

# MAWRC Monthly

- March 2015



## Complete Your Green Star Farms Initiative Self-Evaluation before Spring Planting

Spring is right around the corner, and soon the busy planting season will begin. Unfortunately, the threat of additional water regulations impacting agriculture continues to increase. Everything from the Governor's proposal of a fifty-foot buffer requirement along all waters, the EPA proposed expansion of Clean Water Act rules, or state agencies proclaiming that farmers aren't doing enough to protect water quality; we in agriculture can't afford to ignore this and hope it goes away. Now is a critical time to take action, before you get too busy with spring work, and before new regulations gain a foothold.

There is a safe, easy, confidential way you can help demonstrate that farmers are committed to being good stewards of our water and soil resources. The Green Star Farms Initiative is an on-line self-evaluation tool designed for farmers and ranchers to critically evaluate their own conservation efforts without any government agency involvement. Your participation is important, because our critics will use lack of participation as leverage to push for further regulation. The evaluation may also help you identify areas you would like to improve, and will help you do so on your own, unless you choose to seek outside assistance.

We need your help. All you need is internet access, an email address and about twenty minutes and you can help stop these additional regulations. You already know everything you need to complete the self-evaluation- after all, who knows your farm better than you? It is easy, confidential, and there is no government agency required. Individual farm data will never be presented – only the averages of those participating.



Go to <https://greenstarfarms.org/> and click on "getting started". If you need any assistance, contact Jeremy Geske at 612-756-1200 or [jeremy@mawrc.org](mailto:jeremy@mawrc.org).

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## Third Minnesota River Congress to be held April 16

A third gathering of those committed to improving both the economic and environmental wellbeing of the Minnesota River Basin will take place on April 16 at Turner Hall in New Ulm. Building on the previous meetings held in April and October of 2014, organizers hope to finalize a statement of purpose and settle on a proposed organizational structure for a citizen-led entity that could help guide conservation and economic development plans across the entire Minnesota River Basin.

Farmers are encouraged to attend and provide input. More details and registration information will be available soon. For more information, contact Warren Formo of the MAWRC at [warren@mawrc.org](mailto:warren@mawrc.org) or by calling 952-237-9822.

Adam Birr of the Minnesota Corn Growers summarizes the discussion of one table group at a previous Minnesota River Congress. Photo courtesy of Matt Sparlin Photography.



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## **Governor's Buffer Proposal Legislation Introduced**

Bills to advance Governor Mark Dayton's proposal to require 50-foot buffers along all waterbodies have been introduced in both the Minnesota House and Senate, with committee hearings expected to begin on March 10. You can find the proposed language by searching for MN House File 1534 and MN Senate File 1537

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## **Warmer Weather brings out the Crowd at New Ulm Farm City Hub Club Farm Show**

After weeks of unseasonably cold weather, a large crowd turned out for the annual Farm Show hosted by the New Ulm Farm City Hub Club. Brown County Farm Bureau invited the MAWRC to be a part of their booth, where MAWRC staff members Jeremy Geske and Warren Formo answered questions about farming and water as part of our "Ask a Farmer, Feed a Family" project.

The most common questions revolved around tile drainage (why are farmers doing so much tiling?) and water quality (how do we know farm pesticides aren't polluting our water?). For each question asked, the MAWRC will donate a pound of meat to Second Harvest Heartland. Questions are being collected through April, at which time the questions and answers will be added to the MAWRC website in blog fashion, in order to stimulate further discussion. Compiling the questions also helps us gauge which topics are of greatest concern to the general public.

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## **MDA hosts Water Certification Meeting at Rothsay Farm**

The MDA hosted a meeting at the Rothsay farm of Jerry and Jared Nordick in late February, informing local farmers and farmland owners in the Whiskey Creek Watershed of the opportunity to enroll in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. Larry Gunderson of the MDA also provided an update on the state's plans to regulate nitrogen fertilizer applications. Warren Formo of the MAWRC also had time on the program, during which he reiterated that the agricultural community has, in general, been supportive of the primary objectives of the program—increasing voluntary conservation implementation and recognizing good stewardship practices already in place—but remain concerned about the value of "regulatory certainty", especially in light of recent announcements, most notably, the Des Moines Public Works notice of intent to sue three northwest Iowa counties over elevated nitrate levels. Formo encouraged farmers to check out the program, but as with any contract "always read the fine print."

The program has been under pressure recently due to funding concerns and calls from environmental extremists that the program does not go far enough in protecting water resources, the same groups frequently linked to calls for increased regulations on farming practices.

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The MAWRC is a non-profit research and education corporation comprised of 24 agricultural organizations working together to address water issues. For more information, go to [www.mawrc.org](http://www.mawrc.org).

