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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**A Rare Win for Lakes, Streams and Farmers: Clearwater River Watershed District Honored at Environmental Initiative Award Ceremony**

Solving Minnesota's water quality problems often puts water quality stewards at odds with agricultural producers. The Clearwater River Watershed District was honored with an Environmental Initiative Award for Natural Resources for its Targeted Fertilizer Application Project: A unique, ongoing partnership with local agricultural co-ops and local farmers to protect lakes and streams while supporting farmers through optimized fertilizer use.

Fifty one percent of Minnesota lands are used for agriculture. These same lands – if managed improperly- can export pollutants to our lakes and streams. Many lakes in the Clearwater River Watershed District are impaired due to excess nutrients draining to the lakes from surrounding lands. The Watershed District was challenged to develop innovative ways to reduce nutrients in agricultural runoff. In 2009, the Clearwater River Watershed District implemented a groundbreaking pilot project to test whether cost share would motivate area producers to optimize their use of fertilizer by systematically testing soil for nutrient requirements, and then applying fertilizer at a variable rate based on the results. The District then tracked the resulting amount of fertilizer application, crop yield, nutrient export and cost savings for the producer.

The District's pilot study found that participants applied less fertilizer, saved money, had increased crop yield, and reduced nutrients exported to local waters. Excess nutrients in lakes and streams can cause algae blooms. The results were so promising the District secured an EPA Section 319 grant to expand the program from the pilot's 1,000 acres to 16,000 acres. This expanded project is currently on-going.

The Environmental Initiative Awards annually honor innovative projects that have achieved extraordinary environmental results by harnessing the power of partnership. From large statewide efforts to small-scale locally based projects, many of Minnesota's most innovative environmental efforts have succeeded as a result of collaboration.

For more information about the project, including enrollment, please contact the District office.

<http://www.environmental-initiative.org/>

**CLEARWATER RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT**

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