

WATER QUALITY REMAINS HIGH PRIORITY FOR MN FARMERS AS THEY BEGIN SPRING PLANTING

Farmers stay updated on latest conservation practices through research and involvement with government and local groups

Mankato, Minn. – April 28, 2011 – As farmers keep an eye on the rain clouds in the sky, their minds are focused on getting crops planted for the season. And more importantly, they are focused on planting those crops in the most sustainable way possible. In the land of 10,000 lakes, Minnesota farmers are especially concerned about water quality and want to part of the solution.

“As most of us do, I learned from my parents at a young age about conservation and how we need to take care of the land and water because we need to preserve the water and soil for many generations to come,” notes Lawrence Sukalski, a Fairmont farmer and 2006 National Conservation Legacy Award winner. Sukalski is also a Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) Director and an active member in conservation organizations, including the Minnesota Ag Water Resources Coalition. “Clean water is important to us, our families and our future.”

Farmers across Minnesota attend dozens of water quality meetings throughout the year to ensure they are part of the conversation. Gary Joachim, a MSGA Director and farmer from Owatonna, attended the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance forum this week to learn more about one of the state’s most recently debated bodies of water – Lake Pepin.

“Asking questions is the most important thing we can do,” states Joachim. “It was critical for farmers to be in attendance to have an honest discussion on what is really causing the delivery of sediment into Lake Pepin. It is now generally accepted that streambanks and bluffs along the Minnesota River Watershed are a major source of sediment, but that doesn’t mean we can’t all take active steps to be part of the solution. You cannot look at any one aspect of human activity in isolation.”

Minnesota soybean farmers devote a lot of time and money to the best conservation practices. They invest in machinery, guidance systems and technology to enhance sustainable practices on their farms. And through their checkoff, farmers are currently funding University research on several aspects of agriculture's effect on water quality. One of the most recent studies shows that sediment in the Minnesota River is caused primarily by erosion of streambanks, which has been occurring for centuries. This counters many pointing to agriculture as a major source of sediment.

Through research, asking questions and self-regulation, Minnesota farmers will continue to be stewards of the environment while growing Minnesota's agricultural industry and its ability to produce safe, affordable food for people around the world.

Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council

The Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council is made up of an elected board of 15 soybean producers from across the state. The mission of the council is to invest soybean checkoff dollars in well-defined research, marketing, education and commercialization programs. For more information, visit www.mnsoybean.org.

For more information or to set up an interview with a Minnesota soybean farmer, please contact Rachel Gray at rgray@wideopenthinking.com or 651-269-1327.

###