

# FINAL REPORT

## 1999 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2001

**TITLE:** Protecting Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Kurt Chatfield

**ORGANIZATION:** Dakota County Office of Planning

(with the following project partners: Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, Dakota County Township Officers Association, University of Minnesota Dakota County Extension Service, 1000 Friends of Minnesota, Friends of the Mississippi River, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, and the Dakota County Agricultural Protection Task Force)

**ADDRESS:** 14955 Galaxie Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124

**WEB SITE ADDRESS:** [www.co.dakota.mn.us](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us)

**FUND:** Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

**LEGAL CITATION:** ML 1999, Ch. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. 8 (c)

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT:** \$200,000

### Overall Project Outcome and Results

A farmland and natural area protection plan was developed to address the threats to farmland and natural areas in rapidly growing Dakota County. The plan contains strategies and tools for protecting high-priority farmland and natural areas, and four implementation options. The plan will be presented to the Dakota County Board.

### Project Results, Use and Dissemination

The project originated in citizen concerns about the impacts of growth and development on farmland and natural areas. A multi-organization collaborative was formed in 1999 to conduct the project, using LCMR funds.

More than 1000 citizens, landowners, elected officials, and other stakeholders participated in over 70 meetings to identify and prioritize high-value farmland and natural areas. Project information was posted on the Dakota County website. Press releases were published in area newspapers, and meeting notices were mailed to over 3,000 interested people. The meetings helped people understand the importance of farmland and natural areas in Dakota County, threats to the resource, and ways to protect priority land areas. National experts spoke about farmland and natural area protection at public meetings, and worked with the project partners to develop land protection strategies.

Digital land cover mapping and analysis were used to identify priority farmland and natural areas. Detailed countywide maps were presented to citizens for their input at public meetings. The final maps reflected a combination of citizen preferences and scientific interpretation.

400 citizens were surveyed by telephone about the need to protect farmland and natural areas in the County, the type of public financing mechanism they preferred (bond, levy, none), and how much they would be willing to pay for a countywide land protection program.

Dakota County is currently working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in a pilot program for farmland protection.

**PROTECTING DAKOTA COUNTY FARMLAND AND NATURAL AREAS  
FINAL REPORT**

AUG 13 2001

**Date of Report** : July 1, 2001  
LCMR Final Work Program Report  
**Date of Work Program Approval** : June 16, 1999  
**Project Completion Date** : June 30, 2001

**LCMR Work Program 1999**

**I. PROJECT TITLE:** U5 Protecting Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas

**Project Manager:** Kurt Chatfield  
**Affiliation:** Senior Planner, Physical Development Division  
Dakota County  
**Mailing Address:** Western Service Center  
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FINAL REPORT

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**Total Biennial Project Budget:**

|   |                     |                      |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| <b>\$ LCMR:</b>                                   | \$200,000.00        | <b>\$ Match \$ 0</b> |
| <b>- LCMR amount spent (7/1/1/99 - 12/31/00):</b> | <u>\$165,712.80</u> |                      |
| <b>\$LCMR balance:</b>                            | \$ 34,287.20        |                      |

There is no match requirement for this project. (See letter and attachments from John Velin, Executive Director, dated June 18, 1999.) The previous budget detail referenced \$50,000 that project partners expect to contribute as in-kind services toward achievement of project goals. This reference has been removed in the above summary.

**A. Legal Citation:** ML 1999, Chap. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. 8 (c)

**Appropriation Language:** \$100,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Dakota county to inventory and identify unique farmland and natural areas and protect land through conservation easements.

**B. Status of Match Requirement:** No match required.

## **II. PROJECT SUMMARY AND RESULTS:**

### **Project Abstract**

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Digital land cover mapping and analysis were used to identify priority farmland and natural areas. Detailed countywide maps were presented to citizens for their input at public meetings. The final maps reflected a combination of citizen preferences and scientific interpretation.

400 citizens were surveyed by telephone about the need to protect farmland and natural areas in the County, the type of public financing mechanism they preferred (bond, levy, none), and how much they would be willing to pay for a countywide land protection program.

Dakota County is currently working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in a pilot program for farmland protection.

## **III. PROGRESS SUMMARY July 1, 2000 to December 31, 2000**

Project Partners: Dakota County  
University of Minnesota Extension Service, Dakota County  
Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Dakota County Township Officers Association  
1000 Friends of Minnesota  
Friends of the Mississippi  
Minnesota Farmers Union  
Minnesota Land Trust  
The Trust for Public Land.

Project Need:

1. Efforts to protect farmland and natural areas are being threatened by growing pressures to convert these lands into urban development and to fragment farms by rural residential housing.
2. Townships in Dakota County have been leaders in preserving farmland and open space through land use planning and zoning. Cities in Dakota County have also been leaders with innovative programs to protect natural resources, programs to dedicate land for parks and open space, and providing strong support for a countywide system of greenways.
3. Local governments need a "toolkit" of methods and programs to provide them with more ways to protect farmland and natural areas in Dakota County.

Administration of the Project:

The Agreement between the State of Minnesota (Department of Natural Resources) and Dakota County was completed on October 1, 1999. Partnership agreements have been executed between Dakota County and each of the project partners, except for the Township Officers Association. Funds for the Township Officers Association will be administered through Dakota County, with payments based on invoices approved for payment by the Chair of the Township Officers Association.

**Result 1. Develop a collaborative for farmland and natural area protection.**

***Task A. Form a collaborative that includes the partners of this proposal, local residents, townships, cities, and state and regional agencies.***

**Status Report 7/1/1/99 - 12/01/99:** A collaborative was formed and was in place as of July 1, 1999. Members include the project partners and citizens and elected officials from a grass-roots organization called "Dakota County Agricultural Preservation Task Force." Project partners are:

- Dakota County
- The University of Minnesota Extension Service, Dakota County
- The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District
- The Dakota County Township Officers Association
- 1000 Friends of Minnesota, Friends of the Mississippi
- Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Land Trust
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Minnesota Land Trust

Cities and state and regional agencies are informed about project activities as appropriate.

The collaborative has met four times during the first six months of the project: July 20, August 27, September 23, October 21, and December 2, 1999. Dakota County staff facilitated the formation of the collaborative. The Project Manager serves as the chair for meetings of the collaborative.

The collaborative reviews progress on the project and major policy directions, such as the content for the initial round of public meetings and the financial options survey.

**Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:** The collaborative continues to meet on a regular basis to coordinate project tasks and keep the project on schedule. The collaborative met on the following dates: December 22, 1999, January 6, 2000, February 15, April 13, and July 25.

**Status Report 7/1/00 – 12/31/00**

The collaborative met on July 25, 2000, July 27, 2000 (Ag. Protection Scenario Analysis), Aug. 3, 2000, Sept. 6, 2000, Oct. 18, 2000.

**Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

The collaborative met on January 12, 2000, Feb. 12, 2000, Feb 22, 2000, March 14, 2000, April 4, 2000, April 6, 2000, April 11, 2000, May 9, 2000, June 26, 2000.

***Task B. The collaborative will provide recommendations on program activities and will help to facilitate public participation efforts.***

**Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/01/99:** The collaborative reviews progress on the project and discusses major policy directions. In the first six months of the project, the collaborative has focused on public awareness meetings (Objective 2), preparation of information and methodologies for prioritizing farmland and natural areas for protection (Objective 3), and development of a financing options survey (Objective 4).

Three sub-groups were formed to work on the following project tasks: Public Awareness, Resource Assessment, and Financing Options Survey. Ideas and proposals from these three sub-groups were brought back to the collaborative for discussion and decision-making at the meetings noted above.

**Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:** During this phase of the project the collaborative concentrated on coordinating the Financing Options Survey described in greater detail under "Result 4"(See exhibits in report 2). The collaborative also planned for the public meetings that were held in March and April (See exhibit in report 2). In addition, Dakota County staff gave regular presentations to the Dakota County Township Agricultural Protection Task Force, as well as at the annual and quarterly meetings of the Dakota County Township Officers.

In February, Governor Ventura, Ted Mondale, and a number of Commissioners visited the Extension and Conservation Center in Farmington. The purpose of the meeting was to address farmland loss and urban growth pressures in rural Dakota County. County staff gave a presentation about the Farmland and Natural Areas Project and citizen interests in land protection.

In March, Dakota County staff developed a project web page that provides: updates on the project's status, announcements about public participation opportunities, descriptions of land protection tools, and project contact information. The web page is located at: Ž HYPERLINK <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/planning/land/index.htm>  
– [www.co.dakota.mn.us/planning/land/index.htm](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/planning/land/index.htm) (See exhibit in report 2).

**Status Report (7/1/00 – 12/31/00):** During this phase of the project the collaborative met with agricultural protection experts Tom Daniels, Ed Minehan, and Denny Caneff to discuss scenarios for protecting farmland in Dakota County. County landcover data, growth trends, regional policies, and local zoning were used to identify priority areas. In preparation for the meeting with the collaborative, the agricultural experts were given an aerial tour of the County.

The collaborative coordinated a meeting with the Dakota County Agricultural Protection Task Force to answer questions about farmland protection efforts in other parts of the Country and how they might be adapted to work in Dakota County

The collaborative helped organize a public meeting at the Dakota County Extension Center in Farmington that was attended by more than 100 citizens and locally elected officials.

In addition, the collaborative assisted with organization of the following meetings:

- 1) Meeting with agricultural business leaders in Hampton in August.
- 2) Agency round table meeting with state, federal and non-profit agencies that are responsible for farmland and natural area protection programs (Sept, 2000).
- 3) Public meetings held in 6 different locations to discuss alternative scenarios for protecting farmland and natural areas.

**Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

The collaborative met 9 times in the last 6 months of the project. The purpose of the meetings was to coordinate the following project activities:

- 1) Coordinated the last round of public meetings to review the draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan (meetings were held at three locations in May)
- 2) Planned and coordinated for 2 meetings with realtors and developers
- 3) Planned and coordinated meeting with area farmers to discuss land protection tools and their interest in permanent farmland protection
- 4) Planned and coordinated individual meetings with staff and officials from cities and townships throughout the County (23 separate meetings).
- 5) Coordinated public meeting on transfer of development rights (TDR) for Dakota County Townships at the request of township officers that attended public meetings in May.
- 6) Reviewed and commented on draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan



**Result 2. Increase public awareness of the need to protect farmland and natural areas.**

A public awareness program will be developed that contains four elements:

- a. ***Countywide meetings designed to create an understanding of the importance of farmland and natural areas for sustainable communities.***
- b. ***An educational program directed to farmers and agri-business (including financial institutions and realtors).***
- c. ***An educational program directed to local elected officials, planning commission members, staff, and other local policy makers.***

**Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/01/99:** A Public Awareness Sub-Group involving each of the partners in the project, as well as representatives of the existing Dakota County Agricultural Preservation Task Force" was formed. The University of Minnesota Extension Service, Dakota County leads this Sub-Group.

A series of six public meetings were held during November. These meetings were held at six locations in Dakota County to create a better understanding of the importance of protecting farmland and natural areas and to begin to understand the interests and priorities of citizens in protecting these lands. The meetings were publicized in the local media and a postcard was sent directly to more than 3,000 citizens announcing the meetings. (See Exhibits from Report 1.) Personal letters also were sent to all mayors, township chairs and supervisors, and township and city planning commission members.

In addition, the Public Awareness Sub-Group attempted to target agri-businesses in its mailings. However, we do not know how many agri-business representatives attended the meetings. We plan to work on other phases of the project's public awareness effort that will directly target and involve these groups.

Over 200 people attended the six meetings. (See Exhibits from Report 1) The Public Awareness Sub-Group developed the agenda for the meetings. (See Exhibits from Report 1) for the agenda and members of the Sub-Group.) Members of the Public Awareness Sub-Group also prepared a PowerPoint slide presentation for use in each meeting. (See Exhibits from Report 1. Some photographs not included.) A local citizen hosted each meeting. The host reviewed the meeting agenda with the attendees and helped both to facilitate the meeting and to assure that local interests were understood and addressed. The hosts of the meeting are identified in Exhibits in Report 1.

At each meeting, four exercises were performed.

- In the first exercise, the citizens attending the meeting were asked to allocate dollars either to preservation of farmland or natural areas. The objective of the exercise was to determine a relative priority of the citizens of Dakota County for protecting each of these valuable resources. In total, the attendees allocated 55% of their dollars to farmland preservation and 45% to preservation of natural areas. The detailed results of their decisions are recorded in Exhibits in Report 1).

- For the second exercise, the attendees were asked to rank criteria by which farmland and natural areas might be prioritized. (See Exhibits in Report 1) The purpose of this exercise was to begin to identify criteria that citizens of the County believe are important to consider in ranking lands within the County for preservation. The results of these rankings are being analyzed at the Dakota County Extension office and will be used both by the Resource Assessment Sub-Group and in future public meetings.
- The third exercise asked citizens to mark on County maps provided for their use the areas of farmland and natural value that they felt were important to protect. The Office of Planning is evaluating the results of this exercise, which will be used by the Public Awareness Sub-Group and in future public meetings.
- The final exercise provided attendees with the opportunity to take a recyclable camera provided by the project to take pictures of areas of the County that they felt should be protected. The purpose of this exercise is to create a visual/pictorial record of valued farmland and natural areas. Thirty-seven (37) individuals accepted the challenge to provide such a record for the project. To date, six sets of pictures have been returned. This exercise will be continued through a full year's cycle to capture pictures in all four seasons.

Attendees were asked to evaluate the session that they attended. The meetings received a composite rate of 3.3, on a scale from "1" (poor) to "4" (excellent).

In addition to the public meetings, the partners in the project hosted a booth at the Dakota County Fair to provide citizens an initial introduction to the project.

At the conclusion of the first phase of the public participation effort, we feel that we have developed momentum for the project. The challenge will be to maintain this momentum. The Public Awareness Sub-Group will plan for another set of meetings, tentatively scheduled for April 2000. At these meetings, the results of exercises in the first six meetings will be reviewed, further issues in the prioritization process will be explored, and strategies combining land preservation tools through successful projects in other areas will be explored with attendees to determine perspectives on their relevance to Dakota County. The results of the financing options survey (see Objective 4) are expected to be useful in these meetings.

**Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:** A series of six public meetings were held in March and April of 2000 at six locations in Dakota County. The purpose of this second round of meetings was to report back on information gathered throughout the County in the first round of meetings as well as to provide more information about the availability and use of land protection tools (such as purchase of development right and transfer of development rights). The University of Minnesota Extension Service lead the effort to publicize the meetings in the local media and a postcard was sent directly to more than 3,000 citizens announcing the meetings. Personal letters also were sent to all mayors, township chairs and supervisors, and township and city planning commission members. A press release was distributed by the County's Communications Director to newspapers and radio stations. An ad for the meetings was placed in local newspapers.

There were three parts to the meetings:



Attendees were able to view a County-wide map prepared by Dakota County staff that was a compilation of over 40 marked up maps from the first round of public meetings. The composite map (see exhibits in report 2) depicts natural areas and farmland that were identified by citizens. Attendees were invited to make additions to the maps for natural areas and farmlands that were not represented.

Dakota County and Extension staff presented a Powerpoint presentation that contained dozens of photographs taken by participants of the first round of meetings. The photographs served as a visual inventory of the most valued natural areas and farmlands in the County. In addition, County and Extension staff presented the results of the Financing Options Survey and responded to questions.

Attendees were shown a video about farmland and natural protection programs operating in other parts of the country. After the presentation attendees were asked to break into small groups to discuss how land protection tools might be used in Dakota County. Following small group discussion, attendees reported to the larger group about their interest and concerns about using land protection tools such as purchase of development rights in Dakota County.

Over 200 people attended the six meetings. Many of the citizens were local elected officials. The Public Awareness Sub-Group developed the agenda for the meetings. Again, a local citizen hosted each meeting.

In addition to the public meetings, County Planning staff made presentations before over 100 people at the School of Environmental Studies in District 196 and have made a presentation to the Apple Valley Rotary. Meetings about the project have also begun with city planners. In late June a ½ day forum was held with planners from cities in Dakota County to discuss project coordination between communities. Finally, a cable TV presentation was made by Dakota County and Extension staff to increase public awareness of farmland/natural area loss and existence of a project.

Project materials have been prepared and will be available at the Dakota County Fair in early August.

Arrangements were made to bring National farmland protection experts Tom Daniels and Ed Minihan to workshops and public meetings planned for late July. The purpose of the workshops will be to answer specific questions about protection programs in other parts of the country and help devise strategies to protect farmland in Dakota County. The experts will spend the first day working with the Dakota County Agricultural Protection Task force. In the evening they will give a public presentation and address questions on an expert panel. On the following day they will meet with project partners to develop a series of land protection scenarios to be reviewed by the public at the next round of meetings in the Fall.

Also of note, one of our project partners, Minnesota Farmers Union, is planning an agribusiness forum scheduled for this fall.

### **Status Report 7/31/00 – 12/31/01:**

Hosted a public meeting with two farmland preservation experts in July of 2000 and had over 100 participants at this meeting. Citizens had an opportunity to ask about successful farmland protection efforts in other parts of the country.

Held a series of six public meetings in November. These meetings were held at six locations that differed from the spring 2000 locations in an attempt to continue to reach as wide an array of citizens of Dakota County as possible. Over one hundred and forty people attended these meetings. The meetings had two objectives. The first, to review and receive citizen input on the farmland preservation scenarios created with the experts that visited in July (see exhibit from report 3). The second, to focus on what specific natural areas (See exhibits from report 3) citizens would like to protect and how those areas should be protected (public acquisition/public access versus conservation easements on private land).

In the evaluations, citizens rated the meetings at 3.3 where a 4 was excellent, a 3 was good, a 2 was fair, and a 1 was poor.

Hosted a meeting in October of 2000 of state, federal, and non-profit agencies that have an interest in natural areas in the county and explored ways we could coordinate program funding with land protection efforts opportunities in the County.

A roundtable discussion was conducted in August, 2000 with members of the County's agricultural business community. The group consisted of representatives from implement dealers, elevator operators, creameries, agricultural financing businesses and other businesses dependent on Dakota County agriculture. A public presentation was made and participants discussed how a farmland preservation program would impact their businesses.

A follow up meeting is being planned to include realtors and developers to describe efforts to protect farmland and natural areas and gather their comments and perspective. In addition, project partners will meet with the Dakota County Agricultural Protection Task Force to review the draft of the Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan.

Plans are being made to meet with city staff, planning commissions, councils and town boards to discuss County and local efforts to protect farmland and natural areas. County and local plans will be coordinated as a result of these efforts.

### **Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

Three public meetings were held in April to review the draft land protection strategies that were developed from previous citizen meetings and discussions among the project partners. The meetings were advertised in local papers and in the Dakota County Update. For natural areas, citizens reviewed and commented on maps that identified natural corridors as a land protection strategy. They were also asked to comment on the use of conservation easements as a land protection tool. For natural areas, citizens were asked whether they preferred no public access, some public access, or full access with fee title acquisition. More people favored some public access as opposed to no access or full access.

Citizens were also asked to review a farmland protection strategy that gave priority to highly productive farmland adjacent to natural areas (Farmland Scenario F-1). A second map showed large contiguous blocks of farmland enrolled in the Metro Ag. Preserve Program that is outside of the 2040 MUSA that could be eligible for an enhanced Ag. Preserve Program (Farmland Scenario F-2)

A county web page was also used to provide information about the project. The web page contains the project history, fact sheets for land protection, and will soon contain the draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan

An article was published in the Dakota County Extension Service Extension Line newsletter. The article identified the challenges facing Dakota County agriculture and the threats to natural areas.

A special meeting was held with Dakota County farmers to discuss land values, farm economics, and the land protection scenarios listed in the draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan. Farmers were asked about their interest in long-term farming, and whether or not they would be willing to sell a conservation easement. They were concerned about the amount of money that might be needed to protect a substantial farming area using conservation easements. They were also concerned about being potentially surrounded by development. Most farmers that attended the meeting were interested in conservation easements but needed more information and a greater comfort level with the tool before making a commitment. The phase II LCMR pilot project with Minnesota Department of Agriculture is intended to provide one on one landowner outreach efforts to address these concerns.

About 25-30 township officials (25-30) attended a transfer of development rights workshop on June 13, 2000. Jean Coleman from Biko and associates described the use of TDR and then used specific Dakota County examples. Several of the townships are considering the use of TDR but require technical assistance because of its relative complexity. The phase II LCMR pilot project with Minnesota Department of Agriculture is intended to provide technical assistance on TDR and other tools.

Project partners met with staff and officials from 10 cities and 13 townships to discuss large scale maps of their communities that identified priority farmland and natural areas from the public meetings. At the meetings, project partners discussed city and township plans and the communities' interest in land protection.

### **Result 3. Identify and prioritize the farmland and natural areas to be protected.**

Farmland and natural areas to be protected will be identified and prioritized in a three-step process:

- a. Land-based inventory and identification.***
- b. Develop and apply a functional classification system for lands identified for protection.***
- c. Prioritize farmland and natural areas to be protected.***

**Status Report 7/1/1/99 - 12/01/99:** The first six months of the project has emphasized the land-based inventory and identification element of the process. A Resource Assessment Sub-Group was formed to direct the resource assessment efforts. The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District leads the Sub-Group. The Sub-Group includes representatives from the SWCD, Dakota County Office of Planning, the Friends of the Mississippi River, and the Township Officers Association.

The initial inventory and identification process has two components: natural resource assessment and farmland assessment.

Natural Resource Assessment. The land-based inventory and identification process includes the development of a countywide natural resource assessment ranking and assessment using Geographic Information System data. It serves the following functions:

- Identification and prioritization of areas for detailed land cover mapping (see below); and
- Creating continuous natural resource protection prioritization coverage to fill in areas that will not have detailed land cover mapped.

The "Dakota County Natural Area Mapping Criteria" are attached as exhibits in Report 1. These criteria are based on the protocols and ranking procedures developed by the "Green Corridor Project." The protocols and ranking procedures were modified for the non-farmland areas of Dakota County.

Using ArcView, the Dakota County Office of Planning broke down Dakota County into a series of 40-acre cells. Each cell was assigned a score based on the mapping criteria. The scores were tabulated and linked with the 40-acre cell GIS coverage. A threshold score was identified. Those "cells" (40-acre parcels) which exceeded the threshold score were combined to produce approximately 120 square miles where detailed vegetative land cover will be identified and mapped. (See exhibits in Report 1) Exhibits in Report 1 also show other areas within Dakota County where land cover will be mapped using the methodologies developed by the SWCD, Friends of the Mississippi River, and the Department of Natural Resources as part of the "Pine Bend/Vermillion Bottoms Land Cover Mapping Project" funded by a DNR Greenway grant in 1998. (In addition, detailed land cover mapping from other projects, such the Hastings Area Nitrate Study funded by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Big Rivers Project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is also being incorporated into the LCMR project.)

Land cover mapping is currently underway.

Farmland Assessment. The purpose of the farmland assessment process is to identify high value farmland in Dakota County that may be targeted for preservation in later stages of the project.

In order to develop the farmland assessment, it was first necessary to create an inventory of agriculture in Dakota County. Based on this inventory, high value farmland within this inventory was identified using the County's GIS databases and property records information.

Second, rural residential development was mapped to highlight areas where farmland has been lost due to development. Future plans for urban growth also were mapped using the Metropolitan Council's Growth Management Policy Areas and local comprehensive plans.

The resulting series of maps illustrated:

- Land in Dakota County that currently is in agricultural use
- The best farming soils in Dakota County
- Land enrolled in Agriculture Preserve, Green Acres, or Conservation Reserve Program
- Rural residential development exceeding one unit per 40 acres
- The Metropolitan Council Growth Management Policy Areas
- Local zoning and existing land use

The maps were used at the six public meetings held in November as a basis for discussion of priorities for the land that might be preserved for agriculture in the County.

In future phases of the project, the Dakota County Office of Planning and the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District will combine citizen input received from the public meetings with the physical resource assessments completed in the first six months of the project.

#### **Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:**

##### Natural Area Assessment

The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District continues to map and identify natural areas in the County using a newly developed land classification system developed in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources. They have completed over 90% of the area to be mapped. Specifically, they have completed plotting and interpretation for 144 sections of land cover. Approximately 50 sections of land remain to be field checked. Land cover mapping will be completed by the end of August and analyzed in the late summer and early fall prior to the next round of public meetings.

County staff also produced a map of citizen-identified farmland and natural areas that will be combined with the above mentioned land cover mapping and used to develop land protection scenarios for natural areas.

##### Farmland Assessment

Dakota County Planning Staff used GIS to highlight agricultural lands in the County in relation to soil quality, local plans, current use, rural residential density, and the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA), and Urban Reserve districts. These new maps were created as a result of input from the first round of public meetings and public comment. The maps will be used in land protection workshops with national experts Tom Daniels and Ed Minihan. These experts will assist project partners with the prioritization process and development of multiple land protection scenarios.

**Status Report 7/1/00 - 12/31/00:** The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District completed the mapping and classification of natural areas in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources.

Natural areas in the County were mapped by the SWCD and then combined with citizen identified areas. The County Office of planning then used property information from the County's GIS to determine which natural areas are still privately owned and remain unprotected (see exhibit from report 3). In addition, examples of some of the County's most valued natural areas were mapped along with citizen photos of those areas and distributed at the public meetings that were held in November, 2000.

A functional classification system for lands that need to be protected will be developed largely from the landcover classification system that has already been used to categorize the areas by the SWCD. However, project partners plan to meet with staff and local officials from the cities and townships to refine the functional classification system according to local plans.

The farmland assessment was completed earlier in this project and took into consideration: soils, land in agricultural use, land enrolled in farm programs, the proximity of rural residential development, regional growth policy areas, and local zoning and comprehensive plans. In this stage of the project, alternate farmland protection scenarios were developed. The scenarios considered protecting farmland using three distinct strategies:

- 1) Using a buffer of protected farmland between the urbanizing area and traditional farming areas
- 2) Protecting the "best" farmland in areas where farmers are interested in long-term farming (for example, where land owners are enrolled in the Agricultural Preserve Program)
- 3) Protecting productive farmland adjacent to natural areas to combine open space protection efforts and benefit from the use of best management practices on farmland next to rivers and streams.

A preferred protection strategy is being developed and will be mapped for use in the draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan.

**Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

The draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan includes maps for the three farmland and three natural area protection strategies. The strategies used data and priorities listed in the previous progress report, in combination with citizen input about the proposed scenarios gathered at the final public meetings. The maps are included in the attached draft plan.

#### **Result 4.      Financing options survey.**

Dakota County residents will be surveyed to determine public perceptions and interest in public financing options for PDR, TDR, and fee title acquisition of farmland, natural areas, and open space. In this process, the partners will:

- a. Use the Washington-Chisago survey to develop and/or modify financing option survey questions for Dakota County.*
- b. Conduct the survey, involving approximately 400 randomly selected participants.*
- c. Analyze survey results and prepare a written report for the collaborative.*

**Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/01/99:** A Survey Design Sub-Group was created, involving four partners (The Trust for Public Land, Friends of the Mississippi, 1000 Friends of Minnesota, and Dakota County). Leadership for this element of the project is provided by The Trust for Public Land.

In the first six months of the project, a request for proposals for polling services was drafted and submitted to polling firms recommended by project partners. American Viewpoint was selected to provide polling services for the project.

The Sub-Group has worked with American Viewpoint to produce a first draft of a survey of public financing options, incorporating research conducted by The Trust for Public Land on public financing options. All project partners were given the opportunity to review and comment on the first draft of survey questions (October 21, 1999 collaborative meeting).

Currently, a second draft of the financing options survey is being prepared, incorporating the comments of partners on the first draft. It is anticipated that the survey will be in the field in January or February 2000. (The survey is being coordinated with the Metro Greenway survey, which is expected to be in the field in December of January.)

**Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:** The Financing Options Survey has been completed. The results of the Financing Options Survey and Analysis Report are shown in exhibits in report 2. The Trust for Public Land was the lead collaborator in the effort and completed the following tasks:

- Worked with the Financing Options sub-committee to produce a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and final version of a public opinion survey of natural areas and financing options.
- Worked with all project collaborators to review final draft of survey.
- Worked with American Viewpoint Inc to get the survey in the field by February.
- Worked with American Viewpoint Inc. to convey the results to the survey sub-committee.
- Worked with American Viewpoint and the survey sub-committee to finalize the written analysis and executive summary.
- Worked with American Viewpoint and the subcommittee to time the release of the results with the March and April public meetings.
- Presented the results of the Financing Options Survey to the public meetings held in March and April



**Status Report 7/1/00 - 12/31/00:** The Financing Options Survey has been completed. The results of the survey continue to be used at all public meetings and workshops associated with this project. Results of the Financing Options Survey have been used in local news stories about the project and as the basis of public support necessary to continue farmland and natural area protection efforts. In addition, conclusions from the Financing Options Survey provided a basis for estimating the amount of funding available for land protection. These funding projections were used to gauge the amount of land that could be protected in the different farmland and natural area protection scenarios.

**Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

The information from the Financing Options Survey was used to create land protection strategies and the survey results were included in the draft plan to demonstrate public support for land protection in Dakota County.

**Result 5. Use donated conservation easements to protect 350–500 acres of land.**

This project activity is scheduled to begin in January 2000 and continue until the end of the project in June of 2001. Activities include:

- a. Contact and meet with landowners to solicit their support for donating voluntary conservation easements. Process necessary paperwork for easements.*
- b. Establish an endowment to fund the cost of monitoring and enforcement of these donated conservation easements.*
- c. Prepare a map to show locations of contacted property owners and protected property. Prepare a report that describes how to set up a program for voluntary conservation easements (including legal requirements, techniques, difficulties, costs, and efforts made in Dakota County to acquire donated easements).*

**Status Report 7/1/1/99 - 12/01/99:** The Minnesota Land Trust is the lead partner for this element of the project.

The Minnesota Land Trust has initiated landowner education efforts, including:

- Participation in the project booth at the Dakota County Fair;
- Planning and coordinating a meeting for Dakota and Scott County landowners to discuss conserving land and conservation tools (e.g., easements); and
- Participation in the six public awareness meetings of the project to help to provide information (including handout materials) and answer questions about conservation easements.

In the first six months of the project, initial efforts have resulted in three new Dakota County contacts and one landowner visit.

In addition, the LCMR project will be highlighted at the East Metro Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Land Trust.

**Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:** The Minnesota Land Trust and Friends of the Mississippi River continue to cultivate relationships with landowners that may wish to donate conservation easements. They have met with landowners in Burnsville along the Minnesota River, and with a large landowner in southern Inver Grove Heights. They have also met with landowners along the Vermillion River and in the Township of Ravenna.

Landowner outreach is a component of all public meetings to date. At the public meetings landowners are asking questions about the benefits of donating conservation easements and receiving contact information from project partners.

**Status Report 7/1/00 - 12/31/00:**

Friends of the Mississippi River and Minnesota Land Trust have made a number of contacts with landowners that are interested in preserving natural areas on their property. Many of these contacts were made at the public meetings although the use of the donated conservation easement definitely has limited appeal to landowners with moderate or limited wealth. Here are some examples of progress toward land protection efforts:

The County Office of Planning has provided large scale maps to Friends of the Mississippi River that illustrate the locations of high priority natural areas identified by citizens. The maps contain property owner names so that individuals can be contacted about land preservation.

Friends of the Mississippi River staff have met with people who own land in Hampton Township and the city of Rosemount and passed their names along to Minnesota Land Trust to explore conservation easements.

Staff from Friends of the Mississippi River have conducted outreach to several landowners along the Mississippi River in Inver Grove Heights. One landowner whose property contains very high quality natural areas wrote a letter to project partners expressing his desire to protect his land and is consequently being considered as an applicant in the DNR's Metro Greenways Program.

There are on-going discussions with several other landowners in the Pine Bend Bluffs Area including a large industrial landowner. While some of these discussions are focused on acquisition while others are focused on conservation easements.

Staff from Friends of the Mississippi River are also exploring the protection of a 340 acre parcel of land along the river in Hastings. A conservation easement may not be an option for this piece of land that was identified by groups of citizens in natural area identification meetings.

Staff from Minnesota Land Trust have highlighted the Farmland and Natural Areas Project in their newsletter and participated in public forums. While not specifically assigned to landowner outreach as part of this project, MLT has made 5 new Dakota County landowner contacts and conducted 6 landowner site visits during this reporting period. In addition MLT has been in contact with a number of Dakota County township planning commissions and town boards to answer questions about conservation planning and greenways.

We propose to allocate the funds from result 5 "easements" in the following manner. To create a conservation easement, Minnesota Land Trust spends about 1/3 of their resources on professional services and about 2/3 of their resources on a stewardship fund. The professional services funds are used to pay MLT staff to place a permanent conservation easement on property, and the stewardship fund ensures that the easement will be preserved into the future. Should professional services expenses be less than what we have estimated, we propose to spend the remainder on the stewardship fund.

#### **Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

While the Minnesota Land Trust had a number of landowners express interest in protecting their property with a conservation easement, they were unable to complete any conservation easements within the LCMR grant period. The Minnesota Land Trust prepared a letter that summarized their efforts to protect land and offered two main reasons why efforts in Dakota County yielded different results than they had experienced in Washington County:

- 1) MLT had not established a reputation in Dakota County as they had in Washington County. Landowners in Dakota County were unfamiliar with MLT as an organization and had not worked with MLT on land protection prior to the LCMR grant.
- 2) Land ownership patterns in Dakota County are different than Washington County. From MLT's experience, landowners in Washington County tend to be more affluent and so are financially positioned to take advantage of the charitable tax deduction with a conservation easement. Many of Dakota County's landowners are farmers and are unable to take advantage of the tax deduction incentive. In Dakota County, many times the land is the farmers' greatest financial asset so they are hesitant to lower the property value by restricting future development.

MLT has provided a letter that summarizes the challenges they face in soliciting donated conservation easements (attachment A)

#### **Result 6. Develop a Countywide Plan that summarizes the results of this project.**

This project activity is scheduled to begin in January 2001 and finish in June 2001.

- a. The plan will be responsive to the desires of County residents and will support the goals of cities and townships to protect farmland and natural areas.*
- b. The plan will also recommend where various land protection techniques should be applied and define the landowner scenarios where they would work best.*
- c. The plan will contain an implementation strategy and schedule to address funding sources, including farmland and natural area protection objectives into other local plans and controls, and other necessary strategies.*

**Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/01/99:** Information from all of the elements of the project is being collected and stored for analysis and inclusion in the plan.

**Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:** While work on the plan doesn't officially begin until January of 2001 a large amount of information from the last 6-months will be included in the plan. The results of the Financing Options Survey and the subsequent analysis will be used to help define the scope of a land protection program. The resource assessment element combined with public comment from recent public awareness meetings will help shape what areas to protect. Later this summer and in the fall land protection experts Tom Daniels and Ed Minehan will make recommendations about strategies to protect lands that will be included in the plan (see exhibit in report 2).

**Status Report 7/1/00 – 12/31/00:** Planning staff met with experts Tom Daniels and Ed Minehan in preparation for writing the Land Protection Plan. Staff worked with the experts to develop land protection scenarios and evaluated their effectiveness. In preparation for the plan, staff presented the scenarios at 6 public meetings to find out which scenarios were preferred by citizens.

The Office of Planning continues to research other land protection programs to make use of those elements that have worked elsewhere and could work in Dakota County. In addition, staff are investigating implementation tools and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses and potential application in the County.

This Spring staff are planning to meet with staff and officials from cities and townships to determine the level of local support for a land protection program. If protecting natural areas and farmland is a local priority then we will pursue efforts to coordinate local and County protection efforts.

Staff intends to present the draft plan to the County Board in the spring after meeting with local units of government. Local community support will be necessary for the County Board to adopt a land protection plan that will contain land protection scenarios, an implementation strategy, and will recommend where and how land protection techniques should be applied.

#### **Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

The draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan was prepared by the Dakota County Office of Planning.

The draft plan begins with a statement of the problem and citizen concern over the loss of farmland and natural areas. Citizen concern was identified through the County-wide surveys, the Financing Options Survey, Stakeholder meetings. Over the course of the project, more than 70 meetings were held, engaging over 1000 citizens, elected officials, landowners, agency representatives, developers, farmers, and citizen advisory committees (Agricultural Protection Task Force, County Planning Commission) in a discussion about land protection in Dakota County. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the problem of land protection and citizen opinions. Stakeholder perspectives are described in more detail in Appendix A of the plan along with a summary of stakeholder attendance at key meetings.

The draft plan was written to support the goals of cities, townships, and other public agencies that have land protection programs. Regional and local plans were used to develop the land protection strategies and maps. Priority farmland and natural areas were identified in the plan using a combination of citizen input, local plans, and resource assessment using detailed land cover maps.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the draft plan analyzed both farmland and natural areas as resources, identified threats to those resources, and described opportunities for protecting them.

In Chapter 2, the approach for protecting farmland differs from the approach for protecting natural areas. For example: in order to protect farmland, economically viable farming operations are necessary. A core group of farms is needed to retain agricultural service businesses. Farms need to have farm neighbors to reduce land use conflicts. Inflated land prices and the need for cash flow are pressures that lead farmers to sell lots for rural residential development.

Staff researched land protection programs from around the country and selected program approaches that dealt with situations similar to Dakota County. These approaches were presented to citizens at public meetings in May in November of 2000 and refined in May of 2001 for inclusion in the draft plan. Three farmland protection strategies were identified in the draft plan:

- Strategy F1    Protect productive farmland in contiguous blocks next to natural corridors using conservation easements from willing sellers
- Strategy F2    Promote the use and enhancement of the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserve Program
- Strategy F3    Assist communities with local growth management controls to guide development away from priority farmland, using subdivision ordinances and transfer of development rights.

The farmland strategies propose to use different tools and approaches in different situations. The maps in the draft plan identify areas where conservation easements would be a priority and where the enhanced Metropolitan Agricultural Preserve Program would be a priority.

In Chapter 3, the approach for protecting for protecting natural areas is much different than the approach to protecting farmland. Many natural areas are in the suburban cities as well as in the rural townships. The draft plan recommends a natural corridors approach that "connects and protects" natural areas in Dakota County. The natural corridors approach was selected in part because it was an effective means for protecting wildlife habitat and surface water quality. Dakota County citizen surveys indicate a strong interest in protecting water quality. This is reflected as a major theme in the plan, as many of the natural corridors are streams and rivers.

The draft plan includes three natural area protection strategies that were customized for Dakota County:

Strategy N1: Protect priority natural areas in corridors using conservation easements and fee title acquisition from willing sellers.

Strategy N2: Work with other agencies through their programs to protect County priority natural areas

Strategy N3: Work with large landowners and agencies to protect natural areas on their properties

The draft plan will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners at their Physical Development Committee meeting in September, 2001. A workshop has been scheduled in October to review the plan in detail and discuss implementation options. Four levels of implementation have been identified in Chapter 4:

- 1) Adopt plan, no County program
- 2) Adopt plan, establish seed money fund for participation in outside programs, no County program
- 3) Adopt plan, establish seed money fund for participation in outside programs, County pilot program
- 4) Adopt plan, establish County program with funding from referendum

The implementation schedule for the draft plan will depend on County Board action. County staff will be working with staff from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to begin implementation of the phase II LCMR project that focuses on landowner outreach, and technical assistance to local units of government on land protection tools.

#### IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS

[NOTE: There is no match requirement for this project. All match amounts reflect an in-kind contributions of partners to the project]

##### **Result 1: Development of a farmland and natural area protection collaborative.**

A farmland and natural area collaborative will be formed that includes the partners of this proposal, local residents, townships, cities, and state and regional agencies. The collaborative will provide recommendations on program activities and will help to facilitate public participation efforts.

Lead Collaborator: Dakota County Townships Officers' Association.

|         |                      |                   |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Budget: | LCMR Budget:         | \$7,000.00        |
|         | <u>Amount Spent:</u> | <u>\$3,466.77</u> |
|         | LCMR Balance:        | \$3,533.23        |

Completion Date: July, 1999 – June, 2001

##### **Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/1/99**

- 4 collaborative meetings held.
- Out of state training (conferences) for township officers
- 4 land protection training workshops for local officials

##### **Status Report 12/01/99 – 6/30/00**

- 5 collaborative meetings held:
- Invoices for workshops that were held with township officers in July will be included in the next reimbursement request.

##### **Status Report 7/1/00 – 12/31/00**

- 5 collaborative meetings held
- 1 meeting with Washington County Green Corridor partners
- 1 meeting with County Board
- 1 airplane tour of County with farmland protection experts
- 1 workshop between Ag. Protection Task Force and farmland experts
- 1 public presentation by farmland protection experts attended by over 100 people
- 1 workshop between project partners and farmland experts to develop farmland protection scenarios



## **Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

- 5 collaborative meetings held
- 1 Natural Resource subcommittee meeting held
- 2 Public Awareness subcommittee meetings held

### **Result 2: Increased awareness of the importance of farmland and natural areas protection.**

A public awareness program will be developed that contains three elements:

- 1) Countywide public awareness programs designed to create an understanding of the importance of farmland and natural areas for sustainable communities.
- 2) An educational program directed to farmers and agribusiness (including financial institutions and realtors).
- 3) An educational program directed to local elected officials, planning committee members, staff, and other local policy makers.

These programs will build public support for protecting farmland, open space, and natural areas by focusing on the intrinsic, economic, and social benefits of these resources and will provide options to conserve them. It will also provide technical assistance to local governmental units and will stress that for a community to be sustainable it must make long-term investments in land uses and resources that provide for economic vitality, recreational opportunities, ecosystem stability, and community identity.

Lead collaborator: Dakota County Extension Service

|               |                      |                    |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Budget:       | LCMR Budget:         | \$95,700.00        |
|               | <u>Amount Spent:</u> | <u>\$95,467.53</u> |
| LCMR Balance: |                      | \$232.47           |

Completion Date: July, 1999 – June, 2000

#### **Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/1/99**

6 facilitated citizen-based workshops (includes preparation of background materials, printing, and distribution; development and preparation of large scale maps; meeting notice costs)

#### **Status Report 12/01/99 – 6/30/00**

6 additional citizen based workshops about where to protect lands in Dakota County. In addition, public meetings were advertised and held with Metropolitan Council members, and Governor Ventura and his commissioners. A complete summary of the citizen meetings, activities, and public presentations is on pages 6 and 7 of this report. Specific expenditures are included as exhibit in report 2 in the Dakota County Account Detail Report. Invoices from Friends of the Mississippi River for work completed during this period have not yet been received. Reimbursement for payment to Friends of the Mississippi River will be requested in the next report.

#### **Status Report 7/1/00 – 12/31/00**

- Meetings and workshops with farmland experts (described in result 1)
- 1 workshop between Ag. Protection Task Force and farmland experts
- 1 public presentation by farmland protection experts attended by over 100 people
- 1 workshop between project partners and farmland experts to develop farmland protection scenarios
- Exhibit at County Fair August, 2000
- Agri-business forum August, 2000
- Agency round table meeting Oct. 2000
- 6 Public meetings to review scenarios and gather citizen comments

#### **Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

- 3 large citizen meetings held at Egan, Vermillion, and Farmington
- 2 Public Awareness subcommittee meetings held
- 1 meeting with Washington County staff to discuss Green Corridors
- 3 meetings of Ag. Protection Task Force
- 1 joint meeting between project collaborators and Green Corridors
- 1 meeting with Metro Council representative
- 1 presentation/meeting with Metro Council Rural Issues work group
- 2 meetings with realtor/developer representatives
- 1 transfer of development rights workshop with township officials
- 10 small group meetings with city staff
- 13 small group meetings with township officials
- 1 meeting with farmers
- 1 meeting with farmers coop
- 1 article in Extension newspaper

#### **Result 3: Identification and prioritization of farmland and natural areas to be protected.**

Farmland and natural areas to be protected will be identified and prioritized in a process involving the following three steps:

1. *Land-based inventory and identification.* This inventory process will rely largely on citizen input and existing data. The inventory and identification process will include GIS mapping and analysis of the data, as well as meetings with residents, elected officials, and local governmental staff.
2. *Development and application of a functional classification system for lands identified to be protected.* The tools used to protect lands will vary according to why the land is being protected. After a land inventory is completed, the collaborative will work with citizens, agricultural organizations, and state agencies to categorize lands based on their function, e.g. production farmland, farmland with natural area benefits, critical habitat, natural area, open space corridor, recreational corridor, etc. This classification system will aid local government with land use planning; help residents and policy makers to better understand the function and value of lands that they are trying to protect; and will make it easier to fit the most appropriate land conservation technique to the land to be protected.

**3. Prioritization of farmland and natural areas to be protected.** Farmland, natural areas, and open space areas will be prioritized according to their relative value and risk of being developed. The process will use tools such as the Metropolitan Council's permanent agricultural identification process, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service's land evaluation and site assessment system.

Lead collaborator: Dakota County Soil Conservation District

|         |               |             |
|---------|---------------|-------------|
| Budget: | LCMR Budget:  | \$30,300.00 |
|         | Amount Spent: | \$30,008.40 |
|         | LCMR Balance  | \$291.60    |

Completion Date: July, 1999 – July, 2000

**Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/1/99**

See detailed description of activity above. As of December 6, 1999, \$370 has been expended for partner participation in the three tasks identified. The lead partner – the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District – has not submitted an invoice for work performed in conjunction with this effort as of December 6, 1999.

**Status Report 12/01/99 – 6/30/00**

The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District has made significant progress on this result but have not yet submitted invoices to the County. The SWCD has completed the task of developing a functional classification system for natural areas in the County. Using this system, over 90% of the task of mapping natural areas in the County has been completed. Specifically, SWCD has plotted and drafted the entire 144 square miles of land cover identified in this project. Approximately 50 square miles of interpreted areas remain to be field checked.

In addition, SWCD staff are working with staff from the Dakota County Office of Planning to categorize agricultural lands according to soil quality, local zoning, rural residential population densities, regional plans for sewer extension, and other factors that could influence the long term viability of agricultural areas.

Citizen input has been gathered from the 14 public meetings that have occurred to this point and is being combined with the land cover mapping. The final task of prioritizing what farmlands and natural areas to protect will be completed as a result of future analysis and public input scheduled to occur in the fall of 2000.

**Status Report 7/1/00 – 12/31/00**

- Landcover mapping was completed Sept. 2000
- Identified remaining high priority natural areas on private land using GIS
- Prepared and presented maps of natural areas at public meetings in November
- Prepared and presented maps of farmland protection scenarios at public meetings in November
- Prepared maps/photos of the County's most prominent natural areas to encourage discussion at public meetings in November

#### **Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

- 1 Natural Resource subcommittee meeting held
- Farmland strategy maps created for public meetings and County Board
- Natural area strategy maps created for public meetings and County Board
- Maps prepared for draft Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan

#### **Result 4: Financing options survey.**

Dakota County residents will be surveyed to determine public perceptions and interest in public financing options for PDR, TDR, and fee title acquisition of farmland, natural areas, and open space.

Lead Collaborator: Trust for Public Land

|         |                      |                 |
|---------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Budget: | LCMR Budget:         | \$19,700        |
|         | <u>Amount spent:</u> | <u>\$19,700</u> |
|         | LCMR Balance:        | \$0             |

Completion Date: July, 1999 – December, 1999

#### **Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/1/99**

While the financial survey was expected to be completed by December 31, 1999, the survey has been delayed in order to be coordinated with the Metro Greenways survey. The survey is expected to be in the field in January or February 2000.

See detailed description of results presented above. While only \$100 has been expended as of December 6, 1999 the lead partner – The Trust for Public Land – has submitted an invoice for an additional \$1,799.60 that is not included in the above budget report. The major expenditures for this task will be reflected in the second six month report.

#### **Status Report 12/01/99 – 6/30/00**

The Financing Options Survey is complete. Drafts of the survey were prepared and reviewed by the project partners in December of 1999, and January of 2000. The telephone survey was conducted in February of 2000. The results of the survey indicate a strong interest in identifying and paying for protection of farmlands and natural areas in Dakota County. The survey results, analysis, and executive summary are available for review (see exhibits in report 2). Costs for the survey exceeded initial estimates by \$1900 and so the lead partner – The Trust for Public Land – has proposed to reallocate \$1900 from Result 2 (Increase public awareness of the need to protect farmland and natural areas) to Result 4 (Financing Options Survey). The requested transfer of funds will not increase the overall budget for the project. We anticipate that LCMR staff will approve the proposed transfer of funds between results.

The results of the survey will be used throughout the remainder of this project in public meetings, land prioritization strategy sessions, and in the Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan.

**Status Report 7/1/00 - 12/31/00:** The Financing Options Survey has been completed. The results of the survey continue to be used at all public meetings and workshops associated with this project. Results of the Financing Options Survey have been used in local news stories about the project and as the basis of public support necessary to continue farmland and natural area protection efforts.

**Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

The results of the Financing Options Survey were incorporated into the draft plan.

**Result 5: Protection of 350-500 acres of land through donated conservation easements.**

Between 350-500 acres of farmland and natural areas will be protected through donated conservation easements in targeted areas. An endowment for the monitoring and enforcement of these easements will also be established. Voluntary conservation easements will be negotiated and enforced by the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT). The MLT is a qualified organization under state and federal laws to hold conservation easements. In the case of MLT dissolving, legal responsibility devolves to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Conservation easements are legal agreements, written pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 84C, which restrict development on land parcels to maintain desirable characteristics. The nature of restrictions are determined on a case by case basis during the negotiation of the easement. In return for the easement, landowners may receive certain tax benefits that reflect the reduced development potential of the land.

Lead Collaborator: The Minnesota Land Trust

|           |                      |                    |
|-----------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Schedule: | LCMR Budget:         | \$31,800.00        |
|           | <u>Amount spent:</u> | <u>\$ 1,570.10</u> |
|           | LCMR Balance:        | \$30,229.90        |

Completion Date: January, 2000 – June, 2001

**Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/1/99**

No budget activity was anticipated in the first six months related to this expected result.

**Status Report 12/01/99 – 6/30/00**

The lead partner and – Minnesota Land Trust- has begun outreach activities with Dakota County land owners. In addition, staff from Friends of the Mississippi River have also had discussions with land owners in the County about the possibility of donating conservation easements. During this reporting period, no invoices for land owner outreach have been received by project partners.

The major expenses associated with this result are for creating conservation easements on private property. No conservation easements have been created during this reporting period.

**Status Report 7/1/00 - 12/31/00:**

- No conservation easements have been donated to this point. Friends of the Mississippi River and Minnesota Land Trust have made a number of land owner contacts (see Result 5 in project summary).

- Areas were targeted for land conservation efforts using GIS maps
- Landowners were contacted in Hampton and Rosemount
- Landowners were contacted along the Mississippi in Inver Grove Heights and Hastings
- Increased landowner awareness as a result of the Farmland and Natural Areas Project has lead to opportunities for land protection using methods other than donated conservation easements.

#### **Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

- Minnesota Land Trust attended all collaborative meetings and engaged citizens at public meetings to solicit donated conservation easements
- Minnesota Land Trust followed up with landowners on numerous individual properties as described in previous status reports.
- They were not able to obtain donated conservation easements within the time limits of this project.
- No LCMR dollars were requested by MLT for this result.

#### **Result 6: Development of a Countywide Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan**

A long-term, countywide plan will be developed that summarizes the results of this program to identify and prioritize farmland and natural areas to be protected. The plan will be responsive to the desires of County residents and will support the goals of cities and townships to protect farmland and natural areas. Additionally, the plan will recommend on where the various land protection techniques should be applied and will define under which landowner scenarios that they would work most effectively. The plan will contain an implementation strategy and schedule that addresses funding, incorporation of farmland and natural area protection objectives into other local plans and controls, and other strategies needed to protect these areas.

Lead Collaborator: Dakota County Planning

|                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Schedule: LCMR Budget: | \$15,500        |
| <u>Amount Spent:</u>   | <u>\$15,500</u> |
| LCMR Balance:          | \$0             |

Completion Date: January, 2001 – June, 2000

#### **Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/1/99**

No budget activity was anticipated in the first six-month period. The status report above indicates work undertaken in the first six months related to this expected result.

#### **Status Report 12/01/99 – 6/30/00**

Again, there was no budget activity for this result because it was not scheduled for the first year of the project. Information from the other five results is being gathered for use in the Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan.

**Status Report 7/1/00 – 12/31/00:**

- Planning staff met with experts Tom Daniels and Ed Minehan to develop land protection scenarios
- Researched examples of successful land protection programs elsewhere
- Investigated land protection tools
- Planning staff are now positioned to draft the Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan as designated in the work plan for the last 6 months of the project.

**Status Report 1/1/01 – 6/30/01**

- Approach to writing Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan presented to County Board and Planning Commission in January of 2001.
- Draft Farmland and Natural Area protection plan prepared. (Attachment “B”)
- The draft plan includes:
  - An executive summary and recommendations
  - Identification of the problem
  - Citizen concerns and willingness to pay for land protection
  - Inventory of farmland in Dakota County
  - Threats to the resource and opportunities for protection
  - Inventory of natural areas in Dakota County
  - Threats to the resource and opportunities to protect
  - Prioritization of what lands to protect
  - Incentive based farmland protection approach
  - Incentive based natural area protection approach
  - Findings and strategies for farmland and natural area protection
  - Implementation maps, strategies, funding options, and program levels
  - Appendix A: Stakeholder perspectives and public participation process
  - Appendix B: Project History and Fact Sheets
  - Appendix C: Preservation Tool Box
  - Appendix D: County Financing Options Survey
- Proposed strategies for land protection presented to County Board in May of 2001.
- Proposed strategies for land protection presented at public meetings in May and to the Agricultural Protection Task Force in June of 2001.
- Draft plan presented to project partners in July of 2001.
- Draft plan presented to County Planning Commission in July 2001, recommended for County Board adoption.
- Draft plan is going to County Board in September and to a County Board workshop in October to discuss implementation options.



## **V. DISSEMINATION:**

Information resulting from this project will be conveyed to the broader public through the distribution of information brochures, public meetings/forums, and press releases. The Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan, developed as part of this project, will be provided to all public libraries and local governmental units in Dakota County, adjoining counties, and state agencies involved with agriculture, land use planning, and natural resource management. Information will also be distributed statewide through professional affiliations of project collaborators. Additionally, information, project updates, and, when completed, the Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan will be published on the County's Web page at ž HYPERLINK <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us>

– [www.co.dakota.mn.us](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us)

## **VI. CONTEXT:**

### **A. Significance:**

Townships in Dakota County have been leaders in Minnesota in preserving farmland and open space through township-based zoning and land use planning. Efforts to protect farmland and natural resources are being threatened by a growing pressure to convert farmland into urban development and to fragment farms into rural residential housing. Cities in Dakota County have also been leaders in the state with innovative natural resource protection programs, aggressive parkland and open space dedications, and strong support for a countywide greenways system. Local governmental units need the "toolkit" of methods and programs for protecting farmland and natural areas that are identified in the County's proposal to help build a strategy against this pressure. Furthermore, a countywide framework that identifies important farmland, natural corridors, critical habitat areas, and other open space is necessary to assure that local land protection initiatives make sense from an ecological, economic, and social standpoint.

This proposal builds on the momentum generated by a 1997 LCMR funded project in Washington and Chisago Counties. It leverages the LCMR's investment in that project by utilizing the research undertaken, the materials developed, and lessons learned. The proposed project continues the work begun in Washington and Chisago Counties by developing a countywide farmland and natural resource protection plan for Dakota County. It will build a local commitment to protect farmland and important natural areas from the impact of urbanization and will identify those areas most at risk from development. The program will also provide local units of government the tools and expertise that are needed to protect these lands (purchase of development rights (PDR), transfer of development rights (TDR), donated conservation easements, management agreements, fee title acquisition, etc.).

Urban growth, the aging demographics of farmers, a desire to "get away from it all," and a good economic climate are fueling the demand for development and accelerating the rate at which farmland and natural areas are being lost. It is estimated that the remaining one-percent of unprotected native habitat in Dakota County will be lost to development within the next ten years. Township boards and planning commissions, once made up mostly of farmers, are now consisting more and more of non-farm people who do not have the understanding or commitment to farmland protection. Protecting the remaining natural areas, open spaces, and farmland is a community decision that

must be made before farming is no longer economically viable and before natural ecosystems are no longer functional. The window of opportunity to undertake this effort is closing rapidly, values of property owners are changing and costs to protect important lands are skyrocketing. This proposal will provide residents and local governments the tools to manage growth and create communities that will sustain the economic viability, environmental integrity, and social fabric of Dakota County.

#### **B. Time:**

All activities covered in this workplan will be completed by June 30, 2001. It is expected that results of the public participation, educational, and planning programs done as part of this project will form the basis of a long-term commitment by Dakota County to implement farmland and natural area protection programs. The Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan will provide the context in which this long-term effort will be accomplished. Funding assistance will continue through a collaborative process that includes program partners, local government, and others interested in protection farmland and natural areas in Dakota County. Future funding sources may include, donations, foundations, land trades, grants (LCMR and others), and public financing.

#### **C. Budget Context:**

There have been no prior expenditures for this project. During the 1997 LCMR funding cycle, \$530,000 was funded for a similar project in Washington and Chisago Counties (New Models for land Use Planning, E4, L3). Much of the research undertaken and education materials developed for that project are directly applicable to this project and, as such, will further leverage the 1997 LCMR investment in innovative land planning and farmland and natural resource protection.

A \$5,000 grant land cover mapping and \$15,000 grant for greenways planning in townships were recently received by the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Dakota County Township Officers' Association, respectively. Information collected or developed by these efforts will be incorporated into the farmland and natural areas protection project.

1. BUDGET:

2.

**Personnel**

| <u>Agency</u>                        | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Dakota County                        | \$15,000      | 7.5%              |
| Dakota County Twp Officers' Assoc.   |               |                   |
| Extension Service                    | \$42,000      | 21.0%             |
| Farmers Union                        | \$12,000      | 6.25%             |
| Friends of the Mississippi           | \$19,000      | 9.5%              |
| 1000 Friends of Minnesota            | \$10,000      | 5.0%              |
| Minnesota Land Trust                 | \$2,000       | 1.0%              |
| Soil and Water Conservation District |               |                   |
| Trust for Public Land                | \$5,300       | 2.65%             |

| <b>Other:</b>         | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Activity</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Contracted services   | \$15,000      | Survey          |
| Printing/mailling     | \$17,500      |                 |
| Travel                | \$ 1,100      |                 |
| Meetings &advertising | \$ 6,100      |                 |
| Training              | \$ 3,000      |                 |
| Easements             | \$28,000      | 350-500 acres   |
| Landcover GIS mapping | \$22,500      |                 |
| Expert per diem       | \$ 1,000      |                 |

**3. Submit a budget detail with all the specifics as attached as Attachment A.**

**VII. COOPERATION:**

Collaborators for this project include: the Dakota County Township Officers' Association, Land Stewardship Project (now 1000 Friends of Minnesota), Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Land Trust, the Trust for Public Land, Minnesota Extension Service, and Friends of the Mississippi River.

**VIII. LOCATION:**

Dakota County, Minnesota (countywide).

**IX. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted no later than January 2000, July 2000, and January 2001. A final work program report and associated products will be submitted by June 30, 2001, or by the completion date as set in the appropriation.

**X. RESEARCH PROJECTS:**

Not applicable.

### **Changes to the Work Program:**

**Status Report 7/1/99 - 12/01/99::** No changes to the Work Program approved by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources are being proposed at this time. Issues in the Work Program identified for monitoring and future consideration include:

- Timing and resources to support development of conservation easements.
- Financial options survey costs.

If Work Program changes are necessary, change requests will be submitted prior to the implementation of a change in activity or budget.

### **Status Report 12/1/99 - 6/31/00:**

We are requesting changes to the project work program. The changes are identified in this status report by ~~strikeout~~ and underline.

### **Status Report 7/01/00 – 12/31/00:**

We are requesting changes to the project work program. The changes are identified in this status report by ~~strikeout~~ and underline.

N:\dept\planning\lcmr project\status reports\Report 2

# ATTACHMENT A

## Title: U5 Protecting Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas

Affiliation: Dakota County Office of Planning

Address: 14955 Galaxie Avenue, Apple Valley, Minnesota 55124

Telephone: 952-891-7030

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Fax: 612-891-7031

Web: www.co.dakota.mn.us

## BUDGET DETAIL

### Result A: Development of a farmland and natural areas collaborative.

| Partner:        | Dakota County | Dak. Co. Township Officers' Assc. | Extension Service | Farmers Union | Friends of the Mississippi | Land Stewardship Project | Minnesota Land Trust | Soil and Water Conservation Dist. | Trust for Public Land |       |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Mailings        |               | 1,000                             |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |       |
| Meetings & Adv. |               | 3,000                             |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |       |
| Training        |               | 2,000                             |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |       |
| Expert per diem |               | 1,000                             |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |       |
| Total LCMR      | 0             | 7,000                             | 0                 | 0             | 0                          | 0                        | 0                    | 0                                 | 0                     | 7,000 |
| In-kind         | 2,000         | 0                                 | 1000              | 1000          | 1000                       | 1000                     | 1000                 | 1000                              | 1000                  | 9,000 |

### Result B: Increased awareness of the importance of farmland and natural areas protection.

| Partner:                            | Dakota County | Dak. Co. Township Officers' Assc. | Extension Service | Farmers Union | Friends of the Mississippi | Land Stewardship Project | Minnesota Land Trust | Soil and Water Conservation Dist. | Trust for Public Land |        |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Personnel                           |               |                                   | 40,000            | 12,000        | 15,000                     | 10,000                   |                      |                                   | 3,100                 |        |
| Travel                              |               |                                   | 100               | 100           | 100                        | 100                      |                      |                                   | 100                   |        |
| Modify materials printing & mailing |               |                                   | 5,000             |               |                            | 10,000                   |                      |                                   |                       |        |
| Training                            | 1,000         |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |        |
| Meeting expense                     |               |                                   | 1,000             |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |        |
| Total LCMR                          | 1,000         | 0                                 | 46,100            | 12,100        | 15,100                     | 20,100                   | 0                    | 0                                 | 3,200                 | 97,600 |
| In-kind                             | 2,000         | 0                                 | 2,500             | 1,000         | 2,000                      | 2,000                    | 0                    | 2,000                             | 0                     | 11,500 |

### Result C: Identification and prioritization of farmland and natural areas to be protected.

| Partner:        | Dakota County | Dak. Co. Township Officers' Assc. | Extension Service | Farmers Union | Friends of the Mississippi | Land Stewardship Project | Minnesota Land Trust | Soil and Water Conservation Dist. | Trust for Public Land |       |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Personnel       |               |                                   | 2,000             |               | 3,000                      |                          |                      |                                   |                       |       |
| Landcover GIS   |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      | 22,500                            |                       |       |
| Travel          |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      | 200                               |                       |       |
| Printing        |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      | 500                               |                       |       |
| Meetings & Adv. |               |                                   | 100               |               |                            |                          |                      | 2,000                             |                       |       |
| Total LCMR      | 0             | 0                                 | 2,100             | 0             | 3,000                      | 0                        | 0                    | 25,200                            | 0                     | 30300 |
| In-kind         | 2,000         | 0                                 | 1,000             | 500           | 500                        | 500                      | 0                    | 3,000                             | 0                     | 7,500 |

**Result D: Financing option survey.**

| Partner:        | Dakota County | Dak. Co. Township Officers' Assc. | Extension Service | Farmers Union | Friends of the Mississippi | Land Stewardship Project | Minnesota Land Trust | Soil and Water Conservation Dist. | Trust for Public Land |       |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Personnel       |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   | 2,200                 |       |
| Travel          |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   | 100                   |       |
| Contracted ser. |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   | 15,000                |       |
| Printing        |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   | 500                   |       |
| Total LCMR      | 0             | 0                                 | 0                 | 0             | 0                          | 0                        | 0                    | 0                                 | 17,800                | 17800 |
| In-kind         | 2,000         |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   | 2,000                 | 4,000 |

**Result E: Protection of 350-500 acres of land through donated conservation easements.**

| Partner:   | Dakota County | Dak. Co. Township Officers' Assc. | Extension Service | Farmers Union | Friends of the Mississippi | Land Stewardship Project | Minnesota Land Trust | Soil and Water Conservation Dist. | Trust for Public Land |       |
|------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Personnel  |               |                                   |                   | 500           | 1,000                      |                          |                      |                                   |                       |       |
| Easements  |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          | 30,000               |                                   |                       |       |
| Travel     |               |                                   |                   | 100           | 100                        |                          | 100                  |                                   |                       |       |
| Total LCMR | 0             | 0                                 | 0                 | 600           | 1,100                      | 0                        | 30,100               | 0                                 | 0                     | 31800 |
| In-kind    | 1,000         |                                   |                   |               | 500                        | 500                      | 3,000                |                                   |                       | 5,000 |

**Result F: Development of a County-wide Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan.**

| Partner:          | Dakota County | Dak. Co. Township Officers' Assc. | Extension Service | Farmers Union | Friends of the Mississippi | Land Stewardship Project | Minnesota Land Trust | Soil and Water Conservation Dist. | Trust for Public Land |        |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| Personnel         | 15,000        |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |        |
| Other             |               |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |        |
| Printing/mailling | 500           |                                   |                   |               |                            |                          |                      |                                   |                       |        |
| TOTAL             | 15,500        | 0                                 | 0                 | 0             | 0                          | 0                        | 0                    | 0                                 | 0                     | 15,500 |
| In-kind           | 6,000         |                                   | 1,000             | 1,000         | 1,000                      | 1,000                    | 1,000                | 1,000                             | 1,000                 | 13,000 |