



BLUE EARTH COUNTY

COMMUNICATOR

Effectively & Efficiently Delivering Essential Services

SPRING & SUMMER 2015



Toward Zero Deaths Coalition

The Blue Earth County Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Enforcement Grant has been selected as the outstanding grant of the year for its traffic safety enforcement efforts and coordination in the State of Minnesota by the Commissioner of Public Safety. The Commissioner's Award will be presented to the law enforcement agencies part of the coalition at a recognition event in May. Local agencies part of the coalition include Blue Earth County, Nicollet County, Le Sueur County, Mankato, Eagle Lake, Lake Crystal, Madison Lake, Mapleton, Tri-City Police (Amboy, Good Thunder, Vernon Center), North Mankato, St. Peter, Le Sueur, Janesville and Madelia.

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PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MADELIA, MN 56062
PERMIT NO. 4

POSTAL PATRON

THE COMMUNICATOR

The Blue Earth County Communicator is published biannually to increase public awareness and involvement in county government.



**BLUE EARTH
COUNTY**

For more information about the publication, or to submit questions and/or comments, contact:

Communications Office
Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. 5th St., Mankato, MN 56001

Phone 304-4491 – Fax 304-4344
info@blueearthcountymn.gov



**Award-Winning
Publication**

by the National
Association of County
Information Officers



WHAT'S NEW

REMINDER

FIRST HALF PROPERTY TAXES ARE DUE MAY 15, 2015

Tax payments can be made in person at the Historic Courthouse located at 204 S. 5th Street in Mankato, or mailed to Blue Earth County Taxpayer Services, PO Box 3567, Mankato, MN 56002-3567. Online payments are also now accepted. There is an e-check fee of \$1.49 per transaction and a credit card fee of 2.49 percent of the amount paid applied to the transaction.

Taxpayers can use any of the following drop sites to make payments; Cub Foods 1800 Madison Avenue, Mankato, or Hy-Vee Downtown, 410 Riverfront Drive Mankato, or outside of the Historic Courthouse (on the Fourth Street side of the building).

Taxpayers can also make current year tax payments at the following banks in Blue Earth County; Community Bank in Vernon Center, MinnStar Bank in Lake Crystal, Peoples State Bank in Madison Lake, St. Clair State Bank in St. Clair and US Bank in Amboy. If taxes are paid at any of the bank locations, payments must be made during operating hours for that specific bank. Tax statements should be brought into locations to confirm correct tax amounts and better assist property owners.

There will be a penalty if full payment is not received on or before the due date, or for mailed payments that are postmarked after the due date.

New Customer Service Building on the Horizon for Ponderosa Landfill

By Scott Fichtner, Environmental Services Director

The Ponderosa Landfill, which is owned by Blue Earth County and run by a contract operator, is gearing up for construction of a new customer service/recycling building and scale house with office space. Construction is planned to take place throughout summer 2015 with completion by late fall. Project bids were recently obtained and information will be going to the County Board for final approval of the new facility in the coming weeks.



The rendering pictured above is an initial design concept of what the new Ponderosa Landfill Customer Service Building will potentially look like.

A new facility is needed at the Ponderosa Landfill to help provide individual patrons with safer and more convenient access for dropping off recyclables and materials in addition to providing permanent office space for landfill staff working with haulers and individuals dropping off garbage.

Features of the proposed facility include:

- New scale house office space for staff
- Conference room space for meetings
- Severe weather shelter for staff and visitor safety
- Convenient, safe opportunity for residents to drop off their garbage inside the building rather than at the landfill itself
- Recycling area for patrons to drop-off materials currently collected at the landfill such as tires, electronics and appliances
- Room for additional recycling and materials collection in the future

Stay tuned for more information about the new facility in addition to open house plans on the Blue Earth County website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov

For more information contact Blue Earth County Environmental Services at 304-4381.

Try the Automated Payment Program:

An Easy Way to Pay Property Taxes

Blue Earth County property owners have the option to sign-up for an automatic payment program for making property tax payments. The payment service is free, dependable and convenient. Those interested in taking advantage of the service can find an enrollment form with more information at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/achform.

The automated payment program works by debiting the current tax installment from a subscriber's checking or savings account. Debits take place on property tax due dates which include May 15 and October 15 for real property (May 15 and November 15 for agricultural classification) and August 31 and November 15 for manufactured homes.

Purvis Appointed Public Safety Chair for Association of Minnesota Counties



Blue Earth County Commissioner Will Purvis was recently named Chair of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) Public Safety Committee. The Public Safety Committee is one of five policy committees part of the Association of Minnesota Counties reflecting the collective opinion of county commissioners in Minnesota regarding State and Federal issues. As Chair, Commissioner Purvis will lead the committee throughout 2015 and participate with membership in developing policies for the association representing all 87 Minnesota counties through the democratic process. Ramsey County Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire will serve as Vice-chair for the committee.

More information regarding the Public Safety Policy Committee and the Association of Minnesota Counties is available at www.mncounties.org/committees/policy/PSPC.html.





BLUE EARTH COUNTY LAUNCHES NEW CODE RED SYSTEM TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SERVICES

Residents and Businesses Encouraged to Sign-up for Alerts

The CodeRED emergency notification system provides Blue Earth County with a high speed telephone calling, e-mail and text messaging system capable of delivering customized emergency messages directly to homes, businesses and mobile telephone users. Notification information can also be sent out to those who follow Blue Earth County on social media via Twitter and Facebook. CodeRED sends critical communications such as tornado warnings, missing child alerts and evacuation notices.

When registering, you may contribute additional information if you wish, such as mobile phone numbers, work telephone lines and alternate emergency contact information. Those without internet access can sign-up using computer terminals at any of the three Blue Earth County Library locations in Lake Crystal, Mankato or Mapleton or by calling 304-4920 for assistance. All contact information provided remains private and is only used for emergency notification purposes. ■

Sign-up at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/CodeRED

For more information or if you have questions about CodeRED, please call 304-4920 or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/CodeRED

Celebrating 125 Years of the Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse

Save the Date!
Concert on the Courthouse Lawn
Tuesday, June 23
Mankato Area Community Band Performance
7:30 p.m.

Historic Courthouse Tours
5 to 7 p.m.
(departing every half hour, prior to the concert)

204 S. 5th Street, Mankato

Remember to bring blankets and lawn chairs. Nearby parking is available at the Historic Courthouse and Vine Adult Community Center lots.

In the event of rain, visit for the Blue Earth County website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov for relocation details.

For more information visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov or contact 304-4491.

Despite recent changes with the City of Mankato residential garbage and recycling services, the Blue Earth County Recycling Center remains open under the operation of Waste Management. The facility is located at 725 Waseca Avenue in the LeHillier area of Mankato and offers single stream recycling, eliminating the need to sort recyclables. Materials such as glass, metal, paper, plastics and textiles are accepted at no cost. Other items such as non-commercial appliances, electronics, tires and batteries are accepted for a fee. There is a convenient 24-hour drop off area for most materials and a drive through facility that is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information about the Blue Earth County Recycling Center and recycling rate prices visit the Blue Earth County website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov under the Waste & Recycling section or by calling the 24-hour Waste & Recycling Hotline at 304-4242.



Visit the Blue Earth County Library in Mankato to see the new renovations and stay tuned for details on an upcoming open house!



100 East Main, Mankato
www.beclibrary.org



Minnesota Sheriff's Association Presents Life Saving Award to Blue Earth County Deputy

Blue Earth County Deputy Bill Davis was recently presented the Life Saving Award by the Minnesota Sheriff's Association at their annual conference for his quick and selfless actions while responding to a call in 2014. Deputy Davis was the first to arrive on scene for a reported domestic assault, and while at the residence was able to locate, gain access into a locked room and save the life of a man found unresponsive from an attempted suicide. Quick decision-making and resourceful tactics used by Deputy Davis helped turn an otherwise tragic situation into a positive outcome resulting in the man being alive and well today. The Minnesota Sheriff's Association Life Saving Award is awarded to any employee, volunteer or other person acting under the direction and control of any Sheriff's Office who is a member of the association.



Pictured; Brad Peterson, Blue Earth County Sheriff; William "Bill" Davis, Blue Earth County Deputy; Rodney Bartsh, Wabasha County Sheriff and President of the Minnesota Sheriff's Association.

Your County Attorney at Work

By Pat McDermott, Blue Earth County Attorney

The Blue Earth County Attorney has many criminal and civil legal responsibilities. The following is a summary of duties associated with the Office of the County Attorney in working with the County Board and County Departments. Generally, the County Attorney is not permitted to represent or provide legal advice to private citizens.

Criminal Law Prosecutions

- All adult felony cases
- Adult misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors in unincorporated portions of the County and in cities which hold prosecution contracts with the Office of the County Attorney; Amboy, Eagle Lake, Good Thunder, Madison Lake, Mapleton, Pemberton, St. Clair, Skyline and Vernon Center.
- Crimes associated with the neglect and abuse of children

Civil Law

- Legal advisor for Blue Earth County Officials and Departments
- Represents the County in civil litigation including lawsuits, real estate challenges, welfare and licensing appeals
- Initiates litigation for acquiring land for road improvements
- Protects the environment through enforcement of County solid and hazardous waste ordinances
- Obtains civil judgements for welfare fraud
- Forfeits property used in connection with criminal activity

Juvenile and Protective Services

- Prosecutes all juvenile delinquency matters
- Initiates Children in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) petitions to protect abused neglected children
- Starts legal proceedings to protect the health and safety of vulnerable adults
- Files actions to provide treatment for mentally ill, developmentally disabled, chemically dependent, or sexually dangerous persons

Child Support Enforcement

- Represents the County in all paternity and child support matters
- Brings actions to obtain or enforce child support obligations
- Provides legal advice to County officials regarding paternity and child support matters

Victim/Witness Assistance

- Ensure victims of crime receive written notice of their legal rights and help in exercising their rights
- Inform victims of all important developments in their cases
- Allow victims and witnesses the opportunity to express concerns and get questions answered
- Seek restitution and reparation for losses suffered by crime victims
- Help victims and witnesses understand and participate in the prosecution
- Accompany victims to court
- Provide information on community resources and referrals to other organizations

Pursuing Improvement and Prevention

- Work on enactment of new laws
- Build partnerships among criminal justice programs
- Actively participate in chemical abuse and violence prevention efforts
- Support accountability programs for some first-time offenders ■

For more information please contact the Office of the County Attorney at 304-4600 or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov.

Take Part in Minnesota Severe Weather Awareness Week April 13-17, 2015

IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS WHILE AWAY FROM HOME IN SEVERE WEATHER

GET IN: Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible.

GET DOWN: If you can't get underground, get as low as possible.

COVER UP: Use whatever you have to protect your head and body from flying objects.

IF A TORNADO THREATENS, YOU SHOULD NOT LEAVE IN YOUR CAR! BEING IN A STURDY BUILDING IS MOST LIKELY SAFER THAN BEING IN YOUR VEHICLE ON THE ROAD IF A TORNADO HITS. STAY CALM AND TRY TO FIND A SAFE SHELTER WHEREVER YOU ARE.



ANNUAL STATE WIDE TORNADO DRILL
Thursday, April 16, 2015
at 1:45 p.m. and 6:55 p.m.

Outdoor warning sirens and NOAA Weather Radios will sound in a simulated tornado warning. The first drill is intended for institutions and businesses. The evening drill is intended for second shift workers and families.

TAXPAYER SERVICES



Mailings and Information from Taxpayer Services

By Michael Stalberger, County Assessor and Deputy Taxpayer Services Director

Blue Earth County property taxpayers recently received their annual property tax statement and valuation notice in late March or early April. The Blue Earth County Taxpayer Services Department mails this important information as part of the multi-year assessment and taxation process in Minnesota. The tax statement and valuation notice are sent in a single mailing whenever possible to save postage costs. This mailing includes about 32,000 pieces of mail.



The valuation notice provides information regarding each taxable property's classification (the actual use of the property), its valuation and any special program enrollment. The estimated market value is the county's estimate of what each property would likely sell for and the taxable value is a calculated value used for tax purposes. The information is based on property reviews, local property sale information and analysis conducted by the Assessor's Office staff.

The valuation notice is the foundation for the property tax calculation process that will result in tax statements in 2016. This notice also marks the start of the informal and formal appeals process. The appeals process is listed on the bottom of the notice, as well as on its reverse side. Please note the deadlines associated with appealing property information.

Taxpayers should review the valuation notice, especially classification and valuation information, as it plays an important role in determining the amount of tax each property will pay in 2016.

The tax statement is the second item in the mailing and is the 2015 tax bill for property owners. It is based on valuation and classification information determined in early 2014. That information was mailed in Spring 2014 and can now only be appealed in a court setting.

Taxpayers with more than one parcel of property will receive more than one tax statement and each should be reviewed. Please be sure to pay taxes by the dates listed on each statement to prevent penalties being added to your tax bill. If your property tax statement refers to an escrow account, please be aware that an escrow company was notified of your tax bill and is likely responsible for paying your taxes on your behalf. You should only submit payment if an escrow company is not responsible for taxes. ■

Taxpayer Service Specialists and Appraisers are available in the Historic Courthouse weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by phone at 304-4251 to answer questions. Property information may also be obtained by visiting the County's website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov and clicking on the Property & Taxes quick link on the homepage. Copies of tax statements and valuation notices are also available on the website.

State of Minnesota Property Tax Refunds

The State of Minnesota provides property tax refunds for both renters and property owners. For property owners, if your income is less than \$107,150, you may qualify for a refund based on the amount of property taxes paid. The property also must be your homestead.

There is a special refund not restricted by income if your homestead property taxes increased more than 12 percent and \$100 between 2014 and 2015.

To apply for the refund, check with your tax preparer or gather your property tax statements for 2014 and 2015 and your income tax filing. Visit the Department of Revenue website for more information and to apply online for free: go to www.revenue.state.mn.us and click on "Property Tax Refund" under the individuals tax information column.

Refunds were increased due to recent law changes, so it's important to check with your tax preparer or apply on your own. There is also still time to complete your 2013 filing for 2014 taxes until August 15, 2015.

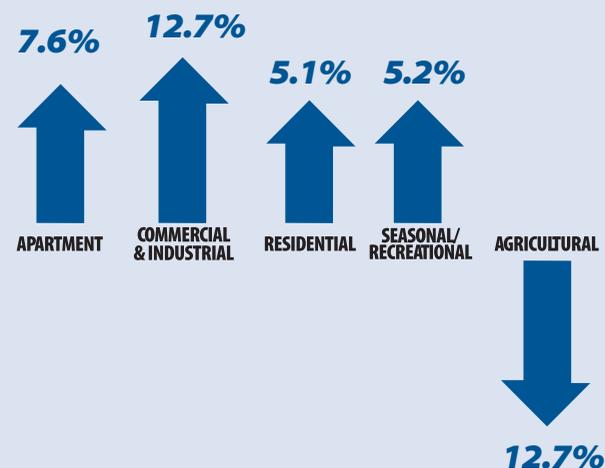


Market Valuation Trends

Each year, based on local sales data, the Taxpayer Services Department estimates market values for approximately 35,800 parcels in Blue Earth County. The various types of property in Blue Earth County saw varying valuation changes. New construction is then added in, such as improvements to existing buildings and new buildings, to report overall valuation trends. Property values are an important component of the property tax process for taxes to be paid next year, in 2016.

Listed below are the changes for major property types compared to the 2014 assessment. Please note these are county averages and each local market may be different.

- Apartment: up 7.6%
- Commercial and Industrial: up 12.7%
- Residential: up 5.1%
- Seasonal/Recreational: up 5.2%
- Agricultural: down 12.7%



For more information please contact Blue Earth County Taxpayer Services by phone at 304-4251 or by e-mail at taxhelp@blueearthcountymn.gov





The Blue Earth County Highway Department will be applying calcium chloride to gravel roads throughout the County for dust control this summer. Residents will be able to purchase a set of two applications; one to be applied in late May and the other in early August (weather permitting). Standard applications for \$125 include an area of 100-ft in length by a 20-ft wide surface area.

No guarantee is made for the performance of the material. However, the material has been used in previous years with good success.

Requests and payments can be mailed to Blue Earth County Highway Department, PO Box 3083, Mankato, MN 56002-3083. Please state the number of feet requested, location (County road number or section and township) and a telephone number.

Applications will not be made unless payment is received by May 15, 2015.

To obtain further details on pricing or to request the service, please contact the Blue Earth County Highway Department at 304-4025.

Tandem Trucks: An Essential Piece of Public Works Equipment

By Chad Wilde, Assistant Public Works Director

One of the most utilized and multi-faceted tools used in highway maintenance is the tandem truck, often known as a snowplow truck. From the dog days of summer to the depths of winter this workhorse rarely gets any rest. The typical tandem truck has 410 horsepower, an Allison automatic transmission and three heavy duty axles. Weights range from about 26,000 pounds empty to over 48,000 pounds loaded.

During snow plowing operations, this truck is equipped with a one-way plow in front to push snow off the road, a side "wing" to push snow off the shoulder, an underbody scraper which can use the weight of the truck to scrape compacted snow and ice and a sander/spreader attached to the rear. A 13-cubic yard dump body and hoist attached to the chassis are also features of this snow/ice clearing machine.

Operating separate controls for three plows, the box hoist and sander requires a skilled and experienced operator. Additional challenges operators face include the poor driving conditions and visibility



during a snow storm, darkness of early morning hours and up to 12 to 14 hours of operation. Traffic, especially when winter starts, can also provide challenges for the operator.

Tandem trucks are seen on a regular basis during a typical Minnesota winter. You may see slight variations in size, axles and attachments, but one attribute that stays fairly consistent is color and what entity they are from. Orange tandems from MnDOT are plowing State highways, red trucks from the City of Mankato plowing city streets and yellow trucks clearing Blue Earth County roads and bridges. Other township and municipality trucks throughout Blue Earth County may vary in color.

The tandem truck serves multiple purposes when not needed for snow and ice control. It hauls various materials such as boulders, rip-rap, tree logs, sand, pea rock and gravel. They also, at times are transformed from plowing and hauling to applying summer dust and noxious weed control chemicals.

The County has skilled and experienced mechanics to maintain and keep up with the ever changing technologies the pieces of equipment require. Typically a truck, despite rough duty, will serve for 7-8 years and last over 225,000 miles. It approximately costs \$150,000 for each truck, which includes all snow removal equipment and the trade-in value of an old truck. ■

Summer Activities At Blue Earth County Parks!

Reserve a Campsite
Online at
blueearthcountymn.gov

PARKS	ACTIVITIES																							
	Tent Camping Sites	Mobile Camping Sites	Electrical Hook-ups	Bathroom	Boat/Canoe Launch	Canoe Rental	Drinking Water	Dump Station	Fire Rings/Grills	Fishing	Fishing Dock	Horseshoe Pits	Interpretive Center/Log Cabin	Nature Trail	Paddleboat Rental	Picnic Shelters	Picnic Tables	Playground	Primitive Restrooms	Resident Caretakers	Restrooms	Swim Beach	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts
BRAY (102.3 ACRES)	10	33	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
DALY (92.41 ACRES)	15	71	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
DUCK LAKE (31.66 ACRES)				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
LAKE GEORGE (4.2 ACRES)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
RAPIDAN (38.69 ACRES)	20				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
RED JACKET TRAIL PARK (4 ACRES)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
WILLIAMS NATURE CENTER (65 ACRES)						•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
INDIAN LAKE (120 ACRES)													•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
SCHIMEK (30 ACRES)									•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
WILDWOOD (28 ACRES)										•														
EAGLE LAKE (1 ACRE)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
LONE PINE (1.4 ACRES)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
HUNGRY HOLLOW STOP (4.2 ACRES)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
WATONWAN STOP (7 ACRES)					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

CAMPING RESERVATIONS: Camping reservation systems are available at Bray and Daly Parks. Reservations are taken by phone, online or in person at the park for which the reservation is requested. Park personnel will take reservations from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday. A deposit is required to hold each camping site.

Daly Park:
11056 571st Lane
Mapleton, MN 56065
524-3000

Bray Park:
2214 Oriole Rd.
Madison Lake, MN 56063
243-3885

South Central MN Safety Camp

Youth entering grades 4-7 are eligible to attend this special camp that promotes safety awareness through active and hands-on learning experiences.

WHEN:

Monday, June 22, 2015 from
7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHERE:

North Mankato Fire Station # 2
1825 Howard Drive in North Mankato.

Space is limited and pre-registration is required by June 12. Please call 304-4142 for further details.



Upcoming Major Road Construction Projects

By Alan Forsberg, County Engineer and Public Works Director

County Road 1 from Highway 30 to Good Thunder

This section of road will soon be under construction as part of a two year project to improve safety, rehabilitate deteriorated pavement and improve drainage. Throughout summer, shoulders will be widened and pipes replaced. Additionally, one section north of Sterling Center will be shifted west somewhat to avoid an eroding bank of the Maple River. This section will remain a gravel surface over winter to allow the road bed to settle. During the summer of 2016, the existing bituminous pavement will be cold in place recycled with placement of a new layer of bituminous pavement. The new road will have a 10-ton pavement to accommodate the farm to market traffic and provide motorists with a safe, modern road for decades to come.

County Road 147 Bridge

Late this summer the historic Dodd Ford truss bridge located on County Road 147 south and west of Amboy will be lifted from its abutments and preserved while a new deck is constructed. The truss will then be returned to its home, resulting in a bridge which respects its historic heritage while allowing modern, heavy farm to market traffic to safely pass. Although the historic truss portion of the bridge will not be bearing the load, the overall appearance of the bridge will be maintained. The bridge will be restricted to one lane traffic with a vertical clearance limit. Essentially, all traffic with the exception of large farm equipment will be able to pass through.

County Road 72 (Kendall Street), Vernon Center

Vernon Center is planning a major street reconstruction project, including replacement of some

municipal utilities. The County is participating by reconstructing County Road 72, Kendall Street. The City and its consultant will be the lead agency in designing and contracting the project.

County Road 5 Bridges

Three bridges on County Road 5 (an extension of Third Avenue north of Mankato and just south of the Le Sueur County line) are planned for replacement in late summer. Despite the bridge decks being in poor condition, the concrete abutments and foundations are in good shape. This allows the County to proceed with a faster and more cost effective solution by replacing the decks through reuse of the existing foundation and concrete abutments. The bridges will be replaced in a staged fashion and in coordination with the State of Minnesota's Highway 22 work to minimize traffic impacts on residents. Plans for the project are complete, although construction is dependent on the State Legislature providing sufficient local bridge bonding funds.



Bituminous Overlays

Bituminous pavements need maintenance to remain in a serviceable condition. Every 15 to 20 years a new layer of bituminous, called an overlay, needs to be placed. These overlays are costly, but along with crack sealing, seal coating and patching are essential to a long pavement life. This summer the western portion of County Road 90, the South Route, and the adjacent County Road 90 trail will be overlaid. Additionally, several other sections of the farm to market roadway system will receive overlays. ■



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HIGHWAY RIGHT-OF-WAY

The County requests the cooperation of all persons owning or renting land adjacent to highways under the jurisdiction of Blue Earth County.

Plowing, planting, or dumping stones and debris on the right-of-way contributes to erosion, is unsightly and creates a hazard for mowing the ditch; it is also in violation of Minnesota Statute 160.2715.

The County will be mowing the entire right-of-way in the south one-third of the County this summer including any crops planted within the right-of-way. The other two-thirds will be shoulder mowed, spot mowed for sight distance and weed control; and spot sprayed with herbicide to control noxious weeds.

Requests from adjacent landowners for areas not to be mowed due to harvesting hay or not to be sprayed due to sensitive adjacent crops should contact the Highway Department at 304-4025.

Main Planning Projects for 2015

By Alan Forsberg, County Engineer and Public Works Director

County Road 12

County Road 12 on the east side of Mankato from the Mankato regional airport to Highway 83 has been an ongoing project the last several years. The last stage from County Road 17 (an extension of Madison Avenue running east) is currently moving forward. This year the road design will be completed and right-of-way acquired. In 2016, utilities will be relocated contingent on receiving additional funding and construction

starting. The road would then be completed and open to traffic in 2017. The project provides a needed north/south link in our regional transportation system, facilitates and encourages economic development and diverts traffic from the highly traveled Highway 22 corridor. The roadway will be four-lane from County Road 17 to Hoffman Road, then two-lane to Highway 83. It will include roundabouts at County 12, Hoffman Road and Highway 83

intersections with a future roundabout at Bassett Drive planned. A pedestrian and bicycle trail will also run alongside the road.

Former Highway 66, Current County Road 1

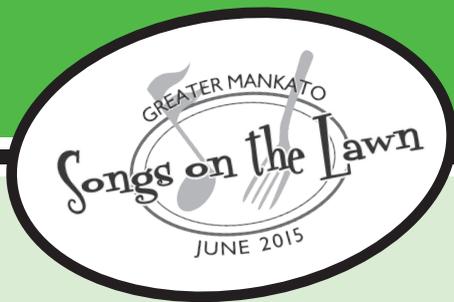
Highway 66 from Good Thunder to Mankato is now Blue Earth County Road 1. Interestingly, this road was originally a County Road before being taken over by the State years ago. Road reconstruction plans will provide modern, safe access for motorists while respecting the road's historic and aesthetic values. In 2015, the County will design and acquire right-of-way for the segment from



Good Thunder to County Road 9 (Rapidan Road). This segment will be reconstructed in 2016. In 2017, work will be deferred while the State is reconstructing Highway 22 so it can serve as a detour route. Then in 2018 the road will be reconstructed from County Road 9 to Mankato. ■

For more information please contact the Blue Earth County Highway Department at 304-4025 or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov.





LIBRARY SERVICES

COME SEE THE BLUE EARTH COUNTY LIBRARY AT SONGS ON THE LAWN!

JUNE 4, 11, 18, 25

PLUS, SIGN-UP FOR THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM!

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY AT THE LIBRARY!

**Saturday, April 18
10 a.m. – Noon**

**Blue Earth County Library
Lovelace Children's Wing**

Fun for Kids and Families

*Activities • Games • Craft Projects
Live Reptiles • Face Painting • and more!*

**Thank You to
Library Supporters!**

The Blue Earth County Library thanks all the generous sponsors to the libraries in Mankato, Lake Crystal and Mapleton Communities. To view a listing of individual and organization sponsors or to learn more about supporting the Blue Earth County Library, visit www.beclibrary.org/supporters



Experience Encore: The Blue Earth County Library's New Automated Library Catalog

Patrons can access the Encore catalog by visiting the Blue Earth County website at www.beclibrary.org/catalog or by clicking on the catalog button on the homepage of the Blue Earth County Library System website at www.beclibrary.org.

Initially, users will be asked to set-up a pin/password to login to the catalog. Once logged in, users can:

- View materials checked-out
- Renew items to extend their due date
- View account reading history
- Create read lists
- Place items on hold
- Utilize many more catalog features



2015 Summer Reading Program **"READ TO THE RHYTHM"**

Summer Reading 2015, "Read to the Rhythm," kicks off on Monday, June 1 at the Blue Earth County Libraries. Children can earn prizes for time spent reading in four age categories and enjoy educational and entertaining programs.

BRAND-NEW PERFORMERS

Ventriloquist James Wedgwood
 Musician Mary Hall's Show for Pipsqueaks
 Bubble Wonders
 Puppeteer Lisa Laird
 Unwine Creations
 Sonflower Puppets with Barbi Cox
 Monkey Business with Annette Fragale

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

Minnesota Zoomobile
 U of M Raptor Center
 Peter Bloedel
 Airplane Rides
 and much more!

Summer Reading is made possible by primary sponsor Taylor Corporation, Friends of the Deep Valley Libraries, Traverse des Sioux Library System and the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund of Minnesota.



2015 Key Sponsor:

Taylor

For further details contact the Blue Earth County Library at 304-4020 or visit www.beclibrary.org for online registration information.



Tips for Proper Septic System Operation and Maintenance

Subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS) or septic systems are designed to properly treat wastewater in a cost effective manner while protecting human health and the environment. They act as mini wastewater recycling plants in people's backyards by treating wastewater and returning safe water to the ground water system. If a septic system is not functioning properly, untreated or partially treated water is returned to the groundwater. These systems are similar to a car and must be properly operated and maintained to ensure long-term, cost effective service. Below are tips that can help you keep your septic system operating properly.

Control Water Use

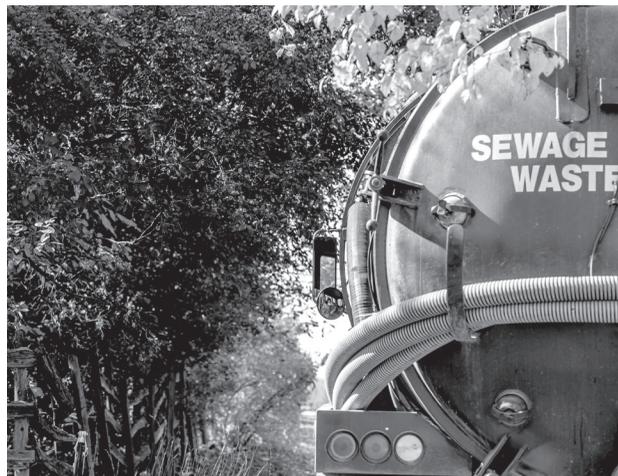
Regularly check and immediately repair all leaky faucets, fixtures and appliances. Install low water use fixtures on toilets and shower heads when possible.

Eliminate Harmful Products from System

Use liquid laundry detergents and gel dishwashing detergents rather than powdered types. This minimizes the non-organic solids introduced into the tank. Read labels carefully, as many gel dishwashing detergents are high in phosphorus content and it is best to avoid these products.

Additives

Additives do not enhance the performance of a properly operating septic system. If bacterial activity in the septic tank is low, it is probably because disinfectants and other products are killing the bacteria.



Cleaning/Pumping the Septic Tank

Septic tanks must be cleaned or pumped regularly to remove all solids. Maintenance is recommended at least every 3 years.

Pumps and Filters

All pumps and motors should be routinely checked for proper operation. Effluent filters need to be cleaned regularly.

Vegetative Cover

Drain field areas may be mowed. However, it's important to not over water the soil treatment area (drain field/mound).

Protect the Soil Treatment Area

Minimize foot traffic over tank, pipes and soil treatment area (drainfield or mound). ■



Blue Earth County is once again partnering with the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) to offer residents affordable rain barrels and compost bins through a special program in selected communities throughout the State. Those interested in ordering a discounted rain barrel for \$69 or a compost bin for \$55 may visit [www. RecycleMinnesota.org](http://www.RecycleMinnesota.org) to learn more information or to place an order. All orders must be made online and be picked up at a special distribution event taking place on May 8, 2015 at the Blue Earth County Household Hazardous Waste Facility.

For more information on septic system operation and maintenance visit the University of Minnesota website at <http://www.septic.umn.edu/>

Household Hazardous Waste Facility Now Open

The Blue Earth County Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility and Product Re-use Center recently opened for the 2015 season. The facility is located at 651 Summit Ave., Mankato and is open every Tuesday afternoon from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. and the second Saturday of each month from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. through the end of October.

Hazardous wastes from households in Blue Earth, Nicollet and Le Sueur Counties are accepted at no charge, plus farm chemicals from Blue Earth County farmers. Products brought to the facility should be in their original containers, if possible, with labels attached.

Examples of items accepted include paints, stains, household cleaners, automotive products and yard and garden chemicals.

Adjacent to the HHW Facility is the Product Reuse Center which contains items that have been dropped off by others that are believed to be in good, usable form and are available for others to take and use for free of charge. ■

For more information please contact the Waste & Recycling Hotline at 304-4242 or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov

HHW Facility & Product Reuse Center 2015 Schedule



APRIL – OCTOBER 2015

**TUESDAYS
12 p.m. to 6 p.m.**

**2ND SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH
8 a.m. to 12 p.m.**



License Plates Now Available for Women Veterans



Women veterans in Minnesota will now be able to obtain a vehicle license plate which recognizes and acknowledges their military service. To apply for this license plate, Veterans should contact their local vehicle license center. A copy of military separation documents (DD 214) will be required.



Widow Pension Benefits

Surviving spouses of deceased veterans may be eligible for a pension benefit from the US Dept of Veterans Affairs. Eligibility for this benefit requires that the veteran had at least 90 days of service, with at least one day of war time service. Income and net worth are also eligibility factors. If the widow is in a nursing care facility or assisted living facility, this could also be a factor in establishing eligibility for this benefit.

For more information on benefits for veterans, please contact Blue Earth County Veterans Services at 304-4246.

Take Advantage of the Free Medicine Collection Program

Convenient Drop Box Locations:

Blue Earth County Justice Center
Sheriff's Office Lobby
401 Carver Road, Mankato
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Mankato Public Safety Center
710 South Front Street
24-hour drop box

Reminder: Sharps cannot go into the free medicine collection boxes. Home sharps should be dropped off at either of the Mankato Hy-Vee Pharmacies in Mankato for proper disposal.

For more information visit
www.blueearthcountymn.gov

Get Involved on a Human Services Advisory Committee or Task Force

Human Service Advisory Committee

The committee is appointed by the Blue Earth County Commissioners. The purpose of the committee is to provide input to the County Human Services Director and the County Board relating to service developments, priorities, budgeting and evaluation within the Human Services Department. This includes the program areas of mental health, community health, social services, and financial assistance.

Task Forces Appointed by the Blue Earth County Commissioners, Advisory to the Blue Earth County Advisory Committee:

Social Service Task Force

This group is authorized as part of the Human Services Act which provides partial definition of how services will be provided in Blue Earth County.

ADULTS AND YOUTH NEEDED!

Members of this task force provide community input on policies and services related to child protection, child and adult foster care, adoption, family based services, vulnerable adult/adult protection, family daycare licensing, developmental disabilities, childcare funding, sexual violence and chemical dependency.

Mental Health Task Force

This group is authorized by the Adult and Children's Mental Health Acts in Minnesota statutes and has specific responsibilities to fulfill as they advise the County Board. Members of this task force provide community input on policies, treatment and services that addresses the mental health needs of children, adults and families.

For more information on Blue Earth County Committees contact Noelle Bruender at 304-4064 or by email at noelle.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Signage Installed

South Central Beyond the Yellow Ribbon (SCBTYR) was proclaimed by the Governor of Minnesota in July of 2012 and is comprised of Blue Earth, Nicollet & Le Sueur Counties. A Yellow Ribbon Community unites key areas within a community or county to create a comprehensive network that connects and coordinates agencies, organizations, resources and employers for the purpose of creating access to resources that meet needs at the local level for service members, veterans and military families. Yellow Ribbon is a unique program that only exists in Minnesota.

Recently, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon signs were added to Blue Earth County entrance markers as a way to highlight the efforts of SCBTYR and to illustrate that Blue Earth County is part of the comprehensive network supporting service members, veterans and their families. Signs are posted at State Highway 22 north and south County lines, State Highway 14 east and west County boundaries and at the State Highway 60 east County marker. ■



Yellow Ribbon County signs were recently installed which designate Blue Earth County as part of the South Central Beyond the Yellow Ribbon network.

For more information about the Yellow Ribbon Network please visit www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org and for local resources on South Central Beyond the Yellow Ribbon "like" us on Facebook or contact southcentralfrg@gmail.com.

SERVING YOU



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District 1 Commissioner
P.O. Box 1283
Mankato, MN 56002-1283
387-2408 (H) / 382-1374 (C)
drew.campbell@blueearthcountymn.gov



Vance Stuehnenberg, Chair
District 2 Commissioner
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Mankato, MN 56001
388-8129 (H) / 317-3942 (C)
vances@blueearthcountymn.gov



Mark Piepho
District 3 Commissioner
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Mankato, MN 56001
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Will Purvis
District 4 Commissioner
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will.purvis@blueearthcountymn.gov



Kip Bruender, Vice-chair
District 5 Commissioner
204 Joan Lane
Eagle Lake, MN 56024
257-2116 (H) / 382-2440 (C)
kip.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov



Brad Peterson, Sheriff
Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4800
brad.peterson@blueearthcountymn.gov



Patrick R. McDermott, County Attorney
Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4600
pat.mcdermott@blueearthcountymn.gov



Bob Meyer, County Administrator
Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4235
bob.meyer@blueearthcountymn.gov

Write Now!

Write & Tell Us What You Think.

The Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners and other officials are committed to providing quality service to our residents. Responding to your concerns and needs is a priority.

Please fill out the information below and leave it with a receptionist at any County office, or mail it at your convenience to:

Blue Earth County Public Information
P.O. Box 8608
Mankato, MN 56002-8608
or email info@blueearthcountymn.gov

With which County department did you have contact?

Please Evaluate: Excellent Good Poor

Courtesy of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timeliness of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value of service provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would like County officials to know:

I have a suggestion:

If you want us to respond to your comments:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

**Thank you for your feedback.
We appreciate your comments so
we can serve you better!**

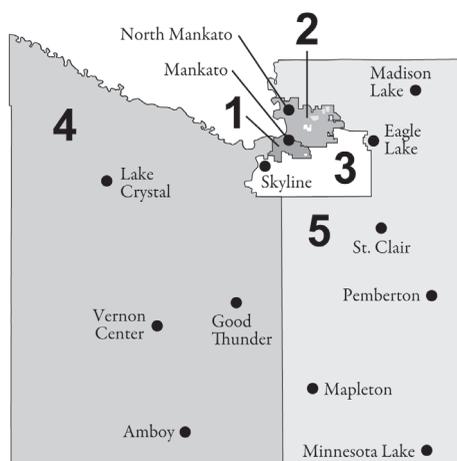
Board Information

The Blue Earth County Board generally meets every other Tuesday in the Boardroom at the Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse, 204 South Fifth Street, Mankato. For more information and specific meeting dates and times visit:

www.blueearthcountymn.gov/board

Citizens who wish to address the Board of Commissioners at a meeting must contact Administration at 304-4284 before noon Thursday preceding the Board meeting. This is needed to manage the Board's schedule. The Board will not take action at the time of the presentation, but will direct County staff to respond appropriately to issues raised by citizens.

Blue Earth County COMMISSIONER DISTRICTS



SERVICE DIRECTORY



Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd., Mankato

Probation
1st Floor, 304-4750
Restitution/Restorative Justice
Adult & Juvenile Probation, Parole, Supervised Release and Diversion
Pre-trial Services/Bail Evaluation
Victim Restitution
Community Work Service Programs
Services to Drug and Truancy Specialty Courts

County Sheriff /Emergency Services

1st Floor, 304-4800
Jail
Patrol
Emergency Management
Dispatch
Civil Process
Permits: ATV, Burn, Gun
Records

5th Judicial District Court

2nd Floor, 304-4650
Traffic Tickets
Small Claims Court
Civil and Criminal Court

County Attorney

2nd Floor, 304-4600



Public Works Department
35 Map Dr., Mankato

Roads & Bridges, 304-4025
Road/Bridge Construction & Inspection
Permits: Driveway, Overweight/Size Loads, Utility
Culvert Sales
Swing-away Mailbox Mounts
Calcium Chloride for Dust Control
Park & Trail System, 304-4025
Camping & Shelter Reservations
Firewood Sales & Boat Rental
Agricultural Inspection, 304-4025
Weed Control & Seed Testing



Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St., Mankato

Facilities and Management
Lower Level, 304-4249

Finance

Lower Level, 304-4182

Taxpayer Services – Property Information/Passports

1st Floor, 304-4251

Assessing
Taxation
Recording
Ditch Management
Passports

Administration

2nd Floor, 304-4150

Public Information, 304-4491

Human Resources

2nd Floor, 387-8664

U of M Extension

3rd Floor, 304-4325

Agriculture & Horticulture
4-H/Youth Development
Nutrition Education Program
Misc. Program Areas



County Government Center
410 S. Fifth St., Mankato

Taxpayer Services – License Center/Elections
Lower Level, 304-4340

Driver's Licenses
Motor Vehicle/Boat Registration
Fishing/Hunting Licenses
Birth/Death Certificates
Marriage Licenses
Voter Registration/Absentee Ballots
Filing of Notaries

Veterans Services

Lower Level, 304-4246

Federal & State Benefits
Transportation to VA Hospital

Information Technology

Lower Level, 304-4204

Human Services

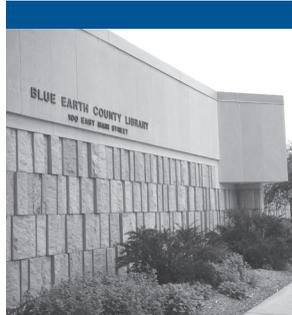
Lower Level/1st/2nd/3rd Floors, 304-4222

Financial Assistance, 304-4335
Social Services, 304-4319
Community Health, 304-4319
Mental Health Center, 304-4319
Child Protection/Intake, 304-4444
Child Support, 304-4166

Environmental Services

3rd Floor, 304-4381

Planning & Zoning
Building & Feedlot Permits
Shorelands/Flood Plains
Water Wells/Septic Systems/Wetlands
Recycling Center/Compost Site/Landfill
Household Hazardous Waste Center
911/Rural Addressing



Blue Earth County Library
100 E. Main St., Mankato

General Services, 304-4001
Children's & Young Adult Services, 304-4020
Adult & Reference Services, 304-4022
Fines & Renewals, 304-4010
Meeting Room Reservations, 304-4002
Administration, 304-4002
Mapleton Public Library, 524-3513
Lake Crystal Public Library, 726-2726

Serving Citizens Through County Government

Other County Facilities/Numbers

Household Hazardous Waste Facility
651 Summit Ave., Mankato, 304-4242

Ponderosa Landfill
20028 Gooseberry Lane, Mankato, 625-7301

Recycling Center
741 Waseca Ave., LeHillier, 345-4255

24-Hour Waste and Recycling Hotline, 304-4242

County TTY/TDD (Hearing Impaired), 304-4399



BLUE EARTH COUNTY

visit us online:
www.blueearthcountymn.gov