Program Implementation Strategic Goal:
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.

Item 6.1 Groundwater

Well Water Testing Grant FY25 - Distribution — Clyne

- Continued working through our FY25 MDH grant for well water testing kits, including following up with folks who picked up kits but have not yet returned them.
- We were also awarded another MDH grant for a county-wide well testing effort. Our previous two rounds focused on the south and north ends of the county, and we've had people reach out who live outside of those target areas. This new grant will give us an opportunity to reach some of those folks we haven't been able to serve through the previous grants.
- MDH is finalizing the agreement now. We have reviewed the draft and are waiting for the final agreement.

6.2 Stormwater

Wetlands — Storm

- TEP meetings have gone into the field to investigate wetland impacts. No new restoration orders have been needed.

Urban runoff — Shaw, new tech

- Project complications related to the short installation window, design and cost. MLC will proceed with a partial stormwater fix on their own. There is interest in possibly revisiting a stormwater treatment expansion in the future but RRWP FY25 SOW allocation will need to be re-assigned.

6.3 Agriculture

County Public Drainage System Inspections — Storm

- An engineer from Moore Engineering, Jacob Rischmiller, reached out to me regarding the public drainage system in Mille Lacs and current priorities, upcoming projects, and any challenges or opportunities.
- County Administrator Doug Hansen, Susan Shaw, and I met to discuss more in depth what expectations are between the county and the SWCD. We connected on what is needed to finish this year as well as the possibility to apply for a Multipurpose Drainage Management Grant.

Cover Crops — Storm

- MWBIF-C25-0343-Nonstructural-2
  The first 3+ species cover crop project went in the past month and the plants are growing well.
- RWBIF-C25-0171-NonStructural-1
  First year of three will be completed this fall.
- BWSR-P23-2708-SoilHealthCS-2, RWBIF-P23-3265-SoilHealth-1, BWSR-P25-0526-SoilHealthDelivery-1
  Second year of three will be completed this fall.
- BWSR-P23-2708-SoilHealthCS-1
- Second year of three will be completed this fall.

- More interests have come in recently, specifically in the bogus brook area. As of 10/8/2026, about 250 acres of cover crops are being implemented through the SWCD this fall.

MAWQCP Storm

- 20499 – Soil tests have been entered into the system. I will be running the scenarios for what is planned on the operation to show the farmer what they're working towards. They have renewed interest in the MDA Climate Friendly Ag practices program.
- 20313 – Ryan Clark reviewed the application. The operation will be certified after a few minor adjustments.
- Other applications are waiting for soil tests, applications, or operational information.

Feedlot Manure Management Storm

- Project has been brought to the Snake Steering Committee, Snake Joint Powers Board, and now to the Mille Lacs SWCD board. This large and complex project will be the first of ours in the Snake River watershed. Our cost sharing this project is possible with assistance of Mike McMillin at Benton SWCD, Barb Zeroth at NRCS, Mary Poelman at Kanabec SWCD, and our BC Zach, as well as many others across multiple organizations.

In Field Structural Projects Storm

- Rum Field Gully
  I've discussed options with the engineer, landowners, and operators. Currently the landowner is getting bids to see what the project would cost. Depending on the cost estimates the plan will have to be adjusted.
- RWBIF23-3265-RuralBMP-1
  Project will be going in after harvest in mid-October. I've checked with the landowner who is aware of the deadline of Nov. 30

6.4 Invasive Species Management Planning

County Ag Inspector/RRWP Invasive Species Management Plan Clyne, Shaw

- Continued discussions with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) about using drone technology to survey invasive species.
- Susan and I also met with Zach Guttormson and Darren Mayers from BWSR to bring them into the conversation and get their perspective. This project is not tied to WBIF funding, but we wanted to see whether this approach could be useful to other districts working on invasive species management.
- The project may have applications beyond water quality, particularly for county agricultural inspector work and forestry management.
- There could also be a water quality benefit. By focusing on priority waterbodies, such as the Rum River, we may be able to better identify areas where heavy buckthorn growth is contributing to erosion or other concerns.

6.5 Forests

Tree Sale Program Clyne

- Pam and I have continued looking into whether we should move our tree sale online. This has been an ongoing board/staff discussion for several years, so we reached out to some of our neighboring SWCDs to see what they are doing and how online sales have been working for them.
- Of the districts we contacted, Benton, Kanabec, and Pine are not currently selling online, while Morrison, Anoka, Isanti, and Chisago are. Isanti uses WooCommerce and WooPayments, Morrison uses Wix, Anoka is in the process of switching to WooCommerce, and Chisago uses WooCommerce with Stripe.
- We already have the WooCommerce plugin available on our website from when a previous employee started looking into online sales, and the WooCommerce software itself is free. The payment processors we are considering, WooPayments and Stripe, both charge approximately 2.9% + $0.30 per transaction.
- Based on what we learned from other districts, plus board recommendations, we'll give online sales a try this year. We'll account for the payment processing fees when setting tree bundle pricing.

Local Forestry Team Coordination Clyne

- A couple of months ago, I facilitated Local Forestry Team coordination and led the development and submission of a Sustainable Forest Economies (SFE) grant application through The Nature Conservancy.
- TNC has since withdrawn their proposal to USDA, which was the source of the funding. USDA introduced new eligibility guidelines, and TNC was unable to get the assurances they needed that the proposal would meet those requirements.
- While it was disappointing not to see the grant move forward, the process was still valuable. It gave us a better idea of what our local partner districts are interested in doing related to forestry, as well as which partners are interested in working together on larger, more widespread forestry efforts.
- There will be other grant opportunities, so we now have a good starting point for future applications and collaboration.

RIM Easement Management Storm

Easement inspections are underway and I will be submitting the inspection reports along with any issues to BWSR at the end of the month.

6.6 Shoreland

Restoration and Stabilization Storm

- Went on a site visit to a landowner's lake home where they have been experiencing some shoreline slumping. They're interested in options to prevent more of their lawn from sinking toward the shoreline as well as reduce sediment from building up in the channel. This interest is out of my current scope, so I've reached out to Aitkin SWCD for their input.

Natural Shoreline Initiative Clyne

- Anoka Conservation District has an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant to do shoreline restoration work focused on fish habitat along the Rum River.
- Jamie Schurbon with Anoka CD had been trying to connect with the City of Milaca about using Rec Park as a potential project location. The site is particularly interesting because the former dam was removed there around 2013.
- Jamie was having difficulty getting a response from the City, so he reached out to us for help making the local connection. The City Administrator was interested and asked that the project be presented at a City Council meeting.
- Jamie presented the project, while Susan and I attended as the local connection from Mille Lacs SWCD. This helped provide context for why Anoka CD was reaching out and how the project could benefit the local community.
- The City Council liked the idea and approved of moving forward. We'll be doing a site visit soon to look at the location and discuss next steps.

6.7 Program Support

Clyne

Coordination & Outreach Infrastructure

The RRWP Project Tour took place recently. I was not able to attend, but Siena and Susan did a great job hosting, and it sounds like the tour received some good feedback!



Figure 1 John Otten's Field Tour Stop



Figure 2 Picture of Group at Becklin Park

Co-hosted the Rum River Watershed Partnership Seed & Cone Collection Field Day with Isanti, Kanabec, DNR, and UMN Extension. The event was held at Becklin Homestead in Cambridge and had approximately 30 non-staff attendees. Everyone seemed to have a really great time! Doug Page with Isanti mentioned that he would like to do another one next year at a different location, so I'll look into potential locations in Mille Lacs County for next year. We also had several Mille Lacs County folks attend, which was great to see.