

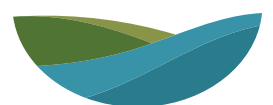
2020



CLEAN RIVER PARTNERS

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

CLEAN RIVER
PARTNERS





A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Partner:

What can be said about 2020 that hasn't already been said? It was a stressful, extraordinary, life-changing year in so many ways. My hope is that what we all experienced in 2020 will make us stronger for having lived through it. At Clean River Partners (formerly Cannon River Watershed Partnership), it was both a challenging and rewarding year as well, and I am convinced our organization is already stronger and more resilient because of the collective experiences from the turbulent year.

Perhaps our biggest news is that the Board and staff underwent a rigorous branding and naming process to effectively position us for the next 30 years. You can read more about our evolution to Clean River Partners on pages 2 and 3, but for now let me simply express how excited we are for what this new brand and name will mean for our future! I invite you to join me in honoring the past 30 years of our existence by embracing our new name and look, sharing our refined mission, and recommitting with us to grow a community that values and protects clean surface water, builds healthy soils, and ensures drinkable water for everyone.

Never has our mission been more important than it is today. Everything we accomplish is because of strong partnerships throughout the communities we serve and that includes you. Your continued support of our mission through your time, talents, and financial gifts makes a tremendous difference in our region. And the numbers speak for themselves. Virtually all of our trend lines are growing as we maintain our focus on improving the environment, spearheading clean water initiatives, and supporting farmers doing the right thing for the common good.

Yet there is so much more we can be doing ... so much more that we plan to do in the year ahead. Whether it's educating everyone in the region – from youth to seasoned volunteers – or advocating for clean water on a statewide level, or continuing to improve collaborations with public/private partnerships, Clean River Partners is committed to moving the needle in helping our region be a leader for clean water, resilient communities, and a prosperous countryside.

I invite you to join me, our staff and our Board of Directors in taking the next step in advancing our mission. We need you. We need your time, your dollars, your passion, and your expertise. Please join us in making 2021 our best year ever! As always, we appreciate your partnership.

In solidarity,

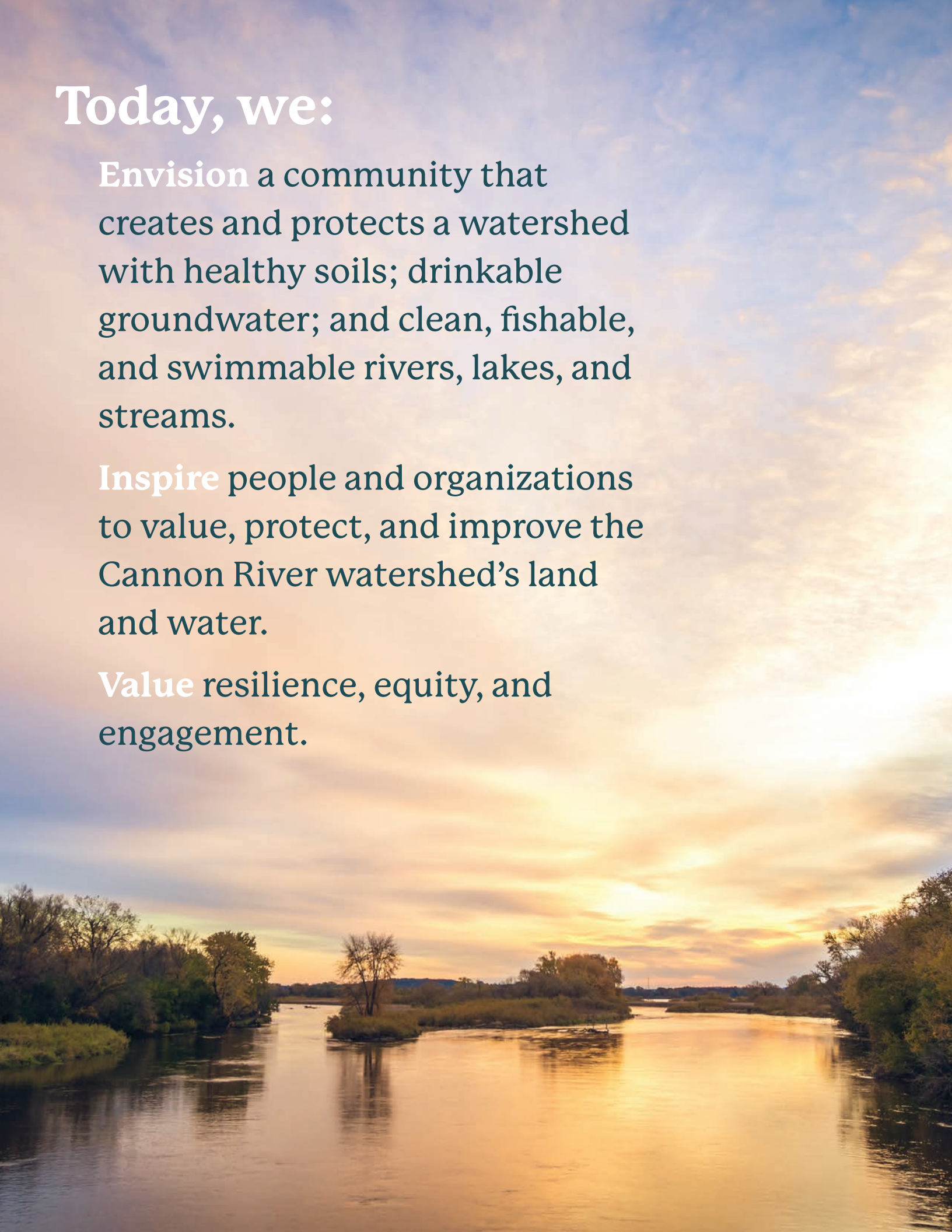
Kristi Pursell
Executive Director

Today, we:

Envision a community that creates and protects a watershed with healthy soils; drinkable groundwater; and clean, fishable, and swimmable rivers, lakes, and streams.

Inspire people and organizations to value, protect, and improve the Cannon River watershed's land and water.

Value resilience, equity, and engagement.





INTRODUCING CLEAN RIVER PARTNERS

The Board of Directors and membership of CRWP is delighted to announce our new name as of May 13, 2021: **Clean River Partners!**

Even though our name has evolved, we remain committed to our mission and vision for a future we can all play an active role in creating for generations to come. Clean River Partners came out of a year's-long effort to streamline our organization's name, brand, and commitment by providing a more memorable moniker to bring our organization into the future.

ABOUT THE NAME

Over the three decades of our existence, the name Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) has created confusion: Questions like “what even IS a watershed?” and “what does that P stand for again?” have plagued our institution. And what's created even more confusion: Since all land in the Metro area must be under the purview of some kind of governmental entity like a WMO (watershed management organization) or a watershed district, many have thought, or continue to think, that we are a governmental body. In 2020, a watershed-wide governmental body was formed calling themselves the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB). This final factor tipped the scale in the eyes of the Board of Directors who felt the moment is now to make the move away from our beloved and historical – but also long and sometimes difficult – name.

Throughout 2020, the Board and staff of Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) invested substantial time and brain power in considering the future of CRWP and what strategic initiatives would give the organization its best opportunities for success. Among the other strategic initiatives, the one that provided the most visibility was the rearticulation of the brand, a crisper name and a new graphic identity to support the roots of the organization but also provide a springboard for future success.

No less than two dozen options were considered as possible replacements for the existing CRWP name. Each word was carefully reasoned and a premium was placed on brevity and something more easily remembered. The branding also was a key driver in the selection process. And, finally, the ad hoc branding and naming committee researched the names of other organizations in the region to make certain our new name was free and clear, and would not be confused with other entities that used parts of other components of possible names moving forward.

Clean River Partners fulfilled all of the goals that were considered in developing a new name:

- It provides clear focus for the type of organization we are.
- It highlights clean surface waters (lakes, rivers, streams) which is the crux of what we are trying to achieve and calls back to our roots by reusing the word *River* from our original name.
- It spotlights partners which is the manner in which we are most successful ... identifying partners throughout the region to collaborate with us in protecting the soil, providing drinkable water for all, and accomplishing what we can to improve the land and water around us.

ABOUT THE CLEAN RIVER PARTNERS BRAND

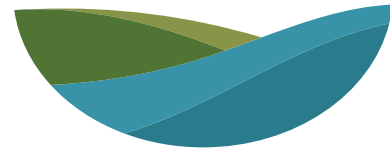
Clean water is everyone's responsibility. Clean River Partners is committed to partnering with other entities and individuals to make this region a model for environmental health and vitality. Our mission is to inspire people and organizations to value, protect, and improve the Cannon River watershed's land and water.

The development of a new name and a clear articulation of the organization's brand led the committee to identify a series of brand promises that will guide the Clean River Partners Board and staff in its decision-making for the years ahead. Clean River Partners is committed to:

- proactively reaching out to other organizations and individuals to partner in making the Cannon and Straight Rivers and the land that surrounds them as clean and healthy as can be;
- helping educate people on how to use the natural resources around us in an effort to enhance the quality of life for everyone living in or visiting the watershed;
- remaining flexible with how we can sustain our commitment so long as it aligns with our core mission of improving the watershed;
- actively seeking out new considerations and opportunities;
- working closely with our members, donors, supporters, sponsors, and collaborators to achieve the greatest impact and recognizing them for their many and varied contributions to improving the watershed;
- working with a passionate core of volunteers throughout the region;
- taking pride in our watershed and striving to be a model organization;
- building a community that protects the watershed with healthy soils and drinkable water;
- constantly improving the watershed day in and day out; and
- honoring the history and continuity of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership as we look to the future by valuing, protecting, and improving the land and water around us.

This brand will ultimately succeed in making a positive impact because it is clear, it is distinctive, and it fulfills a critical need in our region.

CLEAN RIVER PARTNERS



ABOUT THE NEW GRAPHIC IDENTITY

Similar to the new name for Clean River Partners, significant time, thought, and strategy went into the visual representation. A variety of graphic looks and features were considered in this process until the branding and naming committee arrived at the new logo, sketched out initially by a Board member.

The logo depicts the convergence of land and water, communicating the importance of the relationship between the two. We all need to take care of the land to have clean water. The converging oval shape also implies collaboration and partnership, demonstrating the interrelatedness of all of our partners coming together to make a unified whole.

Flowing water implies forward movement, representing adaptability and agility in meeting our challenges. The cleaner more modern look clearly communicates the goal of advancing Clean River Partners into a position of increasing positive impact as the organization looks to the future. The varying shades of color epitomize our environmental and ecological efforts in an ever-changing world. The basin shape of the logo represents a vessel that can hold water, again emphasizing the importance of clean water in both our rivers and our drinking vessels.

The darker green hill on the left represents a farmer's healthy field – crucial in our efforts to feed us all by growing food, and the important role that clean water plays in that process as well as the need to balance multiple priorities to keep our communities vibrant and thriving. The sans serif type reflects a more progressive look for the organization. The overall look works well to position Clean River Partners for the next 30 years.



TEN YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Engaged **2,654 volunteers** who have given **7,962 hours** as participants in our annual Watershed-Wide CleanUP and storm water education
- Removed **164,820 pounds** of trash and debris from area lakes, streams, and rivers
- Planted **6,035 acres** to cover crops or Kernza®, or reduced tillage to improve soil health
- Prevented an estimated **76,000 pounds** of nitrate and **1,900,000 pounds** of sediment from entering streams, lakes, and rivers in the Cannon River watershed
- Engaged more than **300 farmers and landowners** through field days, workshops, direct mailings, and project work
- Installed **15 erosion-prevention systems** including sediment retention basins, grassed waterways, and buffers in the watershed
- Received **624** Pollution Prevention Poster submissions from youth in Northfield and Faribault

THIS YEAR WE WILL:

- Lead local-, regional-, and state-level soil and water conservation efforts, and work in partnership to protect and improve those projects.
- Continue leading and expand a collaboration of public/private entities in our area helping farmers implement conservation practices that improve profitability, regenerate the soil, and improve water quality.
- Increase education of area youth and support even stronger relationships between farm and non-farm communities to create a better quality of life for all who live, work, and play in the Cannon River watershed.
- Have a Board-controlled savings fund to support long-term projects and organizational stability for the long-run.
- Establish a Leadership Council where major donors can receive high- quality experiences learning about our valued natural resources.



We could not do the work
without our incredible
members, our donors,
supporters, and sponsors.
Thank you!

We know that clean,
healthy water is a scarce,
highly valued resource, but
it is also a life-giving force
of nature and should be
respected as such.

Working together is the
single best way we can
ensure clean water in
all of our communities
today, tomorrow, and
into the future.

Together We Succeed

Our Impact

AT A GLANCE



2014–2020

Total number of farmers that received cost share

67

Volunteers at 12th Annual Cannon River Watershed-Wide CleanUP event

200+

Total Clean River Partners cost share provided for all practices

\$188,361

Cumulative sediment loading reduction

1,899,975 lbs.

Total Clean River Partners direct and leveraged cover crop acres

6,035

Cumulative nitrate loading reduction

75,999 lbs.

Participants in our 4th Annual Downstream Environmental Film Festival

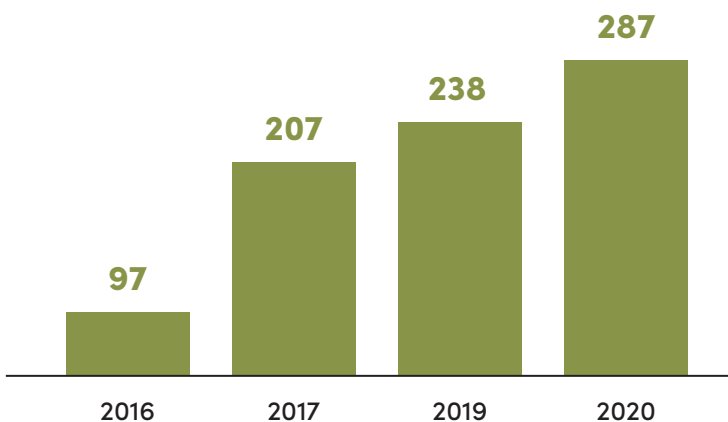
85+

Estimated litter removed from area streams, lakes, and rivers by volunteers

8,500 lbs.

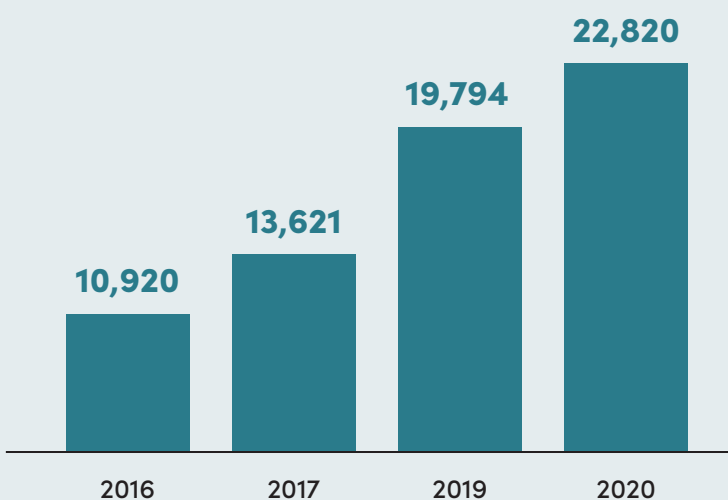
Estimated Number of Farmers Planting Cover Crops

in the Cannon River watershed



Estimated Number of Acres Planted with Cover Crops

in the Cannon River watershed



Survey of 43 Farmers Working with Clean River Partners Over a Three-Year Period

67% response rate

Overall Experience Working with CRWP
(Good or Very Good)

85%

Likelihood to Plant More Acres
(Somewhat Likely or Very Likely)

92%

Desire to Enhance Water Quality
(Important or Very Important)

96%

CRWP Being the Partner
(Important or Very Important)

81%

Cost Share Available
(Important or Very Important)

85%

70% 75% 80% 85% 90% 95%

WORK HIGHLIGHTS

The Clean River Partners Conservation Program, Community Engagement Program, and Wastewater Program are all hallmarks of what makes us a success. The highlights on these pages provide just a glimpse at what can be accomplished when we all work together to improve the watershed. And there are even greater advancements planned in these areas in 2021 and beyond.



CONSERVATION PROGRAM 2020

- **Administered and led** the Cannon River Agricultural Collaborative – **catalyzing the expertise of 10 organizations** to increase Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification in three sub-watersheds – identifying and contacting 63 farmers to implement profitable conservation practices that also improve water quality.
- **Added Bridgewater Township to our partner base** that includes The Trust for Public Land, Great River Greening, Minnesota Land Trust, six Cannon River watershed Soil and Water Conservation Districts, University of Minnesota, St. Olaf College, Fishers & Farmers Partnership, Environmental Initiative, Farmamerica, Minnesota DNR, PCA, and DA, as well as many farm families across the watershed.
- **Advanced new market opportunity** for farmers growing Kernza – the recently developed perennial grain – by **leading a farmer focus group to develop a growers cooperative**, continuing two MDA sponsored field trials to measure Kernza’s dual uses – grain and forage, and by developing a web map now housed at the University of Minnesota Agronomy Department that identifies the places (along with landowner contacts) where Kernza could best protect drinking water from nitrate leaching.
- **Continued on-farm research trials** with four farmers, the University of Minnesota, and MDA to measure profitability and soil health from **solar capture systems** growing corn and cover crops in wider corn row spacing.
- **Shared projects and results nationwide** through Linder Farm Network television and radio, Fishers & Farmers Partnership’s “Boots On The Ground” webinar and podcast, and through articles in the regional magazines No-Till Farmer, The Land, and The Farmer. Also **provided timely local information** on cover crops, soil health, habitat restoration, and land protection opportunities on 40 occasions to 82 email contacts, monthly to 1,200 CRWP newsletter readers, and through newspaper articles to nearly 55,000 recipients.
- **Achieved 41% reduction in stream nitrate concentration** in Rice County’s self-sustaining Brook Trout stream, **Rice Creek**, and expanded **Farmer Leadership for Water & Habitat Protection** to now include farmers in Wolf and Heath Creek watersheds.
- **Hosted and/or presented project results at nine public events (four in-person and five virtual meetings)** where an estimated 220 attendees learned about protecting drinking water, managing cover cropping systems, growing and marketing Kernza, and improving soil health.
- **Created three videos** highlighting CRWP’s collaborations that achieved water quality improvements, advanced new crop alternatives to protect drinking water, and increased permanently protected, publicly accessible high value habitat land. Videos were used by Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources, University of Minnesota Extension, and Minnesota Clean Water Council for statewide meetings.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM 2020

- The 4th Annual **Downstream Environmental Film Festival** attracted more than 85 participants to watch inspiring water-themed local, national, and international short films. Participants also had a chance to try Imminent Brewing's new Kernza beer.
- The 12th Annual **Cannon River Watershed-Wide CleanUP** had more than 200 volunteers working in seven communities and removed an estimated 8,500 pounds of litter from area streams, lakes, and rivers.
- Six **newspaper articles** published in 12 watershed papers along with several local radio interviews and CRWP's social media page and website engaged area residents and supported CRWP's education and outreach efforts.
- *Despite the pandemic*, 24 students in grades 2–5 in Northfield and Faribault submitted original artwork on their ideas for our annual **Stormwater Pollution Prevention Poster Contest**. The 2020 contest was completely remote, with Zoom classroom presentations and posters submitted and judged as digital image files. While numbers were lower this year than in the past, we expect them to rise again in 2021.
- An estimated 500 youth and 25 adults at four Northfield elementary schools learned about Minnesota wildlife and how to keep our rivers and lakes clean during the CRWP **Amazing Cannon River Wildlife** and **Amazing Cannon River History** programs in Northfield. Because of the pandemic, CRWP staff created three short video presentations that teachers could share with students when distance learning or in the classroom.

WASTEWATER PROGRAM 2020

- **West Jefferson Lake project in Le Sueur County** received state funding, began and completed construction on a new wastewater system to serve 140 homes and hook into the city of Cleveland's wastewater treatment facility.
- **Ryans Bay in Wabasha County** has secured state funding for a new wastewater treatment system. Final design and planning work is underway with hopes of construction starting in the fall of 2021.
- **Dobbins Creek in Mower County** made it on the MPCA Project Priority List, the first step in securing funding for a project, and applied for a grant to conduct a Community Assessment Report to find a solution for noncompliant septic systems serving 40 homes.



Cows grazing Kernza at the Anderson farm in Goodhue county with Stella (10), Sophia (8), and Silas (5). Parents Kaleb and Angie.



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Northfield, MN 55057

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507.786.3913
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