



# Dakota County Groundwater Plan

Five Year Review

April 2026

*Dakota*  
COUNTY



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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### A. Introduction

The [2020-2030 Dakota County Groundwater Plan](#) was created with input from residents, local organizations, the Dakota County Planning Commission and a technical advisory group. This advisory group included experts from cities, state agencies, watershed groups, industry and agriculture.

The Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) approved the plan in December 2020. The Dakota County Board of Commissioners adopted the plan in January 2021.

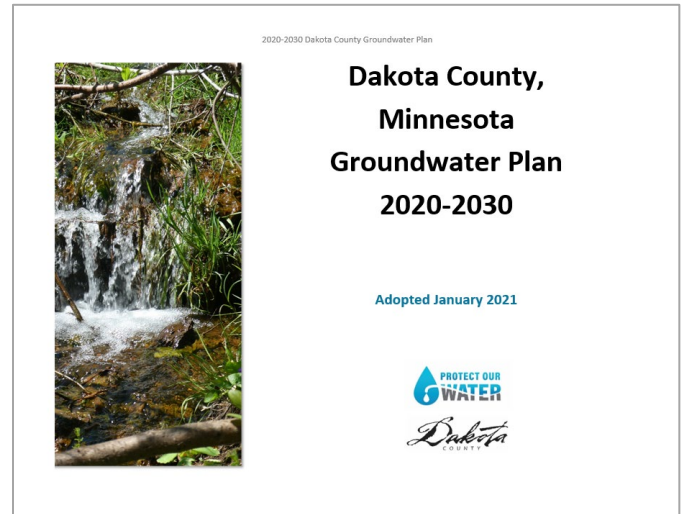


Figure 1. Dakota County Groundwater Plan title page

### B. Purpose

Groundwater supplies more than 90 percent of the water supply in Dakota County. Keeping that water clean, safe and available is essential for people and the environment. But there are some challenges:

- 1) The county's sandy soil and rock layers make groundwater easy to contaminate. In some areas, pollution on the surface can quickly reach the aquifers that supply drinking water. (See the [Groundwater Quality](#) story map to learn more about local geology and common pollutants.)
- 2) Dakota County's population is growing, which increases the demand for water. Climate change has also led to more unpredictable weather. Flooding and drought can reduce the amount of water that soaks back into the ground. Droughts can also increase water use for things like lawn watering and farm irrigation.

The Groundwater Plan lays out a strategy to address these issues. It highlights programs — both new and ongoing — for residents, farmers, businesses, industries and government agencies to help protect and improve the county's groundwater resources.

### C. Goals

The Groundwater Plan has four goals:

- 1) **Water Quality:** Groundwater and drinking water are free from unhealthy levels of contamination.
- 2) **Water Quantity:** Groundwater is sufficient to meet human needs and sustain groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

- 3) **Education:** People who live and work in Dakota County are knowledgeable about water issues, conserve water, and prevent pollution.
- 4) **Governance:** Groundwater programs and services are efficient and effective.

#### D. Five-Year Review and Update

The Groundwater Plan is meant to guide the county for 10 years. But a lot can change in a decade, and new challenges or issues can emerge.

The plan says that the county will “review the plan every five years.” If needed, the county can also amend the plan to respond to new conditions.

The purpose of this five-year review is to:

- Evaluate how much progress has been made so far.
- Identify new issues or challenges that have appeared since the plan was adopted.
- Determine what changes or actions should be taken over the next five years.



*Figure 2. 2025 National Association of Counties (NACo) achievement award presented to Dakota County for our private well sampling programs*

## 2. PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS

The Groundwater Plan organizes its four main goals into strategies and tactics. It includes:

- **22 strategies** – the organized framework of activities to achieve those goals.
- **90 tactics** – the intended activities to implement the strategies.



Figure 3. Hierarchy of goals, strategies, and tactics

### A. Tactic Progress

As part of the review, staff evaluated each tactic to see how much progress had been made. Each tactic was given one of the following status labels:

| Status                    | Description   | Number of Tactics |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------|
| <b>Complete</b>           | The tactic is fully finished  | 13                |
| <b>In Progress</b>        | Work is actively happening, and the tactic is being met (these are ongoing programmatic activities) | 67                |
| <b>Partially Complete</b> | Some work has begun, more progress will require additional resources                                | 4                 |
| <b>Not Started</b>        | No work has begun yet, it may start when opportunities come up                                      | 6                 |
| <b>Total</b>              |   | <b>90</b>         |

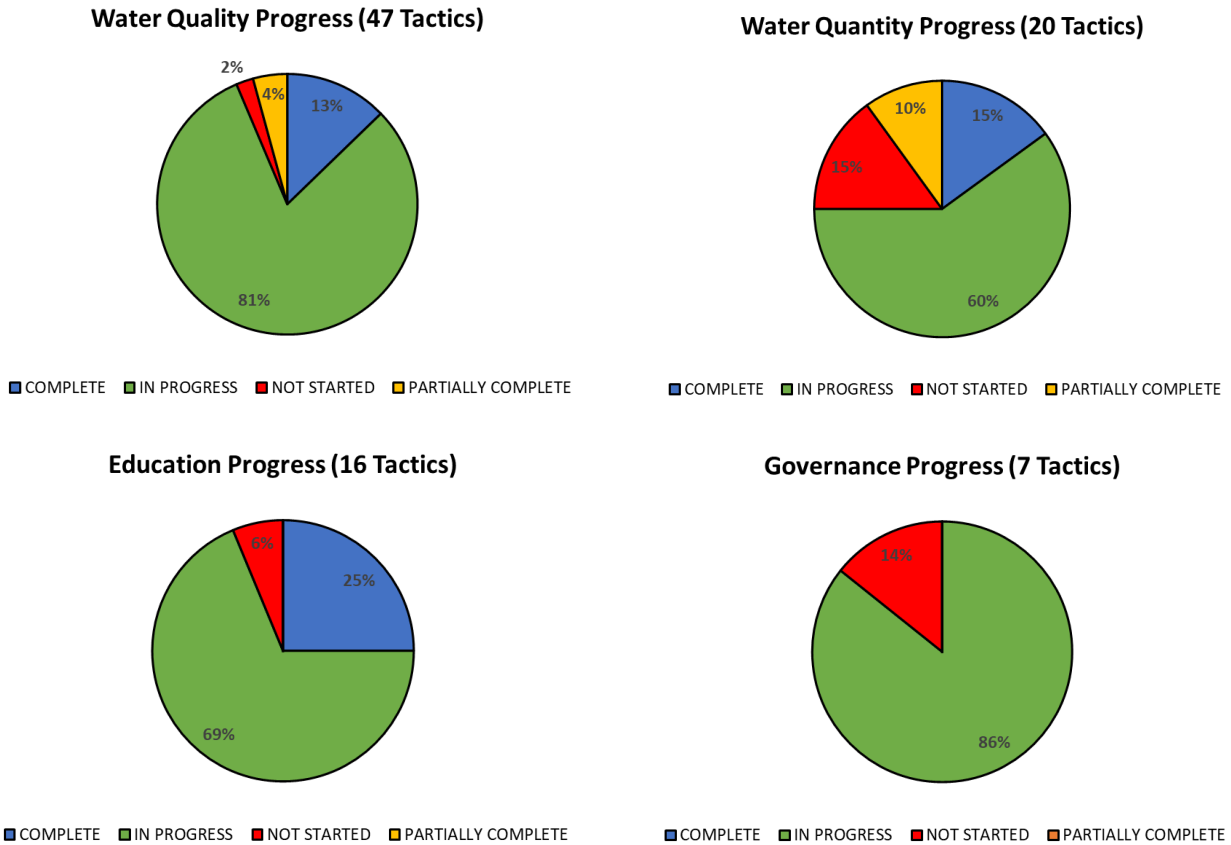


Figure 4. Groundwater Plan tactic progress by goal

Out of the 90 tactics in the plan, 89 percent are either finished or ongoing.

Of the tactics that are “Partially Complete” or “Not Started,” the majority were identified as “opportunity-based” in the Groundwater Plan. This means they depend on available funding, resources, or additional partners before they can move ahead. Other reasons some tactics have been slow to start include:

- Not enough grant funding or staff.
- Limited opportunities for the county to be involved (e.g., another agency is the lead).
- The tactic was later determined to not be a good use of staff time or resources.

This report highlights key program successes and overall progress on the Groundwater Plan.

A detailed report for each tactic — including its status, results so far and any challenges — is provided in the [Groundwater Plan Five Year Review – Tactic Progress](#) document.

## B. Funding and Grants

A guiding principle of the plan is to use non-county funding whenever possible. Over the past five years, Dakota County received **\$1,130,474** in grant funds to help carry out the plan. The county also hosted a **Minnesota GreenCorps member in 2024–2025** at minimal cost to support the county in developing a chloride reduction program.

The following is a summary of the funding received and what it supported:

| Funding source  | Total amount received | Work supported  |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)                      | \$140,000             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well Seal Grant Program</li> <li>• Rural Water Feasibility Study</li> </ul>  |
| Clean Water Funds (CWF)                                       | \$829,274             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well Seal Grant Program</li> <li>• Ag Chemical Reduction Effort</li> <li>• Private Well Testing and Treatment</li> </ul> |
| Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Pesticide Sales Tax | \$161,200             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treatment for private wells with elevated pesticides</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$1,130,474</b>    |   |

The county also partnered with groups such as the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), watershed organizations and local cities. The Groundwater Plan helped our partners secure **more than \$800,000** in grants to support projects that match the plan’s goals. For example, the SWCD led development of the Model Mining Ordinance. Also, the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) led a water conservation media campaign.

Most of the funding came from the **Clean Water Fund (CWF)**, through the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). This money comes from the **Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment**, approved by Minnesota voters in 2008. The amendment raised the state sales tax by 0.375 percent from 2009 through 2034. About one-third of that revenue goes to the Clean Water Fund to protect and improve lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater.



Figure 5. Clean Water Fund logo

## C. Highlight of Successes – What did we do well?

### Water Quality

The water quality goal is to have **groundwater and drinking water that are free from unhealthy levels of contamination**. Although we're not there yet, we're heading in the right direction. Dakota County is continuing to monitor groundwater quality, but it can take decades or longer to see significant improvements in groundwater concentrations.

The below metrics demonstrate just some of the successes for specific groundwater projects, but it's important to note that positive changes on the land, and surface water projects, also have an impact on groundwater quality, such as the county's enforcement of buffer rules, and stormwater management.

#### ***Helped cities and townships plan for their water needs and protect their water resources:***

- Completed a [Rural Water Feasibility Study](#) to see if possible — and what it would cost — to provide municipal or rural water services to homes with contaminated private wells.
- Partnered with SWCD to create a [Model Mining Ordinance](#) that Dakota County cities and townships can use to help protect groundwater and surface water resources.

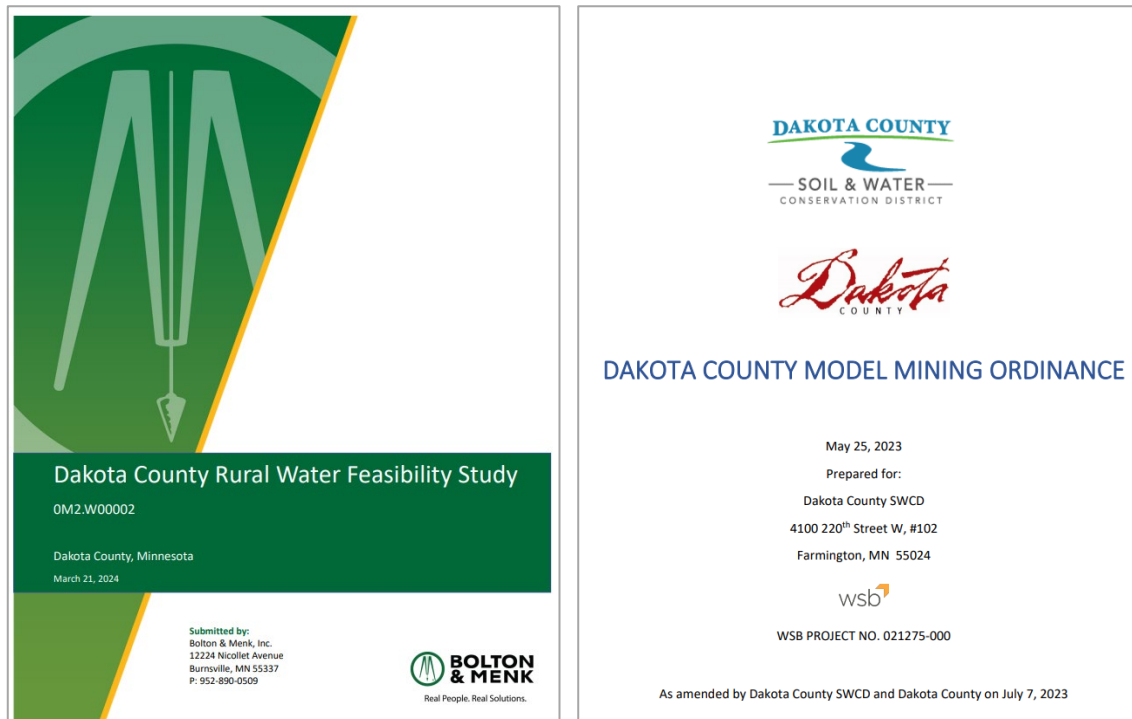


Figure 6. Covers of the Dakota County Rural Water Feasibility Study and the Model Mining Ordinance

**Helped private well users with drinking water testing and treatment:**

- Offered every private well user a free test at least once. Over **2,500** free testing kits were provided for common contaminants including nitrate, arsenic, manganese, lead and bacteria. A summary of results by community can be found on the [Community Sampling Results](#) page.
- Provided grants to **45** well users for water treatment to reduce elevated nitrate, arsenic, manganese, lead, bacteria and pesticides, totaling over **\$79,000** in cost-share.

*Table 1. Number of free well water tests and water treatment grants provided by community*

| City/ Township             | No. of free private well tests | No. of water treatment grants |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Apple Valley               | 19                             | 2                             |
| Burnsville                 | 82                             | 1                             |
| Coates                     | 18                             | 1                             |
| Eagan                      | 53                             | -                             |
| Empire                     | 65                             | -                             |
| Farmington                 | 9                              | -                             |
| Hastings                   | 8                              | -                             |
| Inver Grove Heights        | 476                            | 4                             |
| Lakeville                  | 119                            | -                             |
| Mendota/Mendota Heights    | 8                              | -                             |
| Rosemount                  | 262                            | 1                             |
| South St. Paul             | 1                              | -                             |
| Sunfish Lake               | 44                             | -                             |
| West St. Paul              | 1                              | -                             |
| Castle Rock Township       | 123                            | 1                             |
| Douglas Twp/ Miesville     | 113                            | 3                             |
| Eureka Twp                 | 128                            | -                             |
| Greenvale Twp/ Northfield  | 102                            | -                             |
| Hampton/ Hampton Twp       | 111                            | 1                             |
| Marshan Twp                | 162                            | 7                             |
| Nininger Twp               | 105                            | 8                             |
| Randolph/ Randolph Twp     | 55                             | -                             |
| Ravenna Twp                | 241                            | 8                             |
| Sciota Twp                 | 34                             | -                             |
| Vermillion/ Vermillion Twp | 131                            | 7                             |
| Waterford Twp              | 45                             | 1                             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>2,515</b>                   | <b>45</b>                     |

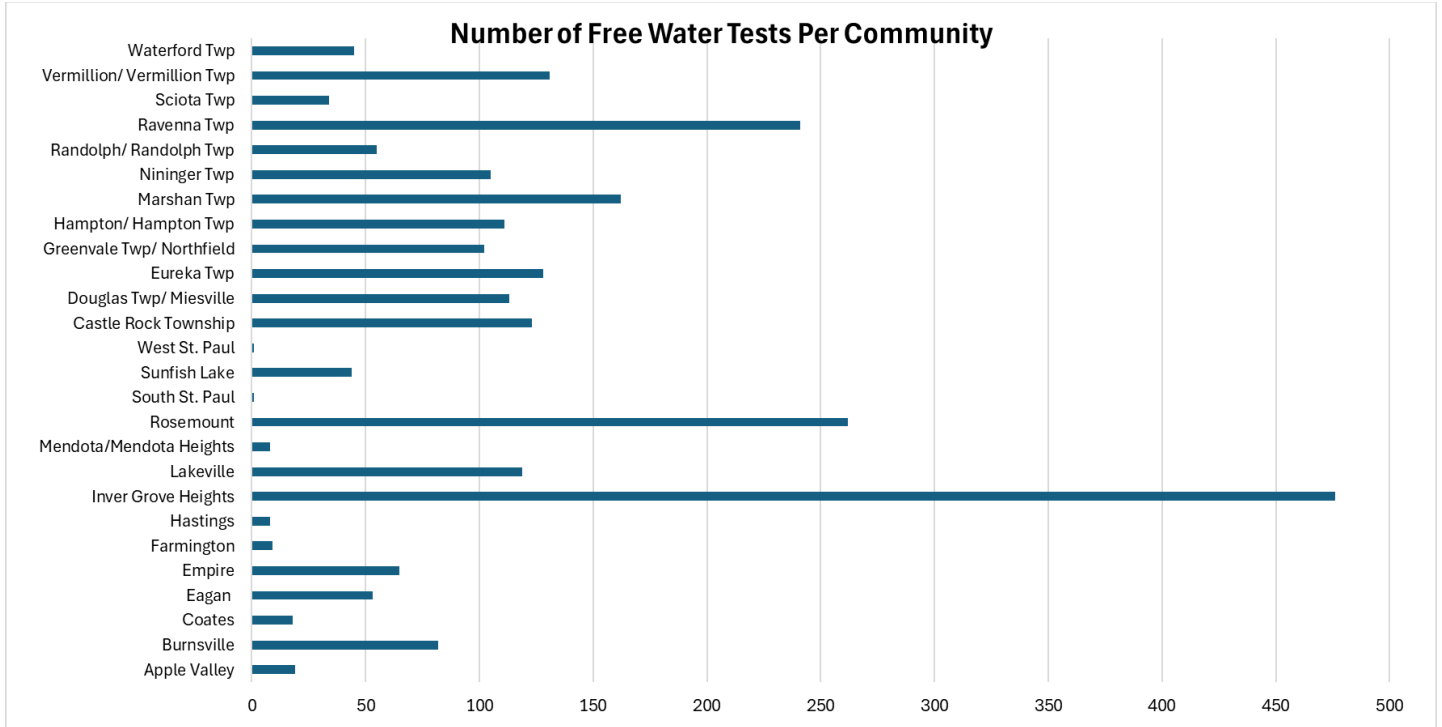


Figure 7. Number of free water tests provided per community

**Protected drinking water by overseeing well construction and sealing:**

- Issued **1,046** permits: **469** well construction permits, and **577** well sealing permits.
- Completed **339** inspections, exceeding the MDH required 25 percent inspection rate for well construction and 10 percent for well sealing.
- Managed more than **800** registered well/monitoring permits each year.



Figure 8. Well construction drill site

**Prevented groundwater contamination from unsealed wells and failing septic systems:**

- Sealed **271** unused wells through the Well Seal Grant Program by providing over **\$380,000** in cost-share.
- Replaced **74** failing septic systems through low-income grants or the tax assessment program, resulting in over **12 million** gallons of wastewater treated annually.

*Table 2. Number of well seal grants per community*

| City/ Township             | No. of Well Seal Grants |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Apple Valley               | 5                       |
| Burnsville                 | 42                      |
| Cannon Falls               | 2                       |
| Douglas Twp                | 3                       |
| Eagan                      | 21                      |
| Empire Twp                 | 1                       |
| Eureka Twp                 | 1                       |
| Farmington                 | 14                      |
| Hampton/Hampton Twp        | 2                       |
| Hastings                   | 25                      |
| Inver Grove Heights        | 34                      |
| Lakeville                  | 28                      |
| Mendota Heights            | 62                      |
| Ravenna Twp                | 2                       |
| Rosemount                  | 12                      |
| South St. Paul             | 4                       |
| Sunfish Lake               | 3                       |
| Vermillion/ Vermillion Twp | 2                       |
| West St. Paul              | 6                       |
| Randolph                   | 1                       |
| Greenvale Twp              | 1                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>271</b>              |

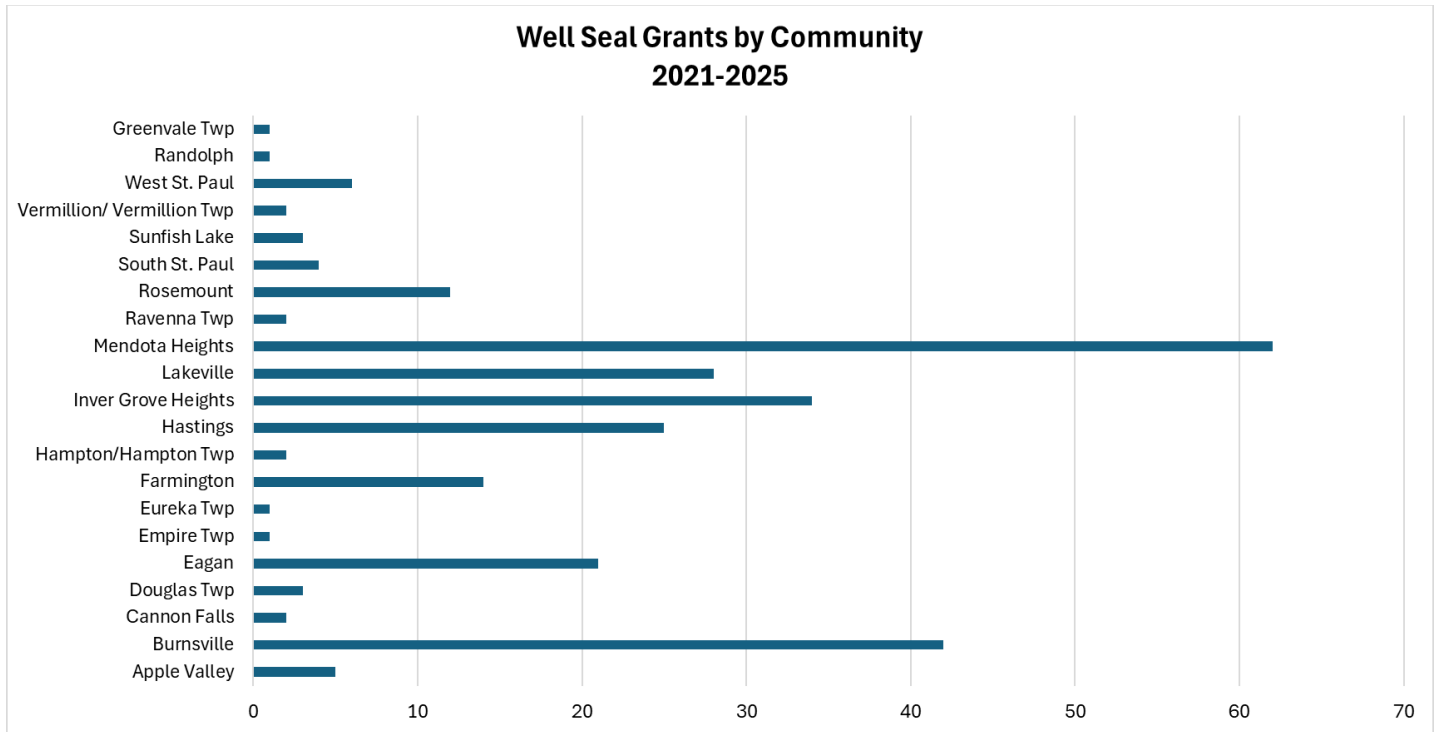


Figure 9. Number Well Seal Grants provided per community

**Studied potential risks to groundwater and responded to emerging contaminants:**

- Studied per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS, also known as PFC, or forever chemicals) and other contaminants in groundwater and in private wells near land that received biosolid applications. The studies are available on the [Drinking Water Studies](#) page.
- Partnered with the MDA to expand private well testing in known areas with elevated levels of the pesticide cyanazine.
- Formed an interdepartmental Emerging Contaminants Workgroup in response to the growing concern around PFAS. The workgroup’s goals are to educate people about new contaminants, work with partners to share information, and support review, communications and response efforts.
  - Created a [PFAS website](#) and a granular activate carbon filter factsheet to educate both city and well water consumers of how to reduce PFAS in their water.
  - Partnered with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to collect samples from private drinking water wells, environmental wells, and springs to test for neonicotinoids (a type of insecticide). The results will help the DNR estimate the age of the water and better understand how groundwater moves and where it may be vulnerable to pollution for the Groundwater Atlas.
  - Conducted PFAS soil, sediment, groundwater, and surface water sampling on publicly-owned property and private land.
  - Available updates and information are posted on the Dakota County website.

**Partnered with the SWCD, Minnesota Department of Agriculture and other organizations to reduce agriculture chemical contaminations such as nitrates and pesticides:**

Completed the [Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort \(ACRE\)](#) Plan. The ACRE Plan outlines actions to reduce nitrate contamination in groundwater and addresses other agriculture contaminants where possible. The plan has four main strategies:

- 1) Collect information for decision making
- 2) Communicate and educate
- 3) Provide technical assistance
- 4) Provide financial incentives



Figure 10. ACRE plan strategies

**Changes in nitrate levels**

It's still too early to tell – it can take years to decades to see changes in groundwater concentrations. However, we are starting to see positive changes on the landscape which should result in reducing nitrates levels in the groundwater, such as increased adoption of best management practices (BMPs) and alternate management tools (AMTs).

Dakota County, in partnership with SWCD, has helped provide resources to farmers, including:

- Created guides like the [Land Management Practices for Improving Groundwater Quality](#), and the [Conservation Toolkit](#). The Conservation Toolkit helps farmers and landowners talk about conservation practices on rented lands.
- Supported on-the-ground practices through the SWCD. Encouraged adoption of AMTs such as cover crops, harvestable cover and perennial crops. From 2021-2025, SWCD saw an increase in participation of programs:
  - Planted **18,768** acres of cover crops on **228** fields.
  - Converted **179** acres of corn/soybean to harvestable cover.
  - Reduced nitrate leaching by over **109,000** pounds.

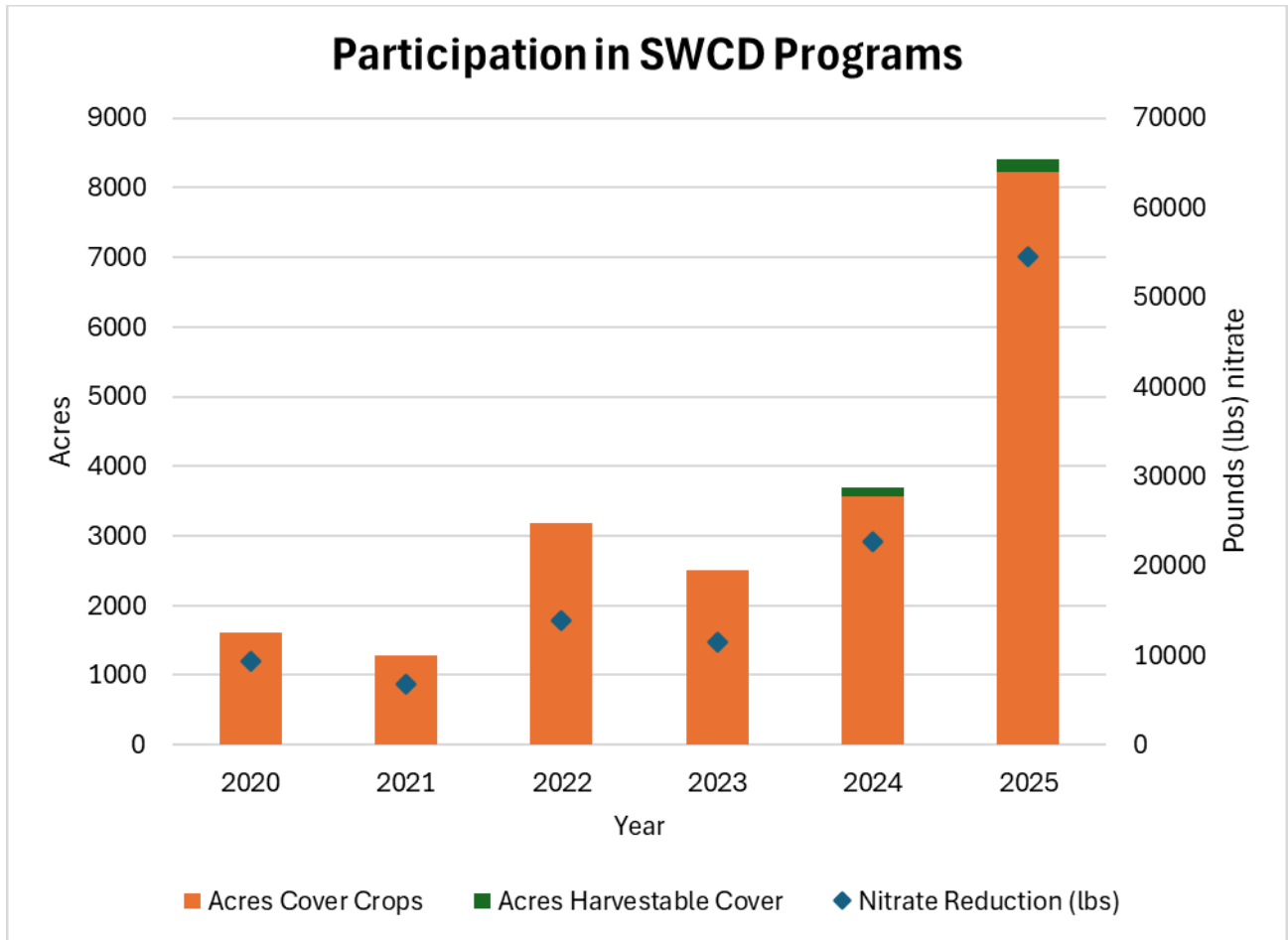


Figure 11. Farmer participation in SWCD programs and nitrate leaching reduction by year

Dakota County installed 15 shallow monitoring wells in the southeast to check for nitrate, chloride and water levels. These wells help us see if conservation practices on the land are reducing nitrates in the shallow groundwater first. Results are updated annually on the [dashboard](#).

It is still too early to see clear trends. So far, two (2) wells have increasing nitrate, four (4) wells have decreasing nitrate, and nine (9) wells have no significant trends. For more information, see the [ACRE Monitoring Well Factsheet](#).

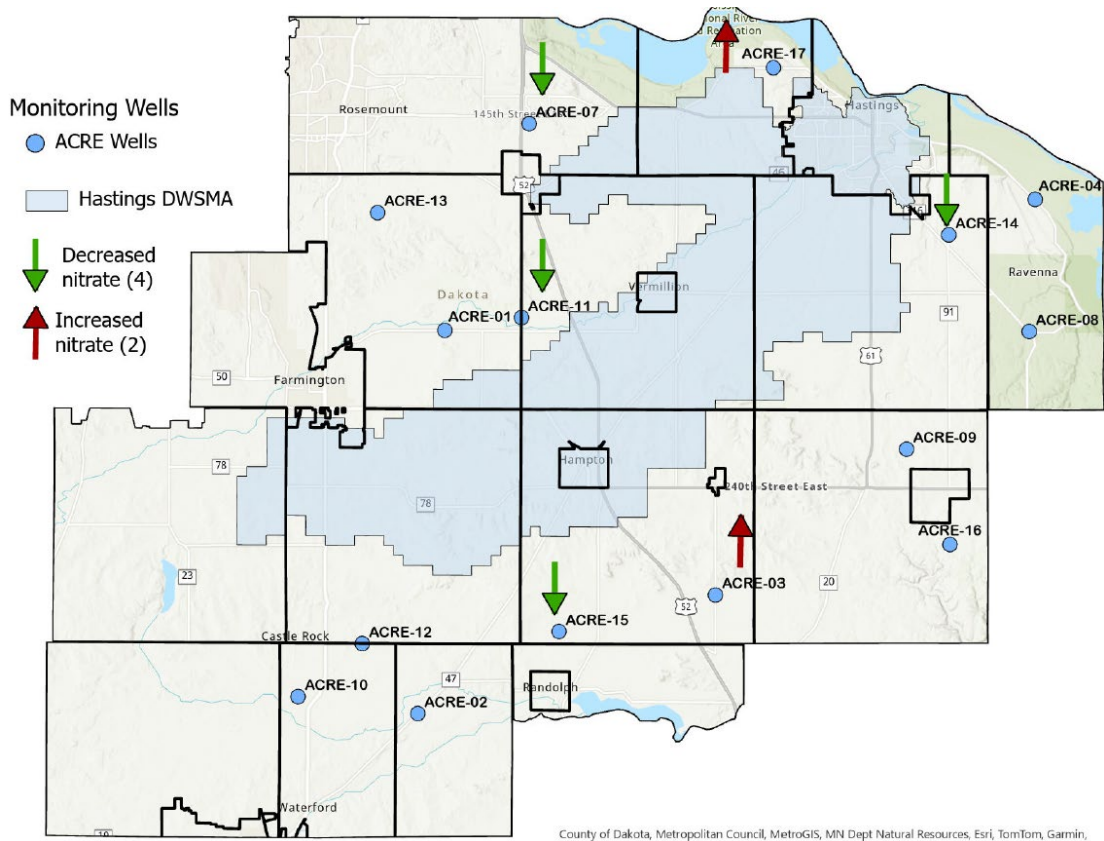


Figure 12. ACRE monitoring well trends

## Water Quantity

The water quantity goal is that **groundwater is sufficient to meet human needs and sustain groundwater-dependent ecosystems**. Below is a highlight of projects that supported groundwater sustainability, and water conservation and reuse.

### ***Helped make sure requests to use groundwater are sustainable:***

Dakota County updated County Ordinance 114 (Well and Water Supply Management) to prevent water from being exported out of the county. In 2019, a company proposed taking 500 million gallons of water from Dakota County to ship to the southwest United States. In response, the county placed a 365-day moratorium on constructing wells that could be used for exporting water and subsequently updated the ordinance to permanently protect our groundwater aquifers.

### ***Supported water conservation and reuse efforts to save more than 6 million gallons of water annually. Key efforts include:***

- Assisted Apple Valley with the Water Efficiency Grant Program. The program provided rebates for WaterSense-certified irrigation controllers, toilets and washing machines.
- Developed water conservation messaging for cities to use during droughts.

- Created the 2024 City Water Wise Challenge to encourage residents to reduce indoor and outdoor water use.
- Partnered with the SWCD and the VRWJPO to create the [Lawns Reimagined Program](#). The goal of the program is to convert traditional lawns into low-water, low-maintenance landscapes.
- Partnered with the SWCD, VRWJPO, and other watersheds to develop the Landscaping for Clean Water & Water Conservation Media Campaign.
  - ✓ The [Landscaping for Clean Water Marketing Video](#) encouraged residents to replace turf grass with native plants or a rain gardens.
  - ✓ The [Lawn Watering Wisdom Marketing Video](#) taught residents about efficient landscape irrigation practices to reduce groundwater consumption, and encourages them to take the pledge.
- Upgraded irrigation controllers at county facilities to smart controllers to improve water efficiency.
- Promoted water reuse by cost-sharing over **600** rain barrels.

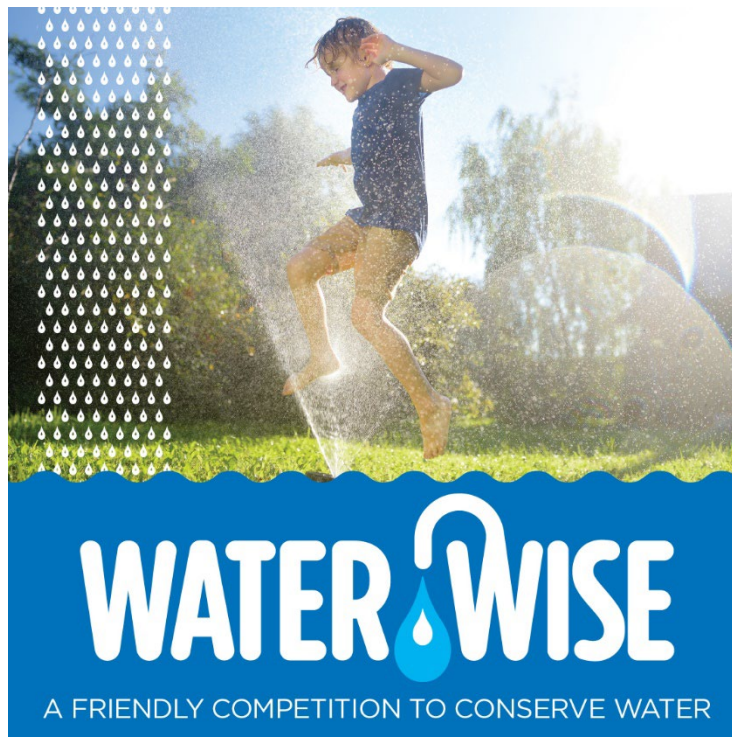


Figure 13. Waterwise challenge promotion

## Education

The education goal is that **people who live and work in Dakota County are knowledgeable about water issues, conserve water, and prevent pollution**. Below is a highlight of projects that supported education and outreach efforts.

### *Expanded outreach and education efforts to protect water quantity and quality:*

- Supported the annual [Children's Water Festival](#). The festival educated more than **7,000** fourth grade students in the metro area on protecting water resources
- Hosted "We Are Water MN" exhibits at Pleasant Hill Library in Hastings and Lebanon Hills Visitor Center in Eagan. The exhibits engaged more than **13,000** people.
- Supported chloride reduction efforts:
  - ✓ Trained more than **450** people in Smart Salting practices for property management, road maintenance, and sidewalks to reduce chloride pollution.
  - ✓ Developed a [Low Salt No Salt](#) chloride reduction program with help from a MN GreenCorps member to encourage residents and property owners to use less deicing salt
- Created the [Our Groundwater Connection](#) video



Figure 14. We are Water Exhibit

## Governance

The governance goal is that **groundwater programs and services are efficient and effective**. Below is a highlight of partnerships that support services.

### *Worked with state, regional, and local partners to address groundwater concerns:*

- Created the Dakota County Groundwater Source Water Protection Collaborative. The collaborative brings together government agencies and water stakeholders to share ideas and discuss concerns.
- Served on the Metropolitan Council Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC). The Committee helped develop the Metro Area Water Supply Plan.

### 3. NEW ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Since adoption of the Groundwater Plan, new issues have emerged. The following is a summary of the new challenges that could affect our groundwater and how we plan to carry out the Groundwater Plan in the future:

#### A. Per- or Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances and other emerging contaminants

PFAS refers to a family of more than 9,000 human-made chemicals. These chemicals are used to repel water, oil and grease. While PFAS has likely been in our groundwater for a while, there was not a drinking water standard for city water

In 2024, the EPA set [national drinking water standards](#) for six PFAS chemicals. Three of those standards are now being reconsidered. The MDH has also tested community water systems in Dakota County and has lower guidance levels to protect vulnerable populations such as pregnant people, infants and children. Testing shows that some Dakota County wells, including city wells in Hastings, Apple Valley, Rosemount and South St. Paul, have PFAS above drinking water standards.

Potential concerns are:

- Lack of trust in the safety of drinking water.
- Health impacts from PFAS and other contaminants.
- PFAS and emerging chemicals without drinking water standards.
- Affordability of home water treatment systems.

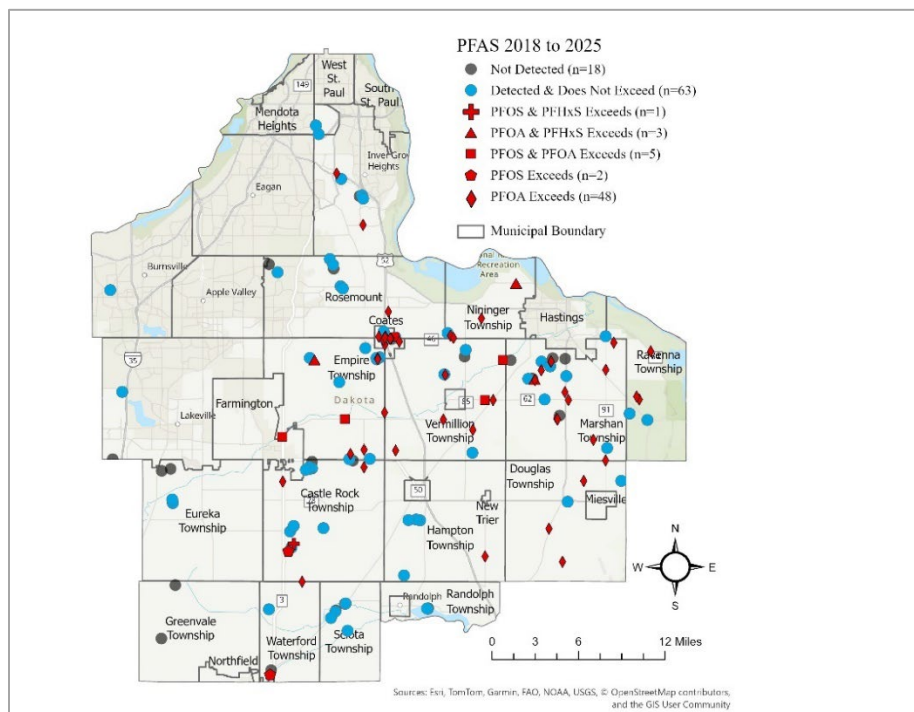


Figure 15. PFAS groundwater sample results in comparison to MDH drinking water guidelines

## What are we doing?

While the MPCA and MDH lead investigations and regulation of PFAS in public water systems, Dakota County has taken several steps to support the Groundwater Plan:

- Helping with water testing, explaining test results, and providing funding for treatment. Current grants don't directly cover PFAS, but treatment for other contaminants like nitrate can also remove PFAS. (tactics 1A3A & 1A3E)
- Creating a [PFAS](#) webpage, researching low-cost treatment options, and making a factsheet about [Granular Activated Carbon Filters](#). (tactic 1A3B)
- Sharing information and providing technical help and expertise to city, township and state partners to investigate and address contamination. (tactic 1C1A)
- Ensuring septic systems are built and maintained properly and encourage the replacement of failing systems. Working septic systems help reduce impacts to the groundwater. (tactics 1C3A-1C3D)
- Monitoring application of wastewater sludge that is applied to agricultural fields as fertilizer called biosolids, since PFAS may be present. (tactic 1C3F)
- Testing for PFAS in the groundwater, sharing results with state agencies, and posting studies on the [Drinking Water Studies](#) page. (tactic 1D1A)
- Launching the Emerging Contaminants Workgroup in 2025. The workgroup will educate the public, study emerging contaminants like PFAS, and conduct research to guide county decisions to help residents and prevent contamination. (tactic 1D1A)

## Is there anything else we can do?

- Advocate for stronger laws and policies that protect groundwater and reduce contaminants like PFAS and other emerging contaminants of concern. (tactic 4A1A)
- Advocate for increased state funding for municipal water infrastructure projects that address PFAS. (tactic 4A1A)
- Increase health risk communication and education/outreach for residents on public water supplies and private wells. (strategies 3A & 3B)
- Depending on funding:
  - Facilitate private well testing for PFAS and other emerging contaminants. (tactic 1A3E)
  - Help fund drinking water treatment systems for private wells with high PFAS levels or other emerging contaminants. (1A3C)
  - Help fund projects that improve drinking water quality. (tactic 4A1C)

## B. Large Water Users

There have been several proposals for large water users that could significantly increase groundwater demand in Dakota County. Pumping and using water from an aquifer faster than precipitation can recharge the aquifer is not protecting our groundwater resource for future generations.

Data center development is being monitored in the county. Three new data centers are currently under construction, of which one is considered a hyperscale data center in Rosemount. Demand for data centers is growing because of technologies like AI (artificial intelligence). Depending on the design, a data center may need huge amounts of water to cool their servers and equipment.

Other proposed large water users include a mining operation in Waterford that will pump significant amounts of water to lower the water table in the bedrock for mining. There is also a bottled water company proposed in Elko New Market (Scott County), located just outside of Dakota County but within the Vermillion River Watershed, that is projected to more than double the city's water use. If all the above-mentioned studies and proposals move forward, groundwater use in Dakota County could increase by upwards of 7-8 billion gallons per year. This is roughly a 20-30 percent increase in total groundwater use.

Potential concerns with increased groundwater use are:

- Threatens the long-term sustainability of aquifers —ensuring enough water for current and future residents and businesses.
- Lowering of groundwater levels, which could cause private wells and irrigation wells to go dry.
- Decrease water flow or change in water quality to high-value surface waters, such as calcareous fens and trout streams.
- Changes in groundwater quality, including contamination moving into deeper aquifers or lowered aquifer levels can cause chemical changes that release manganese or arsenic.

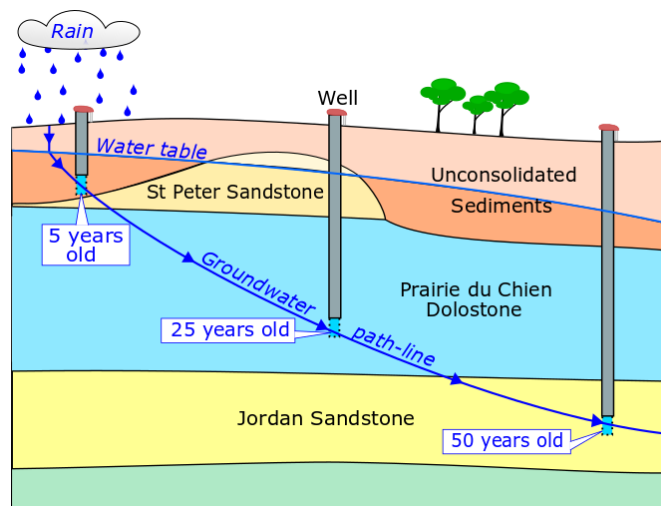


Figure 16. Cross-section of the geology and the three most heavily used aquifers for water wells; most city wells pump water from the Jordan Sandstone

## What are we doing?

Dakota County does not control land use decisions in cities. In townships, the county only controls land use in rural shoreland and floodplain areas. This means decisions about water-intensive industries are made by cities and townships.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reviews and approves water use permits. They do this for projects that will use more than 10,000 gallons per day or 1 million gallons per year. When reviewing permits, the DNR considers potential impacts. This includes groundwater levels, surface waters like wetlands and streams, and nearby wells.

Dakota County plays a limited role in managing groundwater supply but has taken several actions to help protect our water supply and support well owners:

- Reviewing Wellhead Protection Plans, Water Supply Plans, and environmental review documents to ensure water resources are considered. (tactic 1A1A)
- Offering free testing for private well owners to document baseline conditions. (1A3A & 1A3E)
- Creating guidance, like the Model Mining Ordinance with the SWCD, to help cities and townships protect water resources. (1C4B)
- Working with the DNR to review large water permits and sharing information to support sustainable groundwater use. (tactic 2A1A & 2B2D)

## Is there anything else we can do?

- Advocate for policies that require new large water users to identify impacts to groundwater capacity. (4A1A)
- Advocate for rules and guidelines to support water reuse efforts. (2A3A)
- Evaluate and improve internal processes for reviewing environmental documents and DNR permits to ensure groundwater concerns are addressed. (improves upon tactics 2A1A & 2B2D)
- If the county board is interested, consider seeking authority to issue and regulate water use permits at the local level. This would require state law changes. (tactic 2A1B)
- Support updated groundwater models to help make better decisions, building on existing regional work by the Metropolitan Council to predict future water conditions. (tactic 2C1B).
- Identify guidance and resources needs for local governments through the Groundwater-Source Water Collaborative and Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee. (tactic 4A1B & 4A1E).

### C. Climate Resiliency (Droughts)

Minnesota went through major droughts in 2021, 2022 and 2023. The 2021 drought was the worst since 1988 and led to record-high groundwater use. Dakota County used more than 30 billion gallons in one year, mostly for lawn watering and farm irrigation (see Figure 16). This water is pumped from deep aquifers. The irrigation water that does not evaporate will flow to shallow aquifers and it will take decades or more to recharge the aquifer it came from.

In general, Minnesota is getting hotter and wetter. When it rains, it tends to come in heavy storms rather than light, steady rainfall. These changes create uncertainties about how future weather patterns will affect groundwater:

- Fewer rainy days but heavier storms could mean less groundwater recharge.
- More flooding may happen.
- Lawns and crops may need more irrigation.

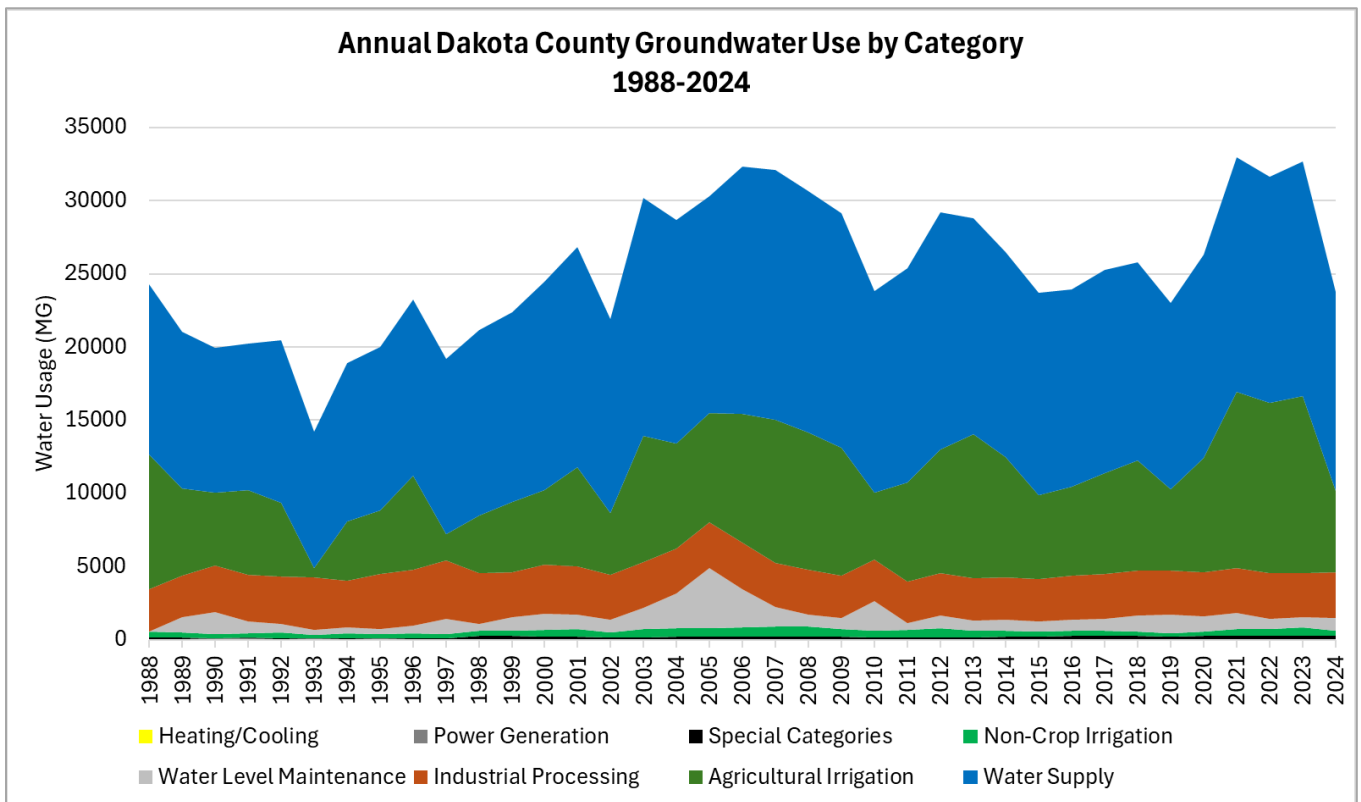


Figure 17. Dakota County annual groundwater use by category from 1988-2024

## What are we doing?

Most of the Groundwater Plan focuses on working with partners to reduce water use and recharge aquifers. Key actions include:

- Creating countywide water conservation programs. This includes messages and materials for cities to use during droughts. (2A2A)
- Offering cost-share for water-saving projects. This includes smart irrigation management tools for farmers and water conservation media campaigns. (2A2B)
- Improving water efficiency at county buildings. This includes installing smart irrigation controllers. (1A2C)
- Identifying open spaces where land preservation can also help recharge groundwater. (2B1C)
- Restoring wetlands for water retention and habitat to reduce impacts of flooding. (2B2C)

## Is there anything else we can do?

- Depending on funding:
  - Implement water efficiency projects at county facilities. (2A2C)
  - Provide cost-share on water reuse projects with partners. (2A3B)
  - Help fund competitive grants for innovative water conservation or reuse projects. (4A1C)

**Do your part, we're in a drought**

We use two to three times more water during the summer months compared to the winter due to outdoor water usage. Dakota County is experiencing drought conditions, and we need your help.

**Here are a few simple steps to help save water and your lawn:**

- Cut back watering your lawn, it only needs 1 inch of water/rain each week.
  - Watering too much encourages disease and keeps grass roots short.
- Promote a drought tolerant lawn by watering infrequently. Place a tuna can or similar-sized container in the area you are watering and stop when it's full. Wait a week to water again.
- Visit [maps.cocorahs.org](http://maps.cocorahs.org) to see if your lawn received enough rain and if you need to water.
- Check your irrigation or automatic sprinkler system for leaks and broken heads.
  - Almost 25 percent of homes have five or more leaking sprinklers. Just one can waste more than 1,000 gallons of water per hour.
  - Get a smart controller that automatically adjusts watering schedules depending on weather, soil conditions, evaporation, plant water use and more.
- Raise your mower height to 3 inches.
  - Grass roots will grow deeper to reach more water and will create a healthier, stronger and more disease-free lawn.

To learn more tips on how to reduce your water usage, visit [extension.umn.edu](http://extension.umn.edu) and search *lawn care*.  
For more water conservation tips, visit [www.dakotacounty.us](http://www.dakotacounty.us), search *water conservation*.

Dakota COUNTY

Figure 18. Countywide water conservation messaging used in 2023

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS/ CONCLUSIONS

The Groundwater Plan’s goals, strategies and tactics are comprehensive and already address the new challenges and issues identified. Staff do **not** recommend amending the plan at this time. However, the plan should be updated before it expires in January 2031.

Staff will work with leadership each year to look for ways to improve upon the tactics identified in the New Issues and Challenges section (section 3, above). Putting these improvements into action will depend on County Board direction and available resources, like staff and funding, which are determined during the annual budgeting and work planning process.

Dakota County’s Groundwater Plan remains a strong guide for protecting our water, even with new challenges like PFAS, large water users and climate change. The plan gives us the tools to respond. By continuing education, working with partners, conserving water and monitoring groundwater, we can keep Dakota County’s water safe and sustainable for everyone today and in the future.

**Thank you to the Dakota SWCD and other Dakota County partners for your assistance in implementing the Groundwater Plan.**

For questions on the Groundwater Plan or annual report please contact [groundwater@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:groundwater@co.dakota.mn.us), or 952-891-7000.

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