

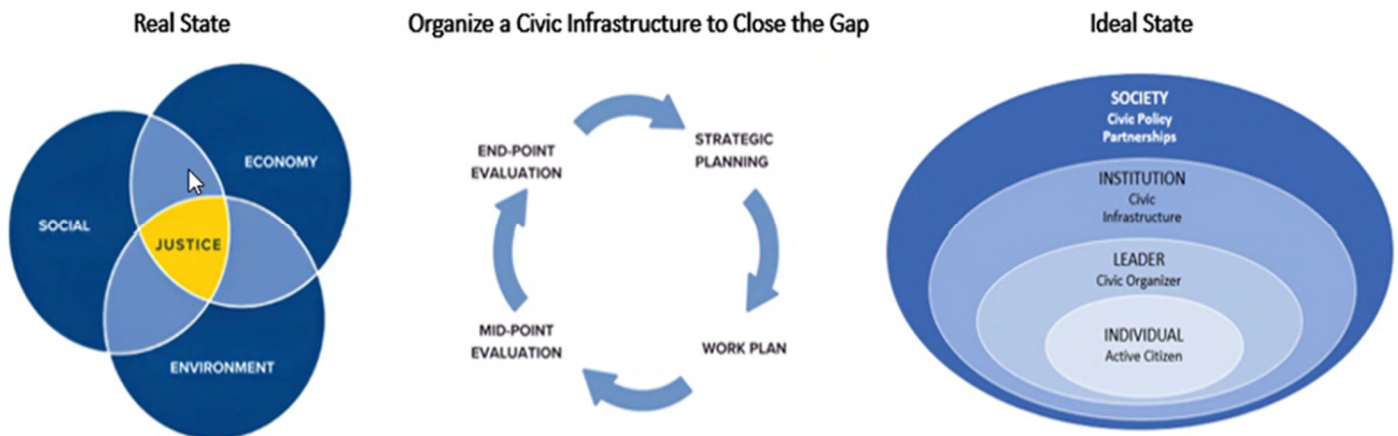
2026 CIVIC STRATEGIC PLAN

PILOT IDENTITY STATEMENT

Mille Lacs SWCD Civic Governance Pilot is applying a Civic Leadership Model for Civic Policy Making to SWCD actions and activities. The desired outcome is a permanent, intergenerational, civic infrastructure that helps develop a base of active citizens with common interest in sustainable soil and water conservation.

PILOT FOCUS

To organize more sustainable partnerships between government and community, by developing and supporting an active role for all citizens in managing soil and water resources, that will ensure soil and water resources can meet the needs and the common good of all citizens.



CIVIC STANDARDS FOR CIVIC POLICY MAKING GUIDE ALL DECISION-MAKING

- All **those impacted** by the problem are stakeholders and **help define the problem** based on civic principles and the realities of their situation.
- All stakeholders are **accountable for contributing** resources (leadership/time, knowledge, constituencies & dollars) to solve the problem.
- Civic leaders **organize the civic infrastructure needed for all stakeholders to engage** in decision-making and policy-making that contributes to the common good.
- All stakeholders **implement policies grounded in civic principles** in the places where they have the authority to act.

CIVIC MEASURES

- Advance key strategic priorities each year by setting and achieving **measurable goals that support the common good**. Use civic organizing standards to guide policy-making.
- Achieve these goals by carrying out a civic organizing **work plan**.
- **Timeliness:** Meet deadlines early enough to engage key stakeholders and uphold civic standards within both the current and growing civic infrastructure.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Civic Leadership Development

Necessary to address the identity statement and pilot focus.

- Staff
- Board
- Partnerships

Program Implementation

These address our statutory role.

- Stormwater
- Groundwater
- Agriculture/Soil Health
- Forests
- Shoreland
- **Program Support**

Fiscal

Supports the first two priorities rather than drives them.


Civic Leadership Development Strategic Goal:

(REFLECTS THE COMMON GOOD AND WHY THIS WORK MATTERS BEYOND JUST THIS MOMENT.)

Within three years, demonstrate a changed way of partnering that builds greater commitment, better coordination of resources with the community, and be intentional about helping people who are interested in sustainable soil and water conservation that addresses the common good.

Program Goal:

(PRACTICAL AND “ON THE GROUND”. THE IMMEDIATE NEED WE ARE TRYING TO ADDRESS.)

<p>Staff & Board</p>	<p>Test the CG execution document developed by the Personnel Committee and see if it meets expectations. (policy 100-02a)</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>100-02a_CG execution.pdf</p> </div>
<p>Partnerships</p>	<p>Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Organizing:</p> <p>Meet and get to know people in the Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group and/or the Mille Lacs lake community, trying to identify someone who is both a leader and interested in talking to others in the community.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out if they see public trust as an issue that gets in the way of collaborative community/government conservation implementation. • Develop and propose a strategy for building public trust that uses only the time, resources, and relationships they already have.

Program Implementation Strategic Goal:

(REFLECTS THE COMMON GOOD AND WHY THIS WORK MATTERS BEYOND JUST THIS MOMENT.)

Improve water quality and habitat, strengthen community connections, and consider local economic benefits, all in ways that serve the common good and help both the organization and the community.

Program Goal:

(PRACTICAL AND “ON THE GROUND”. THE IMMEDIATE NEED WE ARE TRYING TO ADDRESS.)

Stormwater	Wetlands	Measurable: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA) duties: TEP and Restoration orders.
	Urban runoff	Measurable: <ul style="list-style-type: none">County Public Works (Milaca facility) stormwater runoff/erosion control. Reduce nutrients to wetland/county public drainage system/Vondell Brook/Rum River.

Groundwater		Increase knowledge of surface-groundwater connections to encourage land practices that safeguard groundwater quality and recharge.
	Well Sealing	Unused wells act like a direct pipeline from the surface to the aquifer. Contaminants such as bacteria, fertilizers, pesticides, and surface runoff can bypass natural soil filtration. Sealing stops vertical movement of water between aquifers, preventing cross-contamination. This is a Rum watershed FY23 project targeted to Isanti and Mille Lacs counties. Measurable: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Seal up to 10 wells.
	Well Water Testing Kit Distribution	Promote private well water testing and increase awareness of drinking water safety. Targeted at the Mille Lacs Lake surrounding township areas. Measurable: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Distribute the first 100 test kits by end of 2026Review drinking water results and communicate the meaning to participating landowners.Create a map of contaminant finding for the purpose of increasing public awareness of risk but generalized so as not to indicate a specific participant location.
	Nitrate Clinics	Provides education and resources to address nitrate contamination risks and protect human health. Measurable: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Host two (2) event/workshops annually 2026-2027 targeting ML Lake and the broader watershed in the Milaca/Princeton area.One week-long nitrate testing event with 1;1 info provided to people.One workshop on a weekend at ML Lake for out-of-town residents.

<p>Agriculture & Soil Health:</p> <p>STRUCTURAL</p>	<p>Structural agricultural conservation practices: These are engineered and targeted solutions for specific issues. The need is agreed to by landowners and relevant to reducing nutrients in priority waters identified in the Rum, Mississippi St. Cloud and Snake watersheds. Building trusted working relationships with these landowners is key.</p> <p>Nutrient reduction goal: ~641lbs N/yr, build trusted relationships</p>
	<p>Feedlot Manure Management</p> <p>Potential Project in Development</p> <p>Measurables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm landowner is ready to apply for funding assistance. Waiting for contractor bids by Aug. 25th; Contract, ranking, and SOW completed by Aug 28th. Bring project to Snake SC meeting, (with Snake SC approval) take contract to Snake board by their Sept. 28th meeting, (With Snake SC and JPB approval) project to MLSWCD board by October 14th (at LATEST)
	<p>Livestock Watering System</p> <p>Project ID and/or resource concern</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive engineering plans from John Stoltz – currently all at Landowner and engineers’ pace
	<p>Field Gully Erosion</p> <p>West Branch Field Gully</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive design from engineers ~June, Landowner approval then plan goes back to engineers for biddable sheet. <p>RWBIF23-3265-RuralBMP-1 and 2</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep in contact with Benton SWCD as project progresses. Both contracted projects to be done by Nov. <p>Field Gully Erosion 3</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm options and interests by June 30th.

<p>Agriculture & Soil Health:</p> <p>NON-STRUCTURAL</p>	<p>Non-structural agricultural conservation practices: Non-structural refers to management or behavior-based strategies that help protect soil, water, and natural resources without building physical structures. They focus on how the land is managed, rather than installing engineered features.</p> <p>Cover crop payment is designed as a short-term incentive to support initial adoption, with the expectation that producers will continue the practice independently after experiencing its agronomic and economic benefits.</p> <p>Non-Structural goal: 200 acres, ~427lbs N/yr reduction, build trusted relationships</p>
	<p>Cover Crops</p> <p>Measurables:</p> <p>BWSR-P23-2708-SoilHealthCS-2, RWBIF-P23-3265-SoilHealth-1, BWSR-P25-0526-SoilHealthDelivery-1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm 2nd yr cover crop plan, obtain seed tags and confirm planting <p>BWSR-P23-2708-SoilHealthCS-1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm 2nd yr cover crop plan, obtain seed tags and confirm planting <p>Bogus Brook 1S3YCC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm seeding plan by Jul. 1st, bring contract application to board by September meeting. <p>Follow up on tentative interests by Aug 1st allowing time to implement</p>
	<p>No-till Drill Rental</p> <p>Help farmers try no-till or reduced-till practices without needing to purchase expensive equipment. Build trusted relationships.</p> <p>Measurables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize availability in resource target area • Maintenance and safety • Partner with MLC to dedicate space for parking and renting no-till drills, with additional winter storage provided through a collaborating landowner. Confirm by Sept 15
	<p>MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)</p> <p>A voluntary program that helps farmers and landowners implement conservation practices that protect lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater. It provides 10 years of regulatory certainty for certified operations and offers technical and financial assistance to support planning and installing water-protective practices.</p> <p>MLSWCD goal: 3 farms certified</p> <p>Project 20376 • Obtain soil analysis at their schedule, Update and report back to operator within 2 weeks of soil analysis submission</p> <p>Project 20499 • Soil analysis at their schedule, CFAP seeding plan by Jul. 1st</p>

	<p>Project 20313 • Second soil analysis at their schedule. Update and report back to operator within 2 weeks of soil analysis submission</p> <p>Project 20169 • Confirm field IDs by July</p> <p>Project 20508 • Finish mapping fields by Jun. 10, soil analysis at their schedule</p> <p>Project 11131 • Endorsements</p> <p>Project 11946 • Endorsements</p>
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<p>Agriculture & Soil Health:</p> <p>BUILDING TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS</p>	<p>Promote collaborative networks among agricultural agencies and farmer-to-farmer connections to enhance problem-solving, innovation, and long-term conservation outcomes.</p>		
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<p>Agriculture & Soil Health:</p> <p>DITCHES & BUFFERS</p>	<p>Integrate ditch and buffer management with agricultural conservation efforts, promoting practices that stabilize soils, protect waterways, and strengthen working-land resilience.</p> <p>Goal: Complete required ditch and buffer inspections for the year. Build connections, promote problem solving and negotiated solutions that meet the common good and resolve issues as they arise.</p>			
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Agriculture & Soil Health:

CAI (problem solving, negotiating solutions): Regular weed updates and build interest with public works and weed managers.

COUNTY AG INSPECTOR (NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT)

Post Notice/Mgmt Planning	Measurables known/per grant...not filled out yet
Inspect, Monitor, Map	Update township weed managers and public land managers as plants mature
Train Lwis	Measurables known/per grant...not filled out yet
Outreach	Measurables known/per grant...not filled out yet
Enforce	Measurables known/per grant...not filled out yet
Seed Sampling	Measurables known/per grant...not filled out yet
Attend Training	Measurables known/per grant...not filled out yet

Invasive Species Management Planning:

Is a Rum Comp Plan goal. Promotes consistency in planning across partners and using public funds effectively.
Measurable:
• Convene a subgroup of Local Forestry Team partners to:
○ Develop a RRWP invasive species management plan template/format/methodology for targeting
Provide a priority survey area for buckthorn to Minnesota Department of Agriculture

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forests 	<p>Tree Sale Program</p> <p>Promote reforestation, habitat improvement, and soil health. Better understand the forestry needs of our community. Promote the idea of Community Forest.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to people and find out if they imagine being part of a community forest, and if that matters.
	<p>Tree Planter Rental/ Weed Wrench / Tree Bar Lending Program:</p> <p>Make larger scale tree planting feasible. Provides a way to start forestry conversations. Supports smaller stewardship actions by landowners. Provides a way to start forestry conversations.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use tree planter rentals as a way to find out what is motivating people to plant trees and the scope. • Talk to people and find out if they imagine being part of a community forest, and if that matters.
	<p>Woodland Stewardship Plans (WSPs):</p> <p>May encourage forest management and can also lead to more protected land. <i>WSP's create a "foot in the door" to connect with landowners. Easy way to see what the landowner is working toward and why they care. (Hunting, timber harvest, etc).</i></p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 additional cost-shared plans by end of 2026 (<i>totaling _ of the grant or Rum project goal 99?</i>) <i>LCCMR goal is 100 plans by spring 2028. 25 cost shared...</i> • <i>Do we find out about the motivation for a WSP, and how does that relate to larger goals?</i>
	<p>Local Forestry Team Coordination:</p> <p>Maintains cross-agency collaboration on a local scale and helps us move the needle on watershed plan goals.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host 2 additional meetings in 2026
	<p>DNR/SWCD Cost-Share Partnership Development:</p> <p>Addresses gaps by pairing DNR technical expertise with available WBIF funding, enabling more landowners to complete forestry projects that improve water quality and habitat outcomes.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roles and responsibilities (technical vs. financial) ○ Funding flow (WBIF and DNR resources)

Shoreland	Implementation	<p>Protection of target waters: Mille Lacs Lake, Rum mainstem – measurable/achievable goal TBD</p> <p>Restoration of target waters: West Branch Rum, Bogus Brook.... – measurable/achievable goal TBD</p>
	Outreach	<p>Outreach, respond to requests, find out what is at stake for them, bring people together around solution strategies, provide DIY guidance and financial assistance when necessary – measurable/achievable goal TBD</p>
	“Natural Shoreline” Community Conversations: (Molly)	<p>Builds shared understanding of shoreline practices. Many Districts, even within the same watershed, have different guidelines and practices, and different interpretations of what “natural” means.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop end-of-year summary of partner insights • Compare approaches across SWCDs • Identify knowledge gaps for additional conversations
	Boat Wake Impacts Research: (Molly)	<p>Boat wakes are important to some of our partners. We have little evidence of wake boats being an issue on Mille Lacs Lake, but shorelines are still effected by wakes in general. We can raise awareness of potential shoreline impacts and promote awareness while supporting partners who are more directly affected.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement 2 outreach campaigns in partnership with Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District

Program Support	Communications Support	<p>RRWP Notes (IPC & JPE): Ensures consistent documentation and alignment for watershed partners. Supports large-scale implementation.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete notes for all Rum River Watershed Partnership IPC meetings (6–12 annually) • Complete notes for 4 JPE meetings <p>RRWP Monthly Outreach Hour: Connect with partners on plan goals to determine next steps for outreach team and determine what is most relevant and important to local partners.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <p>Monthly meetings: about 12 a year</p> <p>Website hosting: Rum River, Snake River, Mississippi St-Cloud Watershed Partnerships</p>
	Coordination & Outreach Infrastructure	<p>Ag Tech Team Coordination: Bring ag techs together to support coordination of conservation efforts, share learning and resources, and plan events such as soil health field days.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings: about 12 a year • Evaluate if the effort is supporting shared learning
	Public Engagement and Accessibility	<p>ADA Website Compliance: Improves public accessibility to our District. Must be compliant by April 2028.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate DocAccess through other district use • Summarize findings for District Administrator before end of 2026 <p>Local Recognition Program: Encourages stewardship by highlighting and rewarding local conservation efforts. Starts the path for MASWCD nominations.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 2026 landowner recognition <p>Mille Lacs SWCD Facebook Page: Expand outreach, promote events, reinforce messaging. Create a consistent presence.</p> <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish or share 24 posts annually (2 per month)
	Job Approval Authority (JAA)	<p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAA for strip till/no-till/reduced tillage; and for well sealing. • Conservation planner 1 completed by Jul. 8, conservation planner 2 completed at course in Morris Jul. 20-24th. •

Fiscal Strategic Goal:

(REFLECTS THE COMMON GOOD AND WHY THIS WORK MATTERS BEYOND JUST THIS MOMENT.)

Practice responsible, long-term fiscal management that uses public resources wisely and strengthens the organization’s stability. Ensuring funding choices support the work, rather than the work being driven by available funds, so our efforts continue to serve the common good and protect soil, water, and community wellbeing for future generations.

Program Goal:

(PRACTICAL AND “ON THE GROUND”. THE IMMEDIATE NEED WE ARE TRYING TO ADDRESS.)

<p>Fiscal:</p> <p>Bookkeeping & Payroll</p>	<p>Involves recording and managing all financial transactions, maintaining accurate accounts, and processing employee wages, deductions, and tax requirements to ensure clear, compliant organizational financial operations.</p> <p>Measurables:</p> <p>Budget preparation: Prepare expenditure forecasts to inform the Administrator’s budget planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By July, provide list of estimated expenses for next year. <p>Accounts payable/receivable: Manage accounts payable and receivable, identifying and recommending process efficiencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure transactions are completed on time, in compliance with policies, and brought to the board when required. <p>Monthly reconciliation: Understand that the purpose of Treasurer doing reconciliation is to ensure separation of duties and strengthen board oversight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Treasurer for reconciliation monthly. <p>Treasurer’s/transaction report: •</p> <p>Payroll & liabilities: •</p> <p>Qtrly Sales Tax •</p> <p>Annual financial statements •</p> <p>Audits •</p> <p>Grant Tracking •</p> <p>Banking • Monitor pledged collateral at banks</p> <p>Time Tracking •</p> <p>Billable rates: •</p> <p>Reports & requirements of state & federal agencies: •</p> <p>Training: • Host statewide admin training</p> <p>Maintain Fixed Assets List: Measurable: •</p> <p>Maintain MCIT coverage: • EDP etc</p> <p>Maintain vendor accounts: • 1099, ST3</p> <p>Order supplies: •</p> <p>Required website reporting: •</p> <p>Fiscal oversight of sales and rentals: •</p>
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<p>Fiscal: Data/Records Mgmt</p>	<p>Maintain all paper & electronic records per retention schedule. Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Update records organization system. Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Maintain Inventory: Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • <p>Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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<p>Fiscal: Administrative Coord</p>	<p>Administrative support for board meetings: minutes as a permanent historical record. Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minutes as a permanent historical record. • Establish a time before each mtg to work thought the agenda for context and materials <p>Monitor policies & coordinate w/Administrator: Document board actions to policy in the record. Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update fiscal policies with Administrator and Treasurer. <p>A3 hosting: Measurable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda draft • Save the date • Registration process/notice and receipts • Name tags • final agenda notice • At the meeting registration • Track/Invoice time
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