

# Polk County Newsletter

Spring 2006

## Construction underway

### Jail & Justice Center walls going up

The new Northwest Regional Corrections Center Jail and adjoining Polk County Justice Center are beginning to take shape on Polk County land in southwest Crookston. A shell of the building is to be in place by mid-spring with full completion of construction and opening of the facility set for Jan. 1, 2008.

The \$23.7 million project includes the \$17.5 million, 218-bed jail that will be operated by Tri-County Corrections and a \$6.2 million Polk County justice center that will house District Court and related departments that deal with the court and corrections process. Specifically, those offices include Polk County Attorney and Victim Services, Tri-County Corrections administrative and corrections programming offices, Tri-County Probation, and the public defenders service provided by the State of Minnesota.

Site preparation and concrete footings work were completed in November as a part of the first bid package, which also

included the pre-cast concrete wall panels and the pre-cast floor and roof planking. Erection of those panels was begun in late December and will continue into spring.

#### **Third package upcoming**

Like the first bid package, the second phase of bidding held Jan. 26 (for doors, frames, hardware and detention equipment), also came in slightly under budget. The third phase will be bid in late March. That package, which will be the largest, will include just about everything else involved with construction of both the jail and the justice center, such as the interior walls, wall finishes and paint, ceilings, floor finishes and coverings, electronic and electrical systems, heating/cooling system, plumbing, trim and cabinetry, and even the final landscaping.

Work is being bid in "packages" to facilitate fast-track construction, a practice that minimizes the effect of inflation on the cost of materials and possibly labor. With Tri-County Corrections experiencing an

ever-growing cost for housing overflow prisoners in other county jails (\$400,000 has been budgeted for that expense in 2006), having a new jail up and operating as soon as possible is very important.

The fast-track method is being facilitated by the use of a construction management firm (Construction Analysis & Management, Inc., or CAM of Brainerd, Minn.) that conducts bidding as the different elements of the plans are developed by the architects (Klein McCarthy & Co., Minneapolis, and Richard Rude Architecture, Inc., Bemidji). As an agent of Polk County, CAM is also managing the construction process.

The Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail is operated by the Tri-County Community Corrections agency that was formed in 1975 by a Joint Powers Agreement involving Norman, Red Lake and Polk counties. Each county contributes toward operation of the jail and correction-

Continued on Page 2



Construction of the new Northwest Regional Corrections Center Jail & Polk County Justice Center is underway

# Jail & Justice Center construction

Continued from Page 1

## Low Bidders—Package 2

### Standard Doors, Frames & Hardware

Central Door, Fargo.....\$232,315

### Detention Equipment

Chief Industries, Grand Island, Neb.....\$808,297

al programming on the basis of its use of those services. The cost percentage has regularly been at or near 85 percent for Polk County, 10 percent for Norman County and 5 percent for Red Lake County.

### More female beds

Of the 218 beds in the new jail, 60 will be available for female prisoners. The current facility has only six beds for female prisoners when there is a daily demand of 15 to 20.

Another 60-bed pod will be for general population male prisoners with a third 60-bed pod for male work release prisoners. The work release pod will be constructed to "secure" standards so that it can be used to house general population prisoners, if needed.

The balance of the beds will be used to accommodate circumstances and situations that require "special management" of male prisoners. Except for some cells in the special management pod, all cells will be built for double bunking.

Besides the efficiencies of having all agencies that deal with jail, court and corrections in the same facility, construction of the Justice Center allows the County Board to also address another building

issue — that of the Professional Building, which at 105 years old is showing its age and would need extensive work to make it serviceable for any length of future use.

The Polk County Attorney, Tri-County Probation office, Polk County Information Technology office, and the public defenders are currently housed in the "Pro Building," along with the Income Maintenance Division of Polk County Social Services.

### Courthouse space

With District Court and Court Administration moving from the courthouse to the new Justice Center, space vacated on the ground and upper floors of the courthouse will be reallocated. Although plans have not been developed, the goal will be to co-locate all of Social

Services and Public Health there since the two agencies often work closely together.

The Information Management office will also be relocated to the courthouse. Some office space will be available, too, in the new Justice Center.

When all of the moves and relocations are completed, the Pro Building will be taken out of use and eventually taken down.

### Use of old jail

The current jail cells in the Law Enforcement Center jail will remain intact, at least partly because it would be very expensive to remove them. When vacated, that area will be used for secure evidence storage among other purposes. In the event of an emergency or an extreme situation, the cells could be put back into use.

The administrative space now used by Tri-County Corrections in the Law Enforcement Center will be taken over by the Polk County Sheriff's Department, which has been short of space.

The Red River Valley Juvenile Center and the Polk County Dispatch and the Emergency Operations centers, also located in the Law Enforcement Center complex, will remain there.

## The 3 Tri-County Corrections members will remain

# Joint Powers agreement to be amended

Norman, Red Lake and Polk counties now have the option of withdrawing from the Tri-County Corrections program at any time after the year 2014, or of assuming an ownership share in the new 218-bed jail now under construction after the bonds are paid off in 20 years.

The two options are outlined in a recently approved amendment to the Joint Powers Agreement under which the counties have operated the Tri-County Corrections agency for the past 30 years. The amendment was approved by the boards of the three partner counties in separate actions in December.

Although it isn't likely there will be a problem in having it approved by the legislature, withdrawal by a county from a regional jail organization will require a change in the state's Regional Jails Act.

Current law states that a county board may only withdraw from cooperation in a regional jail system "if the county boards of all of the other cooperating counties decide, by majority vote, to allow the withdrawal."

The partner counties and the Northwest

Regional Corrections Board, which operates Tri-County Community Corrections, will seek to change that part of the law during the upcoming session of the legislature. The Corrections Board has two commissioners from each of the three counties.

### Special legislation needed

State Sen. Rod Skoe and State Rep. Kent Eken have agreed to carry the legislation through the Senate and House of Representatives, respectively, and the State Department of Corrections has indicated that it will not oppose that change in the law. Since Norman, Red Lake and Polk counties operate the only regional jail in the state, the change in law would not affect any other counties.

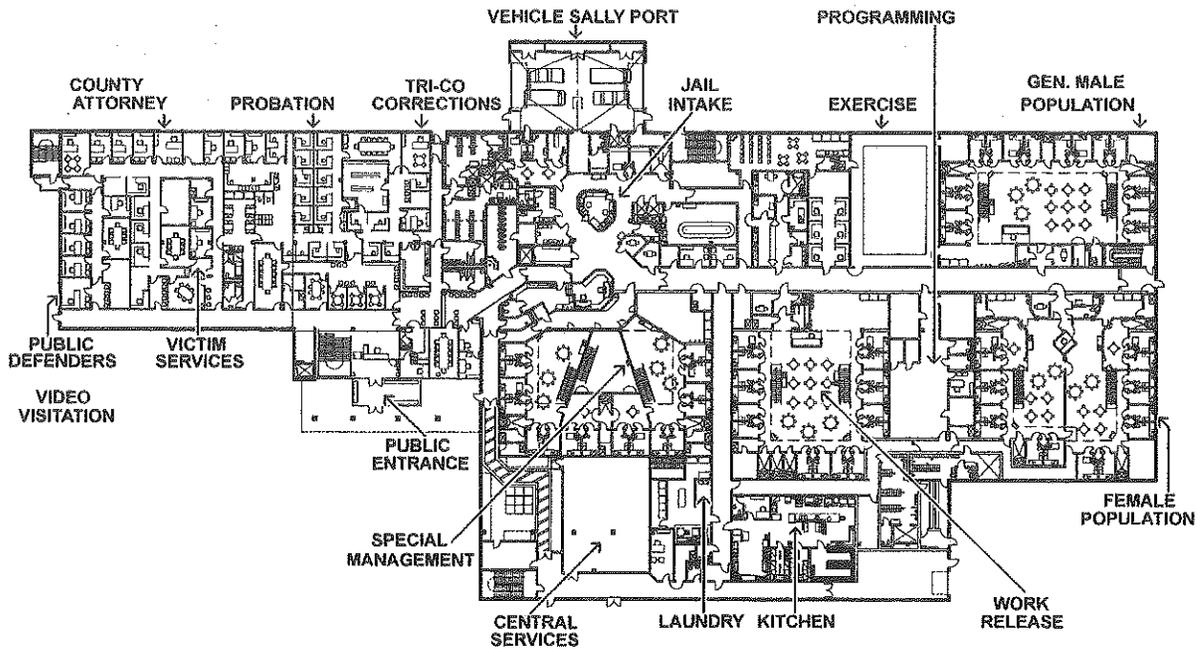
Under terms of the amendment to the Joint Powers Agreement, a county would be able to withdraw from Tri-County Corrections after the first seven years of operation of the new jail, which is scheduled to open in January 2008. A condition of the option to withdraw requires that the county provide at least one year's notice of that intent to Northwest Regional Corrections Board.

In the event that a county would withdraw from the Tri-County Corrections organization, it would receive jail bed space at no cost for a maximum of three years or until its contribution toward debt service was used up. The withdrawing county would, however, no longer receive any of the other services normally provided in the jail such as prisoner meals, medical costs, probation services, corrections programming, juvenile detention and programming, or transportation.

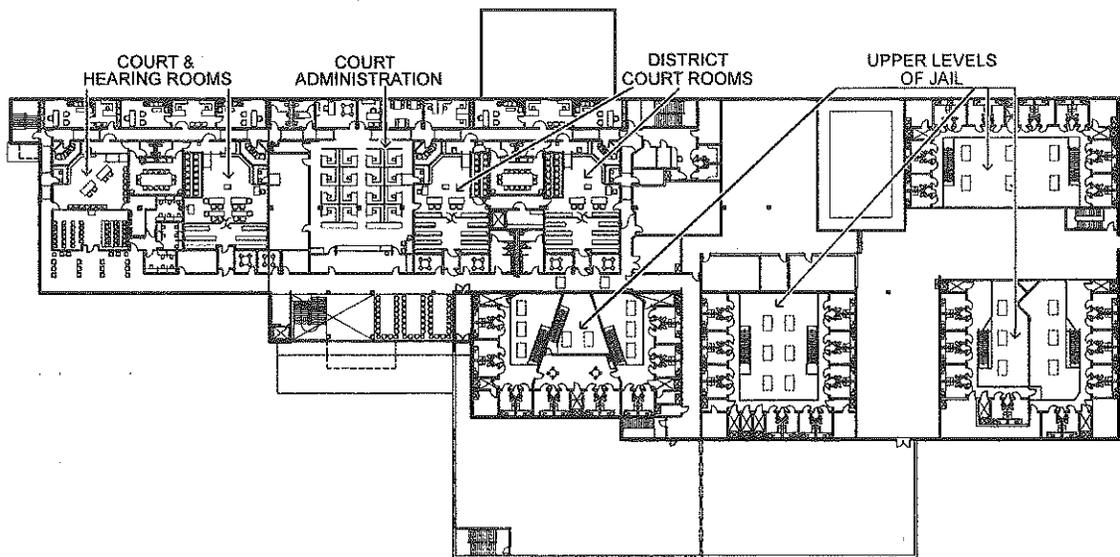
The other change in the Joint Powers Agreement provides that upon the satisfaction of the debt for construction of the jail, Red Lake and Norman counties will have the option of owning a proportionate share of the facility. The share of ownership would be based on the county's contributions toward operational costs, which include debt service over the 20-year repayment period.

With an ownership share, the county would assume all obligations of ownership. Nothing would have to change in the Tri-County Corrections operations if the option of assuming a percentage of ownership is not selected.

Ground floor design



Second floor design



## Tri-County Corrections began operations in 1975

The Tri-County Community Corrections agency was formed in 1975 with the then new Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail opened in 1976.

Built with state grant funds, the jail had space for 28 male and female adult prisoners. It also held juvenile offenders. By the early 1980s, the facility had already become too small to house the average daily population that had quickly grown to 50 and more offenders.

Another state grant was obtained in 1985 to remodel a nearby building that had been constructed at the turn of the century as a TB sanitarium and had later housed the Glenmore Recovery Center. This project provided an additional 36 beds for minimum-security adult males. When the 'Annex' facility became too small in just three years, Tri-County Corrections added

the additional staff needed to meet Department of Corrections requirements for allowing it to also use the second floor of the building.

This increased the number of licensed beds in the Annex to 49, which when added to the beds in the Corrections Center jail, increased the combined total licensed capacity of the two facilities to 81.

### Annex included juveniles

However, seven of the beds in the Annex were designated for house juvenile offenders. When that area became too small in just two years, Polk County constructed an addition to the Corrections Center building to provide space for a juvenile facility. Opened in 1997, it contains eight secure detention beds and eight residential non-secure beds for adolescents from 10 to 18 years old.

With a statewide jail bed shortage, the Department of Corrections has allowed Tri-County Community Corrections to operate both adult facilities above their licensed capacities within in certain limits. This exception has been permitted because of Tri-County's good record of operations.

When jail populations require that some prisoners be housed elsewhere, beds have been leased from counties as far as 200 miles away. The number of prisoners out on "per diem" in other facilities has grown to as high as 35.

Tri-County Corrections spent over \$350,000 to house excess prisoner loads in other county jails in 2005. The budget set for this expense in 2006, not including transportation costs for the Polk County Sheriff's Department, has been set at \$400,000.

## On the job while new judges transition into system

# Judge Roue just keeps coming to work

Officially retired but still on the bench.

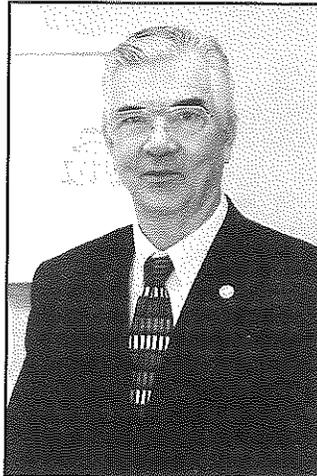
That's the situation of District Judge John M. Roue, Crookston, whose retirement was effective on Jan. 30 but who still continues to hear cases in the 9th District courtrooms as if nothing has happened.

"There are five judges in our work area rotation but we have a need for at least five and a half," Roue says of his continued work on the bench. "I've been approved to stay on the job while new Judges Remick and Yon transition out of their private practices and into the court system.

### 'Retired judges' needed

"After that, I'll be available to work as a 'retired judge.' There's a real demand in this district and in the state for retired judges because of the heavy caseloads and situations when there are vacancies, vacations and cases that other judges can't handle because of certain circumstances."

Judge Dennis J. Murphy, who had chambers in Thief River Falls before his retire-



Judge John M. Roue

ment became effective in November, has moved to the Twin Cities where he is currently working as a retired judge.

### Native of Fosston

A native of Fosston where he grew up on a farm and graduated from high school, Roue earned a degree in political science and history at the University of Minnesota in 1960. With the chance to enter law school at either Harvard University or the

University of Minnesota, he says, "I couldn't afford Harvard. I had to work full-time all the way through school."

After earning his L.L.B. in law from the University of Minnesota in 1964, Roue became an assistant Polk County attorney under then County Attorney Bob Peterson and also worked in Peterson's private practice.

### Appointed in 1980

Roue had his own private practice in Fosston from 1972 until 1980 and also served as a public defender during much of that time. He was appointed a district judge by Gov. Al Quie in 1980.

With more opportunity for personal interests now, Roue plans to spend time at his place on Devils Lake, probably do some traveling and do more writing. An avid reader — about three books a week, he is also a writer, especially novels. He's currently working on the third draft of a completed novel and has two others in the works. His interest in writing includes membership in a writing group in

Devils Lake.

"We won't be leaving Crookston, though. My wife, Mary, has had a daycare here for almost 26 years and she doesn't want to give that up just yet," he says.

### Part of the family

"We've had most of the kids since they were babies and they've been like part of the family. I go home at noon when I'm working in Crookston and help feed the babies, change diapers, wash dishes, etc. I'd miss the kids as much as she would."

Although work on the bench has been almost fulltime since retirement, he says, "I will ease out of it over time and will probably miss it. I've had a great relationship with the other judges in our six-county rotation. We share the work equally and cover calendars for each other whenever necessary.

"I think we've had the best working relationship in Minnesota. This is one of the best jobs in the state but it's also a life-changing job. Our new judges will find that out."

## Following Hanson's retirement

# Newhouse named interim recorder

Maxine "Mick" Newhouse, who has worked for Polk County in various departments for 26 years including the past 12 in the County Recorder's office, is serving as the interim county recorder. Her appointment to the position was made by the County Board following the retirement of Marlene Hanson.

"It's been going well," Newhouse says of the first weeks in the new position of responsibility. "It helps that I have the assurance that I can still call Marlene if I need help with some procedure that is

only done once every 10 years."

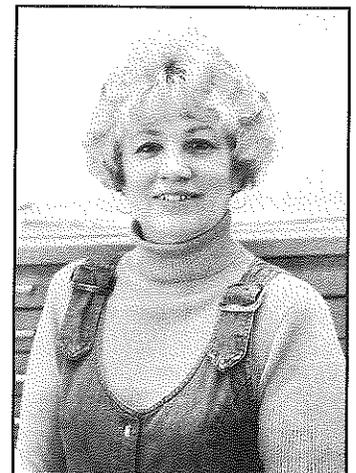
A native of the Beltrami area and a 1970 graduate of Fertile-Beltrami High School, Newhouse attended Moorhead State University for one year before marrying and moving to the Twin Cities area for four years. While there, she earned certification and worked as a nurse's aide.

After moving back to the Fertile area in 1974, she went to work for Polk County in 1976, spending two years in the Social Services Department, two years in the court system

and 10 years in the Assessor's Office working under former county assessors Henry Gredvig and Dale Halos.

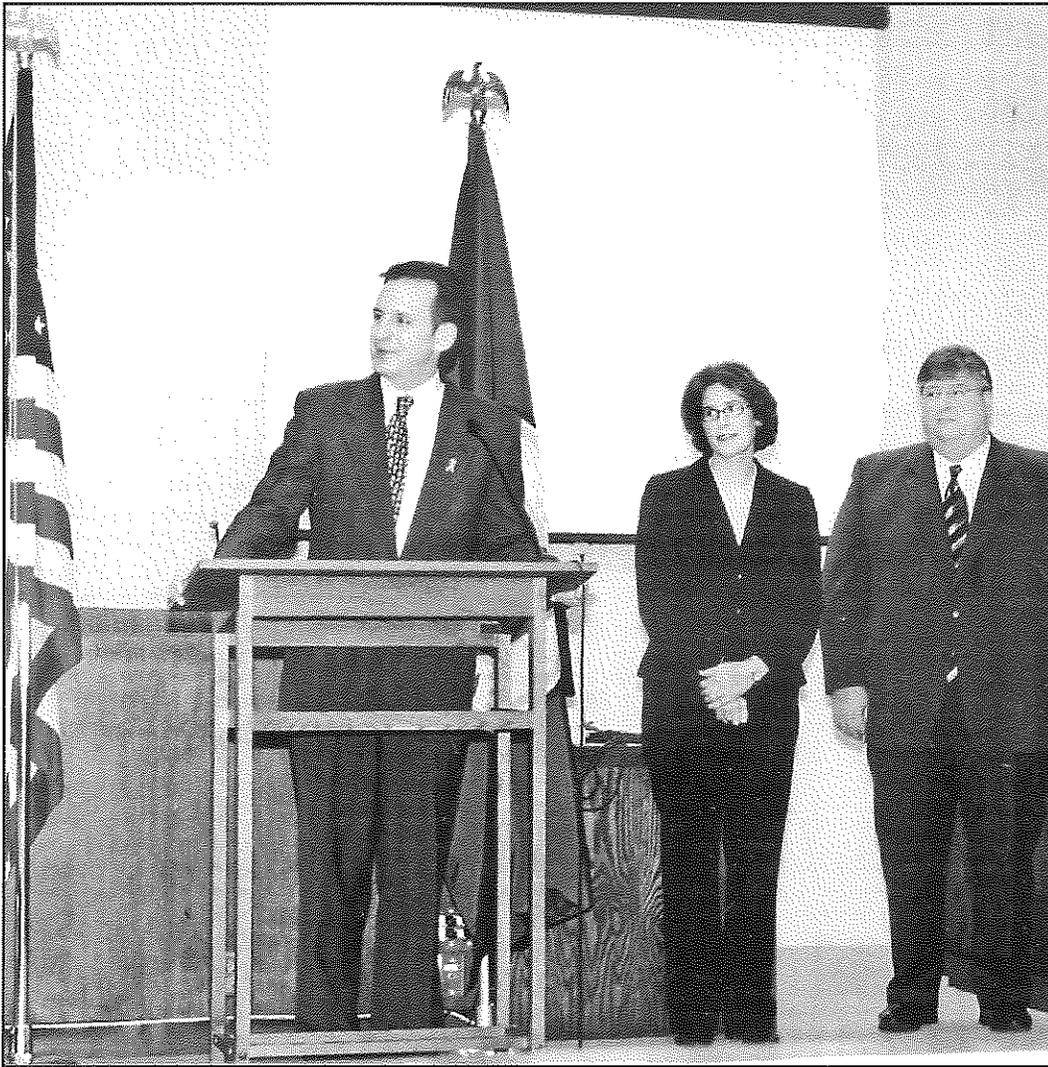
After two years of work in daycare and two years in a secretarial position for Farm Credit Services in Crookston, she returned to county employment at the Recorder's Office on a three-day-a-week basis. She has been fulltime there for the past six years.

Newhouse and her husband, Greg, live near Crookston. She has three grown children: Dirk Kurpiers of Phoenix, Ariz.; Kari (Dale) Trudeau of



Maxine 'Micki' Newhouse

Crookston; and Nicholas Newhouse of Maple Grove, Minn.



Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty introduced new judges Tamara Yon and Jeffrey Remick

## Anderson named chief justice of Supreme Court

Russell A. Anderson is the new chief justice of the Minnesota State Supreme Court.

Anderson, who had his chambers in the Polk County Courthouse in Crookston and lived in Fertile while serving as a 9th District Court judge for 18 years (1983-1998), assumed the Supreme Court's highest position on Jan. 23rd, becoming the 20th chief justice in the state's history.

A native of Bemidji, he has a bachelors degree from St. Olaf College, a law degree from the University of Minnesota and an advanced degree from George Washington University.

Anderson, who served in the Judge Advocate General's Corps while in the Navy, was the Beltrami County attorney from 1978 until 1982 when he was appointed a district judge by then Gov. Al Quie.

His appointment to the Supreme Court was made in 1998 by Gov. Arne Carlson. The appointment as chief justice was made by Gov. Tim Pawlenty following the resignation of Kathleen A. Blatz.

Anderson and his wife, Kristin, who served as the Fertile-Beltrami superintendent of schools, have three grown children.

### Succeeding Roue and Murphy

## Yon and Remick are appointed new 9th District Court judges

Jeffrey S. Remick and Tamara L. Yon, both of Crookston, are the new 9th District Court judges. They succeed retiring District Judges John M. Roue and Dennis J. Murphy.

The new judges will have chambers at the Polk County Courthouse in Crookston. Their appointments were announced by Gov. Tim Pawlenty in Crookston on Jan. 20.

A native of Bemidji, Remick graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of arts degree from Concordia College, Moorhead, in 1985 and received his juris doctorate degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1989.

He was an associate attorney with a law firm at Mound, Minn., for a year before moving to Crookston in 1990 to become first an attorney and later a partner in the Odland, Fitzgerald, Reynolds and Remick law firm.

Remick, 43, and his wife, Ingrid, and their three children live in Crookston.

Judge Yon, who was born in Omaha, Neb., earned a bachelors degree at Concordia College in 1991 and her juris doctorate from the University of North Dakota Law School in 1994.

She had been first an associate attorney and later a partner in the firm of Johannson, Rust, Yon, Stock and Rasmussen in Crookston since 1994.

Yon, 37, and her husband, Bill, live in Crookston with their two children.

Both Remick and Yon have been very active in the bar associations and in the Crookston community. As district judges, they join a five-judge rotation that serves Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk and Red Lake counties.

The other judges in the district and their chamber locations are: Judge Michael Kraker, Mahnomen; Judge Kurt Marben, Thief River Falls, and Judge Donald Aandal, Warren.

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### County Board Meeting Times

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**8:30 a.m. on 1st Tuesday of  
each month**

**1:20 p.m. on 3rd Tuesday**

**8:30 a.m. on 4th Tuesday**

*All meetings are open  
to the public.*

**Commissioners:**

*Dist. 1 — Jerry Jacobson*

*Dist. 2 — Warren Strandell, chair*

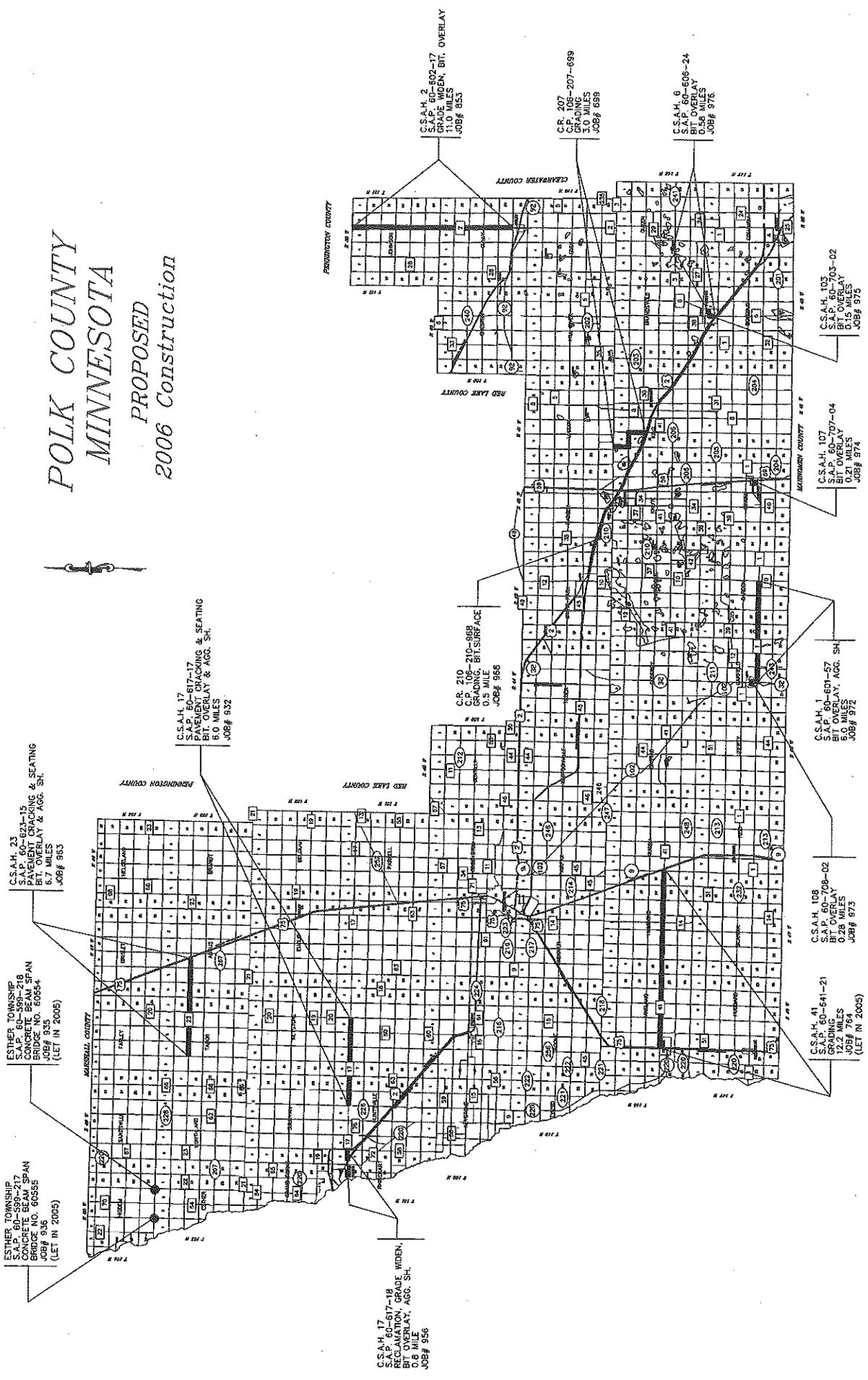
*Dist. 3 — Bill Montague*

*Dist. 4 — Warren Affeldt, v. chair*

*Dist. 5 — Don Diedrich*

# POLK COUNTY MINNESOTA

## PROPOSED 2006 Construction



# 10-ton corridor project dominates highway work

The new road construction season will soon be upon us and the orange construction signs will start going up. This year's program is somewhat less than past years. This is mainly due to the one big project on **CSAH 2** north of Gully.

The map at left shows the construction projects that are planned in Polk County in 2006. This includes both road projects and township bridge replacements.

**CSAH 2** will be grade widened and receive a bituminous overlay project from Trunk Highway (TH) 92 at Gully to the Polk/Pennington county line.

This project, which is part of a project to provide a 10-ton corridor to mainly serve industry in Roseau and Warroad, will be funded 80 percent by federal

money and 20 percent by County State Aid Highway (CSAH) funds.

Congressman Peterson worked to provide funding for this project in the new federal transportation bill called SAFETY-LU. The project is scheduled to be completed prior to the potato harvest in early September.

The following bituminous roads will get an overlay and have aggregate shoulders constructed:

- **CSAH 17** from 3 miles east of TH 2 near East Grand Forks to **CSAH 20** (north of Fisher); and

- **CSAH 23** from 1 mile east of Tabor to TH 75 at Angus.

Depending on how much funding remains after these projects,

the following could be constructed:

- Grading of **CR 207** from TH 2 to **CSAH 35**;

- Surfacing of **CSAH 66** from **CSAH 21** to **CSAH 23**; and

- Reconstruction of **CSAH 17** between Business TH 2 and TH 2 near East Grand Forks.

Construction will also be completed on the grading and reconstruction project on **CSAH 41** between TH 75 near Climax to TH 9.

We anticipate replacing 10 township bridges with box culverts but this is dependent on how much bonding the legislature approves this year for bridge replacements.

The total cost of the construction work planned in 2006 will

be approximately \$9 million.

## Be patient

If you come across some construction this summer, not only on Polk County Roads but also on state or other roads, please be patient. The contractors and government employees will be working long hours to get this work completed in an efficient manner and they don't need impatient drivers angry with them because they might have had to wait a few minutes before traveling on.

If you have questions concerning this year's construction program, please give our office a call at 218-281-3952 and talk to either Darin Carlstrom at ext. 2003 or me at ext. 2001. — **Richard Sanders, county engineer.**

## Policy for dealing with icy roads under review

Plowing snow, or in the case of this winter, scraping ice from Polk County roadways because of the numerous freezing rain events is a subject that is getting a lot of attention. While the discussions have not always been positive, the reason is simply because of the weather conditions that we have had.

How to adjust the Polk County Highway Department's snow and ice control policy to better address icy road conditions is a subject that the Polk County Board and I have discussed at length.

Here's our current policy for how we respond to a winter storm:

After each snowstorm, we send the plows out very early in the morning (sometimes by 4 a.m.) depending on the severity of the storm and the snow conditions. We have nine trucks and six motorgraders that perform this work. Each truck is assigned to plow 70 miles (one direction) of roadway and each motorgrader, 50 miles. It generally takes eight full hours to plow the entire route.

In general, we will not attempt to send the plows out into the rural areas when wind speeds are 20 mph. or more. Experience has shown that we can do more harm than good if the wind is still blowing that hard.

### The next day

The second day, we go over all of the roads to "wing" off the snow and widen the areas that are troublesome. At the same time, the operators clean intersections and apply a 10 percent salt/sand mixture to all intersections, curves and hills. This generally takes another full workday to accom-

plish.

When we have areas where high snow banks have accumulated and around bridge ends, we will use the two blowers that we have to widen out the areas in an effort to lessen the problem.

It is only after this work that we are able to start the process of removing any ice or snow that has compacted on the roadway.

### Heightened expectations

The past two years have brought new challenges to our department. As the number of residents commuting to work on Polk County roadways has increased, their expectations have heightened.

Everyone would like to drive on ice free, dry pavement but that wasn't always possible because of freezing rain events. This has been a major problem for the highway department as well as the traveling public.

Last year, we were unable to get the ice removed until March because of the very frigid weather. Salt does not work when the temperatures fall below 10 degrees. And when the temperature falls to 20 degrees below zero and remains there for several days, trucks and motor graders aren't able to cut the ice either.

This winter, which began with a freezing rain event on Thanksgiving weekend, it was decided that for the first time the county would apply sand and salt to every mile of hard-surfaced roadway. Polk County has 575 miles of hard-surface roadway.

During a typical year, we will use approximately 250 to 300 tons of salt on roadways. In 2005, that entire amount was used in a two-day period and, the day after the salt

supply was gone, an additional 120 tons of salt was ordered.

Another problem was encountered when the salt company did not have trucks available to transport the salt to Polk County because of the high demand for it in our tri-state area. Approximately one week later, Polk County was able to contract with a private trucking company to transport the salt to us.

Fortunately, with the salt and warmer temperatures, our maintenance department was able to eventually remove the ice.

Due to the past two winters and the increasing ice events, it has been decided that the Polk County Highway Department will attempt to provide a higher level of service for the traveling public.

### What's in the future?

We are now in the process of putting together a plan to add at least two trucks to the fleet to lessen the amount of time it takes to plow snow and to allow for more sanding and salting. We are also going to be adding sand and salt storage facilities throughout the county to make our snow and ice removal more efficient.

Polk County does not have the funds or equipment to have a "dry road" policy such as the Minnesota Department of Transportation does. But hopefully with the new equipment and additional salt and sand, we can have a better winter roadway system for our resident to travel on.

And when traveling, please remember to allow adequate distance between your vehicle and the snow removal equipment. — **Richard Sanders, county engineer**

## Polk County Employee Anniversaries in 2006

Hire Date	Employee	Department-Position
<b>35 Years</b>		
9/7/71	Vickie Hughes	Auditor-systems control opr. IV
11/9/71	John Schmalenberg	Coordinator-co. coordinator
<b>30 Years</b>		
3/10/76	Robert Bjerk	Highway-engineering tech IIIC
11/1/76	Carole Juvrud	Auditor-clerk typist cashier IV
12/6/76	Thomas Nelson	Highway-maintenance II
12/27/76	Laureen Anderson	Auditor-appraiser tax officer II
<b>25 Years</b>		
5/4/81	Michael Steffen	Facilities-custodian III
8/3/81	Mary Schmidt	License Ctr.-adm. assistant I
8/17/81	Valerie Bjerk	Coordinator-adm. assistant II
10/19/81	Michael Raymond	Highway-maintenance II
<b>20 years</b>		
1/7/86	Cynthia Peterson	Soc. Svc.-financial assist. spec.
2/18/86	Doug Axtell	Soc. Svc.-fiscal supervisor II
5/1/86	Mark LeTexier	Sheriff-county sheriff
8/1/86	Jennifer Kvaale	Soc. Svc.-financial assist. spec.
9/23/86	Renee Vaudrin	Soc. Svcs.-child suport officer
<b>15 Years</b>		
3/1/91	Richard Sanders	Highway-county engineer
4/19/91	Michelle Erdmann	Enviro. Svc.-sec./receptionist
5/6/91	William Green	Soc. Svc.-social svc. supervisor
7/29/91	Bruce Lindgren	Highway-maintenance II
<b>10 Years</b>		
1/8/96	Jon Volker	Highway-engineering tech IIB
1/22/96	Dave Emanuel	Sheriff-deputy patrol
4/1/96	Todd Rue	Incinerator-utility maintenance
4/3/96	Rosa Guterrez	Soc. Svc.-financial worker
5/1/96	Collette Ketchum	Assessor-clerk typist cashier III
6/10/96	Marna Kelly	Soc. Svc.-social worker
8/26/96	Steve Nelson	Facilities-custodian I
8/26/96	Carolyn Woehle	Soc. Svc.-social worker
9/9/96	Joanne Martin	Incinerator-sort line operator
9/9/96	Mary Winkler	Incinerator-sort line operator
9/23/96	Stephanie Olson	Public Health-dietician
10/12/96	Rick Kappedal	Incinerator-sort line operator
11/26/96	Bruce Hanson	Incinerator-loader operator
<b>5 Years</b>		
1/1/01	Gerald Jacobson	Co. Board-commissioner
1/1/01	William Montague	Co. Board-commissioner
1/22/01	Phillip Juve	Sheriff-deputy patrol
3/12/01	Anita Klinge	Assessor-clerk typist cashier II
4/18/01	Susan Preston-Gorder	Soc. Svc.-social worker
5/8/01	Kathryn Plante-Ziermeier	Soc. Svc.-social worker
5/15/01	Tracey Knutson	Attorney-asst. county attorney
5/21/01	Jody Beauchane	Highway-ditch inspector
5/29/01	Jennifer Stene	Highway-clerk typist cashier II
8/20/01	Mary Efta	Soc. Svc.-social worker
9/3/01	Holly Duciaume	Sheriff-dispatcher
9/11/01	Carla Sundquist	Incinerator-sort line operator
10/15/01	Bradley John Ness	Incinerator-loader operator
11/13/01	Merrie Janorske	Highway-engineering tech IIB

## Managing budgets to be County Board's focus

District 2 Commissioner Warren Strandell is chair of the Polk County Board in 2006. He succeeds Commissioner Jerry Jacobson, Fertile, who represents District 1.

Strandell, who lives in East Grand Forks, had been the vice chair in 2005. The new vice chair is Warren Affeldt, Fosston, who represents District 4.

Further re-organization of county government will occur in July when Commissioner Bill Montague, Crookston (District 3), is slated to succeed Affeldt as chair of the Polk County Social Services Board.

That board, which meets monthly as a separate body, includes the five county commissioners and two at-large members, Cathy Gutterud, Fosston, and Paula Waters, Crookston.

The major issues that the County Board is expecting to have to deal with in 2006, according to Strandell, regard the construction of the new Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail and the adjoining Polk County Justice Center.

"We need to keep those projects moving ahead because, it seems," he says, "that price increases for materials are occurring on a far too frequent basis. We have budgets in place for this work and we need to adhere to them as much as

humanly possible."

Strandell notes that the effect of debt service for the \$17.5 million in bonds that were sold to finance the 218-bed jail portion of the project is included in the proposed property tax bills for 2006 that were mailed out in November prior to the Truth in Taxation hearing.

The justice center portion of the project, he notes, "will be paid for from funds that were banked over several years as it became evident that a building project would have to be undertaken. So, with the effect of debt service for the new jail already known and with money set aside to pay for the \$6.2 million justice center, there shouldn't be any surprises. Our assignment now is to manage those budgets while continuing to provide regular county services as efficiently as possible."

The new jail and justice center are scheduled to open in January 2008. Another construction project — that of a new bathhouse and rest room facility, along with water, sewer and electric hook-ups, and other improvements at the Polk County Park on Maple Lake — is scheduled to be completed and ready for use in the upcoming summer recreation season. Like the justice center, it is also being paid for from existing funds.

## County Attorney's 2005 activity report

<b>Felony &amp; Gross Misdemeanors</b>	Child in need of protective services (CHIPS) petitions . . . . .64
Complaints prepared . . . . .378	EJJ probation hearings . . . . .2
Sentencing hearings . . . . .377	CHIPS hearings . . . . .230
Committed to state prison . . . . .65	Referred to Diversion Program .77
Probation violation hearings . .398	Referred to Restorative Justice .62
Committed to state prison . . . . .42	
Jury trials . . . . .7	<b>County Welfare</b>
Defendants convicted . . . . .5	Commitment petitions* . . . . .30
Criminal appeals handled . . . . .11	Commitment hearings . . . . .55
<b>Misdemeanors</b>	Guardianship petitions . . . . .8
Guilty pleas . . . . .135	Guardianship hearings . . . . .15
Trials . . . . .4	* Mentally ill and/or inebriate
Defendants convicted . . . . .4	<b>Child Support</b>
<b>Juvenile Cases</b>	Child support hearings . . . . .165
Delinquency petitions . . . . .41	Paternity hearings . . . . .265
Delinquency hearings . . . . .527	

## HAVA provisions must be in place for fall elections

# Voting equipment to be ordered and ready

Provisions to assist handicapped persons in voting and to allow persons to correct their ballots in the event of a voting error will be in place for this fall's primary and general elections, according to Jerry Amiot, Polk County auditor-treasurer.

Required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) legislation that was passed by Congress in 2002 as a way to ensure access, integrity, accuracy and privacy for all voters, those features will be made available in the polling places through the use of assistive voting machines (AVMs) and precinct ballot counters.

The AVMs provide handicapped voters with the ability to direct their votes to the candidate of their choice without assistance from anyone else.

When voting, ambulatory persons will mark their ballots in private as usual and then insert the ballot into a precinct ballot counter. Should the machine detect an error — such as crossing over party lines in the primary — the ballot would be rejected and the voter would have the opportunity to make a correction.

### **Grant monies**

The full cost of the investment in the high-tech equipment needed to provide those features will be paid for by federal grant monies.

In Polk County, AVMs are to be purchased and be available to assist handicapped persons in 55 of the 82 precincts. The precincts that won't have the AVMs are the 23 townships and 4 cities that have opted instead to conduct mail ballot voting and as such are not required to have the equipment.

The county will also purchase 46

precinct ballot counters and one central count machine.

The expected cost of the equipment is \$6,031 for each AVM and \$5,649 for each precinct ballot counter. The cost of the central count machine will be about \$51,000. Polk County expects to receive about \$800,000 in HAVA funds. Any dollars not used for equipment purchases will be held for future maintenance.

### **Equipment sharing**

The voting equipment will be shared in the five situations where precincts will use the same polling place, including:

- Knute and Badger townships with the City of Erskine;
- King Township with the City of McIntosh;
- Columbia Township with the City of Lengby;
- Crookston Township with Wards 3 and 4 in the City of Crookston; and
- Rhinehart Township with Ward 1 in East Grand Forks.

The Polk County Auditor's Office will serve as the polling place for the mail ballot townships and cities. An AVM machine will also be available there.

The central count machine will be located at the Polk County Courthouse in Crookston and will be used to count the ballots from the mail ballot precincts. The results of the voting recorded in the precinct counters at each polling place will be delivered to the courthouse on a computer disc and accumulated electronically there.

When not in use, the high-tech electronic equipment is to be stored in environmentally controlled conditions at the

Polk County Human Service Center in East Grand Forks. Storage of the other voting equipment is to be provided by the township or city.

The staff of County Auditor-Treasurer office, working with election officials from cities, townships and school districts, has developed the county plan required by the HAVA legislation to provide for the use and maintenance of the equipment.

### **Working group**

That working group, which met on five occasions, includes: Ilane Rue, representing Queen Township and as president of the Polk County Township Officers Association; Gene Dufault, Gentilly Township and as first vice president of the Minnesota Association of Townships; Dean Frisk, Fairfax Township; Arlet Phillips, Huntsville Township clerk; Betty Arvidson, Crookston city clerk-treasurer and past president of the Minnesota Municipal Clerks & Finance Officers Association; Linda Dargus, Crookston School District 593; Amiot as the auditor-treasurer; Vickie Hughes, chief deputy auditor-treasurer; and Laureen Anderson, deputy auditor-treasurer & elections supervisor.

The cities and townships that are using mail ballot voting include:

Townships — Andover, Belgium, Brandt, Brislet, Fairfax, Fanny, Farley, Fisher, Hammond, Helgeland, Hubbard, Kertsonville, Keystone, Liberty, Lowell, Parnell, Reis, Rosebud, Russia, Sandsville, Scandia, Tynsid and Vineland.

Cities — Beltrami, Climax, Nielsville and Trail.

## Existing events & family celebrations would be excluded

# Large gatherings ordinance under consideration

An ordinance that would govern and control large gatherings is being considered as a part of a study of Polk County's Zoning Ordinance.

While the ordinance would apply to gatherings of 1,000 or more persons at any single time at any location for the purpose of musical, racing, political, promotional or social entertainment, it would not apply to a number of existing situations and events, including:

• Permanent places of worship, stadiums, athletic fields, arenas, auditoriums, coliseums or gov-

ernment-sponsored fairs held on established fairgrounds.

• Gatherings or activities permitted or licensed by state law or the regulations of Polk County, including the State Parks System and Polk County Regional Park System.

• Family celebratory gatherings held entirely upon the premises of a family member.

• Gatherings held within the incorporated limits of a city.

• An event held on water or ice as defined under Minnesota State Statute, Section 86B.121, or suc-

cessor statutes, and permitted by the Polk County Sheriff.

• Gatherings held on property owned by a university.

The purpose of the ordinance would not be to prevent large gathering events but rather to govern them by establishing regulations to address such issues as security, safety, access, emergency situations, the sale of liquor, and the general welfare of county residents. While the study is underway, the County Board has declared a one-year moratorium on new, large gathering events.

# Drees assumes watershed post

Nick Drees, who had been serving as acting administrator of the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District following the resignation of Ron Adrian in July, has been given the position of administrator by the district's Board of Managers.

A 34-year employee of the district as an engineering technician, Drees grew up and lives near St. Hilaire. Houston Engineering Co., which has an office in Thief River Falls, has been selected as the district's consulting engineering firm.

# Mills joins Women's Hall of Fame

Susan Mills, administrator of the Tri-County Community Corrections agency that provides probation and jail services for Norman, Red Lake and Polk counties through provisions of the state Community Corrections Act and Regional Jails Act, has been inducted into the Northwest Minnesota Women's Hall of Fame.

The induction, which was made by the Northwest Minnesota Women's Fund, was held March 4 in Arts Ballroom at Bemidji State University.

A driving force in Community Corrections in Minnesota, Mills served as president of the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties

(MACCAC) organization in both 1991 and 2003. She was presented MACCAC's prestigious Jack Young Award for dedication to corrections programs and efforts in 2002.

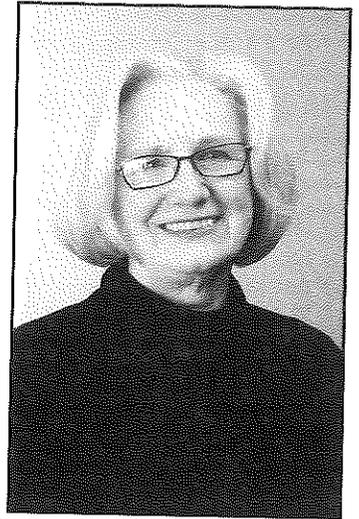
Her accomplishments include the establishment of Tri-County's 51-bed minimum-security facility, which was the first of its kind in the state, and the opening of the Red River Valley Juvenile Center wing of the Northwest Regional Corrections Center in Crookston that was constructed in 1997.

She has also been cited for developing and implementing a "life skills" program at the Northwest Regional Corrections Center in Crookston and

for partnering with school districts and other agencies in the three-county area to obtain a \$3 million federal Safe Schools grant and program.

Mills implemented the first in-home supervision program for adolescents at risk of out of home placement and led the creation of juvenile transition, restitution, and sex offender programs.

A native of Mankato, Minn., she earned a degree in sociology at Minnesota State University-Mankato before joining Tri-County Community Corrections as a research/training coordinator in 1976. She became deputy administrator in 1981, and has been the executive director since 1985. In



Susan Mills

In addition to her professional roles in corrections, Mills also serves as a member of the Crookston School Board.

## Report Welfare Fraud

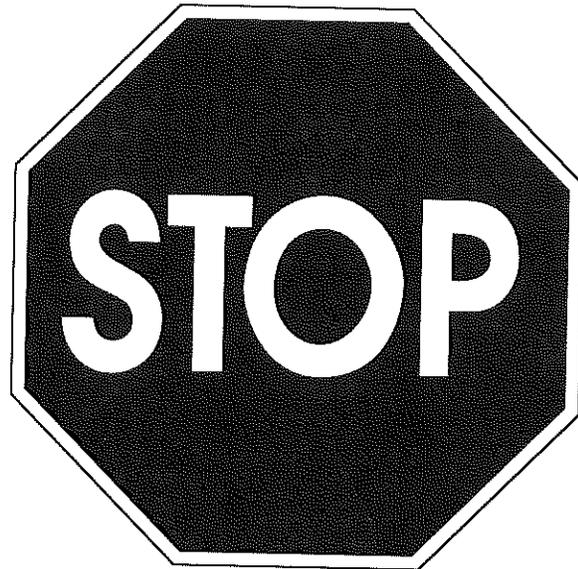
People who give false information or withhold facts in order to receive Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) aid, food stamps, general assistance, childcare or medical assistance may be guilty of fraud.

### You may wish to report:

- Persons not reporting income
- Incorrect reporting of persons living in the home
- Misuse of food stamps or Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards
- Falsifying of information on application
- Unreported property and assets
- Persons receiving dual benefits (from more than one state)

### What you should report:

- **Who** — The name of the person
- **What** — The fraud suspected
- **When** — Date of occurrence
- **Where** — Address of person



## Welfare Fraud

You may remain anonymous

If you suspect someone of misusing or abusing Minnesota assistance programs, call the Polk County Sheriff's Office at this number 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

**1-218-281-0431 (ask for extension 2249)**

You can also contact the toll free Minnesota Welfare Fraud Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at:

**1-800-627-9977 YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS**

## Grassel joins Planning & Zoning Commission

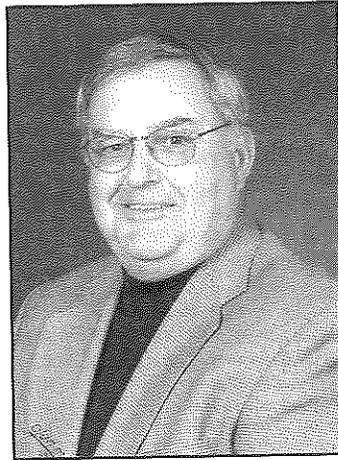
Dick Grassel, East Grand Forks, has joined the Polk County Planning & Zoning Commission as the appointed representative of East Grand Forks Mayor Lynn Stauss.

Grassel succeeds Jim Gander, who retired after six years in the position. Like Gander, Grassel comes to the Commission with an extensive background in city government.

A retired businessman, Gander was appointed to the Commission by Mayor Stauss in 1999 after having served on the East Grand Forks City Council for 22 years including time as the Council president.

### 17 years on Council

Grassel, who is a 17-year member of the current City Council representing the Second Ward, was elected Council president in January. After being appointed to the Council in March 1989, he won elections in 1989, 1993, 1997,



Dick Grassel

2001 and 2005.

A native of East Grand Forks and a 1961 graduate of East Grand Forks Central High School, Grassel had a 30-year career with Minnkota Power Cooperative in Grand Forks before retiring last fall. He had served as the electric generation and transmission cooperative's construction and maintenance

foreman for the last 14 years. Grassel and his wife, Diana (Mellum), have two grown sons and five grandchildren.

### Board of Adjustment

Gander has also left his position on the Board of Adjustment. That seat has been assumed by Earl Beiswenger, Fisher.

A former member of both the Fisher City Council and Fisher School Board, Beiswenger represents Commissioner District 2 on the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Other members of the Planning & Zoning Commission are:

- Clayton Engelstad, Fertile (representing Commissioner District 1);
- Courtney Pulkrabek, Crookston (District 3);
- Kerry Winkleman, Fosston (District 4);
- Barb Hangsleben, East Grand Forks (District 5)

- Crookston Mayor Don Osborne (City of Crookston);
- Roland Gagner, Erskine (Union Lake Sarah Improvement District);

- Doug Thorson, Mentor (Maple Lake Improvement District); and

- Chuck Lairviere, Crookston (Polk County townships).

Winkleman serves as chair of both the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Board of Adjustment.

### Recommendations

The findings of the Planning & Zoning Commission are forwarded as recommendations to the County Board, which makes the final decision.

The Board of Adjustment, which is made up of the five members representing commissioner districts (Engelstad, Beiswenger, Pulkrabek, Winkleman and Hangsleben), makes the final decision on requests to vary from the county's zoning rules.

## Callers to Sheriff's 'Help.us.2' Fight Meth tip line remain anonymous, won't have to testify

The public can now pass on information about illegal activities — especially the manufacture, use and trafficking of methamphetamine, commonly known as "meth" — to the Polk County Sheriff's Department without fear of retribution or of having to testify in court.

"We just need the information," Sheriff Mark LeTexier says. "We know that people are afraid of retribution if they come forward with any information, so we've worked with Garden Valley Telephone Co. in Erskine to develop a tip line that completely protects their identity. The caller can't be found out and won't have to worry about having to testify in court."

### Started in December

The Department's "Help.Us.2" Fight Meth tip line became operational in December. The "Help.Us.2" name relates to the number 435-7872. For calls from out of the 435-service territory (the

Fosston prefix), the 218 area code would precede the number.

"We've been getting calls," LeTexier says. "We announced the tip line through the media in December and I've been telling people about it during the meth presentations that I make around the county. The calls have come from the family members, friends and acquaintances of users and from others who might just have observed something that was suspicious.

### Helps build cases

"This information helps us to build a case... to make an arrest. We use it to reinforce the intelligence that we have or to find out about something that isn't known to us at all," he says.

While the manufacture of meth in the region and state is down because of recent legislation that limits the availability of the pseudoephedrine needed for the process, LeTexier notes that the

overall situation isn't getting any better. "It is still here. Now, about 80 percent of the meth is coming from out of the region... from Texas, California, Mexico and other areas."

LeTexier notes, too, that "user groups" have formed in which the membership is limited to only those known to use.

### Not just about drugs

"That's why we want information about suspicious activities. But it doesn't just have to be about drugs. And you don't have to be from Polk County to call or you don't have to be calling about activities in Polk County. If it's about activity in another county, we pass that information on; we all need to work together."

LeTexier encourages callers to leave detailed messages. "Specifically," he says, "we want to know who, what, when and where. The more information that we get the better. We have to get this thing stopped. It is ruining so many lives."

# Turbine generator to make use of excess steam at Polk County's Waste to Energy plant

The Polk County Waste-to-Energy plant located in Fosston is continually looking for ways to make the operation more efficient.

The plant, which is commonly known as the "incinerator," began processing in 1988 with one steam customer on line. Another customer was added in 1990 thus increasing steam revenues. Steam that is sold is produced by the burning of the solid waste that comes in from five area counties — Beltrami, Clearwater, Mahanomen, Norman and Polk.

A materials recovery facility was constructed in 1996 producing revenues from recyclables remaining in the waste stream and reducing operating and maintenance costs for the incinerator.

Two ash utilization projects using waste combustor ash as a partial replacement for natural aggregate in road paving projects have been completed. Both projects have proven to be cost effective, have shown no negative environmental impact, and demonstrate superior strength and flexibility compared to conventional asphalt.

## Turbine generator

Since start up, several studies have been completed evaluating the use of excess steam to produce electricity with a turbine/generator. However, all of these studies resulted in the same conclusion that it was not economically feasi-

ble. The high capital costs and low electric rates resulted in an investment that could not be justified.

In 2003, economizers were installed into the flue gas stream as part of an air pollution control (APC) retrofit project designed to meet revised air rules and regulations.

While the economizer's main purpose is to control flue gas temperature, a secondary benefit is that heat is added to the boiler feed water resulting in increased steam output.

## Second look

Polk County then decided to take another look at generating electricity with excess steam. Since the last study the capital costs for the turbine/generator project had become "grant eligible," and there were funds remaining in the APC retrofit project grant. If approval could be obtained from the OEA to use the remaining grant dollars for the turbine/generator project, the economic viability would be substantially more attractive.

The study was completed and just as a decision was about to be made to go ahead with the turbine/generator project, a potential customer approached Polk County with a need for steam. The customer requested that steam service be installed to its new plant.

Financially, selling steam is consider-

ably more attractive than generating electricity, so the turbine/generator project was put on hold and the steam service to the new customer was installed.

The new customer is now up and running and it has been determined that even with three steam customers in operation, sufficient excess steam is available for a turbine/generator to produce electricity and reduce incoming power from the local utility.

## Grant funds redirected

Polk County has requested and received approval to use the remaining grant dollars to help fund approximately 50 percent of the capital costs of the project. This funding assistance reduced the projected pay-back period for the project from 15 years to 7 years, and the decision has been made to install the turbine/generator equipment.

The project costs are estimated at \$600,000 and completion is scheduled for November 2006.

This unit will not only make use of excess steam by turning it into a revenue but will be available to act as a backup in case there is a total loss of incoming power to the plant, or one or more of the customers decides to reduce or eliminate their dependence on steam as the energy source for their operations. — **Bill Wilson, Polk County Solid Waste facilities manager**

## Steiner heads Solid Waste Administrators

Polk County Environmental Services Administrator Jon Steiner is serving a two-year term as president of the Minnesota Solid Waste Administrators Association.

Steiner was elected to the position at last fall's annual conference. Previously, he had served as the District 3 representative on the board of directors for six years.

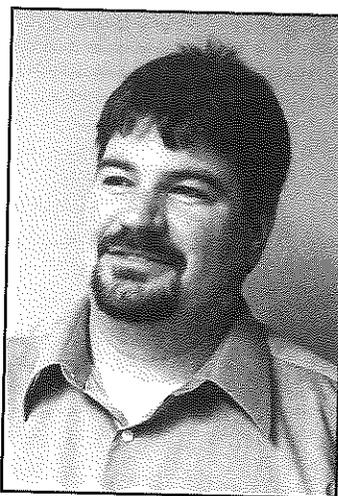
The Solid Waste Administrators Association's mission is to promote solid waste programs and systems that manage these materials in an environmentally sound and cost-effective manner. Goals of the association are to provide educational opportunities for solid waste professionals, increase aware-

ness of solid waste management concerns, initiate/support action on specific solid waste issues (e.g. legislation, regulations, etc.) and to facilitate communication between local and state solid waste professionals.

A native of Coon Rapids, Minn., Steiner has a degree in environmental science from St. Cloud State University. He has previously worked for the Anoka County Parks Department and a St. Cloud area solid waste transfer station and composting facility.

He came to Polk County as an environmental technician in 1995. Steiner became the planning & zoning administrator in 1997 and in 1998 was named

Polk County's environmental services administrator.



Jon Steiner

## Nelson and Tiedemann elected to watershed posts

Dale Nelson, representing Pennington County, is the new chair of the Board of Managers of the Red Lake Watershed succeeding Orville Knott of Red Lake County.

The new vice chair is Gene Tiedemann, representing West Polk County. Nelson had been the vice chair.

Vernon Johnson of Clearwater County is the board secretary and Allan Carlson of East Polk County is treasurer. Knott is the board's delegate to the Red River Water Management Board with Arnold Stanley of Marshall County as the alternate.

# Gravel taxes help maintain roads used in hauling

The Polk County Highway Department and 11 townships will share in the \$104,077 of Aggregate Material Tax collected from gravel importers and operators in the county during 2005.

Commonly referred to as the "gravel tax," the money is meant to compensate local governmental units for damage done to their roads by the hauling of gravel.

By law, the tax is distributed 60 percent to the County Road & Bridge Fund and 30 percent to the Township Road & Bridge Fund. The remaining 10 percent is placed in the Reserve Fund for Pit Restoration, which has a current balance of \$43,590.

Money in the Township Road & Bridge Fund is passed on to the individual townships on the basis of their percentage of the number of miles of roads affected by the hauling. The exact amounts of the distribution of the 2005 tax collection have not yet been determined.

For 2004, the \$72,362 of tax that was collected as a result of hauling activity then was distributed to the townships in the following amounts:

Belgium, 4.0 miles, \$3,859; Brandt, 3.5 miles, \$3,377; Chester, 1.5 miles, \$1,447; Garden, 2.0 miles, \$1,930; Grove Park-Tilden, 2.0, \$1,930; Gully, 1.5 miles, \$1,447; Hill River, 3.5 miles, \$3,377; Kertsonville, 0.5 miles, \$482; King, 1.0 miles, \$965; Liberty, 1.0 miles, \$965; and Onstad, 2.0 miles, \$1,930.

## Special legislation

The ability to collect the tax, which was created by special legislation at the request of Polk and Norman counties when Bernie Lieder was the Polk County engineer, has been available to counties since 1980.

By 1986, 22 counties were using the tax as a way to help maintain roads. Currently, 28 counties and four individual townships collect the tax, which is determined at the rate of 10 cents per yard or 7 cents per short ton.

Initially, the legislation called for voluntary compliance by aggregate producers. In an effort to bring all producers into compliance, the law was amended in 1997 to give county auditors (or township clerks) full access to an operator or importer's business records.

Also at that time, the County Board retained Dave Goosen, then the recently retired maintenance supervisor for the County Highway Department, to monitor activities at gravel pits and report to the auditor-treasurer. His successor, current maintenance supervisor Don Juvrud now monitors the extraction and hauling activities.

Gravel tax collections in 1997 totaled only \$3,325. The next year, collections increased to \$78,035 and since then have ranged from the low of \$72,362 that was collected in 2004 to the high of the \$104,077 assessed in 2005.



Willing Workers' barn on the move

## Willing Workers 4-H Club's 'Barn Project' is up for AMC award

The Willing Workers 4-H Club's Barn Project is a candidate for the Association of Minnesota Counties' 2006 Community Leadership Award.

The winner of the award, to be selected from among entries received from throughout the state, will be announced at the AMC organization's annual Legislative Conference in St. Paul on March 29.

### To Heritage grounds

In the project, a historical barn built in 1918 was moved to the Heritage Days grounds in East Grand Forks where its primary use will be to house the 4-H Club's petting zoo. The zoo has been a part of the annual Heritage Days event for the past six years. Other events and uses for the barn — both during Heritage Days and throughout the year — are also in planning and include an old fashioned barn dance to officially open the barn for use.

### Donated the barn

The Curtis and Betty Amundson family of rural East Grand Forks donated the barn to the club. The family and Curtis Amundson's father, Clarence Amundson, who grew up doing chores

in the barn, also donated money to support the project along with a number of "extras."

### Raised the money

The 35-member 4-H Club and its adult leadership, headed by club leaders Charles and Sharon Vanyo, raised the money needed to pay for the actual move and arranged for the materials, professional services and labor needed to prepare the site for the 36 by 80-foot barn. This included pouring the eight-foot deep concrete footings to support the structure, moving power lines during the move and arranging for work to rewire the barn, cut in new doors, build stairways, replace windows, repair and paint the siding, strengthen the support system for the loft and replace the loft flooring.

### More than 150 contributors

In all, over 150 individuals and businesses have made more than \$31,000 in monetary contributions toward the project or provided services at no charge or at a substantially reduced cost.

The project is to be completed in time for the 2006 Heritage Days event, which is scheduled for Aug. 18-20.

# Growing comparable sales force new increases in tillable land valuations

The assessed valuation of tillable lands in 19 eastern Polk County townships will increase by another 25 percent for taxes payable in 2007 while the value of tillable lands in all of the other townships in the county will go up from five to 20 percent.

Eleven eastern townships saw 25 percent increases a year ago and 10 of those 11 are getting another 25 percent bump again this year.

Adjustments in tillable land values again became necessary based on comparable sales that occurred during the past year. No township was spared a general valuation increase, although nine of them will only receive five per cent increases.

Before these landowners — along with others in the county who will see upward adjustments in the valuation of their properties — hit the roof, they need to know that property taxes don't increase at the same percentage of the valuation increases. Valuation increases simply increase the tax base against which levies for the operation of local government units can be applied. There are also many other variables in the property tax system that affect the final tax bill.

## Determined by sales

Assessed valuation is determined by the sale prices of similar classed properties during the past year. It is what the property would probably sell for as of the assessment date of January 2 each year.

"Valuation, by state law must represent from 90 to 105 percent of the actual sale or market value. Increases in valuation build the tax base and as the tax base broadens, the tax burden is spread out," Wagner

notes.

Besides the tillable land valuation increases, rural building sites throughout the county will get substantial valuation increases. Residential properties in the cities of Crookston and East Grand Forks are set to increase approximately 10 percent, while increases in valuations in other cities in the county will vary.

The actual assessed valuation increases will be noted in the Board of Appeals & Equalization Valuation Notices that are mailed to property owners in early to mid-March each year. Property owners will receive at least 10 days notice of the Board of Appeals & Equalization sessions that are held annually by townships and cities between April 1 and mid-May. The time and location of each is noted on those notices.

The informational notices that were mailed in November 2005 prior to Truth and Taxation hearings showed proposed property taxes that are payable in 2006.

## Lake property up again

Lakeshore valuations will also see increases in the 2006 assessment. Sales on the lakes continue to be strong.

There will be no increases in non-tillable land valuations for 2006. Valuations in that category of property doubled from \$150 to \$300 an acre for payable 2005 and were increased to \$500 acre for payable 2006. Non-tillable lands include pasture and woodlands. Wasteland, which was valued at \$50 an acre for 2005, went to \$100 an acre for payable 2006.

The 19 townships where the value of tillable land will be increased 25 percent are:

Chester, Gully, Grove Park-Tilden, Badger, Lessor, Hill River, Eden, Godfrey, Woodside, Knute, King, Brandsvold, Queen, Garfield, Garden, Winger, Sletten, Rosebud and Columbia.

## Up 20 percent

Land values in Hubbard and Scandia townships in southwestern Polk County townships will see 20 percent increases in valuation.

Townships where tillable valuations will go up 15 percent are: Brislet, Helgeland, Brandt, Grand Forks, Sullivan, Belgium, Rhinehart, Huntsville, Nesbit, Parnell, Fisher, Lowell, Roome, Andover, Vineland, Hammond, Onstad, Reis and Liberty.

The 10 percent increase townships are: Higdem, Esther, Keystone, Euclid, Fanny, Crookston, Fairfax, Kertsonville and Russia.

The townships where values will go up five percent are: Sandsville, Farley, Northland, Tabor, Angus, Bygland, Gentilly, Tynsid and Johnson.

## Revaluations required

About the valuation increases, County Assessor Robert Wagner says, "This is something that we have to do on a regular basis so that values fall within the acceptable sales ratio range of what the Minnesota Department of Revenue would otherwise mandate."

A valuation that is set by the county, he says, can be contested at the Boards of Appeal and Equalization, while a state-mandated increase cannot be challenged. "At least, when the county changes a value, it can be challenged," he says.

# Residential cathode ray tube ban to start July 1

During the 2004 legislative session, a ban was passed on all residential video display devices that contained a Cathode Ray Tube (CRT), such as televisions and computer monitors, that was to be effective on July 1, 2005.

CRT devices contain significant amounts of toxins and/or heavy metals such as lead, nickel, cadmium, mercury and arsenic. Commercial CRT devices are already banned from disposal and must be recycled.

On July 6, 2005, Gov. Pawlenty signed legislation to delay the residential CRT ban

until July 1, 2006. The ban was delayed by one year to address the costs related to collection and recycling of these materials and to establish a comprehensive electronics (all electronics — not limited to CRT devices) recycling program.

The cost to a resident to dispose of a video display device in Polk County currently is on average about \$3. The cost to recycle the same video display device after June 30, 2006, will range from \$10 to \$30 per unit, based upon the unit's screen size.

Many factors have contributed to the increase in video

display device disposal over the last few years and projections indicate the disposal trend will continue to increase. Consumers demand larger, high definition computer monitors, such as flat-panel or flat-screen models. New technology has created high-performance TVs — such as projection receivers, HDTV, wide-screen, LCD screens and liquid plasma receivers.

In addition, the federal government has required that all TV signal broadcasts switch from analog to digital before February 2009. All of these factors have contributed to render those old 19-inch color TVs

and 15-inch computer monitors obsolete.

Efforts are still underway to set up and implement a statewide collection and recycling program for these materials. It is up to our elected state officials to pass this legislation and require its implementation prior to the CRT ban's effective date.

Should the ban go into effect without a collection/ recycling program in place, the burden of complying with this ban would fall to the county and ultimately the resident. — **Jon Steiner, Polk County environmental services director**

## Annual Ag & Drainage report:

# Ditch cleaning requests becoming fewer but washouts, blocks, spot repair issues continue

The number of miles petitioned for the cleaning of county ditches has decreased over each of the past three years, dropping from over 50 miles in 2003 to 30 miles in 2004 and to only 12.5 miles in 2005.

There were, however, many locations of spot repair in 2005 dealing with slope washouts, removing ditch blocks, trees and brush, and also culvert repairs and replacements.

The number of beaver that were trapped dropped from 110 in 2004 to 55 in 2005. The number of dams removed has stayed consistent with approximately 75 dams each year, however, some of the dams removed in 2005 were old and inactive.

In the Glacial Ridge project area, just over 7.5 miles of drainage system was abandoned in 2005 and another 3 miles are being recommended for abandonment in 2006.

### **Ditch blocks**

One of the most common expenses to a county ditch system is ditch blocks due to field side slopes washing into the ditch.

This happens because the tops and sides of the slopes are being encroached upon and worked up by farmers. When this occurs the natural cover or turf is removed and the soil is left unprotected.

At this point, even a mild rain causes the slopes to erode and it piles up within 100 feet of the location it came from creating a ditch block.

When this occurs, the landowner, who may have caused the problem by removing the protective turf, will request the ditch to be cleaned. All property owners on the system will then be assessed for the repair.

### **Some are farming too close**

Keeping farm equipment and plowing operations at least 10 feet away from the tops of the back slopes can prevent most ditch blocks. Many landowners are doing an excellent job of not farming too close to the county ditch that drains their fields but there are other landowners who are creating unnecessary expenses for their upstream and downstream neighbors.

If a landowner is considering having ditches in the system cleaned, it is important to get a petition in to the county ditch inspector as early as possible even if the work cannot be done until the fall of the year. This way a contractor can be lined up and be ready to go as soon as a field edge is cleared of its crop. When petitions come in later in the year, contractors often are booked up and the ditch work is delayed.

### **Cattail control**

This past August, 50 separate drainage systems totaling over 170 miles in the county ditches were sprayed for cattail control. August is usually the best time to kill off cattail infestations because it's the only time the brown head is formed and the plant is storing energy down into the root system, therefore taking the chemical down also.

If spraying occurs before that time it might kill the upper part of the plant but new shoots will be sent out by the root system.

Cattail control is an ongoing battle because they spread by the

root system and by seed. Each cattail head contains over 250,000 seeds and the seeds can remain dormant for over 100 years. Once an area of a cattail stand is eradicated a problem can still exist because millions of dormant seeds are in the surrounding area ready to take root.

That's why in the county ditch systems, it is important to rotate spraying, if needed, back to that same area every three years.

### **Noxious weeds**

The Ag & Drainage Department oversees the spraying of noxious weeds along county and state road ditches throughout the county. Due to cost effectiveness and efficiency, 2005 was the second year a private contractor was used to spray the road ditches.

Roadside spraying operations begin in June and generally take three to four weeks to complete. When the contractor fulfills that contract, the obligation for the year is complete.

If there are townships and cities within Polk County that would like to have some spraying done, the contractor has stated that he would charge them the same rate as charged to Polk County.

Contact the Ag & Drainage Department in early June and we will help you to get in touch with the contractor.

### **Weed complaints**

In 2005, over 13,500 acres of private property was inspected because of noxious weed complaints. The amount of private property that was found to be in violation was just over 1,100 acres.

Most of the acreage found to be in violation was enrolled in Conservation Reserve Programs (CRP). Due to severe and unchecked noxious weed infestations in past years, the Polk County Ag & Drainage Department and the Polk County Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices have formed an alliance to crack down on major infested properties throughout the county in an effort to minimize this problem.

Generally, the public reports most complaints of noxious weed infestations in CRP fields to the FSA offices. A copy of the complaint is then sent to the county ag inspector, who inspects the property. All that is needed for the FSA to penalize a landowner who is enrolled in a CRP program is for the ag inspector to verify that a noxious weed infestation problem exists.

### **Certified seed samples**

A little over 50 certified seed samples from local seed distributors in the county were sent in to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for analyzing in 2005. Nearly all of them came back as legal for sale in Minnesota and no corrective action was needed.

The Polk County Ag and Drainage Department also continues to provide testing opportunities for persons seeking a chemical applicator license. — **Jody Beauchane, Polk County ag and drainage inspector**

*"I'm 16 and I used meth about a year.  
It was the worst mistake of my life.  
Thought it would take away all the hurt I felt  
but instead it caused more..." --Anonymous*

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