

# Tom Maher Named Brown Soil & Water Conservation Districts' 2013 Outstanding Conservationist

The Brown Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) has named Tom Maher of Sleepy Eye as its 2013 Outstanding Conservationist for his dedicated service, conservation efforts, and accomplishments in Brown County.

Tom graciously accepted the nomination for the award in July, before passing away in August of 2013. Tom was a major asset to the district, and he served the citizens and landowners of Brown County well. He will be greatly missed.

In 1977 Tom graduated from Jackson Area Vocational Technical Institute with a major in Surveying and Engineering for Conservation Practices and went on to become an employee of the Brown SWCD, where he worked as the districts' Program Manager for 36 years. He also proudly served in the United States Army and the Minnesota National Guard.



Over the years, Tom assisted the district with the installation of at least 700,000 feet of terraces and 500,000 feet of windbreaks, among countless other conservation practices. Since the program's inception, he also assisted with acquiring 1,751 acres of perpetual Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easements, as well as 5,029 acres of perpetual Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) easements.

The largest and most memorable project of Tom's career was the installation of the Wellner-Hageman Dam in 1992. The project took years of planning and ended up costing over 2 million dollars. The structure is 56 feet in height and creates a pool of 69 acres with normal depth of 27 feet. The structure and adjoining park are located in the South West corner of the county and are still a huge success today.

Another big project Tom worked on was planting trees after the Comfrey tornado in the spring of 1998, where at least 44 rural homes were destroyed and 164 homes had major or minor damage. Tom assisted with completing 46 tree designs and 32 plantings consisting of over 14,000 trees, all within a one month period of time.

He said his biggest professional accomplishment was working the same job for 36 years and staying passionate about it.

Tom is father to Jason, Ryan, and Nicole and proud grandfather of Camryn, Aubree, and Braylen. He is also the beloved husband of his late wife, Helen. In his spare time Tom enjoyed spending time with his family, especially his granddaughters. With a passion for the outdoors and wildlife, Tom was an avid hunter. He participated in annual pheasant and deer hunting and also enjoyed a successful trip black bear hunting in 2012.

Within the community, Tom was a member of Pheasants Forever, Last Man Club of Vietnam War Era of St. Peter, and Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sleepy Eye.

Along with other Outstanding Conservationists from across the entire state, Tom will be recognized at the Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention in Bloomington this December. Tom's children will be invited to accept the award on his behalf.