



CONSERVATION TODAY

Sibley Soil and Water Conservation District & USDA

Winter 2024



2023 Conservationist of the Year

Every year we get the honor of recognizing someone from our County for their conservation stewardship. This year we would like to announce Ron and Leslie Weber of Winthrop, as the Sibley SWCD 2023 Outstanding Conservationist. Ron started farming on his own and milking cows in 1970. Eventually, he expanded his operation to 4,000 acres, while also furrowing and finishing swine. Today, being semi-retired, Ron and Leslie operate approximately 1,000 acres of cropland and wildlife habitat. They still raise animals, but now they raise and release pheasants. Ron first started working with the SWCD by planting a windbreak. Since then, the Weber's have participated in many programs. The Weber's interest in wildlife and reducing erosion led them to 19 active CRP contracts, including 232 acres of buffers, wetland restorations, and pollinator habitat. The Weber's were having some issues with their tile on one tract leading them to seek out different program options. As a result, the Weber's signed up and created a 21.2 acre agricultural wetland bank. Through the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Weber's have adopted numerous pest and nutrient management activities. Sibley SWCD has been very grateful for the Weber's advocacy of conservation programs throughout their community. The Weber's are a great example of conservation leaders, and the district would like to thank them for their dedication!



Sibley SWCD

Joel Wurscher,
District Manager

Jeremy Buckentin,
District Technician

Jack Bushman,
Water Resources
Coordinator

Tara O'Brien
Conservation Technician

SWCD Board

- Kathleen Thies - District 1
- Paul Wiemann - District 2
- Loren Evenson - District 3
- Wayne Grams - District 4
- Robert Nielsen - District 5

Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of
each Month
4 p.m.,
USDA Conference Room



USDA - NRCS

Jacob Stich,
Team Lead

Reyna Chavez
District Conservationist

Nicole Baumann
Agronomist

Office Hours

Monday - Friday
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.



Growing Success for Future Generations

Farming has always been a part of Travis Dahlke's life. Growing up on a farm, Travis learned early on of his love for farming. He always found a way to do it no matter where he was, even if it was growing produce for food shelves. His friends were always intrigued with what he would do next. It didn't take Travis long to realize that there was a lot of rich black soil where he grew up, influencing his decision to preserve that soil for future generations, like his children.

Trying to be astute to what people were doing, Travis and his family decided to try cover crops. "There is always that fear of doing something different," Travis said, "I grew up with conventional farming. It's what my dad did, it's what my grandpa did." Travis went on to say, "back then, dad and grandpa didn't know a lot of the science of what the roots were doing to the soil. Now we know more."

One of the barriers of implementing soil health practices for Travis was cost. If it wasn't for the cost-share program through the Sibley Soil and Water Conservation District, he doesn't think he would have been able to do the cover crops. Luckily, Travis heard about the cost-share program from a neighbor. Travis became the first contract under the new Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) cost-share program. Thanks to WBIF, Travis was able to implement cover crops on his corn and soybean fields. He also ventured out a little further and went with aerial seeding, which has not been common in this area. It was an exciting new experience for the Dahlke's and Sibley SWCD. His cover crop mix consisted of winter cereal rye, triticale, and radish. Dahlke's also have a State Cost Share contract for No-Till/Strip-Till.

Adopting best management practices can have many benefits like improving soil health, reducing pest and disease pressure, increasing yields, reducing erosion, improving water quality, and more. For the Dahlke family, the combination of cover crops and reduced tillage has provided some unexpected benefits.

"Sometimes the things that are harder to do are the right things to do. I didn't want to give up on it." -Travis Dahlke

The Dahlke family has gained more time to spend together, saved on fuel costs, and noticed an increase of wildlife presence. Travis was able to take advantage of this and took his son out hunting for the first time. Short term, Travis is hoping to see an increase in yields; long term, "remains to be seen," he said. "It shouldn't get worse, but should only get better over time." Travis mentioned that he would like to find different methods for seeding in his cover crop that he can do himself into soybeans. He also said, "we are always fine tuning what we are doing."

The Dahlke's enjoy posting their journey on social media. They said it is fun to let people take a look at what they are doing. Travis's advice for others is, "Talk to your SWCD and talk to your neighbors."



Travis with his wife and kids in their cornfield that was aerial seeded with cover crops.

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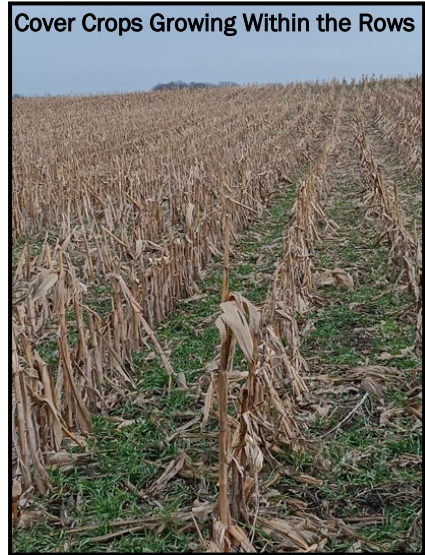
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Farmers are pretty quick to see what others are doing. Ask questions, be a student of it, see for yourself and do some of your own experimenting.”

Dahlke’s passion for farming and love for his family is evident. They have given him the inspiration to take on new challenges in hopes of improving and preserving the land so his kids and future generations will be able to benefit long after we are gone.

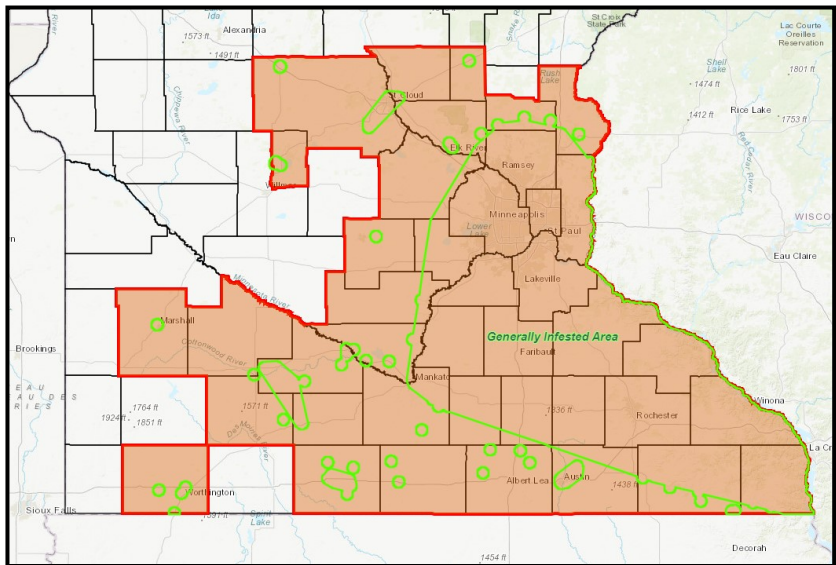
If you are interested in soil health cost share opportunities, call the Sibley Soil and Water Conservation District at 507-702-7077.

“You never know what the future holds, you have to prepare for it either way.” -Travis Dahlke



Emerald Ash Borer Update

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an invasive beetle that has been spreading throughout eastern Minnesota since its discovery near St. Paul, MN in 2009. EAB lay their eggs on ash trees. Once hatched, the larvae feed on the phloem of the tree creating S-shaped channels just beneath the bark. These channels disrupt the transport of soluble organic compounds made during photosynthesis, effectively girdling the tree from its food and causing death. Millions of ash trees have already been killed across the Midwest, eastern United States, and Canada. Minnesota has the highest volume of ash trees in the U.S. and unfortunately all ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.) are susceptible to EAB. As a result, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has placed a quarantine on all infested areas of EAB to help slow the spread.

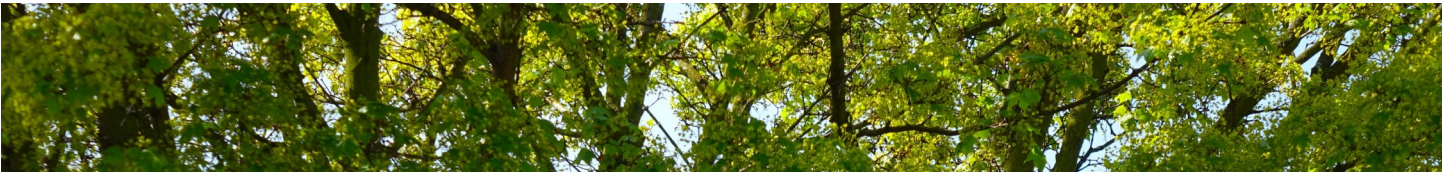


Quarantine Information:

The eastern portion of Sibley County has been designated as a quarantined area for EAB. It is illegal to move ash logs, tree waste, wood chips, mulch and/or firewood from any EAB quarantined area without a MDA certificate.

What can you do?

1. Don't transport firewood: Use locally sourced firewood or buy certified MDA firewood.
2. Cut down & replace or treat your ash trees: Sibley SWCD can help provide you with replacement recommendations through our annual Sibley SWCD Tree Program. Consider contacting an certified arborist to discuss the best course of action for your tree.
3. Watch for signs of EAB: Look for woodpecker damage, bark splits or visible larvae tunneling under the bark and report any findings to **Report A Pest 1(888)545-6684.**



Explore **SOIL HEALTH** Over Breakfast

FREE

DATE:

Thursday, February 8th, 2024

TIME:

8:30am – 10:30am

LOCATION:

Lafayette Community Center
540 7th St., Lafayette, MN 56054

Join us for a **FREE** breakfast as we explore soil health in **The Lower Minnesota River West Watershed with Guest Speaker Keith Hartmann**

R.S.V.P. by January 29th!

Call: 507-702-7077

Email: tara.obrien@sibleyswcd.org



Catered by Dave's Place

Eggs, Pancakes, Sausages, Coffee, and Juice

Sponsored by:

Lower Minnesota River West
HICWD McLeod Nicollet Sibley



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Program Updates

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The application deadline for CSP classic is January 12, 2024. CSP renewal deadline for 2025 is March 1, 2024. The Southeast Area is interested increasing the amount of forestry applicants.

FY 2024 applications (Renewals and Classic) will follow the Farm Bill 2018 MPL:

- MPL= "Multi-Year Payment Limit" for a specific program.
- Individual/Entity can only receive \$200,000 per Farm Bill for CSP.
- Partnerships/Informal Joint Ventures can have maximum \$400,000 contract but are limited per member/individual to only receive \$200,000 per Farm Bill for CSP.

Environmental Quality Initiative Program (EQIP)

EQIP 2024 Payment caps per individual/entity are set at \$50,000 for 19 practices (ex. Brush management, conservation crop rotation, ect.) The majority of EQIP practices have increased from 50% to 75% cost share.

National Initiatives include:

- Monarch
 - Now available statewide
 - Received \$2.6 million for funding
- EQIP Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)
 - Available to landowners statewide
 - For producers transitioning part or all of their operation to organic production
 - The Organic Management (823) practice must be included in the contract



If you have any questions regarding NRCS conservation programs, please contact **Reyna Chavez at (507)237-5435**.



2024 TREE/PLANT PROGRAM - ORDER FORM

ORDER #

Mail with payment to: Sibley SWCD, 112 5th St., PO BOX 161 Gaylord, MN 55334
Order Deadline: March 31st, 2024

office use
only

Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Conifer / Evergreen / Birch - Individually Potted

Type	Species	Size	#/Unit	\$/Unit	Quantity	Total (\$)
1 QUART CONIFERS & BIRCH	Black Hills Spruce	1 Quart - 8" to 12"	Single Pot	\$6.00		\$
	Colorado Spruce	1 Quart - 8" to 16"	Single Pot	\$6.00		\$
	Red Pine	1 Quart - 5" to 10"	Single Pot	\$6.00		\$
	Eastern White Pine	1 Quart - 5" to 8"	Single Pot	\$6.00		\$
	American Arborvitae	1 Quart - 6" to 12"	Single Pot	\$6.00		\$
	Birch Royal Frost TM (New)	1 Quart - 12" to 24"	Single Pot	\$6.00		\$
2 GALLON CONIFERS	Black Hills Spruce	2 Gal. - 18" to 24"	Single Pot	\$18.00		\$
	Norway Spruce	2 Gal. - 18" to 24"	Single Pot	\$18.00		\$
	American Arborvitae	2 Gal. - 18" to 24"	Single Pot	\$18.00		\$
	Eastern White Pine	2 Gal. - 18" to 24"	Single Pot	\$18.00		\$

Deciduous / Broad Leaf - Bundles of 25 Bareroot Seedlings

LARGE TREES	Black Walnut	12" to 18"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Sugar Maple	18" to 24"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Red Maple	18" to 24"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Swamp White Oak	18" to 24"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Red Oak	18" to 24"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Norway Poplar	18" to 24"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
SMALL TREES & SHRUBS	American Hazelnut	12" to 18"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Nanking Cherry	12" to 18"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Common Lilac	18" to 24"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Red Osier Dogwood	18" to 24"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Flame Willow	12" to 18"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Red Splendor Crabapple	12" to 18"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$
	Common Ninebark (New)	12" to 18"	Bundle of 25	\$38.00		\$

Native Seed Mixes

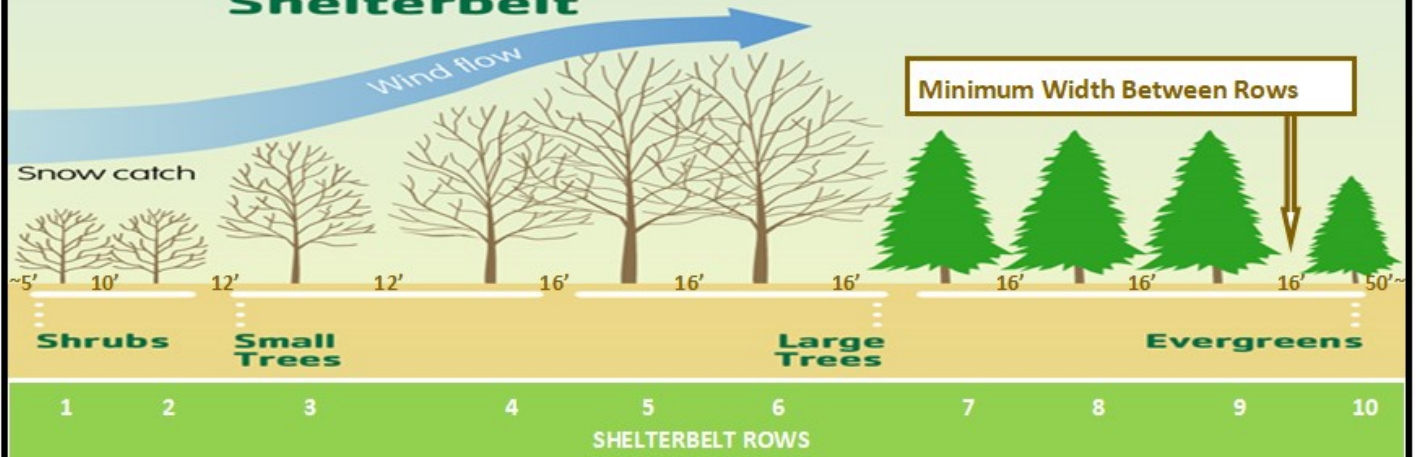
Pollinator Mix	Grasses, sedges and 30+ species of wildflowers. Best for dry to mesic soils. Height: 2-3'	1000 Sq. Ft.	\$75.00		\$
		5000 Sq. Ft.	\$235.00		\$
Septic Mound Mix	Designed to provide stable and attractive native ground cover on septic mound soils. Height 1-3'	1000 Sq. Ft.	\$65.00		\$
Mesic Prairie Mix	Mixed grasses and 15 + species of wildflowers. Medium to clay soils. Height 3-6'	1000 Sq. Ft.	\$60.00		\$
		5000 Sq. Ft.	\$145.00		\$
Shoreline/Wetland Mix	Short grasses/sedges with wildflowers for shoreline/wetland areas. Plant within 2' of waters edge.	1000 Sq. Ft.	\$110.00		\$
Savanna Mix	Grass, sedges and wildflower mix for part-sun sites with 25-50% tree cover. Height 2-4'	1000 Sq. Ft.	\$70.00		\$
		5000 Sq. Ft.	\$200.00		\$

Order Totals

Notice Payment is due in full at time of order, no refunds for orders cancelled after February 23rd, 2024. Plant availability and sizes are subject to change. Trees and seed will be available near the end of April 2024. You will be notified of your pickup day and time for your order via postcard. Please send order form with payment to: Sibley SWCD, 112 5th Street, PO Box 161, Gaylord, MN 55334.

SUB TOTAL	\$
SALES TAX <small>(Sub total x 0.06875)</small>	\$
TOTAL DUE <small>(Sub total + sales tax)</small>	\$

Cross-Section Of a 10-Row Shelterbelt



Shelterbelt Layout Strategy

Rows 1-2—Shrubs: Plants in these first rows are planted 3 to 6 feet apart within the row and 10 to 15 feet between the rows. (Lilac, Ninebark, Dogwood, Flame Willow)

Rows 3-4—Tall Shrub/Small Tree: Seedlings are planted 5-16 feet apart (Tall Shrubs)/8-16 feet apart (Small Trees) in the row and 12 to 16 feet from the shrub row. Row four should be 12 to 16 feet from row three. (Flame Willow, Cherry, Hazelnut, Crab)

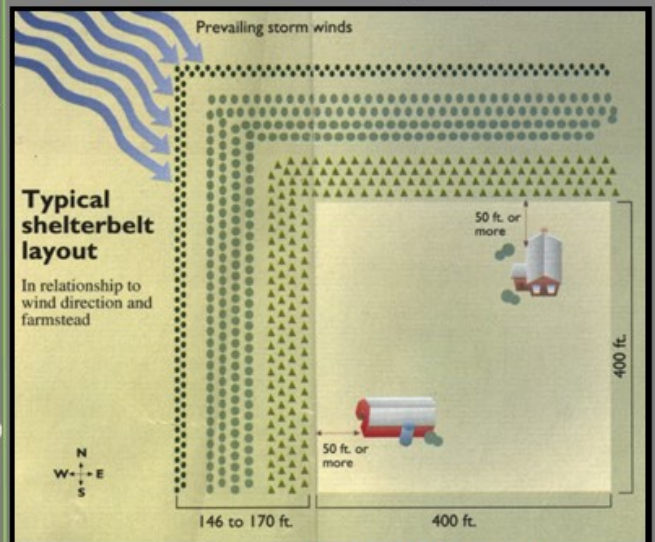
Rows 5-6—Tall Deciduous Tree: Row five should be spaced 16-20 feet behind row four. Row six should be spaced 16 to 20 feet behind row five. Trees should be planted 10 to 20 feet apart within the row. (Walnut, Poplar, Maple, Oak)

Rows 7-8—Tall Conifer: Row seven should be spaced 16 to 20 feet behind row six, and row eight, 16 to 20 feet from row seven. Trees should be planted 10 to 20 feet apart within the row (Norway Spruce, Red or White Pine)

Rows 9-10—Medium Conifer: These last rows are both located 16 to 20 feet from the previous row and trees are planted 10 to 20 feet apart within the row. (Black Hills/Colorado Spruce, Arborvitae)

Recommended Windbreak Designs by Width:

# of Rows	Min. Width	Rec'd Combination:
10 Rows	185 feet	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
9 Rows	169 feet	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10
8 Rows	153 feet	1,2,3,4,5,7,9,10
7 Rows	137 feet	1,2,3,4,7,8,9 or 1,2,3,5,7,8,9
6 Rows	121 feet	1,2,3,7,8,9 or 1,3,5,7,8,9
5 Rows	109-111 feet	1,2,4,7,8 or 1,3,7,8,9
4 Rows	93-99 feet	1,2,7,8 or 1,4,7,8
3 Rows	83-90 feet	1,7,8 or 7,8,9



Species	Type	Height	Width	Preferences
Black Hills Spruce	Conifer	30-60'	15-25'	Variety of soils
Colorado Spruce	Conifer	50-75'	10-20'	Well drained soils
Norway Spruce	Conifer	60-90'	20-30'	Variety of soils
Red Pine	Conifer	80-120'	20-30'	Well drained soils
White Pine	Conifer	80-130'	20-40'	Well drained soils
Am. Arborvitae	Conifer	15-35'	6-20'	Variety of soils
Black Walnut	Broadleaf	50-75'	50-70'	Variety of soils
Sugar Maple	Broadleaf	60-75'	40-50'	Loamy soils
Red Maple	Broadleaf	40-60'	30-40'	Variety of soils
Birch Royal Frost	Broadleaf	40-50'	30-40'	Variety of soils

Species	Type	Height	Width	Preferences
Sw. White Oak	Broadleaf	50-80'	50-80'	Variety of soils
Red Oak	Broadleaf	60-75'	35-45'	Variety of soils
Norway Poplar	Broadleaf	40-60'	20-35'	Variety
Am. Hazelnut	Broadleaf	15-18'	10-12'	Loamy soils
Nanking Cherry	Broadleaf	6-10'	12-15'	Loamy soils
Common Lilac	Broadleaf	8-15'	6-12'	Variety of soils
Redosier Dogwood	Broadleaf	7-9'	8-12'	Variety of soils
Flame Willow	Broadleaf	15-20'	5-15'	Variety of soils
R. Splendor Crab	Broadleaf	15-25'	15-25'	Variety of soils
Common Ninebark	Broadleaf	6-10'	6-10'	Variety of soils



Living Snow Fence

Each year, the residents of Sibley County can expect to receive an average of 30-40" of snowfall. Drifting snow, especially in the western portions of the county, commonly causes travel delays, school closures, and may even give rise to a sore back or two. Those who have lived through a few Minnesota winters can probably point out the areas where the worst snow drifts tend to occur. A living snow fence (LSF) may be able help control snow drift areas which can reduce maintenance and improve travel conditions.

Living snow fences are plants such as trees, shrubs and native grasses that are planted to form a wind barrier. This living barrier slows down wind and causes snow to deposit downwind of the planting, protecting property and roads from drifting snow. Creating a living snow fence is simple, all that is required is a suitable location with enough setback distance for trapping snow and a few rows of trees or shrubs. Yes, you may still get a sore back planting your trees, but at least you will only have to do it once.

Design Steps:

Identify your protection area and use a setback range of 100-250 feet (based on tree height) to allow for a snow catchment zone.

- Be sure to plan your LSF upwind (typically northwest) of your protection area.
- Snow drifts will collect 10 times the height of the living snow fence on the downwind side, ensure you provide enough room for the snow catchment zone.
- If possible, design your living snow fence slightly longer than your protection area to help control snow drifting on each end.

For managing snow distribution across a field to protect crops/soil:

- Row 1: Deciduous shrubs
- Rows 2 & 3: Deciduous trees or shrubs.

For protecting against blowing and drifting snow:

- Row 1 & 2: Deciduous shrubs
- Row 3: Evergreen trees
- Row 4: Evergreen trees/deciduous trees
- Row 5: Deciduous trees/shrubs combination

General tree/row spacing should be used as follows:

Shrubs	3-6ft within row	6-10ft between rows
Small Deciduous Trees	10-15ft within row	16-20ft between rows
Large Deciduous Trees	12-20ft within row	20ft between rows
Conifer/Evergreen	20-25ft within row	20-25ft between rows

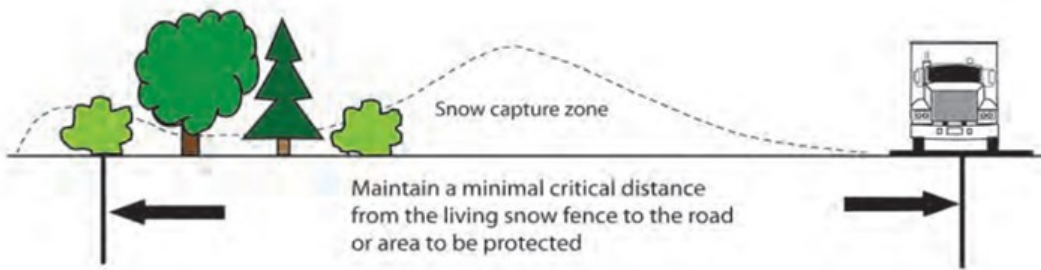


Illustration: Doug Wallace, NRCS

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