



**Big Stone Soil & Water Conservation District**  
990 US Hwy 12, Ortonville MN 56278



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PRESS RELEASE**

Contact: Blayne Johnson, Big Stone Soil & Water Conservation District Technician (320) 839-6149 x3

## **Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program**

**The Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District would like to inform you about a unique opportunity to evaluate how your farming practices are protecting local water quality.**

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary program designed to accelerate adoption of on-farm conservation practices that protect Minnesota's lakes and rivers. Farm owners and operators who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn assured that their operation meets the state's water quality goals and standards for a period of ten years.

The MAWQCP began in 4 pilot areas during the spring of 2014 and is now available statewide in Minnesota. The Big Stone SWCD is excited about this program and its potential to help farm owners and operators demonstrate their commitment to clean water and to accelerate the adoption of conservation practices where needed.

### **Why should you participate?**

- Protect and improve water in local lakes, rivers and streams.
- Receive recognition that you are doing all that is being asked to protect water quality.
- Gain regulatory certainty: certified producers will not be subject to new water quality regulations during the ten year period of certification.
- Earn priority access to financial and technical assistance.
- Achieve greater stability to plan for and invest in conservation practices.
- Track management practices over time and improve record keeping.
- Demonstrate leadership and stewardship.
- To be part of the solution!

Farm operators and owners seeking certification will be evaluated using an on-farm assessment tool. The on-farm assessment is customized specifically to your operation. It is a great educational opportunity to learn about how to maintain and improve your environmental performance. The Big Stone SWCD will be involved with the on-farm assessment process as each program applicant works toward this water quality certification. This is also an excellent opportunity for crop production retailers and crop advisors to learn about the MAWQCP and how they can be involved in the farm assessment and certification process.

Please contact the Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District at (320) 839-6149 ext. 3 for more information.