

Shannon Watrin

As a dairy farmer who has farmed in both southern Minnesota and east central Minnesota, I know firsthand that you cannot do a one size fits all for farm sizes and geography. There are practices, weather patterns and soil types that vary across the state. The MPCA needs to consider also the economic impact of their choices. Farming is already a difficult and low profit business. The mid and small farms cannot remain competitive with added regulation and ceilings to prevent them from growing or adding new infrastructure. I am in support of financial assistance for small farms to be compliant but more importantly we need to invest in helping mid-sized livestock farms to be competitive with larger farms, especially with no off-farm income revenue. As a mid sized dairy with 500 cows, we work directly with MPCA and have had mostly good experiences. As we grow our farm however we are concerned that we will not be able to afford the required technology and practices proposed by this policy. CAFO regulation is daunting and expensive to the midsized farm. We are Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certified and will be hosting an extension tour this summer, highlighting our farm practices. We would like to grow to add our next generation of sons, nephews and daughters but fear this policy will prevent that from happening.

We grow cover crops in east central Minnesota and due to the wet spring we were not able to harvest the acres on time or plant this season's crop. Cover crops are a great tool but they don't work every where or all of the time. Manure is a great resource for crops and soils, dairy farmers have known this for years. It is in the best interest of farmers to be able to apply manure, manage manure and maintain manure for soil health. As an obvious consequence of good manure practices, we have good water quality for our families, livestock and farms. I assert that farmers need more tools and less mandatory requirements for manure management. MDPC should look into tools rather than policies. Please use common sense, driven by farmer input for the best practices that can help farmers and citizens in MN. Thank you.