

Clean Water Fund 2021-22 Interim Activities



Minnesota House Legacy Finance Committee

16 February 2022



Minnesota Clean Water Council

- Created in 2006 to “advise on the administration and implementation of” the **Clean Water Legacy Act**, and “foster coordination and cooperation” among agencies and others.
- Every two years, recommends how to spend the **Clean Water Fund**



Voting members (17)

- Counties (2) (Metro, Greater MN)
- Townships (1)
- Municipalities (2)
- Farm organizations (2)
- Environmental organizations (2)
- Tribal government (1)
- Business (2)
- Fishing organizations (1)
- Hunting organizations (1)
- Lakes/Streams nonprofits (1)
- Watershed districts (1)
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts (1)

Plus 11 other non-voting members from MPCA, DNR, BWSR, MDH, MDA, Met Council, U of M + 4 legislators

2021 Drought/Climate Opportunities

- MPCA conducted **monitoring** in the Minnesota and Des Moines Rivers during **drought conditions** to determine if current wastewater limits are protective during lower flow
- MPCA sampled entire long-term **biological monitoring network** of 60 sites throughout Minnesota during the drought year
- MPCA developed a **climate data viewer tool** to display numerous water and biological factors that are expected to change as the climate changes



Conservation of Groundwater

- Met Council **Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support** conserved an estimated 100 million gallons per year
- Met Council **Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grants** reduced groundwater use by an estimated 500 million gallons per year



Value of Data During the Drought

Ongoing CWF-funded monitoring efforts and data analysis helped DNR and partners manage through the most severe drought since 1988

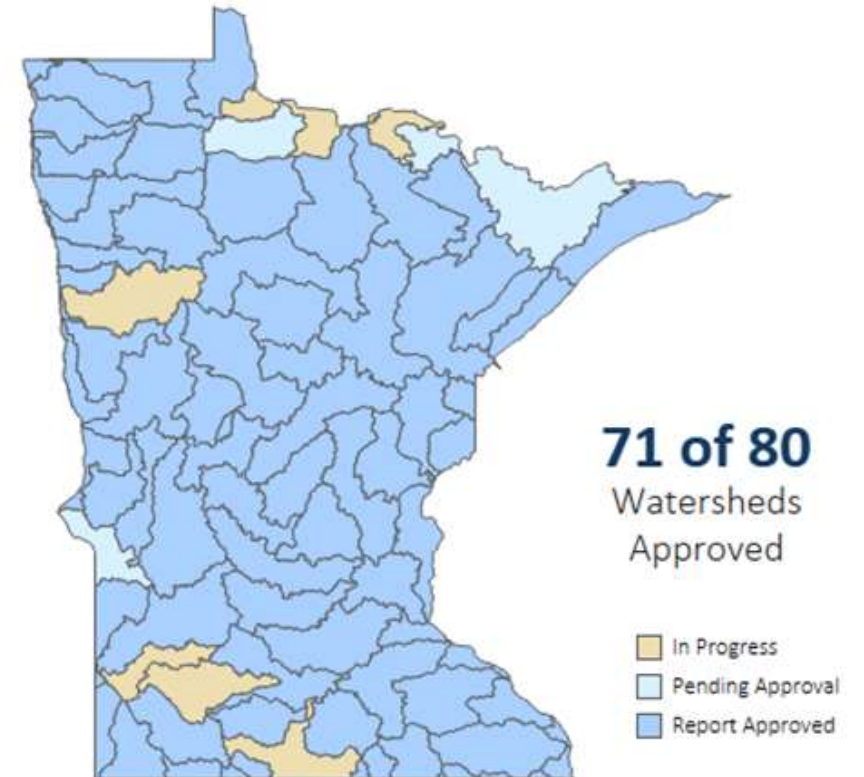
- Long-term data are key to understanding
 - Streamflow (65 stream gauges in 45 watersheds)
 - Groundwater levels
- Evaluation of Hydrologic Change
 - Quantifying how much has changed
 - Establish goals for each watershed



Strategy Development Almost Complete

"Blueprints" to Meet Water Quality Goals

- On track to complete Watershed Restoration & Protection Strategies (WRAPS) by 2023
- Clean-up reports (Total Maximum Daily Load-TMDLs) for 65 impairments approved by EPA
- Serve as basis for comprehensive plans for prioritizing funding



Projects (Implementation)

- **St. Louis River Area of Concern Clean-up**
 - Minnesota-based construction projects on track for 2025 completion
 - CWF supports MPCA capacity, which brings in state bonding, federal funding



Enhanced Compliance (MPCA)

- **Kept Septic System Compliance > 80%**
 - Awarded over \$1.5M to 52 Counties for low-income fix-up grants = ~215 systems
 - Distributed nearly \$1.5M to each county for enhanced inspection
- **Produced New Tools for Wastewater Compliance**
 - Published water quality trading guidance, completed a pilot project in the Crow River Watershed, and issued 8 permits with trading allowances across the state
- **Supported Compliance for New Stormwater Permit (MS4) for Cities**
 - Developed guidance materials for effective street sweeping, stormwater pond assessment, green infrastructure, and BMP vegetation management
 - Began monthly education and outreach Webex meetings to support permittees and answer questions

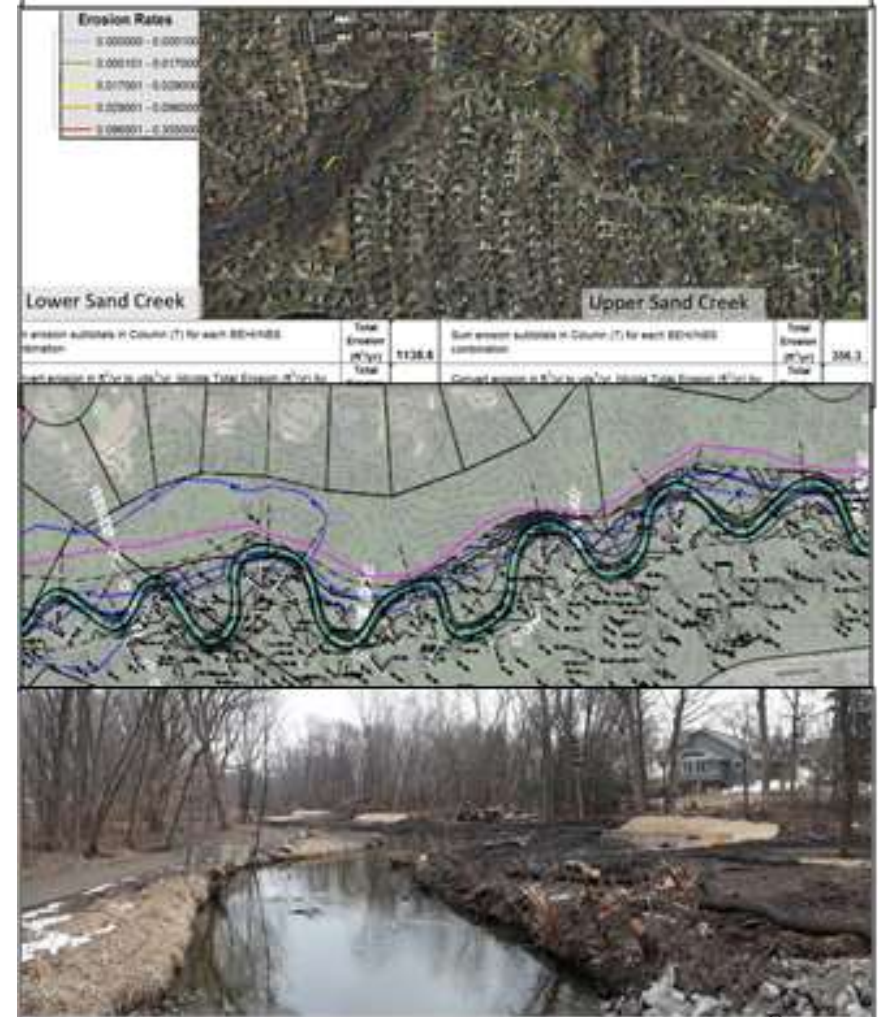
Technical Assistance (MN DNR)

Technical Support for Implementing a Stream Restoration: Sand Creek (Anoka County)

DNR Specialists worked with the Coon Creek Watershed District to implement a Natural Channel Design

- A major shift in project design
- Excellent Partnership Award
- The WD is now looking to apply these concepts to future projects

Sand Creek (Anoka Cty) – from survey data, to design, to implementation



Sand Creek: Early Construction and Post Construction



Chloride Reduction Efforts

Smart Salting Education (Reduce chloride, save money!)

- Hosted 15 trainings & supported 18 partner sponsored trainings for **1000+ participants**
- Developed 2 new Smart Salting refresher trainings for Smart Salting certificate holders

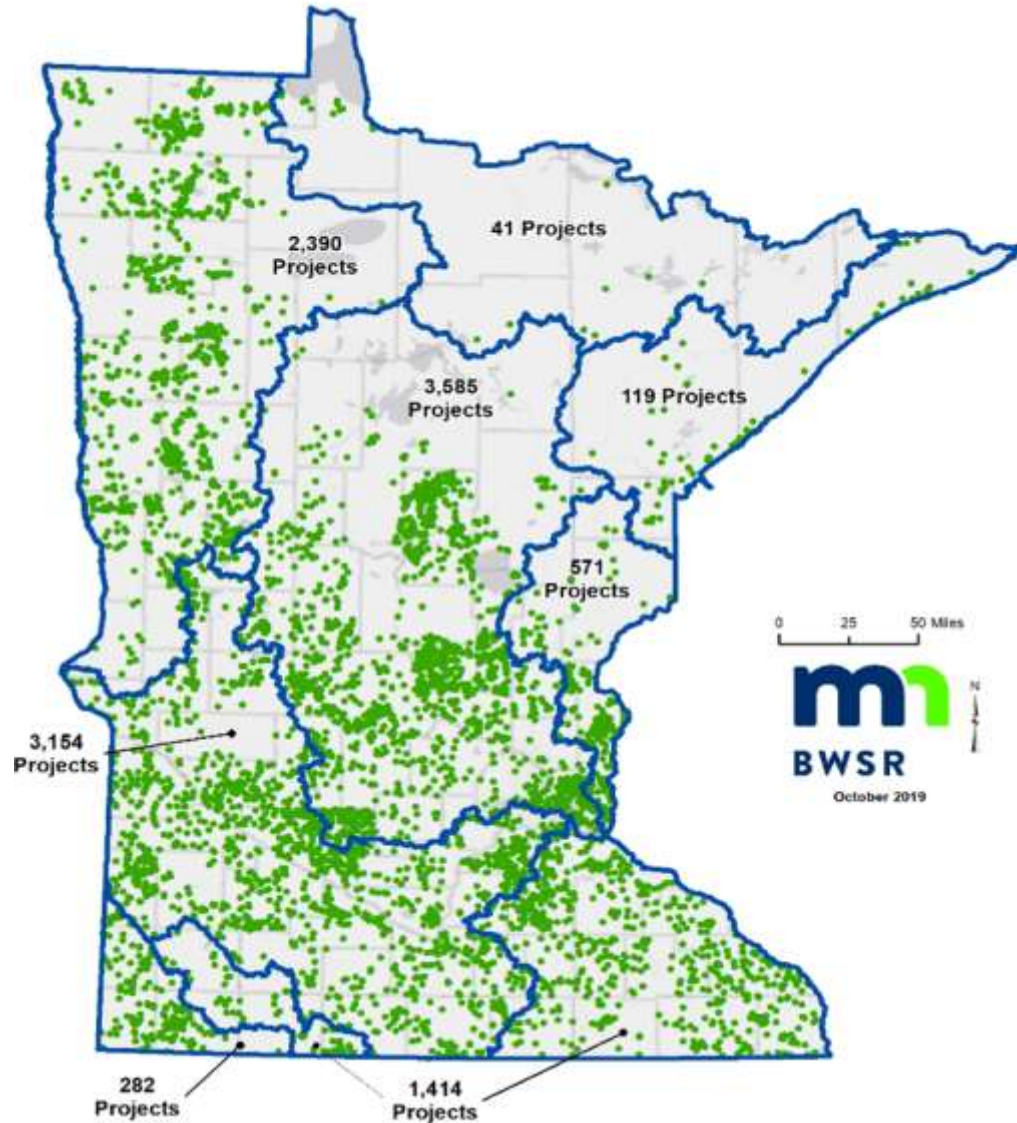
Wastewater

- Awarded the first chloride reduction grant for chloride from water softening in 3 communities (**Avon, Altura, and Medina**)

Technical Assistance (MN Department of Agriculture)

- 143 farms operating on 92,483 acres certified in **Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)** since end of May 2021
- MAWQCP now at 1,170 producers on 818,165 acres (1 million acre goal by end of 2022); up to 49% nitrogen reduction
- Advisory teams meeting in areas covered by the Groundwater Protection Rule
- Outreach to 1,300 farmers, crop advisors, and local partners by U of M irrigation specialist
- Continued support of Forever Green Initiative for perennial cover

Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR): Implementation: Prioritize, Target, Measure





Nemadji Stream Reconnections (BWSR)



The Nemadji 1W1P Planning Partnership received a \$228,727 CWF grant that leveraged \$9 million in additional funds

- Reconnected 29 miles of streams
- Reduced sediment loading by 358 tons/year
- Reduced Phosphorus loading by 379 lbs/year



PROJECT MEETS 63% OF THE
WATERSHED'S STREAM
RECONNECTION GOAL

Locally-led conservation: Soil health

Cover Crop Demonstration Grants

\$1 million total; grants range from \$125K-\$250K

Recipients:

- East Otter Tail SWCD
- Traverse SWCD
- Stearns County SWCD
- Faribault SWCD
- Root River SWCD



Success Story: **Traverse SWCD** Cover Crop Demo Grant

“ No matter what Mother Nature throws at us, we still want to plant a cover crop. ”

— Bruce Johnson, Traverse SWCD technical manager

Total acreage goal:
1,800 acres in cover
crops

**Acres as of
September: 788** (304
of these acres in
DWSMAs)



**COVER
CROPS
AT WORK**



Protect drinking water: strategic safeguards from source to tap

- **Protect source waters:**
 - 88 Source Water Protection Plans approved
 - \$902,000 awarded across 112 Source Water Protection grants
- **Implement Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS):**
 - Eight GRAPS reports released
 - Groundwater Protection Initiative launched—awarding six grants to local government units, totaling \$289,000 in grants and \$546,000 in in-kind support

Protect drinking water: strategic safeguards from source to tap

- **Understand contaminants of emerging concern:** Developed health-based guidance for two contaminants
- **Protect private well users:** Pilot grants to promote testing and financial assistance for mitigation
 - **Horizon Public Health:** Arsenic in Grant, Stevens, and Traverse counties
 - **Olmsted SWCD:** Nitrate, arsenic, and manganese in Olmsted, Goodhue, Wabasha, Winona, Root River, Houston, and Fillmore counties
- **Share research** through reports:
 - Managing Health Risks from **Stormwater Reuse**
 - Lead and Drinking Water report informing current **actions to replace lead service lines**

Empowering Minnesotans to Protect Our Waters

We Are Water Exhibit (MN Humanities Commission, MPCA and other agencies)

- Exhibit visited **Chisholm** (May-June) and **Pipestone** (July-Aug), reaching 4,000 exhibit visitors and 1,500 event attendees
- **State Capitol** (Ground Floor, East Corridor) until Feb 28, 2022
- Five new sites selected for 2022 (**Winona, Lake City, Alexandria, Fergus Falls, Hastings, Eagan**)
- 85% of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I learned something new about our water resources.”



Clean Water Council Follow-up

- Completed initial examination of barriers to drinkable, fishable, and swimmable waters for all Minnesotans aka equity
- Field tour to Nobles, Rock, & Pipestone Cos.
- Recommendations process for FY24-25
- Legislative report on Lidar funding



Thank you again!

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