

2026 Quarter 1 MAWQCP Report Ryan Clark, Northeast ACS

I am starting a new format for my reports as of 2026. With the new tool and private consultants now working on Certifications, I am working on a better way to track progress/numbers. Stay tuned. If any SWCDs want an updated list of Certified producers in their county, let me know!

Also, I will be doing quarterly reports instead of monthly to better match invoicing for MAWQCP work associated with Carlton SWCD's grant with MDA. Below are MAWQCP activities for Q1 of 2026.

Isanti/Kanabec/Mille Lacs?

I visited a new applicant in Foley. This producer farms in multiple counties (Isanti, Benton, and Kanabec). We finalized their Certification and started a MAWQCP FA Grant for fencing in cropland to convert to pasture.

Pine:

Heather and I met with a potential new applicant to discuss nutrient management and MAWQCP. They are going to start with a 590 practice funded through WBIF at the SWCD. Completed a MAWQCP review and climate endorsement for a beef farmer east of Hinckley, but will have to return in the growing season to verify practice installation contingency. Completed a recertification for a beef/crop farm. His renter was overapplying manure, so I will have to revisit this spring to verify he meets this contingency from his initial certification. I participated in one of the Conservation Conversations. Attended the Pine Local Work Group meeting. Met with Heather to go over final paperwork for two big farms east of Hinckley.

Carlton:

Completed a practice inspection for an ag waste practice installed as part of MAWQCP Certification at a dairy farm. Completed a reimbursement request and practice certification for an access control fencing project using MAWQCP FA Grant. Completed a recertification and discussed some new practices to implement with the SWCD. Met with a certified farmer to look at criteria for the IPM endorsement. Completed recertification for a veggie farmer in Wrenshall.

Kanabec:

Completed a recertification for a beef/crop farmer in Ogilvie. Many new practices have been completed at the farm over ten years, some of which were funded by MAWQCP FA Grants.

Aitkin:

Visited a beef/crop farm for recertification. Many changes including feedlot conditions have prevented this applicant from becoming recertified, but we are working with him to make improvements. John Stoltz is working on some HUAP and stream crossing designs.

Cook:

Attended the annual Northshore Farmers winter meet-up in Grand Marais. It was good to visit with a couple Certified farmers on the shore.

Itasca:

Presented in partnership with the SWCD at the Arrowhead Farm Bureau meeting on MAWQCP and soil health. There was a good turnout, and we hope to get some of their members working with conservation programs. Working with Itasca and Cass SWCDs to get funding to assist with close to 1,000 acres of cover crops. This producer also received a soil health financial assistance grant to purchase a VT with cover crop seeder.

South St. Louis:

Completed a Certification for a veggie farm. They raise veggies for local market and specialize in tomatoes and garlic. The only contingency for them is to start soil sampling to get a better picture of nutrient management.

Lake:

Visited a CSA Farm in Finland for their recertification. I am waiting on soil samples from them before finalizing their recertification.

Chisago:

Met with a new applicant to collect info for his MAWQCP assessment. This producer is a no-till farmer that also grows cereal rye for grain in rotation with corn and beans. He received a soil health financial assistance grant to purchase a new no-till drill and is excited to put it to use this spring. I submitted his certification in April. Visited a new applicant to collect info for MAWQCP assessment. I am working with his agronomist to get details on nutrient/pest management. This producer is partially no-till and we should be close to certifying him soon. Completed one review. Working on a certification for a new applicant near North Branch that will get finalized once I get soil samples from them this spring.

Mille Lacs:

Visited a MAWQCP Certified Farm with Siena to look at funding opportunities for no-till and cover crops for 2026. Submitted a MAWQCP FA grant for some cover crop acres. The SWCD will also be working with them on a cover crop cost-share grant.

Besides these county specific updates, I have been taking some questions on the new Climate Friendly Ag Practice Grant with MDA. MAWQCP producers (Certified or working towards) will receive a higher payment rate (75% of EQIP scenarios), but all producers are eligible. Practices include 327, 512, 328, and 612. Max payment is \$10k. We also have a new grant for Nitrogen Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizers. This one is primarily targeted at retailers to offer a discount for inhibitors and similar products for slow-release nitrogen fertilizers. Hopefully, this grant will be announced soon, so MAWQCP producers can utilize the discount during spring planting season. Non-MAWQCP producers are eligible for the discount so long as they are willing to receive promotional materials and outreach from MAWQCP staff.

Links below:

<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/climate-friendly-agricultural-practices-incentive-payments>

<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/nitrogen-enhanced-efficiency-fertilizers>

We started a new digital outreach method for recertifications and reviews. Producers receive an email or text with a link to complete a questionnaire. So far, we have had some success getting some of the basic info back through this process. I have 8 reviews and 23 recertifications left to do in 2026. There have also been many new applicants all throughout the NE Area that will keep me busy and on the road much of the year.





Field checks in Chisago for new applicants. The top field is no-till in corn, soy, small grain rotation. The bottom gets one light disk pass after corn harvest in a corn/soy rotation.





Top picture is an ag waste storage facility at a dairy farm in Carlton. This was installed 2 years ago to eliminate winter spreading manure. Bottom picture is of a cool electric tractor at Round River Farm in Lake County. The farm is entirely off grid, so this tractor is charged from a solar array on the barn roof.