



2022

Annual Report

Waseca County Soil and Water
Conservation District

Waseca County Soil and Water Conservation District

2022 Annual Report

300 North State Street

Waseca, MN 56093

Phone: 507-835-0603

Website: www.wasecaswcd.org

Mission Statement

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Prime Responsibility of the District is to coordinate assistance on private lands to control erosion, prevent flooding, enhance wildlife, develop recreation, build the economic base, and to manage our soil and water resources.

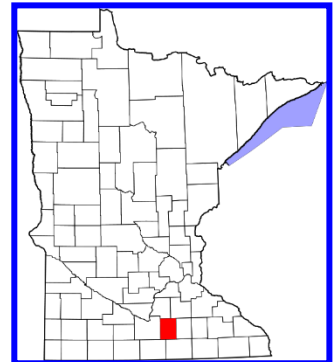
Introduction:

The Waseca County Soil and Water Conservation District is a legal subdivision of State Government operating under provisions of the Minnesota State Statutes Chapter 103C. The District is located entirely within Waseca County and includes all land, public and private, towns and villages. It is governed by a five-member board of elected supervisors, who are responsible for directing all District activities. The Board meets on the second Thursday of each month.

Soil and Water Conservation is essential to the preservation of our environment. Our goal is to implement a soil and water conservation plan on each acre in Waseca County.

The District's success is a result of the efforts of the landowners of Waseca County, the Waseca County Commissioners, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Extension Service, and the Department of Natural Resources.

We submit to you, this 2022 Annual Report.



The Board meets the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Waseca SWCD Offices, 300 North State Street, Waseca MN.

DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

Wayne Cords, Chairman

Scott Hildebrandt, Vice Chairman

Todd Stencel, Treasurer

Keith Morgan, Secretary

Larry Muff, Member

AREA OF REPRESENTATION

Alton, Janesville Townships

St. Mary, Woodville Townships

Freedom, Vivian, Wilton Townships

Blooming Grove, Iosco Townships

Byron, New Richland, Otisco Townships

District Staff

Mark Schaetzke

Tyler Polster

Taylor Piotter

Cheri Brummund

District Manager

District Technician (January – April)

District Technician (July – December)

District Administrative Assistant

NRCS Staff

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

Ciara Ahrens

Lee Nachreiner

Mallory Malecek

Jeremy Kite

Trace Strahle

Kara Mariani

Joshua Carpenter

NRCS Team Lead

NRCS Soil Conservationist

NRCS Soil Conservationist

Wetland Conservationist

Wetland Specialist (January – June)

Wetland Specialist (July –December)

Wetland Specialist (July – December)

Partners Staff

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES:

Jennifer Mocol-Johnson
Jill Sackett Eberhart

Board Conservationist (January & February)
Board Conservationist (March – December)

WASECA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

District 1 - Commissioner Doug Christopherson

District 2 - Commissioner Brian Harguth

District 3 - Commissioner Blair Nelson

District 4 - Commissioner DeAnne (De) Malterer

District 5 - Commissioner Brad Krause

WASECA COUNTY OFFICES:

Haley Byron

Water Resources Specialist

Brian Zabel

Technician/Feedlot Officer/Ag Inspector

Chris Howard

Drainage Management Coordinator

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES:

Dan Giralomo

Area Hydrologist

2022 Outstanding Conservation Farmer

Brad & Leanne Krause



Congratulations Brad and Leanne for your conservation!

Brad and Leanne Krause of Waseca were selected as Waseca County's outstanding conservationists for 2023 by Waseca SWCD. They have a corn and bean operation on 400 acres. They started farming in 1987 after having off-farm jobs. Brad and Leanne started with conventional tillage, then tried ridge till, and are now committed to no-till beans and strip till corn. They have experienced more productivity, increased resilience to drought, and a better return on investment through these practices. Brad does some custom strip tilling allowing others to try this conservation practice. Brad planted a windbreak on the farm with the help of conservation district staff 25 years ago. The windbreak now towers above him and provides protection to their farm site. Their RIM easement on a marginal field provides tremendous wildlife habitat. The Krause's have adopted technology into their operation and look forward to the day when they can use a driverless tractor.

Congratulations Brad and Leanne for all your conservation efforts.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- **Conservation Planning**
- **Planning and Design of Conservation Practices**
Including:
 - Erosion Control Practices
 - Residue Management Systems
 - Windbreak and Wildlife Tree Plantings
 - Animal Waste Control Systems
 - Manure Application Plans
 - Drainage Systems
 - Wetland Restorations
- **Cost-Sharing for Erosion Control Practices**
- **Assist with implementation of the Food Ag. Conservation Trade Act:**
 - Conservation Compliance Plans
 - Swampbuster and Sodbuster
 - Conservation Reserve Program
 - Wetland Reserve Program
 - Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- **Administer Minnesota Conservation Easement Programs:**
 - Reinvest in Minnesota
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
 - Permanent Wetland Preserve Program
- **Implementation of the Waseca County Comprehensive Water Plan**
- **Implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act**
- **Conservation Tree Sale and Tree Planter**
- **Native Grass Drill**
- **Products available through the SWCD**
 - Educational Materials, Colored Marking Flags, Plantskydd Animal Repellant, Native Prairie Plants, Quality Tree Nursery Stock, Tree Weed Barrier Matting

Education and Promotion

- ❖ Soil and Water Conservation promotion and education is a high priority of the District. The primary effort in this arena each year is publishing the Conservation Calendar. In 2022, 4572 calendars were distributed to rural landowners, cooperating agencies, and businesses. The calendar highlights local conservation related photos and events. The District also is continually updating its website. This has made it easier for the public to get up to date information on a regular basis.
- ❖ The Waseca SWCD also sent out MASWCD Area VI Scholarship Contest information for seniors, to the Principles and Agriculture Instructors in all three Waseca County School Districts. There are 2 scholarships that are awarded through the Area VI MASWCD. 1st place is awarded \$1000 and 2nd place is awarded \$500. Applicants were asked to write an essay on one of the following topics:
 1. The relationship between people and trees.
 2. The interrelation of the natural environment and human health.Unfortunately, there were no Waseca County Student applicants.
- ❖ Soil Health winter workshop.

Waseca SWCD hosted a winter workshop on soil health at Farmamerica as part of the Highway 14 Soil Health Tour. The day focused on Dorian Gatchell, a private agronomist in SW MN who focuses on high standards of environmental stewardship. The other main speaker was Don Reicosky, a retired soil scientist from USDA. Don's presentation focused on carbon and how tillage decreases carbon in the soil. The rest of the day included information on cost share programs by partners and a farmer panel on using soil health management on their farms.



❖ 2022 Waseca County Fair

SWCD had a booth at the Waseca County Free fair July 13 – 17. This provides an outreach opportunity for the SWCD to engage people who may not contact the SWCD or be aware of the SWCD’s services otherwise.



Conservation Easements

❖ The District in cooperation with the Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Natural Resources Conservation Service has assisted many Waseca County landowners with the establishing 121 permanent conservation easements on marginal cropland areas. The easements not only benefit the landowner, they also benefit the community by controlling erosion, storing and filtering water, reducing flooding, and providing much needed wildlife habitat. Maintaining these easements in high quality native prairie and wetland restorations is a priority of the District. Easements are inspected periodically. Controlling invasive trees and weeds on these easements is an ongoing challenge. The District continues to assist easement owners with technical assistance for cutting and spot spraying invasive trees, shrubs, and weeds. Controlled burns are recommended on the easements by certified vendors every four or five years.

SWCD Local Capacity Grant

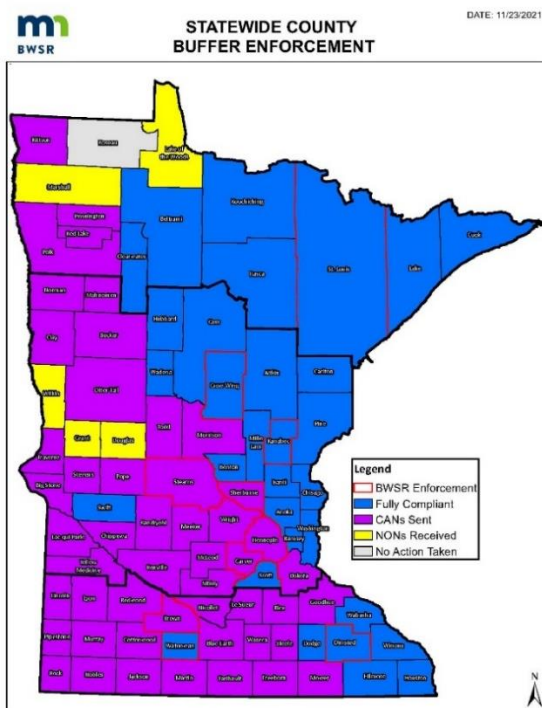
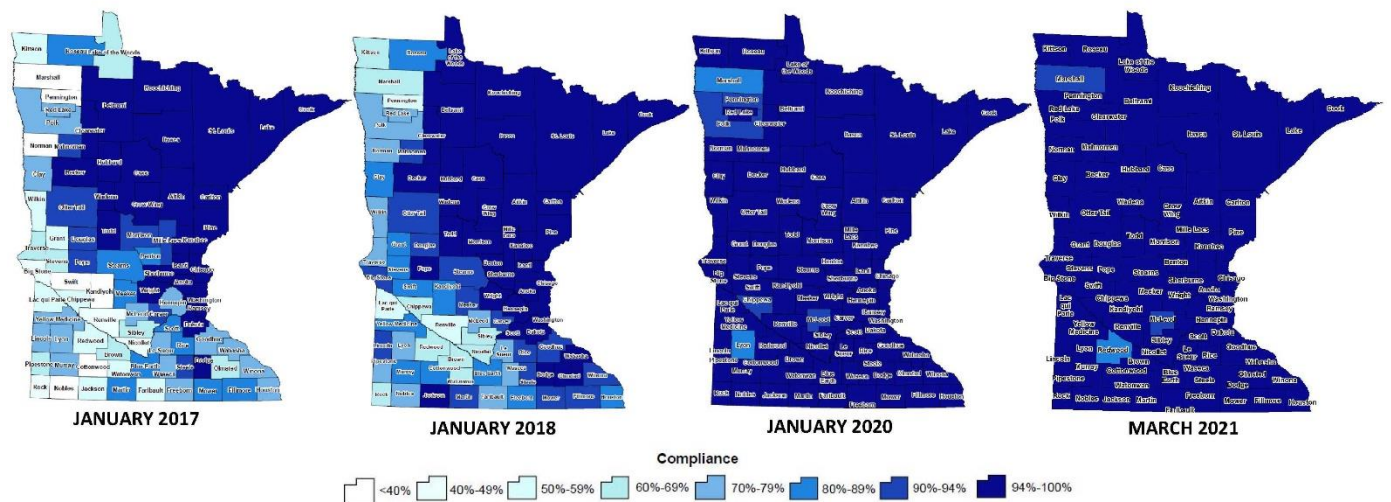
❖ This grant came through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund. The District used the funds to employ staff to improve how the District can assist landowners. The grant provided the necessary funding to support a full time Administrative Assistant and a District Manager to help fulfill the mission of the SWCD.

Buffer Law Grant

- ❖ The Buffer grant provides funding for technical staff to aid in helping the landowner maintain the proper buffer adjacent to public waters and public ditch systems throughout the county. The District assisted the county in Buffer Law enforcement, conducted site visits, and reviewed approximately one third of the parcels required to have a buffer. The following two maps show the progress made on the Buffer Law Compliance over the years and Statewide Compliance as of March 2021. As of December 2022, Waseca County is at 98.1% Compliance on 1890 parcels. 1179 parcels were reviewed and edited in the statewide tracking system in 2022.

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

BUFFER COMPLIANCE ALL WATERCOURSES



All counties in the State have improved in compliance issues over the last 4 years. This is due to greater education on Buffers and their importance, but most of all the willingness of the landowners to comply with Buffer Laws to help keep our waters cleaner.

Most counties have sent out Corrective Action Notices (CAN) to landowners not in compliance with the MN buffer law. Upon receiving these notices, the majority of the landowners are willing to correct issues in a timely manner and avoid monetary and legal penalties. In some instances, the SWCD and/or the County have been able to help in the cost of some of the corrective actions through the help of the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) Grant dollars and other State Funding that may be available.

Wetland Conservation Act

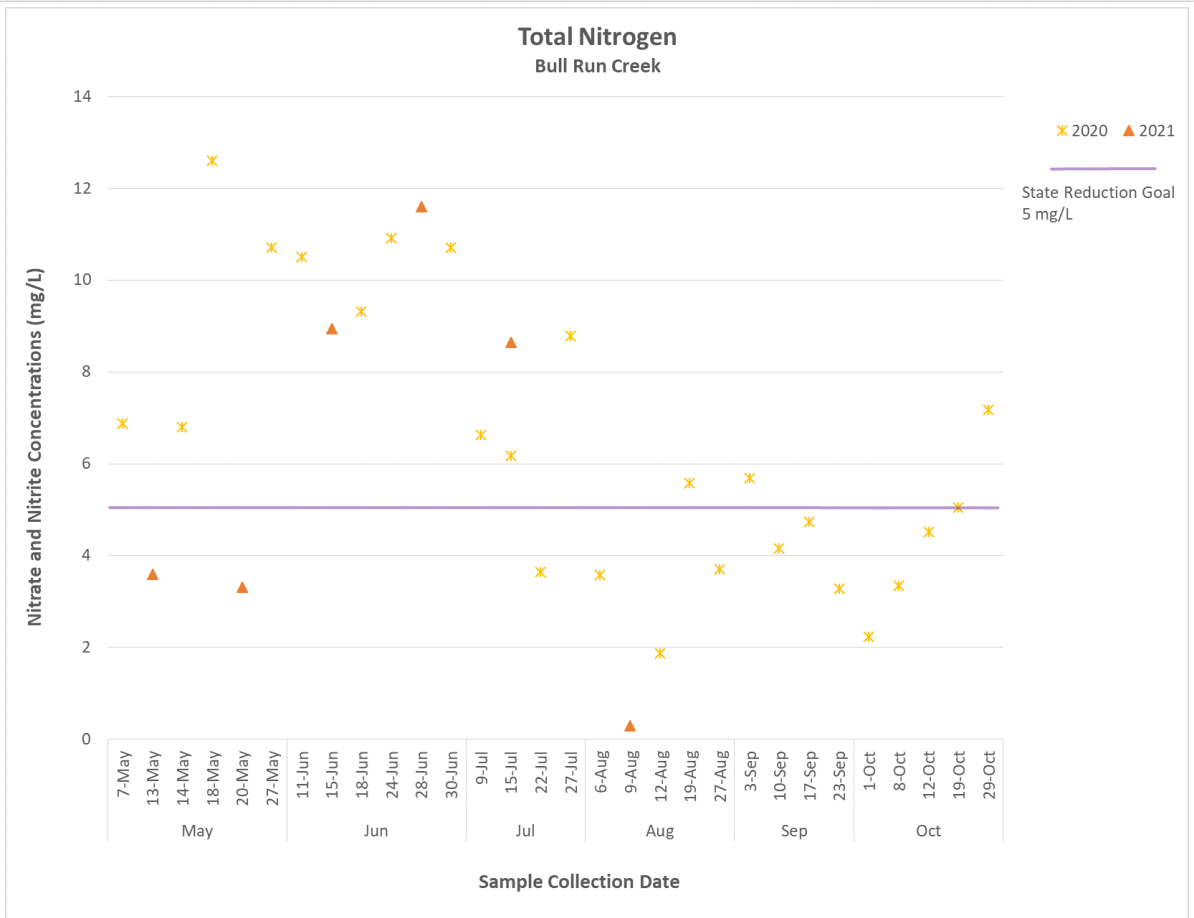
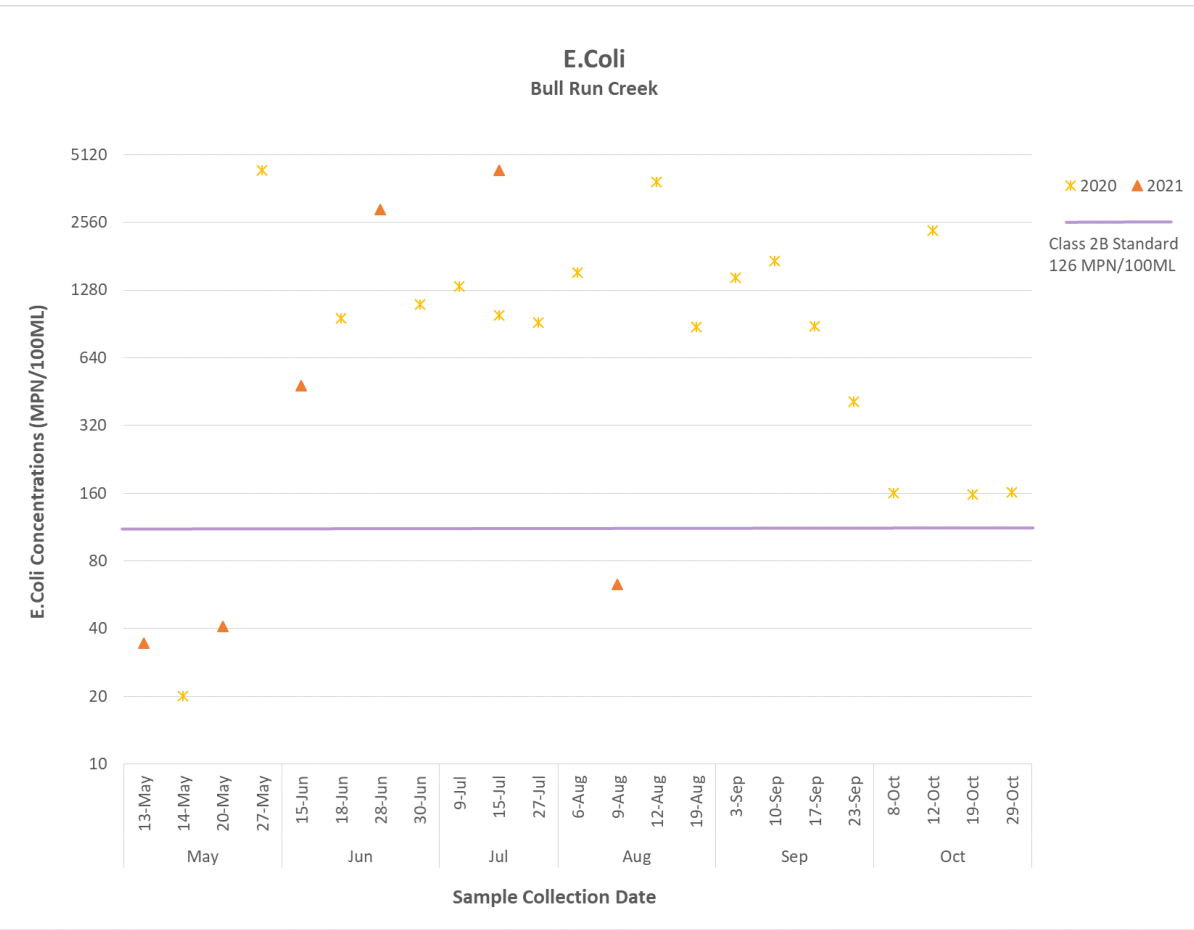
- ❖ The District serves on the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) and Waseca County and City of Waseca administers the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act for the County and City respectively. Working closely with Waseca County, the SWCD aids in reviewing applications, confirmation of any violations, and in development of appropriate restoration orders.

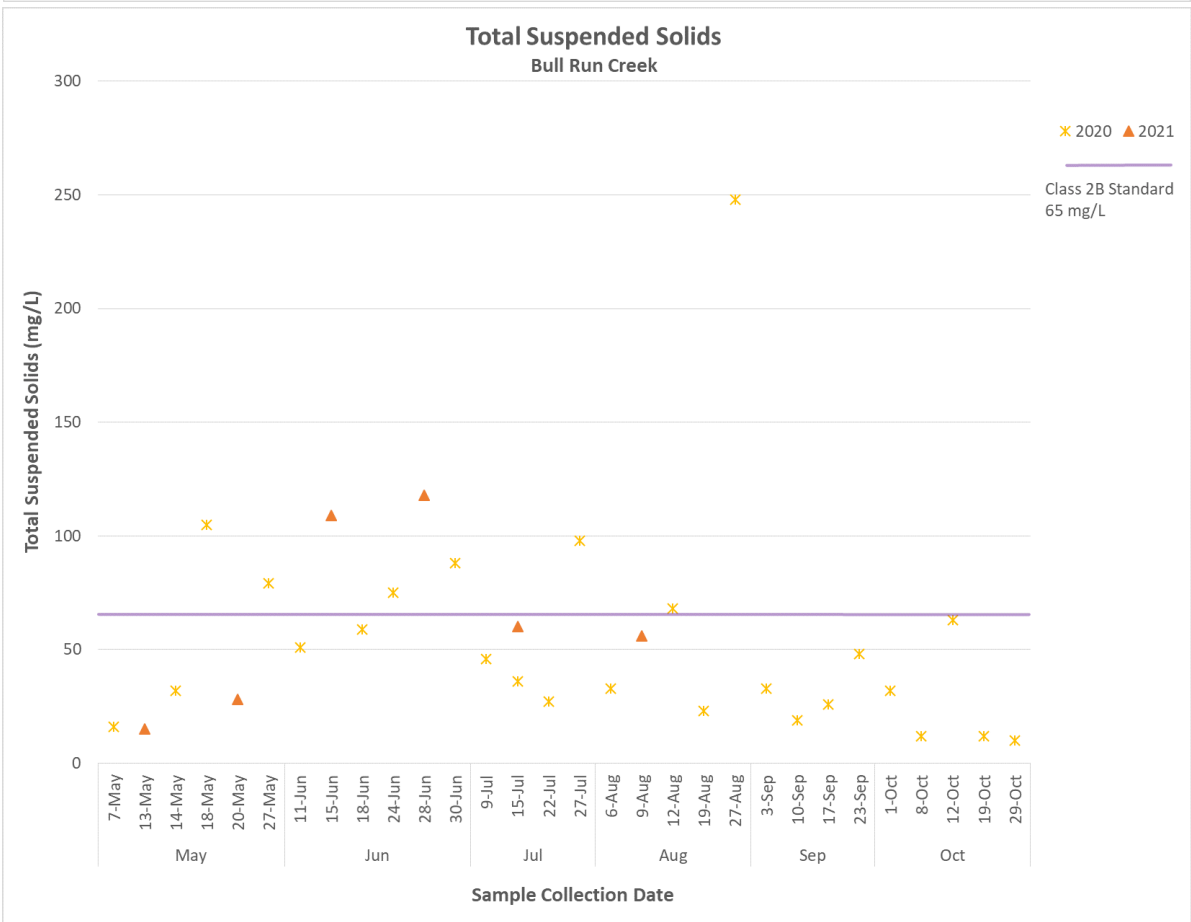
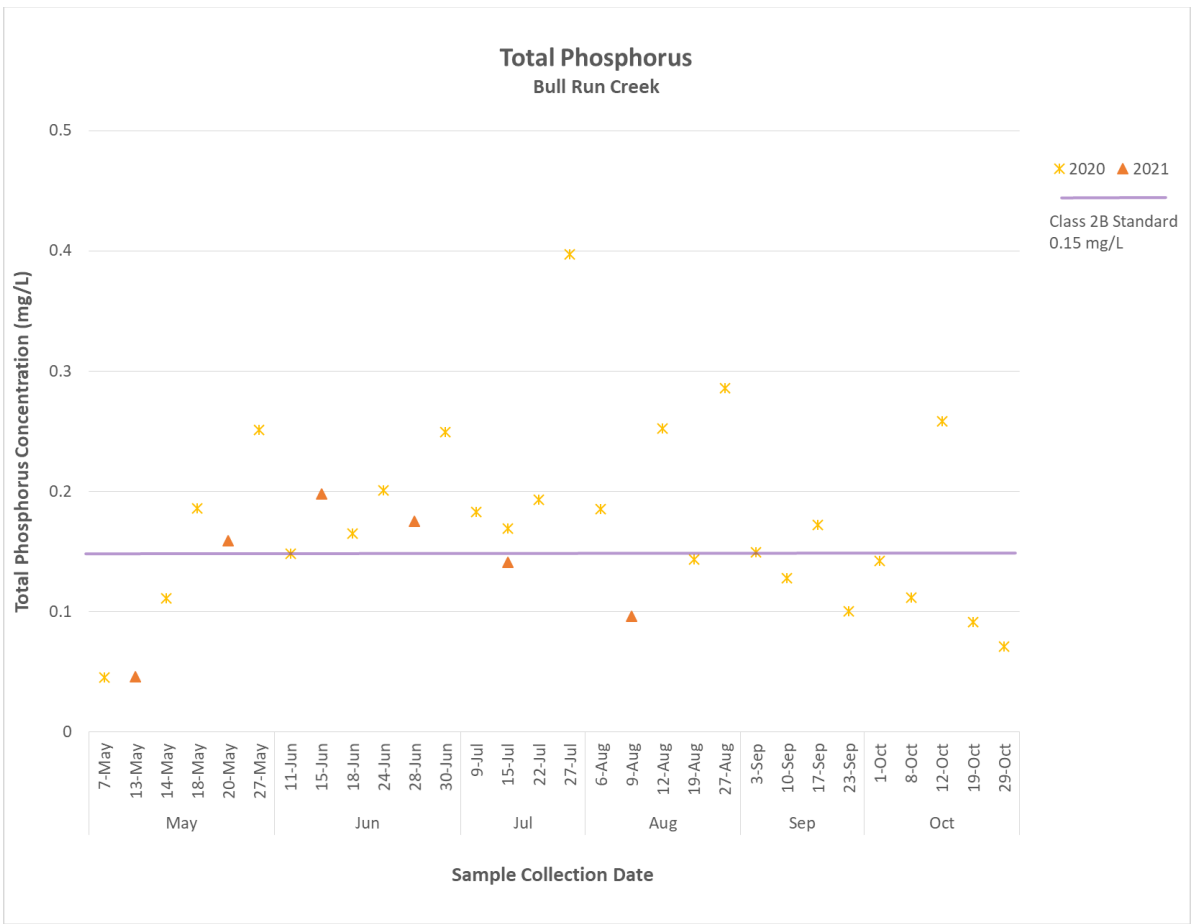


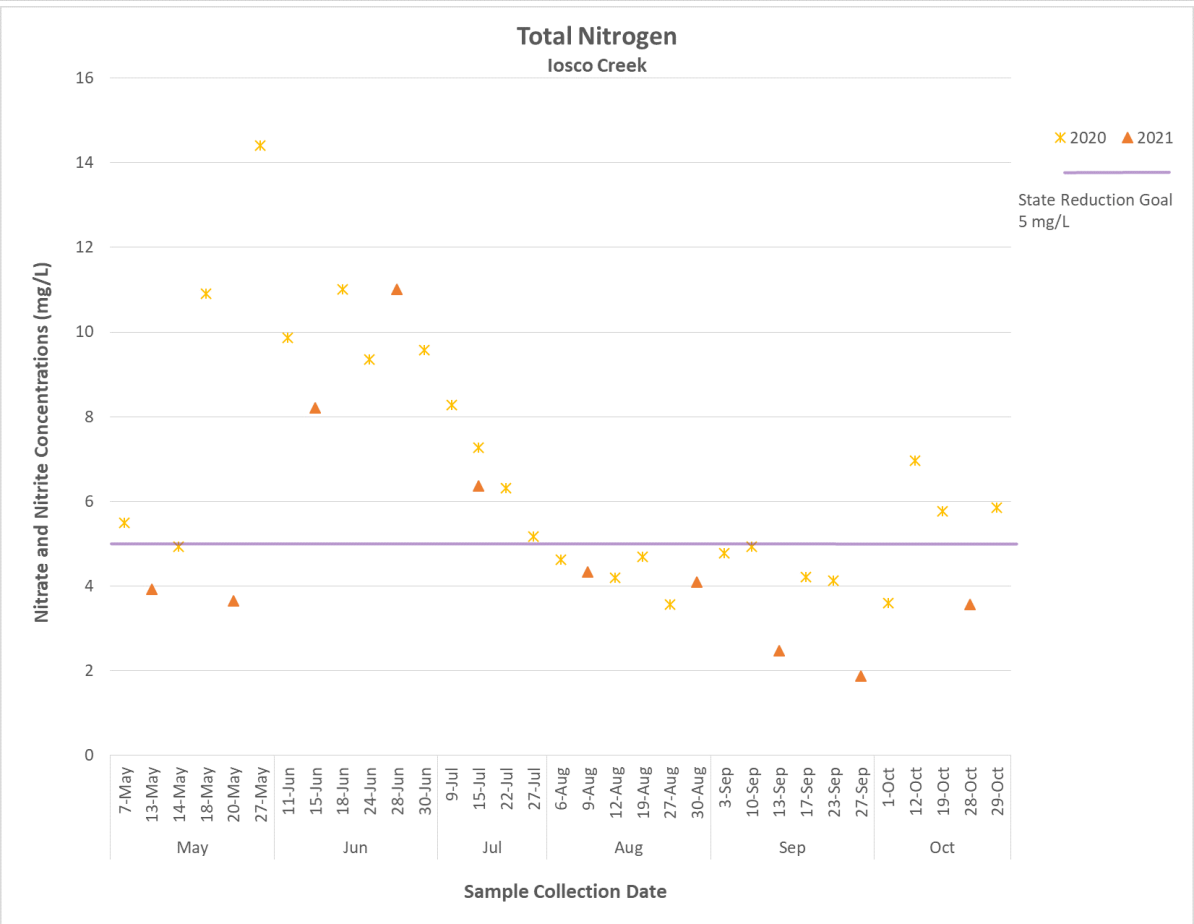
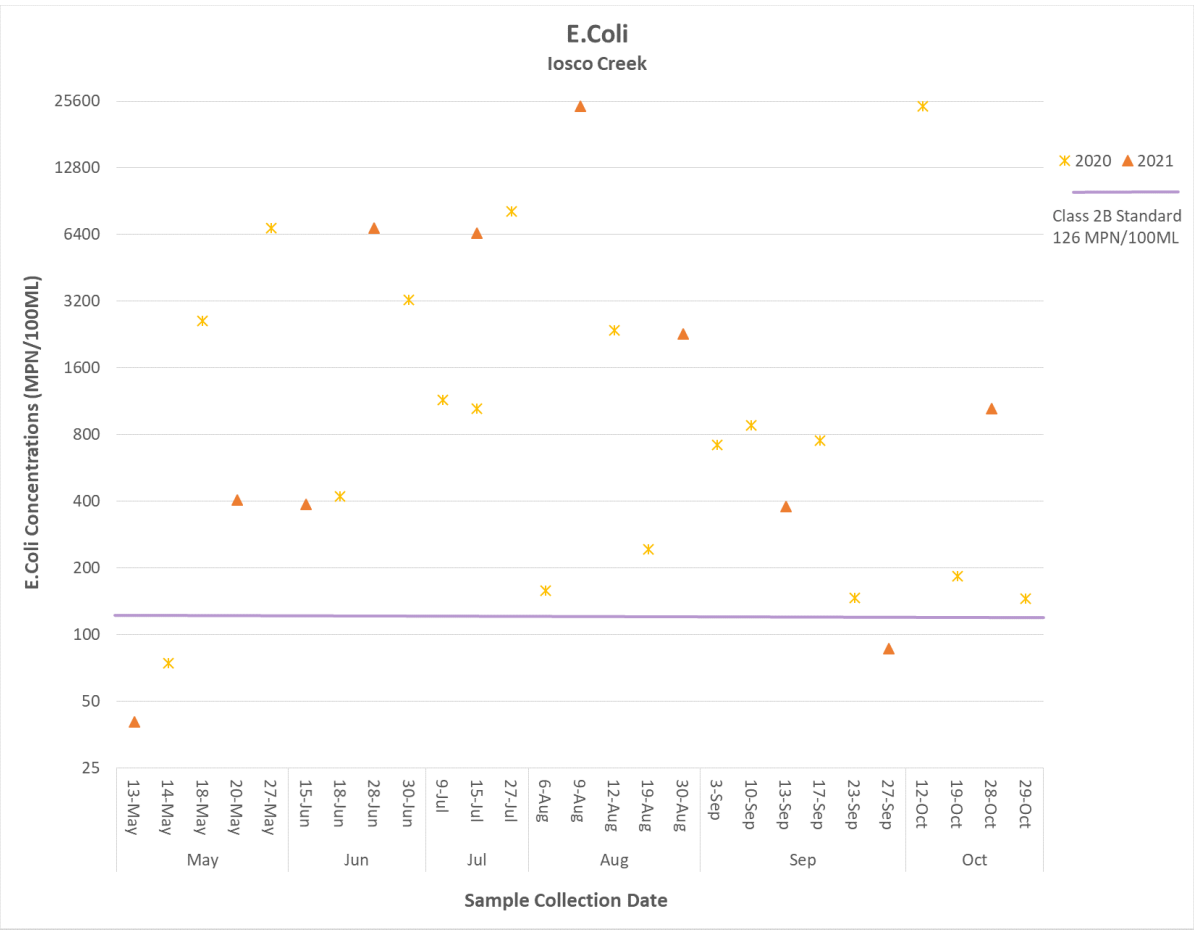
Wetland Banking Site

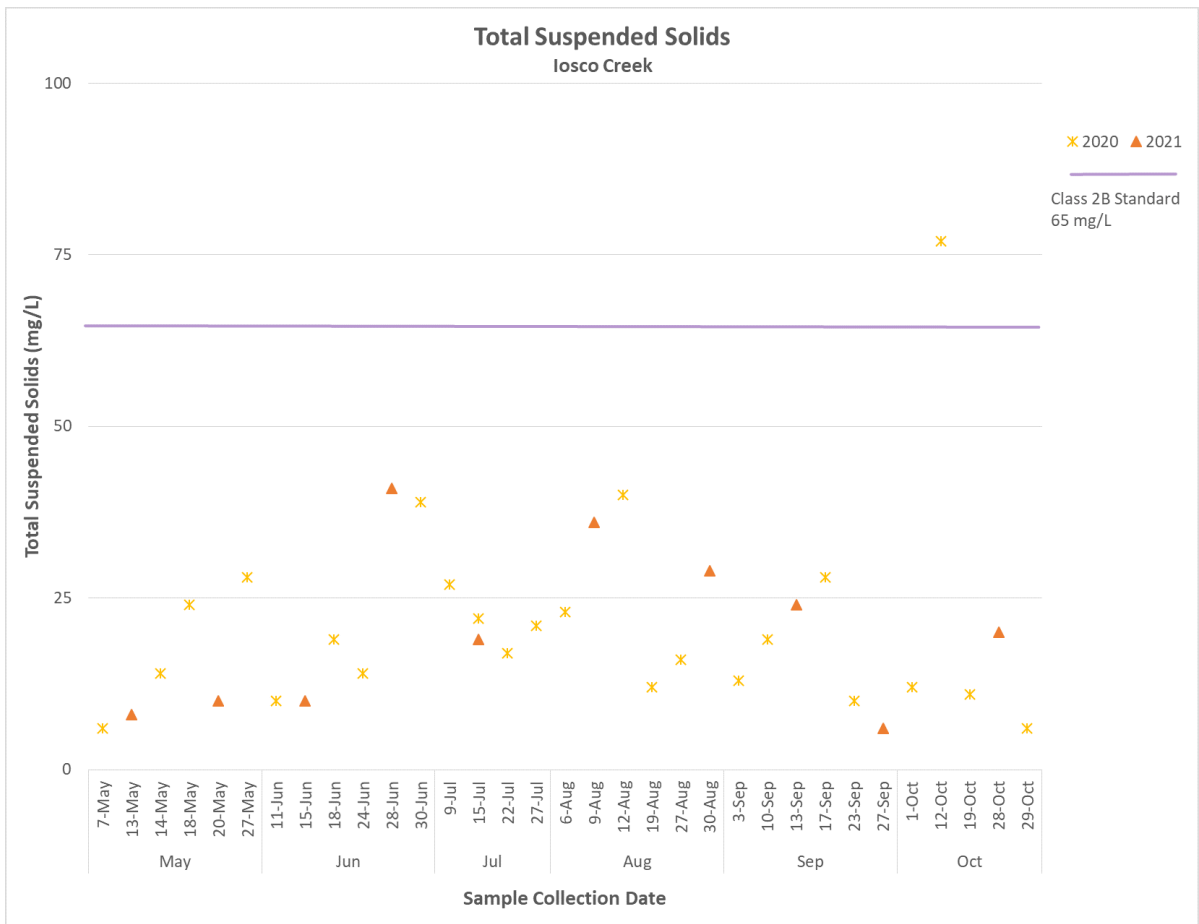
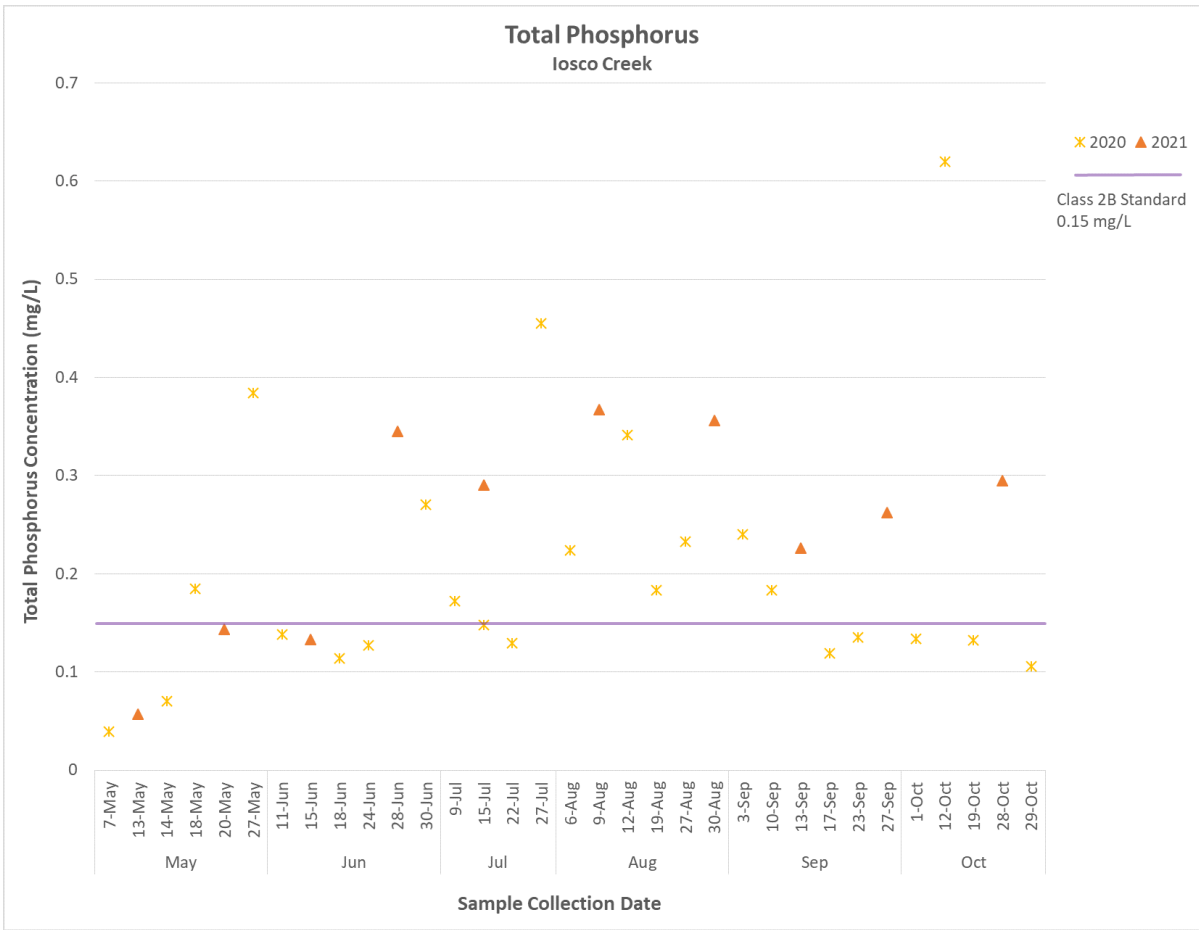
Water Monitoring Program

- ❖ 2022 brought a break for Water Monitoring Equipment purchased through the Local Capacity Grant in 2016 in partnership with Waseca County. Five years of monitoring has been completed on two streams from April through October. The equipment will need some technological and physical upgrades to be functional for the 2023 season. The program involves:
 - 2 Sites: Bull Run Creek and Iosco Creek
 - Data will be used to supplement other monitoring by the MN Pollution Control Agency and to pursue grants to fund water quality practices and projects.
 - Water samples are taken to measure E. Coli, Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Suspended Solids.
 - The following graphs show the monitoring data for 2020 and 2021 compared to the State Standard in purple. (also on website under Water Monitoring) Results show that Iosco Creek and Bull Run would fail to meet state water quality standards for E. Coli, phosphorus, and nitrogen. Bull Run is pushing the limit on total suspended solids while Iosco Creek consistently meets the standard.









District Tree Program

- ❖ The District had another successful tree and shrub sale in 2022. We distributed approximately 7193 trees and 20 wildflower packets, containing 48 plants per packet. The trees and shrubs will be used for snow control, energy conservation (windbreaks), reducing wind erosion, and wildlife habitat/cover plantings. The wildflower packets will provide pollinator habitat and reduce erosion. The orders were about the same as last year and we likely would have sold more but our nurseries ran out of stock.



Conservation Potted Conifers

Conservation Delivery

- ❖ The Conservation Delivery Grant has been used in promoting effective Conservation Practices fitting landowner concerns. Some examples are: site visits, mapping, designing and giving recommendations for waterways, terraces and basins to aid in soil erosion.

State Cost Share Funding

- ❖ State Cost Share is used to provide up to 75% of conservation project costs. The SWCD also provides technical assistance in the form of evaluation, design, and construction certification to the landowner. The landowner was responsible for the remaining 25% of the project. In 2022 we continue to see an increase in project costs and difficulty finding contractors for these projects. One grassed waterway was completed.

Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA)

- ❖ GBERBA is a Joint Powers Organization consisting of ten participating Counties and SWCDs encompassing the Blue Earth, Le Sueur, and Watonwan River Watersheds. GBERBA provides cost share opportunities for Waseca County landowners through various competitive grants. It also facilitates several speakers and information opportunities throughout the year. Current grants being administered include Watonwan Watershed Based Implementation Funds, Watonwan Watershed Drinking Water, and Soil Health Implementation Grant. \$50,000 in cost share and \$25,000 in technical and engineering costs was provided for a Multipurpose Drainage Water Management Project in Waseca County through GBERBA. This resulted in a Storage and Treatment Wetland Restoration with a permanent easement held by Waseca County Drainage Authority and was the first of its kind in the county. Waseca SWCD is represented on the Policy Board by one Supervisor and on the Technical Committee by staff.

South Central Technical Service Area (SC TSA)

- ❖ The SC TSA is a Joint Powers Agreement between 11 SWCDs in south central MN. The SC TSA provides technical assistance to the SWCDs for water quality projects. They have one engineer and two engineering technicians available. In 2022 they assisted us with: grassed waterway construction, survey and design of water and sediment control basins. Waseca SWCD is represented on the TSA board by one supervisor.

Watersheds in Waseca County

One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) – Cannon River

- ❖ The Cannon Watershed was selected for funding for watershed based water planning from BWSR in 2016. Since then the SWCDs and Counties in Waseca, Steele, Rice, Goodhue, Le Sueur, Dakota, the North Cannon Water Management Organization, and the Bell Creek Watershed District have been meeting consistently to develop a water plan for the Cannon Watershed. In 2020 the Cannon River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan was completed, approved by BWSR, adopted locally, and partners formed the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board (CRWJPB) to implement the plan. In 2021, the CRWJPB received Watershed Based Implementation Funding and began to implement projects throughout the watershed. Projects included WASCBS, Cover Crops, Shoreline Survey, Soil Health Outreach and Lake Management Plan. In 2022 work within Waseca county included PTMapp updates, project technical assistance, and a shoreline survey of Toner’s Lake. Waseca SWCD is represented on the CRWJPB by a Supervisor and on the Cannon Implementation Group by the District Manager.



Toner’s Lake shoreline survey

One Watershed One Plan – Le Sueur

- ❖ Partners within the Le Sueur River Watershed were selected for a 1W1P planning grant through BWSR in 2020. Waseca County opted to serve as day to day contact and Waseca SWCD will be providing administrative services. Representatives on the Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Steering Team met regularly to work on planning tasks. Waseca SWCD is represented on the policy committee by one Supervisor and on the Steering Team and TAC by Staff. The Public Kick-

Off Meeting was held at St Olaf Lake Park on September 16, 2021. A mid-point public meeting was held on April 4 in Pemberton. At both meetings area residents were able to ask questions and get information on the 1W1P Planning Process and provide input through an online survey.



**PUBLIC MIDPOINT MEETING
LE SUEUR RIVER WATERSHED
ONE WATERSHED, ONE PLAN**
Monday, April 4, 2022 - 5:30-8:00 p.m. Complimentary food
Pemberton Main Street Plaza 141 4th Street, Pemberton, MN

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION
HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE WATERSHED**
Get updates and weigh in on the planning process for the Le Sueur River Watershed One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P). You'll have the opportunity to learn about progress on the plan and discuss resource concerns with watershed neighbors and local and state conservation partners. Citizens must at the beginning of the planning process (fall) meet and help to shape priorities. You have the opportunity to review how citizen projects have been incorporated into the plan. The meeting will focus on strategies to address priority needs or concerns. The planning effort is part of a statewide initiative to create a watershed-wide, science-based approach to water resource management. The plan will guide watershed planning and implementation over the next 10 years.

YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED
Watershed partners want to learn your residents' priorities and concerns. What river, lake and groundwater issues do you think the plan should focus on? What priority water issues should always be focused on? What watershed improvement strategies can best address watershed challenges?

FOR MORE INFORMATION & SURVEY
There are two ways to provide input on the planning and on-line. You can sign up for the Le Sueur River Watershed 1W1P planning process. https://www.wasecaswcd.org/1/1/9/111975293/mosh_11-30-2022_report_-_public_domain.pdf
1W1P 1W1P (One Watershed, One Plan) is a watershed-wide effort to create a watershed-wide, science-based approach to water resource management. The plan will guide watershed planning and implementation over the next 10 years.

AGENDA
5:30 pm Registration and refreshments
6:00 1W1P Planning Progress Update
6:45 Small Group Resource Concerns
7:15 Small Group Resource Concerns 2
7:45 Report
8:00 Adjourn

WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP
The Le Sueur River Watershed planning partnership includes Blue Earth County, Blue Earth State Land Water Conservation District, Waseca County, Waseca SWCD, Water Conservation Districts, Fairbairn County, Fairbault SWCD and Water Conservation District, Freeborn County, and various Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

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Before the meeting, please visit the Le Sueur 1W1P website for meeting updates or cancellations.

Le Sueur Civic Engagement

- ❖ The Le Sueur River Watershed Restoration and Protection Civic Engagement is funded through Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Its purpose is to educate and aid in development of water plans along the Le Sueur River. Discussions on problems and solutions are the main focus at the present time. Many of the original tasks were postponed or altered due to the pandemic. A Soil Health Workshop was held at Farmamerica in March. Waseca SWCD served as the fiscal agent for other partners within the watershed and this effort concluded in June.

Soil Health Demonstration

- ❖ In 2021 Waseca SWCD received a grant for and committed to 3 years of soil health demonstration with local farmer and 2021 Waseca Outstanding Conservationist Jason Norton. The study areas are 4 plots within three larger agricultural fields. The demonstration includes measuring soil health indicators that are not obvious to the passerby. We completed soil health focused soil tests twice a year, soil temperature records, in field soil health assessments twice a year, and gathered data to quantify return on investment in a soil health farming system. Additional partners include the Minnesota Office of Soil Health (MOSH) and NRCS. A summary of data is located on our webpage: https://www.wasecaswcd.org/uploads/1/1/1/9/111975293/mosh_11-30-2022_report_-_public_domain.pdf

The Programs and Project of the Waseca SWCD and Partnering Agencies Results for 2022

SWCD 2022 Project Accomplishments

Cover Crops (Riparian Funds)	4 contracts on 264 acres
Grassed Waterway	1 completed
Reinvest in MN (RIM) Easements	3 closed, 67.6 acres, \$130,636
Reinvest in MN RIM Easements	2 repairs
Water Storage & Treatment Wetland	1 easement

Waseca County Federal Conservation Funding

(Information furnished by NRCS & FSA)

Fiscal Year October 1, 2021-September 30, 2022

<u>Program</u>	<u>Contracts</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>
CRP (NEW)	39	297	\$78,047
Active CRP	1044	11,650	\$3,039,130
EQIP	6	649	\$80,601
CSP	0	0	\$0
WRP	0	0	\$0