

## Summary of input from agricultural stakeholders – 12 Interviews and 387 Survey Responses

### INTERVIEW SUMMARY

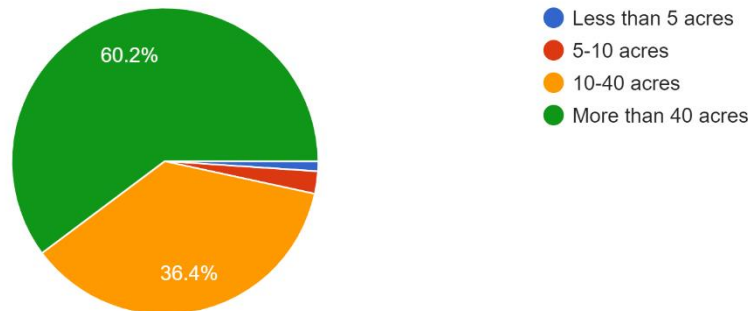
- 12 interviews conducted by phone and in-person (7 Washington, 2 Chisago, 2 Isanti, 1 Anoka)
  - Notes from Angie Hong, 1-17-19
1. **Framing matters.** Many farmers are feeling defensive due to the buffer legislation and media coverage that they feel blames farmers for water quality problems in Minnesota. They would like recognition for their conservation efforts and to know that we are also addressing urban pollution issues, such as development, stormwater runoff, and residential lawn care.
    - Framing I used for our conversations: “Local governments in the Lower St. Croix are working together to develop a regional watershed plan for our area. Once this is adopted in two years, we expect that there will be substantial funding from state and local sources to do conservation work in our area. Much of that will be earmarked for working with agricultural landowners. How can we best use the money? What practices and program are you most interested in?”
  2. **Most local farmers are already doing some conservation practices.** Of the people I spoke with, most have worked with their SWCD or NRCS in the past. Most are doing no-till or strip-till. Some are participating in the MN Ag water Quality Certification program. A few have also installed structural practices, such as sediment basins or grassed waterways, or have conservation easements in place. Several also mentioned changing their fertilizer application practices.
  3. **Farmers are interested in working with us, but want a variety of programs.** It is difficult to find a “one-size-fits-all” program for farming because there is so much variation in operations – land size, crops vs livestock, topography, soil types, renting vs owner-operated, etc. However, everyone I spoke with was interested in at least one project or program for their land.
    - Several expressed interest in a farmer-led monitoring program such as “Discovery Farms” that would allow them to installing monitoring equipment on their land to measure runoff and evaluate the benefit of different best management practices. They would like to know how much practices such as buffers help to protect nearby water resources.
    - They spoke about small profit margins and said that financial assistance programs help them to implement conservation practices. However, they’d like to see better coordination between local, state and federal programs.
  4. **They would like to see more education and outreach.** People asked that we keep them informed as the LSC 1W1P plan moves forward and many said they’d attend a workshop for farmers if we hold one in February. Several commented that they’d like to see more outreach about existing conservation programs and that they want to see more education to the general public as well about stormwater pollution and lawn care.
  5. **They also want to see enforcement for land owners that are causing major pollution.** Several people I spoke with mentioned landowners in their area that are doing a bad job of managing their land and are creating significant runoff and erosion problems. They also talked about people who abuse the government programs. They’d like to see enforcement action taken against those people.
  6. **None shared specific water concerns.** Though I asked, none of the people I spoke with shared specific water concerns in their area.

## SURVEY RESULTS

387 mailed surveys collected from rural landowners in Chisago, Isanti, Pine and Washington Counties

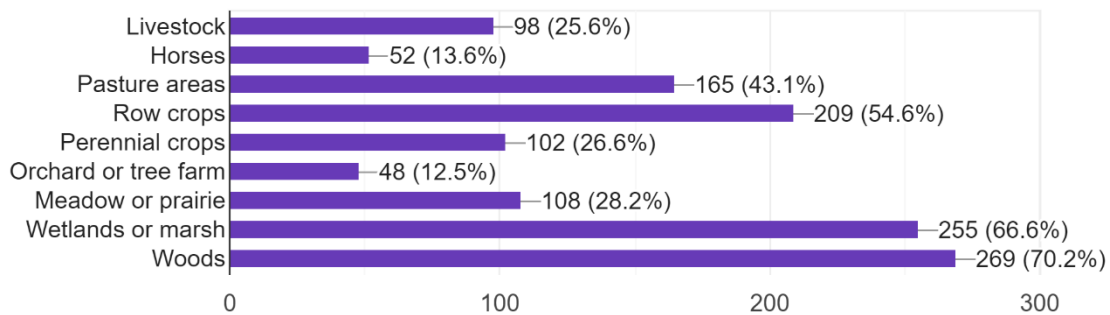
### 1. How large is your property?

382 responses



### 2. What's on your land?

383 responses



### 3. What 3-5 water issues in the Lower St. Croix Watershed are most important to address?

(173 responses)

- (52) Agricultural issues (runoff, erosion, pesticides, fertilizers)
- (23) Groundwater/well water pollution
- (24) Runoff / Chemicals / Contaminants
- (21) Protecting / Improving water quality
- (19) Invasive species (aquatic and terrestrial)
- (17) Erosion/sediment control
- (16) Ditch maintenance
- (16) Runoff and fertilizer use in urban and residential areas
- (15) Restoring / Protecting wildlife or pollinator habitat
- (16) Drainage /water levels / flooding
- (12) Restoring / Protecting wetlands
- (11) Development / population growth
- (9) Promoting and funding agricultural BMPs
- (8) Septic systems

- (7) Protection of specific water resources (St. Croix River; specific lake or stream)
- (7) Chlorides
- (3) Improper garbage and junk disposal
- (3) Water conservation
- (3) Bad neighbors
- (6) Enforcing buffers
- (2) Mosquito control
- (3) Taxes
- (2) Algae
- (2) Expanding well-sealing programs
- (3) Making sure that farming remains viable in the region

#### OTHER RESPONSES

- Educating the public
- Pollution from mining
- Increase in significant weather events
- Over-regulation
- Absentee land owners
- Goose poop
- Water reuse
- Recreation
- Beavers blocking water flow
- E. coli
- Access to water
- Improperly sized culverts
- Elderly / retired land owners

#### 4. How interested are you in the following projects or practices?

(#) = number of people who were very or somewhat interested in the practice

\*\* = practices with the most “very interested” responses

- \*\*Improving soil health (241)
- \*\*Installing physical projects on your land such as grassed waterways, windbreaks, sediment basins (169)
- Planting cover crops for the winter (155)
- \*\*Converting less productive land to natural areas - woods, wetlands or prairie (156)
- \*\*Repairing gullies or ravines (152)
- Developing a Whole Farm Conservation Plan (148)
- Installing monitoring equipment on your land to measure runoff and nutrients (119)
- Transitioning from row crops to hay or livestock grazing (102)
- Becoming certified through the MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program (111)
- Trying out new perennial crops such as Kernza® (perennial wheat) or Silphium (perennial oilseeds) (100)
- Establishing conservation easements (92)

## 5. What city or township do you live in?

- Afton - 3
- Amador - 3
- Blaine - 1
- Braham – 2
- Brooklyn Park - 1
- Cambridge - 2
- Chisago City - 18
- Chisago Lake Twp – 9
- Chisago Lakes – 4
- Chisago Lakes North - 6
- Coon Rapids - 1
- Cottage Grove - 3
- Denmark - 13
- Fish Lake Twp - 45
- Franconia - 6
- Grant – 2
- Greely - 1
- Harris - 30
- Hennepin - 1
- Hugo - 3
- Independence - 1
- Isanti - 6
- Kiester - 1
- Lake Elmo - 3
- Lent - 3
- May - 9
- Nessel - 34
- North Branch – 14
- North Branch Twp - 6
- Oxford - 5
- Pine – 11
- Pine City Twp – 5
- Pokegama - 1
- Rock Creek - 18
- Royalton - 5
- Rush City – 6
- Rush Point – 1
- Rushseba - 18
- Scandia – 11
- Schafer - 16
- South Chisago - 2
- Stanchfield - 4
- Stillwater Twp. - 1
- Sunrise - 15
- Taylor’s Falls - 3
- Woodbury – 1
- White Bear Twp.
- Wyoming - 4

## 6. Please share any other input you’d like included in the watershed plan.

- I have already installed grassed waterways and repaired gullies on my property. I manage fertilizer and lime, plant cover crops, and have hay land. I work with NRCS. I haven't converted less productive land to habitat because there is no tax break.
- We have five acres that are wooded with area around the house that we mow. We don't have the land for the above practices.
- Potential for herbicide runoff & contamination of waters, soil, native and non-GMO plants, impacts to native insects, birds, mammals; relationship with invasive plants introduction
- Chloride treatments to Lansing Ave. (gravel road) may cause runoff into my pond
- Assistance and education through winter meetings would be helpful. Additional rules and regulations would be a detriment particularly with low commodity prices. Everyone should share the cost because of our "cheap food policies." Programs should be voluntary with funding available.
- I already have a conservation easement
- I've already installed physical projects on my property, improved soil health, and implemented cover crops. I have no gullies or ravines.
- Buying the land that can do the best for our environment
- We have 1700 acres of grass and an extensive grazing system with 50% pasture, no crops, several waterways.
- I would dig a sediment basin if you would help me to get the permit

- - Addressing runoff on highly erodible lands and the changes that development affects erosion.
- - What checks and balances are in place for developers and the items they are supposed to address when developing parcels of land? Is there follow-up to ensure they are doing the things they were supposed to do? (this probably extends into more departments)
- I rent the land. They raise crops. Not interested.
- I'm already enrolled in Land Trust. Currently working with MNWCD (Tara Kelly) and SWWD (Andy Schilling) on a 5.6 acre prairie conservation project
- We have already installed physical projects and established a conservation easement. Would like to see more perennial cover: native grasses and lespedeza
- This is the 5th year I've owned the small farm. It was a mess with run-down fields, rotted out fences, junk machinery, and illegal in-ground tanks and broken cisterns. We have been rehabbing the farm.
- We just completed a project in 2018 to inhibit erosion of a small stream. Thanks!
- We are already involved in a Washington County watershed program to turn our land into prairie.
- Things are fine here.
- All our land is rented
- My farm is already MNAWQ certified
- Not sure how well the above would work for us
- I simply rent my land as I live in California. The current farmer is doing a better job than the previous (I've been told...)
- Ditch & Invasive cattail species
- Keep waters clean
- My land is rented and I am old. He used to be interested in all of the above
- I think big money doesn't admit or share the info that would educate us all on the effects of all the chemicals in relation to water quality. Thank you.
- Living in town. No longer farming
- Would like to see more signs installed on wildlife crossing
- Inspect hobby farms with livestock on wetlands that drain to lakes
- Possible to rip-rap rock in woods where water off field is eroding land down to swamp?
- I have notices in the last few years where I had a nice canary grass meadow the cattle could graze in dryer weather is now cat tails and useless
- Water holding for wildlife/native species. Already repaired gully.
- Using high density vegetable growing methods using soil/water conservation practices
- I would like a pond in a wetland area - It has grown in it looks like
- Removing sediment from the water, waterways that are filling at an alarming rate
- Checking on my neighbor's runoff into swamp and check water quality of old garbage dump
- Dig ponds
- Rent out land

- My pond/stream is about 1/2 mile downstream from the joint sewage treatment plant & have concern regarding their discharge at times
- Native plants, Butterflies & bees
- No creeks on my property. A creek is on neighbor's to the west. My renter practices no-till farming now.
- Watershed districts are managed by elected officers. This causes problems downstream. I am interested in Des Moines, IA suit against the upstream water district management on the Racoon River.
- The portion of our land that has row crops (corn & soybeans) was laid out to minimize erosion. The forest & wetlands are self sustaining natural areas. I would welcome any help to control the spread of buckthorn.
- I was hoping to enroll some acres into CRP but found it was not available
- Remove the beaver dam that is backing up water in my fields
- Indicated already transitioned row crops to hay
- Creek clean up
- Our land seems to be getting more wet over the years
- No gullies on property. 50 yrs of conservation so far all organic. no weed killer ever.
- We all need to work to keep our water clean, we have done our share but we can do more!
- Shoreline erosion and Ice jacking lots of trees being damaged and lots of soil going into the lakes that cannot be recovered
- Improve and keep well water clean
- I'm interested is all the above, but we don't have no ag on our land. It's almost all wetland.
- We as farmers can work towards no till or reduced tillage...we can all improve
- Land is rented out!
- We are just a small hobby farm. Already transitioned land from row crops to hay and converted less productive land to natural areas.
- Keep ditches and culverts cleaned out
- Monitor runoff into lakes and rivers. Fine any violation. Add to property tax. use fines to fund monitoring
- My property is residential, non-farming. My acreage is all wooded, no water on my property. Most of the interested noted in #4 are oriented to farming properties and/or property with water access
- Indicated under repairing gullies or ravines: "culvert was repaired incorrectly"
- I've been implementing these practices for many years. Don't need to spend more taxpayer \$ on this.
- We constructed a road to gain entrance to our property. The beavers built a dam. Now there is no road, they ruined it. They built a damn dam. We have no access to our property. You have to walk in. Would like to re-construct road.
- Keep water clean from chemicals & fertilizer
- How to handle drainage ditch that is overgrown

- The solution is go directly to the source of causation. STOP PRODUCING CHEMICALS...NO MORE PROJECTS...LEAVE THE LAND ALONE.
- I hope to place my property into a conservation easement.
- Have a forestry stewardship plan and just implementing a CSP for pollinator habitat.
- Roadway improvements and impact on watershed, town and county especially
- We put in a culvert but needs more outlet. Creek is plugged and doesn't run
- Monitoring agricultural use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers - are there limits?
- How does the county know who is applying what and how often and if its even necessary?
- I am 91. Breathing is all I care about.
- Currently rent acres to farmer (plants beans, wheat) would like to plant alfalfa and not rent to farmer (Fall 2019)
- Planting native grasses/reforestation
- Programs for physically disabled military combat vets established. I think Isanti County needs to clean out the ditches as the law says they shall.
- A) helpful guidelines for owners B) pointing out problem areas. Are you familiar with socialism=communism; owner pays taxes, politicians dictate everything that gets done; when property rights are revoked, one world gov. is close behind
- Rock Lake has cattle in it every day. I believe lake owners need to be educated on Cross Lake and Pokegama Lake in particular about damage from fertilizer use and weed removal.
- Apply stricter rules on septic tank enforcement, junk and junk vehicles on property
- Removal of beavers that dam the water way
- Thanks for all the very useful information that you have already provided!
- We are already doing soil health, with no-till and cover crops
- Right now I rent my 37 tiled acres but am interested in other items in question 4. I am very interested in talking to someone about these items.
- I had US Fish and Wildlife do some work at my place and 2 dikes blew out
- I am too old to start any long term programs
- I'm curious about the drainage ditch system in our township. When it was established and why? Whose responsibility it is to care for it...impact on the surrounding land. Thanks?
- None
- More solar and wind farms
- I support the effort. I do not look at my property as having issues. My son will be the one to deal with this.
- City of Rock Creek
- Sorry, I live in NY, this tract has been in my family for 100 years. I till 30 +/- acres (my cousin does) so not sure how to answer these
- This property is almost entirely made up of sand. No water stands, ever.
- Repair a dam
- Adding a couple of culverts in some key areas

- I need high-speed broadband internet (I realize this has nothing to do with water-I'm just complaining)
- I think that maintaining and improving our drainage is a huge task in the county that needs to be addressed. I would love to talk more about it.
- We're new to Pine City and would like to help improve soil quality and reduce nitrates and herbicides-sustainable farming? Also have a long drainage ravine that is in heavy woods-need help improving
- Having someone get rid of the beaver dam to open up the sunrise river that is backed up water in more and more of the crop land in 2 properties mine being one of them
- We hope to build on the land within a few years. We are considering if the best use of currently planted land is crops, a solar field, or garden or prairie??