

LOWER JAMES RC&D

RESOURCE
CONSERVATION
& DEVELOPMENT



"It was my understanding in talking with John that he envisioned the endowment fund being used for projects that benefited the greatest number of people possible", said Jim Lehi.

John Deppe's Lower James RC&D Memorial Fund

The Lower James (LJ) RC&D Council has a recurrent history of providing mini-grants to projects that are natural resource and community sustaining within their seven county area: **Aurora, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Sanborn & Yankton Counties**. From 1992 through 2009, with RC&D Coordinator **John Deppe's** leadership, 33 mini-grants worth \$29,400 were distributed to projects within the council area. dispersed Monies were raised by the council through grant administration fees & fundraising.

In November 2006, an endowment fund project was started by the LJ RC&D Council, setting aside a minimum of \$500/yr. as an investment. Only interest income from the fund project would be used to provide mini-grants for local projects in the area served by the LJ RC&D Council.

With **Mr. Deppe's** guidance, the LJ RC&D Council placed their endowment fund project into an endowment fund agreement with the South Dakota Community Foundation on December 8, 2008 to legally establish the "**LJ RC&D Council Fund**", with the Foundation serving as the fund manager.

What was it like to work with John on a project?



John Deppe was an invaluable asset; dedicated, reliable and instrumental in cooperating, coordinating, and collaborating with Turner & Hutchinson County cities as they "birthed" the Southeast Enterprise Facilitation Project (SEFP) in 1996/1997, according to Nancy Larsen, SEFP Facilitator.



"John was always interesting to work with because of his different viewpoint about almost all of our projects. We always ended our conversations, though, understanding each other's viewpoint", said Jim Lehi, Treasurer, LJ RC&D Council.

What did John envision the LJ RC&D endowment fund project to develop into and what was his passion for the project?



"John shared his passion in a quiet way, in a way that moved people to action. He

encouraged our RC&D council to strive for a means to help our counties provide a legacy for their future, a means to sustain projects even if national funding dried up. He drew in the experts to show us how an endowment fund could provide mini-grants for future generations and we, his council, moved this project forward with his assistance and that of his staff, Suzie Lampe. Without their guidance, their passion, their dedication to their careers we would not have been successful", said Laura Kieser, LJ RC&D Council member (past President).

RC&D lost a great friend when **John Deppe** passed away on May 27, 2010, at the age of 58 years.

On November 15, 2010 the LJ RC&D Council met, made and passed a motion, to change the name of the "**LJ RC&D Council Fund**" to "**John Deppe's LJ RC&D Memorial Fund**".

The LJ RC&D Council would be honored if all Western RC&D councils would work to establish their own RC&D endowment fund as a tribute to **John Deppe**, and to those good RC&D people from your own councils that have gone before you, providing an opportunity to allow their project to live on!

LOWER JAMES RC&D

RESOURCE
CONSERVATION
& DEVELOPMENT

Partnerships Serving America's Communities



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Wessington Springs Park Improvements

The City of **Wessington Springs, SD**, population 1011, is the Jerauld County seat located in east central SD along SD HWY 34. Their city logo is "Pride of the South Dakota Prairie". A 2003 June tornado wrecked major havoc to the mature trees found in the Wessington Springs City Park.

To address this damage and other community concerns, a strategic planning process was hosted by the Wessington Springs Area Development Corporation. A park improvement committee formed as a result of the planning process. During this community inventory (personal interviews, focus groups, and town hall meetings), **park development** and **beautification** were identified as top priorities by the community. The park improvement committee enlisted the assistance of the Lower James (LJ) RC&D to help with the planning process.

"We walked the park (hands on) with our park improvement team, a member of the forestry department, John Deppe, LJ RC&D Coordinator, and me to help

Community Benefit - It is the team's goal to create an attractive setting, which will encourage both tourist/camper visits while at the same time showcasing a vibrant community setting for families and businesses that are looking to relocate. Visitors, residents and businesses all contribute to a healthy local economy through purchases of local products and services, which generate local tax income and assist in local job retention and or job creation (the marketing team).

everyone get a visual picture of what our idea would become. John then worked tirelessly to help us obtain the funding to make our dream come to fruition", according to **Laura Kieser** Wessington Springs Area Development Corporation.

LJ RC&D assisted with grant writing for a SD DEPT of AG Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry Grant. The grant proposed one activity for Springs Park; **Site Preparation and Tree planting**: "The City of Wessington Springs, the Park Improvement Committee, and other committee volunteers will prepare the sites for planting, order trees, transport trees, and plant the trees based on the methods, species recommendations, and locations provided by the SD DEPT of AG Community Forester".

The value of the park to this community can be found in a **Springs Park** inventory, featuring: natural beauty in its wooded draws alive with native trees, Pony Hills rolling topography, a tournament quality

baseball field (David Jost Field), modern swimming pool, camping near a spring fed lake (Magic Mirror Lake), picnic area with pavilion, historic field house (**Works Progress Administration** project circa 1936) for meetings, tennis court, ice skating area, sledding hill, Old Grade Nature Trail, location of the area's first settler's cabin (Levi & Maribee Hain), and part of the area's multiple natural springs utilized by **Wessington Springs** for their community drinking water supply.



Old Grade Nature Trail Head