

How the Clean Water Fund Protects, Enhances, and Restores Minnesota's Lakes, Rivers, and Streams



The Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment to the State Constitution ratified by the voters in 2008 supports the Clean Water Fund with part of a dedicated sales tax.

Our state's strategy aims to achieve more fishable and swimmable water in Minnesota.



Rock "riffles" on Sand Hill River stabilize erosion and allow fish safe passage.

Photo credit: Ann Wessel, Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources

What we do with the Clean Water Fund

Unlike other states, Minnesota has the ability with the Clean Water Fund to look for more types of water quality problems in every corner of the state. That's more than 86,000 square miles! We also know which waters are healthy that require protection. This data helps us figure out where to spend our time and resources in the most cost-effective way.

Our strategy



Identify what's wrong (or healthy) with our water.



Find the source of the problem, make a plan to fix it, and prioritize the most important problems first.



Fund projects and support the people who can fix the problem.



Monitor the project results to see if the fixes worked.

How long does it take?

Every two years, Minnesota publishes a list of impaired waters that do not meet our state's water quality standards. (Our standards are often stronger than those in other states.)

Most of Minnesota's impairments are from "non-point" sources, or small amounts of contaminants that add up across an entire watershed. Since poor water quality has resulted from more than 150 years of altering our land and waters, it can take 10-15 years depending on the source of the problem for a restored body of water to make it off of the impaired waters list.

In some cases, a project can have an immediate effect on water quality. In others, land use changes have been so intense that removal from the Impaired Waters List is unlikely, but major improvements are possible. With waters that are in good shape, our objective is to protect enough land in a watershed to maintain that high quality.

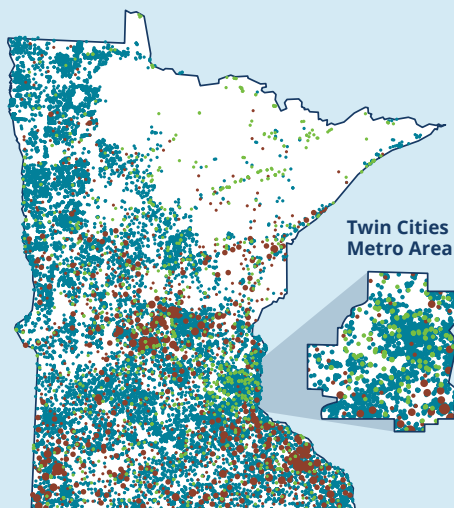
Spreading resources for maximum impact

The Clean Water Fund supports projects throughout Minnesota, from the Twin Cities metro area, farm country, small towns, to pristine northern lakes.

The projects on the map indicate activity from **three of our largest programs.**

Selected projects supported by the Clean Water Fund

Projects supported between 2010–2024



- Received source water protection grant** from MN Department of Health
- Farm certified in water quality** by MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program
- Received funding to protect or restore surface waters** from MN Board of Water & Soil Resources Quality Certification Program

A sampling of thousands of projects:



WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION FOR FARMERS

Over 1,500 certified farmers have significantly reduced the potential for pollutants to enter our groundwater, lakes, and streams compared to conventional practices.



RICE CREEK STREAM RESTORATION

Each year, the Clean Water Fund is used for dozens of stream restorations. Restoring a stream's meandering course reduces the energy of water that can erode the streambank and provides better water quality downstream.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WITH THE FOREVER GREEN INITIATIVE

The Forever Green Initiative is developing and improving winter-hardy annual and perennial crops that protect soil and water while driving new economic opportunities for growers, industry, and communities across Minnesota.