

Farmland and Natural Areas Project



Project Profile: Dakota County

A Quick Guide to Using Natural Resource Information

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2003

SUMMARY

Dakota County officials proposed the Farmland and Natural Areas Project referendum as an answer to growing concern about rapid development in the county. The residents passed the referendum in November 2002. The program utilizes funds collected by a property tax increase to secure additional federal and state money. The fund will be used to protect farmland and natural areas through land purchases and landowner agreements.

Guide to Using Natural Resource Information

The Guide is a useful resource to learn how to create and use natural resource information

The Guide illustrates:

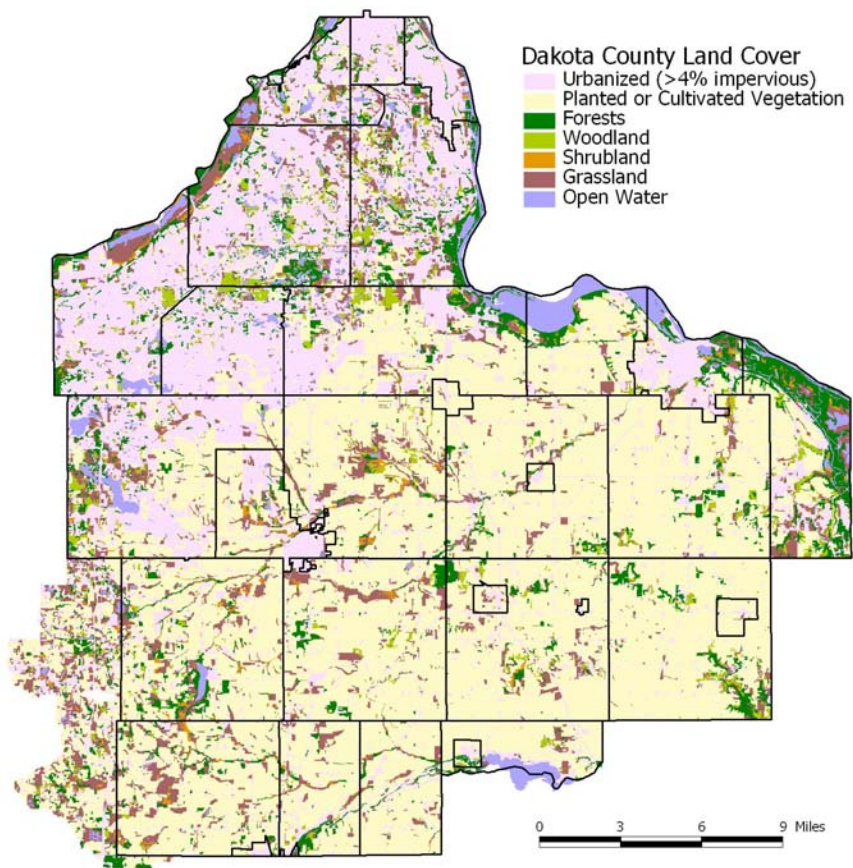
- why natural resources are important
- how your community benefits from natural resources
- how to collect natural resource information, and
- how to use natural resource information to make environmentally sensitive and fiscally responsible local land use decisions

Contact the DNR at the numbers at the back of this Profile to order the Quick Guide Brochure or the whole Guide on CD

Making Minnesota History

Dakota County is developing rapidly, adding 8,000-9,000 new residents each year. County commissioners are responding to resident concerns about growth through the Farmland and Natural Areas Project (FNAP). State history was made in November of 2002 when the residents of Dakota County passed the \$20 million Farmland and Natural Areas Referendum to preserve open spaces. The county money will be maximized by leveraging additional state and federal funds.

The project's objective over the next ten years is to protect 5,000-10,000 acres of priority farmlands and natural areas in Dakota County. Land will be protected through the use of permanent conservation easements or acquisition. Landowner participation will be strictly voluntary. The Dakota County Board of Commissioners, through the assistance of an advisory committee, will make the final decision on what lands are protected.



Natural Resource Inventory

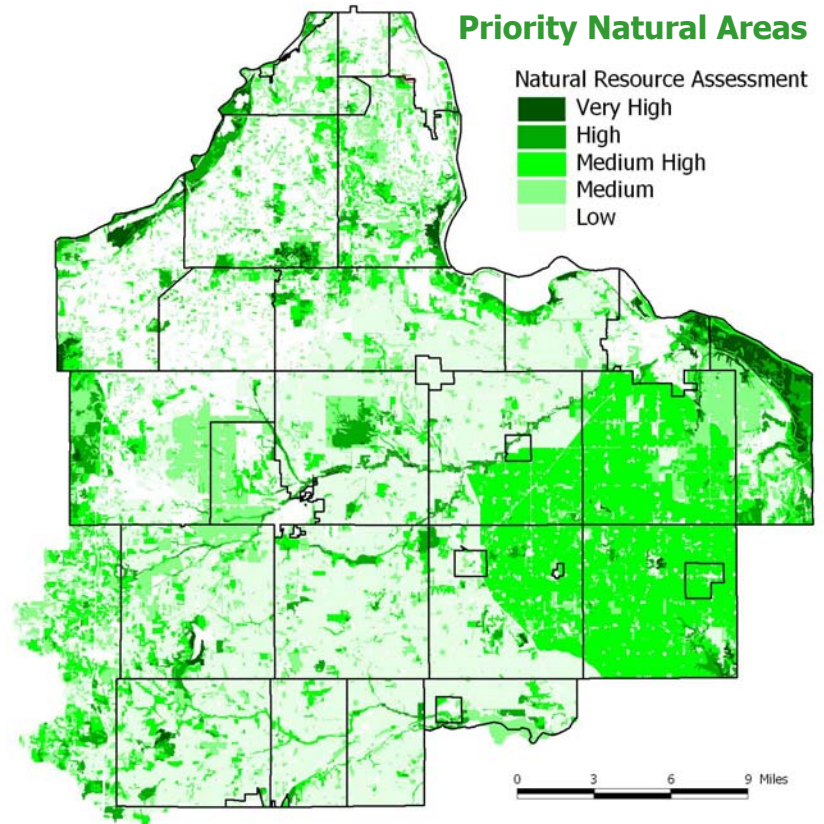
Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS). The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District conducted Level 4/5 MLCCS for corridors within Dakota County as part of the FNAP project. The SWCD has now completed mapping for the entire county.

" The idea of the Farmland and Natural Area Referendum wasn't really very innovative. It was a classic example of government responding to the interests of the people. Concern for the County's growth rate and subsequent loss of open space prompted a three year study involving hundreds of citizens. The referendum came from the plan, which was developed as a result of the study. I believe that is why it was successful."

Nancy Schouweiler

Dakota County Commissioner

Priority Natural Areas



Natural Resource Assessment

In partnership with ecologists at the MnDNR and Friends of the Mississippi River, the Dakota SWCD developed an ecological scoring procedure (below-right) and applied it to the MLCCS to create the map above.

Implementation

The Farmland and Natural Areas Referendum will provide the base funds to permanently protect farmland and natural areas through easements and acquisition. Additional federal and state funds will be used to maximize the efforts of the FNAP. Applications were first accepted in the summer of 2003.

MLCCS POLYGON SCORING VALUE (1-100)

MLCCS POLYGON SCORING	VALUE (1-100)
Habitat Size	
Large	100
Medium	70
Small	40
Rare Natural Community	100
Rare Plant Species Present	100
Rare Animal Species Present	100
Natural Land	80
Semi-Natural Land	60
Agricultural Land	40
Planted or Maintained Vegetation	40
Urban Green Space	30
Vegetated Stream Corridors (300ft. buffer)	50
Trout Stream Areas	100
Undeveloped Lake Shore (300ft. buffer)	
Vegetated	80
Agriculture	40
Patches of Natural Vegetation	100
Corridors of Natural Vegetation	70

Department of Natural Resources
 Central Office
 500 Lafayette Road
 St. Paul, MN 55155-4040
 (651) 296-6157 (Metro Area)
 1-888-MINNDNR (646-6367) (MN Toll Free)
www.dnr.state.mn.us



These Project Profiles were produced, written, and designed by the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Kurt Chatfield
 Dakota County Office of Planning
 Kurt.chatfield@co.dakota.mn.us
 952-891-7022