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### **Engaging Agriculture in Source Water Protection**

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#### **Abstract:**

The NRWA has a 30 year history in providing training and technical assistance to the operators and managers of small and rural public water systems and an 18 year history in Wellhead/Source Water Protection planning and implementation at the local level. Public water systems are staffed by trained professionals who are dedicated to providing the highest quality drinking water to their customers at the lowest cost.

Because:

- Public water systems bear a significant increase in costs to remove non-point source contaminants;
- Agriculture has been identified as the largest cause of the non-point source pollution, and;
- Agricultural production is consistently identified as one of the main land use activities in source water protection areas, engaging agriculture in Source Water Protection is essential.

NRWA professionals, with a long-term commitment, working at the local level through community drinking water systems to develop Source Water Protection Plans are an effective and reliable way to engage agriculture in helping reduce non-point source contaminants in drinking water source areas.

In 2008, the Minnesota Rural Water Association assisted 2 community water systems organize the 'Drinking Water Resources & Agriculture Field Day' to raise awareness about drinking water protection efforts and how agricultural practices and programs can protect groundwater. Area crop consultants, farm operators, rural landowners, Federal, State and local resource staff and the public were invited to attend. A variety of people attended, all sharing an interest and desire to work proactively to protect the areas drinking water resources.

It really takes a team effort to provide long term protection, from those of us who work at it as a profession, water customers, landowners, agronomists, soils experts and Federal, State and local conservation professionals, etc. With increasing demands for energy, food and water supplies one can truly appreciate the complexities of balancing these growing needs and Source Water Protection. The partnership between the nation's food producers and water producers is a natural fit.

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