



# Grazing Management Initiative for the Root and Whitewater Rivers



## Clean Water Funds: 2011

Clean Water Grant	\$126,316
Leveraged Funds*	\$105,540
<b>Total Project Budget</b>	<b>\$231,856</b>

\* Leveraged Funds include required 25% local match

**Targeted Water:**  
County/Watershed Wide

**Project Sponsor:**  
Fillmore SWCD

**Partners:**  
Whitewater Watershed Project,  
Winona SWCD, Root River SWCD,  
Olmsted SWCD,  
Mower SWCD, Wabasha SWCD

**Grant Period:**  
January 2011 - December 2012

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## Project Narrative

The drainage areas for the Root and Whitewater rivers are located in the karst region of southeastern Minnesota. Karst is defined as a landscape with depressions such as sinkholes caused by underground erosion that dissolves the limestone bedrock making this region home to one of the largest collections of freshwater springs in the United States and some of the best trout fishing in the Midwest. However, the hollow nature of the karst terrain also makes this region especially vulnerable to ground water contamination from bacteria and nutrients from livestock manure and sediment resulting from soil erosion. The Root, Whitewater, and adjacent watersheds have considerably more livestock than western portions of the region. Grazing livestock helps keep more land in perennial vegetation as either pasture or hay. Pasture and hay land have been shown to significantly reduce soil erosion rates (compared to row crops) and nutrient and bacteria runoff.

Providing technical assistance to producers is one way to encourage them to adopt managed grazing practices that benefit water resources as well as their economic returns on marginal lands. Since 2009, 35 producers have received help with developing and implementing grazing management plans on 3000 acres. About 30 more producers have plans developed that are ready for implementation. Most of the funding for installing the grazing practices comes from the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Current EQIP contracts are paying over \$850,000 to Root River producers. By extending the work area of the Grazing Specialist into the Whitewater and adjacent watersheds, crucial technical assistance will be available in the area with the greatest need for grazing information.

