



# Grant Progress Report

## Soil Health Staffing 2024

**Grant Title:** Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Centra Sota Cooperative's Soil Health Delivery Initiative

**Grant ID:** C24-0144

**Grant Award (\$):** \$535,000.00

**Grant Execution Date:** 04/29/2024

**Grantee:** Wright SWCD

**Required Match (%):** 0

**Grant End Date:** 12/31/2027

**Fiscal Agent:** Wright SWCD

**Required Match (\$):** \$0.00

**Grant Day-to-Day Contact:** Luke Johnson

|              | Total Budgeted      | Total Spent         | Balance Remaining*  |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Grant Funds  | \$535,000.00        | \$256,644.35        | \$278,355.65        |
| Match Funds  | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |
| Other Funds  | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>\$535,000.00</b> | <b>\$256,644.35</b> | <b>\$278,355.65</b> |

\*Grant balance remaining is the difference between the Awarded Amount and the Spent Amount. Other values compare budgeted and spent amounts.

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Project Abstract</b> | <p>The Wright Soil and Water Conservation District (district), in partnership with the Centra Sota Cooperative (CSC) is requesting \$350,000 to hire one full time shared conservation agronomist position to advance our common goal of the increased adoption of soil health practices across our work areas. The district's capacity to support this position and the anticipated workload associated with this partnership will be increased by two additional new staff positions that will be hired in spring 2024. These new positions consist of one full time conservation technician and a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, allowing existing district staffing capacity to implement soil health related programing. The district is also requesting \$175,000 to support existing staff's added capacity for this workload. These initiatives are primarily driven by agricultural row crop systems (promotion of cover crops, for example) but may also include the full suite of eligible activities outlined under BWSR's CWF Soil Health Program. The added staffing capacity will not only be used for soil health practice implementation, the district will emphasize local partner engagement, as well as landowner outreach and education efforts. In total, the district is requesting \$535,000</p> |
|-------------------------|--|

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Proposed Measurable Outcomes</b>                                    | (total includes \$10,000 for start-up costs) to support 1 ½ fulltime positions over the lifetime of this grant. |
|  | 1. Hire one Conservation Agronomist   |
|  | 2. Increase district collaboration with CSC   |
|  | 3. Increase education and outreach activities   |
|  | 4. Increase soil health practices implemented   |
| 5. Profitability analysis of soil health services as determined by CSC |   |

**Budget Details**

| <i>Activity Name</i>       | <i>Category</i>                  | <i>Source Type</i>  | <i>Source Description</i>   | <i>Budgeted</i> | <i>Spent</i> | <i>Balance Remaining</i> | <i>Match Fund?</i> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Project Start Up           | Administration/Coordination      | Current State Grant | Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Centra Sota Cooperative’s Soil Health Delivery Initiative | \$10,000.00     | \$9,676.85   | \$323.15                 | N                  |
| Supplemental SWCD Capacity | Technical/Engineering Assistance | Current State Grant | Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Centra Sota Cooperative’s Soil Health Delivery Initiative | \$175,000.00    | \$86,407.50  | \$88,592.50              | N                  |
| Conservation Agronomist    | Technical/Engineering Assistance | Current State Grant | Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Centra Sota Cooperative’s Soil Health Delivery Initiative | \$350,000.00    | \$160,560.00 | \$189,440.00             | N                  |

**Grant Activities**

**Activity Name: Conservation Agronomist**

**Activity Category:** Technical/Engineering Assistance **Staff time?:** Yes

**Description:** This is a full time shared position between Wright SWCD and Centra Sota Coop. Goals for this position include, but are not limited to, hire one conservation agronomist, soil health practices promotion with area producers through on-farm meetings, targeted outreach and educational events, coordination of public programs and funding with private sector conservation delivery, education of local agency staff in the principals of agronomy, profitability analysis of soil health services as determined by Centra Sota Cooperative.

**Budget Details**

| <u>Source Type</u>  | <u>Source Description</u>   | <u>Budgeted</u> | <u>Spent</u> | <u>Balance Remaining</u> | <u>Last Transaction Date</u> | <u>Match Fund?</u> |
|---------------------|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Current State Grant | Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Centra Sota Cooperative's Soil Health Delivery Initiative | \$350,000.00    | \$160,560.00 | \$189,440.00             | 12/08/2025                   | N                  |

**Actual Results**

| <u>Results</u>  | <u>Date Added</u>     |
|---|-----------------------|
| <p>Progress was made towards the following grant goals during 2024:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One conservation agronomist hired</li> <li>Conservation agronomist consulted with approximately 20 growers for the adoption of soil health practices, assisted 16 local cost share contracts for soil health practices with the Wright SWCD, completed 30 in-field soil health assessments for area producers.</li> <li>Two in-field educational events were coordinated by the Conservation Agronomist with approximately 185 growers in attendance. There was also outreach through creating educational materials, newsletters, and social media throughout 2024.</li> <li>Coordination between Centra Sota and SWCD staff was ongoing through out 2024 to better connect practice funding to soil health services provided by Centra Sota. This was done through regular staff meetings and collaboration.</li> </ol> <p>A complete summary of 2024 activities was completed by the Conservation Agronomist and is available upon request.</p> | 1/22/2025 10:03:10 AM |
| <p>Progress was made towards the following grant goals during 2025:</p>   | 1/27/2026 9:01:57 AM  |

**Results**

**Date Added**

1. Conservation agronomist still employed by Centra Sota Coop.
2. Conservation agronomist consulted with approximately 22 growers for the adoption of soil health practices, assisted 17 local cost share contracts for soil health practices with the Wright SWCD, completed 40 in-field soil health assessments for area producers.
3. Three educational events were coordinated by the Conservation Agronomist with approximately 270 growers in attendance (total attendance for all events – one held in Wright County). Five side-by-side trials are active with two being in Wright County. There was also outreach through creating educational materials, newsletters, and social media.
4. Coordination between Centra Sota and SWCD staff was ongoing throughout 2025 to better connect practice funding to soil health services provided by Centra Sota. This was done through regular staff meetings and collaboration. SWCD staff attended a tour of the Centra Sota Cooperative facility in Cokato on November 5, 2025. The conservation agronomist assisted with numerous training events internally for Centra Sota Coop staff (sales agronomists, for example) – these trainings covered topics such as cover crops, soil health basics, MN Ag. Water Quality Certification, irrigation and soil probes, and funding updates. A complete summary of 2025 activities was completed by the Conservation agronomist and is available upon request.

**Activity Name: Project Start Up**

**Activity Category:** Administration/Coordination

**Staff time?:** Yes

**Description:** Start up expenses will include, but are not limited to, a computer, desk setup, rent for additional office space, vehicle expenses, office and field supplies.

**Budget Details**

| <u>Source Type</u>  | <u>Source Description</u>   | <u>Budgeted</u> | <u>Spent</u> | <u>Balance Remaining</u> | <u>Last Transaction Date</u> | <u>Match Fund?</u> |
|---------------------|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Current State Grant | Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Centra Sota Cooperative's Soil Health Delivery Initiative | \$10,000.00     | \$9,676.85   | \$323.15                 | 12/31/2025                   | N                  |

**Actual Results**

**Results** **Date Added**

Funding was used to purchase a computer, lease additional office space and purchase & install desk equipment. 1/30/2025 2:31:56 PM

**Results**

**Date Added**

Funding was used to lease additional office space.

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**Activity Name: Supplemental SWCD Capacity**

**Activity Category:** Technical/Engineering Assistance

**Staff time?:** Yes

**Description:** The supplemental capacity represents the time of a half time position at Wright SWCD that will be achieved by the reprioritization of current staff members with strong landowner contacts, experience and JAA in soil health practices. This time will become available through the hiring of two new staff members, one a conservation technician focused on structural conservation practices, the other is a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist focused on CRP and easement programs.

The supplemental staff goals include, but are not limited to, partnering with the newly created Conservation Agronomist position to get that position up to speed on local, state and federal conservation practices and funding opportunities, make producer introductions, service increased contracting workload generated by the Conservation Agronomist, and assisting with education and outreach efforts.

**Budget Details**

| <u>Source Type</u>  | <u>Source Description</u>   | <u>Budgeted</u> | <u>Spent</u> | <u>Balance Remaining</u> | <u>Last Transaction Date</u> | <u>Match Fund?</u> |
|---------------------|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Current State Grant | Wright Soil and Water Conservation District and Centra Sota Cooperative's Soil Health Delivery Initiative | \$175,000.00    | \$86,407.50  | \$88,592.50              | 12/31/2025                   | N                  |

**Actual Results**

**Results**

**Date Added**

2024 - Time was spent towards enrolling producers in cost-share programs, consulting with interested producers on soil health practices, site visits, educational and outreach events, training, and coordinating with the conservation agronomist in partnership with Centra Sota Cooperative. The addition of a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist also allowed additional SWCD staff time towards soil health initiatives in 2024.

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2025 - Time was spent towards enrolling producers in cost-share programs, consulting with interested producers on soil health practices, site visits, educational and outreach events, training, and coordinating with the conservation agronomist in partnership with Centra Sota

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**Results**

**Date Added**

Cooperative. The addition of a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist also allowed additional SWCD staff time towards soil health initiatives in 2025.