

## **Media Release**

**Date:** October 7, 2019 (For Immediate Release)

**Title:** New Public-Private Partnership Brings Together Agriculture, Conservation, and Economics to Help Improve Water Quality in the Cannon River Watershed

### **Summary:**

The Cannon River Agricultural Collaborative is a unique public-private-nonprofit collaborative that envisions prosperous farms, healthy soils, clean water, a thriving agricultural system, and vibrant communities in the Cannon River watershed. The Cannon River watershed covers parts of six counties – Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, Rice, Steele, and Waseca – and agriculture is the major land use in the watershed. The Collaborative helps farmers plan, assess, and implement farming practices that are both economically and environmentally beneficial, improving the soil, water, and economic health of their farms.

The Cannon River Agricultural Collaborative is a partnership between the Cannon River One Watershed One Plan (1W1P), Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP), Central Farm Service (CFS), Environmental Initiative, Great River Greening, Land O'Lakes SUSTAIN™, the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), Rice County SWCD and Steele County SWCD.

"CFS is involved in collaboratives like this one because we work closely with farmers and the data they collect," said Sienna Kampsen with CFS. "We are able to help our growers measure the impact of certain sustainable practices and we feel that being a part of this group helps us and them go full circle and utilize programs that other partners here are involved in, such as the MAWQCP."

Using each member organization's strengths and abilities, the partners work with farmers in the watershed to provide technical assistance and implement agricultural practices that address water quality issues, effectively serving as a "one stop shop" where farmers can get assistance and resources. In turn, the farmers can become certified in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The MAWQCP rewards farmers for implementing practices that help improve water quality by offering specially designated technical and financial assistance and regulatory certainty for a period of ten years.

"Cannon River Watershed Partnership sees this opportunity to collaborate more formally with government agencies, private business, and other non-profits as a way to better serve the farmers in our area," said Kristi Pursell, CRWP Executive Director. "There are many growers in the watershed who are leading the way on putting sustainable practices in place and through

this unique partnership we can better support and then recognize their leadership. This collaborative helps to create a win-win-win-win: there will be more soil health practices on the land, cleaner water, more land certified under Minnesota's Ag Water Quality program, and greater profitability by the farms in the watershed that are certified."

The collaborative also recognizes farmers for their stewardship efforts and will work to share their success to demonstrate the economic benefits of practices that protect and improve soil health and water quality.

**Media Contact:** Kristi Pursell, CRWP [kristi@crwp.net](mailto:kristi@crwp.net) (507) 786-3913



Attached photo (left to right): [Brad Gordon](#), Great River Greening; Alan Kraus, Cannon River Watershed Partnership; Sienna Kampsen, CFS; Brad Jordahl Redlin, MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program; Teresa DeMars Rice SWCD; Keith Parker, Great River Greening; Kristi Pursell, Cannon River Watershed Partnership; Greg Bohrer, Environmental Initiative; Haley Burns, Environmental Initiative; Ashley Gallagher, Dakota SWCD; Danielle Isaacson, MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program; Spencer Herbert, Land O'Lakes SUSTAIN.