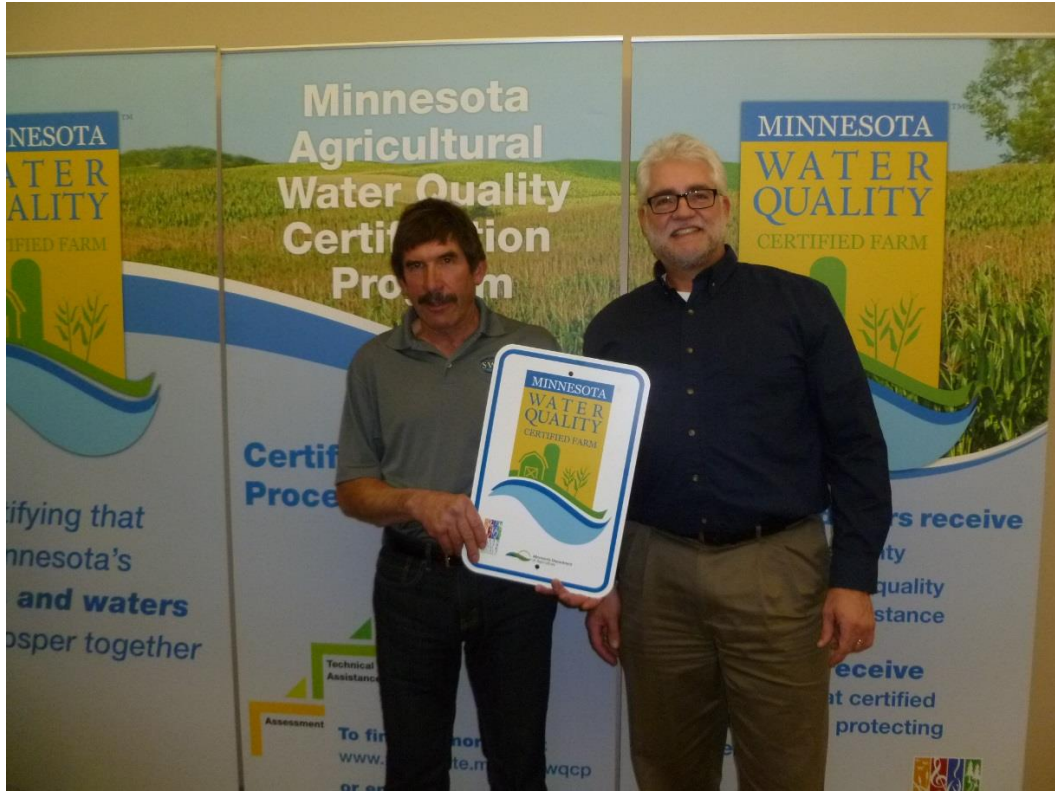


Farmers Are Protecting Water Quality in the Pearl Lake Watershed

Landowners have recently worked with the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in the watershed of Pearl Lake to become certified thru the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). The MAWQCP was developed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and is designed to accelerate adoption of on-farm conservation practices that protect Minnesota's lakes and rivers. The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years. Farm operations seeking certification are evaluated using an on-farm assessment tool. This tool will help determine if a farm operation is immediately eligible for certification or if additional water quality conservation practices need to be implemented before the operation can be certified. This also becomes a great educational opportunity to learn about how to maintain or improve environmental performance. Some recently certified farmers in the area include Mill Creek Dairy and John Wicker. These farmers have adopted any number of the following conservation practices: filter strips, cover crops, water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways, field borders, reduced tillage, alternative tile inlets and improvements in nutrient and pest management. If you get a chance, please recognize these landowners for their efforts in making the lake cleaner.



John Wicker from Kimball



Tom Gregory - Mill Creek Dairy (left) from Kimball with Dennis Fuchs – Administrator Stearns SWCD