

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts - 2009 Annual Award Program
NEWS RELEASE



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Contact: Sheila Vanney, MASWCD Assistant Director, 651-690-9028

CRAIG COLBENSON RECEIVES 2009 MASWCD TEACHER AWARD

St. Paul, Minn.—The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) has awarded Craig Colbenson of Rushford-Peterson Schools with the 2009 MASWCD Teacher Award. The Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District nominated Colbenson for the award.

The award will be presented at the 73rd annual MASWCD convention, to be held Dec.6-8 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center, Duluth, Minnesota. This award honors a K-12 educator/professional teacher who has created innovative conservation education activities for reaching students.

In materials provided in support of the nomination, Fillmore SWCD noted that Colbenson has taught natural resources for 34 years in the public school system. He offers a Natural Resources course and Advanced Natural Resources course to high school juniors and seniors. The curriculum includes: aquatics, Minnesota wildlife heritage, Minnesota biomes, Minnesota's ecosystems, Minnesota's lakes and rivers, winter survival in Minnesota, tree and shrub identification, soils, insects and reptiles of Minnesota.

For each of the weekly Natural Resource course units, Colbenson works to get involvement from former students, members of the community, and government agencies, including the Fillmore and Root River SWCDs and many other natural resource related agencies at the local, state and federal level.

Colbenson serves as advisor for the Rushford-Peterson Envirothon team. The Envirothon, an outdoor environmental learning competition for high school students, has teams of students compete by visiting five learning stations and taking a 20-point exam on an environmental topic. The learning stations are focused on the topics of aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and a current event. The Rushford-Peterson team has won the Minnesota State Envirothon five times, advancing to the national Canon Envirothon. "These challenges allow students to expand their knowledge and confidence in themselves," says Colbenson. "I am very proud of their success knowing I have done my best in teaching them."

Colbenson not only brings the community into the classroom, he also brings the classroom into the community. Each year, teams of students present at functions such as Arbor Day, Earth Day, and the Lions Club. Students work yearly with Peterson Trout Farm to gain knowledge about DNR fisheries. After the devastating flood of 2007 in Rushford, Colbenson was in charge of the student involvement for five days of clean up and in the construction of the new Creek Side Park playground equipment. His students this year are developing a trail system throughout the park. Colbenson believes understanding our ecosystem and how we relate to it is very important.

Colbenson has seen several students go on to work in the field of natural resource management – a true testament to the impact his activities are having on the youth. He can rest assured that his conservation education efforts will have positive long-lasting effects.

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