

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

State Technical Committee Meeting

May 9, 2013



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Memorandum of Understanding

Signed by Governor Dayton,
Secretary Vilsack and
Administrator Lisa Jackson
on January 17, 2012.



http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=S1uF-G2w03g#!

The Vision

- * Develop a **VOLUNTARY PROGRAM** to enhance water quality
- * **Maintains farm profitability and enhances water quality** across the state
- * **Recognize Farmers** who are doing a good job
- * **Provide certainty and assurance to the public** that we're enhancing water quality
- * Provide **“regulatory certainty”** to farmers that attain and maintain certification criteria



MAWQCP Advisory Committee

- * Recommendations developed by a diverse committee have been received by MDA Commissioner Frederickson



FARMER-LED COMMITTEE

Of the 15 Members on the Committee; 7 are ACTUAL FARMERS and 10 Represented Ag Interests

- * **Nathan Collins** (Collins Farms and Farm Bureau)
- * **Doug Peterson** (Madison Farmer and Farmers Union)
- * **Bill Zurn** (Zurn Farms and Minnesota Soybean)
- * **Tony Thompson** (Willow Lake Farm)
- * **Kirby Hettver** (Hettver Farms)
- * **Doug Albin** (Montevideo Farmer and MN Corn Growers)
- * **Jim Riddle** (Winona County Farmer)
- * **Bob Lefebvre** (Minnesota Milk Producers)
- * **Dean Fairchild** (Mosaic Company)
- * **Dennis Berglund** (Central Crop Consulting)

Advisory Committee Report

The committee submitted a series of recommendations presented in seven position papers approved unanimously.

- * Pilot projects
- * Program operations
- * Measurement tool
- * Data management
- * Certainty
- * Incentives
- * Promotion

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

PILOT PROJECTS:

Advisory Committee Recommendation:

- * The Advisory committee recommended that we pilot the program in 3-4 watersheds across the state before taking it statewide.

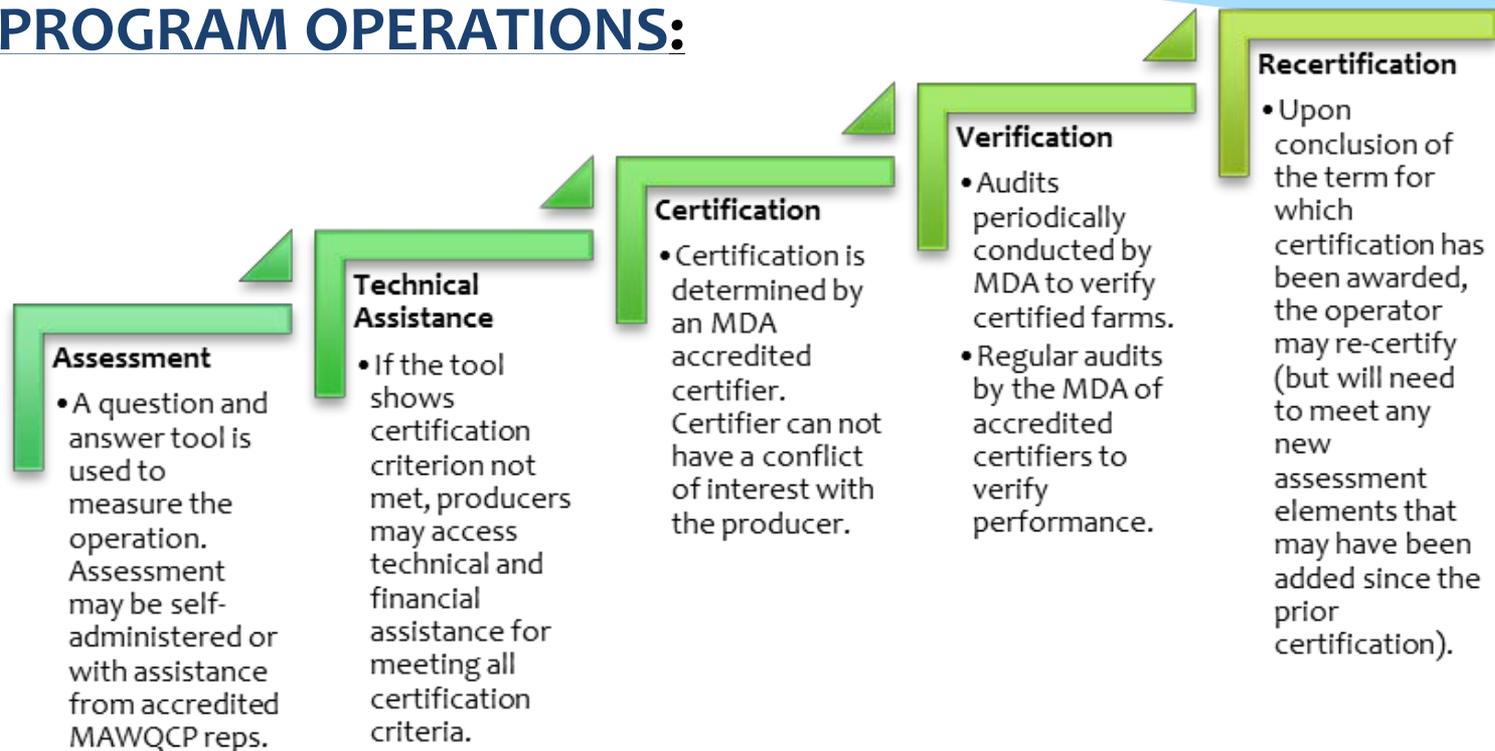
LEGISLATION:

- * Says “The program will first be piloted in selected watersheds across the state...”

CONSISTENT WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

PROGRAM OPERATIONS:



**LEGISLATION IS CONSISTENT WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION**

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

MEASUREMENT TOOL:

Advisory Committee Recommendation:

1. Integrate existing regulatory requirements
2. Maximize technology and prioritize ease of use
3. Utilize a water quality index rather than a rigid one size fits all criteria
4. Incorporate a process for updates and revisions as practices, management and technology changes become established and approved
5. Comprehensively address water quality impacts.

LEGISLATION:

EXACTLY THE SAME LANGUAGE IS IN THE BILL

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Data Management:

Advisory Committee Recommendation:

- * The committee agreed that some information on a producer and an ag operation should be confidential (e.g. business practices, financial records, personal data.) Committee members further agreed that aggregate conservation management and practice information should not identify a specific producer or ag operation but should be publically reported to enable program analysis and assessment.

LEGISLATION:

“All data collected under the program that identifies a producer or a producers location are considered nonpublic data...” The commissioner shall make available summary data of program outcomes on data classified as private or nonpublic under this section.”

CONSISTENT WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Certification Certainty:

Advisory Committee Recommendation:

- * We recommend that “certainty should be provided to certified farmers for a 10 year term with an optional review at three year intervals. The committee agrees that certainty is:
 1. Is offered by the executive branch
 2. Is not an exemption from existing rules
 3. Applies to a certified operation’s land
 4. Requires implementation of recommended practices and certification be maintained
 5. Applies only to agricultural or land management practices that could affect water quality

LEGISLATION:

- * Offers a 10 year term of certainty with optional update intervals
- * Certified Producer would be presumed to be meeting targeted reductions of pollutants
- * Is required to continue implementation of practices to maintain certification
- * Retain necessary records pertaining to certification

CONSISTENT WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Audits and Verification:

Advisory Committee Recommendation:

“The Committee members further agreed that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture should establish a process to randomly audit “certifiers” and producers for verification that they are meeting the criteria set forth the program

LEGISLATION:

“The commissioner shall perform random audits to ensure compliance with the program.” The bill also clearly prescribes the duties of a certifying agent.

CONSISTENT WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Next Steps



- * LEGISLATION IS MOVING THROUGH THE LEGISLATURE
- * PILOT AREAS WILL BE ANNOUNCED SOON
- * DEVELOPING THE MEASUREMENT TOOL

How can you continue to support this program?

- * **Work with MDA and the Pilot Areas** to make them successful by reaching out to farmers.
- * **Promote the “value” of this program** on their websites and in their publications.
- * **Provide feedback on measurement tool**
- * **Partner MAWQCP Education Program** presuming full \$3 million appropriation
- * **Help us recognize certified producers**