Photo credit: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2015

The Nature Conservancy has been protecting forests and water quality in the Headwaters Area for more than a decade; in that time, we've helped conserve more than 150,000 acres.

Minnesota Headwaters Fund

$10 million private-funded investment to support The Nature Conservancy's work to accomplish high-impact conservation of Mississippi River watersheds in Minnesota
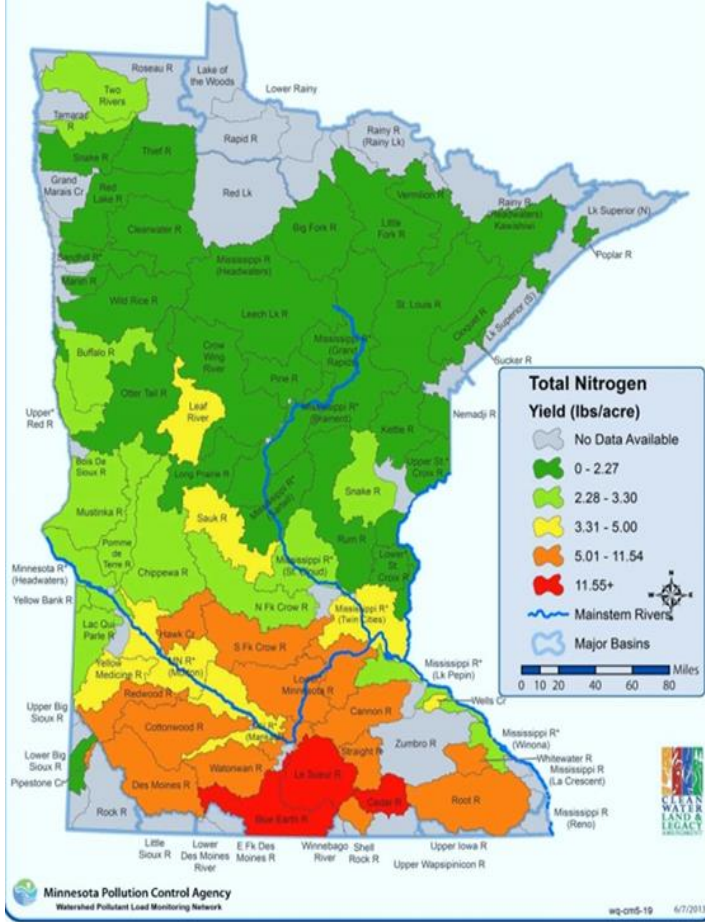
Goals of the Fund

- Implement targeted conservation in watersheds
- Raise awareness of water quality issues affecting Minnesota's natural environments and communities
- Leverage public resources for conservation
- Provide opportunities for the private sector to be a part of the solution

Threats to Minnesota's Waters

- Minnesota is ranked #1 in the nation in wetland loss and #2 in deforestation
- Between 2008 and 2013, more than 260,000 acres of forest, wetland and grassland were converted to other uses , putting healthy waters at risk
- According to the nitrogen source assessment, during an average precipitation year, cropland sources contribute an estimated 73% of the statewide nitrogen load to surface waters and 78% of the nitrogen load to the Mississippi River
  > (Nitrogen in Minnesota Surface Waters, June 2013, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency)
- For every 10% decrease in forest cover in the source area, the cost of water treatment for communities increases by 20%, according to a 2008 study by the Trust for Public Land

Projects within the Headwaters Fund

- Working forest easements on lands that protect watershed health (source water, river health and habitat) that are also at high risk of conversion
- Riparian forest and wetland protection in important source water areas
- Floodplain restoration and reconnection in source water river
- Prioritizing projects in the Rum, Sauk, Crow Wing and Pine rivers

Total Nitrogen Yield (lbs/acre)

- No Data Available
- 0 - 2.27
- 2.28 - 3.30
- 3.31 - 5.00
- 5.01 - 11.54
- 11.55+
- Mainstem Rivers
- Major Basins

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Watershed Pollutant Load Monitoring Network

PROTECTING MINNESOTA'S
HEADWATERS

The Nature Conservancy
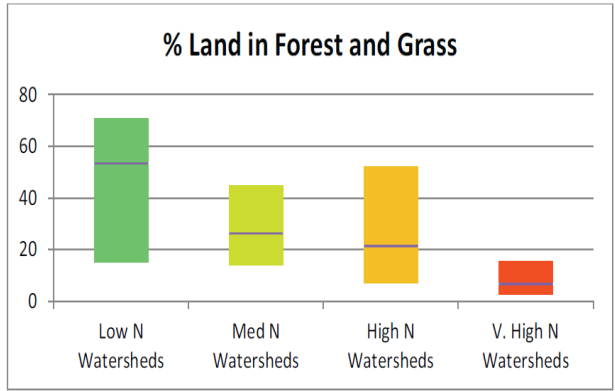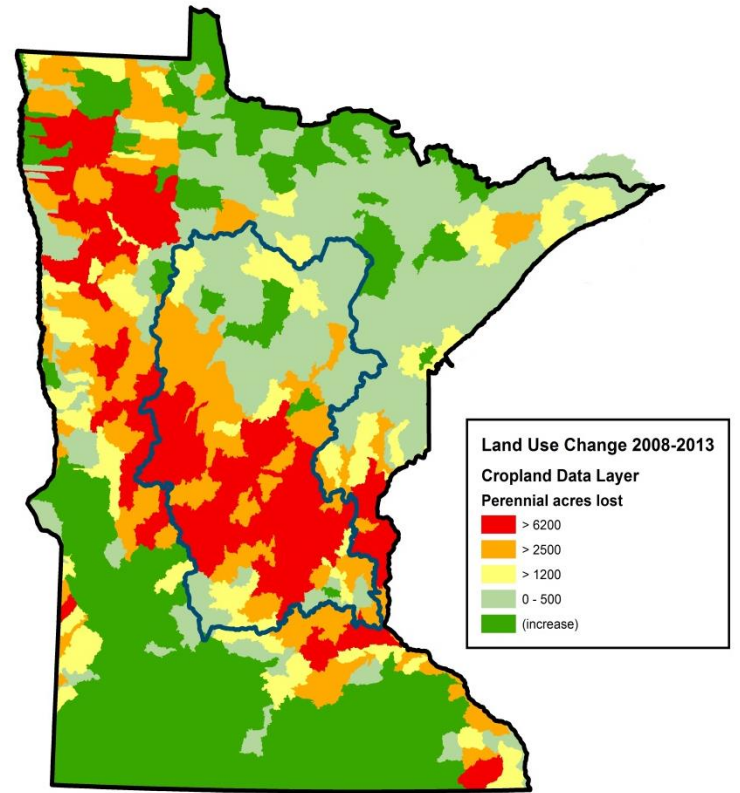
% Land in Forest and Grass

Figure 9. The range (colored bars) and mean (dark line) percent of land in forest and grasses for watersheds classified under each of the four river N level groupings (as listed in Table 3).

Land Use Change 2008-2013
Cropland Data Layer
Perennial acres lost

- > 6200
- > 2500
- > 1200
- 0 - 500
- (increase)