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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Farmers and Water Quality Win: Clearwater River Watershed District Receives Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' Program of the Year Award

Solving Minnesota's water quality problems sometimes puts water quality at odds with agriculture. The Clearwater River Watershed District was honored with the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' Program of the Year 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 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 see whether cost share would motivate area farmers 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.

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 Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (<http://www.mnwatershed.org/>) annually selects a program and project of the year from among its membership via a nomination process. Projects and programs are vetted based on such categories as: problem solving & creative solutions, strong partnerships, public benefit, innovation, and overall success at meeting goals.



**2014 MAWD Program of the Year
Clearwater River Watershed District
Targeted Fertilizer Application**

(from left: Rebecca Kluckhohn, Cole Loewen, Kathy Jonsrud, Ruth Schaefer)

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

CLEARWATER RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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