



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

**WRIGHT SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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SWCD board member, Chris Uecker, loading a drone to plant cover crops on his field.



SWCD staff member, Dan Nadeau, meeting with DNR on the North Fork Crow River.



SWCD Staff member, Michael Candler, meets with landowner to discuss project plans.

ABOUT US



SWCD Staff/board members at a day-long planning retreat where staff and supervisors reviewed and discussed many aspects of the SWCD operation in large and small group settings.

OUR MISSION

To be the trusted leader in natural resource conservation in Wright County.

OUR VISION

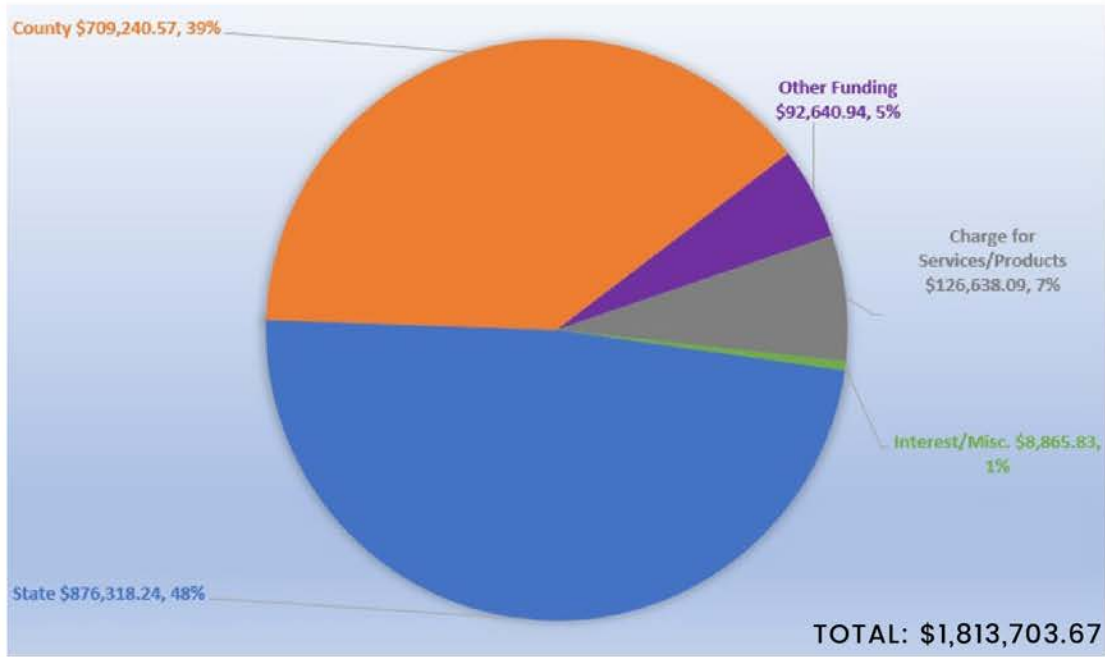
The Wright Soil and Water Conservation District Board envisions a changing Wright County. The District will be sensitive to the environment, citizen concerns and will foster a spirit of cooperation among all agencies and entities charged with the management of our precious natural resources.

As a catalyst for this vision, the Wright Soil and Water Conservation District will proactively influence, educate, cooperate and encourage the wise use of resources to maintain our high quality of life.

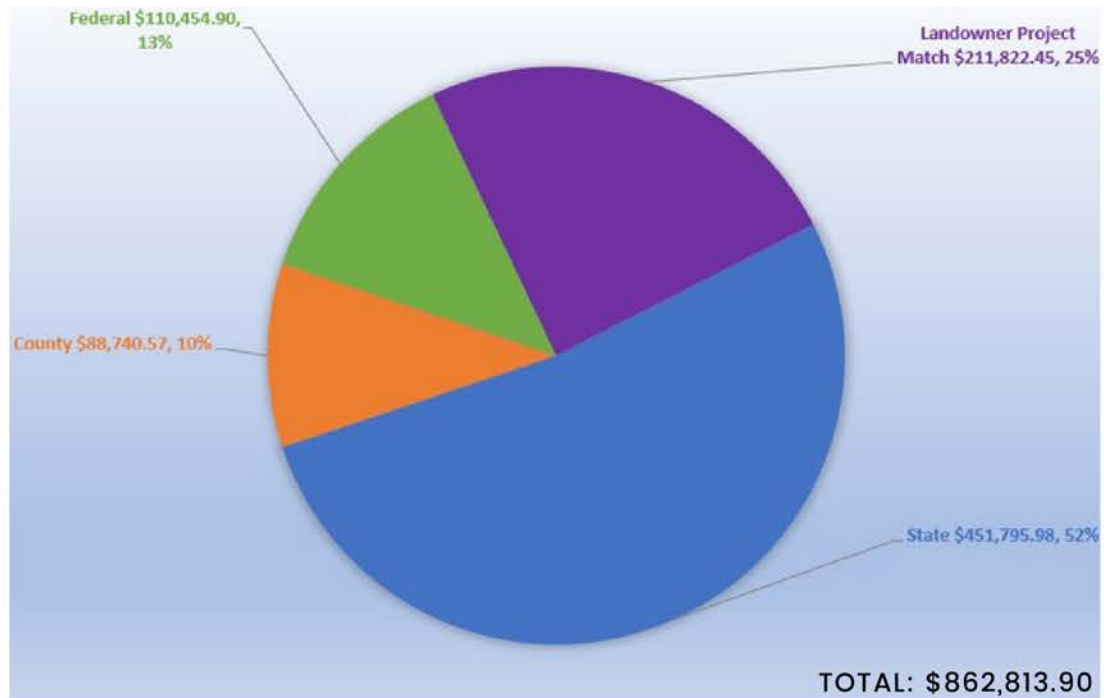
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Wright Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) does not have taxing authority, and relies on support from Wright County, which enables the SWCD to leverage and secure additional technical assistance funds and financial assistance funds for Wright County landowners.

WRIGHT SWCD REVENUES



PROJECTS AND AIS EXPENDITURES



FUNDS FOR DISTRICT OPERATIONS NOT INCLUDED IN CHART

SWCD SUPERVISORS

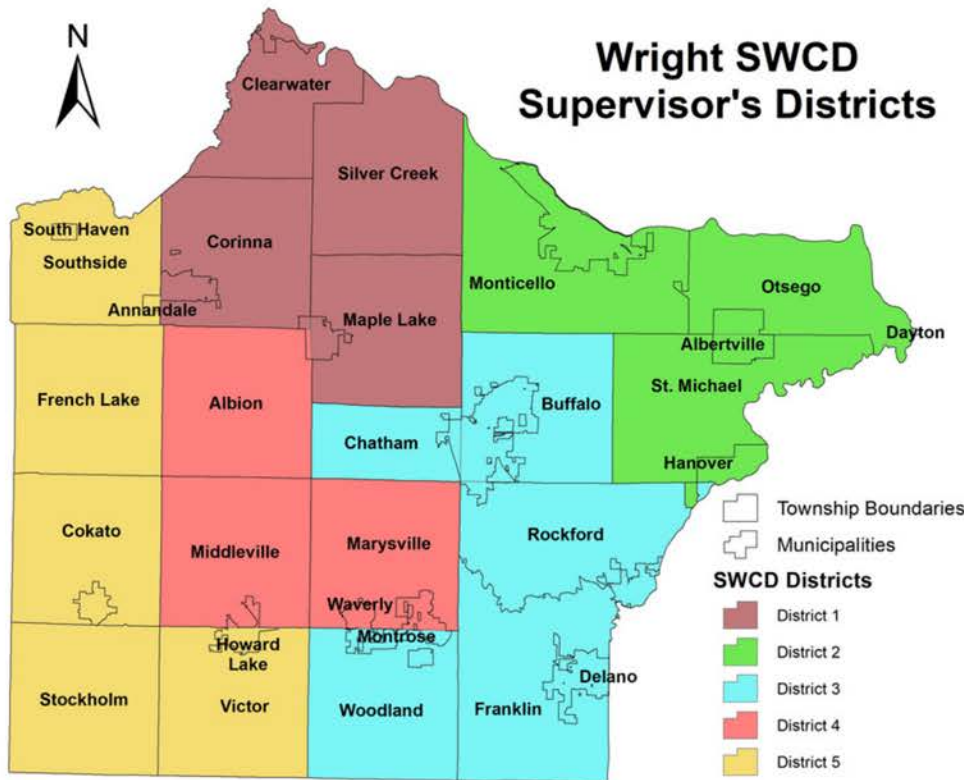
The Wright SWCD's Board is comprised of five Supervisors who are elected by nomination districts at the county wide general election.

Supervisor terms are staggered every four years.

Supervisors receive a per diem of \$75 per board meeting and meet once a month to review and approve District operations, set goals, policies, and priorities for the District.



Wright SWCD Board Members (left to right): Duane Dahlman (District 5), Jeff Burns (District 2), Bill Daluge (District 3), Chris Uecker (District 4), and Mike Zieska (District 1).



District 1
Mike Zieska

Annandale, Clearwater, Silver Creek, Maple Lake, Corinna

District 2
Jeff Burns

Monticello, Otsego, Dayton, Albertville, St. Michael, Hanover

District 3
Bill Daluge

Buffalo, Chatham, Rockford, Delano, Franklin, Montrose, Woodland, Waverly

District 4
Chris Uecker

Albion, Howard Lake, Middleville, Marysville, Waverly, Montrose

District 5
Duane Dahlman

Southside, South Haven, Annandale, French Lake, Cokato, Howard Lake, Stockholm, Victor

WRIGHT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Wright County Commissioners (left to right): Tina Diedrick (District 1), Jeanne Holland (District 3), Darek Vetsch (District 2), Michael Kaczmarek (District 5), and Nadine Schoen (District 3). Photo credit: Wright County.

Five Wright County Commissioners represent populations between 27,912 and 28,718 for their respective districts. As of 2022 the Wright County population is 141,337

The Wright SWCD thanks the Commissioners for their continued support and partnership in conservation.

SWCD STAFF

Wright SWCD staff work with private landowners and public partners throughout the county on various soil and water projects to enhance and protect our natural resources.

Soil & Water Staff Directory:

Alicia O'Hare | Water Management Specialist
Andrew Grean | Senior Wetland Resource Conservationist
Dan Nadeau | Senior Resource Conservationist
Eric Mattson | Conservation Technician
Luke Johnson | District Manager
Mike Candler | Natural Resources Engineer
Sandra Hesselal | Office Assistant



Wright SWCD Staff Members (left to right): Front row: Alicia O'Hare, Luke Johnson, and Andrew Grean. Back row: Eric Mattson, Dan Nadeau, Michael Candler, and Sandra Hesselal.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT



MAXIMIZING OUR SWCD

In the summer of 2022, the Wright SWCD Board initiated a strategic assessment to review District operations, including our mission, programs and staffing structure, in order to plan best use of District resources for the next five years.

To assist with this work, a consultant with previous organizational planning and SWCD work experience was hired.

To gather the information necessary to compile the strategic plan, a variety of methods were utilized including: individual interviews with all staff and supervisors, observation of staff in their work environment and a day-long planning retreat. Staff and supervisors reviewed and discussed many aspects of the SWCD operation in large and small group settings.

In addition to updating the District Mission Statement, three primary goals were identified: Enhance District Capacity, Target Beneficial Funding and Increase Awareness of Wright SWCD.

To best achieve the objectives within each goal, the Board adopted an updated organizational structural and a timeline to implement goal objectives. Portions of the 2022 Wright SWCD Strategic Plan have already been implemented with more planned for 2023 and beyond.

It is the District's intention to utilize this planning document to best meet Wright County's conservation needs.

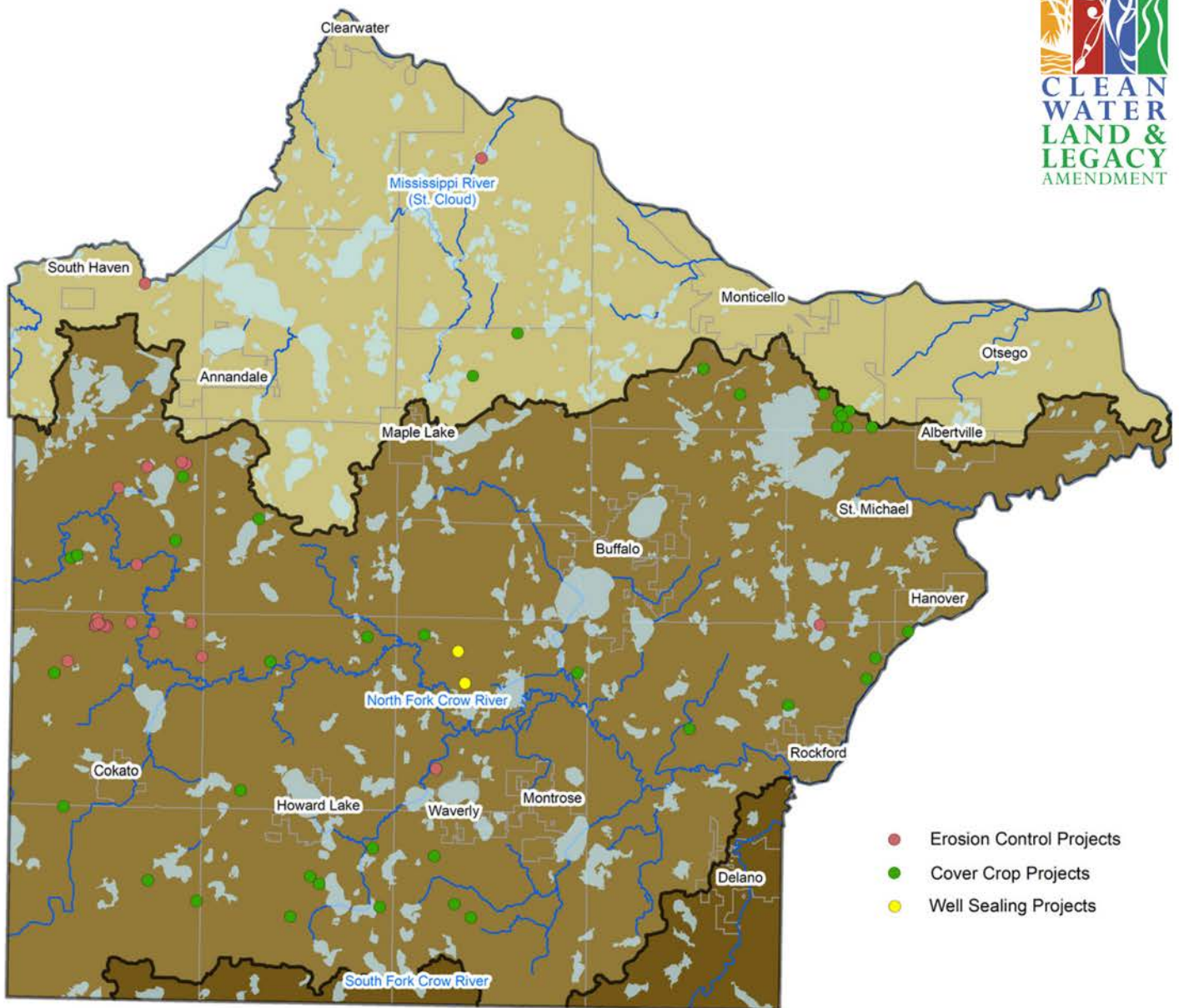


Wright SWCD Board review of the 5-year strategic plan.



District Board and staff work in small groups during the planning retreat.

2022 COMPLETED PROJECTS



Project locations within the three major watersheds in Wright County.

TOTAL REDUCTIONS

- Sediment (tons/year) 2,736.38
- Phosphorus (pounds/year) 3,397.82

LEVERAGED PROJECT FUNDING

- Local: \$210,661.82
- State Funding: \$239,597.35
- Federal Funding: \$55,012.54

TOTAL PROJECTS

- Water and Sediment Control Basins - 27
 - Grade Stabilization Structures - 9
 - Shoreline Restoration - 2
 - Well Closures - 2
 - Cover Crops - 20 contracts, 1,176.70 acres
- Total Project Funds: \$505,271.71

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

MAPLE LAKE COMMUNITY EFFORT

Maple Lake is an 862-acre lake located in north central Wright County. The lake has a relatively small drainage area, comprised of residential development, agricultural land, natural wetlands, and woodlands. The lake is a popular recreation lake, accessible by public boat launches on the northeast and southwest shores, and a productive fishery.

Maple Lake Property Owners Association (MLPOA), Les and Kitty Rasset, and lake property owner Gordy Paumen partnered with Wright SWCD to address agricultural runoff and soil erosion affecting Maple Lake.

On April 13th, 2022, five inches of rain fell in the area on top of frozen ground causing topsoil to erode and migrate onto neighboring lands downstream and into Maple Lake.

An analysis of the surrounding watershed showed that Les Rasset's 40-acre agricultural field was draining relatively unchecked into Maple Lake. The Wright SWCD worked with Les and Kitty Rasset to develop a combination of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to mitigate as much of the surface water as possible. A water and sediment control basin was constructed in his field allowing temporary ponding to slow water down without damaging crops.

A grade stabilization structure was installed along the edge of an actively receding gully to prevent more erosion from washing downstream.

Finally, Les planted a 100 foot wide buffer strip of orchard grass along the edge of his field to help slow water and filter out sediment while still allowing him to keep the land in production. The project will prevent the loss of topsoil and nutrients from the field, while reducing sediment and nutrient loading into Maple Lake.

PROJECT FUNDING & REDUCTIONS

- Project Cost: \$52,023.25
- Wright SWCD: \$39,017.43
 - North Fork Crow River IWIP: \$33,000.00
 - Wright County Project Funds: \$6,017.43
- MLPOA: \$13,005.82
- Sediment Reduction: 109.78 tons/year
- Phosphorus Reduction: 129.11 pounds/year

PROJECT DETAILS

- Year Constructed: 2022
- Components:
 - Earthen Embankments
 - Drain tile
 - Native Vegetation
 - Perennial Crop Cover
- Benefits
 - Sediment Reduction
 - Water Quality Improvement
 - Protection of Farmland
- Partners
 - Les and Kitty Rasset
 - Gordy Paumen
 - Maple Lake Property Owners Association
 - North Fork Crow River IWIP
 - Wright SWCD



Final construction plans.



During Constructing: Berm and installing tile at head of gully.



Finished: Cover crop is greening up on the berm.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Each year, the Wright SWCD participates in various outreach and educational events.

Wright SWCD provides outreach and educational opportunities to community members, landowners, schools, workshops, and tours.



Wright SWCD hosted a cover crop meeting on March 8th. Speaker Ben Dwire spoke about how he incorporates cover crop, reduced tillage, and cover crop grazing into his operation.



Wright SWCD hosted a tour of conservation practices on June 16th. One of the stops was at Mark Berning's cover crop field. In all, twenty five people attended, including Legislators, County Commissioners and staff, BWSR staff, and SWCD Board Members.



On July 20th - 24th, Wright SWCD had a booth at the Wright County Fair. Cover crop demonstration, AIS awareness, and a display of services available were all part of the experience this year.



Wright SWCD hosts an annual Wright Cooperative Weed Management Area meeting. It is a good opportunity for all the partners to review goals and then put together a good implementation plan.



Wright SWCD Board Supervisors and Staff attended the MASWCD Legislator Briefing Day at the Capitol on March 10th. This event gives SWCDs a chance to sit down with legislators and discuss successes in conservation and important issues regarding soil and water conservation.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

MINNESOTA AG WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



The first Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certified producer in Wright County in 2016, the Anderson Family.

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect Minnesota's water resources. Those who practice, implement and maintain approved management practices in all aspects of their operation, will be certified and earn State regulatory certainty for a period of ten years.

This program certifies farmers and landowners that manage the land within their operation in ways that protect water quality. Local conservation professionals assist those seeking certification through a three-step certification process.

Step 1: Application: Self-verification by the participant that they are meeting existing Minnesota laws and regulations regarding water quality.

Step 2: Assessment: Evaluation of each field throughout the crop rotation within an operation using the assessment tool.

Step 3: Verification: On-farm field verification by a MAWQCP certifier.



WRIGHT COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT AREA (CWMA)

The Wright CWMA was created in 2008 as a means for land managers within Wright County to collaborate on invasive weed management. The Wright SWCD cooperates with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), Wright County Agriculture Inspector, Wright County Highway Department, Wright County Parks Department, Townships and private landowners to control invasive weeds.

Due to its relative abundance and risk to public health, Wild Parsnip was the original target species. Recently, the CWMA has expanded its scope and resources to other terrestrial invasive species. Efforts continue to be made on previously recognized species, including Wild Parsnip and Leafy Spurge. Meanwhile, other species including Common Teasel, Oriental Bittersweet, Common Tansy, Non-native Phragmites and Wild Carrot have been acknowledged, and new efforts have been launched for education, outreach and continued control.



Leafy Spurge is a noxious weed on the MN Prohibited Control list. A small roadside infestation in Wright County continues to be monitored and controlled.



Non-Native Phragmites is a Noxious weed that was recently upgraded to the MN Prohibited Control list. Wright County Ag. Inspector, Taylor Osterberg, and SWCD staffer Eric Mattson performed some herbicide control in August 2022.

CWMA REPORT:

- \$5,274.55 funds utilized in 2022
- 6 contracts
- Total funds since 2008: \$82,410.47

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

MINNESOTA BUFFER LAW PROGRAM

In 2022, landowner communication regarding the State Buffer Law continued via phone calls and emails. Most communication was follow-up from previous contacts. Buffers with Notifications of Non-compliance (NONs) were assessed and communication with the County was had. The electronic tracking system, BuffCAT, was referenced for parcels needing spot checks. Approximately 20 buffers were field checked in fall 2022. BuffCAT was updated in December after the latest (2021) aerial photo review. Most parcels were found to still be compliant and were moved to the "monitoring complete" category.



Established buffer along a public water stream.

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)



Permanently restored prairie protects water resources and provides wildlife habitat.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a jointly funded program between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (MNBWSR).

This voluntary program permanently retires environmentally sensitive acres on private lands. Annual payments to agricultural landowners are established through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The same land is also enrolled into a perpetual conservation easement through the state Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program. CREP is implemented locally through Soil and Water Conservation Districts along with Federal and State partners. The land remains in private ownership and is restored and permanently protected for habitat and water quality benefits. In 2022, Wright SWCD continued communication with CREP landowners and performed site inspections. Through outreach, the Wright SWCD promotes the CREP program and pursues landowners who may be interested in enrolling.

FOOD PLOT SEED PROGRAM

The Wright SWCD partnered with The Wright County Chapter of Pheasants Forever and a local seed vendor to provide corn and soybeans to establish food plots.

FOOD PLOT REPORT:

- 250 bags of corn
- 180 bags of soybeans
- Established 570 acres of food plot



Wright SWCD staff member, Eric Mattson, and Meeker County Pheasants Forever Senior Farm Bill Biologist, Josh Pommier, pheasant hunt in Wright County with their dogs.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS



SWCD TREE PROGRAM SALE



In February 2022, the Wright SWCD distributed an informational packet including a program letter, Tree Order Form, Species Description Guide and 2022 New Species Info Sheet to all participants from the 2020 and 2021 programs, and others that requested the information.

The program was advertised in a local paper and on social media. About 450 preorders were filled on a first come, first served basis to Wright County residents and non-residents. There was strong participation in the program again this year with nearly 50,000 trees sold to 490 participants.

Two options of native seed packets were available for mesic or dry sites, containing over 35 species of native prairie grasses, sedges, and wildflowers. Two native plant kits: Shady Garden Kit, and Sunny Garden Kit were also offered for the program. Native plant kits contain 36 plants consisting of 6 species in 6-packs.

TREE PROGRAM REPORT:

- Trees - 49,425
- Prairie Seed Packs - 60
- Native Plant Kits - 66



Trees are packed and ready for pick-up.



Trees being sorted into bundles.



Delivery of native plant kits.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

DISCOVERY FARMS MINNESOTA

Did you know that the longest operating Discovery Farms farm runoff monitoring site is in Wright County? The Discovery Farm site at Sean Groos' farm in Howard Lake has been monitoring runoff water quality for 11 years! We have been able to keep this site going thanks to Sean's continued interest in trying something new. In the fall of 2021, following the harvest of wheat, Groos planted a 7-species cover crop mix (Figure 1). The mix winter killed and was incorporated into the soil in the spring of 2022 after snowmelt (Figure 2). Groos followed the silage with a winter rye cover crop.

If a field has cover crop in the spring the plants and roots help hold the soil in place. In 2012-2014, the last time the field had corn the sediment loading ranged from 976-2,367 lbs./acres (Figure 5). Fastforward to Spring 2022 with cover crops planted, the sediment loss was only 106 lbs./acre and 93% of the sediment loss occurred in May, after the soil was worked.



Figure 1: Field after cover crop has emerged.



Figure 2: Winter killed cover crop.



Figure 3: Corn coming along even without the rain.



Figure 4: Rye emergence after corn harvest Fall of 2022.

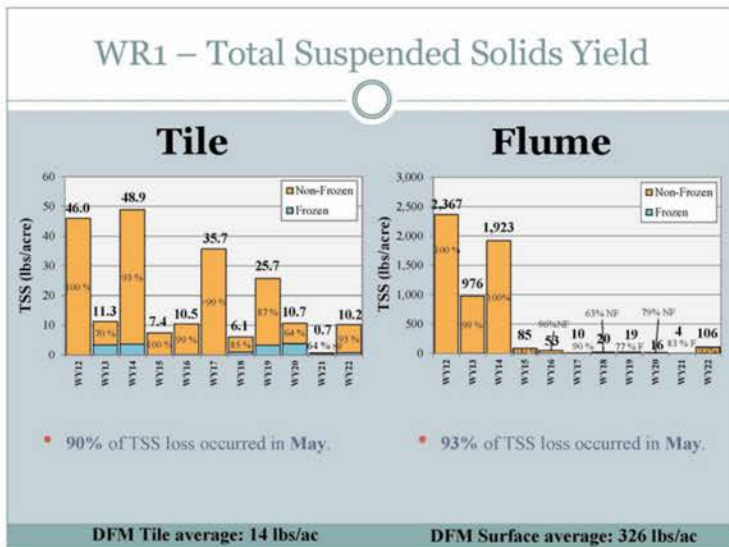


Figure 5: Annual sediment leaving the Discovery farm field. The drought reduced the yield in the tile in 2022, but continuous cover since 2015 greatly reduced sediment loss through the flume.

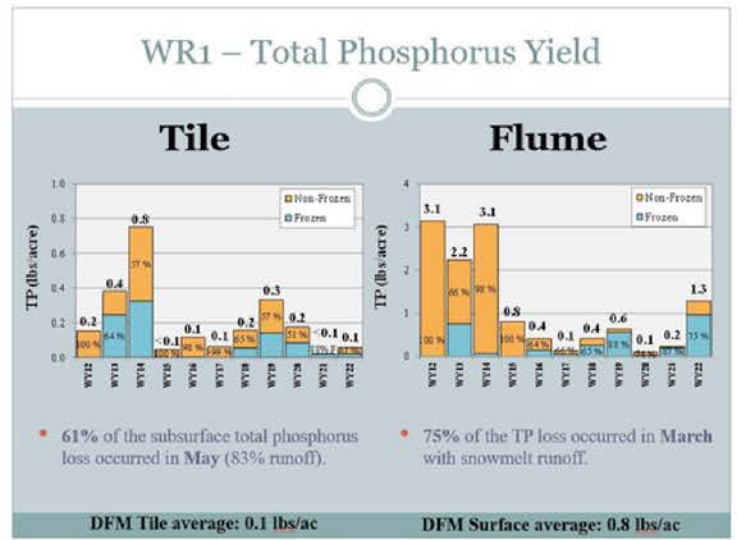
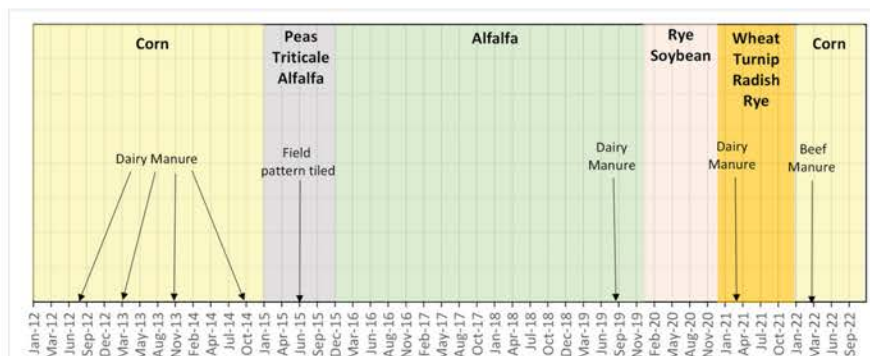


Figure 6: Most phosphorus yield leaves the field in March as result of snowmelt. Leaving crop residue on the field starting 2015 has slowed surface runoff.



Crop rotation, cover crops, and manure applied from 2012 - 2022.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

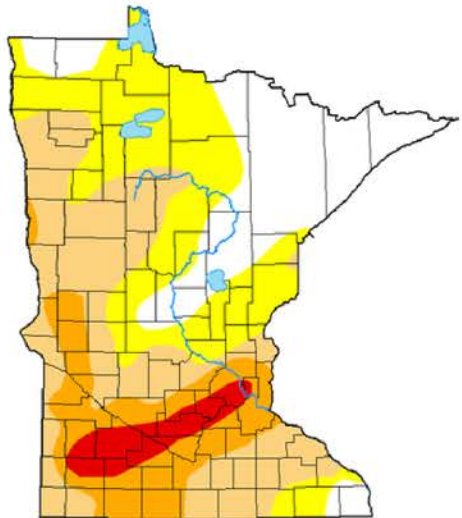
ROCKFORD MONITORING

Despite having a fairly wet spring, June, July and September were all well below average for precipitation.

Flows in the Crow River briefly approached flood stage in late May. But after that flows decreased to very low levels for the rest of the year.

Due to changes in funding Wright SWCD will no longer be monitoring at the site. However, Metropolitan Council will continue to monitor at the Crow River in 2023.

U.S. Drought Monitor Minnesota



December 13, 2022
(Released Thursday, Dec. 15, 2022)
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	22.50	77.50	48.11	19.13	4.88	0.00
Last Week	22.50	77.50	48.11	19.13	4.88	0.00
3 Months Ago	60.88	39.12	10.62	1.94	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year	30.22	69.78	38.55	9.28	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year	45.67	54.33	22.48	4.37	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago	29.11	71.89	48.86	26.58	1.36	0.00

Intensity

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/about.aspx>

Author
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National Drought Mitigation Center



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

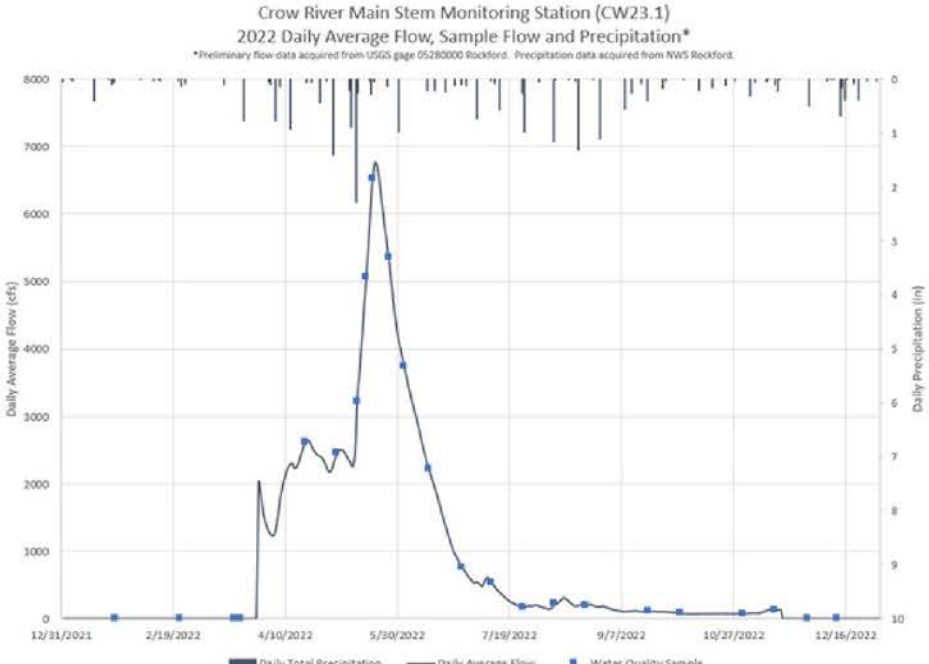
At the peak of the drought in mid-December nearly all of Wright County was in the moderate to severe Drought Category.



Wright SWCD staff member Alicia O'Hare wading into the Crow River to take a water sample.



Low flows on the Crow River in Rockford exposed several islands in September.



Above is the hydrograph for the Crow River at Rockford in 2022. Flood stage was reached for a few hours in the Spring, and then a lack of rainfall the rest of the year kept the flow very low. Image credit: Metropolitan Council.



A drone being used to interseed cover crops into standing beans. Interseeding can extend the window of cover crop growth to maximize the benefits gained.



Cover crops can reduce soil compaction by breaking the hardpan with roots and biological activity such as increased earthworm populations. Soil compaction testers are a handy tool to gauge levels of compaction in-field throughout the year and over time.



SWCD staff conducting an in-field assessment of soil conditions in a field planted with cover crops.

COVER CROPS

The Wright SWCD continued to work with producers experimenting with cover crops in 2022. Local Capacity, State Cost Share, and One Watershed One Plan funds were used to incentivize cover crop use, with higher payments rates for producers willing to interseed the cover crop into the primary cash crop.

Drought conditions persisted throughout the summer of 2022. Similar to 2021, area producers were forced to find alternative feed sources for their livestock. Area producers continued planting cereal rye after silage harvest with the intentions to harvest the rye for a supplemental feed source.

New to Wright County in 2022 was the use of drones for interseeding cover crops. Several producers utilized drones to broadcast cover crops into their primary cash crop. Interest in cover crops has grown in recent years with 2022 resulting in the greatest number of cost-share contracts and acres planted with cover crops to date. Cost-share payments totaled \$68,605 and nearly 1,200 acres of cover crops were planted.

The Wright SWCD commends the producers who have stepped outside of the "normal" farming practices to show that cover crops can be utilized in Wright County. The Wright SWCD will continue to provide technical support, funding, and be an overall resource for anyone interested in incorporating cover crops into their operation. The SWCD hopes to see continued growth in cover crop adoption and improved soil health throughout Wright County in 2023 and beyond!

WATER MONITORING

CITIZEN MONITORING

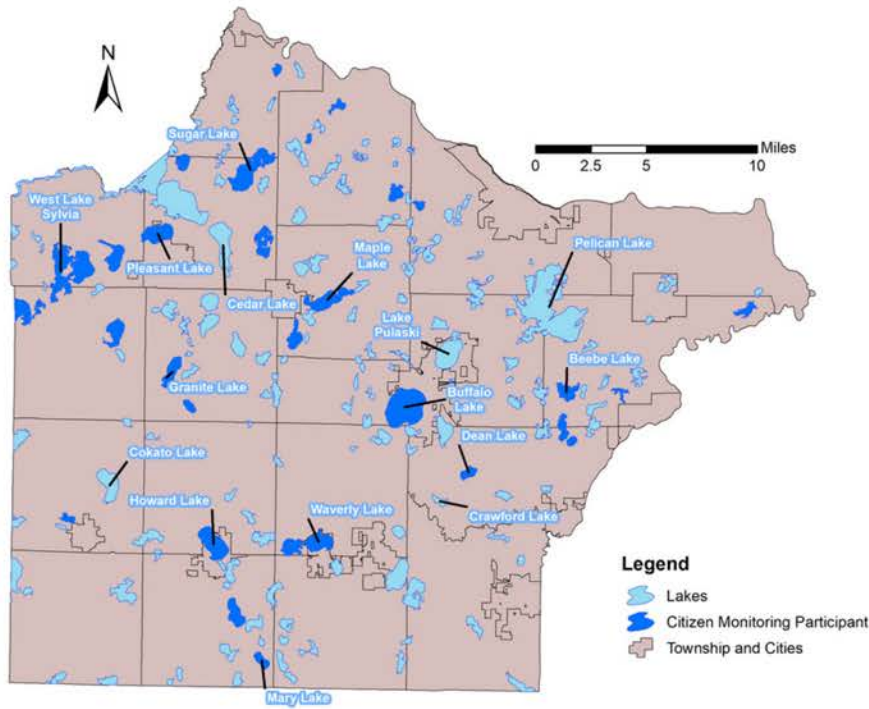


Figure 1: Lakes of Wright County that participate in the Citizen Monitoring Program shown in dark blue. Some lakes may monitor water quality through other programs or entities such as the Clearwater River Watershed District.

Thanks to dedicated citizen volunteers, 17 lakes in Wright County have 20 years or more of routine water quality data. Several other lakes have at least 10 years and more lakes are joining the program each year (Figure 1). Volunteers collect water samples at the surface of the lake five times throughout the summer.

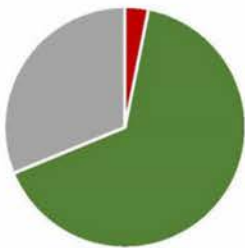
The samples and data are sent to RMB Environmental Laboratory, where they are analyzed for total phosphorus and chlorophyll-a. Each of these measures is an indication of the overall health of the lake, but it is the long-term trends that really tell the story. It's like when you get your cholesterol checked, one test is good, but a routine will help to know if it is going up, down, or remaining stable.

The data is used by SWCD staff to help prioritize work. If a lake is barely over the impairment standard and trending towards better water quality, we want to give lakes like that a little nudge toward being delisted. Same is true if we see a lake trending in the wrong direction, we want to work there to stop it from going over the impairment threshold (Figure 2).

Thankfully, most lakes in Wright County are showing improving water quality trends. It is gratifying to know that implementing projects like lakeshore restorations, rain gardens, cover crops, buffer strips, and more is having an impact on the waterbodies of Wright County.

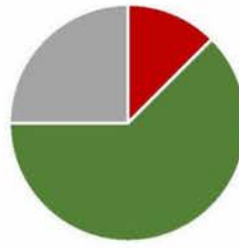


Total Phosphorus Trends



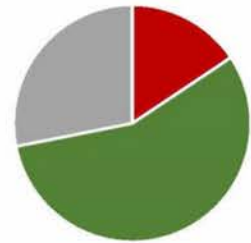
■ Declining ■ Improving ■ Stable

Chlorophyll-a Trends



■ Declining ■ Improving ■ Stable

Secchi Trends



■ Declining ■ Improving ■ Stable

Figure 2: Distribution of water quality trends in Wright County from 2002 - 2022 on 32 lakes. Most lakes show trends toward improving water quality (green), some have stable water quality (grey), a few do have declining trends (red).



TWELVE MILE CREEK FUNDING

WATERSHED APPROACH

The Twelve Mile Creek watershed covers 38,948 acres in southwest Wright County (Figure 1). There are several lakes and small towns in the watershed that is predominantly agricultural land. This area has been identified as a priority by Wright SWCD. To support conservation efforts in the area several sources of grant funds have been secured.

In 2022, the primary funding used was the American Rescue Plan. This fund is paying for in-lake monitoring and feasibility studies on five lakes in the watershed: Ann, Howard, Mary, Waverly, and Little Waverly. Freshwater Scientific conducted plant surveys to identify both native and non-native aquatic plant populations (Picture 1).

Several of the lakes are dominated by the invasive curly-leaf pondweed, which will also cause late season algal blooms.

Hired contractor Carp Solutions, conducted population surveys of carp in the watershed (Picture 2). Lakes: Ann, Little Waverly, and Howard all had levels of carp that may cause low water quality. The population data will be used to identify the best removal methods.

Wright SWCD staff took water quality samples on the five lakes to get detailed information on how the lake water quality changes throughout the summer (Picture 3). This data is being analyzed to determine if a large-scale treatment is feasible within any of the lakes.

Additionally, Wright SWCD installed several sensors along County Ditch 10 and Twelve Mile (Picture 4). The sensors monitor water levels and when paired with water quality samples they will provide information on the different sources of contaminants.

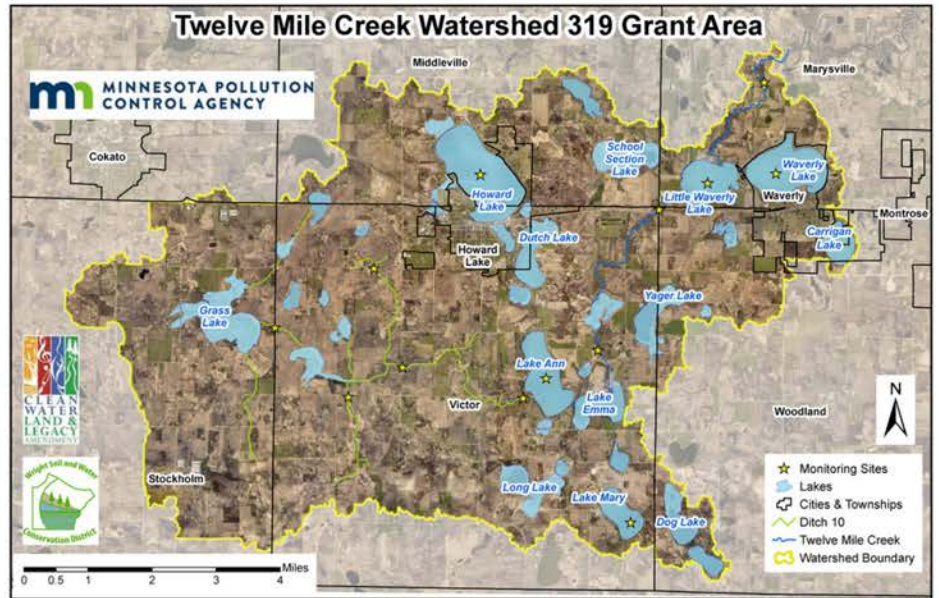


Figure 1: The contributing watershed to Twelve Mile Creek. Monitoring sites are on five major lakes. Additional monitoring sites are located along County Ditch 10 and Twelve Mile Creek.

Funds Available

- MPCA 319 - \$1 million over 16 years
- American Rescue Plan - \$530,000
- Clean Water Fund Grant - \$420,000

TWELVE MILE CREEK MONITORING

Picture 1 (top left): Freshwater Scientific staff use rakes and sonar to identify plants in the Twelve Mile Creek lakes: Photo credit: Freshwater Scientific.

Picture 2 (top right): Carp Solutions staff use electrofishing to capture and tag carp for population estimates. Photo Credit: Carp Solutions

Picture 3 (bottom left): Wright SWCD staff Alicia O'Hare and Summer Intern Emily Brown collect water quality information on Twelve Mile Creek Lakes.

Picture 4 (bottom right): Summer Intern Emily Brown by the computer box for water level sensors in Twelve Mile Creek.



AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

AIS PROGRAMING

Wright SWCD continues to administer the aquatic invasive species (AIS) inspection and decontamination program. Inspections check equipment for plants, animals, water, and mud to minimize the risk of an AIS introduction. They also educate boaters on best practices to clean, drain, and dry equipment before entering and when exiting waterbodies. The decontamination program offers complementary flushing and high pressure, hot water cleaning of watercraft to reduce the spread of AIS.

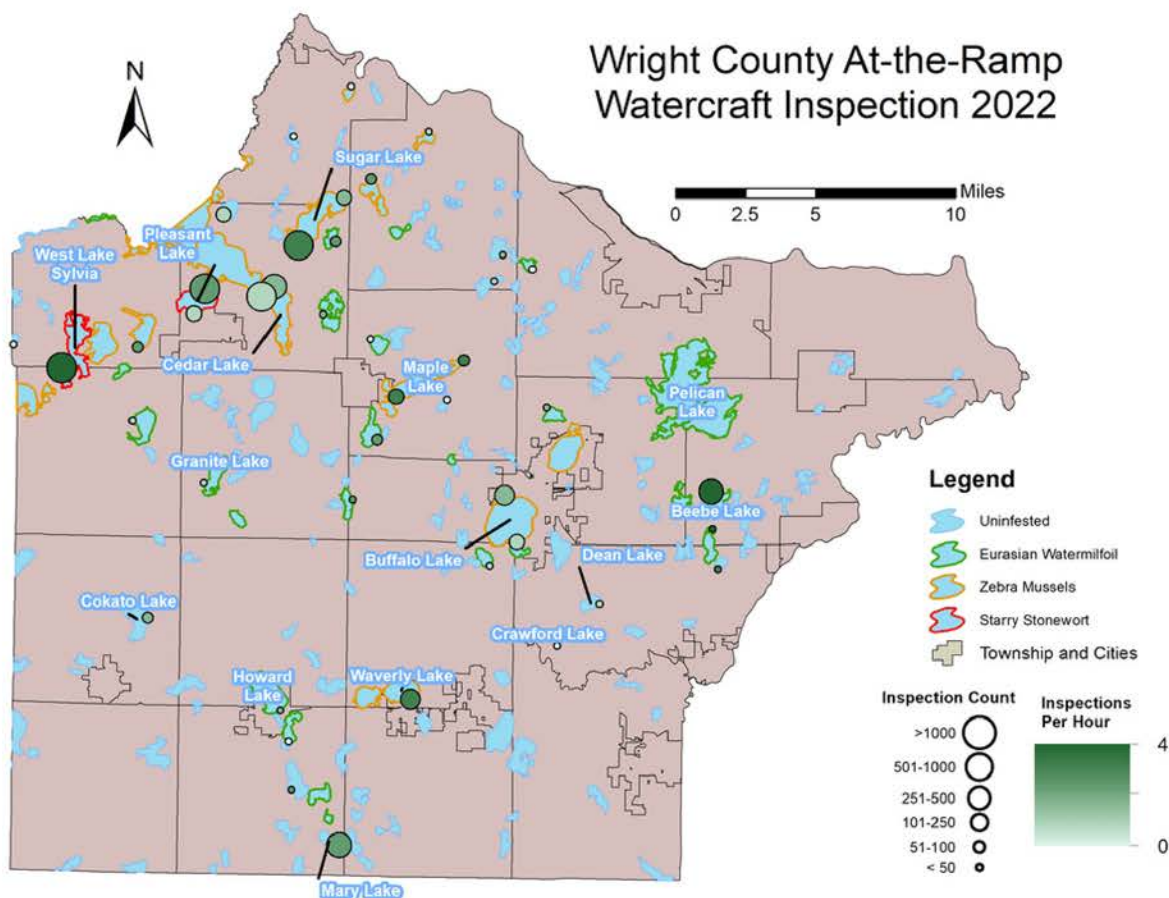
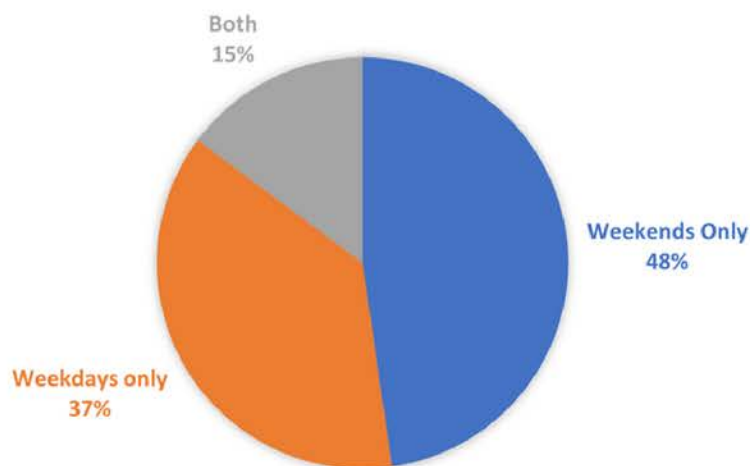


Figure 1: 2022 summary of at-the-ramp inspections by total count and inspection per hour.

Wright SWCD works hard to ensure the inspection program is as efficient as possible. We try to maximize the number of inspections per hour and total number of unique people encountered. In 2022, inspection efforts were concentrated on fewer accesses that present higher risk, as well as inspectors' working hours were expanded to encounter more boaters. Despite 2% fewer hours than 2021, inspections increased by 27% and 10% more unique boaters. In 2022, we had the highest inspections per hour since the beginning of the Wright SWCD inspection program. Good job inspectors!



We want to make sure inspectors are available in all cases to maximize the number of lake users encountered. We discovered something interesting this year; out of the total 7,089 license plates we encountered, 3,383 (48%) were weekend only boaters, 2,657 (37%) were weekday boaters and 1,049 (15%) were encountered both during the weekdays and weekends (Figure 7).



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM



The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a federal program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and assisted by the Wright SWCD.

EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to crop, livestock, and other agricultural producers, enabling conservation improvements to their operations. Those practices include improved water and air quality; increased soil health, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation; improved or created wildlife habitat; and mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility.

EQIP & EQIP RCPP

- Payments made in 2022 for installation of conservation practices = \$70,903
- Conservation practices installed in 2022 through EQIP & EQIP RCPP:
 - 16 water and sediment control basins
 - 1 grassed waterway
 - 45 acres of prescribed grazing
 - 1 earthen diversion
 - 1 grade stabilization structure
 - 246 acres of cover crop
 - 96 acres reduce tillage

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

In 2022, \$22,384 was paid to Wright County agricultural producers through CSP.

SOIL HEALTH



Soil Health Assessment completed on two fields comparing the effects of utilizing Cover Crops.

NRCS STAFF



NRCS staff from left to right: Cassidy Voeltz, Soil Conservation Technician and Julie Reberg, District Conservationist.

USDA- FSA

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) implements agriculture policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster and farm marketing programs to local producers.

Through our network of county FSA offices and dedicated personnel, we are proud to offer a variety of programs.

The Wright-Hennepin County staff features: four program technicians that specialize in farm program areas to offer expert assistance, the County Executive Director, and the County Committee of elected producers to represent their legislative areas across the two-county area.

Throughout the year, staff work with different programming and deadlines dependent upon the season. During this time, program technicians are actively enrolling producers in the ARC PLC program and General CRP. These common programs gain extensive participation in our community.

With the spring of 2023 on the horizon, we are preparing to implement our annual acreage certification program; the start of basic eligibility for all producers to access our programs. By July 15, annually, producers file acreage reports with the office to document crops grown and intended use on all the land they operate. Once planting is complete, contact our office to collect maps and make an appointment.

The Farm Service Agency offers numerous programs for nearly all producers and continues to adapt future programming to meet the current, critical needs. We are proud to equitably serve all farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners through the delivery of effective agricultural programs.

Give the office a call at (763) 682-1982 Ext 2, or email mnbuffalo-fsa@usda.gov, to see what we can do to best serve your operation!

USDA ANNOUNCES GENERAL CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM SIGNUPS FOR 2023

Signup for the General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will be February 27 through April 7, 2023. CRP is a cornerstone voluntary conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a key tool to address climate change and help agricultural communities invest in the long-term well-being of their land and natural resources.

General CRP helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Plus, our Continuous CRP program allows producers and landowners to enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States.

In Wright County, there are 350 current CRP contracts with 4,302 acres enrolled. The average rental rate for acreage is \$178.00 and our most common practices include declining habitats, wetland restorations and filter strips. Our producers continue to take advantage and enjoy the benefits CRP has to offer them.

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local USDA Service Center to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

NEW STAFF - SAM POMERLEAU



Meet our new team member, Sam Pomerleau. Sam is in her first year working for the FSA at the Wright-Hennepin County office as a Program Technician.

She currently assists producers with Marketing Assistance Loans, Farm Storage Facility Loans, and other current programs. She is originally from northern MN where corn and soybean fields were not the norm – her family moved to Buffalo, MN in 2018 and she has since enjoyed learning about the farming community and meeting the hard-working producers.



WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT



The MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) is administered locally by Local Governmental Units (LGU's) such as the Wright SWCD and some cities within Wright County.

The primary goal of WCA is to achieve no net loss in the quantity and quality of wetlands in Wright County and throughout MN. Regulated activities under WCA include draining, filling, and in some cases excavation. Contact us if you have any questions about wetland regulation or who is the current LGU in your area.

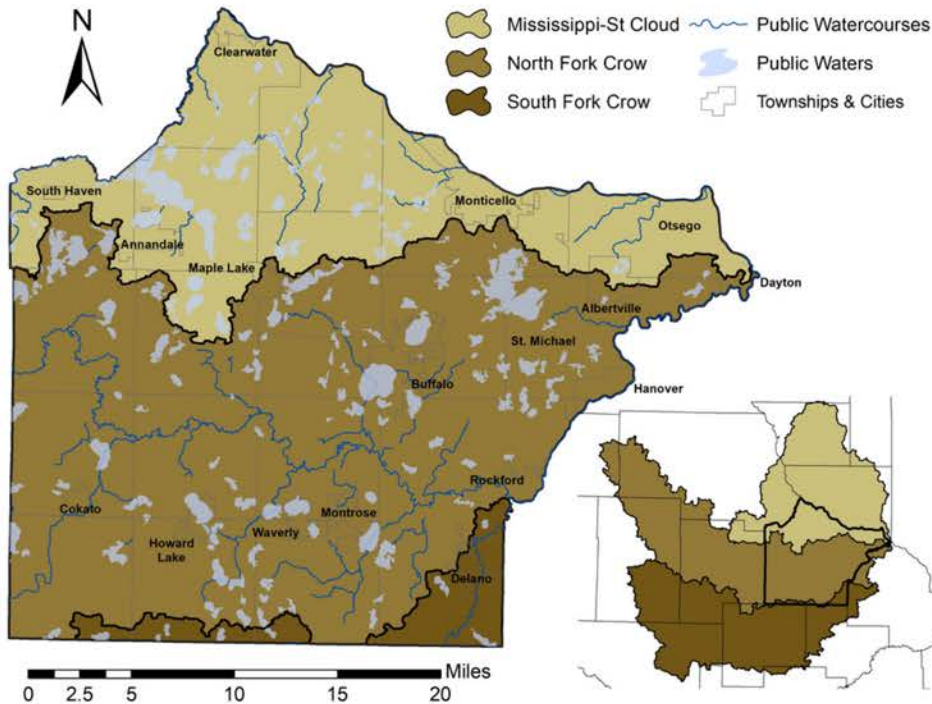
Wetland services provided by the District include and are not limited to:

- Assist landowners in determining where wetlands may exist on their property and regulatory implications of proposed projects
- Review and issue decisions on wetland delineations
- Review and issue decisions on exemption/no-loss applications
- Review and issue decisions on wetland replacement plan applications
- Review and issue decisions on wetland bank applications
- Investigate and assist with the enforcement of WCA violations
- Review replacement wetland monitoring requirements
- Serve as a member of the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP)
- Speak at educational events
- Assist landowners interested in enrolling lands into various wetland conservation programs
- Provide technical assistance for completing wetland delineations and WCA applications for cities and townships
- Assist landowners with any questions they may have regarding wetlands in general

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Responded to approximately 350 landowner contacts regarding wetlands
- Participated in approximately 90 Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) meetings
- Reviewed 2 private wetland banking applications
- Rendered decision on 18 wetland delineation reports
- Reviewed 4 exemption and 6 no-loss applications
- Reviewed 1 replacement plan application proposing to permanently impact 24,894 sf of wetlands
- Investigated 25 potential WCA violations, resolved 3 informally, and 4 Restoration Orders were issued.

ONE WATERSHED, ONE PLAN



Wright County is broken up into three watersheds – Mississippi River – St. Cloud, North Fork Crow River, South Fork Crow River.

One Watershed One Plan (IWIP) is a program administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) that coordinates the transition from county-based water management planning to watershed-based planning. The goal of IWIP is to align local water planning on major watershed boundaries with state strategies towards prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation plans.

Approved plans include prioritization models to align implementation funds and technical assistance with the type of project and geographical areas with the highest conservation value. Local governmental entities including Counties, SWCDs, and Watershed Districts adopt these plans as their own comprehensive plan. Counties, SWCD, Watershed District, members of the public, state agencies, cities, and other conservation organizations are included as part of the planning process.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER-ST. CLOUD

The Mississippi River-Saint Cloud watershed makes up the northern third of Wright County including: Corinna, Clearwater, Southside, Albion, Silver Creek, Maple Lake, and Monticello Townships. Additionally, the cities of South Haven, Annandale, Clearwater, northwest portion of Maple Lake, Monticello, Albertville, and Otsego are within the watershed.

The planning process began in 2022. This is a two-year process in which SWCDs, Counties, and Watershed Districts work together to create a comprehensive plan for the planning area. Local input is imperative to creating a successful plan. As a result it will open up funding sources for the area.

NORTH FORK CROW RIVER

The North Fork Crow River makes up two-thirds of Wright County. This area has completed the One Watershed One Plan process. It has since received three watershed planning grants. The first round of project funding issued in 2018 was for \$423,000 and the second round was \$620,000 for 2020.

From the 2018 grant Wright SWCD secured \$268,628.27 for 11 different conservation practices over two years. During the second round of funding the SWCD secured \$431,064.43 for 19 different conservation practices. Wright SWCD was the plan coordinator and fiscal agent for the 2020 grant and will continue both roles for the new 2022 grant.

SOUTH FORK CROW RIVER

The South Fork Crow River makes up the southeast corner of Wright County, including about half of Franklin Township and the southern portions of Stockholm, Victor and Woodland Township. Additionally, nearly all of the City of Delano is within the watershed.

The planning process began in 2022. Similar to Mississippi River-St. Cloud this is a two-year process in which SWCDs, Counties, and Watershed Districts work together to create a comprehensive plan for the planning area. Local input is imperative to creating a successful plan. Due to two planning processes moving forward concurrently, District staff will divide efforts to contribute to planning efforts.



**WRIGHT SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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