

# Investing in Your Future; Money Well Spent



Aaron Meyer, MRWA Source Water Protection Specialist

A number of years ago the voters in Minnesota passed the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment and one of the results was the creation of the Wellhead Protection – ReInvest in Minnesota (WHP-RIM) Program. The WHP-RIM program is a collaborative program between the Minnesota Department of Health, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, and the Minnesota Rural Water Association. The WHP-RIM program is designed to set aside land by purchasing easements within State approved wellhead protection areas with high or very high vulnerable areas or within the surface water contribution areas which provide runoff to these sensitive infiltration areas (high or very high vulnerable areas).

The WHP-RIM program is a voluntary program that assists landowners in protecting drinking water supplies through the establishment of native vegetation on sensitive lands. Sensitive lands are soils or areas where contaminants may be rapidly transported to the aquifer used by the public water supplier. Some examples include; sandy soils, fractured bedrock, karst areas, etc.



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Landowners participating in the program place an easement on their land which ensures the land will be in a land use which offers protection for groundwater for perpetuity. The landowners in return are given a one-time payment which is typically the assessed value for cropland within the township where the project is located.

Now that commodity prices have fallen substantially from a few years ago this is the perfect time to approach landowners regarding this program. There is typically a small lag between the assessed land values and the easement rates and now that land prices have stabilized or even come down, easement rates are extremely competitive with current land values. For the next few years, the easement rates we have to offer landowners should be very competitive!

In addition, more and more landowners are using the 1031 Land Exchange option with this easement program to improve their farm by exchanging some of their sensitive lands for more productive acres. Many times it is a win-win for the public water supplier and the farmer.

Eligible projects include cropland and noncropland acres alike. If you have a landowner who you think might be interested in the WHP-RIM program or if you have some areas you

are concerned about and you do not feel comfortable approaching the landowner(s), give me a call and I will approach the landowner on your behalf to see if they might be interested in this easement program.

Here is a quick project eligibility summary:

**Acreage must be:**

\*Located in a State approved Wellhead Protection Area (detailed maps of eligible areas are located at <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/easements/wellhead/index.html>

\*Must be located within a High or Very High Vulnerability Area, or in a Surface Water Contribution Area contributing runoff to a High or Very High Vulnerable Area,

\*Owned for at least one year prior to offering land for enrollment.

**Terms:** Producers enter into a perpetual easement and agree to maintain conservation practices.

**Rates:** Cropland - 100% Assessed Township Value  
Noncropland - 60-100% Assessed Township Value\*

*\*We do have the ability to pay cropland rates for noncropland areas if they are deemed a high priority site for protection.*

For more information on the Wellhead Protection - ReInvest in Minnesota Program or if you know of a landowner who might be interested in the program, please contact myself at (800) 367-6792 or [aaron.meyer@mrwa.com](mailto:aaron.meyer@mrwa.com).