

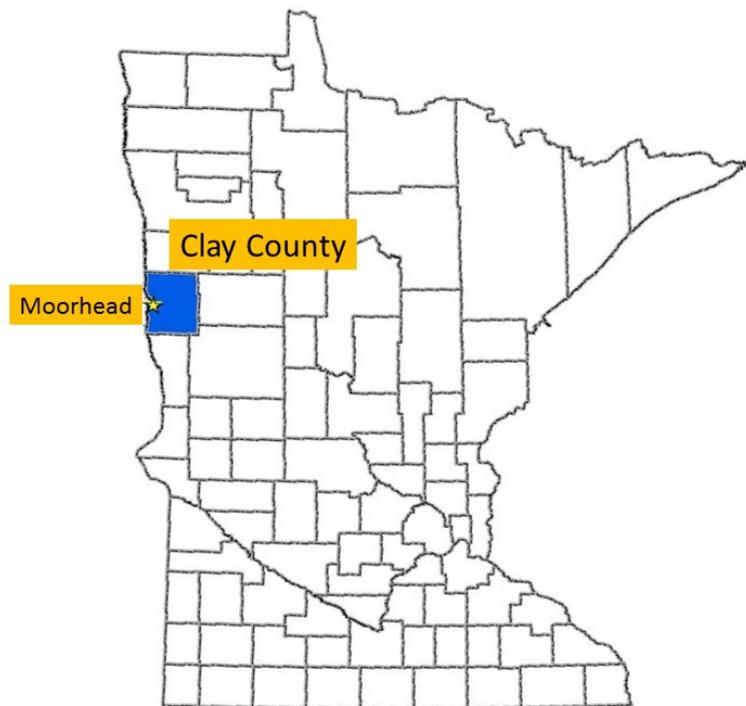
# THE CLAY COUNTY

## PRIORITY CONCERNS SCOPING DOCUMENT

A precursor to

# THE CLAY COUNTY LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

2017



## Introduction

**Population and Population Trends:** Clay County is located in west central Minnesota along the western boundary separated from North Dakota by the Red River of the North. Moorhead, the county seat, is centrally located along the western boundary of the county. Clay County is bordered by Wilkin County to the south, Otter Tail County to the south east, Becker County to the east and Norman County to the north.

According to the 2010 census, the population of Clay County was 58,999. The Minnesota State Demographics Center estimated the population to be 62,181 in 2015. Moorhead comprises 67% of the County's total population. The cities of Dilworth, Barnesville, Hawley and Glyndon comprise another 16% of the County's total population with the remaining residing outside these incorporated areas. The Minnesota State Demographic Center projects the population will increase by 11% by 2045.

**Dominant Land Use and Trends:** Clay County encompasses 1,054 square miles or 675,026 acres. It is divided nearly in half north to south with the western half comprised of the very fertile Red River of the North Basin of Northwestern Minnesota. The eastern half of the county is dominated by beach ridge deposits associated with Glacial Lake Agassiz. Cultivated land constitutes the largest portion of Clay County at 76.8%. The remaining 23.2% of the land use is comprised of urban development/open space (6.6%), grassland, hayland, or pasture (6.4%), bog, marsh, fen (wetland) (5.2%), forested land (3.0%), water (1.8%), Barren Land (0.1%) and brushland (<0.1%).

**Plan Responsibility and Updates:** The responsibility of administering and coordinating implementation of the Clay County Local Water Management Plan is assigned to the Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (Clay SWCD). Input, guidance and direction is provided by the Clay County Local Water Management Plan Advisory Committee. This committee is comprised of citizen, interest group, local, state and federal agency representatives.

The original Clay County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan was locally adopted on June 12, 1990. Updates to the plan were completed in 1997 and 2005. The 2005 plan was amended in 2010.

The current plan was scheduled to expire on December 31, 2015, however the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) granted a one year extension. It is expected that the revised plan will be submitted for State approval by the December 31, 2016 deadline.

**List of Priority Concerns:** The following priority concerns were identified through prior public meetings, township surveys and agency input and are ranked in order of concern;

1. **Water Quality:** Including, but not limited to; impaired waters (TMDL/WRAPS), nonpoint pollution, groundwater/aquifer pollution and protection (WHP, DWSMA), septic systems.
2. **Natural Resource Enhancement & Protection:** Including, but not limited to; wetland/prairie restoration and protection, stream/river restoration, connectivity and buffers.
3. **Flood Damage Reduction:** Including, but not limited to; flooding (Fargo-Moorhead Flood Risk Management Project), effects of tiling (DWM), drainage.
4. **Erosion Concerns:** Including, but not limited to; soil erosion (wind and water), streambank erosion, sedimentation of streams, rivers, ditches, promotion of BMPs (cover crops, residue management, soil health, and field windbreaks).

**Priority Concerns Identification:** The Clay SWCD secured input through the Notification of Plan Update process. This included input by state agencies including the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Department of Health, MN Pollution Control Agency, BWSR and the Environmental Quality Board. Federal agencies include the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Local input was requested from 4 adjacent counties, 2 watershed districts, 9 cities and municipalities, 30 townships, local units of government, and public meetings. Although not required, the City of Fargo, Cass County and the Cass Soil Conservation District of North Dakota were given opportunity to provide input.

In addition, resource related concerns were gathered from existing planning efforts and documents including the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District Watershed Management Plan, the Wild Rice Watershed District Watershed Management Plan and adjacent county Local Water Management Plans.

**Local, State and Federal Agency Input:** The Clay SWCD solicited and received input from several local, state and federal agencies or interest group representatives. The input received helped determine the top water resource related concerns Clay County should focus on in the coming decade. The comments received are as follows:

Board of Water and Soil Resources (Brett Arne, Board Conservationist, Detroit Lakes, MN)

1. Erosion and sediment control
2. Flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement
3. Stakeholder inclusion in update process
4. Stormwater pollution loading
5. Use of tools and technology to prioritize, target and measure projects
6. Collaboration and communication between SWCD and county for programs

MN Pollution Control Agency (Reed Larson, Manager, North Watershed Section, Watershed Division, St Paul, MN)

1. Water quality (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and impaired waters
2. BMP targeting
3. Restoring and buffering riverine surface waters
4. Pro-actively address failing septic systems

MN Department of Agriculture (Rob Sip, Environmental Policy Specialist, Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division, St Cloud, MN)

1. Cover crop and residue management
2. Drainage water management (DWM)
3. Windbreaks and vegetative plantings
4. Goundwater protection

MN Department of Health (Jenilynn Marchand, Principal Planner, Environmental Health Division, Source Water Protection Unit, Bemidji, MN)

1. Unused and unsealed wells
2. Landuse as it relates to groundwater contamination
3. Promote landowner participation to protect highly vulnerable DWSMAs.

MN Department of Natural Resources (Theresa Olson, NW Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Bemidji, MN)

1. Wetland and Prairie Protection and Restoration
2. Water conservation for State Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific and Natural Areas, wetlands and other easements
3. Use of MN DNR watershed health assessment tool in assessing vulnerabilities
4. Coordination and implementation of Fargo-Moorhead Flood Risk Management Project
5. Correct culvert replacement to maintain connectivity
6. Buffering and channel restoration of first order streams
7. Invasive species

Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (Bruce Albright, Administrator, Barnesville, MN)

1. Transition into One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P)
2. Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) for Buffalo River and Upper Red River
3. Concentrate on restoration of Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee
4. Erosion and sediment control

Wild Rice Watershed District (Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Ada, MN)

1. Water Quality (surface and groundwater), WRAPS development and implementation
2. Natural Resource Enhancement (NRE) and Protection (Felton ditch and South Branch of the Wild Rice River)
3. Erosion (South Branch of the Wild Rice River)
4. Flood Damage Reduction (FDR) on Felton Ditch and South Branch of the Wild Rice River

Hagen Township (Mark Ciernia, Chairman Hagen Township)

1. Subsurface drainage
2. Ground water center pivot irrigation

River Keepers (Christine Holland, Executive Director, Riverkeepers, Fargo, ND)

1. Urban Best Management Practices

**Citizen Input:**

A Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan Advisory Committee meeting was held on December 10, 2014. A meeting to solicit public input was held on August 8, 2016. Additional opportunities for public input will be included in future Advisory Committee meetings.

These priorities will be the foundation of the Clay County Local Water Management Plan for 2017 through 2027. In the coming months, the Clay County Local Water Management Plan Advisory Committee will;

Request existing information from agencies to help assess priority concerns

Identify goals and objectives to address the priority concerns

Develop a 5 year implementation program for ongoing activities

Write a water resource management plan containing 1) Executive Summary, 2) Priority Concerns Assessment, 3) Priority Concerns Goals and Objectives, 4) Implementation Program for the Priority Concerns, 5) Implementation Program for Ongoing Activities, and 6) Appendix

As required by Minnesota Statute, a public hearing will be held to validate the focus of the final plan. The plan will then be submitted for final state review and approval. Once the plan is approved at the state level, it can be adopted by Clay County and implementation programs can be initiated.

**Priority Concerns Not Addressed by this Plan;** Inherently, there are issues and concerns that are unable to be adequately addressed through the Local Water Management Plan. Additionally, some issues and concerns should not be addressed through this plan, but through other entities' plans and implementation programs such as County Planning and Zoning, Watershed Districts, and others. Some of these issues include: agricultural preservation, land use conflicts, resource use conflicts, etc.