DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed

GROUNDWATER RESTORATION AND PROTECTION STRATEGIES REPORT

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GRAPS Report #24

Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies Report

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Photo Credit: The photo on the front page is in the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed, courtesy of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

Contents

Summary 5
Introduction 8
What Is the GRAPS Report? 8
How to Use this Report 9
Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed Overview 10
Land Use 11
Geology and Hydrogeology 13
Pollution Sensitivity 14
Wellhead Protection Planning and Drinking Water Supply Management Areas 19
Groundwater Protection Rule 22
Private Wells 24
Extreme Weather 25
Groundwater Issues and Concerns 27
Groundwater Quality Issues and Concerns 27
Groundwater Quantity Issues and Concerns 48
Strategies and Actions to Restore and Protect Groundwater 63
Tips for Prioritizing and Targeting Strategies and Actions 63
Strategies and Actions for Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed 65
Descriptions of Supporting Strategies 87
Making Sense of the Regulatory Environment 95
Appendices 98
List of Acronyms 98
Glossary of Key Terms 100
Dataset Sources 102
Additional Resources 103
References 107

Figure 1: Watershed Approach Framework 8
Figure 2: HUC-10 subwatersheds. 11
Figure 3: Land cover. 12
Figure 4: Primary Aquifers by section. 14
Figure 5: Pollution sensitivity of near surface materials. 16
Figure 6: Recharge travel time for near-surface materials 16
Figure 7: Pollution sensitivity of wells. 17
Figure 8: Recharge Travel Time for Buried Aquifers 17
Figure 9: Wellhead protection plan development status for community public water systems. 20
Figure 10: Drinking water supply management areas (DWSMAs) 21
Figure 11: Fall nitrogen fertilizer application restrictions and MDA mitigation DWSMAs. 23
Figure 12: Density of drinking water wells per section. 24
Figure 13: Drinking water wells and flood zone risk to contamination. 26
Figure 14: Nitrate results from drinking water wells. 30
Figure 15: MDA township testing program initial and final results. 31
Figure 16: MDA monitoring wells 32
Figure 17: Arsenic results. 37
Figure 18: MPCA ambient groundwater monitoring well network. 39
Figure 19: Active feedlots per section. 41
Figure 20: MPCA active tank and leak sites. 44
Figure 21: MPCA solid waste sites. 45
Figure 22: Reported water use from the DNR permit holders by resource category. 49
Figure 23: Reported groundwater use from DNR permit holders by aquifer category. 50
Figure 24: Reported groundwater use from DNR permit holders by use category. 51
Figure 25: Distribution of groundwater appropriation permits for 2023 by volume reported and use category. 53
Figure 26: Distribution of groundwater appropriation permits for 2023 by volume reported and aquifer category. 54
Figure 27: Location of groundwater-level monitoring wells in the planning area. 55
Figure 28: Trends in groundwater levels in DNR wells across Minnesota in the last 20 years. 56
Figure 29: Hydrograph of water-table aquifer (QWTA) well DNR 49002 (243998). 57
Figure 30: Hydrograph of buried water-table aquifer (QBAA) well DNR 05007 (243443). 58
Figure 31: Hydrograph of water-table aquifer (QWTA) well DNR 49028 (431178). 59
Figure 32: Hydrograph of DNR water table aquifer (QWTA) well DNR 49002 (243998). 60
Figure 33: Groundwater-flow dominated lakes. 61

Figure 34: Visual representation of the relationship between goals, supporting strategies, and recommended groundwater action. 66

Figure 35: BWSR RIM easements. 87

Figure 36: Minnesota State Agency Roles in Groundwater 95

Figure 37: Sensitivity Assessment and Calculation for Pollution Sensitivity of Wells (Figure 7). 105

Figure 38: Sensitivity Assessment and Calculation for Pollution Sensitivity of Wells (Figure 7) continued. 106

Summary

Groundwater is an important resource in the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed (MRSW) One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) planning effort[1]. Approximately 66 percent of the people living in the watershed utilize community public water and the remaining 34 percent obtain their drinking water from private wells. Residents rely on both groundwater and surface water for drinking water in the watershed. Additionally, groundwater is permitted for agricultural irrigation (77 percent), water supply (20 percent), and special categories (1.2 percent) as the top water uses. Permitted annual groundwater use in the MRSW was generally between 6,270 and 14,725 million gallons per year from 1988-2023. It is important to ensure adequate supplies of high-quality groundwater remain available for the region's residents, businesses, and natural resources.

Approximately 69 percent of wells in the MRSW depend on buried glacial aquifers for drinking water. These aquifers are generally protected by clay and silt that imped water infiltration and potential contaminants from the lands surface. Another 16 percent of wells use surficial glacial aquifers, and 1 percent use sedimentary bedrock aquifers.

Groundwater has a greater risk to contamination in areas of high pollution sensitivity[2]. The MRSW has areas of high pollution sensitivity that are largely concentrated in the central portion of the watershed. Understanding pollution sensitivity is a key consideration to prevent groundwater pollution. Many land-use activities (including row crop agriculture, stormwater, septic systems, and tanks/landfills) within the watershed could contaminate groundwater if pollutants are not carefully managed, especially in areas of high pollution sensitivity.

Contamination, both naturally occurring and from human activity, is present in parts of the watershed groundwater, specifically:

- **Nitrate** – just over five percent of the 3,214 tested drinking water wells had nitrate levels at or above the SDWA standard of 10 mg/L.
- **Arsenic** – close to two percent of the 640 tested drinking water wells had arsenic levels exceeding the SDWA of 10 µg/L. The EPA has set a goal of 0 µg/L for arsenic in drinking water because there is no safe level of arsenic in drinking water.
- **Contaminated sites –** there are 73 active tanks that could leak chemicals into the environment and 6 leak sites that may cause localized groundwater pollution if not

[1] For this report, the boundary of the MRSW is the HUC 8 major watershed for planning purposes.

[2] Areas of high pollution sensitivity allow the rapid downward movement of water into surficial sands (water table) aquifers, increasing the risk for groundwater contamination from surface pollutants.

properly managed. The risk to groundwater is greatest in areas of high pollution sensitivity.

- There is one closed landfill within the watershed.

These contaminants can affect both private wells and public water systems when levels exceed drinking water standards. Two-thirds (66 percent) of the people living in the watershed get their drinking water from a community public water supply system. Wellhead Protection Plans have been developed for 23 community public water systems in the MRSW and identify land use protections strategies for the approximately 44,646 acres in Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs).

Permitted groundwater is primarily sourced from buried sand and gravel aquifers, followed by surficial sand aquifers in the watershed. The DNR has 48 active groundwater-level monitoring wells in the MRSW. Ten wells had sufficient record for determining the groundwater level trends. All ten wells showed no trend over the period of record.

Activities on the land surface can affect groundwater levels by reducing infiltration (groundwater recharge); these activities include changes in vegetation, increased areas of impervious surface, and changing surface water or stormwater flow.

The MRSW includes natural features, including surface waters that depend on groundwater to sustain them. There are 45 groundwater-flow dominated lakes in the MRSW. Of these lakes, 24 have a watershed area to lake area ratio between 5 and 10, and 21 have a watershed to lake area ratio of less than 5. These lakes may be groundwater dominated. If groundwater quantity or quality is degraded, these lakes are at risk.

To address risks both from groundwater overuse and from the introduction of pollutants, this report outlines a broad range of strategies that can be implemented, as well as specific actions that individuals, local government, and other partners can take. The nine categories of strategies highlighted below were selected to address the key risks to groundwater and drinking water within the 1W1P planning area. Areas of higher pollution sensitivity are often appropriate places to prioritize pollution prevention activities.

- **Education and Outreach:** Educate landowners, private well users, and others about how their actions affect groundwater and how they can conserve, restore, and protect groundwater.
- **SSTS Management:** Monitor, maintain, and/or upgrade SSTS to ensure proper operation and treatment.
- **Irrigation Water Management:** Control the volume, frequency, and application rate of irrigation water to sustain groundwater.
- **Land Use Planning and Management:** Use city or county government planning and regulations along with land management goals that implement best management practices (BMPs), conserve water, and educate stakeholders to protect groundwater levels, quality, and contributions to groundwater dependent features.

- **Contaminant Planning and Management:** Use land use planning, ordinances, and collaboration with state regulatory agencies to protect groundwater and drinking water supplies from contaminant releases.
- **Conservation Easements:** Maintain and expand the amount of land protected from being converted to high intensity uses, such as row crop agriculture.
- **Cropland Management:** Encourage the implementation of voluntary practices to manage resource concerns while minimizing environmental loss.
- **Nutrient Management:** Assure that application of crop fertilizer or manure follows guidelines for the right source, right rate, right time, and right place.
- **Integrated Pest Management:** Implement a pest management approach that incorporates many aspects of plant health care/crop protection in ways that mitigate harmful environmental impacts and protect human health.

This GRAPS report was designed to help prioritize and target local efforts to restore and protect groundwater resources in the watershed. Representatives from BWSR, MDA, MDH, DNR, and MPCA compiled existing state and regional data, and developed maps to establish a baseline understanding of groundwater conditions and associated resource management concerns for the 1W1P planning boundary. The team highlighted strategies and supporting actions that can be applied at a county or watershed-level to help restore and protect groundwater. To target local implementation, actions listed in this report are paired with those counties and subwatersheds (HUC-10) where risks have been identified. This report should be used in conjunction with the WRAPS report, which focuses on surface water issues and needs, to ensure that both groundwater and surface water are effectively addressed during the 1W1P planning process.[3]

[3] It is important to note that groundwater science lacks the predictive tools available for surface water analysis and as such cannot provide quantifiable strategies commonly found in WRAPS. BWSR recognizes this challenge and has provided guidance in the Setting Measurable Goals section of the 1W1P Guidebook (https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2018-12/One%20Watershed%2C%20One%20Plan%20Guidebook.pdf) to meet the measurability requirement.

Introduction

What Is the GRAPS Report?

The State of Minnesota adopted a watershed approach to address the state's 80 major watersheds[4]. Major watersheds are denoted by an 8-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC). This watershed approach involves a 10-year cycle that includes 5 stages:

- Monitoring and assessment
- Water resource characterization and problem investigation
- Restoration and protection strategy development
- Comprehensive watershed management plan
- Ongoing local implementation

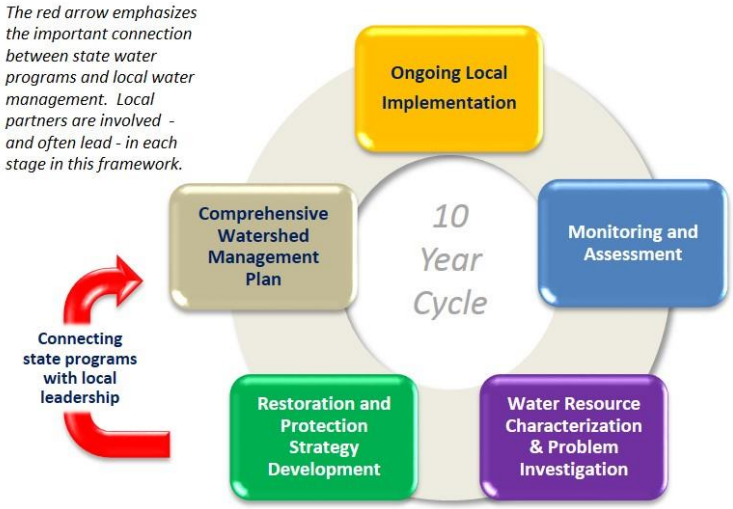

Figure 1: Watershed Approach Framework

Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS) reports are designed to help prioritize and target local efforts to restore and protect groundwater resources in the One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) planning process. While groundwater is not broken into watersheds like surface water, several state agencies have worked together to compile information and strategies for groundwater below surface water watersheds. A GRAPS report uses existing state data and information about groundwater and land-use practices that affect groundwater in the watershed to identify key groundwater quality and quantity concerns. The report also suggests targeted strategies and actions to restore and protect groundwater. GRAPS reports are meant to be used in conjunction with Watershed Restoration and Protection

[4] You can learn more about the Watershed Approach at Watershed approach to restoring and protecting water quality (www.pca.state.mn.us/water/watershed-approach-restoring-and-protecting-water-quality).

Strategies (WRAPS) reports in the development of 1W1P plans. WRAPS inform how to restore and protect surface water, and GRAPS inform how to restore and protect groundwater in the same geographic area.

WRAPS is initiated through an intensive monitoring effort to determine if a surface water body is meeting its designated use. WRAPS identify actions and the rate of adoption needed to restore water quality, as well as recognizing protection-based activities to maintain the health of high-quality surface waters. GRAPS is largely protection-based—identifying actions to maintain groundwater quality and quantity. However, if contaminants exist or overuse is suspected, the strategies and actions identified to address the issue can result in restoration as well as protection. In most cases it is very difficult determine the rate of BMP adoption needed to restore groundwater, therefore quantification is not part of GRAPS.

How to Use this Report

This report is a resource and tool for developing local water management plans. The report is divided into five parts to accommodate the different needs and information partners and agencies may seek. This report is not necessarily designed to be read cover to cover. Rather, you can flip to the parts that are most relevant to the issues facing your community. If you are accessing this document electronically, you can click on hyperlinks throughout the report to jump to related information and/or access webpages (all hyperlinks are in blue type).

Some maps include embedded links to the Watershed Health Assessment Framework (WHAF) Explorer application (https://whaf-explorer.dnr.state.mn.us/). Clicking on maps with the caption "Click the image to view the interactive web version" will open a browser window displaying the interactive version in WHAF Explorer. You can then explore the watershed and map layers dynamically, alongside additional data and watershed health scores.

The report is divided into the following parts:

1. Watershed Overview: This section provides a brief overview of the watershed.
2. Watershed Groundwater Issues and Concerns: This section highlights the main groundwater quality and quantity concerns, where each concern is most prevalent within the watershed, and general ways to address the concern.
3. Watershed Strategies and Actions to Protect and Restore Groundwater: This section provides tips for prioritizing and targeting restoration and protection strategies, makes suggestions about what strategies and actions would be most appropriate in which counties and subwatersheds, describes the suggested strategies, and provides information about existing programs and resources for each strategy.
4. Making Sense of the Regulatory Environment: This section provides an overview of the roles state agencies play in managing groundwater and drinking water.
5. Appendices

Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed Overview

This report provides a brief overview of land use, geology, hydrogeology, pollution sensitivity, wellhead protection planning and drinking water, and water use and groundwater withdrawals affecting the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed (MRSW) 1W1P planning boundary groundwater quality and quantity. You can find more detailed information about the MRSW and groundwater through the following resources:

- Restoration and Protection Plans
- MPCA watershed reports (www.pca.state.mn.us/watershed-information/mississippi-river-sartell)

The MRSW covers over 1,025 square miles in the south-central part of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The watershed includes all or parts of the counties of Benton, Crow Wing, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Stearns, and Todd (Figure 2). The watershed increased in population by nearly 6 percent from the 2000 to 2010 census. The largest cities are St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, Little Falls, and Saint Joseph.

Of the roughly 78,900 people living in the watershed, approximately 52,340 (66 percent) utilize community public water and the remaining 34 percent obtain their drinking water from private wells. Most residents within the watershed rely on groundwater for their water supply through community public water systems and private wells. A small portion of St. Cloud lies in the southeastern portion of MRSW, and the city primarily uses surface water as its drinking source. While groundwater is clearly the dominant source in other municipalities within the watershed, the inclusion of part of St. Cloud makes it difficult to accurately estimate how many of the 78,900 residents depend on groundwater for drinking water.

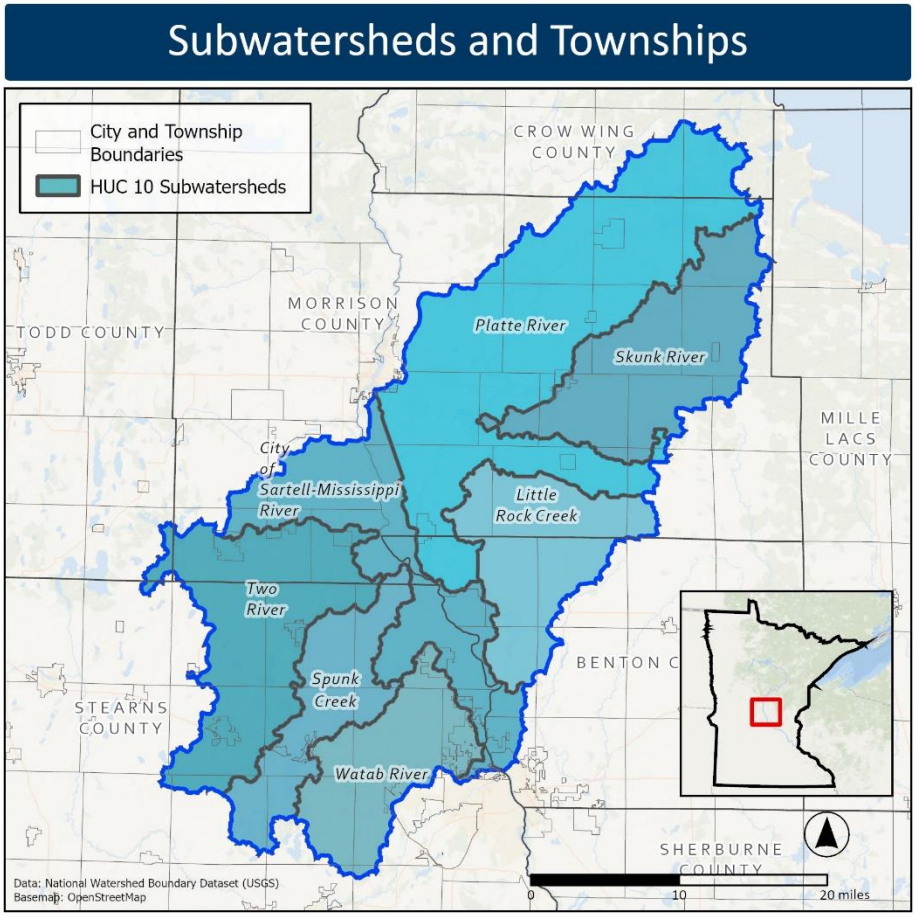

Figure 2: HUC-10 subwatersheds. Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed is comprised of 7 subwatersheds (HUC-10). Click the image to view the interactive web version.

Land Use

Most of the MRSW lies in the North Central Hardwood Forests ecoregion, with the top-half of the watershed falling in the Northern Lakes and Forest ecoregion. Approximately 53 percent of the watershed is in agricultural production, Figure 3. Beginning in the 1950's and into the 1980's there was a significant shift in agricultural land use with annual row crops rising to its peak around 2010, replacing small grains and a reduction in hay acres.

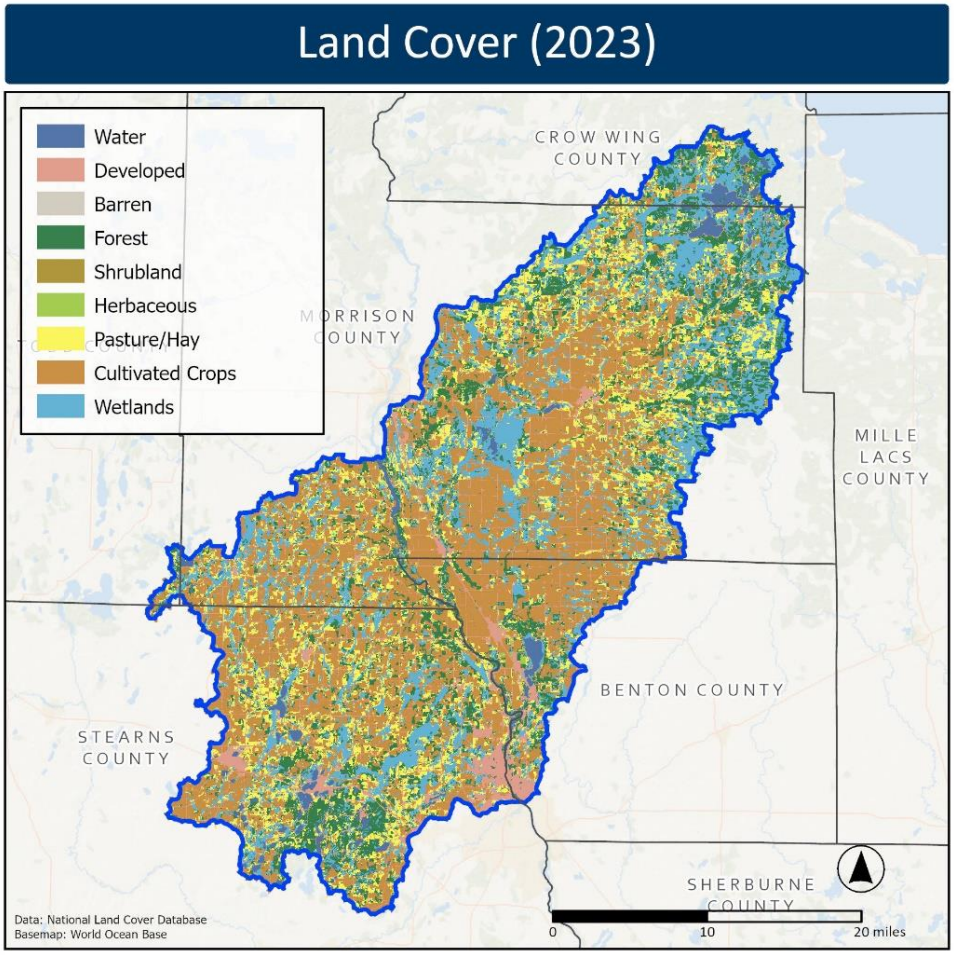

Figure 3: Land cover. Row-crop agriculture is the predominant land cover in the watershed, followed by wetlands, pasture and hay land, and developed land. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

Geology and Hydrogeology

Groundwater sources within the MRSW vary according to the underlying geology, which is the result of igneous, metamorphic, sedimentary, and glacial processes that have taken place in the region over billions of years.

The bedrock in the region is mostly very old, crystalline (mostly granite) igneous and metamorphic rocks, containing very little pore space, and thus not a significant source of groundwater. While the Mt. Simon Sandstone sedimentary aquifer contributes to groundwater supply in the neighboring Mississippi-St. Cloud watershed, it is not present in this region, meaning groundwater comes primarily from glacial deposits. Cretaceous sandstone materials are present in the southern part of this region and are drawn upon by some residential wells in Stearns County.

Above the bedrock is sediment deposited by the advance and retreat of glaciers during the last ice age. Glacial geology is complex and multilayered. Some aquifers are protected beneath less penetrable layers of sediment ("buried"), while others lack these barriers ("surficial" or "water table" aquifers). Surficial aquifers are easier to access but are also more vulnerable to contamination.

Surficial glacial sediment consisting primarily of sand and gravel deposits are abundant near banks of the Mississippi river, which flows roughly north-south through the west-central part of MRSW. In central Morrison County, these sand deposits can exceed 100 feet in thickness and serve as surficial aquifers. The rest of the watershed, including much of Morrison County and the northwest Benton County, are dominated by till ranging in texture from clayey to sandy. Sandy till is particularly abundant in central Morrison County southwest of the city of Pierz. Organic-rich deposits are common in low-lying areas such as marshes, especially in the northeastern corner of Morrison County. In many parts of Morrison County, these surficial deposits are hydraulically connected to buried sand and gravel aquifers without an intervening layer.

Among the drinking water wells that have interpreted aquifer codes in the state database, about 69 percent of wells draw from buried glacial aquifers. Another 17 percent of wells use surficial glacial aquifers, and 1 percent use sedimentary bedrock aquifers.

Figure 4 depicts a generalized map of aquifers in the watershed. More information on the bedrock and surficial geology can be found in the Geologic Atlases for Morrison, Stearns, Benton, Todd, and Crow Wing Counties. MDH has also developed a watershed-scale groundwater model for the region.

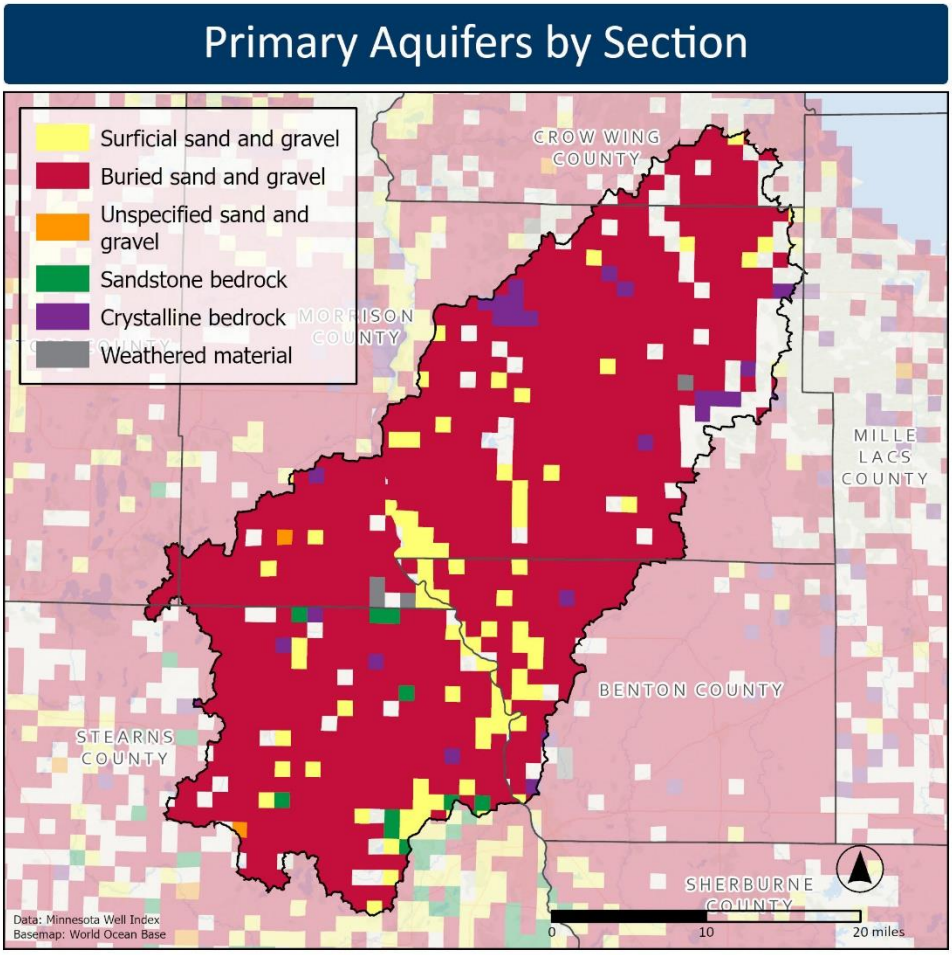

Figure 4: Primary Aquifers by section.Buried sand and gravel aquifers are the primary drinking water source for the watershed, followed by surficial sand and gravel aquifers. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

Pollution Sensitivity

Understanding pollution sensitivity is important for prioritizing and targeting implementation efforts. Pollution sensitivity (also known as aquifer vulnerability or geologic sensitivity) refers to the time it takes for groundwater to recharge and for contaminants at the ground surface to reach the underlying aquifer.

Figure 5 depicts the pollution sensitivity of near-surface materials dataset developed by the DNR. This dataset only considers the top ten feet of soil and geologic material when assigning a sensitivity rating. More information on this dataset is available on the Minnesota Hydrogeology Atlas (MHA) (https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/groundwater_section/mapping/mn-hydro-atlas.html#hg-02).

Understanding the target aquifer when assessing pollution sensitivity is important because certain aquifers may be deeper and more geologically protected than others in each area. Figure 5 depicts the pollution sensitivity of near-surface materials dataset developed by the DNR. This dataset only considers the top ten feet of soil and geologic material when assigning a

sensitivity rating. The pollution sensitivity map reflects the surficial glacial geology, with high vulnerability throughout the central portion of the watershed due to the widespread sand and gravel deposits around the Mississippi River. In these coarser-grained glacial river and outwash sediments, water can be rapidly transported downward, meaning that an aquifer could become easily contaminated by surface pollutants. In finer grained till sediments, a higher clay content and lower hydraulic conductivity mean that water generally travels slower and there would likely be more time to respond to pollution incidents before contamination occurs, resulting in a lower vulnerability in the eastern and western parts of this watershed.

Because this statewide dataset was partly assembled from county maps at varying scales, some sensitivity ratings are discontinuous across county lines. To reduce discontinuities across county boundaries in statewide sensitivity datasets, the Minnesota Geological Survey is developing seamless three-dimensional geologic models that integrate subsurface and surficial data. These models are expected to provide more consistent watershed-scale interpretations once they become publicly available (Minnesota Geological Survey, 2022).

The pollution sensitivity of deeper aquifer materials depicted in Figure 7 was created by calculating the sensitivity at individual wells in the watershed and then interpolating between them to create a smooth layer. The wells used to make this figure vary in depth but overall provide a picture of the geologic sensitivity of aquifers below the water table. This method was employed due to the absence of an available statewide dataset depicting pollution sensitivity, or vulnerability, of aquifers. Figure 7 shows that the groundwater pollution sensitivity rating is mostly "low" to "moderate" throughout, with areas of "high" sensitivity reflecting the influence of individual wells and localized stratigraphic complexity. More information on the geologic sensitivity calculations used to make this figure is included in the references section of this report as Figure 37 and Figure 38.

It is also important to understand how recharge travel time ratings (Figure 6 and Figure 8) for surficial water table aquifers differ from those used for deeper aquifers (Table 1). For example, a pollution sensitivity rating of ‘moderate’ for surficial materials reflects vertical travel times on the order of weeks (Figure 5); whereas, for deeper aquifers more commonly used for drinking water, a rating of ‘moderate’ reflects travel times of years to decades (Figure 8). This difference stems from the fact that infiltrating water and contaminants reach surficial materials more quickly than deeper aquifers. Deeper aquifers often have protective clay layers that make travel time significantly longer. As noted above, this distinction is important when determining the potential impact of various contaminants on surficial materials and drinking water aquifers.

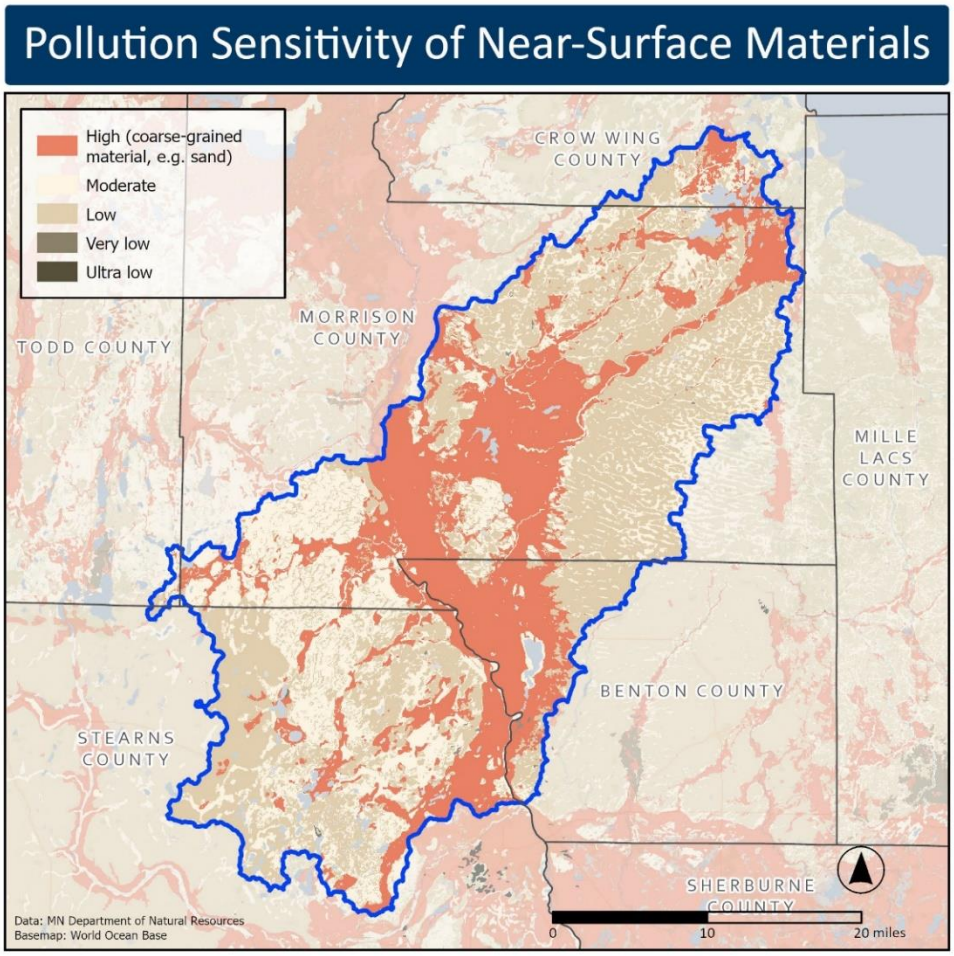

Figure 5: Pollution sensitivity of near surface materials. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

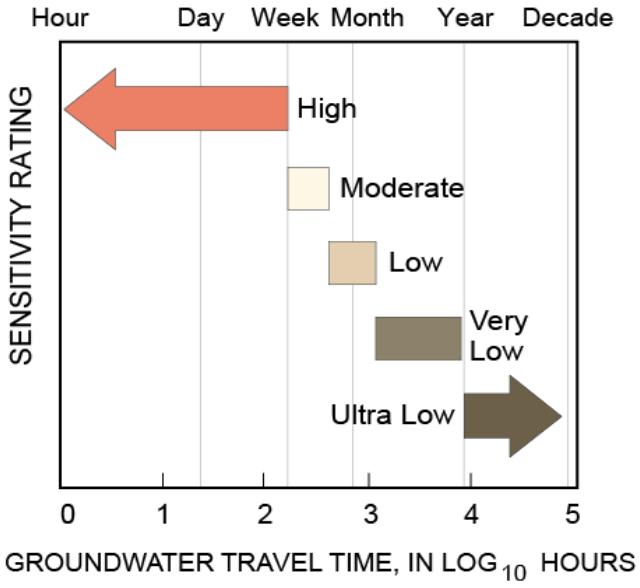

Figure 6: Recharge travel time for near-surface materials

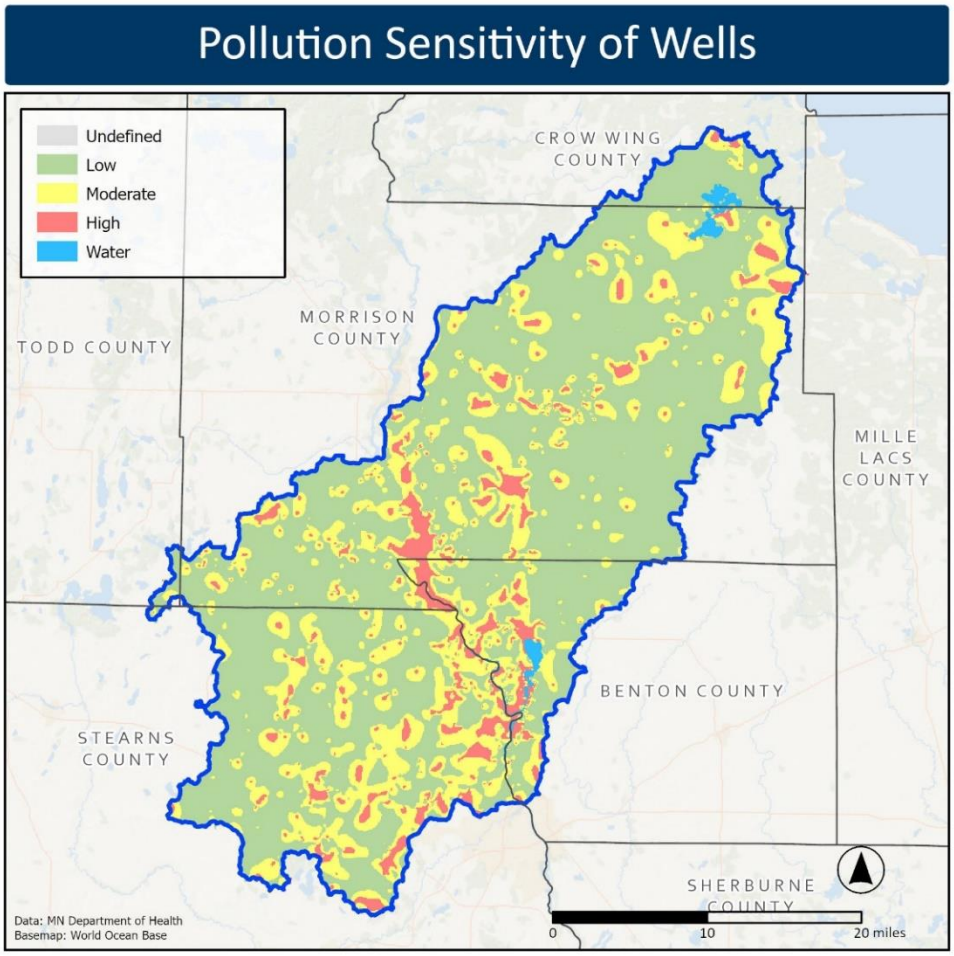

Figure 7: Pollution sensitivity of wells. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

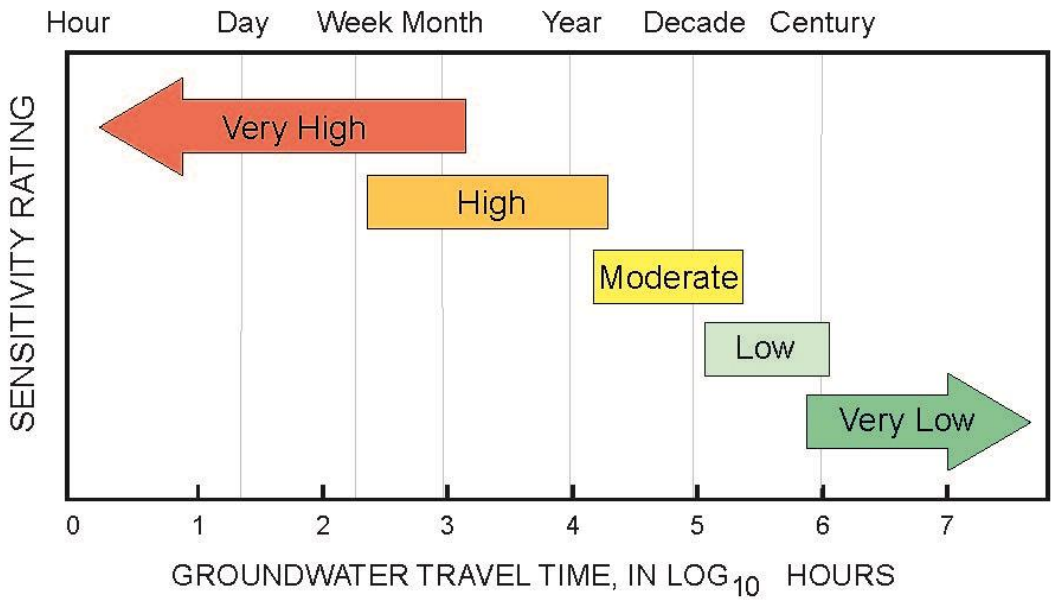

Figure 8: Recharge Travel Time for Buried Aquifers

Table 1: Sensitivity rating and the associated recharge travel times for surficial and buried aquifers.

Pollution Sensitivity Rating	Aquifer Recharge Time Period[5] for Surficial Aquifers	Aquifer Recharge Time Period for Buried Aquifers
High	Hours to a week	Days to months
Moderate	A week to weeks	Years up to one or two decades
Low	Weeks to a year	Several decades to a century

[5] Aquifer recharge time periods refer to the time it takes aquifers to receive recharge from the land surface. Aquifer recharge rate informed by the Geologic Sensitivity Project Workgroup, 1991.

Wellhead Protection Planning and Drinking Water Supply Management Areas

Wellhead protection (WHP) planning is the process whereby public water systems examine land uses in the recharge area for their wells and develop strategies for land use management. The strategies are based on vulnerability and are appropriate for safeguarding drinking water supplies. Community public water supplies[6], including municipal and nonmunicipal systems, are required to prepare Wellhead Protection Plans. As part of this effort, the recharge area that contributes water to the public water supply well(s) is delineated based on physical and chemical characteristics of the aquifer being used. These areas, known as wellhead protection areas (WHPAs), provide an assessment of the aquifer vulnerability (sensitivity) of the public water supply wells. Once the WHPA is established, a Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) is created to provide planning boundaries on the land surface to manage the groundwater below. Learn more about MDH Source Water Protection (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/index.htm).

The word 'sensitivity' is used to describe groundwater generally throughout the state; 'vulnerability' is the term used for wellhead protection planning to protect public sources of drinking water. While there are minor differences between how these words are used as described above, the words are essentially the same for the purposes of planning and management.

Aquifers and wells used for public water supplies vary widely. Some are very shallow and unprotected and easily contaminated by activities at the ground surface. Others are deeper or more protected by geologic materials; these tend to exhibit a low vulnerability to overlying land uses. The types of management activities required within WHPAs will vary based largely on the vulnerability assessments. Highly vulnerable WHPAs require a greater level of management to prevent potential contaminants at the ground surface from entering the aquifer. Whereas for WHPAs with low vulnerability the primary focus is on sealing unused/unsealed wells since this is the primary pathway for contaminants to reach the aquifer.

Of the 24 community PWS within the MRSW, 23 are engaged in the wellhead protection planning process or are implementing/amending their plans, except for Wildwood Manor. The DWSMA vulnerabilities range from "high" to "low", with many demonstrating moderate and high vulnerability. Figure 9 shows the status of wellhead protection planning for the public water supply systems in the watershed. Figure 10 shows the DWSMAs delineated at the time the report was compiled, which covers approximately 44, 646 acres in the watershed. It is important to note that WHP areas do not follow watershed boundaries and can extend into neighboring watersheds.

[6] Community public water supplies serve at least 25 persons or 15 service connections year-round. Community public water supplies include municipalities (cities), manufactured mobile home parks, etc. Currently there are almost 1,000 community water supplies in Minnesota.

The MRSW has 24 community PWS that manage 48 wells. Not reflected in the report are the 7 non-community non-transient PWS wells and 106 transient non-community PWS wells.

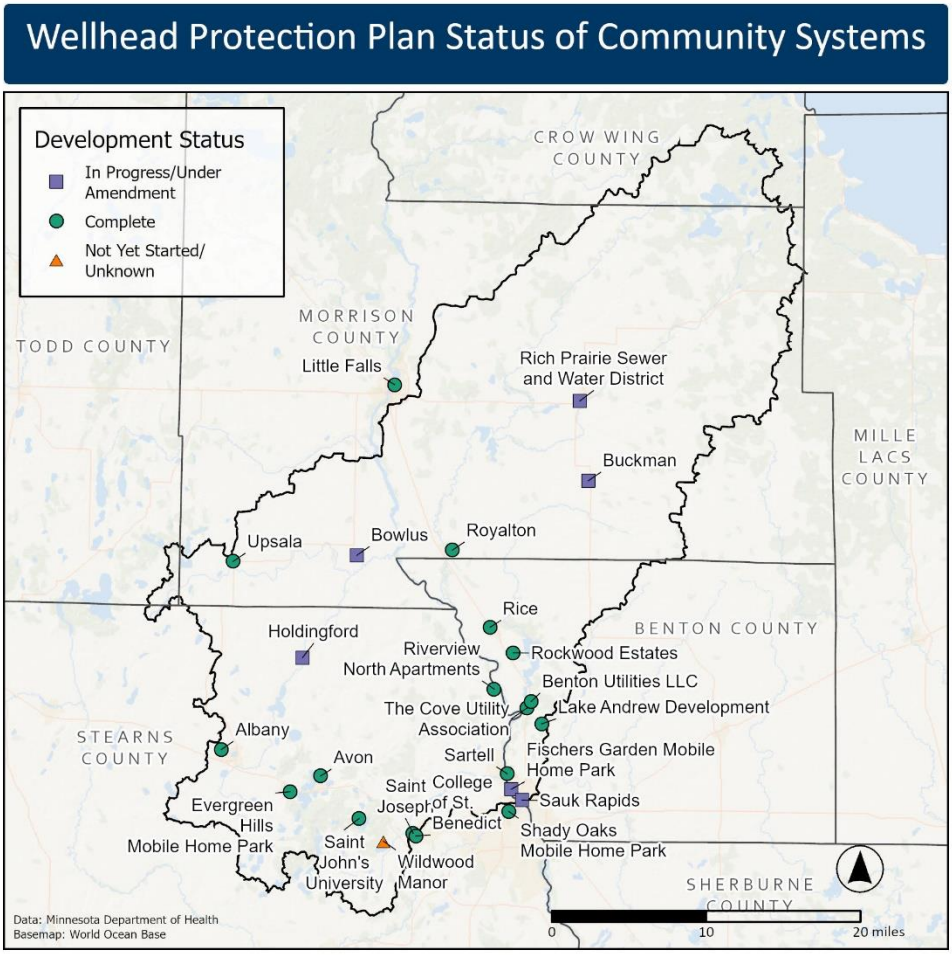

Figure 9: Wellhead protection plan development status for community public water systems. All community public water supply systems are engaged in the wellhead protection planning process or are implementing/amending their plans, except Wildwood Manor.

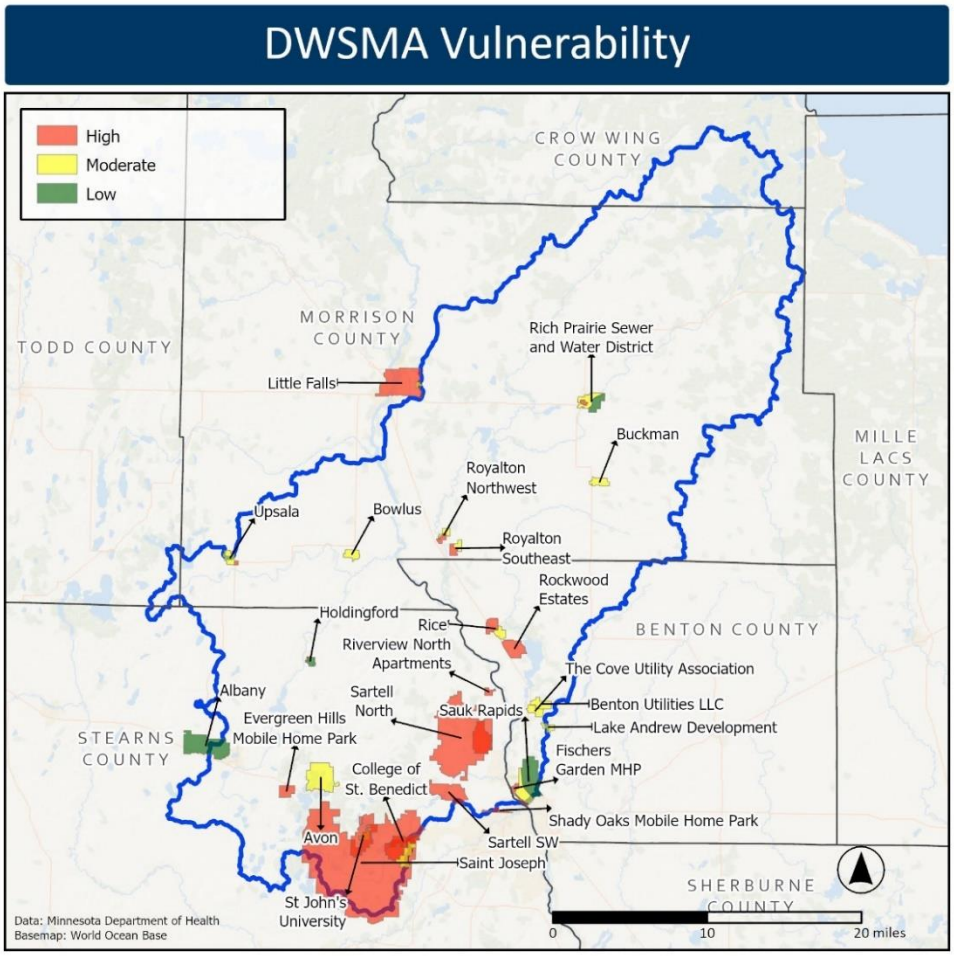

Figure 10: Drinking water supply management areas (DWSMAs). There are 25 approved DWSMAs for community public water systems in the watershed. Six DWSMAs are conjunctive WHPAs with a surface water contribution area. The conjunctive delineations are for Holdingford, Little Falls, St. John's University, Saint Joseph, Sartell North, and Sauk Rapids. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

The MRSW has six conjunctive WHPAs for Holdingford, Little Falls, St. John's University, Saint Joseph, Sartell North, and Sauk Rapids. A conjunctive WHPA delineation occurs when a strong connection exists between the groundwater capture zone for a well and either a surface water body or the land surface area intersected by that capture zone.

Managing conjunctive WHPAs can present challenges because they are larger than the more traditional WHPAs that are based solely on groundwater capture areas. In addition, management practices of potential contaminant sources can differ between groundwater capture areas and surface water capture areas (surface water contribution area). Within the groundwater capture area, the focus will be on those contaminants most likely to soak into the ground, whereas, in the source water capture area, the focus will be on those contaminants most likely to runoff during rainfall or snowmelt events. It should be noted that conjunctive WHPAs do provide a means of achieving multiple benefits within a watershed. Improvements in land use management in these areas stand to benefit both the aquifer used by the PWS and associated surface water bodies.

Groundwater Protection Rule

The Groundwater Protection Rule (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/nfr minimizes potential sources of nitrate pollution to groundwater and protects drinking water. The rule restricts the application of nitrogen fertilizer in the fall and on frozen soils in areas vulnerable to contamination, and it outlines steps to reduce the severity of the problem in areas where nitrate in public water supply wells is already elevated.

The rule is intended to promote appropriate nitrogen fertilizer best management practices (www.mda.state.mn.us/pesticide-fertilizer/nitrogen-fertilizer-bmps-agricultural-lands) and to involve local farmers and agronomists in adopting the most current science-based and economically viable practices that can reduce nitrate in groundwater. These other practices are alternative management tools – AMTs (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/fertilizers/nutrient-mgmt/nitrogenplan/nitrogenmgmt/amts).

The rule is implemented by MDA and contains two parts. Each part contains separate criteria and requirements.

Part 1 of the Rule

Part 1 of the Groundwater Protection Rule restricts the application of nitrogen fertilizer in the fall and on frozen soils on farmland in 1) an area with vulnerable groundwater or 2) those protection areas around a municipal public well (DWMSA) with high nitrate. Figure 11 shows the nitrogen fertilizer restrictions in the MRSW.

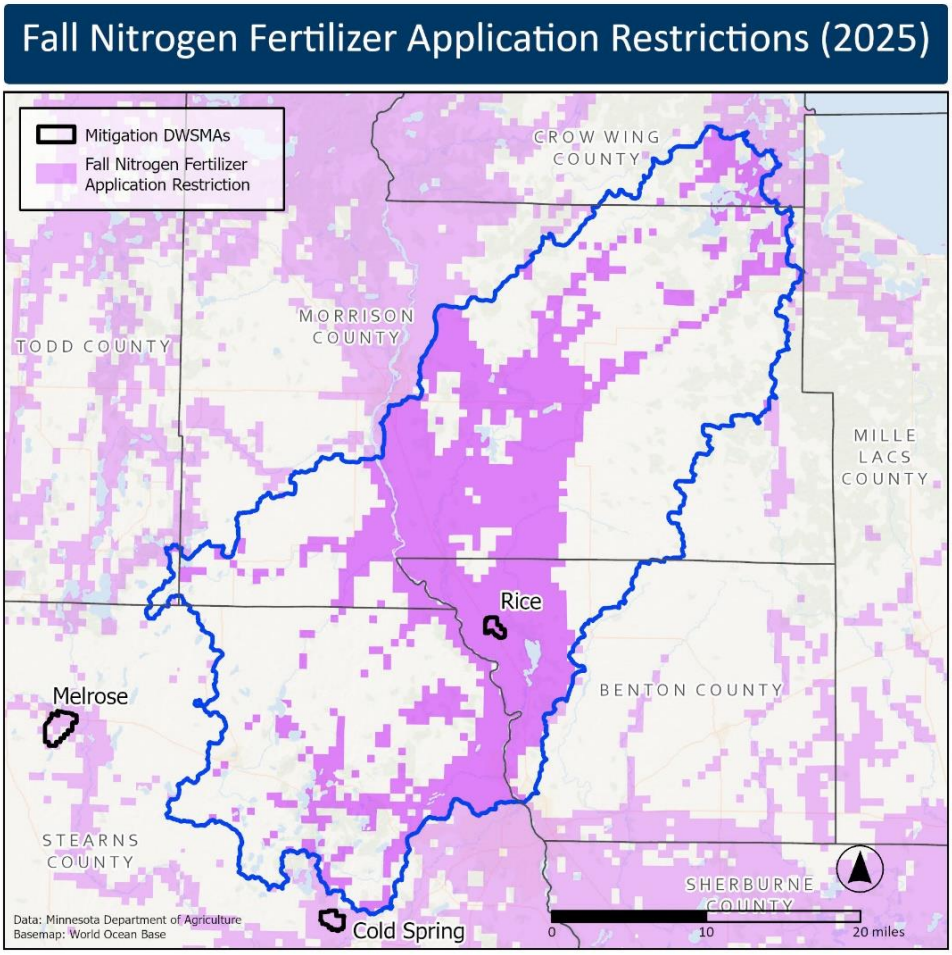

Figure 11: Fall nitrogen fertilizer application restrictions and MDA mitigation DWSMAs. The City of Rice has been designated as a Mitigation 1 DWSMA with nitrate levels greater than or equal to 5.4 mg/L but less than 8 mg/L at any point in the previous ten years. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

Part 2 of the Rule

Part 2 of the rule responds to DWSMAs which already have elevated nitrate. The goal is to take action to reduce nitrate in groundwater before a public well exceeds the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) standard for nitrate of 10 mg/L. The rule is structured using a sliding scale of voluntary and regulatory actions based on the concentration of nitrate in the well and the use of the BMPs.

There are four mitigation levels used to determine voluntary and regulatory actions, two voluntary levels and two regulatory levels. The MDA uses monitoring provided by MDH to determine mitigation levels. Wells that have nitrate levels greater than or equal to 5.4 mg/L but less than 8 mg/L at any point in the previous ten years fall within the guidelines for a Mitigation Level 1 determination. Wells with nitrate at or above 8 mg/L at any point in the last ten years or are projected to exceed 10 mg/L in the next ten years are within the guidelines for Mitigation Level 2.

The MRSW has a Mitigation Level 1 DWSMA for the City of Rice (Figure 11) that have nitrate levels greater than or equal to 5.4 mg/L but less than 8 mg/L at any point in the previous ten years.

Private Wells

The MRSW has over 5,400 private wells with known locations, ranging from 12 feet to 576 feet deep with an average depth of 65 feet. More than 18 percent (over 1,000 wells) of private wells are in a highly vulnerable setting. Private well users are not afforded the same water quality safeguards as people who get their water from public water systems. While public water systems make sure water is safe for the end-user, private well users are responsible for making sure their water is safe for everyone in the household to drink.

The Minnesota Well Code ensures that private wells are properly located and constructed. However, once the well is put into service, private well users are responsible for properly maintaining their well, testing it regularly, and treating the water when necessary.

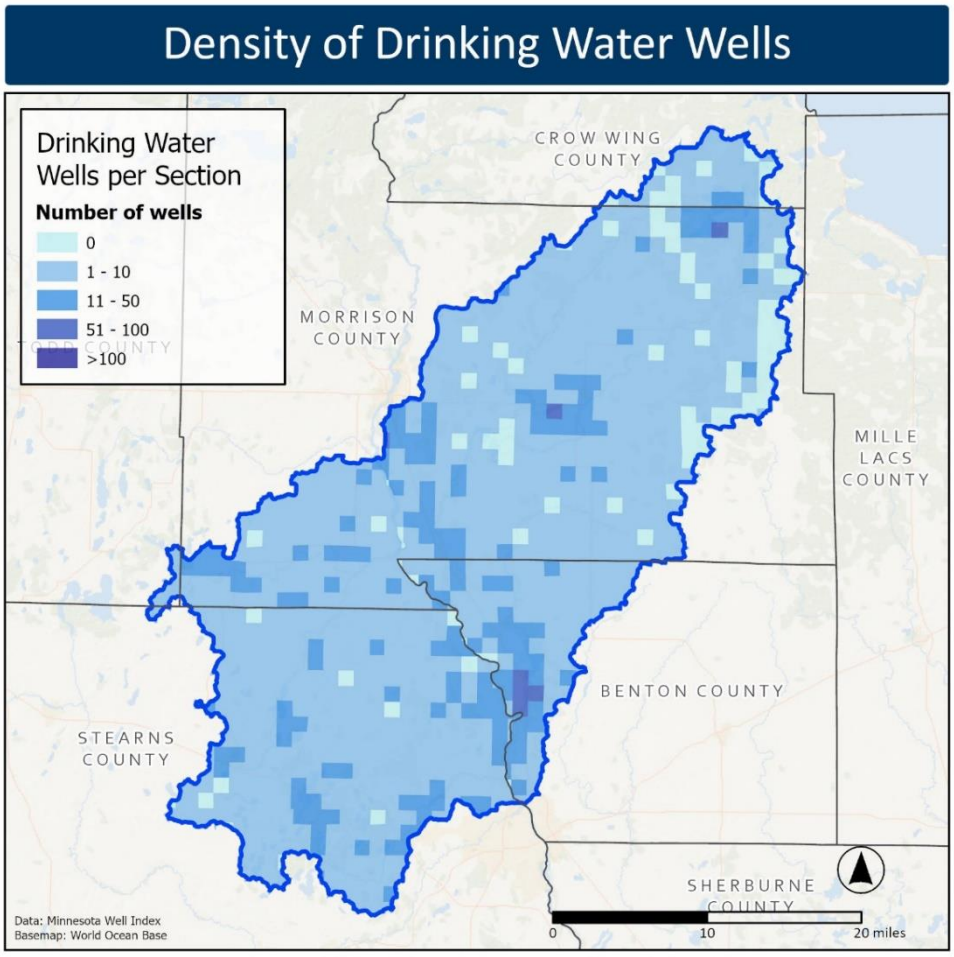

Figure 12: Density of drinking water wells per section. There are over 7,000 private wells identified in the watershed. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

Figure 12 illustrates well density and water use data in the MRSW. This figure contains a grid that depicts the number of wells in each six by six-mile section of the watershed. Deeper colors correspond to a higher concentration of wells. Well density is variable across the watershed. Only wells used for drinking water were included in this analysis.

Extreme Weather

Climate records show that across Minnesota there has been an increase in average rainfall, as well as heavy precipitation events. As storms become more frequent and intense, flooding will be an ongoing challenge for public water systems and private wells. Flood events can threaten the safety and availability of drinking water by washing pathogens (bacteria, viruses, and parasites) and chemical contamination into source aquifers or by overwhelming the capacity of treatment systems to clean the water. The full extent of floodwater contamination depends on land use and associated infrastructure in the affected area. Figure 13 displays drinking water wells and flood zone risk to contamination in the MRSW.

Extreme weather may also affect drought conditions by changing how and where precipitation falls. Increased rainfall over frozen ground and reduced snowpack from spring melt can decrease infiltration into groundwater when converted to runoff. The Groundwater Quantity Issues and Concerns section of the report assesses aquifer sustainability by evaluating long term monitoring well trends.

Climate data for the MRSW observed no significant trends in precipitation from the early 1980s to 2024. However, an upward trend in the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) over the last three decades indicates generally wetter conditions, increasing wells' risk of flooding. This could also be an indicator of climate shifts, potentially influencing aquifer availability and groundwater quality.

For more information on Climate and Health (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/) or visit the DNR's webpage Climate Change and Minnesota (www.dnr.state.mn.us/climate/climate_change_info/index.html).

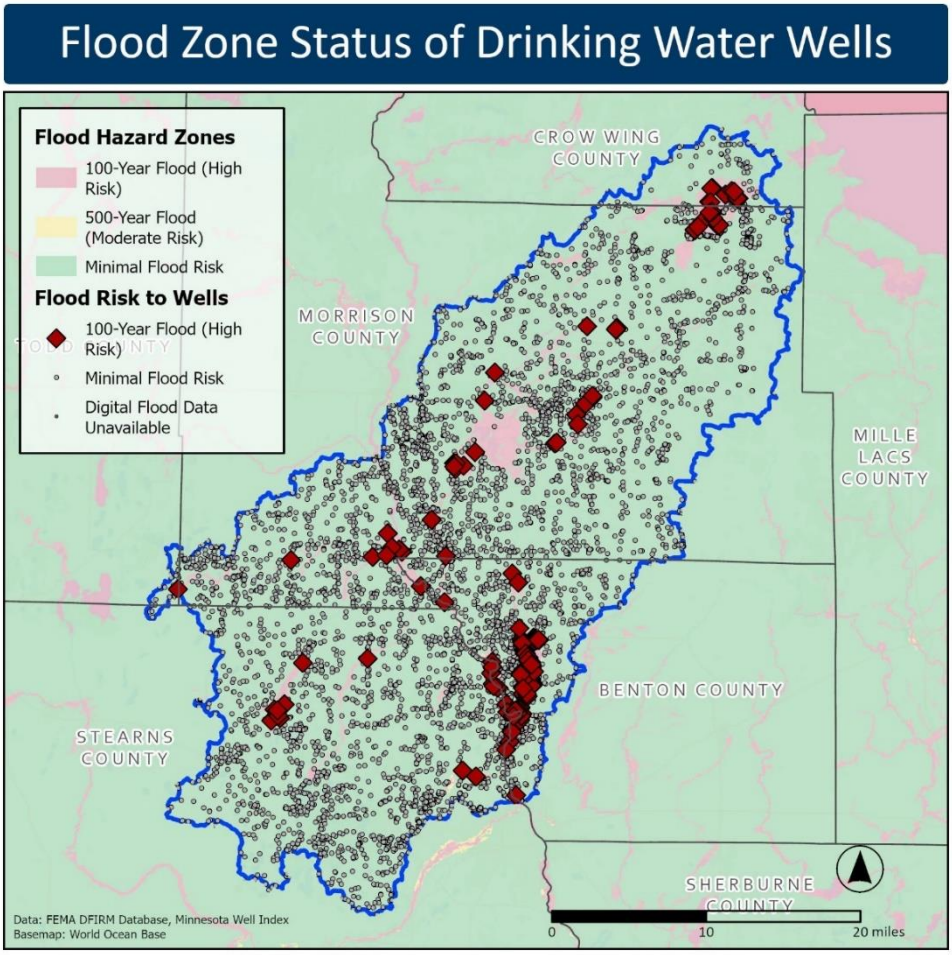

Figure 13: Drinking water wells and flood zone risk to contamination.

Groundwater Issues and Concerns

This section of the report describes the key groundwater quality and quantity issues for the MRSW. The descriptions each include an overview of the issue, where the issue is most prevalent, and a few key approaches to address the issue. The Strategies and Actions for Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed provides a more detailed list of actions to address groundwater issues and concerns.

Groundwater Quality Issues and Concerns

Both naturally occurring and human-made contaminants affect the MRSW groundwater quality. Multiple state agencies monitor different types of groundwater wells and public water systems for contaminants. Nitrate, pesticides, and arsenic have been detected in wells sampled in the MRSW. This section provides context and data about these contaminants and their occurrence in the watershed. It also provides information about the following land uses: feedlots, row crop production, subsurface sewage treatment systems, contaminated sites (leaky tank sites and closed landfills), and household hazardous waste in the watershed that may affect groundwater quality.

All public water systems in the watersheds strive to meet Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)[7] requirements for the quality of water served to their customers. However, some public water systems may have water quality issues in their untreated source water that requires either blending or treatment to meet SDWA standards.

Nitrate

Nitrate-nitrogen (referred to as nitrate) occurs naturally but also has many human-made sources such as animal manure, fertilizers used on agricultural crops, failing SSTS, fertilizers used at residences and commercially, and nitrous oxides from the combustion of coal and gas. Studies in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest consistently show that nitrate concentrations at or below 1 milligram per liter (mg/L) represent natural background conditions, while higher concentrations generally indicate human influence (State of Minnesota Interagency Coordination on Nitrate, 2025). For example, nitrate levels in the soil root zone of undeveloped prairies and forests average 0.4 mg/L or less, and median groundwater concentrations from 52 undeveloped and forested wells are only 0.05 mg/L (Kuehner et al., 2020). Precipitation monitoring by the National Atmospheric Deposition Program has reported values ranging from 1.4 mg/L (1985–2000) to 0.9 mg/L in 2022, showing that even atmospheric inputs remain low compared to human-impacted systems (NADP, 2025). Therefore, when nitrate concentrations in groundwater exceed 1 mg/L, human activity is the likely source.

[7] The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) is the federal law that protects public drinking water supplies throughout the nation. Under the SDWA, EPA sets standards for drinking water quality; MDH is delegated to implement the program in MN to ensure drinking water safety.

Nitrate is one of the most common contaminants of groundwater in Minnesota and is a public health concern if found in groundwater used for drinking water. The SDWA standard for nitrate in drinking water is 10 mg/L. Most of the samples taken from wells within the watersheds did not exceed the SDWA standard for nitrate. This dataset includes newly constructed wells, private wells, and other drinking water supply wells. Sampling of newly constructed wells for nitrate began in 1974. Many older wells, pre-well code, are not included in this dataset. Table 2 shows nitrate test results for samples taken from these wells.

Table 2: Summary of nitrate results in drinking water wells of the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed.

Depth Range (feet)	Total samples (nitrate)	Minimum results (mg/L)	Maximum results (mg/L)	Median results (mg/L)	Samples at or above 3 mg/L	Samples at or above 10 mg/L
< 50	447	0	33.2	0.5	28.4%	12.1%
50 - 99	2,058	0	39.5	0.5	20.7%	5.1%
100 - 149	503	0	21.2	0.5	14.3%	3.6%
150 - 199	117	0	18.85	0.5	6.8%	0.9%
>= 200	89	0	8.17	0.5	2.2%	0%
Total	3,214	0	39.5	0.5	19.7%	5.5%

Where Is Nitrate in the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed?

High levels of nitrate are present in areas where there are both human-caused sources of nitrate and high pollution sensitivity, which is consistent with MDA findings in the Township Testing Program (TTP). The following images helps identify where nitrate is detected and at what levels in the watershed:

- Figure 14 shows the nitrate levels in wells in the MRSW. Please note that although concentrations above 1 mg/L indicate some level of human influence, Figure 14 uses 3 mg/L as a visualization threshold purely to improve map readability and make spatial trends more apparent. When compared with the areas with high pollution sensitivity (Figure 5) there is a correlation between pollution risk and nitrate detections above 3 mg/L. In other instances, the absence of elevated nitrate concentrations may be a function of low-impact land use near the well or the presence of favorable geochemical conditions in the aquifer. Nitrate requires relatively oxidizing conditions to persist in groundwater, and the presence of locally reducing conditions can remove nitrate. The dataset used to create this figure is the same as that used in Table 2. These nitrate samples were taken from newly constructed wells, private wells, and other drinking water supply wells sampled by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).
- Figure 15 shows the Township Testing Program (TTP) results. The MDA has identified townships throughout the state that are vulnerable to groundwater contamination and

have significant row crop production. Two townships (Langola, and Watab) in Benton County were tested in 2013. Ten townships were tested in Morrison County, five of those (Agram, Belle Prairie, Bellevue, Buh, and Swan River,) were tested in 2013 and five (Elmdale, Little Falls, Ripley, Swanville, and Two Rivers) were tested in 2015. Four townships (Brockway, Le Sauk, Millwood, and Wakefield) in Stearns County were tested in 2014. Each selected township offered testing in two steps: the 'initial' sampling and the 'follow-up' sampling. In the initial sampling, all township homeowners using private wells received a nitrate test kit. If the initial sample detected nitrate, the homeowner was offered follow-up tests for nitrate and pesticides and a well site visit. Trained MDA staff visited willing homeowners to resample the well and then conducted a site assessment. The site assessment identified possible non-fertilizer sources of nitrate and assessed the condition of the well. A well with construction problems may be more susceptible to contamination.

Nitrate concentrations within the townships tested ranged from <0.05 to 42.0 mg/L. The list below presents the number of wells in each county that had a nitrate concentration that exceeded the SDWA standard for nitrate of 10 mg/L.

- Benton – 17
- Morrison – 71
- Stearns – 20

Two datasets, 'Initial' and 'Final', are used to evaluate nitrate in the private wells in this program.

- The initial dataset represents private wells drinking water regardless of the potential source of nitrate.
- The final dataset was informed through an assessment process to evaluate each well. In the assessment, wells that had nitrate results over 5 mg/L were removed from the final dataset if a potential non-fertilizer source or well problem was identified, there was insufficient information on the construction or condition of the well, or for other reasons which are outlined in the full report (see Appendix E for details). The final dataset represents wells with nitrate attributed to the use of fertilizer.

The MRSW has completed both the initial testing and the follow-up testing. Figure 15 shows the 'Initial' results alongside the 'Final' results. Detailed sampling results are available at Township (Nitrate) Testing Program (http://www.mda.state.mn.us/townshiptesting).

The Central Sands Private Well Network was developed in 2011 due to concerns about high nitrate levels in private drinking water wells. This network includes 14 counties in the central region of Minnesota. The Sartell Watershed is entirely within the boundaries of the Central Sands Private Well Network.

In 2024, there were 23 private wells tested for nitrate, within the watershed boundary. The nitrate concentration from the private well water ranged from <0.03 to 6.27 mg/L. All

participating wells had nitrate below the Health Risk Limit of 10 mg/L nitrate-nitrite. The mean and median nitrate concentrations were 1.56 mg/L and 0.09 mg/L, respectively.

Figure 16 shows the active MDA ambient monitoring well locations in the MRSW. The MDA currently samples eight sites.

- **Current monitoring** – the eight sites that the MDA currently samples within this watershed have been sampled annually or semiannually since 2000, with this data summary covering the data to 2023. Nitrate concentrations range from 0.55 to 63.5 mg/L. Monitoring of the MDA's sites in the watershed is expected to continue.

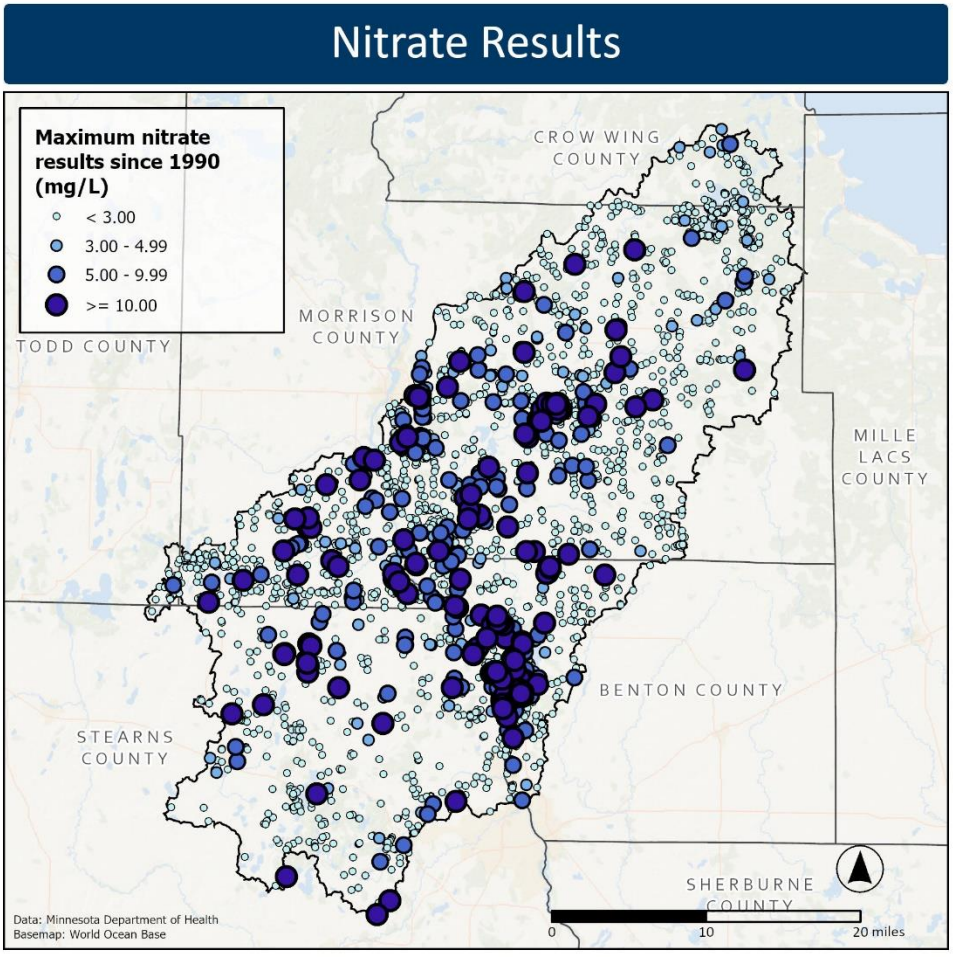

Figure 14: Nitrate results from drinking water wells. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

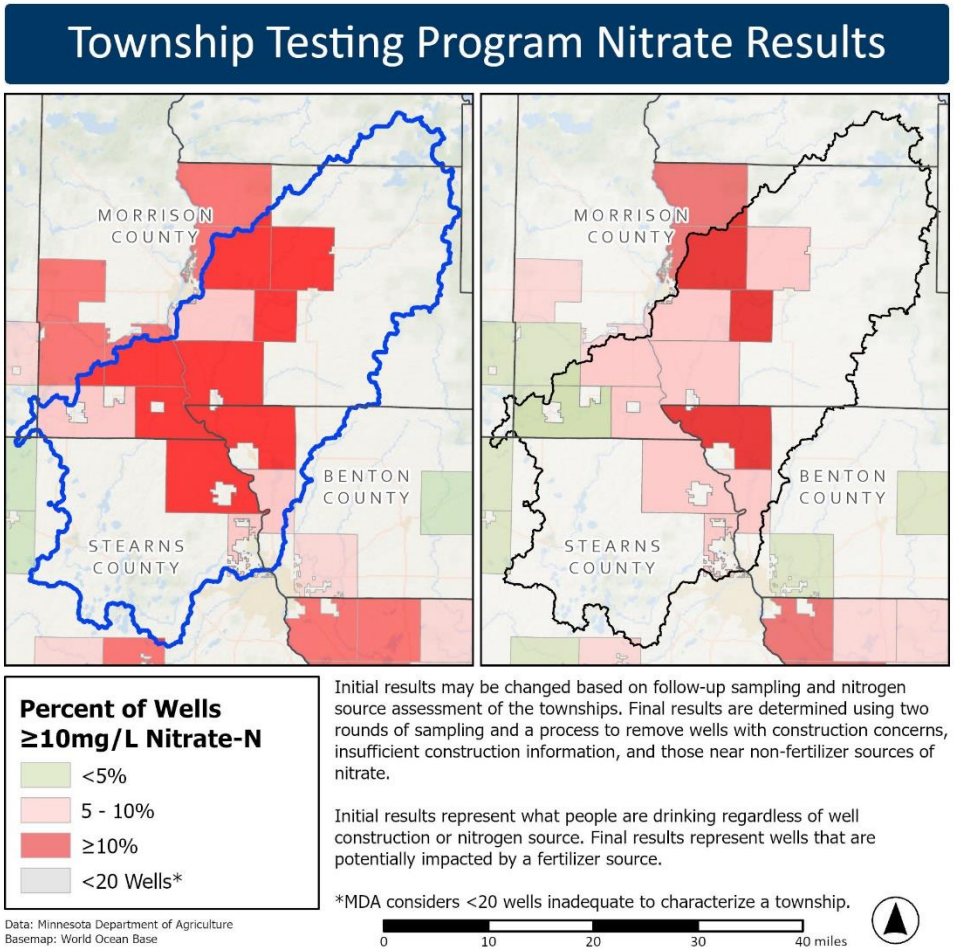

Figure 15: MDA township testing program initial and final results. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

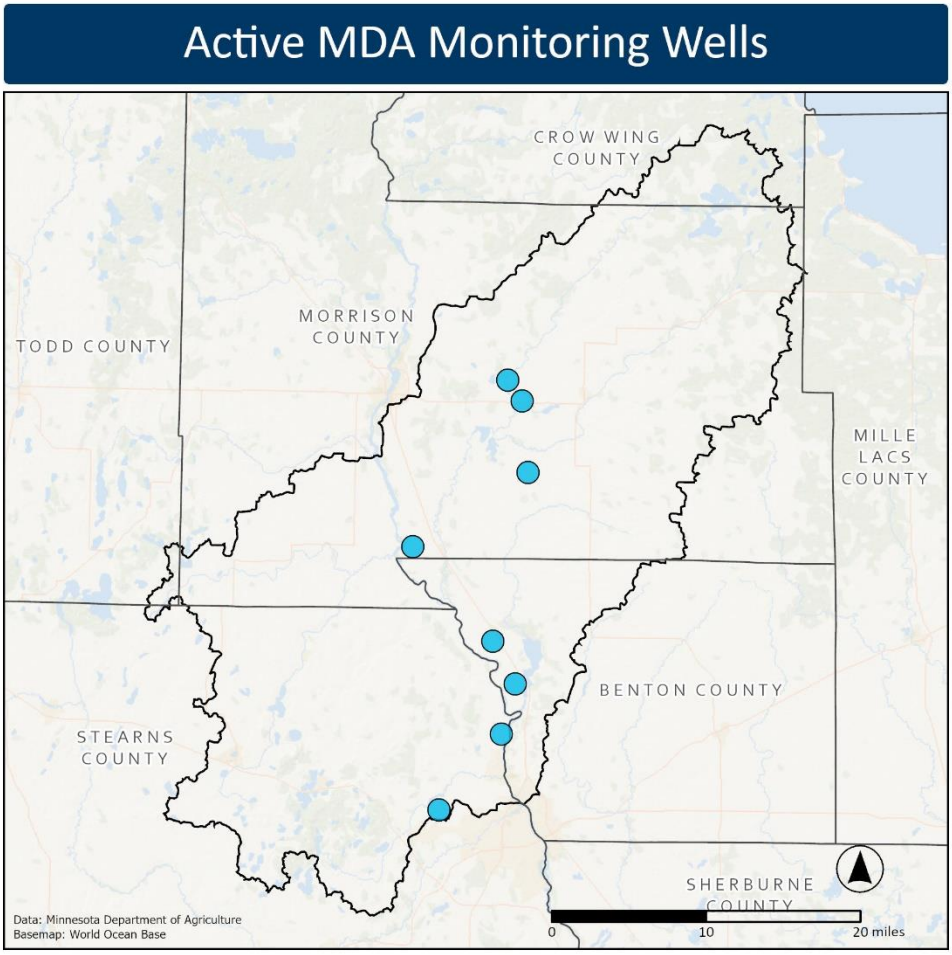

Figure 16: MDA monitoring wells

How to Address Nitrate in Groundwater

The Minnesota Groundwater Protection Act established a prevention goal that groundwater be maintained in its natural condition, free from any degradation caused by human activity. When degradation exists, it is important to understand the reflected level of management required based on the nitrate concentration.

Table 3 provides a protection framework that identifies management priorities reflective of nitrate concentrations.

Table 3: Nitrate protection framework and associated land use management goals. Implementation activities should build as you move from one classification to the next.

Nitrate Protection Framework	Nitrate Concentration	Implementation Emphasis
Protection – Maintain	0 – 4.9 mg/L[8]	Proactive and preventive: Maintain existing land cover by discouraging or preventing land conversion. Contaminant source management on existing land uses (Agricultural BMPs, SSTS management, easements, forest management plans)
Protection – Threatened	5.0 – 9.9 mg/L	Contaminant source reduction or elimination: Shifting land uses away from those that may leach excess nitrogen (Alternative Management Tools[9], upgrade failing SSTS, easements)
Restoration – Treatment	10.0 mg/L and above	Active intervention required by public water supplies to avoid drinking water consumption (new sources; treatment) while still aiming for long term contaminant source mitigation through reduction and elimination

[8] Nitrate levels above 1 milligrams per liter (mg/L) in groundwater is likely caused by human activity (State of Minnesota Interagency Coordination of Nitrate).

[9] MN Dept. of Agriculture developed Alternative Management Tools to protect groundwater quality from nitrate contamination. For more information, visit MDA Alternative Management Tools (www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/fertilizers/nutrient-mgmt/nitrogenplan/nitrogenmgmt/amts)

Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of specific actions counties and subwatersheds in the MRSW can take to restore and protect groundwater quality related to nitrate.

Pesticides

A pesticide is any substance or mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying, repelling, or lessening the damage of any pest and may be a chemical substance or a biological agent. Consuming water with different types of pesticides in it can cause a variety of health problems. MDA monitors for 'common detection pesticides' as a part of the MDA Pesticide Management Plan (www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/waterprotection/pmp.aspx). Common detection pesticides are pesticides frequently used in row crop production and include acetochlor, alachlor, atrazine, metolachlor and metribuzin.

The MDA began evaluating pesticide presence and magnitude in private residential drinking water wells as part of the Private Well Pesticide Sampling (PWPS) Project in 2014 as a companion program to the MDA TTP. Townships in different counties were sampled every year for the PWPS project. The initial project concluded in June 2021, but ongoing sampling in select counties continues. Townships in the PWPS Project depend on the participation of well owners and may not reflect all the townships sampled in the TTP. Results of the PWPS sampling can be found at the MDA's website for the PWPS Project (http://www.mda.state.mn.us/pesticide-fertilizer/private-well-pesticide-sampling-project).

Where Are Pesticides in Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed?

The MDA currently samples eight sites (Figure 16).

Current monitoring – the eight sites that the MDA currently samples within the watershed have been sampled annually or semiannually since 2000.

As part of the PWPS Project, wells in two townships in Benton County, ten townships in Morrison County, and five townships in Stearns County that lie entirely or partly within the watershed were sampled for approximately 130 pesticide compounds during Phase 1 of the PWPS Project from 2016 to the spring of 2021. The resulting chemistry data is available for the wells; however, due to the privacy rules, the well locations cannot be shared. The county, the year it was sampled, number of wells, and the number of townships that were sampled are listed below:

- Benton (2020) – 90 wells in two townships
- Morrison (2016, 2017, 2020) – 282 wells in ten townships
- Stearns (2016, 2020, 2021) – 142 wells in five townships

The number of pesticides or pesticide degradates that were detected in wells in each county is listed below:

- Benton – 31 pesticides or degradates found
- Morrison – 33 pesticides or degradates found

- Stearns – 28 pesticides or degradates found

None of the wells had a concentration that exceeded an established human health reference value for the compounds.

The MDA performed follow-up sampling for atrazine and cyanazine degradates in Agram, Belle Prairie, Bellevue, Elmdale, Little Falls, Ripley, Swan River, Swanville, and Two Rivers Townships in Morrison County in 2023, due to those compounds not previously being a part of the analysis during sampling in 2016-2017, for evaluation of total cyanazine. Only one sample had a detection for total cyanazine, and the concentration did not exceed the human health reference value. There were also six wells in Ripley Township that received testing for 4-hydroxychlorothalonil as part of a special investigation. Three of the six wells had a detection of the compound, but none of these wells had a concentration that exceeded the established human health reference value.

How to Address Pesticides in Groundwater

General approaches to reduce the amount of pesticides that may enter groundwater include:

- Providing educational opportunities about pesticide and insecticide BMPs for both agricultural lands and residential/commercial lawns (turf)
- Increasing the adoption of water quality BMPs for pesticides and insecticides

Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of specific actions the counties and subwatersheds in the MRSW can take to restore and protect groundwater quality related to pesticides.

Arsenic

Almost two percent of the 640 arsenic samples taken from located wells in the MRSW have levels of arsenic higher than the SDWA standard of 10 micrograms per liter (µg/L)[10]. Arsenic occurs naturally in rocks and soil across Minnesota and can dissolve into groundwater. Consuming water with low levels of arsenic over a long time (chronic exposure) is associated with diabetes and increased risk of cancers of the bladder, lungs, liver, and other organs. The SDWA standard for arsenic in drinking water is 10 µg/L; however, drinking water with arsenic at levels lower than the SDWA standard over many years can still increase the risk of cancer. The EPA has set a goal of 0 µg/L for arsenic in drinking water because there is no safe level of arsenic in drinking water. Learn more about arsenic in well water (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/arsenic.html).

Since 2008, the State of Minnesota has required that water from new water supply wells be tested for arsenic. Table 4 outlines the number of well water samples tested for arsenic in the MRSW, using the dataset from the Minnesota Well Index (MWI) and well for newly constructed private wells. The table shows the percentage of samples with arsenic levels over the SDWA

[10] One microgram per liter is the same as 1 part per billion (ppb).

standard. It is important to remember that arsenic concentrations can be drastically different from nearly identical wells installed on adjoining properties.

Table 4: Summary of arsenic (As) concentrations in wells of the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed.

Depth Range (feet)	Total samples (n)	Minimum results (µg/L)	Maximum results (µg/L)	Median results (µg/L)	Samples at or above 5 µg/L	Samples at or above 10 µg/L
< 50	81	0.0005	9.8	1	3.7%	0%
50 - 99	373	0.0005	17.1	1	6.2%	1.6%
100 - 149	121	0.0005	27.8	1	11.6%	0.8%
150 - 199	34	0.0005	11.21	1	8.8%	5.9%
>= 200	31	0.0005	12.48	0.25	16.1%	6.5%
Total	640	0.0005	27.8	1	7.5%	1.7%

Where Is Arsenic in the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed?

Figure 17 shows that arsenic is found in elevated concentrations throughout the watershed but is largely focused on the south-southwestern area. The dataset used to create Figure 17 is the same information displayed in Table 4. These samples were taken from newly constructed domestic wells.

There are elevated levels of arsenic above the drinking water standard of 10 ug/L in wells completed in the Quaternary Buried Artesian glacial aquifer. Typically, elevated arsenic in Minnesota groundwater is associated with glacial lobes originating from northwest Canada, although it can be found in bedrock in northeastern Minnesota. Elevated arsenic in glacial aquifers is correlated with clay layers and reducing geochemical conditions that release arsenic into the groundwater. There is less information on the occurrence of elevated arsenic in bedrock aquifers. Well depths with elevated arsenic in the MRSW range from 34 to 274 feet. For wells with arsenic detected but below the drinking water standard, the wells were completed in the Quaternary Buried Artesian and Quaternary Water Table glacial aquifers and some wells completed in the Weathering Residuum aquifer. More elevated arsenic results are located throughout the watershed, especially in the southern and slightly northern part of the watershed.

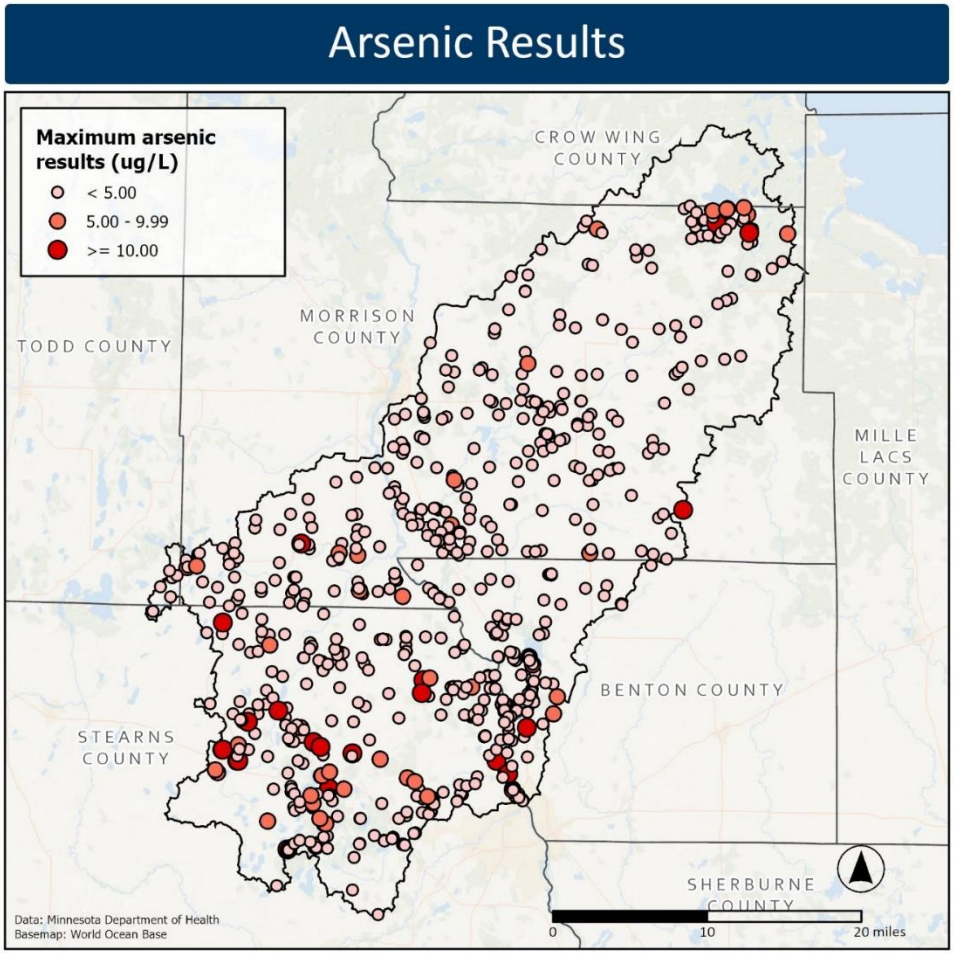

Figure 17: Arsenic results. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

How to Address Arsenic in Groundwater

Unlike nitrate and pesticides, human activity rarely causes arsenic in Minnesota groundwater, except for local releases of insecticides or wood preservatives into the environment. Therefore, few actions can reduce the amount of arsenic in groundwater. Implementation efforts should focus on making private well users aware of the health risks associated with arsenic, encouraging them to test their water for arsenic, and providing them with treatment options to keep their drinking water safe when arsenic is present.

Radionuclides

Concentrations of naturally occurring radioactive radium have been detected in some groundwater samples in the MRSW. There are no elevated levels of combined radium 226/228 above the drinking water standard of 5 pCi/L in the raw water collected for public water supply wells. There are three public wells above 1 pCi/L but below 5 pCi/L and is constructed in the Quaternary Buried Artesian aquifer and one is indeterminate. These wells are located in the southern part of the watershed. The exact source of these compounds is not well

understood. They may originate in the clay-rich glacial sediments or may be part of the original mineral composition of the Mt. Simon or fractured Sioux Quartzite geologic units. What is known is that their presence in the groundwater is related to reducing geochemical conditions and the very slow rate of groundwater flow in theses bedrock layers.

Where are Radionuclides in the Mississippi River – Sartell?

The few results indicate combined radium may not be a problem.

How to Address Radionuclides in Groundwater

Human activity is unlikely to be the cause of radionuclides in the MRSW groundwater. Therefore, actions cannot reduce the amount of radionuclides present in groundwater. Implementation efforts should focus on awareness that radionuclides may be found in groundwater. The factors that contribute to the presence of radionuclides in the MRSW groundwater are not well understood at this point. If private well users are concerned about radionuclides in their well, they can pay to have their water tested through an accredited laboratory. Water softeners and reverse osmosis are effective at removing radium from groundwater. Learn more at Radionuclides (Radium) in Drinking Water (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/contaminants/radionuclides.html).

Ambient Groundwater Monitoring

The MPCA's Ambient Groundwater Monitoring Program monitors trends in statewide groundwater quality by sampling for a comprehensive suite of over 100 chemicals including nutrients, metals, anions and cations, and volatile organic compounds. The Ambient Groundwater Network currently consists of approximately 270 sites that represent a mix of deep domestic wells and shallow monitoring wells in non-agricultural regions across the state. The primary focus is on shallow aquifers that underlie urban areas, due to the higher tendency of sensitivity to pollution, and are predominately located in sand and gravel and Prairie du Chien-Jordan aquifers.

Between 2009 and 2024, six ambient network wells were sampled within the MRSW. Of all the chemicals sampled for, nitrate and chloride are of particular concern due to the health risks (nitrate) and ecological risks (chloride). The MDH limit for nitrate in drinking water is 10 mg/L (MDH, 2025). The results detected from the wells within the MRSW were largely below this threshold. However, nitrate in one monitoring well was consistently detected during that time period and in five instances exceeded the drinking water standard. Chloride is naturally found in groundwater, but elevated levels can be caused by things like road salt and water softener salt. It can also be damaging to plants and aquatic life but is a categorized as a nuisance chemical in drinking water. This means there are no established health risk limits for it in drinking water, but it can produce an unpleasant taste so, for it, the US EPA has set a secondary maximum contaminant level of 250 mg/L (US EPA, 2025). Results from all wells were all below this level.

MDH hosts information on a List of Contaminants in Water (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/contaminants/index.html), as well as CECs (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/risk/guidance/dwec/index.html).

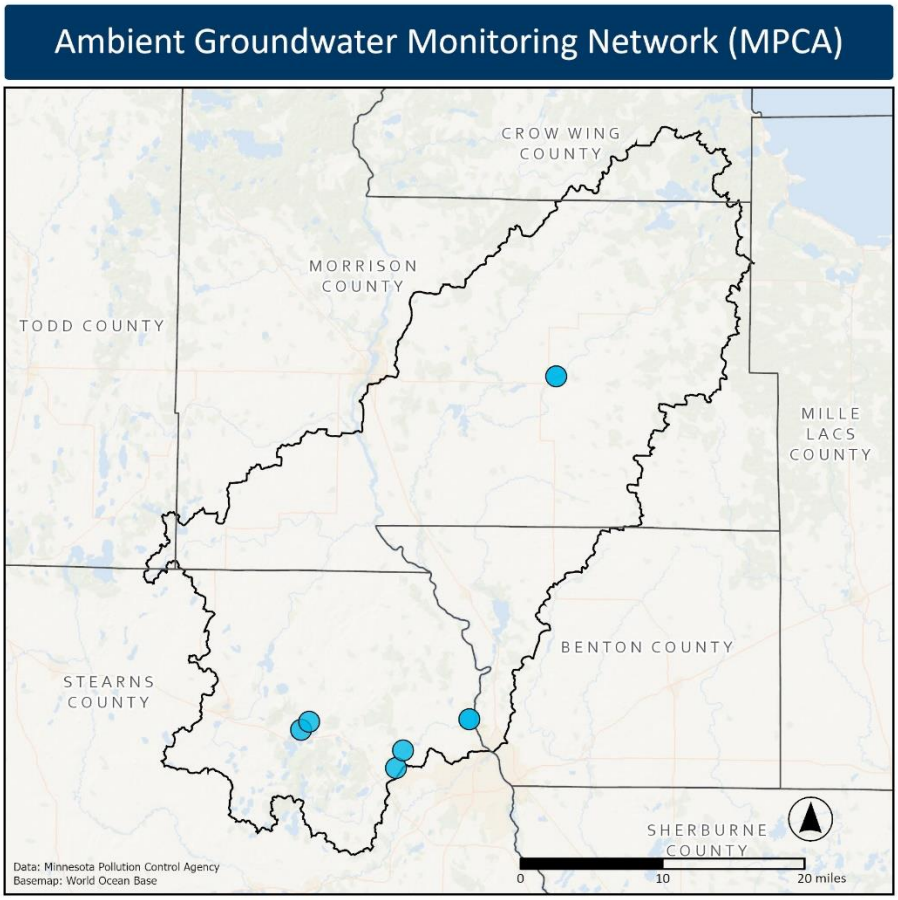

Figure 18: MPCA ambient groundwater monitoring well network.

Potential Contaminant Sources

Some land use practices make it easier for contaminants to get into groundwater. Key land uses that are potential contaminant sources in the MRSW are described below.

Animal Feedlots

MPCA regulates the land application and storage of manure generated from animal feedlots in accordance with Minnesota Rule Chapter 7020. The Feedlots Program (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/feedlots) requires that the land application and storage of manure be conducted in a manner that prevents nitrate contamination to both groundwater and surface water. Animal manure contains significant quantities of nitrogen and pathogens. Improper management of manure, especially in places with high pollution sensitivity, can contaminate groundwater.

MDA hosts an interactive map that provides information on local ordinances regulating animal agriculture in Minnesota's counties. The information includes the most common areas of regulations, such as setbacks and separation distances, conditional use permits, feedlot size limitations, and minimum acreage requirements. For more information, visit the Local Ordinances Regulating Livestock - Web Mapping (www.mda.state.mn.us/local-ordinances-regulating-livestock-minnesota).

MDA developed a new tool in collaboration with the National Weather Service called the Minnesota Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast (RRAF) system (www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/cleanwaterfund/toolstechnology/runoffrisk). RRAF is designed to help farmers and commercial applicators determine the best time to apply manure to reduce the probability of off target movement of valuable nutrients and protect water resources.

Where Are Animal Feedlots in the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed?

The MRSW has 1,233 active feedlots. Minnesota Rule 7020 allows the MPCA to transfer or 'delegate' regulatory authority and administration of certain parts of the feedlot program to a county. A delegated county regulates feedlots with less than 1,000 animal units; MPCA regulates anything above that threshold. County feedlot programs have responsibility for implementing state feedlot regulations including registration, permitting, inspections, education/assistance, and complaint follow-up. More than half of the counties in the MRSW are delegated counties executing the feedlot program locally. Benton and Crow Wing counties rely on the MPCA to execute the feedlot program within their jurisdiction.

Table 5: Number of registered feedlots and the delegated counties outlines the number of registered feedlots in the MRSW for each county. Figure 19 shows the active feedlots in the watershed.

Table 5: Number of registered feedlots and the delegated counties

Counties	Number of Registered Feedlots per County	Delegated County
Benton	77	No
Morrison	475	Yes
Todd	6	Yes
Crow Wing	8	No
Stearns	667	Yes

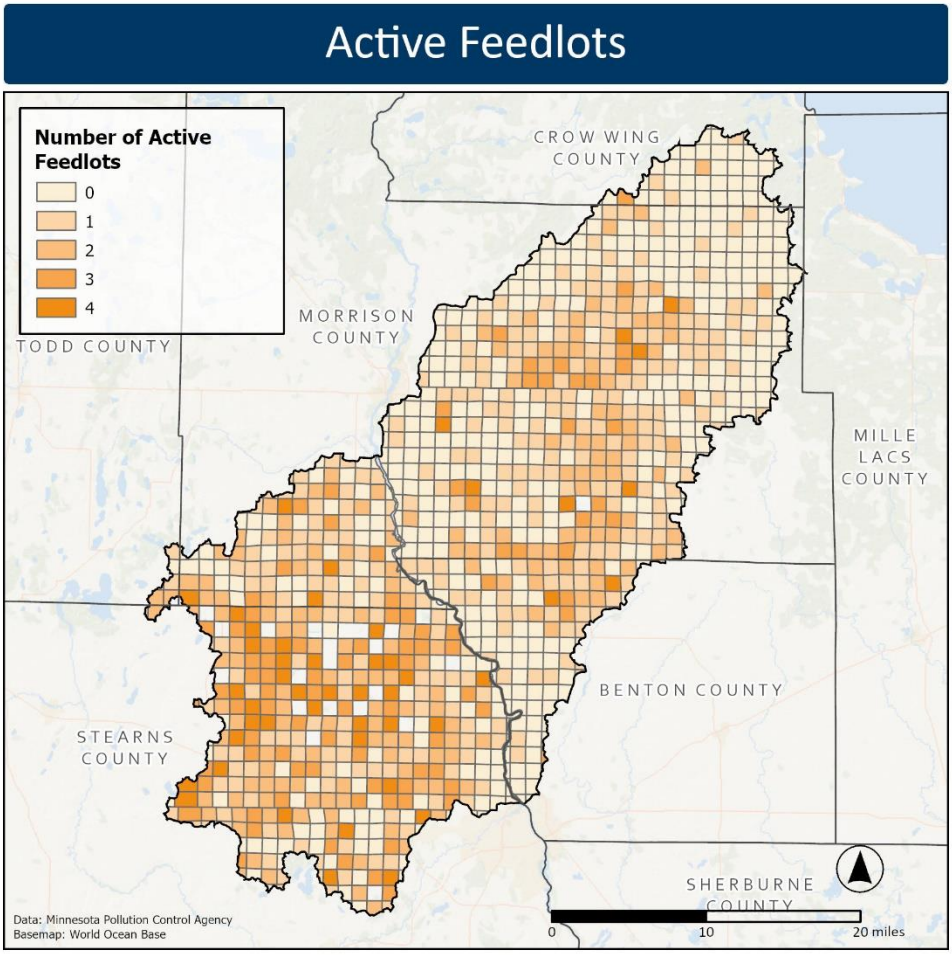

Figure 19: Active feedlots per section. There are 1233 active feedlots within the watershed. Click the image to view the interactive web version where the feedlots are visualized as points.

How to Protect Groundwater from Contamination

Manure management plans, feedlot inspections, permitting, technical assistance and record keeping are all used to manage nitrogen impacts to water quality. It is important to prioritize activities in the areas most sensitive to groundwater pollution first. Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of specific actions partners in can take to protect groundwater from nitrate and pathogen contamination.

Row Crop Agriculture

Row crop agriculture or cultivated crops (Figure 3) are the largest land cover within the MRSW covering just over 36 percent of the watershed. Impacts from row crop production to water resources include nitrogen loss in the form of nitrate to groundwater, which can move downward to aquifers or be laterally dispersed to lakes and rivers. Tile drainage is another pathway for nitrogen to reach surface water systems, however this is not a focus of the GRAPS report being the TMDL and WRAPS reports assess impacts. Agricultural chemicals, including

pesticides, are another risk for groundwater contamination from row crop agriculture. Both nitrate and pesticides are addressed in the Groundwater Quality Issues and Concerns section of this report.

Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS)

A total of 648,641 SSTS (commonly called septic systems) were reported across Minnesota in 2024, representing an estimated 44.4 billion gallons of wastewater treated by SSTS per year (MPCA 2022). The number of compliant SSTS has increased over the last ten years, from approximately 431,000 systems in 2015 to 541,150 systems in 2024. Trends observed from the MPCA 2024 SSTS Annual Report suggest continued improvements in subsurface wastewater treatment across the state.

While compliant SSTS have increased, failing SSTS still pose a risk to groundwater contamination. A failing SSTS lacks adequate separation between the bottom of the drain field and seasonally saturated soil. The wastewater in SSTS contains bacteria, viruses, parasites, nutrients, and some chemicals. SSTS infiltrate treated sewage into the ground, which ultimately travels to groundwater.

Where Are SSTS in the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed?

SSTS are found in all counties of the MRSW. State regulations require each county to adopt a local SSTS ordinance to protect both ground and surface water. An imminent health threat or failing systems must be replaced and brought up to current standards. Even with a required ordinance, some counties still have identified gaps in their SSTS program, ranging from lack of records on treatment system age, type, or function, known unsewered communities, and lack of a point-of-sale requirement triggering an inspection through a property sale. According to the MPCA's SSTS Annual Report, all counties within the MRSW require compliance inspections for property transfers, resulting in over 1,185 SSTS inspections across Benton, Stearns, Todd and Morrison counties in 2024.

How to Protect Groundwater from SSTS Contamination

SSTS must be properly sited, designed, constructed, and maintained to minimize the potential for disease transmission and groundwater contamination. Each county carries out permitting, inspections and operation of the SSTS program locally. Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of specific actions the MRSW can take to assure SSTS do not contaminate groundwater. You can find more information about building and maintaining SSTS at Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/subsurface-sewage-treatment-systems).

Contaminated Sites

The MPCA identified 73 active tanks, six leak sites, and 12 active solid waste sites in the MRSW. There is one closed landfill in the watershed. These types of contaminated sites (also referred to as point sources) have the potential to contaminate groundwater with a variety of chemicals.

Where Are Contaminated Sites in the Mississippi River – St. Cloud Watershed?

Figure 20, maps active tank and leak sites compared to pollution sensitivity of near-surface materials in the MRSW. Figure 21 provides a map of the 12 active solid waste sites in the MRSW. The following sites also provide maps to help identify contaminated sites.

- What's in My Neighborhood (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/data/whats-my-neighborhood): This app identifies potential contamination sites for water quality, feedlots, hazardous waste, investigation and clean up, air quality and solid waste.
- Landfill Cleanup Act Participants (http://mpca.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Solutions/s2.html?appid=6470bb44bd83497993da5836333d1cb3): This site has an interactive map that shows closed landfills and the corresponding groundwater plumes and groundwater areas of concern.

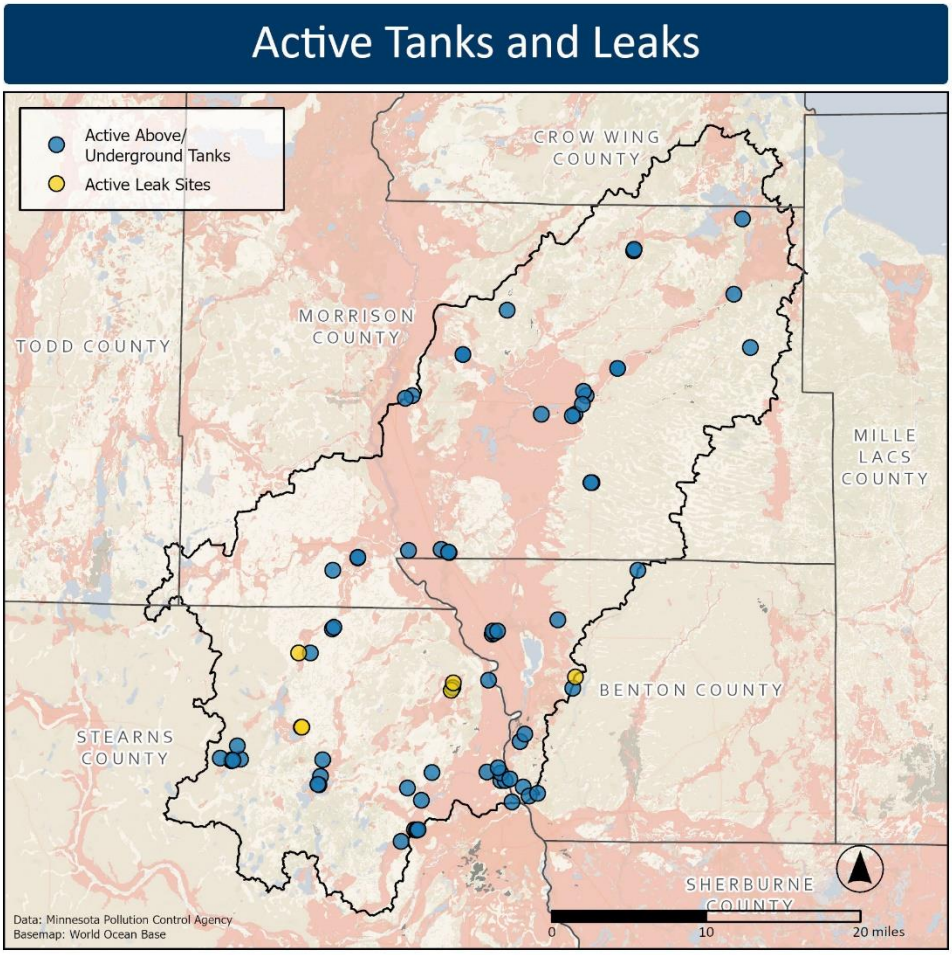

Figure 20: MPCA active tank and leak sites. The watershed has 73 active tanks and 6 leak sites.

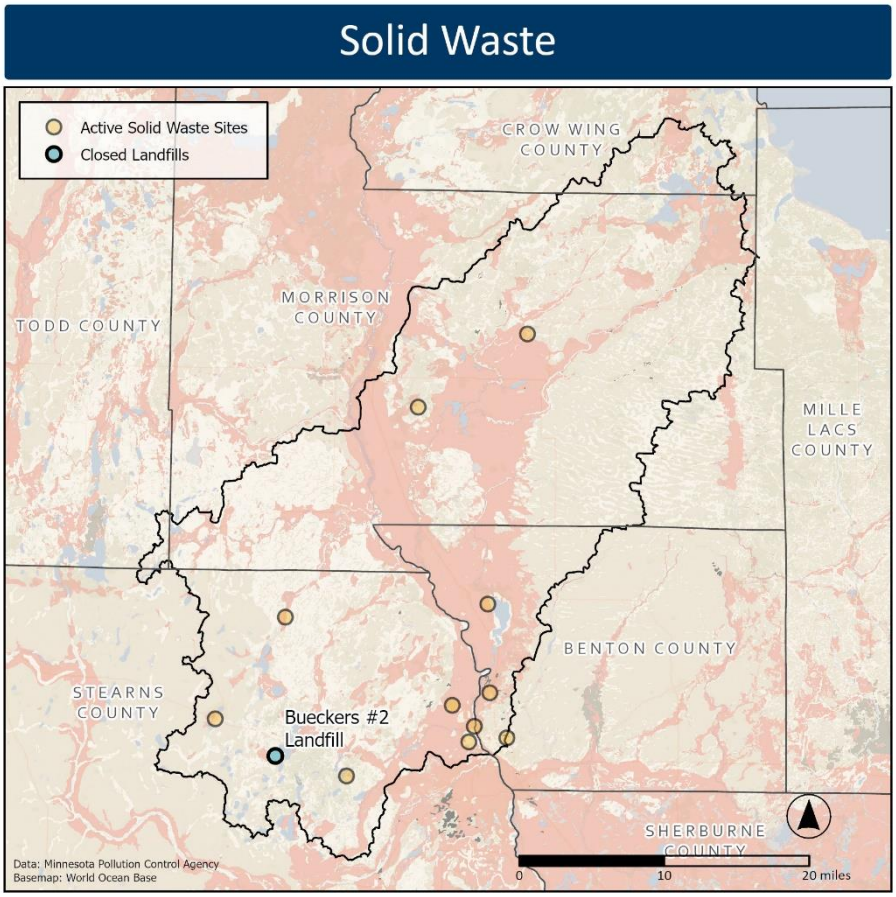

Figure 21: MPCA solid waste sites. The map includes the 12 active solid waste sites and one closed landfill in the watershed.

How to Protect Groundwater from Contaminated Sites

Contaminated sites should be identified before making or changing any land use plans, zoning maps, and/or ordinances. Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of specific actions the MRSW can do to assure contamination sites do not further contaminate groundwater.

Stormwater

The MPCA Stormwater Program (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/municipal-stormwater-ms4) regulates the discharge of stormwater and snowmelt runoff from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s), construction activities and industrial facilities, mainly through the administration of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)/State Disposal System (SDS) Program. MS4s in Minnesota must satisfy the requirements of the MS4 general permit if they are in an urbanized area and used by a population of 1,000 or more or owned by a municipality with a population of 10,000 or more, or a population of at least 5,000 and the system discharges to specially classified bodies of water. Entities with an MS4 permit require the treatment and management of stormwater runoff.

The management of stormwater runoff is increasingly reliant on the infiltration of stormwater into the soil to control the volume of runoff. Several stormwater practices concentrate runoff and force infiltration into the soil where it can recharge groundwater aquifers. The impacts of these practices on groundwater quality have not been thoroughly evaluated.

The MRSW contains several regulated MS4s. The MS4s are concentrated in the city of St. Cloud and surrounding townships in the southeastern part of the watershed in the city of Sartell, and in the townships of Brockway, Saint Joseph and Le Sauk. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is also a regulated MS4 to help reduce the amount of sediment and other pollution that enters surface and groundwater from storm sewer systems.

The MPCA Stormwater Mapping Tool – MS4 Program (https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/05cd9bcb10d5484f8326f7ef802cddae) is an online web application that shows MS4 communities across the state.

How to Manage Potential Stormwater Infiltration Risk

Caution should be observed when infiltrating stormwater, especially in areas with vulnerable drinking water sources. Consult the MDH and MPCA's joint guidance on Stormwater and wellhead protection (https://stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/Stormwater_and_wellhead_protection) to better understand when infiltration is appropriate in wellhead protection areas. Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of additional actions the MRSW can take to prevent stormwater infiltration from contaminating groundwater.

Household Hazardous Waste

Many household products you use to clean your home, maintain your yard, and control animals and insects contain hazardous materials. When these products are disposed of improperly, it may lead to groundwater contamination.

Minnesota's household hazardous waste (HHW) program is a partnership with the MPCA and the counties. Together, they provide education about HHW storage and disposal as well as maintain a network of regional, local, and mobile facilities to collect HHW statewide. The MPCA provides a list of registered collection sites (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/registered-collection-sites) for household electronics disposal. To find collection sites for other HHWs, please contact your county's HHW program.

Like the partnership for HHW, MDA partners with counties to provide a means to safely dispose of unwanted and unusable pesticides through the Waste Pesticide Collection Program. Through this program, pesticide users in every county around the state have opportunities to dispose of unwanted agricultural pesticides through county HHW facilities, mobile collection events or by attending MDA schedule events. Participants can drop off up to 300 pounds free of charge. MDA manages a waste pesticide collection schedule to learn about partnerships and scheduled events, MDA Waste Pesticide Collection Schedule (www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/spills/wastepesticides/schedule.aspx).

How to Protect Groundwater from Household Hazardous Waste Contamination

Promote HHW and the pesticide collection program availability to residents and evaluate opportunities to expand services to increase participation. Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of specific actions the MRSW can take to assure consumer products do not contaminate groundwater.

Pharmaceuticals

The presence of pharmaceuticals in water is of increasing concern because they may cause harm to humans and aquatic life. Pharmaceuticals enter rivers, lakes, and groundwater when human waste, animal waste or discarded medications move from stormwater systems, sewer systems or septic tanks into water. Wastewater and drinking water treatment may not completely remove pharmaceuticals. As a result, these chemicals can be found in drinking water sources.

How to Protect Groundwater from Pharmaceutical Contamination

Do not flush old or unwanted prescription or over the counter medications down the toilet or drain, and do not put them in the trash. There are more than 240 medication collection boxes located at law enforcement facilities and pharmacies in Minnesota. These collection sites do not charge for disposal. You can use the Earth 911 website to identify collection sites by zip code, Locations that take medications (https://search.earth911.com/?what=Medications&where=MN). If a disposal site is not available, follow the MPCA guidance to minimize risk to the environment, Medication Disposal Guidance (www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/managing-unwanted-medications).

Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

PFAS are a family of chemicals that have been widely used for decades. PFAS are extremely stable and do not breakdown in the environment. PFAS have been found in the water, air and soil around the world, including Minnesota. Some PFAS can build up and stay in the human body for many years but can also slowly decline if the exposure stops.

How to Reduce your Exposure to PFAS

PFAS can be measured in the blood of most people around the world, including Minnesotans. For most people, consumer products that are grease, oil, stain and/or water resistant are a much greater source of PFAS exposure than drinking water. Eliminating all exposure to PFAS is unlikely; however, you can reduce your exposure to PFAS by:

- Limit use of consumer products that contain PFAS. These products may include food packaging, nonstick cookware, stain-resistant coatings, water-resistant clothing, some cleaning and personal care products.
- Follow the fish consumption guidance to choose fish low in PFAS.

- Remove household dust.
- People can also be exposed to PFAS from consuming water high levels of PFAS above health-based guidance. Water with PFAS levels above health-based guidance is safe for bathing, showering, swimming, washing clothes, and cleaning, but should not be used for drinking or cooking.
- MDH has test for PFAS in community public water systems (CWSs) across the state. The Interactive Dashboard for PFAS Testing in Drinking Water shows the status and results in PFAS testing for CWSs in Minnesota. PFAS Testing of Minnesota Community Water Systems (https://mdh.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=63515695237f425ea7120d1aac1fd09a).

Information about private drinking water well sampling is available at: PFAS and Private Wells (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/pfas.html).

Groundwater Quantity Issues and Concerns

Permitted groundwater use from individual groundwater appropriation per holders ranged between 2,890 and 14,725 million gallons per year from 1988 to 2023 (MNDNR, 2023).

In 2023, approximately 83 percent of groundwater use was for agricultural irrigation and 14 percent was for water supply. Over the period, an average of 35 percent of groundwater was taken from surficial sand and gravel aquifers (water table, QWTA) and an average of 54 percent taken from buried sand and gravel aquifers (confined, QBAA).

Groundwater Use

A water-use appropriation permit is required from the DNR for groundwater users withdrawing more than 10,000 gallons of water per day or 1 million gallons per year. This provides the DNR with the ability to assess which aquifers are being used and for what purpose. Permits require annual water-use reporting. This information is recorded using Minnesota Permitting and Reporting System (MPARS), which helps the DNR track the volume, source aquifer, and type of water use. The DNR has electronic records of reported water use from 1988 to the present. There have been 587 groundwater appropriation permits issues in the MRSW although not all are currently active.

Figure 22 - Figure 24 show graphs of reported water use, from both surface and groundwater withdrawals, for the period of 1988 to 2023. Figure 23 and Figure 24 show graphs of reported groundwater use by calendar year from 1988 to 2023.

Over the period of 1988-2023, annual groundwater use in the MRSW had ranged from a low of 2,890 MG in 1993 to a high of 14,725 MG in 2023 (Figure 22).

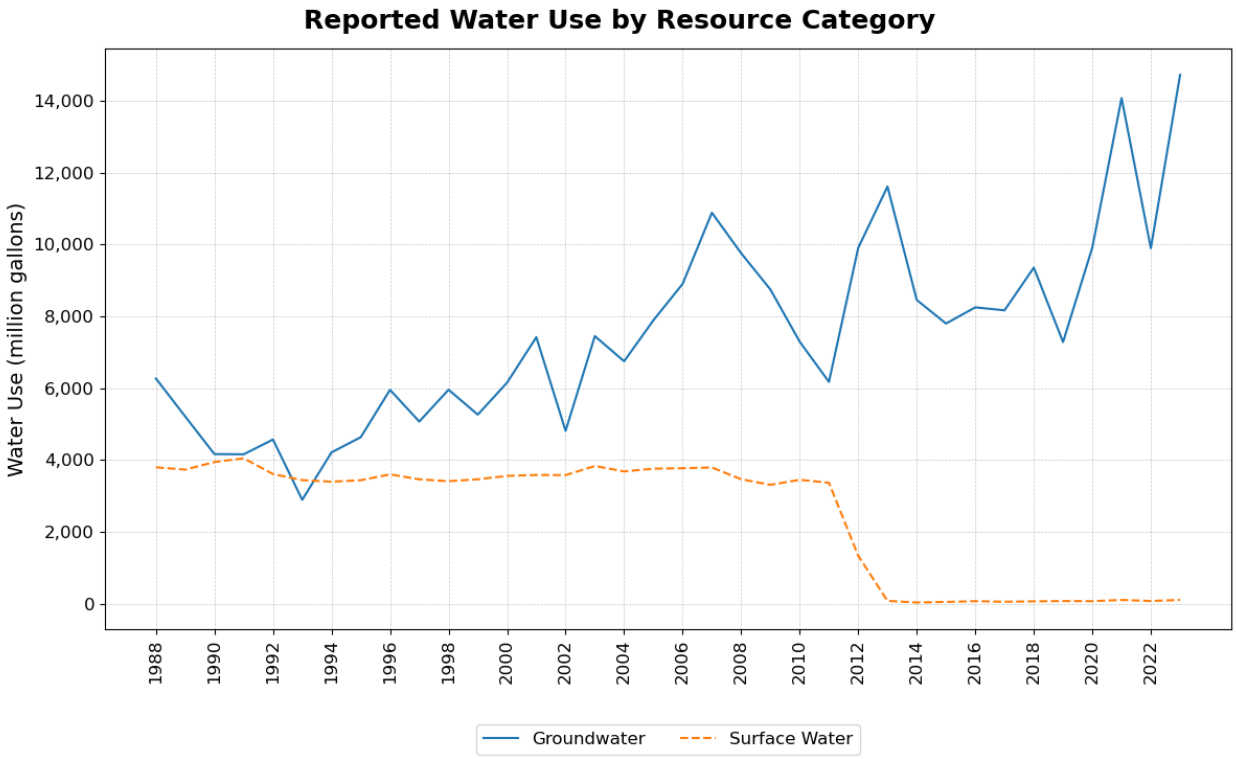

Figure 22: Reported water use from the DNR permit holders by resource category. Groundwater use increased from about 6270 million gallons per year in 1988 to over 14,700 million gallons in 2023, an average annual increase of 2.5 percent.

Noticeably more groundwater was pumped from the buried, confined sand and gravel aquifers (QBAA) Figure 23) than from surficial sand aquifers (QWTA). Most permitted groundwater use is for agricultural irrigation (Figure 24), which increased by an average annual rate of 2.3 percent over the period 1988-2023.

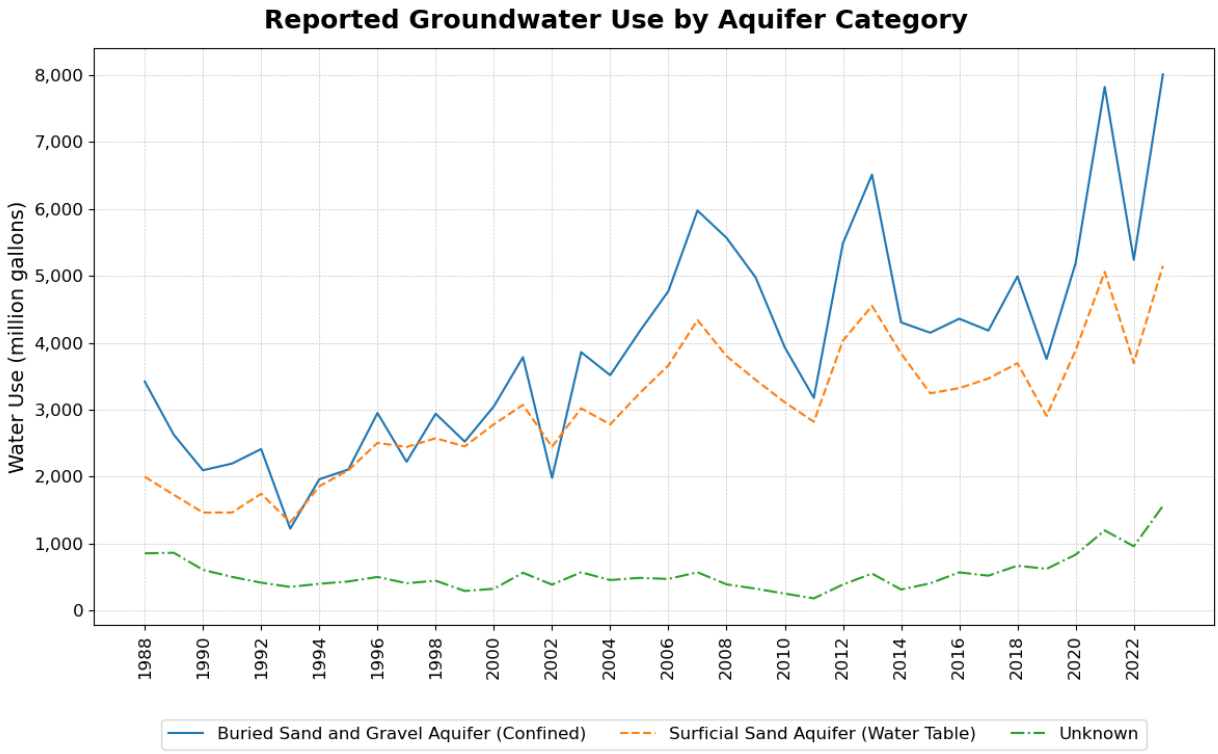

Figure 23: Reported groundwater use from DNR permit holders by aquifer category. More permitted groundwater use occurs from buried sand and gravel (QBAA) aquifers compared to surficial sand and gravel aquifers (QWTA). Pumping from the QBAA and QWTA each varied from about 1,400 million gallons (MG) in 1993 to 2,800 MG or more in 2023.

A summary of reported 2023 groundwater withdrawal by use category versus source aquifer is shown in Table 6. Figure 23 and Figure 24 show the distribution of permitted wells with reported 2023 water use, grouped by use category and aquifer category, respectively.

In 2023, approximately 83 percent of groundwater use was for agricultural irrigation, 14 percent was for water supply, 1.2 percent for non-crop irrigation, and the remainder spread among other use categories. Approximately 35 percent of permitted groundwater was sourced from surficial sand aquifers (QWTA), 54 percent from buried sand and gravel aquifers (QBAA), and 10 percent from uncategorized aquifers.

No groundwater use from bedrock aquifers was reported in 2023. However, in 2021 the MN State Legislature extended protections limiting the use of the Mt. Simon-Hinckley Aquifer to the entire state. Individuals and municipalities hoping to appropriate from this aquifer should contact their DNR Area Hydrologist.

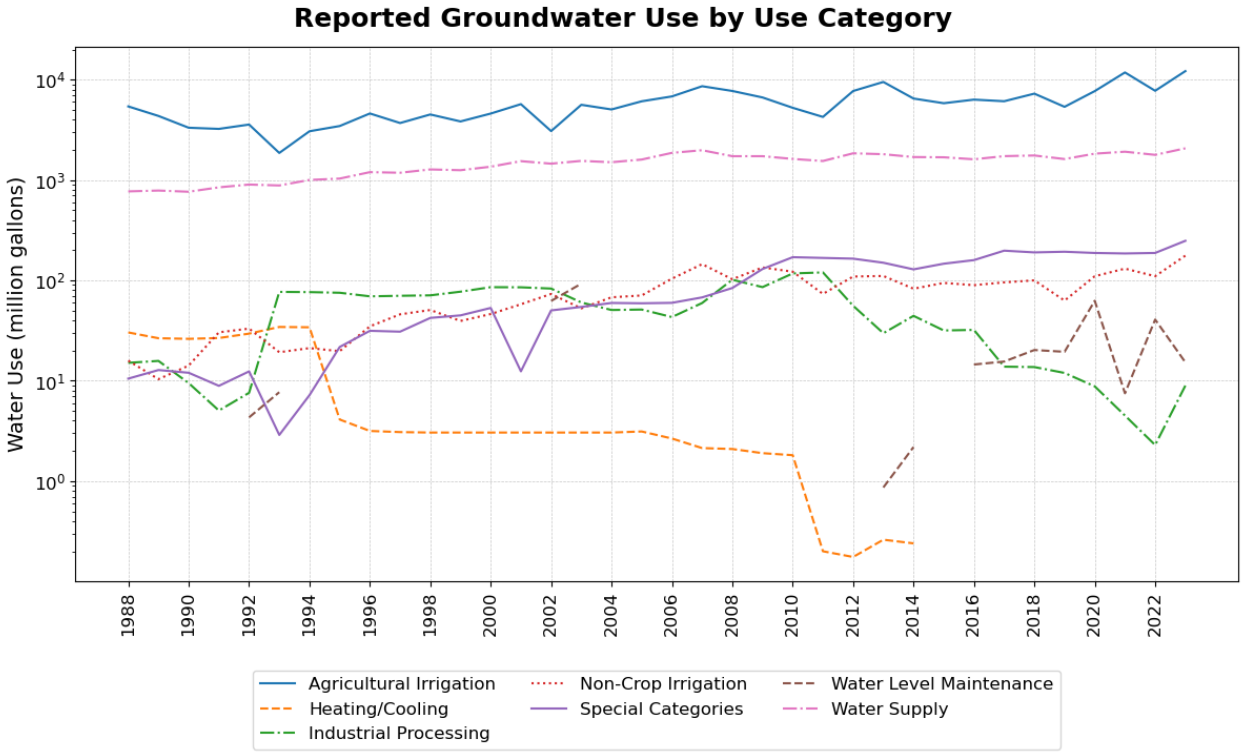

Figure 24: Reported groundwater use from DNR permit holders by use category. Most permitted groundwater withdrawals are for agricultural irrigation. Pumping for water supply rose from about 5,400 million gallons (MG) in 1993 to more than 12,000 MG in 2023, an average annual increase of 2.3 percent. Note that the water use axis uses a logarithmic scale.

Table 6[11]: Reported 2023 water use from DNR groundwater permit holders in million gallons per year.

Use Category	Surficial Sand Aquifer (Water Table)	Buried Sand and Gravel Aquifer (Confined)	Bedrock Aquifer	Unknown	Total (MGY)	Total (percent)
Agricultural Irrigation	3,660.7	7,157	0	1,383.2	12,200.8	82.9
Heating/Cooling	—	—	—	—	—	—
Industrial Processing	4	1.3	—	3.6	8.9	0.1
Non-Crop Irrigation	47.2	129.5	—	—	176.7	1.2
Other Categories	56.4	183.1	—	8.9	248.4	1.7
Water Level Maintenance	—	—	—	15.3	15.3	0.1
Water Supply	1,381.9	542.8	—	150.2	2,074.9	14.1
Total (MGY)	5,150.1	8,013.6	—	1,561.2	14,725	—
Total (percent)	35	54.4	—	10.6	—	100 *

[11] Data from MPARS; MGY, million gallons per year; dash marks (-) indicate no use in those categories; * percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

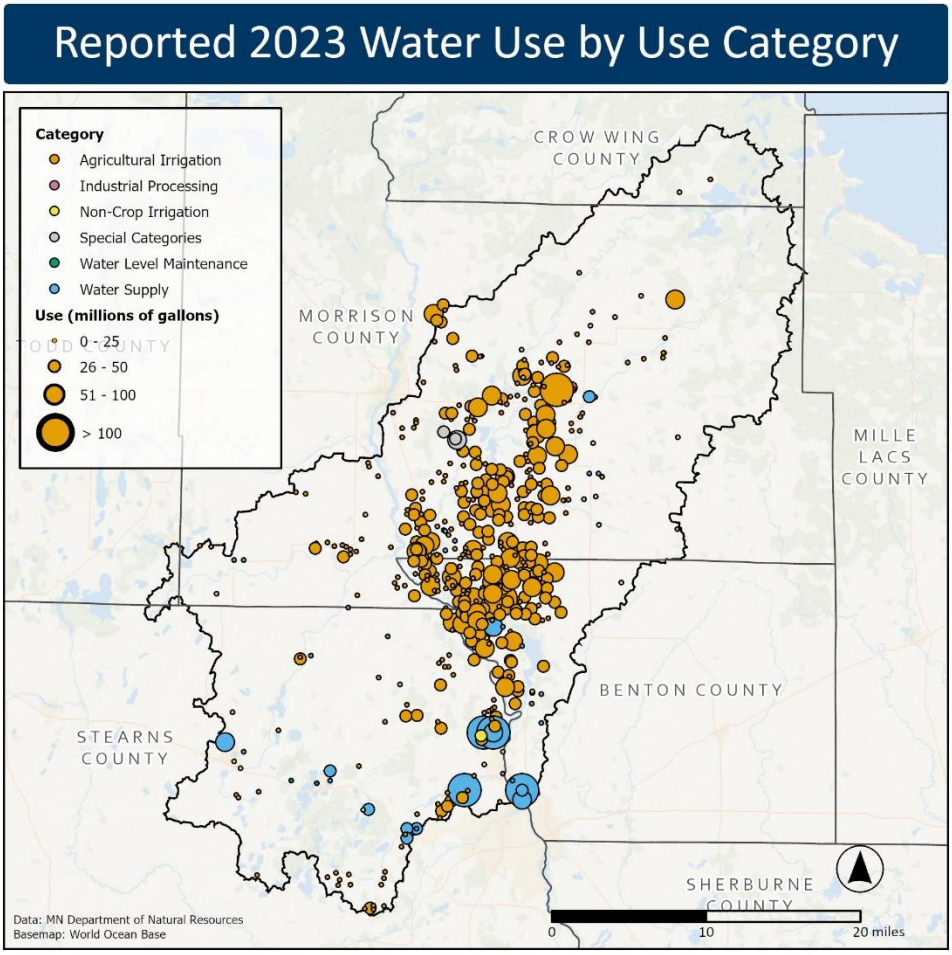

Figure 25: Distribution of groundwater appropriation permits for 2023 by volume reported and use category. Agricultural Irrigation is the largest water use in the watershed.

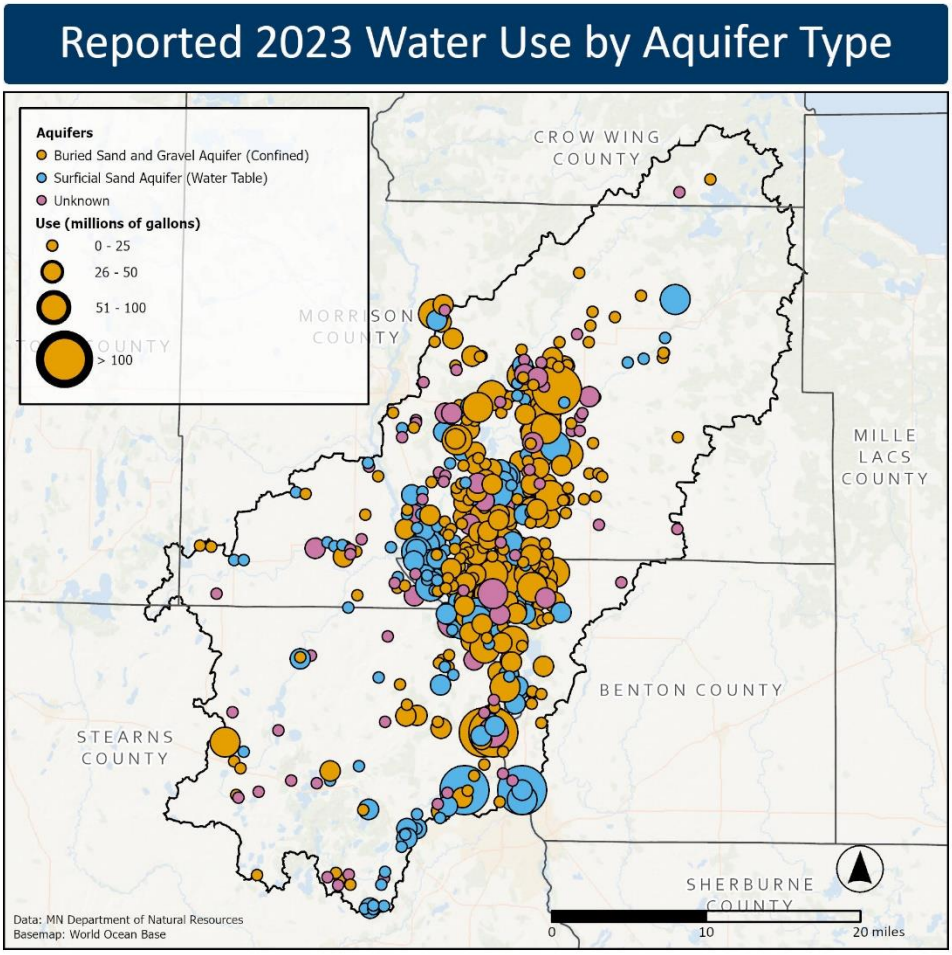

Figure 26: Distribution of groundwater appropriation permits for 2023 by volume reported and aquifer category. In 2023, surficial sand aquifers supplied 35 percent of the reported use and buried sand, and gravel aquifers supplied 54 percent of the reported water use.

Groundwater Level Monitoring

The DNR maintains a statewide groundwater-level monitoring program for assessing groundwater resources, determining long-term trends, interpreting impacts of pumping and climate, planning for water conservation, evaluating water conflicts, and managing water resources.

There are currently 48 groundwater-level monitoring wells with an active read status in the planning area. Nineteen of the wells are required by groundwater appropriation permit conditions, and 29 wells are DNR observation wells (Figure 27).

Over the last 20 years, only 12 of the 48 observation wells had sufficient record for determining the groundwater level trends. None of the 12 wells showed an upward or downward trend in water level (Figure 27).

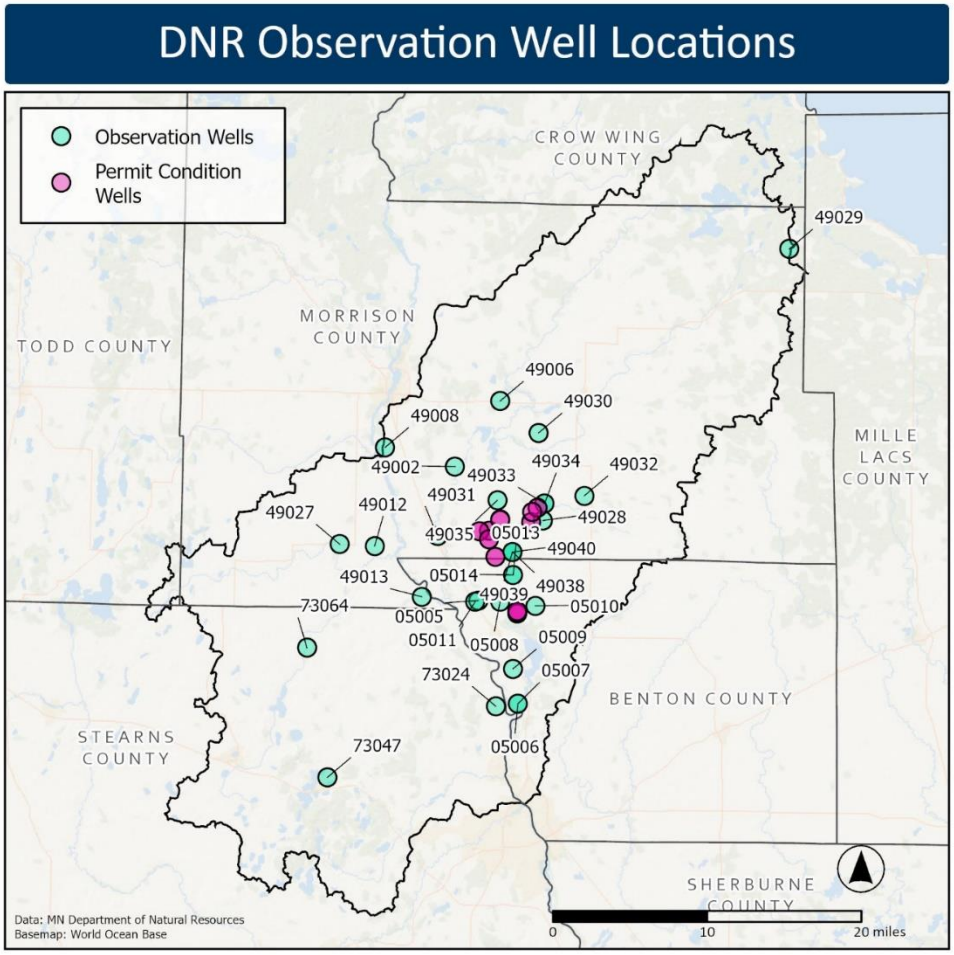

Figure 27: Location of groundwater-level monitoring wells in the planning area. Forty-eight wells currently have an active status: 29 DNR wells and 19 permit condition wells.

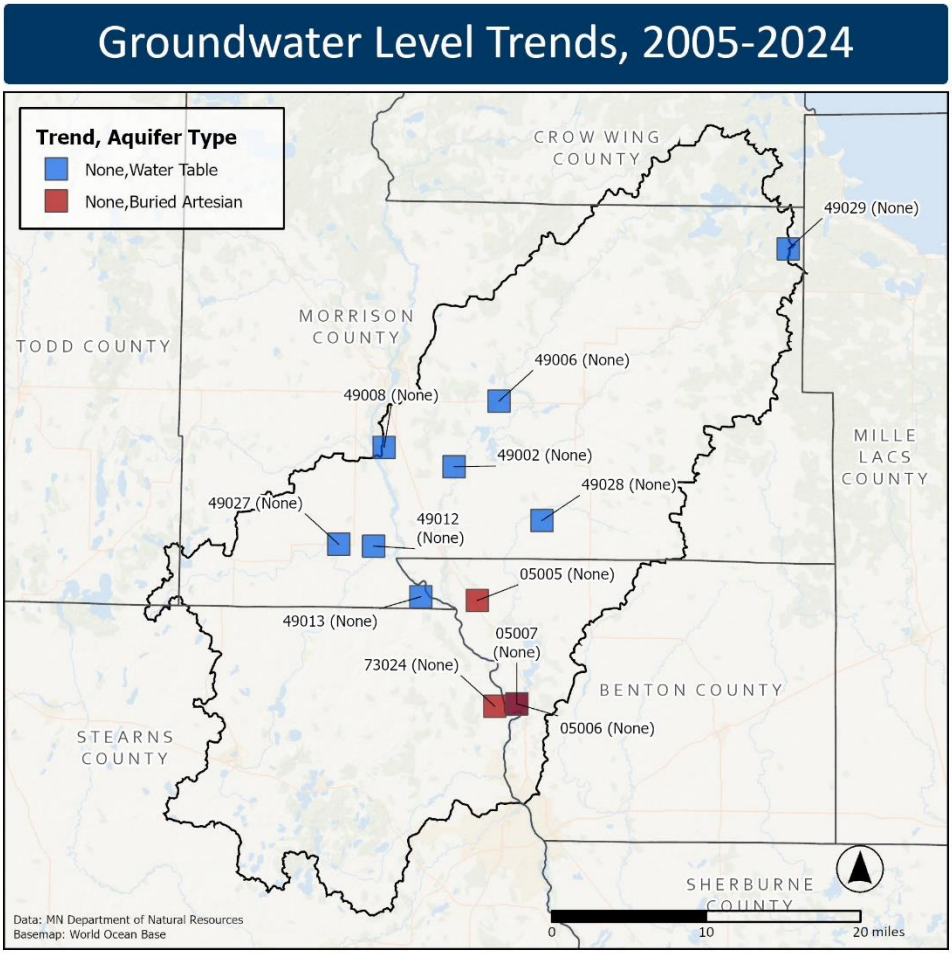

Figure 28: Trends in groundwater levels in DNR wells across Minnesota in the last 20 years.

The wells shown in the map above had enough data to calculate a statistical trend. Trends were calculated using the Mann-Kendall non-parametric statistical method with pre-whitening (Yue and Wang, 2002). Twelve wells had sufficient water-level data to calculate a long-term trend over the period 2005-2024. None of the wells showed an upward or downward trend in water level.

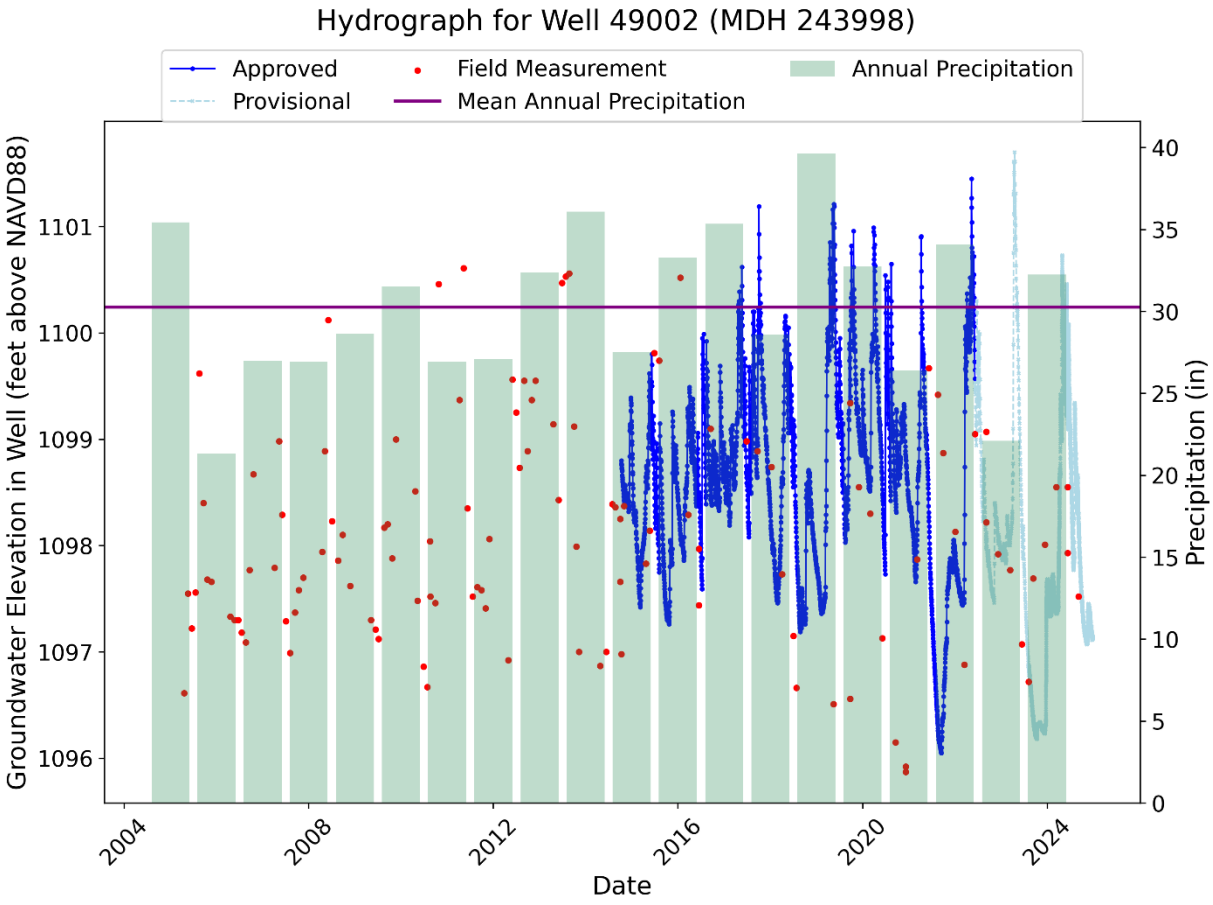

Figure 29: Hydrograph of water-table aquifer (QWTA) well DNR 49002 (243998). The water level varied around 6 feet over a 20-year period (2005-2024). The average trend over the period was 0.03 ft/year. The location is shown in Figure 27.

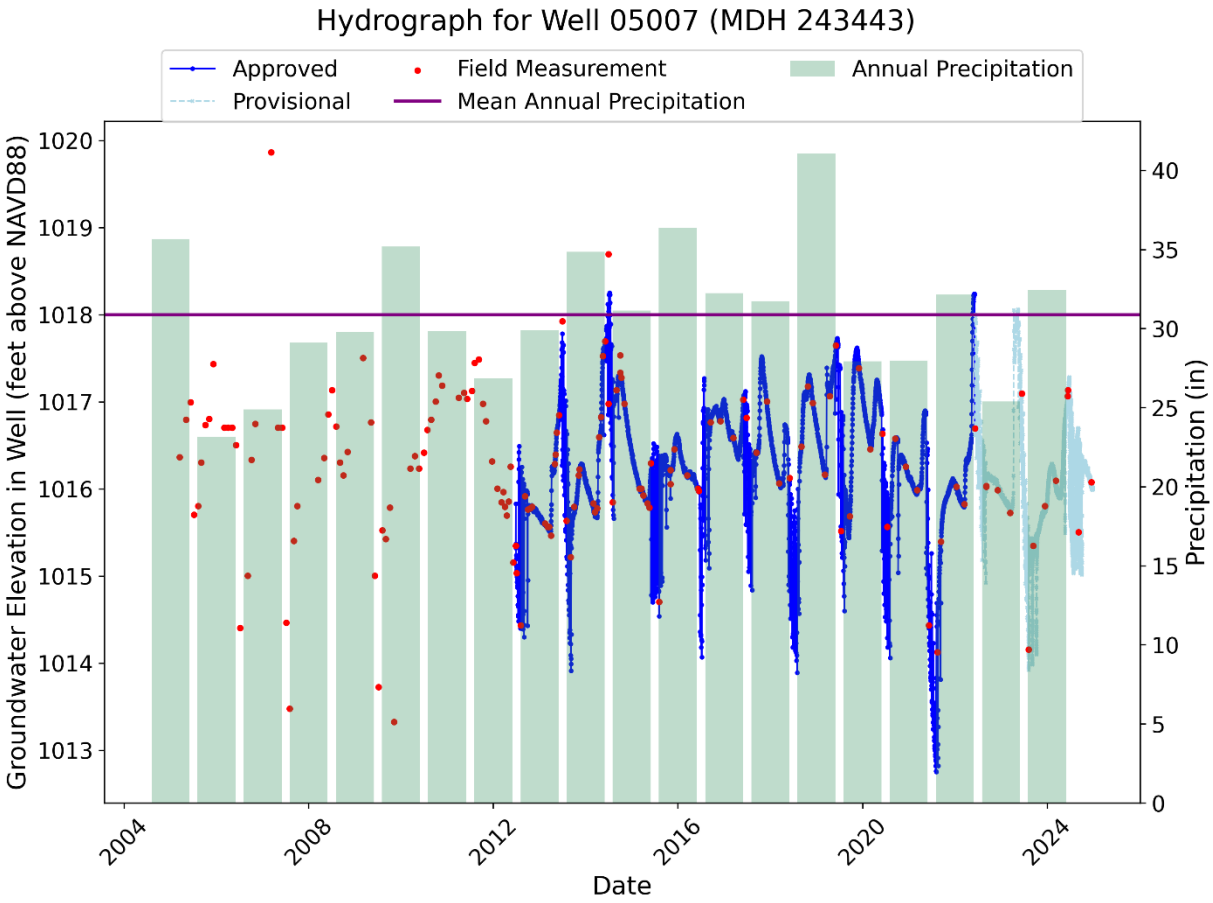

Figure 30: Hydrograph of buried water-table aquifer (QBAA) well DNR 05007 (243443). The water level varied around 7 feet over a 20-year period (2005-2024). The average trend over this period was -0.02 feet/year. The location is shown in Figure 27.

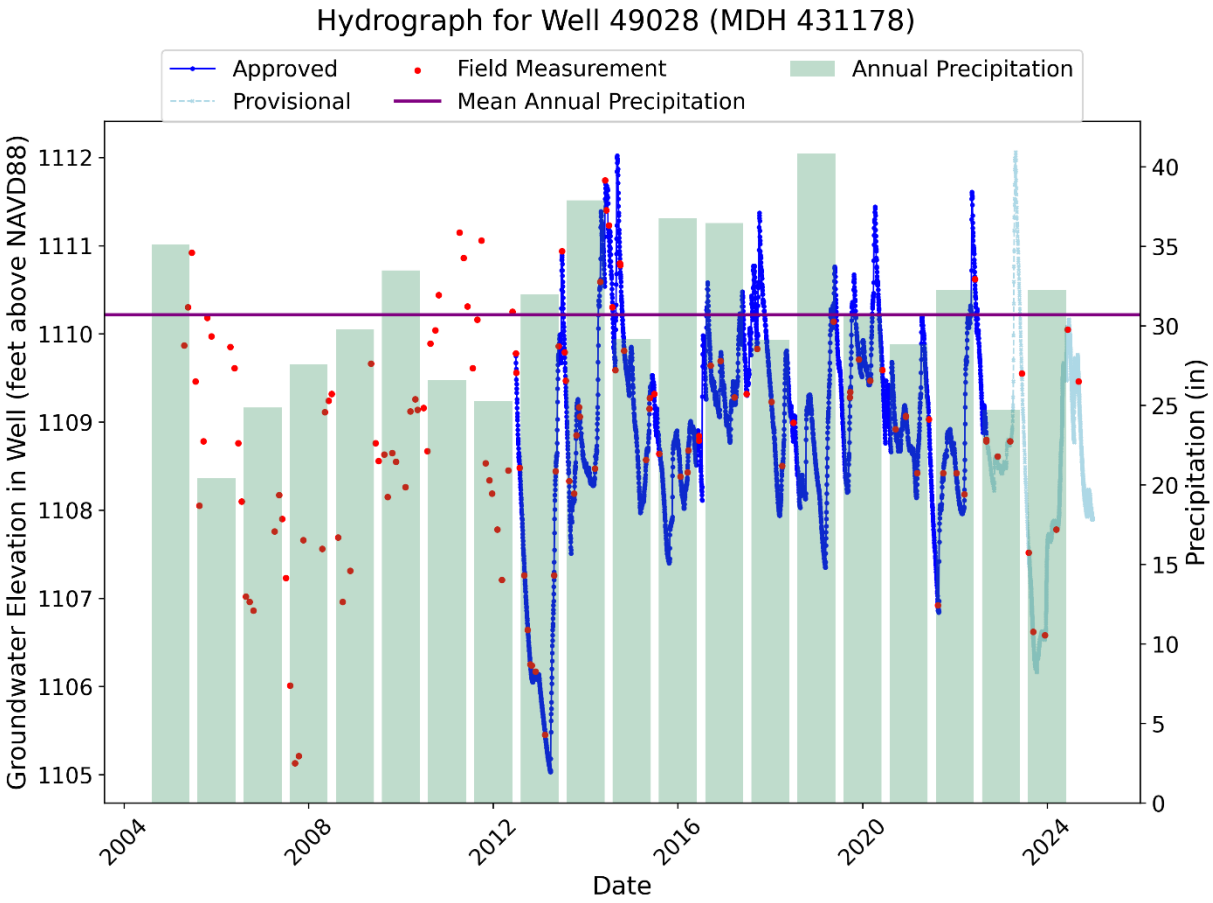

Figure 31: Hydrograph of water-table aquifer (QWTA) well DNR 49028 (431178). The water level varied around 7 feet over a 20-year period (2005-2024). The average trend over this period was -0.1 ft/year. The location is shown in Figure 27.

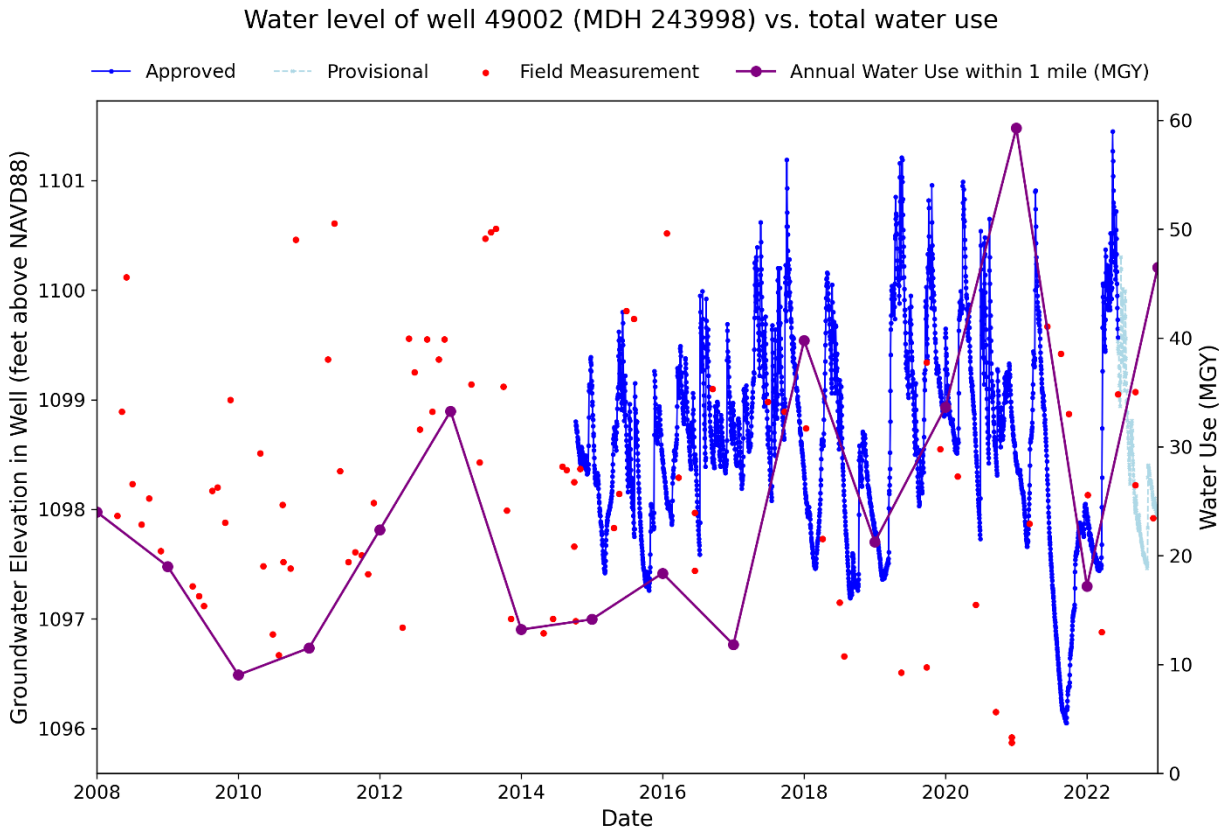

Figure 32: Hydrograph of DNR water table aquifer (QWTA) well DNR 49002 (243998). *In response to increased pumping in 2021, the groundwater level drops sharply, and rebounds once again in response to decreased pumping in 2021.DNR 49002 appears to be sensitive to nearby fluxes in water use. The well location is shown in Figure 27.*

Groundwater Connected Natural Features at Risk

The MRSW includes significant natural features, including surface waters that depend on groundwater to sustain them. Groundwater appropriations and land-use changes can impact the health of these natural resources. If groundwater quantity or quality is degraded, these resources are at risk.

Groundwater Flow Dominated Lakes

All lakes are connected to groundwater, but the specific interaction between lake water and groundwater depends on the geology, topography, and volume of surface-water inflow and outflow associated with the lake. There are three basic lake types (Petersen and Solstad, 2007):

- Lakes dominated by surface water inflow and outflow resulting from a large ratio of contributing surface watershed area to lake area.
- Lakes dominated by groundwater inflow and outflow resulting from a smaller ratio of contributing surface watershed area to lake area (10 or less) (Gergel and others, 1999). This lake type is often landlocked with no surface outlet. For the purposes of this GRAPS

report, the lake level outlet elevation has not been studied. Lakes have been put into this classification solely by watershed to lake area ratio.

- Lakes intermediate between the first and second types. This applies to lakes that typically have a large watershed to lake area ratio, but during times of drought, the lake level will drop below the outlet level. Groundwater often becomes a significant part of the inflow to these lakes during extended dry periods.

Only the groundwater-dominant lakes as defined in the second bullet above are shown in this report (Figure 33). There are 45 groundwater-flow dominated lakes in the MRSW. Of these 45 lakes, 24 have watershed to lake area ratios between 5 and 10, and 21 lakes have watershed to lake area ratios less than 5. Large-scale groundwater pumping near groundwater dominated lakes will likely have more impact on the lake than pumping near surface water dominated lakes. In the MRSW, there are no observation wells located close enough to a groundwater-dominated lake to illustrate how coupled the groundwater elevation and lake levels are to each other.

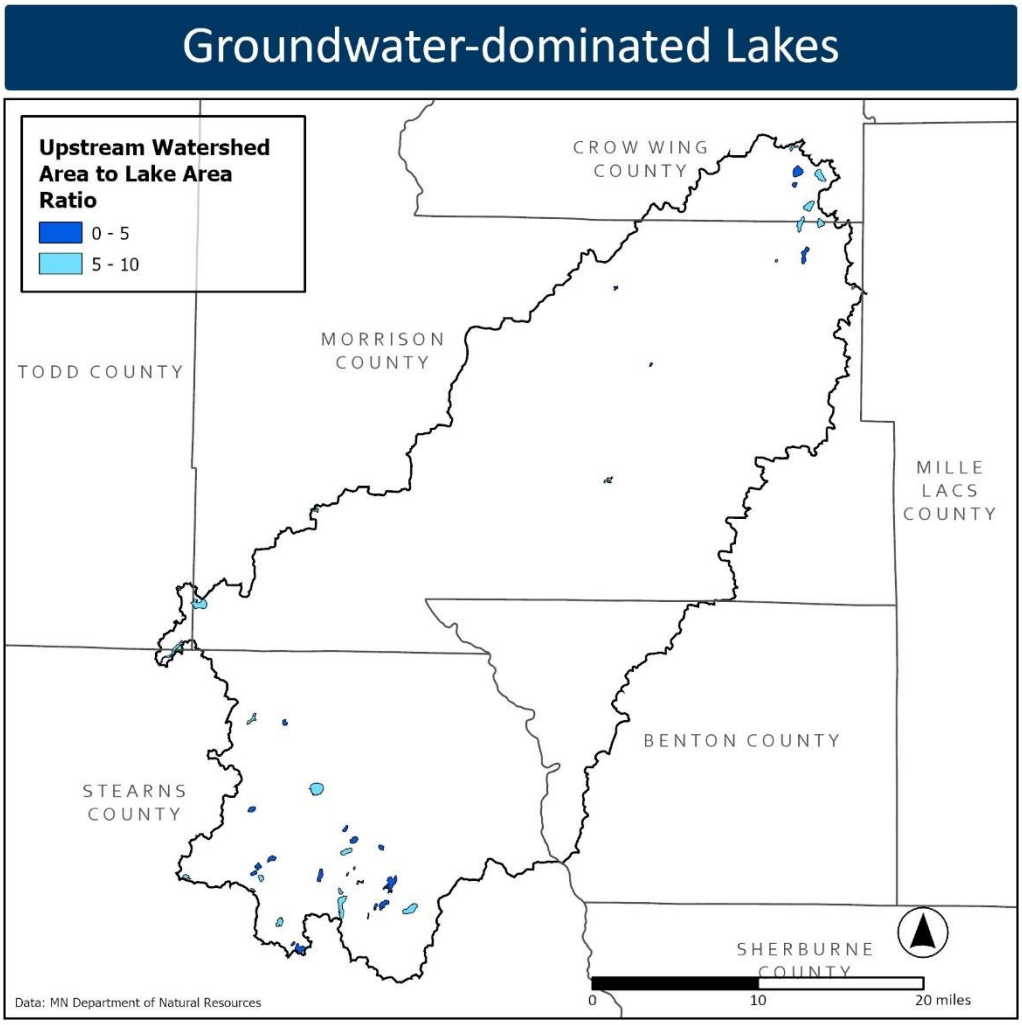

Figure 33: Groundwater-flow dominated lakes.

There are 45 groundwater-flow dominated lakes in the planning area. Of these lakes, 24 have a watershed area to lake area ratio between 5 and 10, and 21 have a watershed to lake area ratio of less than 5. These lakes may be groundwater dominated. Lake specific data should be collected before making a final determination on the amount of influence groundwater has on a particular lake. Click the image to view the interactive web version.

How to Address Groundwater Quantity Issues

Most groundwater quantity (sustainability) issues are the result of overuse of groundwater and/or reduction in recharge to the underlying aquifer. Therefore, the strategies to address water quantity issues are similar, regardless of the groundwater quantity issue. The two primary goals to assure water sustainability are:

Water conservation: Reduce or limit the amount of groundwater used.

Promote or protect recharge: Find ways for water to infiltrate back into the ground.

There are a variety of strategies to help meet water conservation and recharge goals. The type of strategy used depends on the primary factor affecting quantity in the area in question. Strategies include conservation easements, cropland management, education and outreach, irrigation water management and land use planning and management. Table 8 provides a more comprehensive list of specific actions the MRSW can take to conserve water and promote recharge.

Strategies and Actions to Restore and Protect Groundwater

This section provides tips for prioritizing and targeting restoration and protection strategies and makes suggestions about what strategies and actions would be most appropriate within different areas of the watershed. Information on the geological, ecological, and sociological conditions for each county and subwatershed (HUC-10) informs which strategies and actions would be effective for each HUC-10 and county.

Tips for Prioritizing and Targeting Strategies and Actions

Determine Your Goal

You may decide to address an issue because of known instances or threats in an area, or maybe you are working in a geographic area because of jurisdiction or some other factors. The Actions and Strategies Table (Table 8) will help you focus on the goal, for instance, reducing nitrate in groundwater. Then you will need to decide, using the table, if you would like to focus on conservation easements, outreach and education, nutrient management, or some other strategy.

Match the Right Action with the Right Location

The Actions and Strategies Table (Table 8) will help you determine where the actions would be most effective. For instance, an activity that reduces nitrate in groundwater may be more valuable in sensitive areas or vulnerable wellhead protection areas. Or, if you are focused on a limited geography, the table will help you determine what actions are applicable to that area. Considering the sensitivity combined with the presence of drinking water wells and vulnerable wellhead protection areas can help further focus efforts. In another example, factors such as the presence of groundwater dependent features and a concentration of large appropriation wells can help determine where efforts to promote conservation and recharge would be most effective.

Know the Pollution Sensitivity

Groundwater quality is impacted by both point and non-point source pollution. These potential contaminant sources need to be managed according to the pollution sensitivity of the aquifer (Figure 5). Examining the sensitivity of the aquifer as it relates to contamination risk helps determine the level of management necessary to protect groundwater quality. For example, a failing septic system has a greater potential to contaminate the aquifer in a highly sensitive setting with coarse textured material than an area with low sensitivity that has a protective clay layer that retards the movement of water into the aquifer.

Consider Multiple Benefits

Oftentimes, the restoration and protection strategies identified for both groundwater and drinking water positively influence other ecosystem services, such as surface waters, habitat, and pollinators, among others. Managing water as 'one water', rather than parceling it out to reflect the different aspects of water as it moves through the hydrologic cycle, allows for better planning and allocation of resources. The far-right columns of the Actions and Strategies Table (Table 8) identifies the multiple benefits that could result from implementing the action.

Leverage Other Programs and Practices

Utilize existing Federal and State programs that are already working in the MRSW to conserve land, prevent erosion and protect or improve surface water quality. Many of the practices that are being implemented have a benefit for groundwater. You can further target some of these efforts based on the information provided in this report to maximize the benefits by protecting groundwater. (Table 8) includes a column that identifies which agencies can assist with a specific action; the listed agencies typically have some type of program in place that you can leverage. The Descriptions of Supporting Strategies section of this report lists existing programs and resources for each of the suggested strategies.

Emphasize Protection

There is often a bias in groundwater management towards strategies that emphasize protection because of the cost and difficulty of remediating already-contaminated resources. In contrast to surface water bodies, groundwater:

- is difficult to access
- cannot be observed, sampled, or measured easily
- travels slowly, often along complex pathways and through aquifer media that can absorb and store contaminants over long time periods
- is very difficult and expensive to treat if contaminated

Timeframes associated with groundwater cleanup activities are often measured in decades and cost millions of dollars. Groundwater management strategies that emphasize prevention and protection are critical.

Although the tide is changing within water resources management in Minnesota, many funding streams and priorities are focused on restoration activities that can show measurable outcomes. Even though it is difficult to demonstrate 'improvements' from protection strategies, it is important to stress the need to take a balanced approach and protect groundwater resources.

Strategies and Actions for Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed

This section provides a table of strategies and actions local partners in the MRSW can take to restore and protect groundwater resources. Many of the proposed actions require the participation of a willing landowner to execute. Other actions reflect opportunities to manage land use through local controls. Many of the proposed strategies and actions align with strategies to protect surface waters.

Each action aligns with one or more supporting strategies and goals.

Goals identify how an action helps restore and/or protect groundwater.

Supporting Strategies are key approaches to achieving the goal.

Recommended Groundwater Actions are specific actions prescribed to a specific county or HUC-10 within the watershed that will help achieve the goal and pertains to the supporting strategy.

Figure 34 provides a visual representation of the relationship between goals, supporting strategies, and recommended groundwater actions. Note that each goal is supported by many supporting strategies, and each supporting strategy may have a variety of recommended groundwater actions.

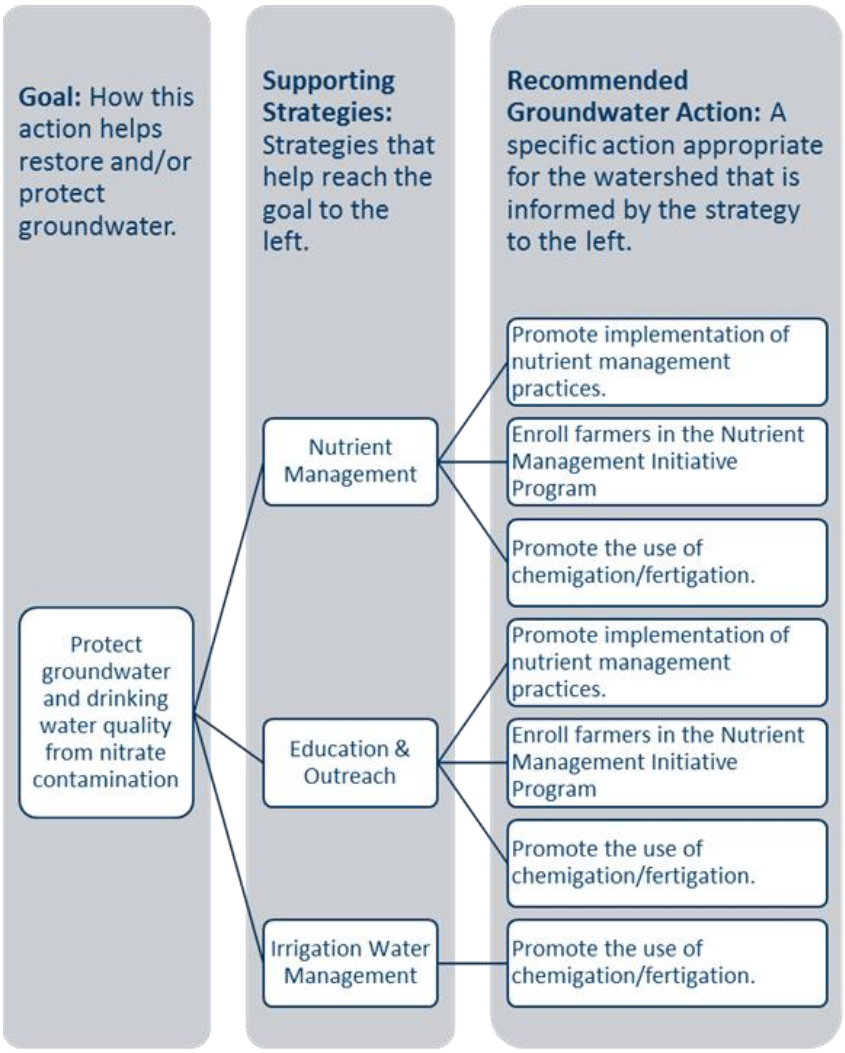

Figure 34: Visual representation of the relationship between goals, supporting strategies, and recommended groundwater action.

How to Use the Table of Actions and Strategies

The Table of Actions and Strategies (Table 8) is designed so that you can find actions and strategies related to whatever your priorities may be when it comes to restoring and protecting groundwater. There are a variety of columns to facilitate the following:

- finding actions for specific geographic areas (counties or HUC-10s)
- finding actions or strategies that would help achieve a specific goal,
- learning the additional benefits of implementing a specific action, and
- tips for determining where to target a specific action if you cannot implement the action in the entire recommended area.

The following list defines each of the columns in Table 8:

- **Goal:** How the action in this row helps restore and/or protect groundwater. The goals have been sorted alphabetically as much as possible. Each goal identifies the main objective—such as whether it protects groundwater quality or sustains the amount of water available—and includes a keyword to explain how the goal is achieved. For example, a goal that is listed as 'Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Closed Landfills' can be interpreted as: Protect groundwater and drinking water quality from landfill contamination.
- **Supporting Strategies**: Identifies and links you to general strategies that help accomplish the goal for the action in this row. Each strategy is hyperlinked to a section of the report that provides more information about the strategy and connects you with existing tools and programs that may assist you in implementing this strategy or implementing actions related to this strategy.
- **Recommended Groundwater Action**: A specific action you can take to help achieve the goal to the left in the row and is informed by the strategy to the left in the same row.
- **Target _____ Co.:** The 'X's' denote which counties should consider using the action described in the corresponding row. An 'X' denotes the action would be most beneficial for that county. The addition of the counties helps to further prioritize and target where recommended groundwater actions should be implemented, narrowing the focus from a larger subwatershed to a specific geographic area. For example, many of the subwatersheds identify the need to work with irrigators; by adding the additional filter of counties, you can eliminate specific counties that do not have irrigators, targeting where implementation should occur. It also works as a quick reference to identify groundwater actions specific to the county in which you work.
- **HUC-10s Involved**: This column denotes which HUC-10 subwatershed(s) within the MRSW to consider using the action described in the corresponding row. There are seven HUC-10s within the watershed. Table 7 provides the name and the HUC-10 number assigned to each major watershed. Figure 2 is a map of the HUC-10s.
- **Agencies that can assist**[12]**:** This column lists agencies that may be able to assist with implementing the strategy through existing programs or providing more information or technical assistance.
- **Tips for Targeting & *Helpful Maps:*** This column helps identify the areas that should be targeted for the specific action if it is not feasible to implement the action in all the recommended counties or HUC-8s. The column also includes links to maps within the GRAPS report that may be helpful in identifying which specific areas within a county or

[12] BWSR=Board of Soil and Water Resources; FSA=Farm Service Agency; MDA=Minnesota Department of Agriculture; MDH=Minnesota Department of Health; MPCA=Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; NRCS=Natural Resources Conservation Service; UMN=University of Minnesota Extension (*not a comprehensive list of agencies/partners*)

HUC-8 to target. The maps are listed in *italicized font.* You can click on the *blue text* that says the figure number for the map to hyperlink directly to the map being referenced.

- **Benefit:_____**[13]**:** This series of 'X' marks whether the corresponding action may have additional benefits. An 'X' denotes the action could create the described additional benefit.

Table 7: HUC-10 subwatersheds within the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed

HUC-10 Name	Reference Name in Implementation Table	HUC-10 Number
Two River	Two River	0701020101
Spunk Creek	Spunk Creek	0701020102
Skunk River	Skunk River	0701020103
Platte River	Platte River	0701020104
Little Rock Creek	Little Rock	0701020105
Watab River	Watab River	0701020106
City of Sartell-Mississippi River	City of Sartell	0701020107

Summary of Key Findings and Issues

Below is a summary of key groundwater quality and quantity findings found in the MRSW. This summary can be used to help target groundwater actions during the 1W1P exercise.

Key Groundwater Quality Findings and Issues

Nitrate – 5.5 percent of the 3,214 tested drinking water wells had nitrate levels at or above the SDWA standard of 10 mg/L. Nitrate exceedances were primarily observed in shallow wells less than 50 feet deep.

The MDA Ambient Program currently samples eight sites annually or semiannually since 2000. Nitrate concentrations range from 0.55 to 63.5 mg/L.

The MDA TTP collected drinking water samples in four counties and 16 townships in the watershed. Nitrate concentrations within the townships tested ranged from <0.05 to 42.0 mg/L. In total 108 wells sampled exceeded the SDWA for nitrate of 10 mg/L.

MDA fall nitrogen fertilizer application restrictions apply to much of the watershed, with the largest concentrated areas in Benton and Morrison counties.

[13] Habitat=Improve/Protect Habitat, including pollinators; GWCF=Improve/Protect Groundwater Connected Features; Soil Health=Improve/Protect Soil Health; Erosion=Control Erosion; Carbon=Carbon Sequestration; Nutrient Runoff=Control Nutrient Runoff, including pesticides (*The multiple benefits achieved are dependent on the placement and type of BMPs implemented; seed mixes planted; and other site conditions*).

There is one MDA Mitigation Level 1 DWSMA for the City of Rice. Wells that have nitrate levels greater than or equal to 5.4 mg/L but less than 8 mg/L at any point in the previous ten years fall within the guidelines for a Mitigation Level 1 determination.

Between 2009 and 2024, six MPCA ambient network wells were sampled in the watershed. Samples from one well exceeded the SDWA standard for nitrate in five separate instances, but overall results were largely below this threshold. Chloride concentrations did not exceed 250 mg/L, the secondary maximum contaminant level, at any of the ambient sites.

Arsenic – Just below two percent of the 640 tested drinking water wells had levels exceeding the SDWA standard of 10 µg/L. The EPA has set a goal of 0 µg/L for arsenic in drinking water because there is no safe level of arsenic in drinking water. MDH started collecting arsenic samples from newly constructed wells in 2008 and may not be a true reflection of risk.

Pesticides – MDA currently samples 8 monitoring wells for pesticides. Thirty-three different pesticides or pesticide breakdown products (or degradates) have been detected in the wells. None have exceeded human health reference values.

As part of the PWPS Project wells were sampled for approximately 130 pesticide compounds between 2016 and 2021.

In follow-up sampling in Morrison County in 2023, only one sample had a detection for total cynazine, and the concentration did not exceed the human health reference value. There were also six wells in Ripley Township that received testing for 4-hydroxychlorothalonil as part of a special investigation. Three of the six wells had a detection of the compound, but none of these wells had a concentration that exceeded the established human health reference value.

DWSMAs cover approximately 44,646 acres in the watershed. Nearly all 24 community PWS within the MRSW are engaged in the wellhead protection planning process or are implementing/amending their plans, except for Wildwood Manor.

The MRSW has six conjunctive delineations for Holdingford, Little Falls, St. John's University, Saint Joseph, Sartell North, and Sauk Rapids.

Approximately 66 percent of the people living in the watershed get their drinking water from a community public water supply system and the remaining 34 percent obtain their drinking water from private wells.

Among the drinking water wells that have interpreted aquifer code, about 69 percent of wells draw from buried glacial aquifers. Another 16 percent of wells use surficial glacial aquifers, and 1 percent use sedimentary bedrock aquifers.

Private wells – there are over 5,400 private drinking water wells with known locations ranging from 12 ft. to 576 ft. deep, with an average depth of 65 ft. More than 18 percent (over 1,000 wells) of private wells are in a highly vulnerable setting.

Flood events can threaten the safety and availability of drinking water by washing pathogens and chemical contamination into source aquifers. All counties in the watershed have flood data.

Animal feedlots – there are 1,233 active feedlots in the watershed. More than half of the counties in the MRSW are delegated counties executing the feedlot program locally. Benton and Crow Wing counties rely on the MPCA to execute the feedlot program within their jurisdiction.

Row crop agriculture – approximately 36 percent of the land cover is in row-crop agriculture in the watershed. In areas with high pollution sensitivity, agricultural inputs can contaminate the underlying aquifer.

SSTS are found throughout the watershed. All counties within the MRSW require compliance inspections for property transfers, resulting in over 1,185 SSTS inspections across Benton, Stearns, Todd and Morrison counties in 2024.

Contaminated sites – the MPCA 73 active tanks that could leak chemicals into the environment and 6 leak sites that may cause localized groundwater pollution if not properly managed. The risk to groundwater is greatest in areas of high pollution sensitivity.

There is one closed landfill within the watershed.

Key Groundwater Quantity Findings and Issues

Annual permitted groundwater use in the MRSW was generally between 2,890 and 14,725 million gallons per year over the period 1988-2021.

In 2023, approximately 83 percent of permitted water use was for agricultural irrigation, roughly 14 percent for water supply, nearly two percent for special categories, 1 percent for non-crop irrigation, and less than one percent on other categories.

Approximately 54 percent of permitted groundwater was sourced from the buried sand and gravel aquifers, 35 percent from surficial sand aquifers, and 11 percent from unknown aquifers.

The watershed has 48 active DNR groundwater-level monitoring wells. Over the 20-year period of 2005-2024, only 12 wells had sufficient record for determining the groundwater level trends. All 12 wells showed no trend in groundwater level over the time period.

There are 45 groundwater-flow dominated lakes in the MRSW. Of these lakes, 24 have a watershed to lake area ratio between 5 and 10, and 21 lakes have watershed to lake area ratios less than 5. These lakes may be groundwater dominated. Lake specific data should be collected before making a final determination on the amount of influence groundwater has on a particular lake.

Table 8: Actions and Strategies to Restore and Protect Groundwater

Goal	Supporting Strategy	Recommended Groundwater Actions	Target Benton	Target Crow Wing	Target Stearns	Target Morrison	HUC-10s Involved	Lead Agency that can assist	Tip(s) for Targeting & *Helpful Maps*	*Benefit: Habitat*	*Benefit: GWCF*	*Benefit: Soil Health*	*Benefit: Erosion*	*Benefit: Carbon*	*Ben: Nutrient Runoff*
Protect Private Well Users: Arsenic	Education and Outreach	Educate well users about the health risks of elevated arsenic levels in drinking water. Promote testing of private wells through education or cost share. Provide information from MDH about arsenic in Minnesota's well water to private well users to help answer health related questions and information on arsenic removal.	X		X	X	All	MDH Well MGMT	Prioritize areas with a high density of private wells and areas with evidence of high levels of arsenic in private wells. *Arsenic Map* (Figure 17) *Drinking Water Wells Map* (Figure 12)						
Protect Private Well Users: Well Testing	Education and Outreach	Make information available to private well users about local drinking water quality and well testing. Host a well testing clinic or provide resources to well users to have their water tested for: Coliform Bacteria (every year) Nitrate (every year) Arsenic (at least once) Lead (at least once) Manganese (at least once)	X	X	X	X	All	MDH Well MGMT	Prioritize areas with a high density of private wells, high pollution sensitivity and/or where there are known groundwater contaminants. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Arsenic Map* (Figure 17) *Drinking Water Wells Map* (Figure 12) *Nitrate Map* (Figure 14)						
Protect Private Well Users: Manage Wells **Protect Groundwater**	Education and Outreach	Promote proper management of wells through MDH tools, such as the 'Well Owners Handbook' in landowner outreach efforts.	X	X	X	X	All	MDH Well MGMT	Prioritize areas with a high density of private wells. *Drinking Water Wells Map* (Figure 17)						

and Drinking Water Quality: Manage Wells									
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Well Sealing	Education and Outreach	Provide cost share to well owners for sealing of unsealed, unused wells. Provide educational materials on well sealing.	X	X	X	X	All	MDH Well MGMT	Prioritize areas with a high density of private wells and DWSMAs. *Drinking Water Wells Map (Figure 12)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)*
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Well Inventory	Land Use Planning and Management	To understand water quality trends, establish a well inventory to record baseline data or changes in groundwater quality. An example of a successful model is the Southeast MN Domestic Well Network.	X	X	X	X	All	MDH Well MGMT	*N/A*
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Flooding	Land Use Planning and Management	Conduct a survey of property owners within the flood plain to identify unused/unsealed wells. Seal those wells identified to prevent contamination of the aquifer.	X	X	X	X	All	MDH Well MGMT	*Prioritize private wells with the highest risk of flooding.* *Drinking Water Wells and Flood Risk (Figure 13)*
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Flooding	Land Use Planning and Management	Request flooded well test kits from MDH Well Management to distribute to private well owners after a flood event.	X	X			All	MDH Well MGMT	*Prioritize private wells with the highest risk of flooding.* *Drinking Water Wells and Flood Risk (Figure 13)*
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Closed Landfills	Contaminant Planning and Management Land Use Planning and Management	Identify MPCA closed landfill locations and groundwater areas of concern in comprehensive land use plans, zoning maps and ordinances. Identifying the location will help assure drinking water and public health implications are considered when evaluating future growth or development near these sites. Consult and review the MPCA Closed Landfill Program to make sure any proposed			X		Spunk Creek	MPCA CLP Land Manager	*Closed Landfill Map (Figure 21)*

		changes in zoning districts or new land use planning proposals are not in conflict with the State Closed Landfill Plan. Contact the MPCA Closed Landfill Program for current information and any concerns or changes to the groundwater area of concern when considering land use changes or developments near the area. Request to be notified regarding any changes in the migration or movement of contaminants. Educate residents about the proper disposal of HHW, pharmaceuticals and personal care products that can contaminant landfills.								
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Leaky Tanks	Contaminant Planning and Management Land Use Planning and Management	Identify leaky and active tank sites in your area in comprehensive land use plans, zoning maps and ordinances. Identifying these locations will help assure drinking water and public health implications are considered when evaluating future growth or development near these sites. Contact the MPCA Tank Compliance and Assistance Program for current information and any concerns or changes to the groundwater area of concern when considering land use changes or developments near these areas. Request to be notified regarding any changes in the migration or movement of contaminants.	X		X		Two River Watab River Little Rock Creek	MPCA Tanks Program	Focus in areas with high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)* *Tank & Leak Site Map (Figure 20)*		
Protect Groundwater and Drinking	Contaminant Planning and Management	Prioritize feedlot inspections, regardless of size, in areas of greatest risk to pollution, to	X	X	X	X	All	MPCA Feedlot Program	*Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs.*			X

Water Quality: Feedlots		minimize the loss of nitrate and harmful bacteria.						*Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Active Feedlot Map* (Figure 19)				
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Manure Management	Education and Outreach Nutrient Management	In delegated counties, all feedlots that apply manure in areas of high risk will conduct a Level 2 records review completed regardless of the size of facility. In delegated counties, conduct annual Level 3 review of manure acres in areas of high risk. Assist feedlot owners, especially sites with 300 or fewer animal units, in the development of a manure management plan. Host field days that promote emergency response training, manure crediting, calibration of equipment, and the manure testing process. Evaluate local ordinances and revise to include manure timing guidelines to protect from nitrate loss. Follow the UMN Extension guidelines, including no summer application and fall application only after soil temperature is below 50 degrees.	X	X	X	X	All	MPCA Feedlot Program	Focus in areas with high pollutions sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Active Feedlot Map* (Figure 19)	X	X		X
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Manure Management	Education and Outreach Nutrient Management	Promote actions to prepare for field application of manure: Inspect equipment to ensure everything is functioning properly to avoid leaks or spills	X	X	X	X	All	MPCA Feedlot Program	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7)	X	X		X

	Contaminant Planning and Management	Get manure sampled and analyzed for nutrient availability Plan applications for each field Determine any setbacks needed in fields and mark locations of sensitive features to avoid Use the Minnesota Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast system tool to determine the best time to apply manure. Put together an emergency action plan that identifies leak and spill containment						*Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Active Feedlot Map* (Figure 19)	
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate	Nutrient Management Education and Outreach	Promote implementation of nutrient management practices to improve farm profitability and reduce nitrogen loss. Practices include: Improve nitrogen efficiency by practicing the 4 Rs of nitrogen stewardship (right source, right rate, right timing, and right place) Adopt and use of the UMN 'Best Management Practices for Nitrogen use in Minnesota Properly credit nitrogen sources (soil/manure tests, past crops, & mineralization) Implement comprehensive nutrient management plans to improve nitrogen crediting, equipment calibration, and record keeping Spoon feed nitrogen to sync with plant growth through side dressing and split fertilizer application	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWMSAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)	X

Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate	Nutrient Management Education and Outreach	Increase the number of farmers enrolled in the Nutrient Management Initiative Program to evaluate alternative nutrient management practices.	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWMSAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)*					X
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate	Nutrient Management Education and Outreach Cropland Management	Identify programs and opportunities for growers to test and implement new nitrogen practices, innovative technology or cropping systems that protect groundwater quality that prevent or reduce nitrogen loss. (E.g., Cover Crops, Alternative Crops, Precision Ag / New Technologies, Nutrient Management Initiative, etc.)	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWMSAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)*	X		X		X	X
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate	Nutrient Management Education and Outreach	Promote the adoption of cover crops for scavenging nutrients under irrigated row crops.	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, irrigated row crops, and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)* *Drinking Water Wells Map (Figure 12)* *DNR Water Appropriation Permits by Use Type (Figure 25)*	X		X	X	X	X

Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate **Groundwater Sustainability:** Water Conservation	Nutrient Management Education and Outreach Irrigation Water Management	Host an irrigation water-testing clinic to determine nitrate concentrations in raw water to calculate the irrigation water nitrogen crediting formula.	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, irrigated row crops, and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *DNR Water Appropriation Permits by Use Type* (Figure 25)					
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate **Groundwater Sustainability:** Water Conservation	Education and Outreach Nutrient Management Cropland Management	Promote the benefits of farming using soil health principles that increase soil moisture holding capacity, organic matter, and nutrient cycling.	X	X	X	X	All	NRCS Field Office	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWMSAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Nitrate in Wells Maps* (Figure 14)	X	X	X	X	
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate **Groundwater Sustainability:** Water Conservation	Education and Outreach Nutrient Management Cropland Management	Contact state and federal agency resource partners and coordinate opportunities for local field days, training and outreach for farmers, co-ops, and crop consultants. Focus on alternative nitrogen management practices, soil health, and second crops.	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWMSAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Nitrate in Wells Maps* (Figure 14)					

Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate **Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality:** Pesticides	Education and Outreach Cropland Management Integrated Pest Management	Promote the benefits of crop diversity and rotation, which include high yields for each crop in the rotation, pest and weed control, and enhanced soil fertility.	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWMSAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)* *Nitrate in Wells Maps (Figure 14)*	X	X	X	X	X
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate **Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality:** Pesticides **Groundwater Sustainability:** Water Conservation	Education and Outreach Irrigation Water Management	Provide information on best practices for turf management to the public. Include information on fertilizer application, crediting for grass clippings, lawn watering and herbicide and pesticide application.	X		X	X	Platte River City of Sartell Little Rock Creek Spunk Creek Two River Watab River	UMN Lawns & Turfgrass MGMT Team	Focus on MS4 communities and residential developments with high pollution sensitivity, along with highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)* *DNR Water Appropriation Permits by Use Type (Figure 25)*		X	X	X	X
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Pesticides	Education and Outreach Integrated Pest Management	Promote the adoption and use of MDA's water quality BMPs for agricultural pesticides and insecticides.	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas of pesticide detection in MDA's monitoring wells, along with areas of high pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)*					X

								DWSMA Map (Figure 10)		
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Pesticides	Education and Outreach	Promote the Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Waste Pesticide Collection Program to farmers and area businesses for disposal of unwanted and unusable pesticides.	X	X	X	X	All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus in areas of pesticide detection in MDA's monitoring wells, along with areas of high pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWMSAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)*		
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Nitrate **Groundwater Sustainability:** Water Conservation	Irrigation Water Management Education and Outreach	Promote and encourage the adoption of irrigation water management BMPs that increase water conservation and decrease conditions for nitrogen loss past the root zone by utilizing: - Irrigation water scheduling to control the volume, frequency, and application of irrigation water - Conservation to low flow pressure irrigation nozzles - Proper timing of irrigation using online tools that identify local climate, growing degree days (GDD), and evapotranspiration (ET) conditions - Test irrigation water and take credit for nitrate present as a fertilizer source	X				All	MDA Pesticide & Fertilizer Division	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, irrigated row crops, and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map (Figure 5)* *Pollution Sensitivity Wells (Figure 7)* *DWSMA Map (Figure 10)* *DNR Water Appropriation Permits by Use Type (Figure 25)*	X	X
Groundwater Sustainability: Water Conservation	Irrigation Water Management Education and Outreach	Assist farmers applying for a water appropriate permit by developing a water resource plan that identifies water conservation measures that improve water use efficiencies and reduce water demand.	X		X	X	All	DNR Ecological & Water Resources	Focus on areas of permitted water use for row crop irrigation. You may further refine by targeting confined aquifers with limited recharge. *Primary Aquifers by Section (Figure 4)*	X	

								DNR Water Appropriation Permits by Use Type (Figure 25) *DNR Water Appropriation Permits by Aquifer Type* (Figure 26)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: SSTS	SSTS Management	Enforce state and locally adopted SSTS ordinances for the protection of groundwater and drinking water sources. Evaluate existing SSTS ordinances and identify opportunities to enhance groundwater protection. Activities may include adding a Point-of-Sale requirement to trigger a SSTS inspection during real estate transactions. Improve SSTS records by obtaining information on treatment system; age, type, and function to understand potential risks to groundwater.	X	X	X	All	MPCA SSTS Field Staff	Focus in areas with high pollution sensitivity, highly vulnerable DWSMAs, and areas with a density of SSTS. You can use the Well Density Map as an imperfect surrogate for SSTS density. *Drinking Water Wells Map* (Figure 17) *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: SSTS	Education and Outreach SSTS Management	Educate citizens about SSTS including: The basic principles of how a septic system works How to operate the system efficiently and effectively Risks to human health and the environment Financial options to repair or replace failing or non-compliant system	X	X	X	X	All	MPCA SSTS Field Staff	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, highly vulnerable DWSMAs, and areas with a density of SSTS. You can use the Well Density Map as an imperfect surrogate for SSTS density. *Drinking Water Wells Map* (Figure 17) *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)

Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: SSTS	Education and Outreach SSTS Management	Host local SSTS training and workshops for area contractors and citizens regarding SSTS technology, compliance, and maintenance.	X	X	X	X	All	MPCA SSTS Field Staff	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, highly vulnerable DWSMAs, and areas with a density of SSTS. You can use the Well Density Map as an imperfect surrogate for SSTS density. *Drinking Water Wells Map* (Figure 17) *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Wellhead Protection (WHP)	Education and Outreach Cropland Management Land Use Planning and Management	Serve on WHP planning teams to assist public water suppliers with planning and implementation activities to address land use planning concerns.	X	X	X	X	Clearwater Elk Headwaters Silver St. Cloud	MDH SWP Unit	*Wellhead Protection Plan Development Status* (Figure 9) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Wellhead Protection	Land Use Planning and Management	Integrate WHP plan strategies into local plans, such as the 1W1P and land use plans.	X	X	X	X	Clearwater Elk Headwaters Silver St. Cloud	MDH SWP Unit	*DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking	Education and Outreach	Educate the public about the risks of improperly disposing of HHW and	X	X	X	X	All	MPCA Hazardous	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs.

Water: Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)	Land Use Planning and Management	promote community-supported collection sites. Make disposal of HHW easy for the public by expanding collection sites through mobile units by stopping in different communities throughout the summer for free drop off. Promote other recycling options of various products at area businesses throughout the year.					Waste Program	*Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water: Pharmaceuticals	Education and Outreach	Keep unused/unwanted medications out of drinking water supplies by educating the public about available safe and secure drop box locations at law enforcement facilities and pharmacies.	X	X	X	X	All	MPCA Hazardous Waste Program	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water: Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CEC)	Education and Outreach	Enhance Minnesotans' understanding of CEC's by communicating the health impacts and exposure potential of emerging contaminants in drinking water. Outreach and Education Grants are available through the MDH CEC Initiative. See Outreach and Education Grants (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/risk/guidance/dwec/outreachproj.html) for opportunities.	X	X	X	X	All	MDH CEC Program	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water	Education and Outreach	Educate the public and decision makers about the hydrologic connectivity of groundwater and surface water and how this	X	X	X	X	All	DNR Ecological & Water Resources	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5)

		influences the vulnerability of drinking water resources.						*Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4)	
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality	Education and Outreach	Develop a 'drinking water protection' page on the SWCD or county website or other communication tools that can be used to share information with citizens on what they can do to protect both public and private sources of drinking water. Include information about the connection between surface and groundwater, well sealing and water conservation. Dakota County's webpage Water Quality (https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Environment/WaterQuality/WellsDrinkingWater/Pages/default.aspx) is a good example.	X	X	X	X	All	MDH Well MGMT & SWP Unit	N/A	
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality **Water Sustainability:** Recharge	Land Use Planning and Management	Develop ordinances, overlay districts, performance standards, etc. to further protect drinking water and groundwater connected features from future land use impacts for their long-term sustainability and use.	X	X	X	X	All	MN Assoc. of Counties	Focus on areas with high pollution sensitivity, highly vulnerable DWSMAs and groundwater connected natural features. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Groundwater Dominated Lakes* (Figure 33)	X
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality	Land Use Planning and Management	Incorporate basic groundwater and drinking water information into local comprehensive plans and ordinances including: Local geology and aquifer information	X	X	X	X	All	MDH SWP Unit	*Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *Primary Aquifers by Section* (Figure 4) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)	

Water Sustainability: Recharge		The sources of drinking water and the pollution sensitivity of public and private wells Maps of state approved WHP areas Groundwater dependent natural features Contaminant areas of concern Other local information needed to consider and protect groundwater and drinking water resources in local land use planning decisions							*Tank & Leak Site Map* (Figure 20) *Groundwater Dominated Lakes* (Figure 33)						
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality **Water Sustainability:** Recharge	Conservation Easements	Enroll private lands in land acquisition programs or conservation easements. Programs may include Continuous CRP, RIM Reserve for wellhead protection, and CREP.	X	X	X	X	All	BWSR	Prioritize areas of high pollution sensitivity and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. Target areas of high-water use, known groundwater connected natural features. Examine areas where you can expand on existing easements and protected lands to increase protections. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *Pollution Sensitivity Wells* (Figure 7) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Monitoring Wells/Pumping* (Figure 28) *Groundwater Dominated Lakes* (Figure 33) *RIM Easements Map* (Figure 35)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality	Conservation Easements	Maintain and expand set-aside acres in sensitive areas, including areas in publicly supported conservation programs like CRP, from being converted to high intensity uses, such as corn and soybeans.	X		X	X	All	FSA	Prioritize private lands with existing CRP contracts, along with state and federal easements, such as RIM and DNR and USFW habitat easements. Target areas of known groundwater dependent features, areas of high	X	X	X	X	X	X

Water Sustainability: Recharge									pollution sensitivity, and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *RIM Easements Map* (Figure 35) *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10) *Groundwater Dominated Lakes* (Figure 33)						
Protect Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality: Stormwater Management **Water Sustainability:** Recharge	Land Use Planning and Management Education and Outreach	Manage stormwater runoff to minimize adverse impacts to groundwater. Refer to the Minnesota Stormwater Manual for infiltration guidance on project sites located in wellhead protection areas.	X		X	X	Clearwater Elk Headwaters Silver	MPCA MS4 Program	Prioritize MS4 communities, target highly sensitive areas and highly vulnerable DWSMAs. *Pollution Sensitivity Map* (Figure 5) *DWSMA Map* (Figure 10)	X	X		X		X
Groundwater Sustainability: Water Conservation	Education and Outreach	Provide education on water conservation practices that can be adopted in people's homes and businesses. Use the Met Council's Water Conservation Toolbox.	X	X	X	X	All	DNR Ecological & Water Resources	N/A		X				
Groundwater Sustainability: Water Conservation	Land Use Planning and Management	Assist communities serving over 1,000 people with water conservation measures outlined in their DNR municipal water supply plans.	X		X		Two River Watab River City of Sartell	DNR Ecological & Water Resources	N/A		X				
Water Sustainability: Recharge **Water Sustainability:**	Land Use Planning and Management	Promote and increase the adoption of recharge BMPs including wetland construction/restoration, perennial establishment, riparian buffers, and conservation easements.		X	X	X	Two River Spunk Creek Watab River Platte River	DNR Ecological & Water Resources	Target areas near sensitive features and groundwater fed lakes. Groundwater Dominated Lakes Map (Figure 33)	X	X	X	X	X	X

Rare or Declining Habitats

Descriptions of Supporting Strategies

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values. Easements allow landowners to continue to own and use their land. They can also sell it or pass it on to heirs. Maintaining and expanding set-aside acres, including areas in publicly supported conservation programs (like CRP) from being converted to high intensity land uses, such as row crop agriculture, will help protect groundwater quantity and quality.

Existing Programs and Resources

- BWSR **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - CREP** (https://bwsr.state.mn.us/mn-crep-landowners): This project is a federal, state and local partnership and will voluntarily retire environmentally sensitive land using the nationally recognized Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve. Figure 35 shows where RIM easements are in the watershed.

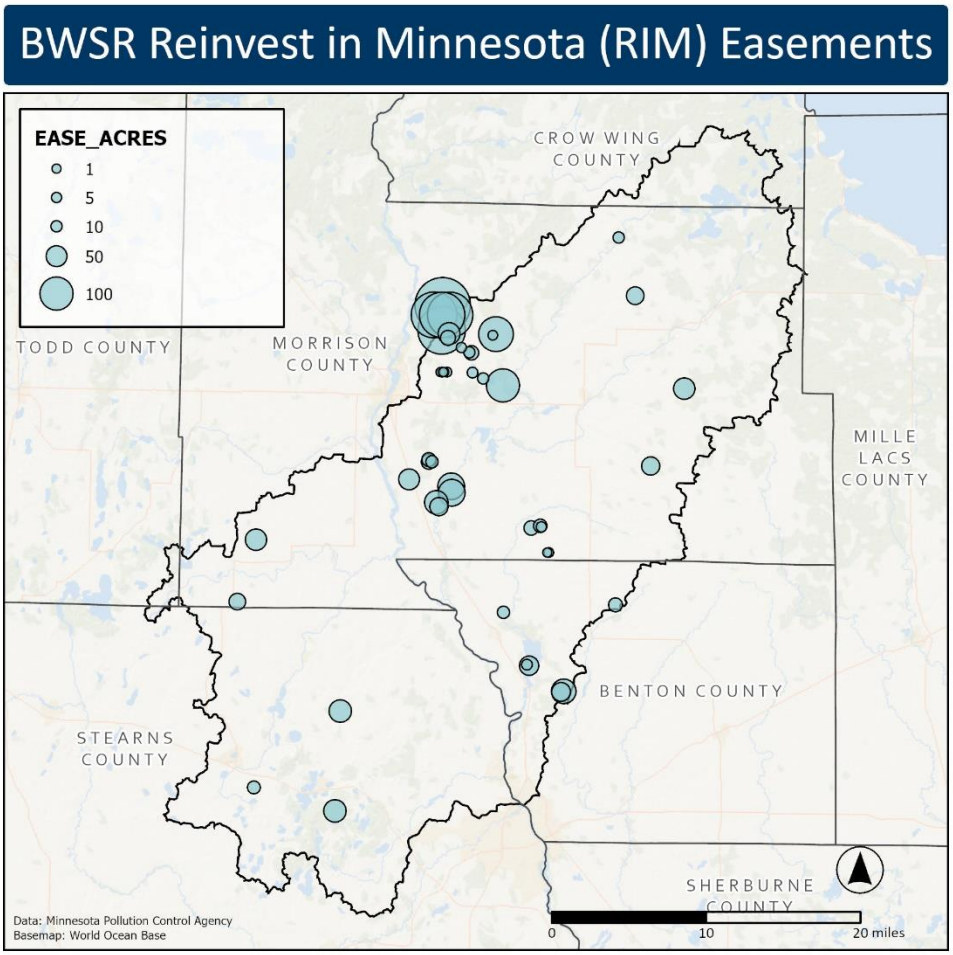

Figure 35: BWSR RIM easements.

Contaminant Planning and Management

Protect groundwater and drinking water supplies from contaminant releases in the environment through land use planning, ordinances, and collaboration with state regulatory agencies.

Existing Programs and Resources

- MDA **What's in My Neighborhood? Agricultural Interactive Mapping** (www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/spills/incidentresponse/neighborhood.aspx): A tool that tracks and maps spills of agricultural chemicals and sites contaminated with agricultural chemicals.
- MPCA **Manure Management** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/feedlot-nutrient-and-manure-management): Resources such as fact sheets, guidelines, computer tools and forms for feedlot nutrient and manure management.
- MPCA Tank Compliance and Assistance Program--**Storage Tanks** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/storage-tanks): A program that provides information and assistance to tank owners and others regarding technical standards required of all regulated underground storage tanks and aboveground storage tank systems.
- MPCA **Closed Landfill Program** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/closed-landfill-program): A voluntary program to properly close, monitor, and maintain Minnesota's closed municipal sanitary landfills.
- MPCA **Feedlots** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/feedlot-program): Information about feedlot rules, permits, and management.
- MPCA **What's in My Neighborhood** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/data/whats-my-neighborhood): An online tool for searching information about contaminated sites and facilities all around Minnesota.
- UMN Extension **Manure Management in Minnesota** (https://extension.umn.edu/animals-and-livestock#manure-management): Information about manure characteristics, application, and economics.
- MDH **Contaminants of Emerging Concern** (www.health.state.mn.us/cec): A program that investigates and communicates the health and exposure potential of contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) in drinking water.

Cropland Management

Voluntary practices to manage resource concerns while minimizing environmental loss. Practices may include conservation tillage, cover crops, soil health and other agricultural BMPs.

Existing Programs and Resources

- MDA **The Agricultural BMP Handbook for Minnesota** (https://wrl.mnpals.net/islandora/object/WRLrepository%3A2955): A literature review of empirical research on the effectiveness of 30 conservation practices.

- NRCS **Conservation Stewardship Program** (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program): A voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner.
- NRCS **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives): A program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers so they can implement structural and management conservation practices that optimize environmental benefits on working agricultural land
- NRCS **Field Office Technical Guide** (https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/state/MN/documents/section=3&folder=64457)**:** Provides information, fact sheets, and tools about cover crops.
- NRCS **Soil Health** (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soil/soil-health)**:** Provides information about the basics and benefits of soil health.
- **Midwest Cover Crop Council** (mccc.msu.edu/statesprovince/minnesota/): Provides resources to help with technical support and answer questions from a local perspective at no cost.
- MDA **Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program** (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/environment-sustainability/minnesota-agricultural-water-quality-certification-program): A voluntary program for farmers to implement conservation practices to protect water quality.

Education and Outreach

Educate landowners, private well users, and other stakeholders about how their actions impact groundwater quality and quantity. Provide information about potential health risks related to groundwater quality. Identify actions individuals, households, and partner agencies can take to sustain groundwater and protect or improve drinking water quality. Some ideas include managing household hazardous waste, maintaining household septic systems, and household water conservation measures.

For educational materials and programs related to a specific topic, go to the strategy about that topic. For example, go to 'nutrient management' to learn more about potential education opportunities regarding reducing nitrogen use. The list below provides some additional tools that may be helpful.

Existing Programs and Resources

- Metropolitan Council **Water Conservation Toolbox** (https://metrocouncil.org/Wastewater-Water/Planning/Water-Supply-Planning/Guidance-Planning-Tools/Water-Conservation/Toolbox.aspx): Information about how residents and businesses, suppliers, learners, and communities can conserve water.

- Minnesota Rural Water Association **Source Water Protection Resources** (http://www.mrwa.com/sourcewater.html): Resources to help public water suppliers develop plans to use local community resources to protect drinking water quality.
- MPCA **Waste** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste): Information about managing waste, recycling, composting, and preventing waste and pollution.
- MPCA **Manual for Turfgrass Maintenance with Reduced Environmental Impacts** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/p-tr1-04.pdf): Practical advice for those who manage turfgrass (golf courses and athletic fields excluded).
- MDH **Wells Laws and Rules** (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/rules/index.html) : Minnesota State Well Code (MR 4725.0050 – 4725.7605).
- MDH **Wells and Borings—Well Management Program** (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/index.html): Information about proper well construction, maintenance, testing, and sealing.
- MDH **Wellowner's Handbook** (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/construction/handbook.pdf): A consumer's guide to water wells in Minnesota.
- MDH **Arsenic in Minnesota's Well Water** (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/arsenic.html): Information about arsenic in Minnesota.
- MDH **Water Treatment Units for Arsenic Reduction** (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/arsenictreat.pdf)
- MDA **Waste Pesticide Collection Program** (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/pesticide-fertilizer/waste-pesticide-collection-program): Information about the safe disposal of unwanted and unusable pesticides from farms and area businesses.
- MPCA **Managing Unwanted Medications** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/managing-unwanted-medications)**:** Information about the safe disposal of unwanted or unused medications from households.

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a balanced approach to pest management which incorporates many aspects of plant health care/crop protection in ways that mitigate harmful environmental impacts and protect human health. Some of the IPM program activities include generating and distributing IPM information for growers, producers, land managers, schools, and the general public. Information should help them make alternative choices in their pest management decisions.

Existing Programs and Resources

- MDA **Integrated Pest Management Program** (www.mda.state.mn.us/pesticide-fertilizer/pesticide-best-management-practices): A program that develops and implements statewide strategies for the increased use of IPM on private and state managed lands.
- MDA **Groundwater and Surface Water Protection from Agricultural Chemicals** (www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/bmps/herbicidebmps.aspx): Information to address pesticide use and water resource protection.

Irrigation Water Management

The process of determining and controlling the volume, frequency, and application rate of irrigation water in a planned, efficient manner (NRCS Codes 442 & 449).

Existing Programs and Resources

- MDA **Irrigation Management** (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/irrigation-outreach-farm-nitrogen-management-central-minnesota): Provides information about irrigation management, similar practices, guidance from NRCS, and links to additional resources.
- DNR **Minnesota Water Use Data** (www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/wateruse.html)**:** Data gathered from permit holders who report the volume of water used each year.

Land Use Planning and Management

This broad strategy encompasses many different concepts including regulations, ordinances, BMP implementation, conservation measures, and education to protect groundwater levels, quality, and contributions to groundwater-dependent features.

Land use planning focuses on the application of city or county government planning and regulations to restore and protect groundwater and groundwater levels. Local planning and regulations can help restrict land uses in groundwater sensitive areas, areas of high aquifer sensitivity, or regions of limited water supply to prevent conflict.

Land management implements voluntary practices that manage resource concerns while minimizing environmental loss. This may include the efficient use of groundwater through conservation measures and use of emerging technology to increase water conservation at the field or local level.

Existing Programs and Resources

- **Association of Minnesota Counties** (www.mncounties.org/): A voluntary, non-partisan statewide organization that helps provide effective county governance to Minnesotans. The Association works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted.

- DNR **Water Supply Plans** (www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/eandc_plan.html)**:** Provides information about Minnesota public water supply plans.
- DNR **MPARS** (MNDNR Permitting and Reporting System) (www.dnr.state.mn.us/mpars/index.html): DNR is the permitting authority for high-capacity water use.
- DNR **Water Conservation** (www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/conservation.html): Provides tips and tools for promoting water conservation at home, public water supply systems, and other environments.
- **League of Minnesota Cities** (https://www.lmc.org): Promotes excellence in local government through effective advocacy, expert analysis, and trusted guidance for all Minnesota cities.
- MPCA **Groundwater Monitoring** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/groundwater-monitoring).
- MPCA **Stormwater and Wellhead Protection** (stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/Stormwater_and_wellhead_protection): Guidance and recommendations for determining the appropriateness of infiltrating stormwater in a Drinking Water Supply Management Area.
- MPCA **Minnesota Stormwater Manual** (stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/Main_Page): A manual to help the everyday user better manage stormwater.
- MPCA **Enhancing Stormwater Management in Minnesota** (https://stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/index.php?title=Minimal_Impact_Design_Standards_(MIDS)_workgroup): Information about standards and tools for minimal impact designs for stormwater management.
- MPCA **Stormwater** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/stormwater): MPCA regulates the discharge of stormwater and snowmelt runoff from municipal separate storm sewer systems, construction activities, and industrial facilities.
- MDH **Source Water Protection** (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/index.htm): MDH works with communities to protect the source(s) of their drinking water.
- DNR and Minnesota Geological Survey **Groundwater Atlas Program** (www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/groundwater_section/mapping/index.html): Provides additional information on the groundwater resources and hydrogeology of the watershed through maps and reports of geology, groundwater, pollution sensitivity, and special studies.
- MPCA **Household Hazardous Waste** (www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/household-hazardous-waste-managers-and-operators): Resources for HHW managers and operators, education resources, searchable by county HHW facilities.

Nutrient Management

This strategy addresses both nutrient and manure management.

Nutrient management concepts are centered on applying crop fertilizer or manure using the right source, right rate, right time, and right place (NRCS Codes 327, 340, 345, 393, 590, 656).

Manure management targets the collection, transportation, storage, processing, and disposal of animal manure.

Existing Programs and Resources

- MDA **Nitrogen Management** (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/fertilizers/nutrient-mgmt/nitrogenplan/nitrogenmgmt): MDA is the lead state agency for all aspects of pesticide and fertilizer environmental and regulatory functions. This page provides information on nitrogen management programs, reports, publications, factsheets, and related external sources.
- MDA **Nutrient Management Initiative** (https://www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/cleanwaterfund/onfarmprojects/nmi): The program assists farmers and crop advisers in evaluating alternative nutrient management practices for their fields.
- MDA **Township Testing Program** (www.mda.state.mn.us/township-testing-program): The program tests private wells for nitrate and pesticides in areas of the state with the greatest potential for nitrate and pesticide contamination.
- MDA **Nitrogen Fertilizer Best Management Practices** (www.mda.state.mn.us/pesticide-fertilizer/nitrogen-fertilizer-best-management-practices-agricultural-lands): Provides nitrogen BMPs for various areas within Minnesota.
- MDA **Minnesota Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan** (www.mda.state.mn.us/pesticide-fertilizer/minnesota-nitrogen-fertilizer-management-plan): The state's blueprint for preventing or minimizing impacts of nitrogen fertilizer on groundwater.
- MDA **Monitoring & Assessment for Agricultural Chemicals in the Environment** (www.mda.state.mn.us/node/2696): Information about agricultural chemical monitoring and assessment programs and additional resources.
- UMN Extension **Nutrient Management** (https://extension.umn.edu/crop-production#nutrient-management): The page focuses on helping farmers and agriculture professionals optimize crop production using appropriate nutrient inputs while minimizing effects on the environment.
- UMN Extension **Nitrogen Application with Irrigation Water: Chemigation** (https://extension.umn.edu/irrigation/applying-nitrogen-irrigation-water-chemigation): Information about risks, benefits, and methods.
- MDA **The Agricultural BMP Handbook for Minnesota** (www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/cleanwaterfund/research/handbookupdate): A literature review of empirical research on the effectiveness of 30 conservation practices.

- Nutrient Stewardship **What are the 4Rs** (https://www.tfi.org/insights/nutrient-stewardship/what-are-the-4rs/): Information about the 4Rs of Nutrient Stewardship.
- MPCA **Land application of manure** (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/land-application-of-manure): Resources such as fact sheets, guidelines, computer tools, and forms for feedlot nutrient and manure management.
- UMN Extension **Manure Management in Minnesota** (https://extension.umn.edu/animals-and-livestock#manure-management): Information about manure characteristics, application, and economics.

SSTS Management

Monitoring, maintenance, and/or upgrading of individual septic treatment systems to maintain proper operation and treatment of septage by the system. In some areas, the intensity of use may require upgrading to a sanitary sewer to eliminate risks to the environment.

Existing Programs and Resources

- MPCA **Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems** (www.pca.state.mn.us/water/subsurface-sewage-treatment-systems): This program protects public health and the environment through adequate dispersal and treatment of domestic sewage from dwellings or other establishments generating volumes less than 10,000 gallons per day.
- UMN Extension **Septic System Owner's Guide** (https://septic.umn.edu/septic-system-owners): Provides information about the basic principles of how a septic system works and how to operate and maintain the system.

Making Sense of the Regulatory Environment

State agencies and programs play a variety of roles in restoring and protecting groundwater. Understanding the groundwater-related authorities and resources available at the state level and leveraging strengths of local water resource professionals are key to implementing effective groundwater protection strategies. Figure 36 provides a very basic introduction into the roles Minnesota state agencies have for groundwater.

- MDA works with groundwater that is or could be affected by pesticides and/or fertilizers.
- MDH focuses on proper well construction, assessing health risks related to groundwater, and protecting drinking water supplies.
- MPCA works with groundwater that is or could be affected by chemical releases and/or industrial pollutants.
- DNR focuses on assuring the availability of groundwater and protecting groundwater dependent features.

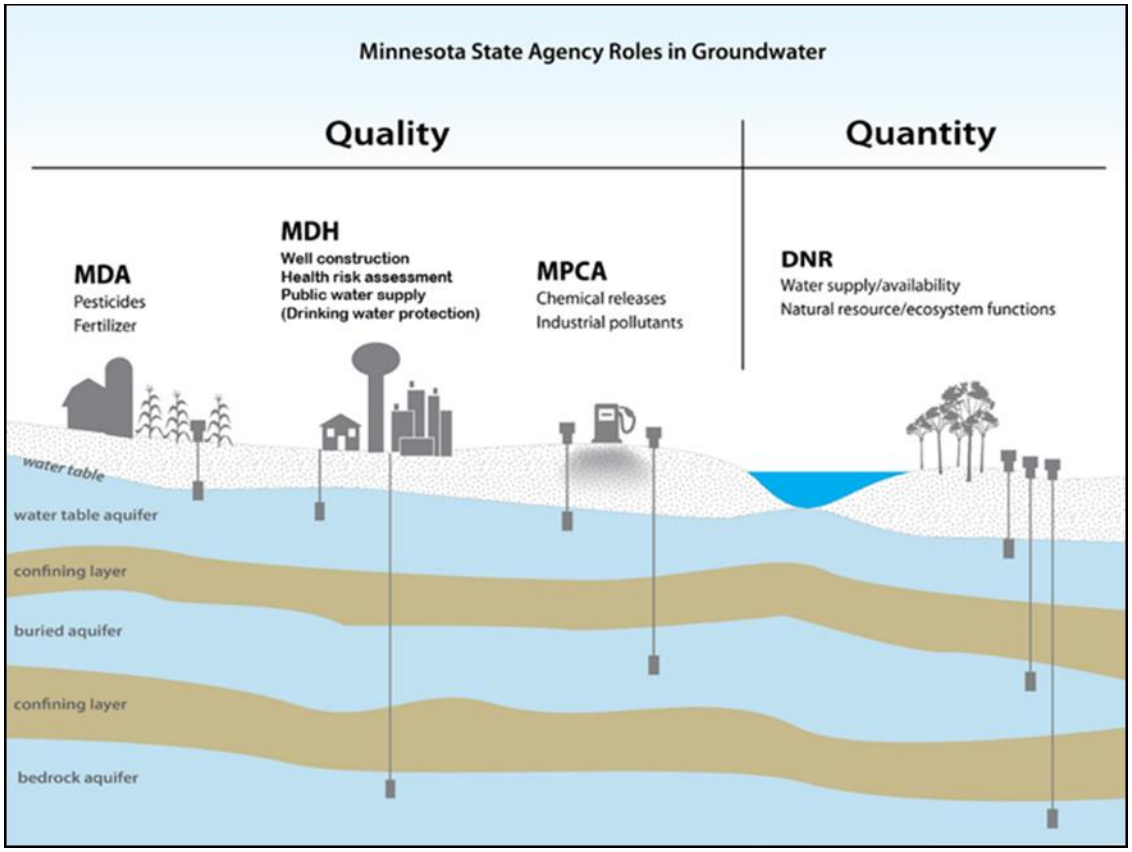

Figure 36: Minnesota State Agency Roles in Groundwater

Each of the state agencies listed above has a variety of programs to help meet their role in groundwater restoration and protection. Programs each of the agencies manage are referenced in the Descriptions of Supporting Strategies Section. Programs are listed under the restoration or protection strategy they mostly closely correspond to.

Figure 36 provides a more detailed overview of the different roles agencies play within Minnesota's Water Management Framework. Principal water resource management agencies are DNR, MPCA, MDA, BWSR, and MDH. These agencies are responsible for state or federal programs, including:

- the Clean Water Act for MPCA,
- the Safe Drinking Water Act for MDH, and
- Appropriation Permitting for the DNR.

The strength of these programs is that they provide technical assistance and regulatory oversight (including enforcement) to safeguard public health, natural resources, ecological needs, and the environment. These programs are generally effective at managing most types of point sources of contamination in the state and at managing quantity issues at the local and regional level. In addition, these programs often set standards for performance that can be used to drive action.

Two weaknesses of state or federal programs are that they (with few exceptions) are ineffective against non-point sources of contamination and lack authority relative to managing general land use practices. Non-point source management is a difficult issue for water resource managers at all levels. With few regulatory options available, the most common approaches involve the use of financial incentives, technical assistance, and education and communication about sound land and water stewardship. Seldom are representatives from state agencies able to spend the necessary time in the local community to build trust among landowners. As a result, these approaches benefit greatly from the perspectives and relationships that local water resource professionals can forge by working locally.

Table 9: Agency roles within the Minnesota Water Management Framework

Agency	Ongoing implementation	Monitoring & assessment	Watershed characterization & problem investigation	Restoration & protection strategy development	Comprehensive watershed management plan
BWSR	Funding and technical assistance for locally implemented watershed restoration and protection projects.	Monitor progress of local implementation goals.	Conservation targeting tools (e.g., Environmental Benefits Index). BMP guidance (e.g., drainage water management).	Participate on interagency watershed teams developing WRAPS (with all agencies).	Comprehensive watershed management planning (1W1P). Local water and watershed plans.
MNDNR	Appropriations and public waters permitting. Shoreland floodplain management. Technical assistance for projects.	Stream flow. Fish and plants (lakes). Mercury in fish tissue. Aquifer levels (with Met Council).	Stream hydrology and geomorphology (support MPCA). Small scale watershed modeling and groundwater level modeling. County Geologic Atlas.	Advise on conservation actions based on holistic view of watershed health (hydrology, geomorphology, connectivity, biology, water quality).	Input on local conservation actions informed by statewide plans for prairies, forests, etc. Water supply planning and groundwater management areas (with Met Council).
MDH	Funding for source water protection, contaminants of emerging concern.	Source water and finished drinking water.	Guidance for contaminants of emerging concern.	Source water protection planning (identification of	Guidance for infiltration in DWSMAs.

Agency	Ongoing implementation	Monitoring & assessment	Watershed characterization & problem investigation	Restoration & protection strategy development	Comprehensive watershed management plan
	Well sealing cost share.	Bacteria monitoring on Lake Superior beaches.	Data analysis and modeling to support WHPA delineation and vulnerability assessments for public water supplies.	problems, issues, and opportunities). Well construction management.	Source water protection planning (local measures and strategies).
PFA	Loans and grants for water infrastructure projects based on priorities set by MDH and MPCA.				
MPCA	NPDES permit programs, SSTS compliance. Grants for Clean Water Partnership, Great Lakes Restoration, stormwater, and wastewater treatment (PFA).	Water chemistry (surface and groundwater). Fish and macroinvertebrates (streams). Surface water assessment grants.	Stressor identification for biological impairments. Watershed modeling (HUC-8). TMDLs. Civic engagement.	Stakeholder agreement on broad watershed restoration and protection strategies (WRAPS). WRAPS report – includes implementation table. TMDLs to EPA.	Provide WRAPS for incorporation into local plans. Input on management strategies informed by statewide nutrient plan.
MDA	Ag BMP loans. MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. Implement pesticide and nitrogen fertilizer management plans.	Pesticides in surface and groundwater. Nitrate in groundwater.	Research/evaluation on ag sources, practices, and solutions. Technical assistance on ag sources and practices, BMP demonstration/evaluation sites. Stressor ID for pesticides.	Ag practices and management options, nitrogen fertilizer and pesticide use. Participate on interagency teams developing WRAPS. Vegetative cover.	Input on management strategies informed by pesticide and nitrogen fertilizer management plans.
Met Council	Technical assistance and demonstration projects.	Lake, stream, river monitoring flow, chemistry, biology. Effluent monitoring (WWTPs). Impervious surface and land cover assessments.	Modeling and trend assessments (surface water). Pollutant load calculations. Groundwater mapping and characterization.	Participate in WRAPS and local water planning teams. Master water supply plan. Groundwater management areas (with DNR).	Participate in review of local water and watershed plans (metro area), local water supply plans, and comprehensive land use plans (metro area).

Appendices

List of Acronyms

BMP	Best Management Practices
BWSR	Board of Soil and Water Resources
CAFO	Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
DWSMA	Drinking Water Supply Management Area
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
GRAPS	Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies
HUC	Hydrologic Unit Code
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
MCL	Maximum Contaminant Level
MDA	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
MDH	Minnesota Department of Health
DNR	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
MPCA	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems
MWI	Minnesota Well Index
NRCS	United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service
NLCD	National Land Cover Database
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
PFA	Public Facilities Authority
QBAA	Quaternary Buried Artesian Aquifer
QWTA	Quaternary Water Table Aquifer
RIM	Reinvest in Minnesota Program
SSTS	Subsurface Sewage Treatment System
SDWA	Safe Drinking Water Act
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District
TTP	MDA Township Testing Program
UMN	University of Minnesota Extension
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

USGS	United States Geological Survey
WIMN	What's in My Neighborhood
WHP	Wellhead Protection
WHPA	Wellhead Protection Area
WHAF	Watershed Health Assessment Framework
WRAPS	Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy

Glossary of Key Terms

Aquifer: An underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock, rock fractures or unconsolidated materials (gravel, sand, or silt) from which groundwater can be extracted using a water well.

Aquifer Vulnerability: Defined as the ease with which recharge and contaminants from the ground surface can be transmitted into the subsurface aquifer. MDH uses the terminology 'vulnerability'; whereas the MNDNR references 'sensitivity'. Both terms cite the risk to groundwater degradation.

Community System: A public water supply system that serves at least 25 persons or 15 service connections year-round, which includes municipalities (cities), manufactured mobile home parks, nursing homes, etc.

Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA): The surface and subsurface area surrounding a public water supply well, including the wellhead protection area that must be managed by the entity identified in a wellhead protection plan. The boundaries of the DWSMA are roads, public land survey and fractions thereof, property lines, political boundaries, etc. (See MN WHP Rules 4720.5100, Subp. 13.)

Groundwater Recharge: The process through which water moves downward from surface water to groundwater. Groundwater recharge is the main way water enters an aquifer.

Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC): Assigned by the USGS for each watershed. HUCs are organized in a nested hierarchy by size. For example, the St. Croix River Basin is assigned a HUC-4 of 0703 and the Sunrise River Watershed is assigned a HUC-8 of 07030005.

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL): The highest level of a contaminant that EPA allows in drinking water. MCLs ensure that drinking water does not pose either a short-term or long-term health risk. EPA sets MCLs at levels that are economically and technologically feasible.

Protection: This term is used to characterize actions taken in watersheds to maintain conditions and beneficial uses of waters not known to be impaired.

Pollution Sensitivity: The ease with which recharge and contaminants from the ground surface can be transmitted into the subsurface.

Public Water System: A water system with 15 or more service connections or regularly serves at least 25 people for 60 or more days per year. A system that serves water 60 or more days per year is considered to 'regularly serve' water. Public water systems can be publicly or privately owned. Public water systems are subdivided into two categories: community and noncommunity water systems. This division is based on the type of consumer served and the frequency the consumer uses the water.

Restoration: This term is used to characterize actions taken in watersheds to improve conditions to eventually meet water quality standards and achieve beneficial uses of impaired waters.

Source (or Pollutant Source): Actions, places, or entities that deliver/discharge pollutants (e.g., sediment, phosphorus, nitrogen, pathogens).

Source Water Protection: Protecting sources of water used for drinking, such as streams, rivers, lakes, or underground aquifers.

Transient Noncommunity System: A public water system that serves at least 25 people at least 60 days of the year but does not serve the same 25 people over 6 months of the year (places such as restaurants, campgrounds, hotels, and churches).

Water Budget: An accounting of all the water that flows into and out of a particular area. This area can be a watershed, wetland, lake, or any other point of interest.

Water Table: The boundary between the water filled rock and sediment of an aquifer and the dry rock and sediment above it. The depth to the water table is highly variable. It can range from zero when it is at land surface, such as at a lake or wetland, to hundreds or even thousands of feet deep. In Minnesota, the water table is generally close to the land surface, typically within a few tens of feet in much of the state.

Wellhead Protection (WHP): A method of preventing well contamination by effectively managing potential contaminant sources in all or a portion of a well's recharge area. This recharge area is known as the wellhead protection area.

Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA): The surface and subsurface area surrounding a well or well field that supplies a public water system, through which contaminants are likely to move toward and reach the well or well field. This definition is the same for the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (40 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1428) and the Minnesota Groundwater Protection Act (Minnesota Statute 103I).

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Additional Resources

The following resources may be helpful for gathering data and learning more about groundwater in the watershed. The resources are listed alphabetically by the topic they address.

Type of Information	Where you can get more information
Aquifer Vulnerability	For information on aquifer vulnerability ratings DWSMA, please contact MDH or the public water supplier in question. Protecting Drinking Water Sources (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/about.html) 651-201-4700
Groundwater Quality Data	Find water-related monitoring data on Minnesota streams, lakes, wells, Superfund Program, closed landfills, other remediation sites, open landfills, data from MDA, MPCA, and USGS. Environmental Quality Information System (EQuIS) (www.pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/environmental-quality-information-system-equis) Environmental data (www.pca.state.mn.us/environmental-data) Groundwater (www.pca.state.mn.us/water/state-groundwater)
Drinking Water Annual Reports	MDH has issued a report regarding the state of drinking water in Minnesota each year since 1995. These reports provide test results, an overview of the role of the Department's drinking water program in monitoring and protecting drinking water, and an examination of emerging issues. Drinking Water Protection Annual Reports (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/dwar.html)
DWSMA maps and Shapefiles	PDF maps and shape files of the DWSMAs can be downloaded from the MDH website. Source Water Assessments (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/swa.html) Maps and Geospatial Data (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/maps/index.htm)
Point Source Pollution	Visit the following sites for more information on point source pollution:

	Point Source Pollution (https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/tutorial_pollution/03pointsource.html) Point Source Pollution (www.mncenter.org/point-source-pollution.html) Water Permits and Forms (www.pca.state.mn.us/water/water-permits-and-forms)
Well Construction and Use Data	Most of the construction and use data pertaining to wells in the state is housed in the Minnesota Well Index (MWI), an online database. All the key data in the MWI is also available in spatial datasets, designed for use in geographic information systems (GIS). The Minnesota Geological Survey and MDH work together to maintain and update the data in the Index. MWI provides basic information, such as location, depth, geology, construction, and static water level, for many wells and borings drilled in Minnesota. It by no means contains information for all the wells and borings and the absence of information about a well on a property does not mean there is no well on that property. MN Well Index (https://mnwellindex.web.health.state.mn.us/)
Wellhead Protection Plans	These plans can be obtained directly from the communities or from MDH with permission from the communities. Water chemistry data collected from these systems can be provided by request to MDH. Protecting Drinking Water Sources (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/about.html) 651-201-4700

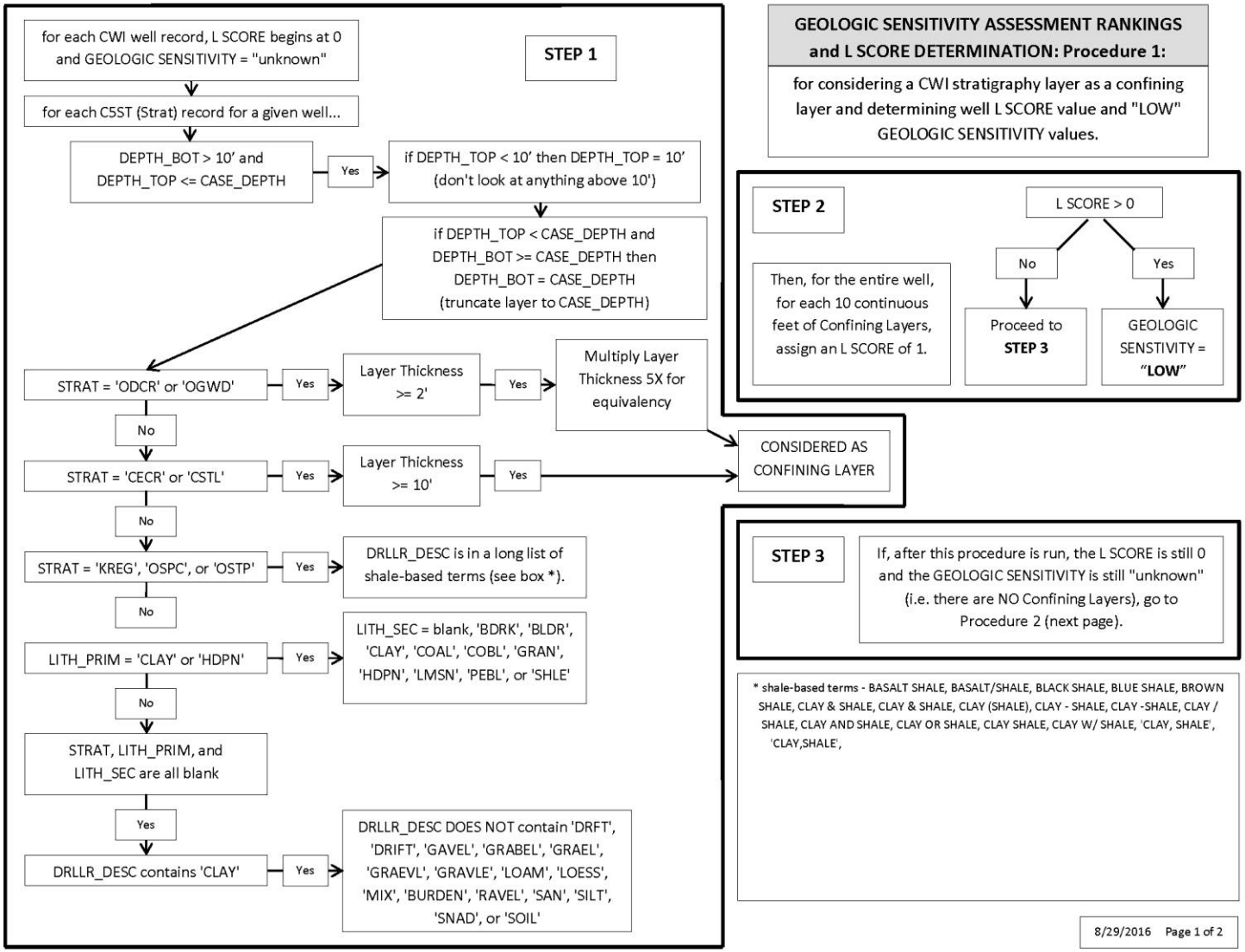
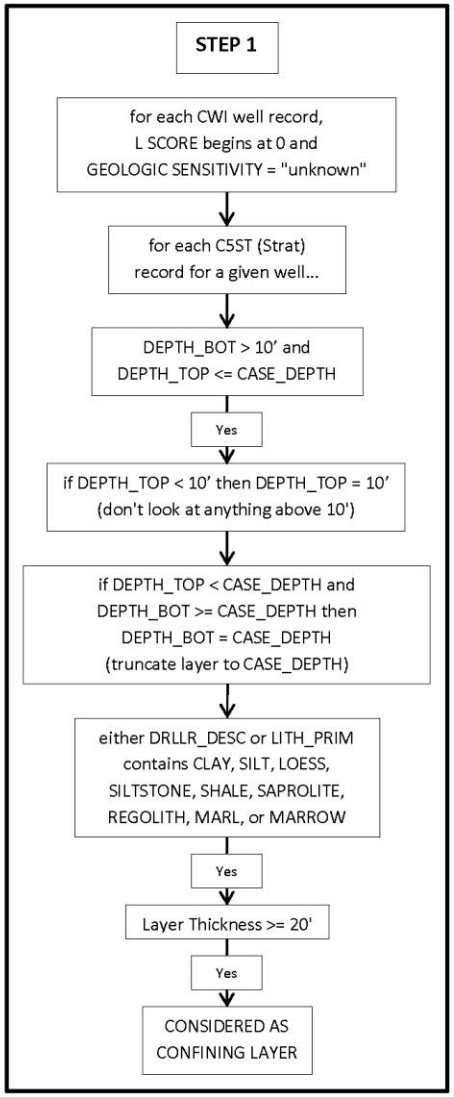


Figure 37: Sensitivity Assessment and Calculation for Pollution Sensitivity of Wells (Figure 7).



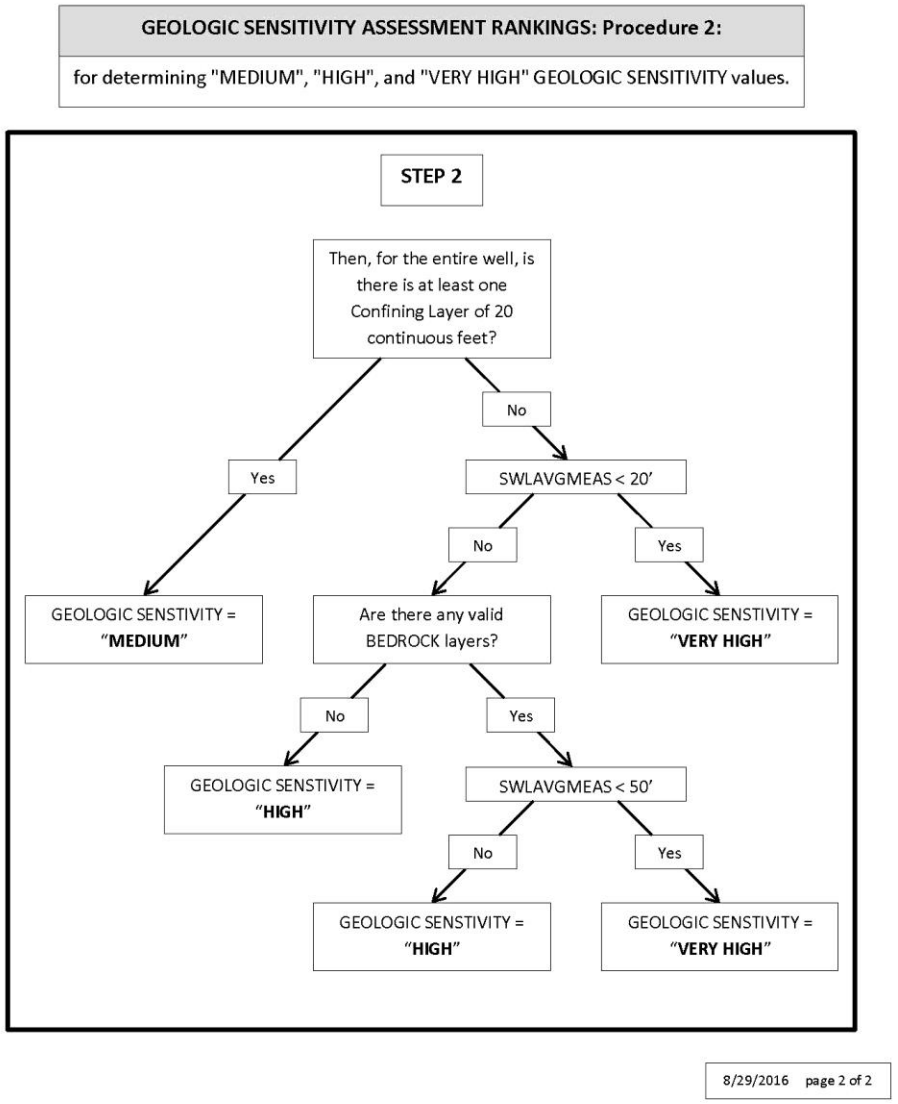


Figure 38: Sensitivity Assessment and Calculation for Pollution Sensitivity of Wells (Figure 7) continued.

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