

# POLK COUNTY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2017



## Drug money

This stack of cash — thousands of dollars — was recovered when the Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force exercised a search warrant in Crookston that put a marijuana-growing operation out of business. In 2016, the Task Force made 271 arrests in the eight-county area of northwestern Minnesota in which the organization's 13

officers work. In a typical forfeiture, 20% of the money is directed to the State of Minnesota and 10% goes to the prosecuting agency. The balance is used to support the operations of the Drug Task Force. A story about the work done by the Task Force during the past year is on **Page 7**.

## Bonding Bill is key to start of solid waste project this year

Following a year when some \$3 million in building issues were addressed in the effort to prepare the county's infrastructure for many years to come, the focus of the County Board in 2017 will involve getting things in place for a much bigger venture.

That bigger venture is the planned \$30 million Solid Waste Expansion Project for which \$9.25 million in Phase 2 funding is being requested in a state bonding bill that is expected to be decided during this legislative session.

Phase I funding of \$8 million was approved during the 2015 session and everything was in place for a start of construction in 2016 until the Phase 2 funding fell victim to some last-ditch maneuvering at the end of that regular state legislative session.

The difference between the \$17.5 million in expected state funding and the \$30 million project total is to be repaid through the collection of tip fees when waste is dumped at the incinerator in Fosston.

In short, the bonds that will be sold by the county to complete the financing for the project will not be paid back with property taxes.

### Preferred disposal method

When completed, the project will give the six-county partners a solid waste program that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency says is the preferred method of disposal.

"Getting all of the funding in place for this project — the biggest since we built the new jail nine years ago — will be our main focus," new Board Chair Don

See **PROJECT ON PAGE 2**

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# Project—

Continued from Page 1

Diedrich says of work in 2017. “While we have to wrap up a few of the projects that didn’t quite get completed before the end of the year,” he says, “having virtually all of that work done before Jerry (Jacobson) and Gary (Willhite) came on the board was good thing. They didn’t have to deal with that work and instead can be involved from the start with the solid waste projects that are just beginning.”

## New chairman

Diedrich, the commissioner representing District 5, succeeded the retiring Nick Nicholas as chair when the board re-organized at its first meeting of 2017. District 4 Commissioner Joan Lee is the new vice chair. The chair and vice chair positions rotate through the commissioners on an annual basis.

As the year began, the County Board also approved the following appointments and reappointments to positions on boards and commissions that conduct business for the county:

**Planning & Zoning Commission** — Mike Powers, representing East Grand Forks Mayor Steve Gander; Len Vonasek, East Grand Forks, representing Commissioner District 2; Arlet Phillips, rural East Grand Forks, representing Polk County Township Officers Association; Mike Schulz, Mentor, representing Maple Lake Improvement District; and Rolland Gagner, Erskine, representing Union Lake Improvement District.

**Extension Committee (3-year terms)** — Amy Theis, Crookston, representing Commissioner District 3; Scott Balstad, Fosston, representing Commissioner District 4; Paul Aakre, Angus, succeeding Kaydi Grunhovd, Euclid, as the District 5 representative.

**Marshall & Polk Water System (4-year term)** — Michael Kasowski, Fisher.



A group of landowners/farmers listened on Feb. 23rd as Tom Gile, Buffers and Soil Erosion Program coordinator for the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, outlined buffer requirements during an information session held at the University of Minnesota-Crookston. Three information meetings were held in the county.

## First buffers must be in place by Nov. 1

Minnesota Statute §103F.48 requires water resource protection requirements (buffers) on public waters and public drainage systems.

Buffers are areas of perennial vegetation adjacent to all bodies of water that are intended to protect water resources of the state from runoff pollution, stabilize soils, shores and banks and protect or provide riparian corridors.

Required buffers on public waters (50 feet) must be in place by Nov. 1, 2017; buffers on public drainage systems (16.5 feet) must be in place by Nov. 1, 2018.

The passage and subsequent revision of this law has certainly and understandably been the source of compound contention perhaps further complicated by elected state administrative changes and associated speculation. There are multiple efforts scheduled for introduction in the regular legislative session proposing changes or further revision of the current statute.

Counties or watershed districts must affirm local jurisdiction as compliance enforcement under statute or defer to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). If a landowner (parcel) is out of compliance with the requirement, the

county or watershed district will provide a correction letter (notification provided to BWSR with potential Administrative Penalty Order [APO]) and work with the landowner on a reasonable timetable for completion. SWCDs are not the enforcement entity regarding buffers under Minnesota statute.

Minnesota DNR has released a public “buffer protection map” (updated February 2017) [www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers) that identifies areas that require permanent vegetative buffers.

Landowners are encouraged to visit SWCD technical staff for assistance in determining buffer requirements. Landowners are ultimately accountable for the installation and maintenance of buffers as identified on the DNR buffer protection map.

West Polk SWCD staff are available to assist with any inquiries relative to buffer legislation/requirements and qualified to identify multiple options for compliance with direction.

Federal agencies (Farm Service Agency, National Resource Conservation Service) administer various programs that provide cost share and potential annual payments (CCRP, EQIP) for implementation and maintenance

of buffer/filter strips, although availability of programs is questionable after buffer regulatory deadlines.

It is the intention of Conservation District staff to assist you with technical guidance and field all inquiries.

A self-initiative approach to compliance (without any state or federal program assistance or compensation) allows a landowner to determine the seed mix of perennial vegetation for establishment and required maintenance of buffer requirements.

Please view [www.westpolkswcd.com](http://www.westpolkswcd.com) buffers page and utilize direct links to BWSR, DNR and Minnesota Farm Bureau web pages for current available information regarding buffers or visit our field offices:

West Polk SWCD is co-located with NRCS at 528 Strander Ave. Crookston and the East Polk SWCD is in the Bjella Building, 240 Cleveland Ave. in McIntosh. — Aaron Habermehl, district technician, Wetland Conservation Act administrator, West Polk Soil & Water Conservation District



District Judge Jeff Remick conducted the oath of office ceremony for commissioners Jerry Jacobson, Gary Willhite and Don Diedrich (left to right) prior to the first meeting of the year in

January. Jacobson and Willhite were starting new the terms on the board while Diedrich was beginning his fourth .

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Crime**  
*The Polk County  
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 Help us to fight drugs  
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## Polk County Solid Waste report:

The permit for the Polk County Landfill Complex near Gentilly was up for renewal in the spring of 2016. The landfill is allowed to continue operations pending the permit reissuance if the renewal application is filed six months prior to the expiration date.

In addition, Polk County was required to file for an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Landfill Permit Renewal due to the volume of waste disposal capacity requested and that a new footprint for expansion was sought. The footprint expansion request was to the east of the current activity area. After the conclusion of the public notice period, no public comment had been received. As such, no Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was required.

A long negotiation period related to the terms sought by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) ensued. During this period, Polk County constructed of a new two-acre MSW cell without a permit, but within the permitted footprint of the expired permit in the summer of 2016. The Polk County Landfill permit was later placed on public notice at the end of 2016. In February 2017, Polk County's Landfill permit was issued.

Major changes to the Polk County Landfill Complex were incorporated or required in the new permit. Major changes include: construction of a sedimentation pond to collect surface waters from the site and off the demolition landfill, construction of a new all-weather compost pad, installation of five (5) additional new monitoring wells, enhanced water monitoring parameters, lower well monitoring thresholds and a requirement to update the facilities industrial solid waste management plan.

### **MPCA Environmental Assistance Grant:**

Polk County applied for two (2) Environmental Assessment Grants from the MPCA. The first grant was for assisting schools, businesses and other institutions, which generate large quantities of organic wastes (ex. food scraps) with the evaluation and establishment of organic waste compost programs. This project rated highly, but just missed the cut for funding.

The second grant request was for a difficult or problem materi-

al grinder, which would be used to reuse or recycle materials, that are difficult to manage or dispose of in their current form.

This grant request was awarded and executed in March 2017. Polk County received \$225,000 to apply toward the purchase of this grinder. The grinder is capable of shredding root balls, stumps, logs, storm debris, demolition debris, shingles, tires and oversize/bulky wastes.

### **Resource Recovery Facility Expansion – Phase I:**

Polk County received funding for a Phase I expansion of the Resource Recovery Facility in Fosston. This project will consist of a new 18,500 sq. ft. tip floor to the east of the existing plant for incoming recyclable and waste materials awaiting processing, and reorientation of existing equipment to the new building addition. Select advanced processing equipment will also be upgraded to increase material throughput and remove operational limitations.

Wenck Assoc. of Maple Plain, Minn., was hired to design the expansion project. The specs for the building addition are currently being finalized, the permit applications have been filed, and bid packets are being assembled. It is anticipated that bid packets for the construction will be released in April 2017, with construction in the summer/fall of 2017.

At the same time, Polk County has engaged Titus MRF Services of Fontana Calif., to do a design/build of the specialized advanced processing equipment. The Phase I funding is insufficient to do the entire MRF upgrade, and the project will be broken down into two projects – pending receipt of Phase II funds.

### **Phase II funding:**

Phase II funding was expected in the 2016 Legislative Session, and despite being in both the House and Senate versions of the 2016 Bonding Bill, no bonding bill was passed and funding was not allocated. Polk County currently has Phase II funding bills in both the 2017 House and Senate, but it is unknown if both bodies will put forth any bonding bill this session. – **Jon Steiner, administrator Polk County Solid Waste**

# New commissioners begin their terms in office

## Jerry Jacobson

"I'm very happy to be a commissioner again," Jacobson says. "Things have certainly changed with all the technology that is in use now but the basics are still the same... always trying to blend good services with the cost of providing them in the most efficient way possible."

Jacobson, who has extensive business experience in advertising publications, started the Valley Shopper in 1969 and operated it for seven years before selling the business to the Crookston Times in 1976.

### Started Tri-County Press

That same year, he and two partners started the Tri-County Press shopper in Grand Forks. They operated that publication for eight years before Jacobson sold his interest to an employee.

This was followed by the start of the North Star Shopper along with a print shop in Thief River Falls in 1984. He sold the Shopper to a sales associate but continued the printing business.

When elected a Polk County commissioner in 2000, the combination of the demands of being both a commissioner and running the print shop led to the sale of the business to his son, Geoff, and his wife, Tammy.

Jacobson was, however, able to remain in the printing business on a limited basis in the Fertile area, including having a screen-printing business that was continued until 2012.

### To Seattle and back

After growing up on a small farm near Maple Lake during his early years, Jacobson's parents moved the family to the Seattle area for about 3 years. They moved back to the Fertile area when Jacobson was a sophomore in high school. He graduated from Fertile-Beltrami High School in 1960.

Following high school, he attended Bemidji State



Jerry Jacobson

University for a year before returning to the Seattle area to be the office manager of an office equipment company. He returned to Minnesota to sell office equipment in the Fargo and later the Minneapolis areas. He and his high school sweetheart, Lynn Erikson of Beltrami, were married in 1963.

### Worked hand in hand

Lynn attended Concordia College in Moorhead for two years before earning a teaching degree with a kindergarten certification at Moorhead State College in 1966. Lynn worked hand in hand with Jerry on the shoppers until becoming a kindergarten teacher in the Fertile-Beltrami school in 1978. Now retired from that position, she still does substitute teaching.

The Jacobson's have four children:

- Geoffrey and his wife Tammy, live in Thief River Falls, where they operate the print shop.
- Steven and his wife, Dawn and their son, Alex, live in Erskine where they and Dawn's brother Darren, own and operate the Building Center and hardware store.
- Amy and her husband, Matt Bounds, and their two daughters, Ella and Mya, live in Jordan, Minn., where they operate the Dairy Queen.
- Elizabeth lives in Moorhead and owns and operates a hair salon in West Fargo.

## Gary Willhite

Gary Willhite brings a record of public service to the County Board that includes 39 years in mostly administrative roles at the University of Minnesota-Crookston and eight years in elective positions with the City of Crookston, including that of mayor.

"I really enjoyed being the mayor of Crookston and as a team we were able to accomplish some great things," he says of the two years that he spent in that office before having to resign when elected to the District 3 commissioner position in November.

"I hadn't thought about becoming a commissioner until Nick Nicholas announced last summer that he would not be a candidate for re-election. With that position to become open, I thought that being a commissioner would be something that I would also enjoy.

### Learning a lot

"Being a commissioner is a big responsibility. I am finding out more about incinerators, 9-1-1 systems, ditches and all the complexities involved with social services than I ever thought I would need to know. But I'm enjoying it. Having some really good people to work with makes all the difference. I have been impressed with the other commissioners, our department heads and staff. The county has a strong team led by some strong leadership."

### Little House on the Prairie

Willhite grew up in Walnut Grove, a little town in southern Minnesota made famous by the Little House on the Prairie book series. "I grew up about two miles from Plum Creek," he notes. After going through the local schools there, he earned a business degree at Mankato State University (MSU) followed by a masters degree in educational administration.

He worked at MSU for four years before taking a position at the University of Minnesota-



Gary Willhite

Crookston in 1978 when it was still a junior college.

He currently heads the Residential Life Housing Program, Emergency Preparedness and Campus Security Services. His earlier work at UMC included supervisory roles for the dining area, some teaching in the business and communications areas and, with his minor in psychology, he taught that subject, too.

### Did about everything

"In the early years," he says, "you did just about everything. I came up here thinking I would be here a couple of years but our family liked the community so much that we have stayed."

His involvement in the Crookston community began with the Crookston Jaycees and the Noon Day Lions and has included many years with the Chamber of Commerce, a year as chair of the United Way effort, four years on the Park & Recreation Board.

He recently completed his 25th year as a youth basketball coach. "I still enjoy being in the gym on week nights and on Saturday mornings during these winter months," he says.

### Councilman and mayor

Willhite served on the Crookston City Council for four years in the 1990s and for another two years in 2013-14 before being elected mayor two years ago.

His wife, Lynn, has owned a

See WILLHITE, Page 5

# Will become president-elect in April, then president in 2018 Sanders on track to head National Association of County Engineers

Polk County Engineer Richard Sanders is slated to become president-elect of the National Association of County Engineers (NACE) in April and then to automatically advance to the position of president in April of 2018.

The track for Sanders to advance to the positions of president-elect and then president began when he was elected secretary-treasurer of the national organization in April 2016.

A nonprofit, nonpartisan, professional association now in its 60th year of existence, NACE promotes activities and legislation for safe, efficient county roads and bridges. Nationwide, local roads account for about 75% of the highway system and the over 231,000 bridges that are owned by counties.

NACE membership includes nearly 2,000 county engineers, road managers and related professionals in the U.S. and

Canada.

Its primary goals are to:

- Advance county engineering and management by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and information aimed at improving service to the public.

- Influence federal legislation affecting county transportation/public works departments.

- Foster and stimulate the growth of individual state transportation organizations.

The NACE executive board conducts its business through monthly conference calls. The executive board is made up of the president, president-elect, secretary-treasurer, past president, five regional vice presidents, and a liaison member from the National Association of Counties.

The full board of directors, which includes one representative from each state, meets twice a year.

Sanders had been vice president the North Central Region



**Richard Sanders**

of NACE prior to his national positions and before that had been president of the Minnesota County Engineers Association.

He has also served as a member of several state and national transportation committees and study groups including the University of Minnesota Local Transportation Assistance Program Steering Committee.

## Willhite

Continued from Page 4

small business for 29 years selling art at national and regional art shows, and is now taking a slower pace and enjoys spending time with the three grandchildren.

They share four adult children:

- Erin and her husband Kevin Kelley, a librarian, and their son, Connor, live in Minneapolis where she works as the director of Microsoft Dynamics for Hewlett-Packard Enterprise Services.

- Garrick, a graduate of UMC, is the senior art director at Periscope, an advertising firm in Minneapolis.

- Gabriel, senior vice president of American Health Investors, and his wife, Britney, an attorney at the Allen Matkins Firm, both earned law degrees at the University of Minnesota. They live in Laguna Niguel, Calif., with their daughter, Mazie, and son, Grady.

- Grant is a senior southwest regional digital sales leader for Accenture PLC and lives in Santa Monica, CA.

## Kennedy Bridge will remain open... well, most of the time

The Highway 2 Kennedy Bridge between East Grand Forks and Grand Forks will remain open throughout most of the two-year reconstruction project although there will be lane closures, short-term detours and other traffic impacts at times.

The \$15.66 million project that started in March is a joint design of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, North Dakota Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. It will include complete deck replacement, pier replacement, structural repairs and new lighting. The new layout will maintain four lanes of traffic and add an additional protected walkway that will connect the Greenway Trail on each side of the river. Along with preserving the historic nature of the bridge, the project will improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The bridge was built in 1963 and currently serves 23,000 vehicles per day. Two other bridges span the Red River between East Grand Forks and Grand Forks. One of those, the Sorlie Bridge, which connects the downtown areas of the two cities, underwent a \$4.2 million restoration last year.

For more details, including tentative project schedule, closures and project FAQ, visit the project website: [www.mndot.gov/d2/projects/kennedybridge](http://www.mndot.gov/d2/projects/kennedybridge).

## Jesme named state's outstanding watershed district employee

Red Lake River Watershed District Administrator Myron Jesme was named the the 2016 Outstanding Watershed District Employee of the Year by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) at that organization's annual meeting in December.

As administrator, Jesme has been instrumental in the completion of multiple large-scale water projects in the district including the \$7.25 million restoration of the Grand Marais Creek Outlet into the Red River north of East Grand Forks.

He was cited for having successfully developed and maintained positive relationships with state and federal agencies, the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, multiple local units of government, non-governmental organizations, and the public.

Jesme became administrator of the Red Lake Watershed District in



**Myron Jesme**

2003 after having previously worked for 20 years for what was then known as the Middle River-Snake River Watershed District and has since become the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed.

The Red Lake Watershed District, which has offices in Thief River Falls, is the largest watershed district in Minnesota.

## Hamre selected to succeed Brekken on Sand Hill Board

John Joseph “JJ” Hamre, rural Beltrami, is the new member of the Sand Hill Watershed District Board of Managers.

Appointed by the County Board in December, Hamre succeeded Robert “Bill” Brekke, Nielsville, who did not seek reappointment after having served on the board for 17 years.

A 2001 graduate of Fertile-Beltrami High School, Hamre earned a B. S. degree in Speech Language and Hearing Services at the Minnesota State University-Moorhead in 2005 before his father, Brent, in the Hamre family farming operation at Beltrami. Hamre and his wife, Kristin, have three daughters Nora, 6; Harper, 4, and Lucy 1.



**JJ Hamre**

Roger Hanson, Beltrami, was reappointed to another 3-year term on the board of managers in December. The board president, Hanson has served as a manager since May 1978.

## Cote now serving as state president of recorders group

Polk County Director of Property Records Michelle Cote was advanced to the position of president of the Minnesota County Recorder’s Association (MCRA) at the Minnesota Association of County Official Conference in February.

MCRA, an educational and training association, is one of two organizations that comprise the Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO). All 87 counties in Minnesota are members of MACO.

A 29-year employee of the county, Cote worked in the Auditor’s Office for a year before moving across the hall to the Assessor’s Office for the next 17 years. She was appointed the county recorder on June 19, 2006, and became the director of property records in 2011 when the



**Michelle Cote**

Assessor, Recorder and Auditor offices were combined into the Taxpayer Service Center.

Cote has been a member of Riverview Hospital Board of Trustees for the past five years and is the vendor manager for the Polk County Fair Association.

## Polk County Commissioner assignments

**Jerry Jacobson (Dist. 1)** — Polk County Social Services Board, Polk County Board of Health, Polk-Norman-Mahnomen County Joint Community Health Board, Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) Environment & Natural Resources Policy Committee, Sandhill Watershed District Advisory Committee, Minnesota Rural Counties (delegate), Northwest Mental Health Board (sec-treas.), Region 1 Area Agency on Aging Committee (v. pres.), Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC), Regional Solid Waste Advisory Board (alternate), Lake Agassiz Regional Library Board (alternate), Polk County Parks Committee, Judicial Ditch 60 Committee, Polk-Red Lake Joint Ditches 1, 3 & 66 Committee, Red LKE-Polk County Ditches 64 & 71 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Ditch 2 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Judicial Ditch 72 Committee, Crookston Downtown Task Force.

**Warren Strandell (Dist. 2)** — Polk County Social Service Board, Polk County Board of Health, AMC Public Safety Policy Committee, Northwest Regional Community Corrections Board (chair), Northwest Regional Emergency Communications Board, Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC), NWRDC Executive Board (vice chair), NWRDC Transportation Advisory Committee (vice chair), MnDOT Dist. 2 Area Transportation Partnership, Polk County Public Safety Committee, Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force, Polk County Building Committee, Polk County Hazardous

Mitigation Committee, 911 Planning Commission, Red Lake Watershed Advisory Committee, Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

**Gary Willhite (Dist. 3)** — Polk County Social Services Board, Polk County Board of Health, Lake Agassiz Regional Library Board (executive committee), Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, AMC General Government Policy Committee, Northwest Mental Health Board, Northwest Regional Emergency Communications Board (alternate), Polk County Parks Committee, Polk County Senior Health Care Providers, Polk County Public Safety Committee, Polk County Building Committee, Judicial Ditch 60 Committee, Crookston Downtown Task Force.

**Joan Lee (Dist. 4)** — Polk County Social Services Board (vice chair), Polk County Board of Health, AMC Health & Human Services Policy Committee, AMC Futures Committee, Regional Solid Waste Advisory Board, Polk-Norman-Mahnomen Joint Community Health Board, Polk County Finance Committee, Polk County Household Hazardous Waste Advisory Committee, Polk County Public Works Committee, Polk-Norman-Clay Agassiz Trail Advisory Committee, Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force (alternate), Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Ditches 1, 3 & 66 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Ditches 64 & 71 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Judicial Ditch 72 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Ditch 72 Committee, Red Lake River Corridor Joint

Board, Inter-County Community Council Board, East Polk County Development Achievement Center Board, Polk County Extension Service Committee, Fosston Law Enforcement Committee.

**Don Diedrich (Dist. 5)** — Polk County Social Services Board (chair), Polk County Board of Health, Polk County Planning & Zoning Commission, Northwest Mental Health Board (vice chair), Northwest Regional Community Corrections Board, Polk County Tax-Forfeiting Property Viewing Committee, Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust Board of Directors representing Minn. Dist. 3 (secretary-treasurer), Polk County Extension Service Committee, Polk County Finance Committee, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, AMC Transportation Policy Committee, One Watershed One Plan, Joint Powers Board of the Red River Basin Commission in Minnesota, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Ditches 1, 3 & 66 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Ditches 64 & 71 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Ditch 2 Committee, Red Lake-Polk County Joint Judicial Ditch 72 Committee, Polk County Judicial Ditch 60 Committee, Red Lake River Corridor Joint Board, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District Citizens Advisory Committee, Brandt-Angus Project Work Team, Polk County Public Works Committee, Law Library Board of Directors, Emergency Management Committee, Red Lake River Corridor Joint Board, Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (alternate).

# Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force made 271 arrests in 2016

Investigative work done by the Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force in 2016 led to 271 arrests for drug trafficking and other violent offenses in an eight-county area of northwestern Minnesota.

That number of arrests — 271 — was almost double the 140 arrests that were made in 2015.

In the process of their work, the 13-member task force team also confiscated 57 weapons, turned up extensive amounts of drug paraphernalia and stolen items, and seized a large amount of drugs. The drugs seized included 1,617 grams of meth, 102 grams of heroin, 38 grams of cocaine, 2.8 pounds of marijuana, and 537 prescription pills.

The 102 grams of heroin was more than triple the 31 grams that were confiscated in 2015 and the 1,617 grams of meth was more than double the 663 grams seized in the year before.

“As our statistics show, we’ve mirrored the nationwide trend of having an increase in the use of heroin,” a task force official notes. “The deadly fentanyl-laced heroin drug combination has been noticed in our area and we are doing everything that we can to get it stopped. Since multiple other agencies have joined in our task force efforts we’ve been able to be much more effective. This shows in our increased number of cases.”

## Many now doing time

About those cases, the official says, “A significant number of offenders are now doing time in prison. We have been able to develop air-tight cases; there just haven’t been many not-guilty verdicts.”

Also high in popularity is the use of prescription pills. That popularity has resulted in a number of home break-ins where the medicine cabinet was a prime focus. Of crimes committed locally, agents say, drugs and alcohol are a factor in a large percentage of them.

Marijuana, according to team members, continues to be the “starter” drug... the one that



**This assault rifle, other guns, shells and a number of bags of meth were seized by the Task Force during a probation search in Roseau.**

typically precedes the use of meth, heroin and many of the others.

Three of the task force’s 13 agents are from Polk County with one investigator each provided by the cities of Crookston and East Grand Forks and a deputy provided by the Sheriff’s Office.

The Lake of the Woods, Norman, Pennington and Roseau county sheriff’s offices each provide an agent while the U.S. Border Patrol commits four agents and U.S. Homeland Security provides one investigator.

Additionally, the City of Thief River Falls has also recently assigned a part-time investigator to work with the team.

While not committing a full-time member to the task force, Marshall, Kittson and Red Lake counties are available to otherwise assist as needed. Marshall and Norman counties and the City of Thief River Falls have new canine officers that are at the disposal of the task force.

The task force receives \$200,000 in state funding annually. This money is split between the cities and counties to reimburse them for a

portion of the salaries of the investigators that they provide. A part of the grant is also used for training and to purchase necessary equipment.

## Advisory board supervises

The team answers to a 14-member advisory board. That board is made up of Polk County Sheriff Barb Erdman, Crookston Police Chief Paul Biermaier (board vice president), East Grand Forks Police Chief Mike Hedlund (board president), Crookston City Council member Bob Quanrud, East Grand Forks City Council member Chad Grassel, Polk County Commissioner Warren Strandell, Roseau County Sheriff Steve Gust, Assistant Roseau County Attorney Mike Grover, Pennington County Sheriff Ray Kuznia, Thief River Falls Police Chief Dick Wittenberg, Norman County Sheriff Jeremy Thornton, Norman County Chief Deputy Ben Fall, Lake of the Woods County Sheriff Gary Fish and Lake of the Woods County Attorney James Austad.

Associate (non-voting) advisory board members include Polk County Attorney Greg Widseth, Red Lake County Sheriff Mitch Bernstein, Ada Police Chief Jody Bueng, Kittson County Sheriff Kenny Hultgren, Marshall County Sheriff Jason Boman, U.S. Border Patrol Agent Eric Kuhn, and Homeland Security Investigations Agent Josh Goldberg.

In addition to their work in the field, the federal agencies provide a connection to other government resources including prosecution through the U.S. District Court (federal) system.

The task force has agreements that allow it to work across state lines with the Grand Forks Narcotics Task Force and to work extensively with drug task forces in adjacent counties and throughout Minnesota.

Suspicious activities can be reported to the sheriff’s office (218-281-0431), the Crookston Police Department (218-281-3111), the East Grand Forks Police Department (218-773-4307), or to Polk County’s Help Us 2 Fight Meth and All Crime anonymous number (877-204-7505).



**This line-up of mostly \$20 bills was seized when 2 pounds of meth was discovered during a search exercised in East Grand Forks.**

## Succession Success

By Chuck Whiting  
Polk County Administrator



I often feel as though I am searching for someone with big feet. You know, the type that can fill big shoes, the shoes that are left when someone leaves your organization and takes with them years, perhaps decades of institutional knowledge that you and everyone else relies upon.

It can be quite a jolt and even unfair to the new person trying to fill those shoes. Remember watching your young child wearing your shoes and trying to act like dad, to continue to use the shoe metaphor.

Why am I thinking of this? Well lots of places, including Polk County, are seeing turnover in our euphemistically referred to "senior employees." People are retiring. They are retiring everywhere, too. 10,000 people in this country turn 65 every day.

### Some to retire soon

Moreover, some working at Polk County and will be retiring soon as well.

What that presents is a need for planning my part and that of our county management staff. The two main concerns are how to retain that knowledge bank that is preparing to walk out the door and how to position the next person for success in this succession.

Our Highway Department likely will see four such retirements this year, including one special employee who has been with the county for 50 years.

It will be a test replacing each of them. One strategy the county has used is to overlap the retiree and their replacement for a period of time.

### Benefitted from overlap

I benefitted from this practice when I came to Polk County, and we have repeated it in various areas when possible. Sometimes it is not possible, which puts more pressure on our hiring skills, emphasizing our work culture and not set-

ting for an inadequate hire.

A reality with new hires also must be acknowledged. The new person is not the same as the retired employee and therefore some, or a lot of change should be anticipated, developed and capitalized on for the betterment of the organization and operations.

### Options reviewed

One of the most frequently used personnel rules at Polk County is to review options whenever an employee vacancy occurs and this is particularly important for those longer-term employee replacement situations.

A retirement notice this February led to a department management reorganization, and since we knew it was coming, we had time to prepare and adjust.

Our goal is our expectation, to meet and exceed your expectations, our taxpaying public. Over the next 10 years, we will experience more of this turnover in the county's management staff.

### Open hiring but look within

As best we can, we are looking at succession planning as a routine part of our ongoing human resources and leadership development. The county practice is always to open the hiring process up for these positions, but day to day, we eye and look for talent and capability within existing staff, too.

As you see a new face from time to time at the County, remember they did not get there by accident. To those leaving their big shoes behind, we thank you for the work you've done. We wish you the best and hope you found satisfaction serving your fellow county residents.

Your coworkers will miss you, too.

## 'East End' sheriff's base to be ready soon

The Polk County Sheriff's Department will soon have an "east end" base of operations for the deputies who are assigned to do patrol and conduct investigations in that area of the county.

Space in the county-owned Stenberg Building located on property adjacent to the Polk County Waste to Energy Incinerator in Fosston is being remodeled to provide that "satellite" office.

"This will fulfill a great need," Sheriff Barb Erdman says, noting among other things that it will give deputies direct access to the electronic technology needed to send their case reports to the main Sheriff's Office in the Law Enforcement Center office, to the County Attorney's Office and to the courts all located in Crookston rather than having to drive them there.

"This office will provide a

safe environment in which to do interviews, to store equipment and to conduct DUI and drug testing. And the 'sally port' in adjoining garage space will provide secure movement of a suspect from a patrol car to the office," she says.

"Having secure garage space will be a real advantage for our operations because it will eliminate the need to relay resources to the east end of the county. Instead, they can be stored there and be available to us as a situation unfolds, making us better prepared and more efficient."

The two contract deputies serving the City of Fosston will continue to maintain an office in the Fosston City Hall but, for the most part, Erdman says, all of the rest of law enforcement will work primarily from the new office in the Stenberg Building.

# NEED HELP WITH COURT FORMS?

**WHEN**  
2:00-4:00 p.m.  
2nd & 4th Tuesdays of each month  
(first come, first serve)

**WHERE**  
Polk County Justice Center  
Courthouse Law Library  
610 Main Ave.  
Crookston, MN

QUESTIONS OR TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT, CALL 1-800-450-8585

**SELF HELP LAW CLINIC CAN ASSIST FREE OF CHARGE WITH:**

Divorce  
Domestic Abuse  
Name Change  
Child Support  
Child Custody  
Parenting Time  
Criminal Expungement  
Landlord-Tenant  
Or any other legal, non-criminal matters

Sponsored by:

Polk County  
Law Library Board



## Help with court forms is available

The Polk County Law Library in partnership with Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota has instituted a Self Help Clinic that can assist county residents who are representing themselves in civil court matters.

The clinic, which is open from 2 to 4 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, is located in the Law Library at the Polk County Justice Center at 816 Marin Ave. in Crookston. The service, which is free of charge to residents, can involve explanations of the legal process and options, assisting and reviewing court-approved pro-se forms, or the referral to appropriate resources.

### Joint venture effort

District Judge Tamara Yon, one of the organizers of the clinic, notes that the clinic "will provide guidance to ensure that unrepresented individuals have access to the court system. This joint venture between the Polk County Law Library Board and Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota is intended to increase the accessibility and efficiency of the legal system."

According to Charles "Corky" Reynolds, president of the Law Library Board of Directors, the Law Library, which is funded by fees that are paid as a part of civil filings and by court-ordered fees in criminal matters, has contracted with Legal Services of Northwestern Minnesota to pay for the clinic services at a one-year cost of \$5,280.

Crookston attorney James Fischer has been contracted to provide the legal service at the clinic on a first come, first serve basis. Services will involve personalized help for persons in understanding and completing forms dealing with non-criminal matters that are to go before the court.

Fischer will not be available to undertake the representation of any client and his assistance provided will be "advice only."

If necessary, an appointment to meet individualized needs can be made by Legal Services of Northwestern Minnesota, by calling 1-800-450-8585 or 218-233-8585.

## Ellefson on the job as new county veterans service officer

Kurtis Ellefson became the Polk County veterans service officer in November when he was selected to succeed the late Les Goodwin.

"I'm really honored to have the job," he says of having been chosen as the successor to Goodwin, who died last summer. "It is an honor to be serving the veterans of Polk County, trying to try to help them out with different issues. Everything has been going pretty well but I know that I have some really big shoes to fill. I'm meeting more county veterans every day. My No. 1 goal as Polk County veterans service officer is to ensure that no veteran goes without the benefits they have earned."

The position is not new to Ellefson, who continues work in a part-time role as the veterans service officer for Red Lake County. When he assumed the Red Lake County position in December 2011, Ellefson recalls getting an invitation from Goodwin to sit down with him and talk about some of the things that he would need to know for the job. "Les was always good to me. He helped me out whenever I needed it."

A native of the Dorothy and Huot areas of Red Lake County and a 2004 graduate of Lafayette High School in Red Lake Falls, Ellefson enlisted in the Minnesota National Guard as an infantryman in Bravo Company 2/136 in Crookston while a senior in high school. He shipped off to basic training at Fort Benning in Georgia in August 2004.

At his first Guard drill in Crookston after completing basic training, Ellefson learned that the unit was to be deployed to Iraq in the next year. This actually occurred in October 2005, when the activated unit was sent to Camp Shelby for six months of field training. Bravo Company was sent to Iraq in March 2006.

What was to be a 12-month deployment grew into the 18 months that it actually served while completing combat missions as an attachment to a Marine unit at Camp Fallujah.



Kurt Ellefson

After his active military service, Ellefson majored in criminal justice at Northland Community & Technical College in Thief River Falls as the start of a plan to become a road deputy. That strategy changed in April 2008 when while looking for a part-time job as a college student, he learned that Tri-County Community Corrections had corrections positions available at the Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail in Crookston. From that opportunity, Ellefson became a part-time corrections officer at the jail and the part-time status soon became full-time.

In December 2011, Ellefson learned that Red Lake County was advertising for a person to be its veterans service officer on a part-time basis. Ellefson applied, was hired and combined the job with that of being a corrections officer until he left the corrections job in October to become Polk County veterans service officer.

Ellefson and his wife, LeAnn (Casavan), and their children Rylee, Presley, Jesse and Shane live in Red Lake Falls.

An advertisement for Polk County Social Services. It features three small photographs: a young boy smiling, a young girl, and a woman. The text reads: "Make a Difference Change a Life Become a Foster Parent! Polk County Social Services 1-877-281-3127".

Make a Difference  
Change a Life  
Become a Foster Parent!  
Polk County Social Services  
1-877-281-3127

# 2016 proved challenging for Tri-County Corrections

For Tri-County Community Corrections, 2016 was a year full of challenges as well as opportunities. All departments experienced an increase in workload due to increasing populations throughout the criminal justice system.

The Northwest Regional Corrections Center (jail), which is licensed as a 200-bed Class III facility through the Minnesota Department of Corrections, saw the highest average daily population (ADP) of 185.45 in the relatively short history of the facility. The increase was not related to the housing of inmates from other counties, but was instead linked to a significant increase in the inmate population for the partner counties.

In 2015, local county inmates (meaning inmates who were being held for Norman, Polk or Red Lake counties) accounted for approximately 58.5% of the entire jail population, with the rest of the inmates being housed for other jurisdictions. This number changed dramatically in 2016 with nearly 70% of the jail's beds being used for the housing of local inmates.

## Juvenile Center increases

The Red River Valley Juvenile Center (RRVJC) saw an increase in resident population of approximately 13% from the previous year (2016 ADP of 10.08, 2015 ADP of 8.92).

This increase in population is the result of a very deliberate effort to increase awareness of the quantity and quality of services provided at the RRVJC. Expanded casework services and enhanced programming opportunities have provided exciting opportunities to better serve the youth of northwest Minnesota and surrounding areas.



## 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 are committing fraud. 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 REMAIN  
ANONYMOUS**

## Probation Department

The numbers in the Probation Department are more difficult to quantify due to the movement of cases through the court system on a day-to-day basis, however, year-end numbers from 2016 reflect an increase in total offenders under supervision of 5.9% compared to year-end numbers for 2015.

An increase in offenders under supervision means more reports, paperwork and offenders to supervise.

In addition to the sheer increase in numbers across all departments, the complexity of cases within each department has become increasingly challenging due to the prevalence of mental illness, chemical dependency and co-occurring disorders.

The Collaborative Care Grant, which was implemented in late 2014 to create a system of collaboration for case management between Tri-County Community Corrections and community mental health partners, has proven beneficial with expanded information sharing and training. Despite some of the promising results seen during the brief grant implementation period, long-term funding for continuation of this program as designed was not obtained, though pieces of the program will remain in place after the grant has ended.

## Security upgrade underway

Due to outdated equipment and software, a very costly security system upgrade in both the Northwest Regional Corrections Center and the Red River Valley Juvenile Center has been initiated. Preliminary cost estimations for this project approached \$1,500,000, though the final price tag will likely be less than originally anticipated. Rather than planning for the security system to

be replaced in one project, a phased approach was discussed and determined to be a more palatable option.

The first phase of this security system at the Juvenile Center was replaced in November of 2016 with minimal facility interruptions. The update has allowed for the expansion of touch-screen technology in the Polk County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) Dispatch Center. The system upgrade will also allow the Northwest Regional Corrections Center to be utilized for purposes of operating Juvenile Center doors in the event of a large-scale incident being managed by the Dispatch Center.

Camera upgrades have also reduced some blind spots within both the secure and residential sides of the facility and allowed for enhanced monitoring of residents within the facility.

## Staffing issues

Significant staffing challenges were encountered in 2016, with the most dramatic challenges being seen within the corrections officer ranks of the NWRCC. While finding qualified staff to fill vacancies is not a new challenge, the sheer volume of turnover encountered in 2016 was somewhat unprecedented for Tri-County Community Corrections. There were more Corrections Officer resignations in 2016 (27) than in the previous four years, 2012 – 2015, combined (24).

The staff turnover created a variety of operational challenges within the NWRCC, including a significant increase in overtime expenditures as well as the obvious loss of experience and the subsequent impact this has on day-to-day operations. It is hoped that the turnover problems encountered in 2016 are a blip on the radar and not a sign of things to come. — **Andrew Larson, TCCC executive director**

## Whiting serving as president of Minnesota Association of County Administrators

Polk County Administrator Chuck Whiting became president of the Minnesota Association of County Administrators (MACA) at the annual Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) conference this past December.

After having served as chair of the organization's Intergovernmental Relations Committee, Whiting was elected vice chair of the association in 2014. The vice chair automatically advances to the top position following the second year of the two-year officer term.

In assuming the top office of the association, Whiting presented goals to increase the profile of MACA within AMC's legislative issues. He looks to continue support for



**Chuck Whiting**

professional administrative management and have the MACA board work in a more businesslike fashion.

Seventy-one Minnesota counties have an administrator, coordinator or a manager and,

despite the wide variety of county organizations, similar administrative issues are familiar to all counties. Often a best practices approach, according to Whiting, assists counties with their management issues. He hopes to strengthen MACA's value to other administrators and their county boards toward that end.

Now working toward his fifth year with Polk County, Whiting became county administrator in August 2012 in the process of succeeding John "Jack" Schmalenberg, who was retiring at the end of that year. He had previously been the city administrator at Faribault, Minn., and before that the administrator in St. Croix County Wisconsin.

## Juvenile Center kids working with horses

In June 2016, Red River Valley Juvenile Center (RRVJC) began incorporating mentoring sessions at the Stable Days Youth Ranch into weekly programming for juveniles on the residential side of the facility.

Stable Days Youth Ranch (SDYR), which was established in 2011 as a 501(c)3, has two locations near East Grand Forks. Its mission is to support and encourage youth down a path of personal development.

The free program allows the juveniles in the RRVJC facility to experience the benefits of the outdoors and equine-based mentoring. Besides horses, SDYR has many other animals to encourage a fun, therapeutic atmosphere including chickens, donkeys, goats, sheep, ducks, geese, dogs and rabbits. The animals connect with children in unique and profound ways.

Participation in this program is strictly voluntary. Residents who choose to attend are escorted by staff to SDYR for a 90-minute session that is divided into two sections. The first involves chores designed to teach work ethic, volunteerism and hands on skills. The second is animal time where juveniles groom, build relationships with the animals, play games or ride horses.

Residents earn Independent Living Skills credit through the Crookston School District. The hours are applied to their credits toward graduation.

Feedback from the juveniles has been very positive and highlight the positive impact that this programming opportunity has had.

“My thoughts on Stable Days are extremely helpful, learning about the horses and interacting with them helps us with anxiety or depression. You learn about the horses and yourself at the same time. Interacting with nature is amazing and stress free.” – 16-year-old female.

“Stable Days Youth Ranch helped with stress while I was locked up. I think it was being with the animals and being outside. I really recommend that you guys, keep it going.” – 17-year-old male. — **Andrew Larson, Tri-County Community Corrections executive director**



Residents at the Red River Valley Juvenile Center benefit from association with horses

### First annual award by Minnesota corrections association

## Hajicek is probation agent of the year

Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) Probation Agent Jessica Hajicek received the inaugural Outstanding Agent Award at the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC) conference held in Minneapolis March 2-3.

The award recognized her for exemplary service to the field of community corrections. In the nomination, Hajicek, who consistently makes herself available for departmental projects such as the development of a probation violation recommendation grid as well as the training of new employees, was specifically recognized her commitment to high standards in the quality of her work, handling of complex cases and her efforts to support colleagues in their work.



Jessica Hajicek

A probation agent with TCCC since January 2008, Hajicek has managed offender caseloads ranging from juveniles, sex offenders, offenders with mental health diagnosis, felony drug offenders and others.

She actively seeks out training opportunities to

advance her knowledge of supervision practices as well as to further educate herself on the issues faced by the offenders under her supervision.

Training in 2016 has included the Effects of Childhood Trauma on Brain Development and Adult Health, ODARA Risk Assessment, Group Crisis Intervention, Assisting Individuals in Crisis, and Cultural Competency.

Hajicek currently supervises a caseload of high-risk offenders residing predominantly in western Polk County with the highest concentration of these cases located in the East Grand Forks area. — **Andrew Larson, TCCC executive director**

## Records being converted to electronic form

A massive project is underway in Polk County that will convert boxes and boxes of paper records to an electronic form that will both save valuable storage space and make those "papers" much more easily accessible whenever there might be a need to reference them.

Polk County Director of Property Records Michelle Cote is directing this "scanning" effort. In addition to the several part-time employees who have been hired specifically to do scanning, Cotes is using members of her full-time staff in the Taxpayer Service Office along with staff from other county departments when they are available.

Cote provides this report on the scanning projects that are currently in progress:

### Sheriff Scan Project

As of mid-February, we had scanned 60,437 records that allowed us to destroy some 545 boxes of paper records. This detailed process involves the scanning and indexing of primarily criminal cases. The electronic records are validated to ensure quality and accuracy. All boxes are then logged before being destroyed.

This project is about 60 percent complete with the anticipation that it will be finished by the end of the year. Some 20 plus people are involved in this work from almost every department in the county.

### Military records - DD214's

All the military discharges are being scanned and indexed for archival purposes.

We are taking care of the DD214's that are in books. Once we get to the loose sheets the Veterans Service Office will take over.

### Administration/HR Project

All active and inactive employee files are being scanned in addition to the County Board packets.

### Temporary Part-Time Recorder staff Project

I have currently four staff working on this project. This includes scanning marriage records, validating images from an out-sourced scan project and the fixing of poorly scanned images that are black with white writing.

### Tax Book

The Tax Book project is complete. It encompassed over 7,000 books.

"I have also assisted other departments in starting projects. Tri-County Community Corrections is well on its way to scanning jail records. Public Health has started scanning its immunization records and expanded from there. The County Attorney's Office is now using a more efficient scanner to upload its documentation to the court system. Victim's Assistance is keeping all of its records electronically.

"Many of these projects were started by the employees who are participating in the sheriff's scan project. The scan structure they learn here can lend itself to almost any situation. Without the dedication and time commitment from those employees involved none of these projects would be possible."

## Load limits preserve the roads

The load limits that went into effect on March 8 in Polk County — along with the rest of the North Central Region of Minnesota — will end when the Minnesota Department of Transportation determines that factors such as temperature, frost in the ground, water in the roads, etc. are no longer detrimental.

"During spring load restrictions water is trapped between the frost and the roadway making it the weakest that it can possibly be," according to Polk County Engineer Richard Sanders. "Load limit restrictions are put in place to prevent damage from happening in the different regions of the state... the Southeast, Metro, Central, North Central and North. We're in the North Central Region."

Each spring, two Highway Department crews are assigned to erect the load restriction signs on the 1,000 miles of county roads. No signs are erected on roads that have a 10-ton rating. Roads rated for 7-ton or 9-ton capacities are signed appropriately. Gravel roads are statutorily posted for 5-ton limits, so they don't need signage.

The University of Minnesota Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) offers truck weight training every year to help individuals determine legal loads for their particular truck. This training will be held at the Polk County Human Service Center in East Grand Forks on March 30.

For more information, go to <http://www.mnltap.umn.edu/training/topic/customized/truck-weight/index.html>. The road restrictions map is on the county website: [www.co.polk.mn.us](http://www.co.polk.mn.us).

## Roadwork program set

Much of this year's construction program will again involve roads that will be receiving a bituminous overlay. These projects include:

- **CSAH 50** from TH 2 to CSAH 53
- **CSAH 53** from CSAH 11 to CSAH 50
- **CSAH 54** from CSAH 11 to CSAH 57
- **CSAH 71** from CSAH 11 to TH 75 at UMC
- **CR 210** from TH 2 to CHS Elevator

Other projects include the grade widening and overlay of **CSAH 19** from CSAH 20 at the Omera Piling Station to TH 75 at Euclid and the reconstruction of **CSAH 34** from TH 2 to 1st Aveue So. in Erskine.

As in the past two years, we will be using a mixture of County State Aid Highway construction funds from the state gas tax, motor vehicle sale tax, tab fees, along with the Wheelage Tax dollars collected as part of your tab fees.

The County Wheelage Tax is the \$10 per vehicle charge that everyone is paying when they renew their license plate tabs. Polk County receives a little over \$300,000 a year in funding from this revenue source.

We have spent over \$800,000 the past three years to overlay the following county roads: **CR 233** from Old TH 75 (Crookston) west to the north gate of American Crystal Sugar, **CR 214** from CSAH 45 to TH 2 (Crookston) and **CR 206** from TH

59 to CSAH 34 (south of Erskine). This year we will be funding the overlay of **CR 210** with these funds. In August, I will be requesting that the County Board raise the Wheelage Tax amount to \$20. This would allow us to construct more County Road projects that are in need of work.

We also anticipate replacing a number of township bridges with box culverts.

The Nielsville Bridge is hopefully crawling along toward replacement. We have done the cultural resource work needed for the project and have completed a preliminary plan and hydraulics for a new bridge. In April, Polk and Traill counties are planning on, reapplying for a TIGER Grant that would help pay for the replacement of the bridge and reconstruction/overlay of the roads on both sides of it. If, and when, we receive confirmation of funding for the project, it will take about a year to complete the work.

Remember to drive safely through our work zones. Not only will it keep the workers safe but yourselves as well.

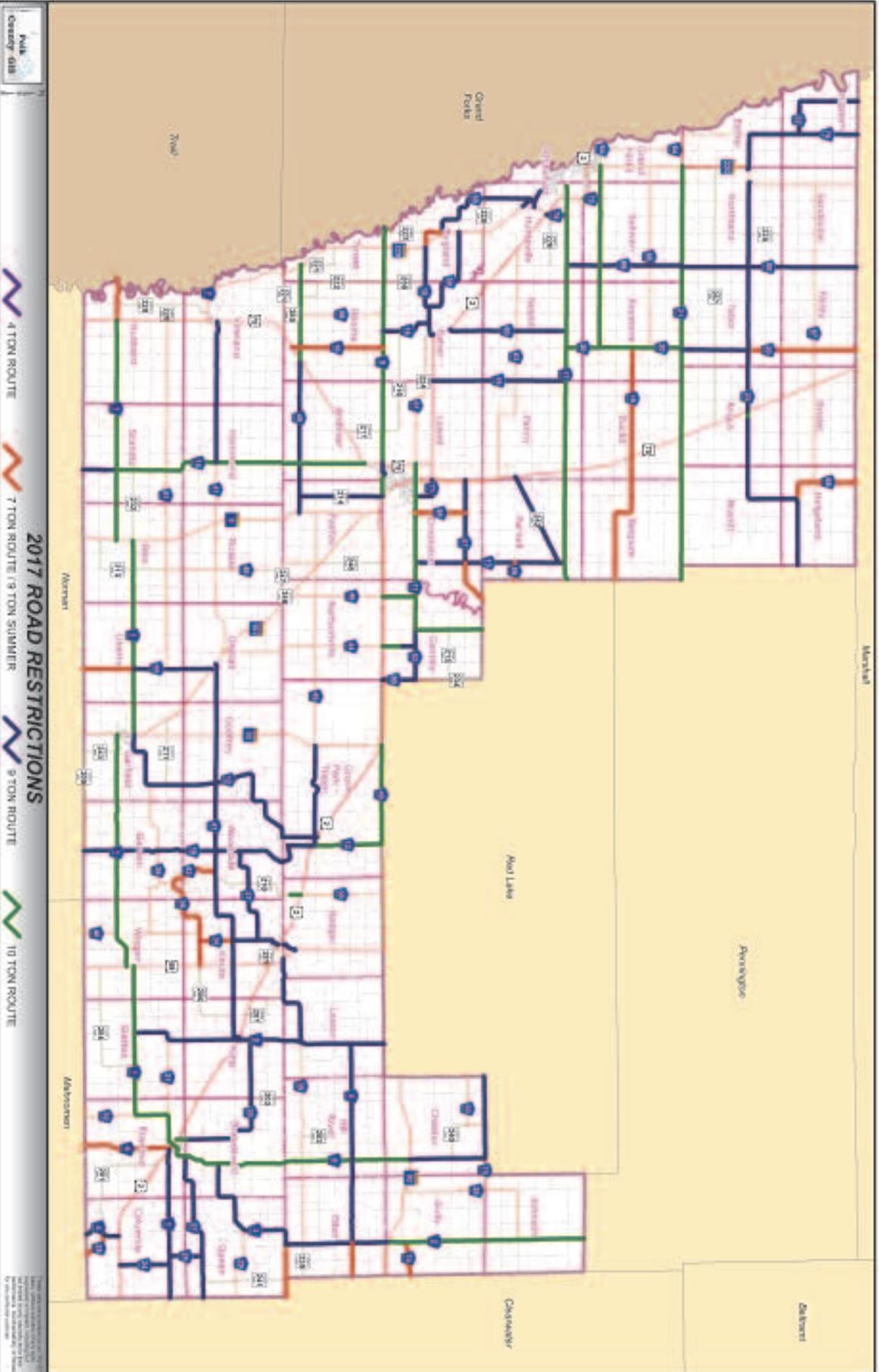
If you have any questions concerning this year's construction program, please give our office a call at 218-281-3952 and talk with either Darin Carlstrom at ext. 8254 or me at ext. 8253. — **Richard Sanders, county engineer**

## County Board Meeting Times

8:00 a.m. on 1st Tuesday of the month  
 10:00 a.m. on the 3rd Tuesday  
 8:00 a.m. on the 4th Tuesday  
**All meetings are open to the public**

### County Commissioners

Dist. 1 — Jerry Jacobson  
 Dist. 2 — Warren Strandell  
 Dist. 3 — Gary Willhite  
 Dist. 4 — Joan K. Lee, vice chair  
 Dist. 5 — Don Diedrich, chair



PAK  
Osseby Oil

4 TON ROUTE

7 TON ROUTE / 9 TON SUMMER

9 TON ROUTE

10 TON ROUTE

**2017 ROAD RESTRICTIONS**

THESE RESTRICTIONS APPLY TO ALL VEHICLES EXCEPT TRUCKS WITH A GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING (GVWR) OF 10,000 LBS OR LESS. THESE RESTRICTIONS APPLY TO ALL VEHICLES EXCEPT TRUCKS WITH A GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING (GVWR) OF 10,000 LBS OR LESS.

# Polk County Employee Anniversaries in 2017

| <u>Hire</u> | <u>Employee</u>     | <u>Department-Position</u>                                   |
|-------------|---------------------|--|
| 6/12/67     | Kathryn Glass       | Highway Dept. - Accounting Clerk III<br><b>50 Years</b>      |
| 1/05/87     | Robert Wagner       | Director of Assessment Services<br><b>30 Years</b>           |
| 8/05/87     | Brenda Johnson      | Social Services - Case Aide                                  |
| 11/01/87    | Barbara Erdman      | County Sheriff   |
| 12/14/87    | Bonnie Swenson      | Social Services - Accounting Tech.<br><b>25 Years</b>        |
| 2/03/92     | Kathy Kelly         | Social Services - Case Aide                                  |
| 6/15/92     | Julie Sistad        | Incinerator - Accountant/Secretary<br><b>20 Years</b>        |
| 3/03/97     | Linda Emery         | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 6/23/97     | Joann Munter        | Public Health - Clerk Typist Cashier II                      |
| 11/10/97    | Karen Barnes        | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 12/01/97    | Allyson Cwikla      | Social Services - Social Worker<br><b>15 Years</b>           |
| 1/07/02     | Nathan Rasch        | Sheriff's Dept. - Deputy Patrol                              |
| 7/01/02     | Stephanie Pry       | Victim Assistance Specialist                                 |
| 7/01/02     | Sheila Razmyslowski | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 7/08/02     | Darin Kelly         | Highway Dept. - Engineering Tech. IIIB                       |
| 8/01/02     | Holly Thorssen      | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 8/19/02     | Laurie Holtman      | Social Services - Family Based Svc. Provider                 |
| 8/20/02     | Doreen Narlock      | Public Health - PH Lead Coordinator                          |
| 12/02/02    | Victoria Ramirez    | Social Services - Social Svcs. Supervisor<br><b>10 Years</b> |
| 1/02/07     | Wade Farrell        | Landfill Technician  |
| 1/02/07     | Chad Erdmann        | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 1/04/07     | Sheila Stromstad    | Social Services - Accounting Technician                      |
| 2/26/07     | William Pahlen      | Highway Dept. - Highway Maintenance                          |
| 2/28/07     | Lee Kujawa          | Highway Dept. - Highway Maintenance                          |
| 4/02/07     | Melissa Perreault   | Public Health - Wellness Coordinator                         |
| 4/16/07     | Stephanie Makin     | Social Services - Accounting Tech.                           |
| 5/01/07     | Daniel Lene         | Sheriff's Dept. - Deputy Patrol                              |
| 8/01/07     | Angela Bruggeman    | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 11/07/07    | Karen Watt          | Social Services - Social Svcs. Supervisor                    |
| 12/05/07    | Justin Swang        | Sheriff's Dept. - Deputy Patrol<br><b>5 Years</b>            |
| 1/30/12     | Bramwell Horsley    | Incinerator - Loader Operator II                             |
| 1/30/12     | Wayne Oien          | Incinerator - Facility Yard Operator                         |
| 2/27/12     | Michelle Naplin     | Public Health - RN II  |
| 5/22/12     | Darren Barstad      | Waste Combustor/Bailer Operator                              |
| 6/15/12     | Brandon Larson      | Sheriff's Dept. - Deputy Patrol                              |
| 7/11/12     | Alicia Kieckbusch   | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 7/18/12     | Amanda Caillier     | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 8/12/12     | Amber Swenson-Hill  | Assessment Svcs. - Appraiser Tax Off. III                    |
| 8/20/12     | Charles Whiting     | County Administrator   |
| 8/21/12     | Jessica Rarick      | Social Services - Child Support Officer                      |
| 8/28/12     | Ashley Elwood       | Social Services - Office Support Specialist                  |
| 9/24/12     | Anna Corona         | Public Health - Clerk Typist Cashier II                      |
| 9/24/12     | Julie Deziel        | Sheriff's Dept. - Dispatcher                                 |
| 10/10/12    | Ashley Jacobson     | Social Services - Office Support Specialist                  |
| 11/15/12    | Ashley Rye          | Social Services - Social Worker                              |
| 11/26/12    | Linda Williams      | Social Services - Eligibility Worker                         |

## Septic loan program now in 5th year of funding upgrades

For the last four years, Polk County Environmental Services has been offering septic loan funding to low-income families in the county to upgrade failing septic systems. Money has been made available through the Clean Water Legacy Act and distributed to counties across the state.

The county has set up a revolving loan fund with a 25% cost-share grant available to property owners who have failing septic systems. By operating this program as a loan, we ensure that even if funding from the state runs out, we will be able to continue to help upgrade failing systems long into the future.

Since the program was launched in 2013, we have upgraded 18 septic systems in the county.

And since 2015, the county has added more incentive into the program by offering a 25% cost-share grant. This means that the county will contribute 25% of the septic system replacement cost and the remaining 75% is rolled into a .0001% loan that is paid back over a 10-year term as a special assessment.

## Don't forget the building permit

Polk County Environmental Services would like to remind you that Polk County requires building/land use permits for all construction projects.

If you are planning building/land use projects, please contact Polk County Planning & Zoning prior to construction to determine setback and ordinance requirements that may apply.

People sometimes forget to apply for a building permit or don't think they need a permit for a deck, small shed, etc. However, permits are required for almost any construction project within the county.

Any land alterations or landscaping activity in the shoreland or floodplain zoning districts may also require a permit.

More information on building/land use regulations can be found on the Polk County website at [www.co.polk.mn.us](http://www.co.polk.mn.us) under the Environmental

This makes this a very affordable and convenient program for many property owners. Currently, the program has enough funding flowing back through special assessments to fund two additional systems per year.

Funding is subject to low-income guidelines and is based on household size. The county has been allocated funding again for the upcoming year and applications will be accepted through June 1st and awarded based on income status, condition of existing system, and proximity to priority surface waters.

After the June 1 deadline, the program will continue on a first-come first-serve basis for the remainder of 2017.

More information regarding this great program can be found on the Polk County Website at [www.co.polk.mn.us](http://www.co.polk.mn.us) under the Environmental Services and Planning & Zoning Department page or by calling Polk County Planning & Zoning at (218) 281-5700. — **Josh Holte, Polk County assistant Environmental Services administrator**

Services and Planning & Zoning Department page.

Also, remember that Land Use/Zoning permits that aren't obtained prior to construction are treated as "after the fact" permits subject to three times the cost of the permit plus an additional \$150 penalty fee.

The costs can add up, especially if setbacks aren't met or a variance or conditional use permit is required. In certain situations, penalty fees may be over \$1000.

So, make sure to apply for your land use/building permits early and plan ahead to avoid unnecessary delays or penalty fees. Our office is more than happy to answer questions and assist you through the permitting process. For more information contact Polk County Planning & Zoning at (218) 281-5700. — **Josh Holte, Polk County assistant Environmental Services administrator**

## Polk County AIS Task Force gearing up for a busy summer...

Since 2015 the task force has been working on several projects focusing on education and public awareness. Billboards, public access signs, and several promotional items have been developed to help spread the message about the threat that AIS poses in Polk County and around the state.

This summer the task force is planning to hire three seasonal AIS technicians to conduct watercraft inspections, work on monitoring projects and help with other AIS outreach and educational activities. With two AIS technicians last summer, we were able to conduct over 1,500 watercraft inspections on public water access sites around Polk County. In our first year, our inspectors had a 3.5% violation rate for boats arriving with drain plugs in and a 2% violation rate for boats arriving with weeds attached. Although these numbers seem low, our goal is to get those violation rates even lower this upcoming year to help protect our lakes and rivers.



Another new project that boaters will notice this year is the installation of I-LIDS units at Maple Lake and Union Lake. I-LIDS stands for Internet Landing Installed Device Sensor. I-LIDS is a self-contained, solar powered system installed at boat launches to prevent AIS through video capture and remote inspection of launching boats/trailers, and audio education of boaters using the lake. For more information regarding the I-LIDS system, you can visit [www.environmentalsentry.com](http://www.environmentalsentry.com).

Invasive species are species that are not native to Minnesota and cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Minnesota waters are threatened by aquatic invasive species. It is illegal to transport any aquatic species like Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, starry stonewort, spiny waterflea or other prohibited invasive species. Within Polk County, Eurasian watermilfoil is already present on Union Lake, and zebra mussels are present in the Red River. With the new infestations of starry stonewort in Beltrami County and other counties around the state, it is critical that every boater take the steps necessary to limit the spread of AIS.

With the spring fishing and boating season right around the corner, it is critical that every boater take the steps necessary to limit the spread of AIS. So remember to clean, drain, and dry your boat, gear and equipment every time to help protect our lakes and rivers. For more information visit [www.co.polk.mn.us/ais](http://www.co.polk.mn.us/ais). — **Josh Holte, Polk County assistant Environmental Services administrator**

### **Regulations You Should Know:**

#### **It is unlawful to...**

- Transport watercraft without removing the drain plug
- Arrive at a lake access with drain plug in place
- Transport any prohibited species on public roads
- Launch a watercraft with prohibited species attached
- Transport water from Minnesota lakes or rivers
- Dispose of live bait into the water

**Penalties up to \$1,000**

# **STOP**

### **AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS**

- ✓ **Remove aquatic plants and invasive species from your boat**
- ✓ **Drain your live well and remove the drain plug**
- ✓ **Dispose of used bait in the trash**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**VISIT: [www.co.polk.mn.us](http://www.co.polk.mn.us)**



## **STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!**

