

## Government Center Project Progresses

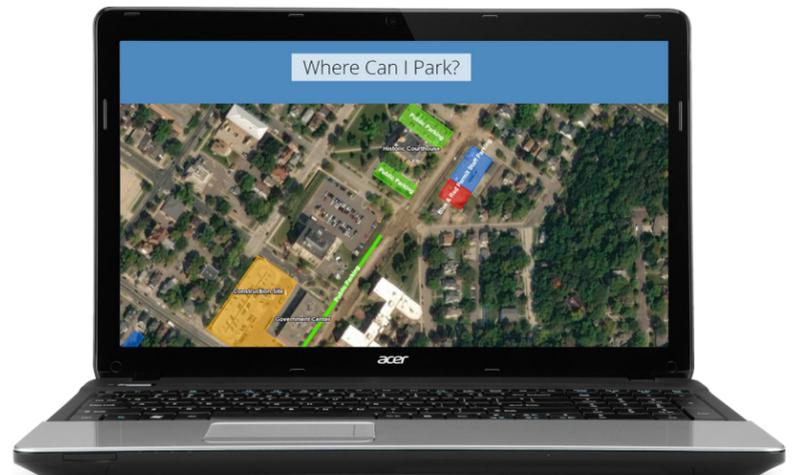
A new website features project updates and interactive maps to help keep you informed.

The Government Center expansion and renovation project, located at 410 S 5th Street in Mankato, continues to take shape. When complete, this multi-year development will feature a 344-stall parking ramp, 37,000 sq. ft. expansion, and renovation of the existing building.

Summer rainfall required nearly 150,000 gallons of water be filtered and pumped out of the site. Rain events will have less of an impact once concrete is poured for the parking ramp and drainage features have been installed. Concrete pouring has begun and will continue into early winter, with a ramp completion date in summer 2019. To date, weather has set the project back six weeks from its original completion date, but construction management is confident a majority of that time can be made up.

Despite setbacks, the overall timeline has seen positive changes. Since the project's introduction, an estimated seven months have been shaved off the schedule by moving from a floor-by-floor renovation to a single-phase renovation. This condensed timeline presents the additional challenge of displacing entire departments made up of nearly 200 employees who currently reside in the building. Some departments will move directly into their new space in the building expansion, while others will move temporarily offsite. The one exception will be the License Center, which will have its permanent space on the first floor of the renovated building completed early to keep the Center at its current location throughout the project. Completion of the renovation is scheduled for early 2020.

To give citizens access to timely information, a new website has been set up featuring construction updates and photographs, interactive parking and department location maps, and a flyover drone video. The site will be updated often with the most up-to-date information. To view the site, visit [www.blueearthcountymn.gov/GCProject](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/GCProject)



## Road Project Uses Specialized Method

Advanced processes are being used to help reduce project footprints and deforestation.

### County Road 12 – MN Highway 83 to Madison Avenue (County Road 17)

After beginning construction in July 2017, this \$7.5 million project is nearing completion. A three-lane segment from the MN Highway 83 roundabout through the new Hoffman Road roundabout is open to traffic up to Carver Road, offering eastern access to Hoffman Road and Prairie Winds Middle School. The remainder of the road, a four-lane section from Carver Road to the Madison Avenue roundabout, remains under construction. Crews are actively working toward completion of the remaining bituminous pavement, grading work, installation of street lights and signs, striping, and turf establishment, which should be completed this fall. When complete, the project will feature 1.8 miles of new County Road (CR) 12 roadway, roundabouts at MN Highway 83 and Hoffman Road, Hoffman Road connection between Prairie Winds Drive and CR 12, and bituminous trails on the east side of CR 12 and along the north side of Hoffman Road.

### County Road 1 (Old MN Highway 66) – County Road 9 to Mankato

This \$10.1 million project is the second of three staged project segments. Reconstruction of the road from CR 90 to the south city limits of Mankato continues through the fall of 2019, with the placement of geotextile fabric and soil surcharge fills between CR 9 and CR 90 anticipated to be completed in 2019. The new road will feature a 12' bituminous driving lane with segments of 8' shoulders with curb and gutter in urbanizing areas, and segments of 4' paved shoulders with an additional 4' of aggregate shoulders and ditches in rural areas.

To provide modern, safe access for our citizens, while respecting the road's historic aesthetic and natural values, this project features construction of Reinforced Soil Slopes (RSS) in three separate segments of the project north of CR 90. The RSS construction allows the county to construct tall embankments at 45 degrees and 70 degree faces, which significantly reduces the project footprint or right-of-way impacts, reduces deforestation of adjacent hillsides, and reduces how much required fill needs to be imported to build more traditional, flatter embankment slopes. The RSS construction uses layers of high strength geogrid reinforcement placed between 2' thick layers of specially graded sand faced with a geo-cellular confinement RSS face to construct the stable tall steep slopes. The project will also feature drainage improvements and ponding to reduce future erosion and drainage issues.



[www.blueearthcountymn.gov](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov)

**STAY CONNECTED**  
with Blue Earth County

Connect with us by mail at  
PO Box 8608, Mankato, MN 56002-8608  
or by submitting your comment online at  
[www.blueearthcountymn.gov/connect](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/connect)

# Food Resources

Food insecurity is defined as not having reliable access to safe, nutritious food and it's a growing concern in many communities and among many different populations. According to Feeding America, 12% of Blue Earth County (BEC) residents are food insecure, including children, seniors, working families, and even college students. Fortunately, there are resources available to help residents find healthy food in times of need:

## ECHO Food Shelf

**SERVES:** BEC & North Mankato  
**INFO:** Can visit 12 times/year for standard food assistance, plus once/week for ECHO Extras (fresh produce & baked goods)  
**CONTACT:** (507) 345-7508

## Campus Cupboard

**SERVES:** Mankato-area College Students  
**INFO:** Schedule a time to pick up groceries & personal care items  
**CONTACT:** (507) 625-6779

## Maple River Loaves & Fishes

**SERVES:** Good Thunder, Amboy, Mapleton, & Beauford  
**INFO:** Open Tuesdays 3-6pm and Saturdays 10am-12pm  
**CONTACT:** (507) 524-3046

## Meals on Wheels/Senior Dining

**SERVES:** BEC Seniors aged 60+  
**INFO:** Delivers hot meals and offers community dining sites  
**CONTACT:** (507) 625-8970

## Backpack Food Program

**SERVES:** All ISD77 Schools, BEC Elementary Schools, & Middle Schools in St. Clair, Mapleton, & Lake Crystal  
**INFO:** Provides food for kids to take home over weekends  
**CONTACT:** (507) 720-8511

## Fare for All

**SERVES:** Everyone  
**INFO:** Cooperative model saves 40% or more on groceries. Sales are held once/month at New Creation Church in Mankato  
**CONTACT:** (763) 450-3880

## Hot Meals on Wheels

**SERVES:** Mankato, Skyline, Le Hillier, & Eagle Lake (no age or income requirements)  
**INFO:** Delivers a nutritious noon meal each weekday for those who find it difficult to shop or prepare their meals  
**CONTACT:** (507) 387-4076

# Aquatic Invasive Species

## How we're helping to prevent the spread of AIS.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are not native to Minnesota and can cause recreation, economic, and ecological damage. According to the DNR, less than 7% of the state's more than 11,000 lakes are on the infested waters list, and some of those water bodies are in Blue Earth County. Ballantyne, Eagle, Lura, and Madison lakes have Eurasian watermilfoil, which displaces native plants and produces extensive mats of vegetation on the surface. Other AIS haven't entered the county but are a concern, such as zebra mussels, faucet snails, bighead and silver carp, starry stonewort, and more.

The two primary pathways for introduction of AIS are human-facilitated movement and surface water connections.

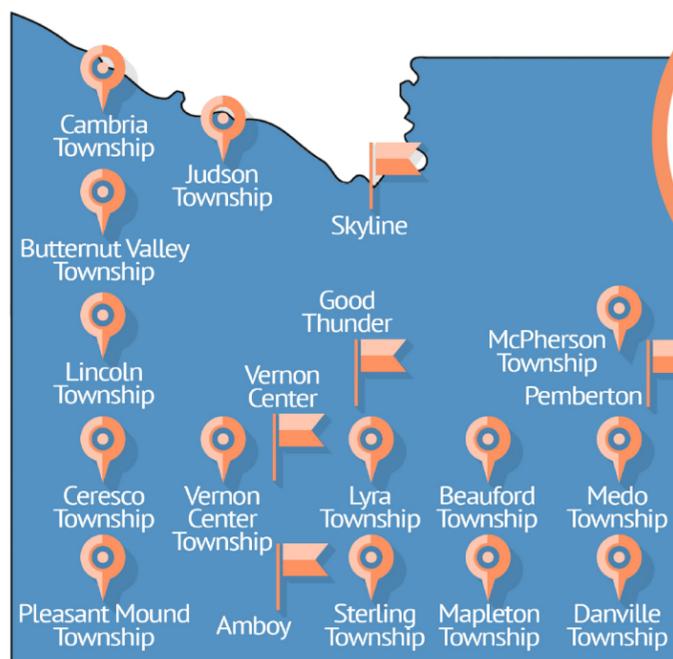
Human-facilitated movements happen when AIS is transported with watercraft and associated equipment from one water body to another. The county uses state-granted AIS Prevention Aid funds for watercraft inspections at public water accesses. Trained inspectors work at ten of the 23 trailer launches from fishing opener to the end of September to educate boaters and visually inspect equipment to prevent transport of AIS. During the busiest summer months, an inspector is scheduled to work at one or more lakes in the county every day. During the 2018 season, there were 2,454 watercraft inspections as of August 29.

Surface water connections are potential pathways for both large animals capable of moving upstream, such as bighead carp, and for AIS that can be passively transported between connected waters, such as eggs, larvae, seeds, or plant fragments. Lakes like Madison, with direct connections to rivers, are particularly at risk. To prevent migration of invasive fish from the Le Sueur River entering Madison Lake, the Minnesota DNR is installing an electric fish barrier on a stream to keep them out. This system doesn't kill the fish, but instead, electrifies the water so that fish avoid it altogether or are temporarily immobilized.

For more information on AIS and prevention methods, visit [www.blueearthcountymn.gov/AIS](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/AIS)

## MAIL VOTING IN BLUE EARTH COUNTY

### MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT



Anyone can vote early by absentee 46 days prior to Election Day. (Began Sept. 21)

If you live in one of these cities or townships, you vote by mail.



Be sure you're registered at your current address and name. Visit [www.mnvotes.org](http://www.mnvotes.org) to register.



All registered voters automatically receive a ballot approximately 46 days (September 21) before the election.



Follow the instructions. Be sure you sign your envelope. Be sure your witness completes their entire section.



Mail the ballot back in the postage paid envelope or deliver it to the Blue Earth County Elections Office.



Don't miss the deadline. Your ballot must be received no later than Election Day in order for it to count.

Questions? Mistake on your ballot? Didn't receive a ballot? Contact the

### BLUE EARTH COUNTY ELECTIONS OFFICE

Historic Courthouse, 204 South 5th Street, Mankato | Monday-Friday 8am-4:30pm  
 (507) 304-4341 | [bec.elections@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:bec.elections@blueearthcountymn.gov) | [www.blueearthcountymn.gov/elections](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/elections)

## DWI Officer Grant Awarded

Blue Earth County was recently awarded a DWI Officer Grant from the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). The award will support one full-time sworn officer dedicated to reducing DWI incidents. The grant covers personnel and fringe benefits and runs October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019. The grant is guaranteed for two years but are written for one fiscal year at a time. Following the two-year period, the county has the option of reapplying.

The DWI Officer's shift must be between 5pm and 5am, the time with the highest concentration of alcohol-related crashes, according to the 2016 Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts. In addition, the schedule requires two Fridays and two Saturdays per month along with a few high traffic holidays.

### Factors considered by OTS when awarding the grant:

-  Liquor Licenses
-  Population
-  Colleges
-  Yearly DWI Arrests
-  Calls for Service
-  Alcohol-Related Accidents

During the duration of the grant, OTS will monitor statistics, from the number of traffic stops to the disposition of those stops, among other things. OTS also requires quarterly statements to evaluate the usefulness and need for this position in the county.

# First Annual Fishing Event



This year marked the first annual Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office Youth Fishing Event, held on July 13 at Red Jacket Valley Park. Although the idea wasn't new, as agencies throughout the country have been hosting youth fishing events for years, the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office had never hosted an event of its kind. Sheriff Brad Peterson saw the opportunity to foster relationships between local Law Enforcement and youth, which can have a lasting impact on both the children and members of law enforcement.

Deputies Jeff Wiborg and Kyle Phillips spearheaded the event, garnering partnerships with local businesses who provided donations of rods/reels,

bait, tackle, and refreshments. Despite periodic rain prior to and during the event, 22 youth and parents/guardians attended. Sheriff's Office Deputies and Administration alike donated their time to assist with tying hooks, baiting lines, removing fish, and answering questions from kids.

The event was a success due to local business support, the hard work of the County's Park Department, Sheriff's Office staff who donated their time, and the community's support. Be sure to watch for details on the 2019 event!

## Supporting our Local Veterans

Blue Earth County and its residents have a long, proud history of military service; it also has a long history of supporting those who have served. The tradition of caring for those who answered the Nation's call is still strong today and is evident when you look at some of the area events put on to care for and recognize our veterans:

**Tee it Up for Troops** – This annual golfing fundraiser held at the Mankato Golf Club donates proceeds directly to local veterans in need and area veterans' service organizations.

**Stand-Down** – The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) is a state-wide, non-profit helping veterans and their families who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or struggling with a crisis. For 14 years, MACV's Mankato regional office hosts Stand-Down, a free event providing a meal, benefit counseling, legal assistance, and housing resources for veterans. This year's event will be held 9am-2pm at the Verizon Wireless Center in Mankato on October 20.

**Chilifest** – Encompassing all of Blue Earth, Nicollet, and Le Sueur counties, the South Central Beyond the Yellow Ribbon (BTYR), which has close ties with local National Guard and Reserve units, assists with various needs that arise from the rigors of training and deployment. They also assist with current and former Active Duty military men and women and provide help with vital services such as lawn mowing and transportation. Their annual Chilifest competition looks for the best chili made by businesses, charities, and individuals. Proceeds go to local Guard and Reserve members or veterans in need. This year's Chilifest is on November 17 from 11am-2pm at the Morson-Ario-Strand VFW Post 950.

In addition to these events, the Blue Earth County Board recently provided another example of the community's commitment to support by approving a \$10,000 donation towards the construction of a State Veterans Home in Preston, MN. Currently, there are five State Veterans Homes in the state; the Minneapolis and Luverne homes serve most of the Blue Earth County veterans. The need for long-term, skilled nursing care for our veterans continues to grow and the wait time for admission can be up to two years. With the addition of the Preston home, more rural veterans will be served.

By continuing to show our appreciation towards those who served, our community can fulfill part of a pledge that President Lincoln tasked the country with: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."

## Fall Watering of Evergreens

Help newly transplanted trees, especially conifers, by watering not just throughout the summer, but also up to fall. Evergreens can conduct photosynthesis throughout the year - even in late winter. If the air is relatively warm and the sun is out, the plant will "ask" its roots for water. If a tree's roots cannot replenish its needles' moisture, winter dieback can occur.

This damage was particularly present in Blue Earth County, where northern white cedar, a type of North American evergreen tree, showed severe symptoms in the spring. Often, it appeared as if the needles were torched. This damage was typically seen on the north or west facing side, where the winter winds stripped the needles of moisture.

By watering 6-8 inches down when it is above 60 degrees, you can lessen drying damage to your landscape. Try to do this as much as possible from summer until fall, allowing the soil to dry out before watering again. You may decrease your watering schedule during September to "toughen up" the tree, but resume your original schedule afterwards until solid freeze. In order to allow water to move through soil before low temps slow it down, it is best to water midday. Finally, avoid puddling water as this can cause ice sheets that harm your landscape.



## Be in the Know!

### Passport Photos

We're here to help you apply for a passport from start to finish, from supplying application paperwork to taking passport photos! Photos take just a few minutes and only cost \$15 (tax included). Want to save even more time? Avoid our busiest months - January, February and March. Visit [www.blueearthcountymn.gov/passports](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/passports) for more information.



### REAL IDs

REAL IDs are now available at the Blue Earth County License Center, but there's no need to rush out and get one right away. Minnesotans will be able to use their standard driver's licenses and ID cards for federal purposes, including boarding domestic flights, until October 2020. That means you have two years to obtain one, if you choose.

Keep in mind that when applying for a REAL ID compliant card, additional documentation is required compared to the requirements for a standard Minnesota driver's license.

For more information on REAL IDs and all of your ID and license options, visit [www.blueearthcountymn.gov/realid](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/realid)

## Vote Nov. 6

It's as easy 1-2-3!

- 1 Register.
- 2 Learn where you vote.
- 3 Vote early or on Election Day.

Visit [www.mnvotes.org](http://www.mnvotes.org) for more information.

# Proud of our Compliance

## County residents show strong commitment to water quality.

Landowners in Blue Earth County have been hard at work over the past two years becoming compliant with Minnesota's Buffer Law. To be compliant, anyone with property along public water (lakes and streams) should have 50 feet of perennial vegetation along the waterbody, and property along county drainage ditches should have 16.5 feet of perennial vegetation. Buffer strips are beneficial because they filter out nutrients and sediment before entering the water, help stabilize banks, improve water quality, prevent erosion, and provide wildlife habitat. The Buffer Law compliance deadline for public waters was November 1, 2017, and the deadline for public drainage ditches is November 1, 2018.

Landowners had many options to receive compensation for taking their land out of production, whether it was signing up for CREP, CRP, RIM, or, if available, electing for cost-share dollars.

The Blue Earth Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Blue Earth County Environmental Services have been working diligently to notify landowners about compliance, and the SWCD has helped landowners determine what options are best for them and in what scenarios. Much of the credit goes to the landowners for working so quickly and efficiently on getting their buffer strips planted.



There are 3,287 parcels in Blue Earth County that are on public waters. As of August 31, 2018, all but six have been planted or are working on planting them as soon as possible. This is a testament to the commitment the citizens and landowners of Blue Earth County have to water quality.

Anyone with questions or concerns that they might not be in compliance by the deadlines mentioned above is encouraged to contact Jake Fritz with Blue Earth Soil and Water at 507-345-4744.

## Upcoming Library Events



### Halloween Party

Saturday, October 27 • 10:30am

The Reptile and Amphibian Discovery Zoo will bring some "scary" creatures for kids to see. Then, trick-or-treat around the library during our costume parade!



### Ventriloquism and Puppetry

Saturday, November 10 • 10:30am

Shari Ellingson will bring her puppets to delight kids with puppetry and extraordinary ventriloquist skills - you'll forget what's real and what's not!



### The Magic of Christmas

Saturday, December 15 • 10:30am

Randy Christensen will blend holiday traditions with magic, juggling, audience participation, and much more during this incredibly fun show!

## Getting Involved: A Win-Win

We make decisions every day that affect the lives of our more than 67,200 residents. In order to make the most informed decisions possible, we rely on you, our citizens, to give input. So how can you get involved?

**Serve on a Committee:** Choose from nine boards, committees, and task forces ranging in areas from Mental Health to Recycling. Recommendations from these groups are brought to the County Board, providing direct participation by residents in formulating policy and evaluation of programs. Applicants must apply to serve, and the County Board appoints members. If you're interested, go online to [www.blueearthcountymn.gov/committees](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/committees) for more information.

**Attend an Open House:** Open houses are a great opportunity to share your thoughts and have your questions answered about an upcoming project. It also gives the county a chance to provide you with accurate information so you can understand how a project or issue could affect you. The information you share is noted and appropriate input is incorporated into project plans.

**Stay Informed:** We have multiple ways for you to connect with us and to get information about news, events, services, projects, and other county happenings. Visit our website, [www.blueearthcountymn.gov](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov), for everything you need to know about Blue Earth County 24/7. Our Facebook and Twitter pages help us engage directly with you every day. You'll find news, job opening information, and public interest pieces. We also have our County Communicator, which is sent to all county residents twice each year. Each edition lets you know what's happening in county government and how your tax dollars are spent.

**Sign up for Citizens Academy:** Get a "behind-the-scenes" look at county government! This seven-week program teaches you how each department serves the community and features tours of many county buildings.

## Winter Park Activities

Snow and cold doesn't have to stop you from enjoying Blue Earth County parks. Ice fishing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are just some of the ways you can continue savoring the great outdoors during the winter months.



Although the gate at **Red Jacket Valley Park** is closed October 31 to April 1, there is parking outside the gate and the park is open to foot traffic for hiking and ice fishing.



Snow is plowed for hiking on the **Red Jacket Trail** from Mankato city limits to Weagle Park, and removed from all of **Indian Lake Trail**.



**Williams Nature Center** is open for trail use during the winter, but is not groomed.

Finally, the landings at **Lake George, and Duck, Eagle, and Lura Lake** are kept clear for ice fishing traffic.



## Serving You

### Drew Campbell, Chair

District 1 Commissioner  
387-2408 (H) | 382-1374 (C)  
[drew.campbell@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:drew.campbell@blueearthcountymn.gov)

### Vance Stuehrenberg

District 2 Commissioner  
388-8129 (H) | 317-3942 (C)  
[vances@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:vances@blueearthcountymn.gov)

### Mark Piepho

District 3 Commissioner  
345-4380 (H) | 327-4161 (C)  
[mark.piepho@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:mark.piepho@blueearthcountymn.gov)

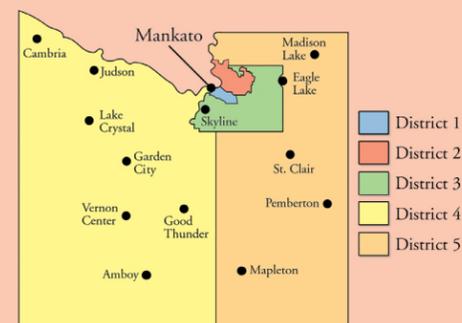
### Will Purvis, Vice-Chair

District 4 Commissioner  
549-3420 (H) | 317-5465 (C)  
[will.purvis@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:will.purvis@blueearthcountymn.gov)

### Kip Bruender

District 5 Commissioner  
257-2116 (H) | 382-2440 (C)  
[kip.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:kip.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov)

### Commissioner Districts



For more information on the County Board, visit [www.blueearthcountymn.gov/board](http://www.blueearthcountymn.gov/board)

### Brad Peterson, Sheriff

(507) 304-4800  
[brad.peterson@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:brad.peterson@blueearthcountymn.gov)

### Patrick R. McDermott, County Attorney

(507) 304-4600  
[pat.mcdermott@blueearthcountymn.gov](mailto:pat.mcdermott@blueearthcountymn.gov)