

*MPR Radio Interview Transcript*

*October 16, 2019*

Elizabeth Dunbar, MPR News

A new project in southeastern Minnesota aims to dramatically increase the number of farm fields using conservation practices to improve water quality. Elizabeth Dunbar reports.

The Cannon River Agricultural Collaborative is focused on row-crop farming in parts of six counties -- Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, Rice, Steele and Waseca.

The goal is to get more farmers to reduce tillage and plant cover crops and perennials. Those practices are associated with improved soil health and reduced runoff to area streams and rivers.

Kristi Pursell is executive director of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership.

"To be able to lift up farmers who really have the potential to do a lot instead of just pointing the finger at them for creating the problems, I think farmers can really be a solution for how to get back to a better place with cleaner, better quality water."

Nonprofit groups, agribusiness and local soil and water conservation districts are all part of the project.

A new collaboration in southeastern Minnesota is working with farmers to increase conservation practices like reducing tillage and planting cover crops.

The Cannon River Agricultural Collaborative will help farmers measure the impact of conservation practices in parts of six counties -- Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, Rice, Steele and Waseca.

Kristi Pursell is executive director of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership.

"We want to make sure we're supporting farmers who are doing the right thing. We want to make sure they can be profitable as well as regenerate the soil and improve water quality. And we think all three of those things are very possible to do if we can all support the farmers, who are the ones on the front lines trying to make those changes happen."

A new state analysis shows these farming practices often have a fourth benefit -- reducing emissions linked to climate change.