

Bonnie Haugen

Thank you for taking comments on updating our Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy 2025.

Comment: We do need to reduce the phosphorus and nitrate levels in our soils and ground water, especially in any karst regions.

Rationale: There have been health concerns documented with high nitrate levels, and more health concerns not yet proven, but very highly coincidental. Access to clean safe water is a human right and the waters we have need to be protected from pollution.

Comment:

We bought our 230 acres in 1993, planted rotational grazing forages, occasionally spread half rates of fertilizer in our early years, and our nitrate levels continue to rise. We have row crop farming around us, and I assume that is a major contributing factor.

Rationale: According to the MPCA, 89% to 95% of the nitrate in waters in southern and central Minnesota is coming from cropped fields.

Comment: The importance of clean, safe water availability is becoming an increased concern.

Rationale: There are A.I. centers being built in various communities, and these businesses typically draw huge quantities of water. Some communities also have the issue of big confined animal feeding operations (CAFO's) drawing huge quantities of water from our aquifers.

Comment: Clean and abundant water is a fundamental right for all and each of us. Our livestock, other animals, food crops, other vegetation and the soils all do best when the water is clean and the aquifers recharged. As a member of the Southeastern Minnesota Nitrate Work Group (SE NWG), I learned many important factors and pieces of information that need consideration as the draft of the Updated Nutrient Reduction Strategies is proposed. With that in mind, I am very pleased with much of the proposed draft. I strongly agree and am pleased to see alignment with the SE NWG recommendations to accelerate a transition to perennial crops, pasture, small grains and harvested crops on millions of acres.

I believe that social factors are extremely important. Offering the best practices and financial incentives will not be utilized or even tried until farmers are aware of, understand, and are ready to try implementing any recommendation. Variations of venues and education styles should be utilized to maximize exposure, access and explanation of recommendations. The farmer-to-farmer networks should be supported and encouraged.

In addition, our Soil and Water Conservation Districts, along with Soil Health groups, need increased funding to administer programs that increase nutrient reduction strategies. Financial

packages to help farmers transition in any market shortfalls are needed.

Increased data reporting is needed to bring awareness of current applications and help in identifying places where over-application of fertilizer needs to be reduced.

Thank you.

Farming is Everybody's Bread, Butter, and Water. What I do on my farm affects everyone's water quality and quantity.

Bonnie Haugen