



# Land Conservation Plan for Dakota County



Planning Commission - July 23, 2020  
Environmental Resources and Office of Planning

# Tonight's Presentation



1. Plan Overview
2. Outreach and Engagement
3. Comments Received
4. Plan Revisions
5. Questions and Discussion
6. Recommendation on Adoption

# Plan Overview: Purpose



## Land Conservation Plan for Dakota County



Public Review Draft: February 19, 2020



- Identify significant natural resource lands and connecting corridors for protection and increased resource management
- Improve coordination and collaboration
- Explore tools to increase voluntary protection and natural resource management of private lands
- Update Program guidelines

# Plan Overview: Vision and Goals



## Vision

*The natural resources of Dakota County are collaboratively protected, improved and managed for current and future generations.*

## Goals

1. Ecologically important areas are prioritized for protection.
2. Water quality and quantity is protected and enhanced.
3. Natural resource quality is improved and sustained.
4. Biodiversity is restored and sustained.
5. The public supports and is involved in natural resource protection and management.
6. Recreational access to conservation lands is enhanced.



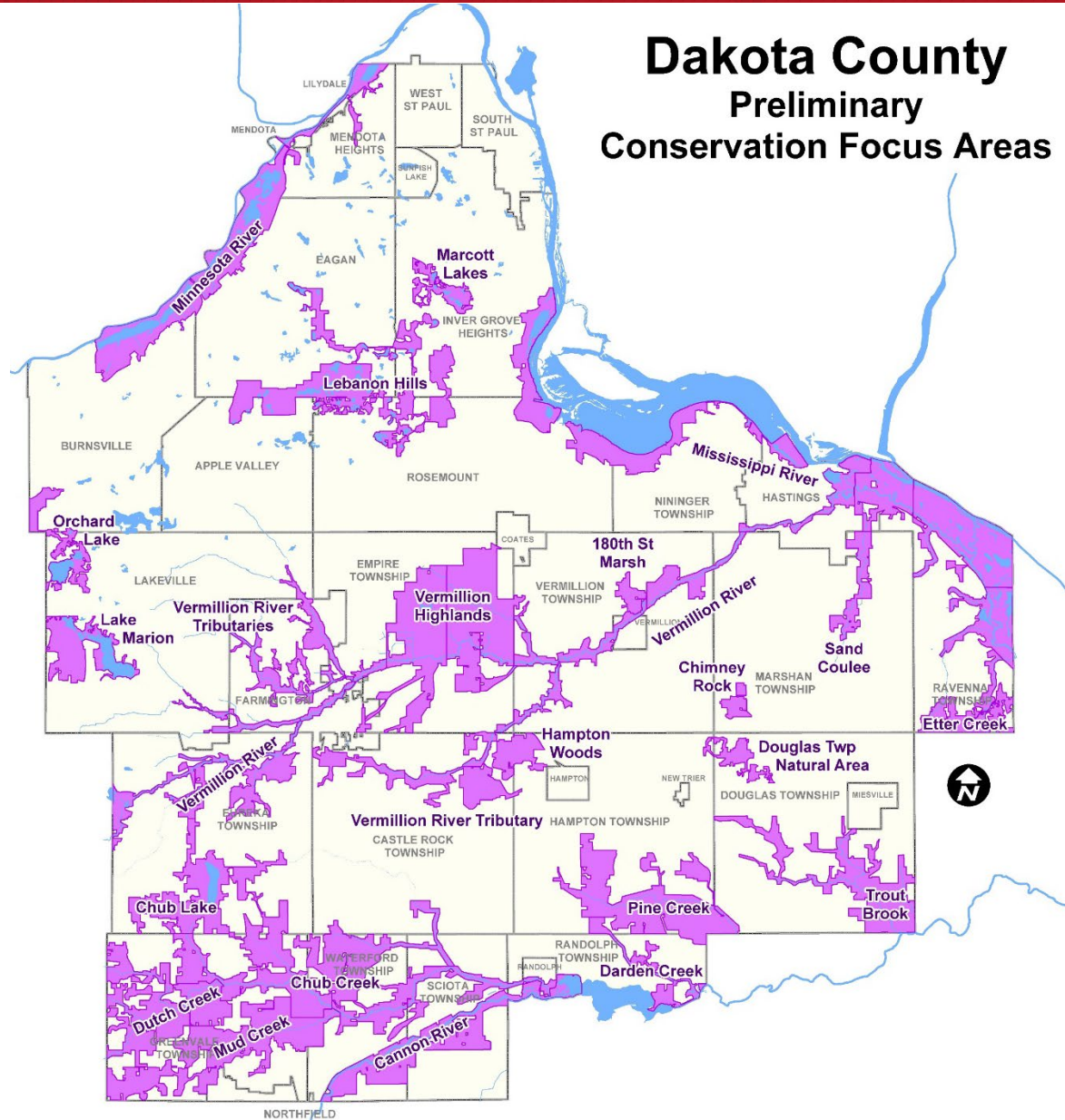
# Plan Overview: Preliminary CFAs



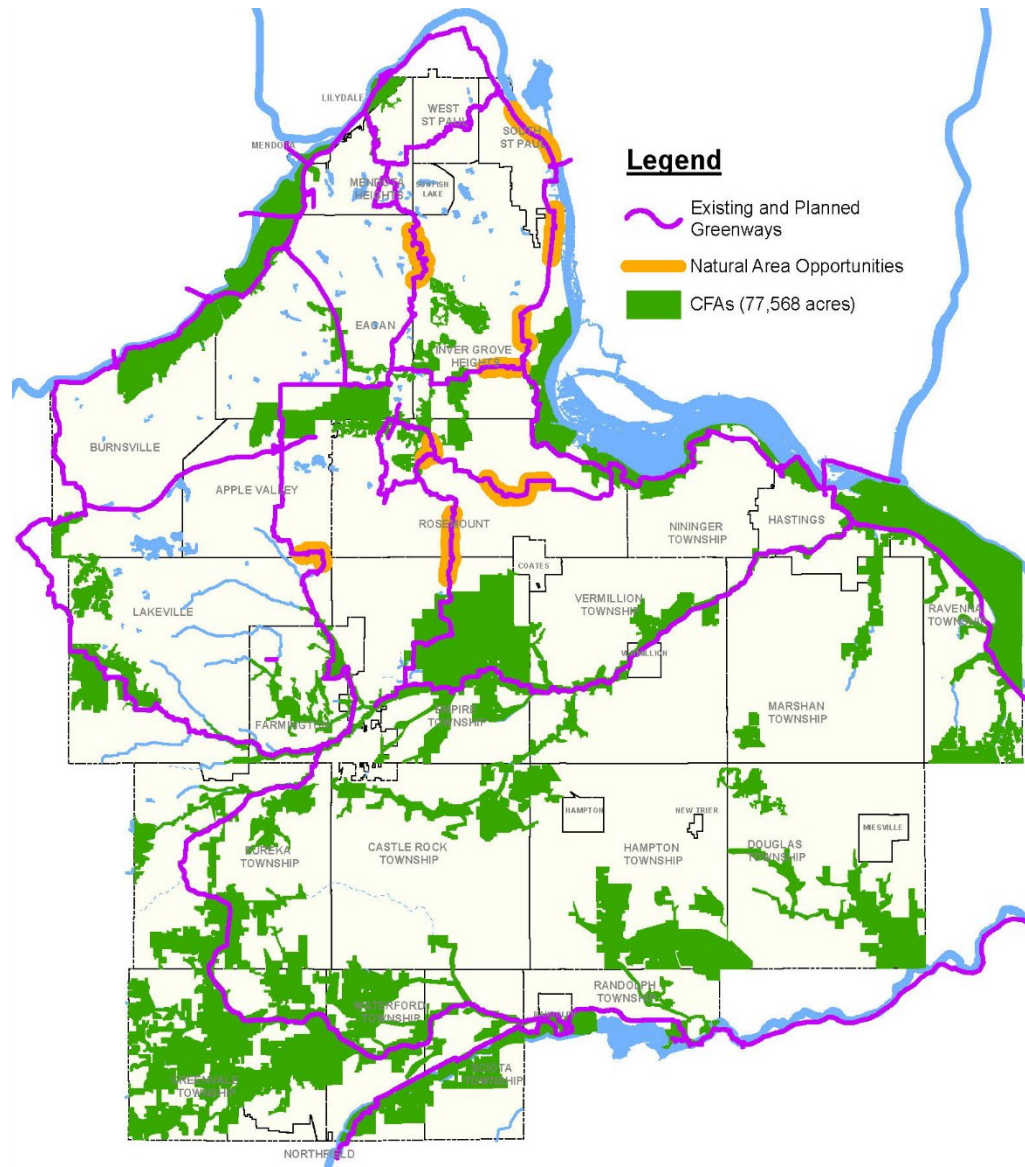
## CFA Network

- High quality natural areas
- Parks
- Greenways
- Open space
- Large restorable wetland basins
- Enhanced natural resource management

## Dakota County Preliminary Conservation Focus Areas



**Dakota**  
COUNTY



# Plan Overview: Implementation



## **Near-term Priorities: Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4**

### **Initiate Preliminary CFAs**

- Outreach to landowners and pilot projects
- Refine project evaluation criteria
- Analyze and prioritize wetland restoration sites
- Collect baseline data

### **Address Long-term Natural Resource Management**

- Develop City-County Conservation Collaborative
- Explore and develop private landowner incentives



# Outreach and Engagement



## Review Period

**March 25 to July 1, 2020**

(extended by County Board)

- Plan link on website with email, mail and address for comments
- News and social media releases
- Notified partners, city staff, landowners, past event participants, and others
- Township Officers meeting cancelled - Emails to clerks, supervisors and commissioners
- Promoted by conservation organizations
- No public meetings





## More than 200 General Public Comments

- Supportive of the Plan
- 85 percent County residents and 14 percent from adjacent counties
- 77 percent online support letters developed by Conservation Minnesota and Friends of the Mississippi River
- Similar concerns to 2002: Development, loss of natural areas and native species, and water quality and supply

## Agencies and Organizations providing Comments

- City of Hastings
- City of Inver Grove Heights
- Empire Township Board
- Great Plains Institute
- Metropolitan Council
- Washington County Natural Resources
- Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

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## CFA Process and Priorities

- Prioritize land within Preliminary CFAs first, then target outreach to highest priorities
- Include groundwater recharge areas (83,000 acres) in preliminary CFA boundaries
- Prioritize restoration of cultivated wetlands over creating new wetlands
- Do not protect agricultural or mining lands



## Natural Resource Management

- Need better incentives for natural resource management on protected private lands
- Need outcome metrics for natural resource management
- Create larger-scale pollinator habitat

## Economic Concerns

- County should consider compensating LGUs for loss of property tax base due to private land protection
- Consider Increasing Amount of County cost-share

## Program Implementation

- Provide more information on:
  - ✓ City-County Conservation Collaborative
  - ✓ New land protection incentives and tools
  - ✓ Private funding entity to assist with natural resource management on protected private lands
- Clarify ten-year Plan goals, staffing and program outputs

# Plan Revisions: Preliminary CFAs

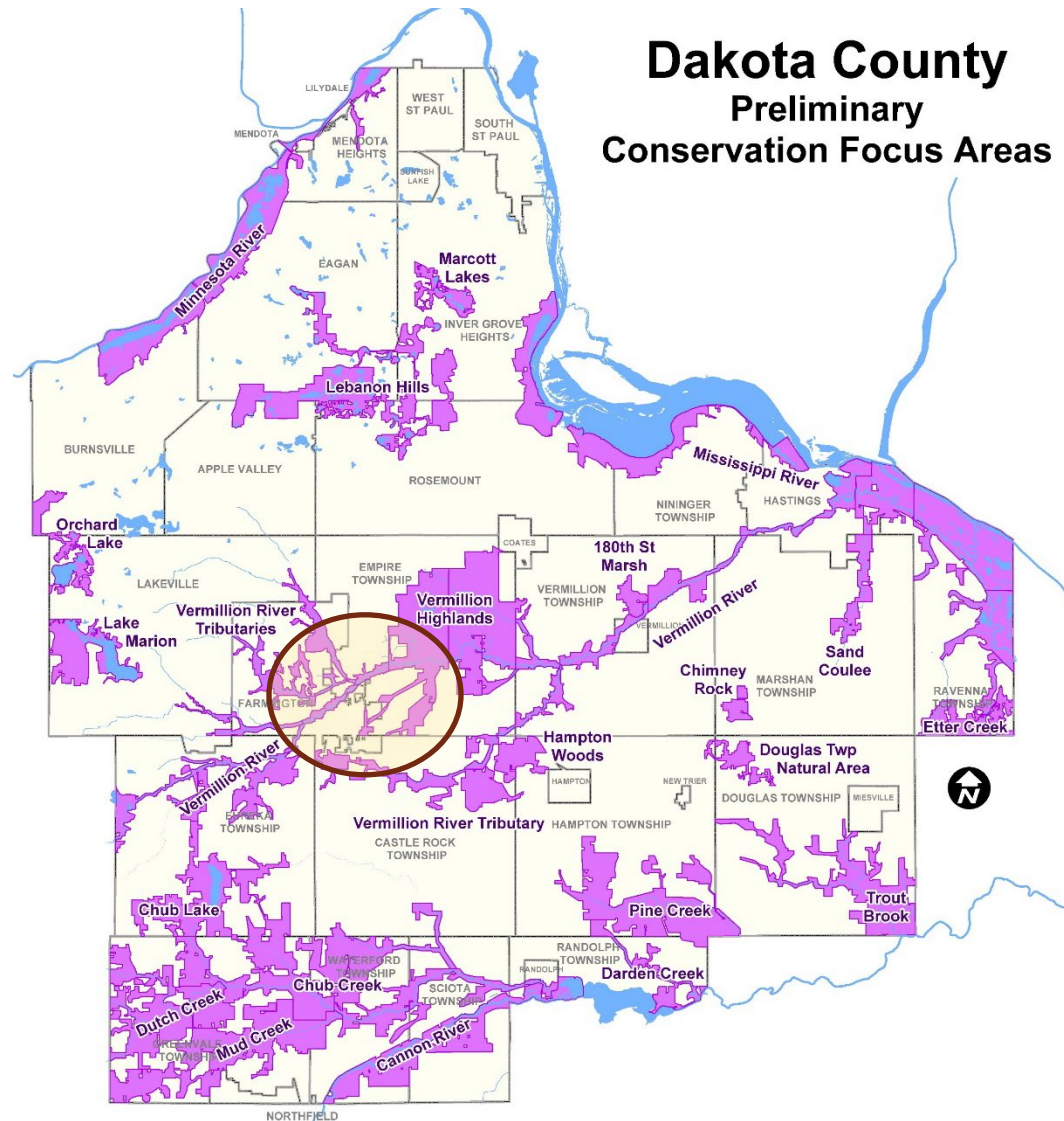
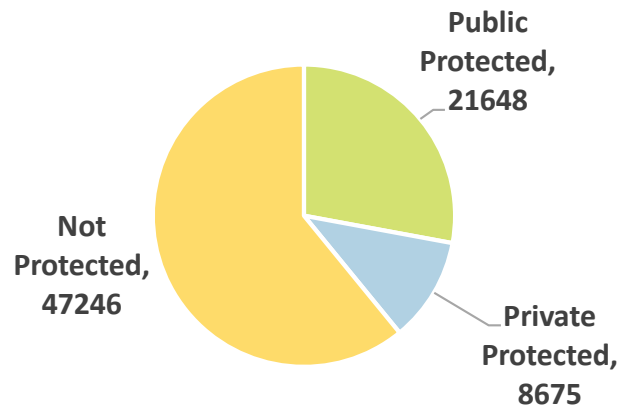


## County Board - July 7, 2020

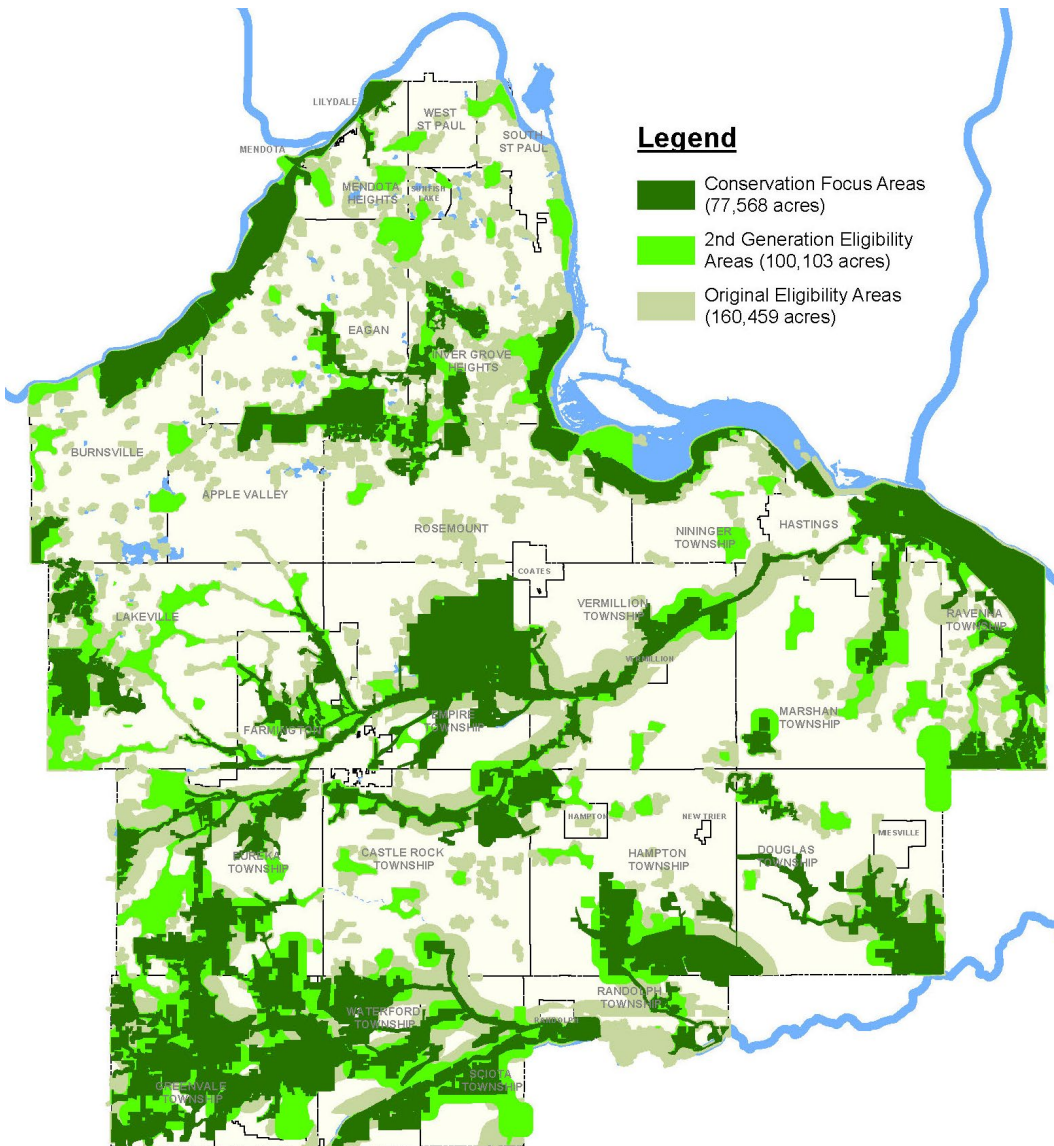
- Supported requested change by Empire Township
- Reduce agricultural land in within Preliminary CFAs

**4,547 Acres Eliminated**

**Protection Status within  
Refined Preliminary CFAs, Acres**



# Plan Revisions: Refined Eligibility



## Legend

- Conservation Focus Areas (77,568 acres)
- 2nd Generation Eligibility Areas (100,103 acres)
- Original Eligibility Areas (160,459 acres)

Refinements	Acres
FNAP Plan - 2002	160,459
FNAP - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation	100,103
CFAs - Draft	82,115
CFAs - Refined	77,568



## Limit Use of Agricultural Easements for Specific Situations to Achieve Multiple Public Benefits

- Protect land adjacent to County parks and greenways, protected public and private conservation areas and land associated with wetland restoration sites
- Protect land to maintain open space connectivity between protected natural areas



# Assumptions Used for Outcomes



- 80 percent of public agencies interested in restoring their lands.
- 30 percent of landowners with County easements interested in protection and restoring additional land.
- 20 percent of new program applicants interested in protecting and restoring their land.
- Existing and future State and other non-County grant funds at the same level.
- Overall County cost-share would be 20 to 25 percent for protection and 5 to 10 percent for restoration activities.

# Plan Revisions: Outcomes and Costs

Protection and Ownership Status	Total Acres	Ten-Year Protection Acres	Ten-Year Total Protection Costs	Ten-Year County Protection Cost	Ten-Year Restoration Acres	Ten-Year Total Restoration Costs	Ten-Year County Restoration Cost
Public Conservation Lands within CFAs	23,554	0	\$0	\$0	7,500	\$22.5M	\$1.4M
Protected Private Lands within CFAs	8,675	2,600	\$31.9M	\$2.1M	2,600	\$16.8M	\$0.7M
Non-Protected Private Lands within CFAs	45,339	3,500	\$133.0M	\$6.5M	2,100	\$83.8M	\$3.2M
Non-Protected Private Land outside of CFAs	2,400	500	\$17.4M	\$0.9M	400	\$9.0M	\$0.2M
New Sub-Totals	77,568	6,600	\$182.3M	\$9.5M	12,600	\$132.1M	\$5.5M
Revised Estimated Costs for Potential Implementation Outcomes:						\$7.6M to \$15M	
Prior Sub-Totals	82,563	5,000	\$207.3 M	\$10.4 M	15,600	\$159.8 M	\$7.6 M
Prior Estimated County Costs for Potential Implementation Outcomes:						\$18M	

# Implementation Options



## Protection and Restoration Options Based on Staffing

Estimated Annual Cost	Land Protection		Natural Resource Restoration		
Acres	250	500	400	800	1,200
Staff and Operations	2.5 FTE (Current)	3.5 FTE	1.5 FTE (Current)	2.5 FTE	3.5 FTE
Subtotal Cost	\$430K	\$545K	\$258K	\$373K	\$488K
Total Annual Cost	<b>\$430K</b>	<b>\$545K</b>	<b>\$773K</b>	<b>\$888K</b>	<b>\$1.0M</b>

Estimated Ten-year Cost	Land Protection		Natural Resource Restoration		
Acres	2,500	5,000	4,000	8,000	12,000
Staff and Operations	2.5 FTE (Current)	3.5 FTE	1.5 FTE (Current)	2.5 FTE	3.5 FTE
Subtotal Cost	\$4.3M	\$5.4M	\$2.6M	\$3.7M	\$4.9M
Total Ten-Year Cost	<b>\$4.3M</b>	<b>\$5.4M</b>	<b>\$7.8M</b>	<b>\$8.9M</b>	<b>\$10M</b>



# Draft Plan and Comments



## Discussion

- Public Comments
- Proposed Plan Revisions



# Recommendation on Adoption



## **Request for Commission Recommendation**

Adoption of Land  
Conservation Plan for  
Dakota County



**Thank you!**

