When the Vierlings took on a more than 100-year-old farm house with ten acres of land, they agreed to start slow and just enjoy living in the country, closer to nature. By the end of their first year, however, they had chickens, a small herd of goats, and two llamas. “We actually got the llamas to protect the goats from coyotes,” Philip explains. Apparently the wooly animals serve well as guard dogs.

Shortly after moving to the farm, Philip and Becky also scheduled a site visit with the Washington Conservation District to learn more about what they could do to care for the land. Thirteen years later, they have planted trees to create windbreaks along the road and edges of the pasture and converted two acres of cultivated land to native prairie. They have even convinced three of their neighbors to plant prairie as well. In addition to their conservation efforts, the Vierlings have lovingly restored the farm house and barns, using recycled timber for a pasture fence and installing the original bell from Woodbury School near the barn. “We want to honor what Minnesota used to be like,” Becky explains, “Our goal is to steward the land and respect the heritage of this farm.”

Five years ago, the Conservation District contracted Philip while working on a project to protect Trout Brook, a nearby stream that flows through Afton State Park to the St. Croix River. “We could see the flags from those countries waving as we pulled into the driveway every day,” Philip explains. “We really wanted to see his conservation efforts reach beyond the edges of their property, so he convinced three neighbors to plant prairie as well, resulting in a total of 8 acres of prairie between the four households.”

For the Vierlings, owning a farm has been an opportunity not just to connect with nature, but also to nurture connections with friends, family, and people in their community. When they sell one of the goats, they donate the proceeds to help youth from their church go on mission trips. Philip himself has traveled to Estonia, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, in addition to hosting people from those countries at their home here in Minnesota. “We’re proud to demonstrate how to grow beans and vegetables on a small plot of land between their properties for their neighbors in conservation projects. According to Philip, he and Becky try to live by a few key principles, “Be a good steward. Live a life of gratitude. Appreciate the simple things in life.”

Outstanding Conservationist

Two llamas and a prairie

“For our 25th anniversary – the silver anniversary – we got a doe with silver ears and two baby goats.” Becky Vierling smiles as she talks about the small farm in Denmark Township that she and her husband Philip bought in 2003.
A Unique Approach to Bluff Stabilization in Lake St. Croix Beach

The lower St. Croix River is perhaps most beautiful in the fall, when the water reflects a ripple of colors – yellow, red and gold – from the trees along its banks. Having intact, native woodlands along the St. Croix is part of what makes the river a special place, worthy of Federal Wild and Scenic designation. Unfortunately, communities along the lower river often struggle to control bluff erosion without using armored rip-rap (large rocks) that many people consider an eyesore. Recently, the City of Lake St. Croix Beach worked with the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization and the St. Croix River Association to repair an eroding river bluff using an innovative technique that combines soil with rip rap so that trees and prairie can be planted into the rocks. The end result will stabilize the bluff, prevent dirt from washing into the river, increase bird habitat, and maintain natural beauty.

TRIVIA

Which apple varieties can you find at local apple orchards in Washington County?

a. Zestar!  c. Honeycrisp
b. Haralson  d. All of the above

Answer: D. To learn more about where to get locally grown apples visit www.minnesotasgrown.com

DNR FORESTRY STEWARDSHIP COST SHARE PROGRAM

Do you own woodlands in rural Minnesota? Are you looking to practice good forest stewardship on your land? A forester works with the landowner and develops a specific project plan to accomplish their goal. The landowner does the work themselves or hires it out to a contractor. After the work is completed and approved by the forester, the landowner receives a payment that should equate to roughly 50% of the cost to install the project.

Some project examples include tree planting, bud capping, crop tree release, tree tube installation, invasive species removal, silt wall control, wildlife habitat improvement, and forest road rehab. This year we will also be offering a payment to any landowner who gets a new, or updated, Woodland Stewardship Plan prepared for their property. Taking care of your woodlands benefits all Minnesotans by:

- Enhancing recreational opportunities such as bird watching, hunting, and fishing.
- Improving and protecting water quality.
- Enhancing wildlife habitat.
- Supporting a healthy forest products economy.
- Providing clean air.

The lower St. Croix River is perhaps most beautiful in the fall, when the water reflects a ripple of colors – yellow, red and gold – from the trees along its banks. Having intact, native woodlands along the St. Croix is part of what makes the river a special place, worthy of Federal Wild and Scenic designation. Unfortunately, communities along the lower river often struggle to control bluff erosion without using armored rip-rap (large rocks) that many people consider an eyesore. Recently, the City of Lake St. Croix Beach worked with the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization and the St. Croix River Association to repair an eroding river bluff using an innovative technique that combines soil with rip rap so that trees and prairie can be planted into the rocks. The end result will stabilize the bluff, prevent dirt from washing into the river, increase bird habitat, and maintain natural beauty.

TRIVIA

Which apple varieties can you find at local apple orchards in Washington County?

a. Zestar!  c. Honeycrisp
b. Haralson  d. All of the above

Answer: D. To learn more about where to get locally grown apples visit www.minnesotasgrown.com

DNR FORESTRY STEWARDSHIP COST SHARE PROGRAM

Do you own woodlands in rural Minnesota? Are you looking to practice good forest stewardship on your land? A forester works with the landowner and develops a specific project plan to accomplish their goal. The landowner does the work themselves or hires it out to a contractor. After the work is completed and approved by the forester, the landowner receives a payment that should equate to roughly 50% of the cost to install the project.

Some project examples include tree planting, bud capping, crop tree release, tree tube installation, invasive species removal, silt wall control, wildlife habitat improvement, and forest road rehab. This year we will also be offering a payment to any landowner who gets a new, or updated, Woodland Stewardship Plan prepared for their property. Taking care of your woodlands benefits all Minnesotans by:

- Enhancing recreational opportunities such as bird watching, hunting, and fishing.
- Improving and protecting water quality.
- Enhancing wildlife habitat.
- Supporting a healthy forest products economy.
- Providing clean air.

The lower St. Croix River is perhaps most beautiful in the fall, when the water reflects a ripple of colors – yellow, red and gold – from the trees along its banks. Having intact, native woodlands along the St. Croix is part of what makes the river a special place, worthy of Federal Wild and Scenic designation. Unfortunately, communities along the lower river often struggle to control bluff erosion without using armored rip-rap (large rocks) that many people consider an eyesore. Recently, the City of Lake St. Croix Beach worked with the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization and the St. Croix River Association to repair an eroding river bluff using an innovative technique that combines soil with rip rap so that trees and prairie can be planted into the rocks. The end result will stabilize the bluff, prevent dirt from washing into the river, increase bird habitat, and maintain natural beauty.

TRIVIA

Which apple varieties can you find at local apple orchards in Washington County?

a. Zestar!  c. Honeycrisp
b. Haralson  d. All of the above

Answer: D. To learn more about where to get locally grown apples visit www.minnesotasgrown.com

DNR FORESTRY STEWARDSHIP COST SHARE PROGRAM

Do you own woodlands in rural Minnesota? Are you looking to practice good forest stewardship on your land? A forester works with the landowner and develops a specific project plan to accomplish their goal. The landowner does the work themselves or hires it out to a contractor. After the work is completed and approved by the forester, the landowner receives a payment that should equate to roughly 50% of the cost to install the project.

Some project examples include tree planting, bud capping, crop tree release, tree tube installation, invasive species removal, silt wall control, wildlife habitat improvement, and forest road rehab. This year we will also be offering a payment to any landowner who gets a new, or updated, Woodland Stewardship Plan prepared for their property. Taking care of your woodlands benefits all Minnesotans by:

- Enhancing recreational opportunities such as bird watching, hunting, and fishing.
- Improving and protecting water quality.
- Enhancing wildlife habitat.
- Supporting a healthy forest products economy.
- Providing clean air.

The lower St. Croix River is perhaps most beautiful in the fall, when the water reflects a ripple of colors – yellow, red and gold – from the trees along its banks. Having intact, native woodlands along the St. Croix is part of what makes the river a special place, worthy of Federal Wild and Scenic designation. Unfortunately, communities along the lower river often struggle to control bluff erosion without using armored rip-rap (large rocks) that many people consider an eyesore. Recently, the City of Lake St. Croix Beach worked with the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization and the St. Croix River Association to repair an eroding river bluff using an innovative technique that combines soil with rip rap so that trees and prairie can be planted into the rocks. The end result will stabilize the bluff, prevent dirt from washing into the river, increase bird habitat, and maintain natural beauty.

TRIVIA

Which apple varieties can you find at local apple orchards in Washington County?

a. Zestar!  c. Honeycrisp
b. Haralson  d. All of the above

Answer: D. To learn more about where to get locally grown apples visit www.minnesotasgrown.com

DNR FORESTRY STEWARDSHIP COST SHARE PROGRAM

Do you own woodlands in rural Minnesota? Are you looking to practice good forest stewardship on your land? A forester works with the landowner and develops a specific project plan to accomplish their goal. The landowner does the work themselves or hires it out to a contractor. After the work is completed and approved by the forester, the landowner receives a payment that should equate to roughly 50% of the cost to install the project.

Some project examples include tree planting, bud capping, crop tree release, tree tube installation, invasive species removal, silt wall control, wildlife habitat improvement, and forest road rehab. This year we will also be offering a payment to any landowner who gets a new, or updated, Woodland Stewardship Plan prepared for their property. Taking care of your woodlands benefits all Minnesotans by: