Agriculture and Groundwater
The views of Minnesota farmers and livestock producers

In 2019, the University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes partnered with Iowa State University and the UMN Humphrey Institute to conduct a survey of Minnesota farmers and livestock producers in the Straight River and Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Areas about their views on the value of water and what actions should be taken to protect groundwater quality and availability. A total of 464 people responded to the survey, for a response rate of 33.5%. The findings will help support groundwater management and outreach throughout the region.

Which water values and uses are most important to farmers and producers?

- Drinking water that is safe and clean: 99.6%
- Future generations: 97.6%
- Water for livestock production: 97.9%
- Beaches and lakes that are safe for swimming and playing: 93.2%
- Healthful and natural foods for people: 89.8%

What are respondents' top environmental concerns for their farms in the next 10 years?

- 47.5% agree that "My farm operation is vulnerable to drought."
- 41.9% agree that "My farm operation will likely be harmed by climate-related impacts."
- 41.2% agree that "Drought is a real risk to my area in the future."
Which groundwater management actions do farmers support?

- Individual farmers adopting water use conservation BMPs: 66.6%
- Farmer-led groundwater management and planning: 60.1%
- Collaborative groundwater management and planning with shared decision making among farmers, rural water systems, and conservation agencies (local, state, tribal): 51.6%

What do respondents believe about groundwater management?

- "It is my personal responsibility to help conserve water": 84.9%
- "Landowners have the ability to work together to protect water resources": 54.6%
- "Water resources in my state need better protection": 48.8%
- Somewhat to strongly agree: 48.8%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 34.8%
- Somewhat to strongly disagree: 16.3%

73% of respondents believe climate change is occurring.

Believe climate change is occurring:
- 40%: caused more or less equally by natural changes in the environment and human activities
- 22.8%: not occurring
- 11.9%: occurring, and is caused mostly by natural changes in the environment
- 16.6%: occurring, and is caused mostly by human activities

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