



# Productive Conservation on Working Lands

## Why Productive Conservation?

Across much of Minnesota the landscape is dominated by an agricultural system dependant on two major crops – corn and soybeans. This limited focus on these two crops has had profound effects on the social, economic, and natural environment of rural Minnesota.

The rural farm economy is heavily dependent on the volatile commodities market. This market volatility contributes to economic dependence on government crop subsidies, which have come under increasing scrutiny from urban media and lawmakers. The intensive production of these commodities has contributed to many stretches of streams and rivers in Southern Minnesota being considered impaired by pollutants such as excessive nutrients, suspended sediment and fecal coliform bacteria.

It is in this context that we begin to look for solutions to the economic and environmental problems plaguing the rural regions of Minnesota. While land idling conservation programs such as Conservation Reserve Program are often seen as the gold standard for conservation, they take land out of production that could be utilized to produce food, fiber and fuel in an environmentally sound manner.

As a result there is a push to move conservation programs toward a “working lands conservation” ethic. The thought being that through the promotion of conservation on working lands, we can achieve the desired resource conservation goals while giving the landowner the ability to profit from their conservation lands. This also serves to diversify crop production in the state, making the rural economy less susceptible to fluctuations of the commodities market.

For more information about Productive Conservation on Working Lands please contact:

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