



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Local comment sought on Farm Bill programs

Two meetings set for April at Riverland to gather public feedback

AUSTIN, Minn. – Friday, April 6, 2018 – Area farmers, agricultural landowners and the public have a couple of opportunities this month to provide feedback on local and national programs related to conservation and the federal Farm Bill.

Public meetings are set for next Wednesday, April 11, for Mower County's Local Work Group and April 25 for a 2018 Farm Bill Listening Session organized by Minnesota's new U.S. Sen. Tina Smith's staff. Both meetings will take place in the new Center for Agricultural & Food Science Technology at Riverland Community College's west campus in Austin, 1900 Eighth Ave. N.W.

In 2017, Mower County leveraged about \$3.3 million in federal funding from the Farm Bill for conservation projects.

Mower Soil & Water Conservation District and the federal Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff for Mower County will host their annual Local Work Group meeting on Wednesday, April 11, at Riverland Community College in Austin. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting from 10:30 a.m. to noon at Riverland's new ag center, located in Room A-115 in the college's west campus facility.

"This is an opportunity for the public to learn about federal Farm Bill conservation programs and provide input about how those programs are delivered in Mower County," said Justin Hanson, district manager for Mower SWCD. "The Local Work Group process is informational and conversational in nature."

The Local Work Group meeting will begin after the monthly meeting of the Mower SWCD Board of Supervisors, which is having its meeting at Riverland this month to see and learn more about Riverland's new and growing agricultural center. Riverland continues to be a growing partner of Mower SWCD, particularly with cover crops and other soil-health practices.

Staff with Mower SWCD and NRCS will lead a discussion on conservation programs currently used in Mower County as well as take public input on how improvements could be made to those programs. Discussion also will include setting priorities for conservation practices utilized locally and address locations in Mower County that should be viewed more closely.

Some of the programs on the agenda for discussion include the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); Conservation Reserve Program (CRP); Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).

On April 25, staff for U.S. Sen. Tina Smith will host a 2018 Farm Bill Listening Session from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. also in Riverland's new Center for Agricultural & Food Science Technology on the west campus in Austin (Room A-115).

Staff for the senator are seeking public comment on Minnesota's priorities for the Farm Bill, such as energy, commodities, nutrition, conservation and rural development.

This listening session is part of a series of meetings that Sen. Smith and her staff are organizing across Minnesota as the 2018 Farm Bill begins to be written in Washington.

Mower Soil & Water Conservation District

Since 1953, Mower SWCD has provided land and conservation services to Mower County landowners to help manage lands in a way that promotes a sound economy as well as sustains and enhances natural resources that are key to the state's environmental health. Mower SWCD is one of Minnesota's 91 SWCDs that each are governed by a board of elected supervisors.

Farm Bill comment sessions

Who: Mower SWCD, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) of Mower County; and staff for U.S. Sen. Tina Smith.
What: Two separate, public meetings seeking comment on federal Farm Bill programs and their local delivery.
Where: West Campus (Room A-115) at Riverland Community College in Austin, 1900 Eighth Ave. N.W.
When: Local Work Group meeting from 10:30 a.m. to noon Wed., **April 11**; and Sen. Smith's listening session from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on **April 25**.
Why: The 2018 Farm Bill is being discussed in Congress now. Local conservation staff also want feedback on how Farm Bill programs are delivered in Mower County.

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