

MRWA Staff meets with Congressman Peterson and the city of Perham

CITY OF PERHAM WORKS TO PROTECT DRINKING WATER QUALITY



Staff at the Minnesota Rural Water Association met with Congressman Peterson and the city of Perham to discuss the source water protection initiatives of the city.

The City of Perham initiated the development of a Wellhead Protection Plan in the mid 1990's, as the result of concerns surrounding the increase of nitrates in the City's drinking water. Nitrate levels in the City's wells, and in area private wells, had been on the increase for several years. Year's earlier, concerned citizens started a well nitrate monitoring project, with the assistance of the Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Rural Water Association & Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and their efforts landed them seats on the City's Wellhead Protection Committee. The Committee worked to develop a WHP Plan, which was formally adopted and is currently being implemented by the City. Members of the WHP Committee included local citizens, City leaders & administration, local businesses, students, area Ag producers, NRCS, SWCD, along with other state and local agencies. The coarse-textures sandy soils make nutrient management a major challenge to area producers. Working in cooperation with the City's WHP Committee, local farmers have reduced nutrient inputs, participated in educational activities, sponsored demonstration projects, and taken advantage of assistance with development of nutrient management plans and irrigation scheduling. At the same time City management looked at options it had to help reduce nitrate levels in the drinking water. Along with the installation of two new wells, the City has purchased two agricultural land parcels adjacent to the primary well field. This land had been previously used for irrigated cropping and is being converted to less-intensive land uses,





primarily residential and institutional (new hospital site). The combined efforts of the local Ag producers, students, citizens and City leadership have paid off with declining nitrate levels in the City's drinking water.

Congressman Peterson has supported programs such as MRWA's USDA and EPA Source Water Protection programs as well as programs that can be used by governmental entities to support their source water protection initiatives.