Beltrami County Mission and Values: We will strive to be the catalyst to firmly establish a community that promotes healthy families, environmental quality, expanding economic opportunity and a quality of life second to none.

Jail Steering Committee
to Aide in Addressing the Needs of the Beltrami County Jail

As Beltrami County moves forward to address the deficiencies within the Beltrami County Jail one of the first steps will be to gather a steering committee whose members will advise the Beltrami County Board of Commissioners on how to best proceed to insure the needs of Beltrami County are being met.

The Steering committee will be made up of ranking Sheriff’s Office personnel, the Beltrami County Administrator, the Beltrami County Auditor’s Office, two members of the Beltrami County board of commissioners. Also will be a representative from the Beltrami County Attorney’s Office, Bemidji Police Department, NW Indian CDC, County Facility Management, County Health and Human Services, the Minnesota Department of Corrections, and the Public Defender’s Office. The county is intent on also having Beltrami County residents included on the Steering Committee as well.

Each steering committee member will be required to attend several days of training sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections on how to plan each aspect of a correctional facility from its design, funding, meeting the needs of the community, architectural and engineering aspects, as well meeting the needs of the future.

Steering Committee members will also be assigned to sub-committees whose charge will be to address each of those individual aspects and report back to the steering committee.

The Beltrami County Board of Commissioners will soon be seeking residents to serve on the steering committee through an application process. The goal will be to find individuals that bring important perspectives to the jail study process.

The County is seeking citizens interested in serving on the Jail Steering Committee, or on one of several other committees that will be created. For information about what will be involved in this participation, and on how to apply for a committee see page 5 of this newsletter.

~Submitted by: Sheriff, Ernie Beitel

New Mental Health Crisis Center

The new Mental Health Crisis Center being planned is a joint venture between Sanford Health Bemidji and Beltrami County. Beltrami County received a $3.63 million bonding grant via the legislative bonding process and the Minnesota Department of Human Services and will begin work with Sanford Health of Bemidji to design and implement the new mental health program. Although construction has not started, partners are excited to get the project moving and look forward to the creation of a new mental health crisis clinic in Bemidji.

Our plan is to provide another avenue for people in the region to access mental health crisis services. The services will open up access to a specialty model of care in which people can come to when they are in a mental health crisis. In this setting, they will receive supportive services, get an assessment, and get recommendations for further service needs.

Currently, the project is being referred to as the Beltrami County Behavioral Health Crisis Center. The project has gone through some changes since it was initially proposed. The original plan would have provided a place for both youth and adults. However, due to funding changes, those original plans for the facility are altered to what they are today, which will be an eight-bed crisis facility for adults.

The cost of the project will be $3.63 million, funded through a state bond. The proposed location for the project is next to the current PrimeWest facility, which is located in the 3000 block of Hannah Avenue in Bemidji, not far from the main Sanford Health facility.

Part of the building will be the crisis component of the current PrimeWest program; the other will be similar to the medical emergency department where folks go to get screened and then triaged. The facility is expected to have eight beds and the average stay for a patient will likely be around 10 days.

In addition to reducing the number of people using the emergency room for mental health crisis, the facility will also be more welcoming with the intent of deescalating the crisis. A new addition to the program will be an Empath room, which stands for emergency psychiatric assessment, treatment and healing. The setting will be ‘homey’ with comfortable furniture, low lighting, healthy snacks, and immediate access to mental health professionals who will provide prompt services. The idea is that such a room will provide less intense stimulation and allow the patient to feel more comfortable, with the hopes of intervening and reducing the crisis in the first place.

~Submitted by: Health & Human Services Director, Becky Secore

Some of the information you will find inside includes:

- From the Administrator’s Desk: 2
- Highway Dept Road Awards: 2
- Aerial Imagery Project: 3
- Mail Boxes in Road Right-of-Way: 3
- Child Protection Services: 4

Homelessness & Community Health: 5
Recreational Trails & Funding: 6
Solid Waste Department Update: 7
SWCD & Environmental Service Programs: 7
Census 2020: 8
From the Administrator’s Desk

I am always amazed at how much more there is to know about county government, no matter how many years any of us has worked in this sector. It is completely understandable when a citizen tells us that they don’t know how something in the county works, because we are just a very complex organization. This newsletter has been a great tool in getting information out to the people we serve. However, it cannot begin to cover what we might think of as the tip of the iceberg, but that sure does not mean we won’t keep trying.

An important effort that has been taking place for more than a year has been centered on the need for more childcare slots in Beltrami County. A diverse group of large and small employers, educators, economic development staff, daycare providers and county staff formed, using a process called the Rural Child Care Innovation Program. (RCCIP) A significant focus for the group was to prop our current Child Care Providers up for success and to let them know how much the community values the work they do. We cannot exaggerate the impact that a good child care provider has on the children, families and community they serve! Another of several goals was to make in impact on the legislation and rules around the licensing of child care. In order to provide information to our area legislators, the group held a Legislative Panel last fall. Our Senators and Representatives heard directly from members of our collaborative and from daycare providers and asked many questions. I am really happy to report that Senator Paul Utke signed on as the Chief Author of Senate File 3292, with Senator Eichorn as an author. (At this point there is not a companion bill in the House, but we have assurances from Representatives Grossell and Persell that they will support such a bill) The Senate Bill has been sent to the Health and Human Services Finance and Reform Committee as of this writing, and we are very hopeful that it will get full support. If passed, it would provide much more flexibility to our child care providers as far as the number of children from different age groups that they would be able to accept into their care. We believe that this change would bring much needed relief in the number of slots available for infants, as that has been identified as the largest need. This effort and the potential legislative change is strong testimonial to the impact that engaged citizens can have to the legislative process. We are all really proud of the team that has been working on this issue.

Most county services do not change much from season to season. However, as spring approaches there are many county services that get into full gear. No doubt that after another Minnesota winter of harsh temperature swings that our pot-hole crews will be extremely busy. The Highway Department will be opening bids on the road projects to be done this year. Our parks and trails system will be in full swing, moving from the busy winter activities to warm weather activities. The elections division of the Auditor-Treasurer’s Office is definitely in high gear as they provide ballots and equipment for not only the Presidential Primary and annual Township Elections in March, but preparing for the Primary and General elections just around the corner. People are starting to come in for building permits and for addresses for new driveways. With many more things also “popping up” it sure feels like spring is just around the corner.

Fire Damage to Highway Department Shop

The Highway Department Obrien shop located west of Blackduck sustained major damage from a fire that happened overnight December 2. The cause of the fire was a short in electrical wiring on a tandem snowplow truck parked inside. Thankfully, the fire extinguished itself by running out of oxygen. The damage was not found until employees came to work the next morning. Four employees work out of the Obrien shop with 3 tandem trucks, 2 motorgraders, a backhoe, a skidsteer, and three pickups that are housed in this shop. 4 of those units were a total loss with the rest sustaining damage but were repairable. The building interior and salvageable contents will be cleaned. Damages to the roof, electrical, mechanical, and other furnishings will need to be repaired. Temporary facilities have been rented until repairs are completed.

For more information please contact the Beltrami County Highway Department at (218) 333-8173.

The Beltrami County Highway Department was recently presented with an award recognizing the excellence in engineering from the American Council of Engineering Companies. The study and design of the CSAH 7 (Division St) corridor which included the four roundabouts at the Jefferson, High School, Adams and Becida intersections, was given the Honor Award. The study and engineering was completed by Stonebrooke Engineering of Burnsville, MN.

The Beltrami County Highway Department was recently presented with an award recognizing excellence in asphalt pavements for 2019 from the Minnesota Asphalt Pavement Association and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The paving project on CSAH 15 (Irvine), including the roundabout, was determined to be the best in its class (County/Municipal (Rural State Aid) New or Reconstruct).
Aerial Imagery Project

Over the years, Beltrami County has found great value in having aerial imagery that is as up-to-date and of the best quality that we can reasonably justify and afford. Aerial imagery is used daily by many county employees in multiple departments. In local government, it allows for more informed, efficient, and equitable decision-making in areas such as natural resource management, environmental quality, zoning and land use, property valuation, engineering, surveying, and others. Aerial imagery has also become a widely-used tool in many businesses and by the general public, and many of you turn to the county’s online GIS maps to view the imagery for various purposes. For these reasons, Beltrami County evaluated proposals and has selected Quantum Spatial, Inc. (www.quantumspatial.com) to conduct a large-scale, high resolution aerial imagery project that will replace the county’s last high resolution aerial imagery from 2014.

How It’s Done

The imagery will be collected in the spring using manned aircraft equipped with digital cameras and airborne GPS. Essentially, a small airplane will fly back and forth across the county taking several digital photographs. The individual photographs then go through a process where they are geometrically corrected to adjust for topography, camera lens distortion, and camera tilt. This process is known as orthorectification, and the resulting product is known as an orthophoto. When stitched together, the orthophotos become what is known as an orthophotomosaic or orthomosaic. Google Earth images are a common example of an orthomosaic.

Ground Control Targets

An important part of a large aerial imagery project like this is establishing what are known as ground control targets. One of the most common types of ground control target is a large white plus sign (+) painted on a paved roadway, the location of which is then recorded by a survey crew. These plus signs are painted before the flyover takes place so that they can be seen in the aerial photos. They will be used to ensure the accuracy of the orthomosaic when it is produced. You may see a few of these ground control targets show up on area roads when spring arrives.

An Opportunity for Collaboration and Cost Sharing

Beltrami County is collaborating with other agencies who have graciously offered partnership funding for this project including the Red Lake Watershed District and the U.S. Forest Service. Also, through collaboration with the City of Bemidji, a higher resolution image will be made available that covers the geographic area of the City and Northern Township.

The new 2020 imagery is anticipated to be ready for use by the time fall arrives and it will become the new default imagery basemap that you will see on the county’s online GIS maps.

Mailboxes allowed in Road Right-of-Way

Beltrami County Highway Department strives to provide public right-of-ways that are safe, efficient, and free of unnecessary hazards. As per Minnesota Statute 160.2715 it is illegal to place objects in the road right-of-way. Examples of illegal objects are buildings, fences, signs, billboards, political signs, and retaining walls. Those objects are a safety hazard for errant drivers and for other users such as ATV’s and snowmobiles.

Mailboxes are the only structure that private owners are allowed to install within the road right-of-way. The mailbox installation and support must conform to State, County and U.S. Postal Service standards. All mailboxes placed within the public right-of-way are owned by the property owner, are placed there at the owner’s risk, and are the owner’s to maintain.

Mailbox supports shall be designed so that if struck it will bend or fall away from the striking vehicle to prevent severe damage or personal injury. Supports shall not be made of materials stronger than a wooden 4 x 4-inch post or a 2-inch diameter metal pipe that weighs more than three pounds per lineal foot. Massive supports such as telephone poles, heavy metal posts, concrete posts, antique farm equipment, or other similar items are prohibited. No other objects such as landscaping blocks or flower pots may be placed near the mailbox. The County Highway Department sells and installs swing-away type mailbox supports.

When the County is plowing roads and removing snow in front of mailboxes sometimes they are accidently hit. The County Highway Department will repair or replace properly installed and maintained mailboxes that are damaged by actual physical contact with a County snow plow. However, mailboxes damaged by snow are not repaired. The Highway Department will adjust speed when plowing to help prevent damage from heavy snow but sometimes damage is unavoidable. When replacing mailboxes, the Highway Department does not provide special mailbox installations or decorative designs. Damaged supports will be replaced with the Department’s swing-away type support.

SWCD 2020 Tree Program

Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District is currently holding its annual tree sale. The SWCD offers a variety of bare-root trees at low cost for conservation plantings. Seed mixes and plant plugs specifically designed for pollinators, songbirds, lakeshore, and woodland gardens are also available. Trees, plants, and seeds can be ordered now and picked up in the spring. Supplies of a number of species are running low, so be sure to place your order soon! Tree order forms are available in the SWCD office or online. For more information or to check availability call 218-333-4158.

“Submitted by: Highway Engineer, Bruce Hasbargen”

“Submitted by: GIS Director, Kevin Trappe”
It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to protect children whose health or welfare may be jeopardized through physical abuse or neglect. Beltrami County Health and Human Services (BCHHS) is the local agency responsible for assuring the safety of children. The vast majority of cases that are referred to BCHHS result in voluntary services. Many others are screened out because they fall short of meeting state established criteria. For the small percentage of cases that involve harm, egregious harm, or neglect, the Beltrami County Attorney's office will file what is known as a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) petition.

The respondent to a CHIPS petition (usually a parent or guardian) may be at risk of having their child(ren) removed from their home, but the ultimate decision regarding out of home placement is made by the Court. Neither BCHHS nor the Beltrami County Attorney's office has the authority to independently remove children from a home. We may present evidence to the court and advocate for a certain outcome, but ultimately, the court decides whether a child should be removed from a home. As Mr. Lind states in his article, police officers have the authority to place children on a temporary hold if they suspect abuse, but the child must be returned unless the court issues an order stating otherwise within 72 hours. The County Attorney's office does have the authority to overturn a police officer hold, meaning if we disagree with the hold, we can release the child back to the parent or guardian without presenting it to the Judge. However, if we agree with the hold, file a CHIPS petition, and a Judge agrees that a Child Protection Matter exists, then a CHIPS case is started with the Courts.

The parent or guardian who is the Respondent to the petition has certain rights, including, but not limited to, the right to an attorney and a trial. Cases are often settled whereby the parent or guardian agrees with some or all of the allegations in the petition. The parties then work to create a case plan and implement the appropriate services to remedy the underlying issues that caused the petition to be filed. Sometimes cases instead proceed to a trial, where we at the County Attorney's office are tasked with proving the allegations in the petition. The parent or guardian also has the ability to present evidence disproving the allegations. The Judge makes the ultimate determination as to whether the child(ren) are in need of protection or services, and what will happen in the future. Either way, after an admission, or after a trial, the ultimate goal of every child protection case is to work together to reunite the family. BCHHS must develop a plan and make reasonable efforts to reunify the child(ren) with their parent or guardian. In the case of Native American children, Federal (ICWA) and State (MNHPA) law require an even higher standard, and the agency must provide active efforts to reunify.

State law gives the local social services agency a maximum of one year to accomplish reunification. The State sets timelines on these cases, in part, because of a child’s need for a permanent living situation. Therefore, if the parent or guardian has not demonstrated to the Judge an ability to reunite with their child(ren) after one year, then the Judge will order the County to file what is known as a Permanent Petition. After a Permanency Petition is filed, the parent or guardian has the same rights that they have maintained throughout the case. The matter can proceed to another trial, as it could have when the CHIPS petition was filed, however, this time the trial is meant to determine if the child(ren) should be permanently placed outside of the parent or guardian’s custody. If the County is successful at trial, we always strive to place children with a suitable relative or family friend. If the child is Native American, input is always sought from the child’s tribe.

In closing, the protection of children from abuse and neglect is not something to be taken lightly. In Beltrami County we do everything possible to first prevent the necessity of a CHIPS petition by working with families voluntarily. Then, even if it is necessary to file a CHIPS petition, we do everything possible to work with the families to reunify. This is evidenced by the numbers. Of the over 1600 cases that were referred to BCHHS in 2019 only 52 resulted in children being placed out of home.

Submitted by: County Attorney, David Hanson
Addressing the Needs of Homelessness

It would be entirely impossible in a short article to outline all of the efforts in Beltrami County from agencies and individuals dedicated to ensuring all people have a safe place to sleep at night. What I can do is highlight on a few areas that the Northwest Minnesota Foundation is currently working on, with a focus in Beltrami County.

Bemidji Area Rapid Response to Homelessness

In October of 2018 the Northwest Minnesota Foundation (NMF) was made aware of community members concerned about the hungry and homeless population in the Bemidji area. Knowing there was a harsh winter ahead NMF convened leaders from across the community to develop a collaborative plan of action. In all over 100 organizations from the Bemidji area have signed on to be a part of this effort. Without Beltrami County staff and leaders, local housing support agencies as well as volunteers in the community none of this work would have been possible.

Through a set of planning sessions this group developed three main priorities; Build Community Awareness; Create Daytime Shelter and; Increase Evening Shelter Capacity. NMF awarded four grants to expand overnight shelter capacity at two area organizations and to add two complementary daytime shelters in the winter of 2018/2019.

NMF’s investment in these critical areas resulted in:
- 263 homeless individuals received assistance
- Support services were accessed 1,079 times
- Three organizations received grant funding from NMF to support evening and daytime shelter for the winter of 2019/2020
- In the Fall of 2019 a resource guide was created and distributed throughout Bemidji and the surrounding area including Cass Lake and Red Lake.

Family Support Network

Social service providers including Beltrami County staff, local housing and family support agencies, schools, and shelters are working together to reduce barriers for children, youth and families to achieve stable housing. The collaborative has been working to include those with lived experience throughout the development of the project.

This project currently has an open grant round with a focus on four areas meant to reduce barriers for children youth and families to achieve stable housing. Those four areas include mental health, life skills, addiction, and support systems.

There is also a variety of programs that benefit the entire region of Northwest Minnesota, but also provide resources to Beltrami County. Those interested in learning more about homelessness programming at Northwest Minnesota Foundation, open grant rounds, or obtaining copies of the Bemidji Area Housing Resource guides please contact Cory Boushee, Program Officer at NMF at coryb@nwmf.org.

~ Submitted by: Cory Boushee, Northwest Minnesota Foundation

Seeking Citizen Involvement in Jail Study and Response

Beltrami County is working toward addressing the needs for an updated County Jail. The county goal is to have a right sized jail that is designed to keep staff and inmates safe and secure, with programming designed to reduce recidivism. Goals of maximizing the efficiency of jail staff, reducing the long term operational expenditure, and improving programming for inmates can be achieved through proper design and programming.

The County is seeking citizens interested in serving on the Jail Steering Committee. Expectations for Steering Committee members will be to attend a 3 day training at the end of April, attend monthly meetings, and to be fully engaged in the process of research, discovery and problem solving.

Citizens may send letters of interest to the County Administrator by March 31. Letters should include information about what the "applicant" can bring to the conversations. Examples of experience: financing, building trades, building projects, cultural diversity – particularly Native American, corrections, citizen engagement, work with inmate populations (this is not an inclusive list)

Citizens that are not appointed to the Steering Committee will be considered for appointment to other Jail Study Committees.

Letters may be sent via e-mail to kay.mack@co.beltrami.mn.us or by regular mail to 701 Minnesota Ave NW, Bemidji, MN 56601.

Community Health Improvement Plan

Beltrami County has recently completed its Community Health Improvement Plan. A community health improvement plan is a long-term, systematic effort to address public health problems in a community. It is based on the results of community health assessment activities, and is one step in a process to improve community health.

The community health improvement plan is developed collaboratively with community partners, and defines a vision for the community’s health. A community health improvement plan guides the community health board, its partners, and its stakeholders on work to improve the health of the population within its jurisdiction. Community and government agencies use the community health improvement plan to set priorities, coordinate, and target resources.

Beltrami County Public Health takes the lead in developing a three-year community health improvement plan, working closely with Sanford Health and other partner agencies. The process begins with community assessment work, followed by a prioritization process. There were many priority areas identified, including substance use disorder, mental health, graduation rates, health behaviors/wellness, stable housing, families in poverty, child care, long term care for elderly, transportation, and parenting.

Many community partners have programming that address these priority issues in some way. In looking at the resources we have at Beltrami County in our public health, social services and economic assistance divisions, we will be focusing our internal efforts to help build and support Healthy Families and address Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health.

Our Family Home Visiting program currently serves over 40 families, and will be focusing on expanding our reach to support additional families. We partner with local counties, tribes, and community organizations to connect families to the services that will best meet their needs. Across Beltrami County Health and Human Services, families are connected to other services that help families become healthy and successful.

Beltrami County Health and Human Services staff support the First Steps to Healthy Families program in connecting pregnant women with resources to help them avoid illicit substance use during pregnancy and after delivery. At any given time, there can be as many as 25 referrals open to Beltrami County’s First Steps to Healthy Families program. One of the primary goals of the program is to keep parents and babies together and prevent out of home placement. Staff try to actively engage with clients to address safety and substance use concerns prior to the need for a higher level of child protection involvement.

~Submitted by: Public Health Director, Cynthia Borgen
Sheriff’s Office Programs

Boat & Water Patrol, Snowmobile Safety Enforcement, Off Highway Vehicle enforcement

Beltrami County has long been a destination for people wanting to enjoy all that the great outdoors has to offer. For many, enjoying the great outdoors means boating, snowmobiling and riding their OHV’s (off highway vehicles) and each of these comes with some very unique challenges for the Sheriff’s Office to make sure everyone has a fun and safe experience. To meet these challenges the Sheriff’s Office has a proactive Boat and Water Patrol, Snowmobile Safety Enforcement and Off-Highway Vehicle Program with enforcement efforts being partially funded through Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Grant. These grants enable the Sheriff’s Office to have dedicated Deputies assigned to each of these activities but also provides funding to purchase the necessary equipment including boats, snowmobiles, and OHV’s.

Grant funding to each Sheriff’s Office comes from the legislature as an appropriation to the DNR to be divided by each participating Minnesota Sheriff’s Office based upon a formula. As an example the state-wide OHV funding for 2020 and 2021 is $485,000 and the formula for each of Minnesota’s 87 counties is based upon:

- Public acres within the county (federal, state and county, combined)
- Public waters & wetlands within a county (since they are frozen or otherwise accessible by OHVs much of the year)
- Number of OHVs registered within a county
- Number of OHVs primarily used within a county, and
- County participation funding divided equally among participants.

For 2020-2021 Beltrami County’s grant amount is estimated to be $13,379.00.

For 2020-2021 Snowmobile Safety Grant the legislature has appropriated $315,000 and that formula is based upon:

- Public snowmobile trail and right of way riding miles within a county;
- Number of snowmobiles registered to residents living within a county
- Number of snowmobiles primarily used within a county,
- County participation funding divided equally among participating counties.

For 2020-2021 Beltrami County’s portion of the state-wide grant amount is estimated to be $7,938.00.

Boat and Water Safety Programs are formulated very similarly but offer more grant opportunities beyond the State Grant. US Coast Guard grants pay for equipment and special shifts that concentrate on days when additional boaters may be using the water ways. An example would be days around the Independence Day celebration.

The Beltrami County Sheriff’s Office would not be able to provide these services without the financial aid from the Minnesota DNR and US Coast Guard.

~Submitted by: Sheriff, Ernie Beitel

Beltrami County Recreational Trails

Natural Resource Management & The DNR

Beltrami County is home to many recreational trails. There are more than 630 miles of snowmobile trails, of which about 140 miles cross lands managed by the County Natural Resource Management (NRM) Department. The Department also manages 42 miles of horse riding trails, 33 miles of ATV trails, 27 miles of cross-country ski trails, 10 miles of snowshoe trails, and 8 miles of mountain bike trails. For safety reasons, trails are designated as single use but there is a 3.35-mile non-motorized multi-use trail in Three Island County Park that allows cross-country skiing, fat tire biking, snowshoeing, hiking, and dogs on the trail.

Most recreational trail clubs go through a process for their trail system with the Minnesota DNR to gain eligibility with the Trails Assistance Program, commonly known as the grant-in-aid (GIA) program. Grooming, trail development and improvement, maintenance, signs, maps, and informational boards are made possible through funding from local clubs, the GIA program, grants, and the many hours of volunteer labor.

These trails are maintained and groomed by volunteers from local recreational clubs and the completed work is financially supported by the GIA program. These local clubs include the North Country Snowmobile Club, the Bemidji Area Cross-Country Ski Club, the Go and Whoa Club, local mountain bike enthusiasts, and the Bemidji North-wood’s Riders OHV Club and the Timber Riders ATV Club.

The most recent maps for the county recreational trails at Movil Maze Recreation Area, Three Island County Park, Grant Creek Horse Camp, and Wilton Trails Northwest can be found on the Beltrami County website under Departments/Natural Resource Management/Parks & Recreation.

The relationship between the County, DNR, partners, clubs, and volunteers are essential to the success of the trail systems. Without them, the Beltrami County NRM Department could not offer diverse recreational opportunities or provide well-maintained facilities.

~Submitted by: Natural Resource Mgmt Director, Richard Moore
Beltrami County Solid Waste Department
A Department within Beltrami County Public Works

On December 16, 2019 the Beltrami County Solid Waste Department took over operations of the Blackduck and Bemidji Transfer Stations, as the contract with a private company had ended. The County goal was to improve services at our facilities, so doing by hiring operators, adjusting hours of operation, keeping the Transfer Station cleaner and orderly, and improving overall operations.

It is early in the county venture of operating this facility, but the general feedback from the public has been very positive. Below are a few of the comments that have been received.

Jan 13: Email County Administrator “I am a frequent visitor/user of the County Transfer Station—we really try to recycle and be responsible about our cost-off and trash. Mary and I have been remodeling since August and my visits have been even more frequent since then. I noticed quite a dramatic change for the better after the first of the year. The station is ever so much cleaner, organized, and the staff acts very professionally, welcoming, and helpful. I visited, briefly, with a young man staffing the station this morning and he gave me a brief update. Thank you as County Administrator and please extend my appreciation to County Board for their courage to take this important service seriously. I am certain that over time County residents will notice and appreciate the change.” Mr. Lynn C. Eaton

Jan 24: Note to Solid Waste Administrator: “I wanted to let the county know that it is really impressive to see the improvements that have already been made to the Bemidji Transfer Station. As a large church and school, we make many trips to the Transfer Station to get rid of things that are not part of the normal garbage or recycling. It is so much easier to come into the Transfer Station now and know where to put the miscellaneous items because of the good signs and the clean facility. We also want to say how good it is to have such friendly and helpful staff.” Brad Arel, Facilities Director at St. Philips Church and School

Feb 6: Email to Solid Waste Administrator “Good afternoon, I am a resident of Beltrami County and have lived off of Hwy 89 for the past 24 years and have used both of the transfer satellite stations located in Pinewood and Island Lake on a regular basis for dumping my garbage. Over the past 22 years I have had to deal with broken down trash compactors along with over filled roll off dumpsters with heaping garbage and it laying all around on the ground on a regular monthly basis at both stations. This was very frustrating for me and I wondered how the elderly residents dealt with this inconvenience. Now over the past year when Beltrami County has taken over this operation, they have cleaned up the station areas, leveled the sites, fenced the station areas, installed security cameras and have quality compactors that they maintain very well! The full garbage containers that hold both the garbage and recyclable are changed out regularly so there is always room to put more garbage and recyclables into the containers. It is nice to see quality refuse sites that are set up well for the residents of Beltrami County. Thank you!” Todd Sjorne, Resident

The county plans to continue improving operations and services. If residents have recommendations on how we can do better, we have a suggestion box in the lobby area the Bemidji Transfer Station and encourage you to use it, or you can call 218-333-8187 to speak to the Operations Coordinator. ~Solid Waste Director, Brian Olson

SWCD Forestry Cost Share

Beltrami County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) goes to great effort to find funding that allows private land owners to partner with the County on projects.

The more favorable of the cost-share options became available through a grant received from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities, Inc. This grant provides a cost-share opportunity to eligible landowners to reimburse 75% of the total cost of obtaining a Forest Stewardship Plan.

This is quite a unique opportunity in that it is available to any landowner who has property within the Mississippi Headwaters Watershed. Note that this watershed extends beyond the boundaries of Beltrami County. If you’re not sure if your property is within this watershed, check out the map (below) or contact our office.

The other opportunity for cost-share provides the landowner with 60% reimbursement for a Forest Stewardship Plan. This opportunity is available only to those landowners whose property is located in Beltrami County.

One benefit of having a plan is that it provides you with ideas of how to better manage your property. Those management goals are established between you and your forester. They could range from improving wildlife habitat to establishing a timber harvest, and more.

Additionally, once you have a registered Forest Stewardship Plan, there are a number of options that could actually provide you with some extra income. The two most common programs are the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act, otherwise known as SPIA, and 2c Tax Classification-Managed Forest Land. If you would like to know more about how these programs work, please contact our office, and we would be happy to assist you.

~Submitted by: SWCD Conservation Technician, Aly Bergstrom

Financial Assistance for Septic System Upgrades

Septic system replacement costs can be a major unexpected expense for a homeowner. Septic systems don’t last forever and will need to be replaced at some point. If you don’t have the money set aside for this expense we may be able to offer some assistance.

For the past 7 years, Beltrami County has received grant funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Clean Water Legacy to assist low income families with the repair or replacement of their failing septic systems. Since 2013, the County has dispersed nearly $160,000 in grant funds to assist homeowners with repair or replacement costs for their septic system.

We are happy to announce that grant funds for 2019 have been approved. If you or someone you know has a septic system that is failing, we may be able to offer financial assistance to help cover the costs of upgrading the septic system. Grants are limited and available on a first come basis. Grants are awarded based on income and may cover up to 90% of the cost of septic system replacement.

If you don’t qualify for a low income grant, we can still connect you with options for a low interest (3%) loan and we are exploring an option for the possibility of a lower interest or possibly no interest loan for septic system upgrades. Loans can be taken out for the entire cost of the septic system if needed.

If you would like more information regarding the grant and/or loan programs, contact Environmental Services Department at 218-333-4158 or email esd@co.beltrami.mn.us

~Submitted by: Environmental Services Director, Brent Rud
The goal of the 2020 Census is to conduct a complete and accurate count of the U.S. population. For the 2020 Census, individuals will for the first time be able to complete and submit their census on line. People who are unable to complete the Census online will again have the option to be counted by mail, over the phone, or in-person by a door-to-door Census taker.

By April 1, 2020, everyone will receive an invitation to participate in the Census. The invitation will give three options for completing your census form: 1) Online 2) by phone or 3) through the mail. To ensure you don’t miss the invitation, you can sign up to receive an extra reminder from the Census Bureau and they will send an email letting you know as soon as you can complete your Census form. The process for respondents is designed to be simple and convenient!

And remember, the Census Bureau is required by law to keep your answers confidential. That means they must protect your personal information and will never share it with any other people or organizations, inside or outside of government.

- March 12-20, 2020, people will be receiving an invitation to respond online to the 2020 Census and some households will also receive the paper questionnaire.
- March 16-24 Reminder letters to complete the census form will be sent. If you have not responded by March 26, a reminder postcard will be sent.
- Census day is April 1, 2020! If you have not responded by completing the census form online, by mail or over the phone, a reminder letter and paper questionnaire will be sent.
- April 20-27 a final reminder postcard is sent to all households who have not responded, this is the final postcard before the Census Bureau follows up in person.

A sample copy of the questionnaire is available on the United States Census 2020 website at https://2020census.gov

The data that will be collected by the 2020 Census are critical for states, counties, and communities. They will shape political representation, funding of government programs, the flow of business and commerce, and the planning and delivery of services to local communities. The Census has far-reaching effects, holding relevance to many facets of our everyday life in Minnesota.

**Representation**

Census data determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as the size of voting districts for state and local governments.

Minnesota is at risk of losing a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

**Funding**

Census data determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as the size of voting districts for state and local governments.

Even one missed person could mean forfeiting almost $28,000 in funding for the next ten years.

**Planning**

Census data determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as the size of voting districts for state and local governments.

With accurate demographic data about Minnesota, we can understand shifting community needs & efficiently direct resources to address them.

**Business**

Census data determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as the size of voting districts for state and local governments.

Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations across Minnesota gain valuable insights by using census data.

---

Beltrami County News and Highlights 1st Qtr 2020 page 8