

WATER QUALITY IN THE WATERSHED

@ Louisiana - Minnesota Partnership

(Credit: K. L. McKee, U.S. Geological Survey, Public domain.)

PROJECT STATUS

Project Year: 2017 - Present
Status: Ongoing
Category: Water Quality
Location: Mississippi River Watershed
Project Partners: Minnesota Department of Agriculture

ADDRESSING A NATIONAL WATERSHED ISSUE

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture have joined forces in improving water quality in the Mississippi River Watershed. A letter of understanding was signed in 2017, formalizing the partnership.

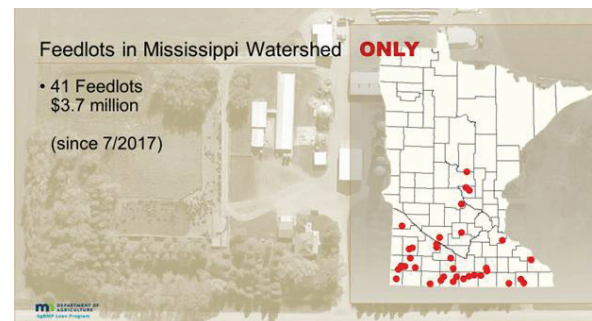
Protecting state and national water resources is a major objective of state and federal environmental programs throughout the nation. In addition, it is recognized that pollution does not stop at political boundaries; upstream pollution load can significantly impact downstream users and resources. Day-to-day activities in Minnesota, located in the Mississippi River watershed, ultimately can impact the water quality in the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary in Louisiana through which the Mississippi River passes before reaching the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore, promoting responsible land use, even at the headwaters of the Mississippi River in Minnesota, can improve downstream water quality.

The letter of understanding which formalized the partnership recognized the intent of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program (AgBMP) to implement pollution prevention and restoration practices that are recommended by BTNEP in their Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP).



The area in green shows the portion of the state of Minnesota that lies in the Mississippi Watershed.

Source: Minnesota Department of Agriculture



In the Mississippi drainage, 41 projects that would not have been eligible before the agreement were funded between 2017 and 2019, totaling about \$3.7 million.

Source: Minnesota Department of Agriculture

CCMP ACTION ITEMS ADDRESSED

EM = Ecological Management

EM-10: Reduction of Sewage Pollution





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DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT

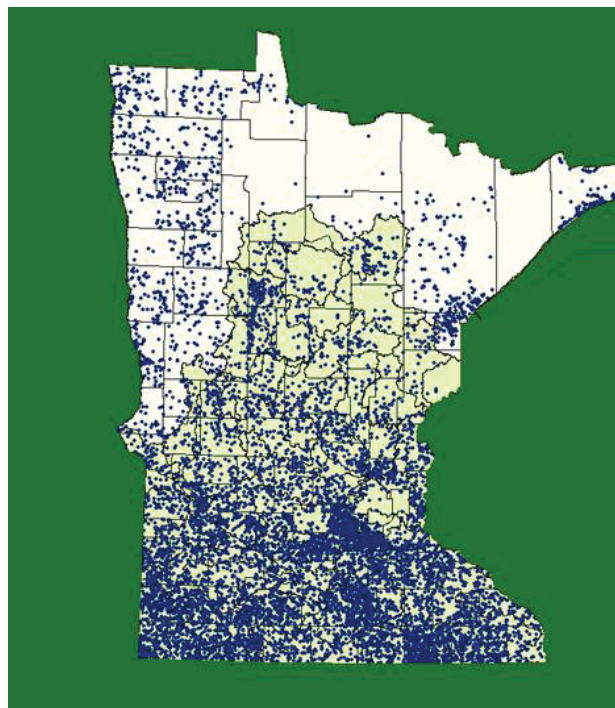
1. The US EPA guidance has established project eligibilities that are different under Clean Water Act Sections 319 and 320. Being able to fund projects under both Sections 319 and 320 would expand the AgBMP Loan Program's ability to encourage and correct pollution problems by providing low interest financing to more potential clients.
2. In addition to 319 eligibilities, the AgBMP Loan Program may finance Section 320 practices and activities that are:
 - a. Eligible under EPA guidance;
 - b. Eligible under Minnesota rules, statutes, and policies; and
 - c. Implement components of the Section 320 BTNEP CCMP.
3. Practices implemented by the AgBMP Loan Program may include any Section 320 project identified in guidance provided by the US EPA and recommended by the BTNEP CCMP. As of this writing, components of the Action Plan EM-11: Reduction of Agricultural Pollution will be the primary emphasis of the AgBMP Loan Program as related to the BTNEP CCMP.
4. Funding for these practices will be the full responsibility of the state in which they are implemented. There is no joint or cross funding between jurisdictions.
5. The AgBMP Loan Program will report to BTNEP biennially, a summary of projects funded under Section 320 eligibility and may include other pertinent summaries of projects that impact BTNEP, but may have been funded under other eligibilities and programs, such as Section 319.
6. When BTNEP updates the CCMP, they will forward a copy of the plan to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for comment. When preparing updates to the BTNEP CCMP, upstream and watershed contributions and potential remedial actions will be considered.
7. Any parties of this understanding may withdraw at any time by notifying the other partners in writing.

MINNESOTA 319 NONPOINT SOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN:

This plan describes how the state and local governments will address nonpoint source pollution problems such as those financed by the AgBMP Loan Program. It identifies the nonpoint source problems throughout the state, establishes priorities, and recommends potential actions to mitigate their impact. The Comprehensive Local Water Plans, prepared by the counties, provide the basis for much of the statewide water plan. The United States Environmental Protection Agency approves this plan.

BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY (BTNEP) 320 COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN:

This plan provides guidance for SRF funded practices implemented throughout the Mississippi River Watershed, including the southern two-thirds of Minnesota, which will mitigate water quality problems in the downstream Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary and the Gulf of Mexico. The United States Environmental Protection Agency approves this plan.



Minnesota Section 319 projects, most of which are in the Mississippi Watershed. Source: Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Finalized 8/21/2017