Our Vision: Being Minnesota's favorite place.
Our Mission: Serve well. Deliver value. Drive results.
Our Values: Be responsible. Treat people right. Build a better future.

AGENDA

Crow Wing County Committee of the Whole
Regular Meeting

07/21/2026
9:00 AM
County Board Room, 3rd Floor, Historic Courthouse, Brainerd MN

*Note: Times are approximate

The agenda has been published as shown below but is subject to change to include such business as may come before the Board.

ATTEND IN-PERSON OR BY MICROSOFT TEAMS (CALL 218-302-1725, CONFERENCE ID: 491 110 781#); LIVESTREAM AVAILABLE AT WWW.CROWWING.GOV OR ON THE CROW WING COUNTY YOUTUBE CHANNEL

ONE OR MORE MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY BOARD MAY ATTEND REMOTELY

1. **9:00 AM - Crow Wing County Soil & Water Conservation District**

   Crow Wing County Soil & Water Conservation District Update

2. **9:15AM - Restore Recovery - Mindy Mueller, Emily Johnson & Becca Young**

3. **9:30 AM - LTSS - Kara Terry**

   Long Term Services and Supports Presentation

4. **10:00 AM - County Burial Discussion - Tami Lueck & Kara Terry**

   County Burials

5. **10:30 AM - Northland Reliability Project Tax Forfeited Property Lease -Tom Strack**

   Tax Forfeited Property Lease

6. **10:40 AM - Regional Pedestrian Trail Support - Tim Bray**

For more information, call 218-824-1067
Crow Wing County Committee of the Whole meeting agendas are available online at
www.crowwing.gov

RUM RIVER
WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

Hello Crow Wing SWCD,

What does it look like when a watershed starts working together across counties, communities, and organizations?

Across the Rum River, we're starting to see that answer take shape.

In just a few short years, the Rum River Watershed Partnership (RRWP) has supported hundreds of conservation projects, strengthened local connections, and brought new resources into the region, all with the goal of improving water quality and long-term watershed health.

We wanted to share a brief update and keep you in the loop as an eligible partner in this work. This means your organization is located within the watershed and eligible to participate on our board as a local government partner. We simply want to keep you informed and we welcome any future interest in participation.

Take a quick look at what this collaboration is already accomplishing across the watershed:

- **2025 Annual Review**
- **BWSR Snapshot Article**

Together, these highlight:

- **300+ conservation projects** supported through over **$6 million in funding**
- **2,537 lbs/year of phosphorus** and **9,591 tons/year of sediment reduced**
- **1,000+ individuals engaged** through outreach and education

The snapshot article also reflects early success across the watershed:

- Wetland restoration and soil health goals already exceeded

- Hundreds of acres permanently protected
- Nearly 300 conservation activities completed

We encourage you to **share this update with your board and leadership**. Our goal is simply to keep you informed about the progress happening across the Rum River watershed and the momentum that is building.

If it would be helpful, we would be glad to attend a future board meeting to share more, answer questions, or provide additional context.

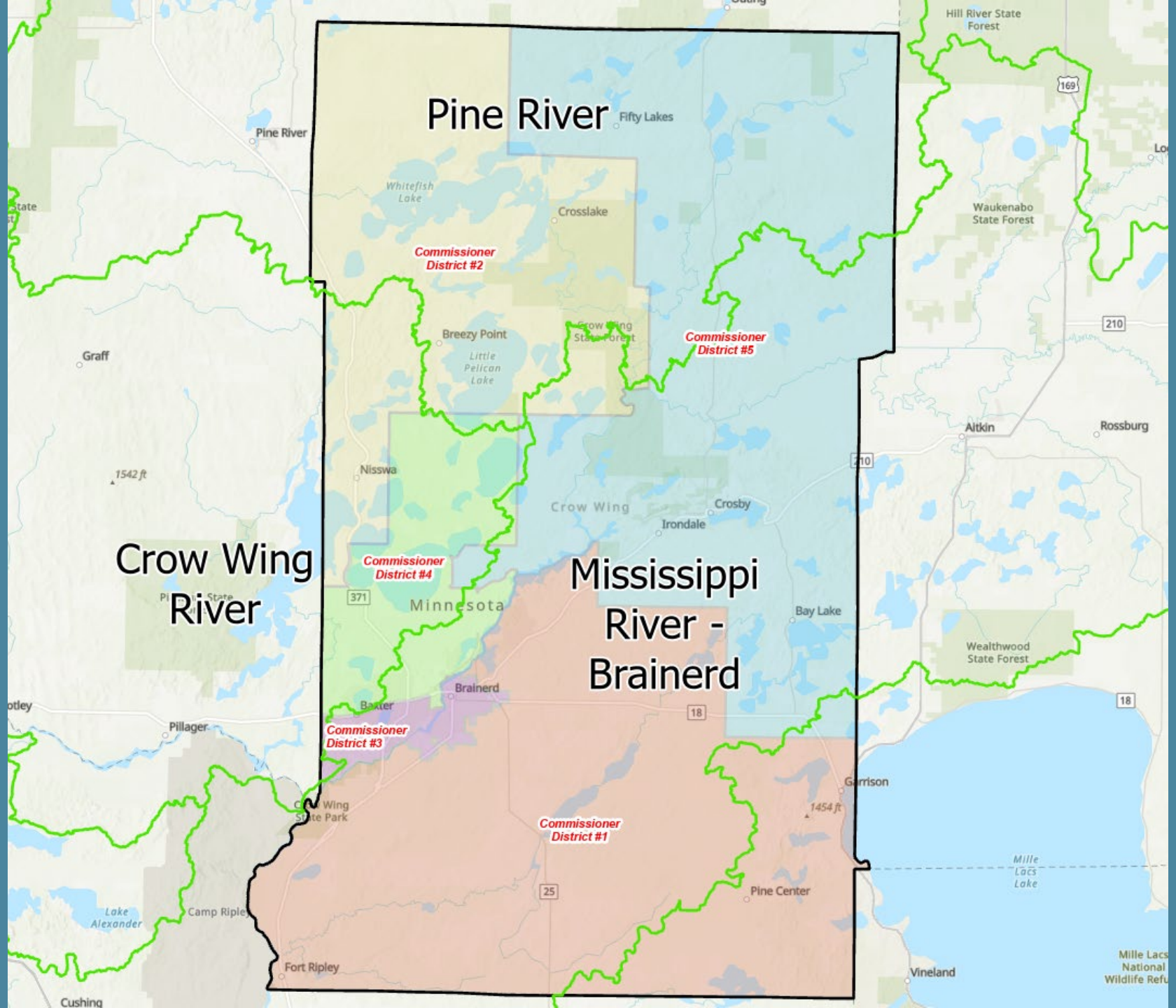
Thank you for the work you are doing in the watershed—we appreciate your time and leadership.

Best regards,

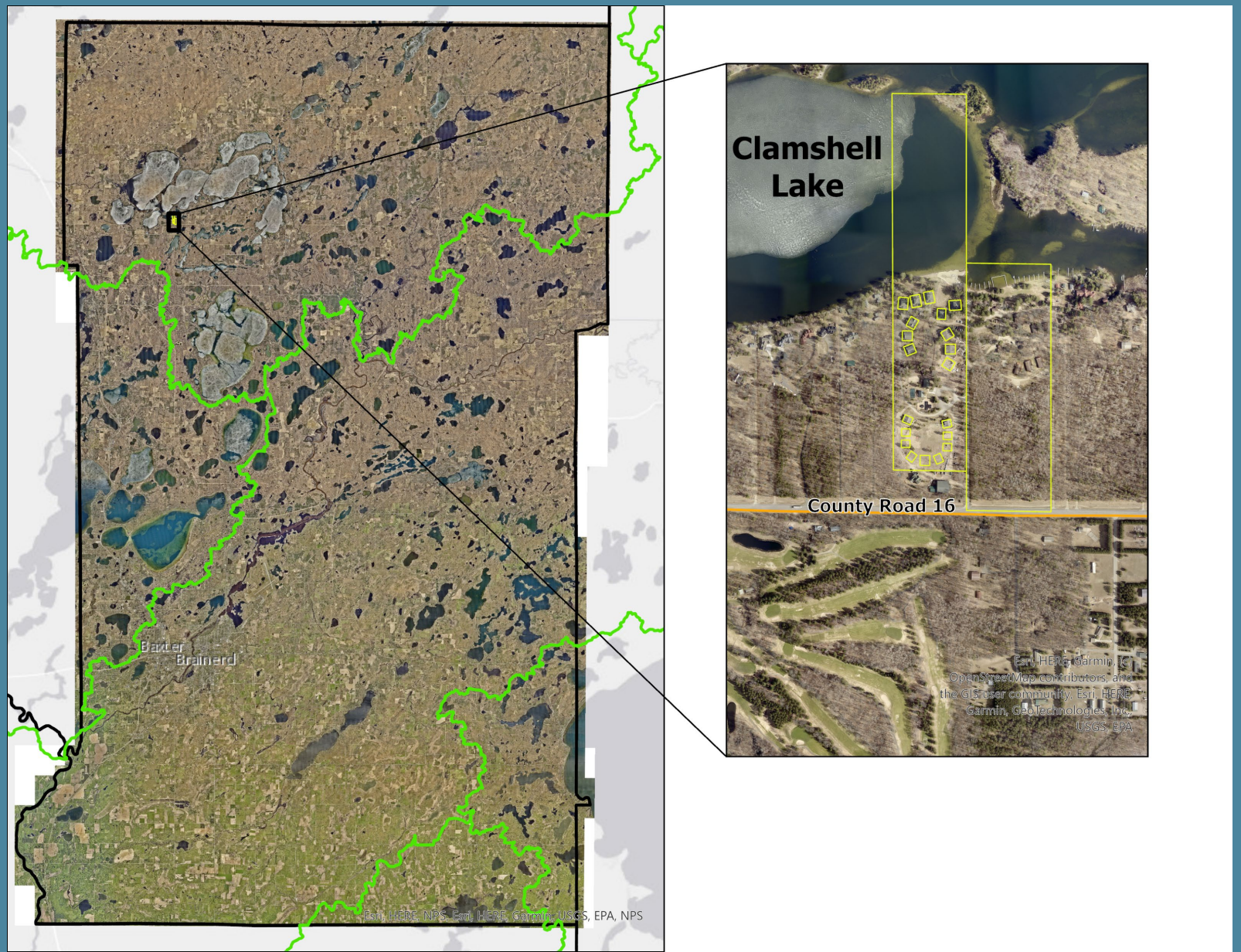
Jake Janski
Board Chair of the Rum River Watershed Partnership
Mille Lacs SWCD Supervisor

Watershed Based Implementation Plan Accomplishments

Crow Wing SWCD

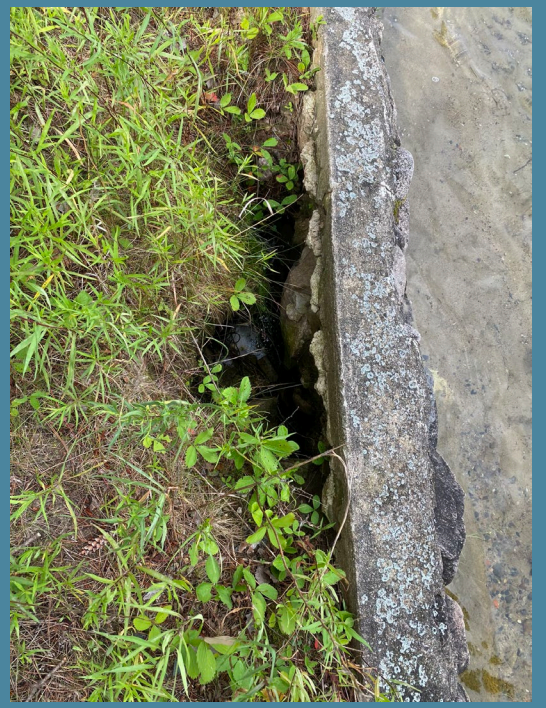

Pine River
Fifty Lakes
Pine River
Whitefish Lake
Crosslake
Commissioner District #2
Breezy Point
Crow Wing State Forest
Commissioner District #5
Little Pelican Lake
Graff
1542 ft
Nisswa
Crow Wing
Crosby
Irondale
Crow Wing River
Commissioner District #4
Minnesota
Mississippi River - Brainerd
Bay Lake
Brainerd
Baxter
Commissioner District #3
Pillager
Crow Wing State Park
Commissioner District #1
Garrison
1454 ft
Pine Center
Lake Alexander
Camp Ripley
Fort Ripley
Cushing
Vineland
Hill River State Forest
Waukenabo State Forest
Aitkin
Rossburg
Wealthwood State Forest
Mille Lacs Lake
Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refu
169
210
371
18
25

Clamshell Beach Resort



Before











Additional Damage





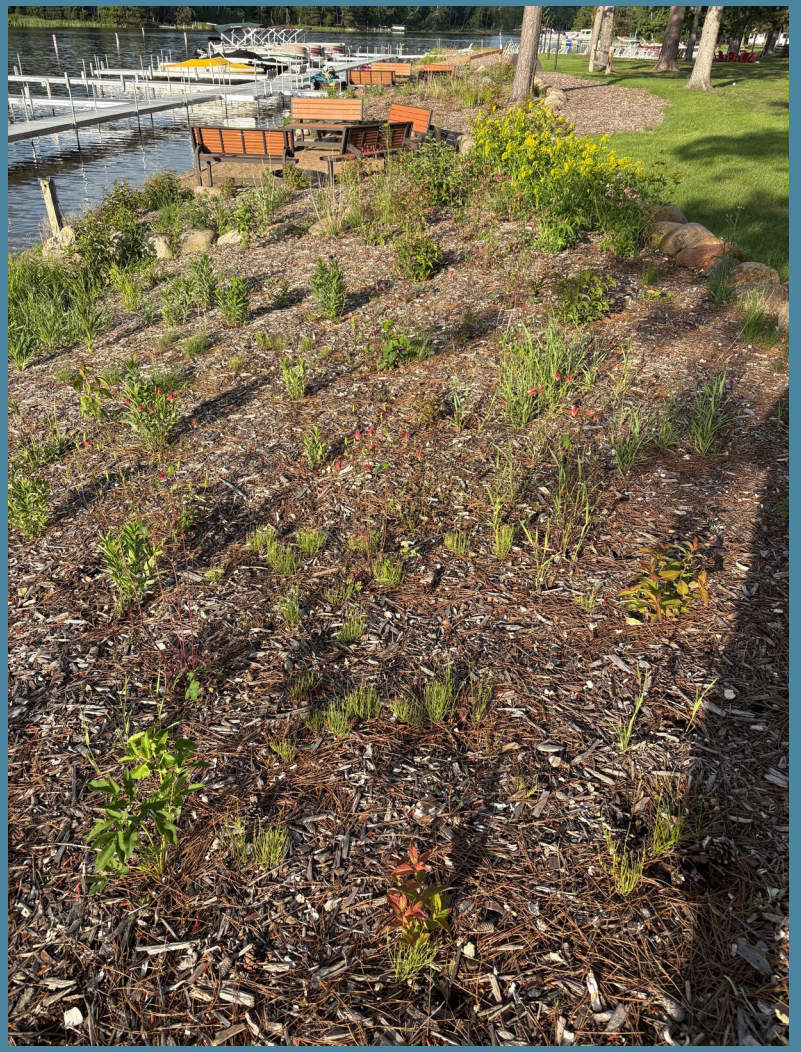
Work Completed

- Demolition of retaining wall (175 Linear Feet)
- 194 Cubic Yards of soil regrading
- 280 Linear Feet of 18-inch Coir Logs
- 1,779 Native Plant Plugs
- 3,500+ Square Feet

After



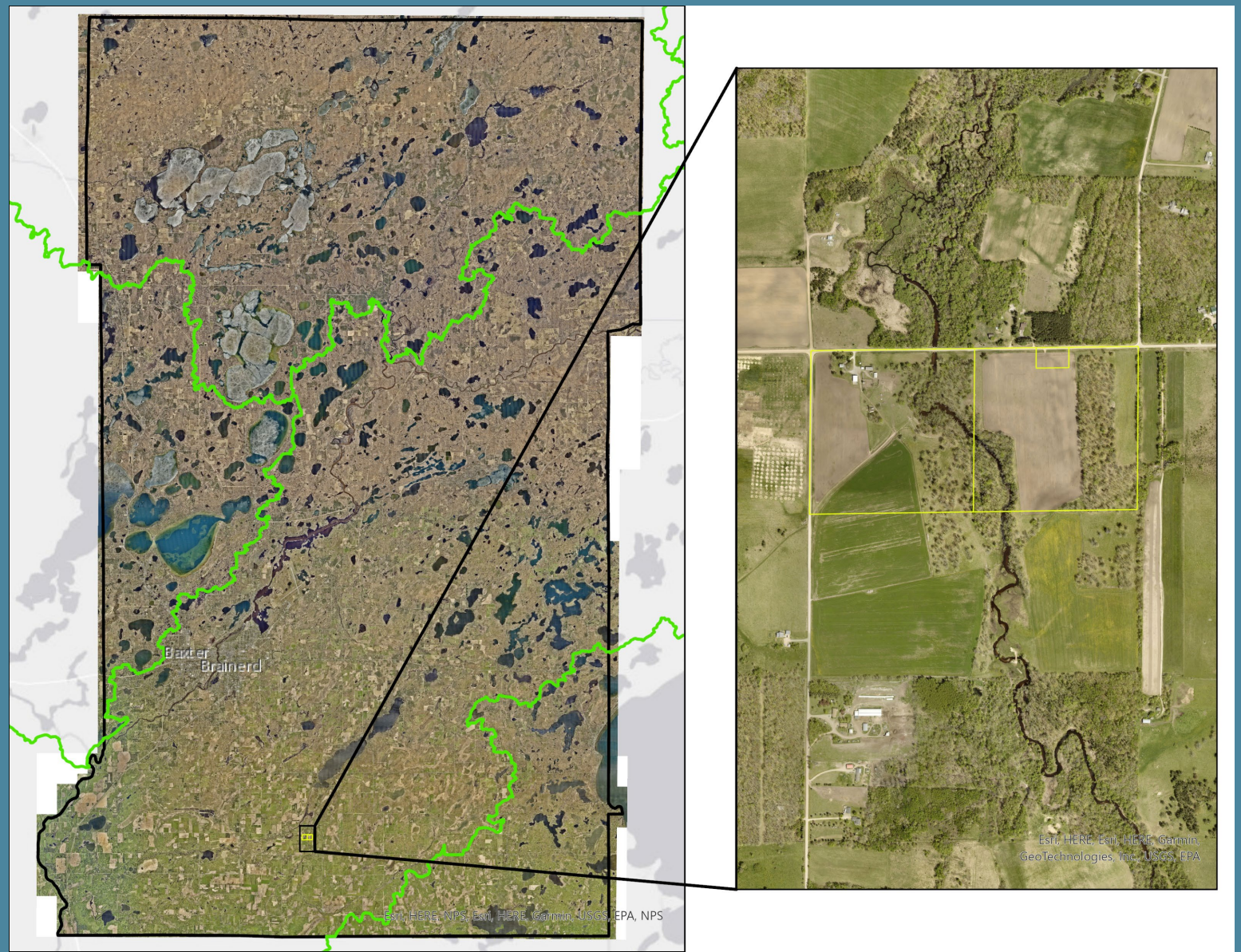




Results

- Estimated Pollution Prevention per year
  - 5.1 Pounds of Phosphorus (equivalent to 2550 Pounds of Algae)
  - 5.1 Tons of Sediment
- Brought an existing non-conforming parcel into compliance with modern Land Use Ordinance (Helps to restore the littoral zone)
- Project in a heavily visited location to educate the public on healthy shoreline practices

Annual Forages for Grazing System

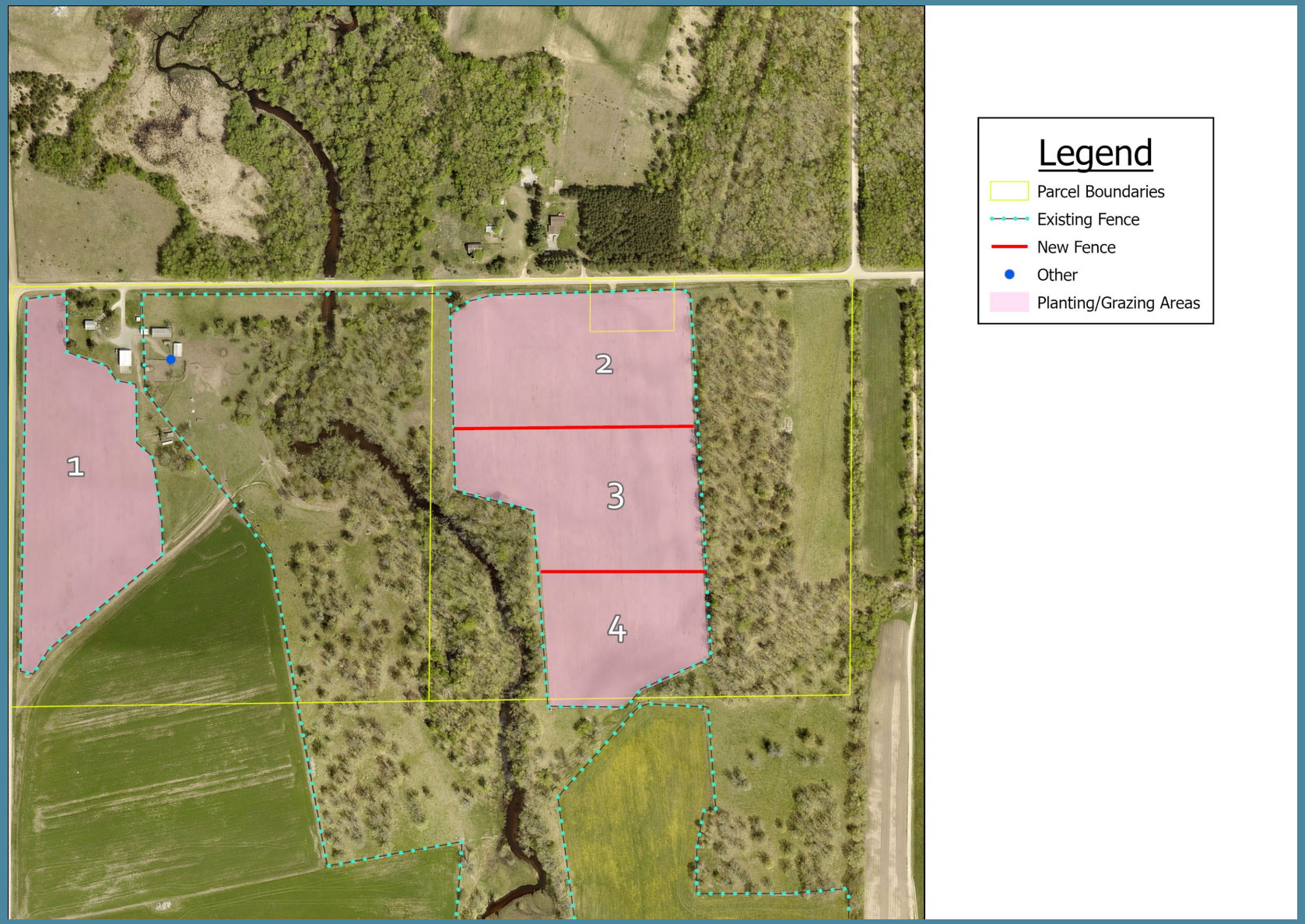


Before





Plan


1
2
3
4
Legend
Parcel Boundaries
Existing Fence
New Fence
Other
Planting/Grazing Areas

After



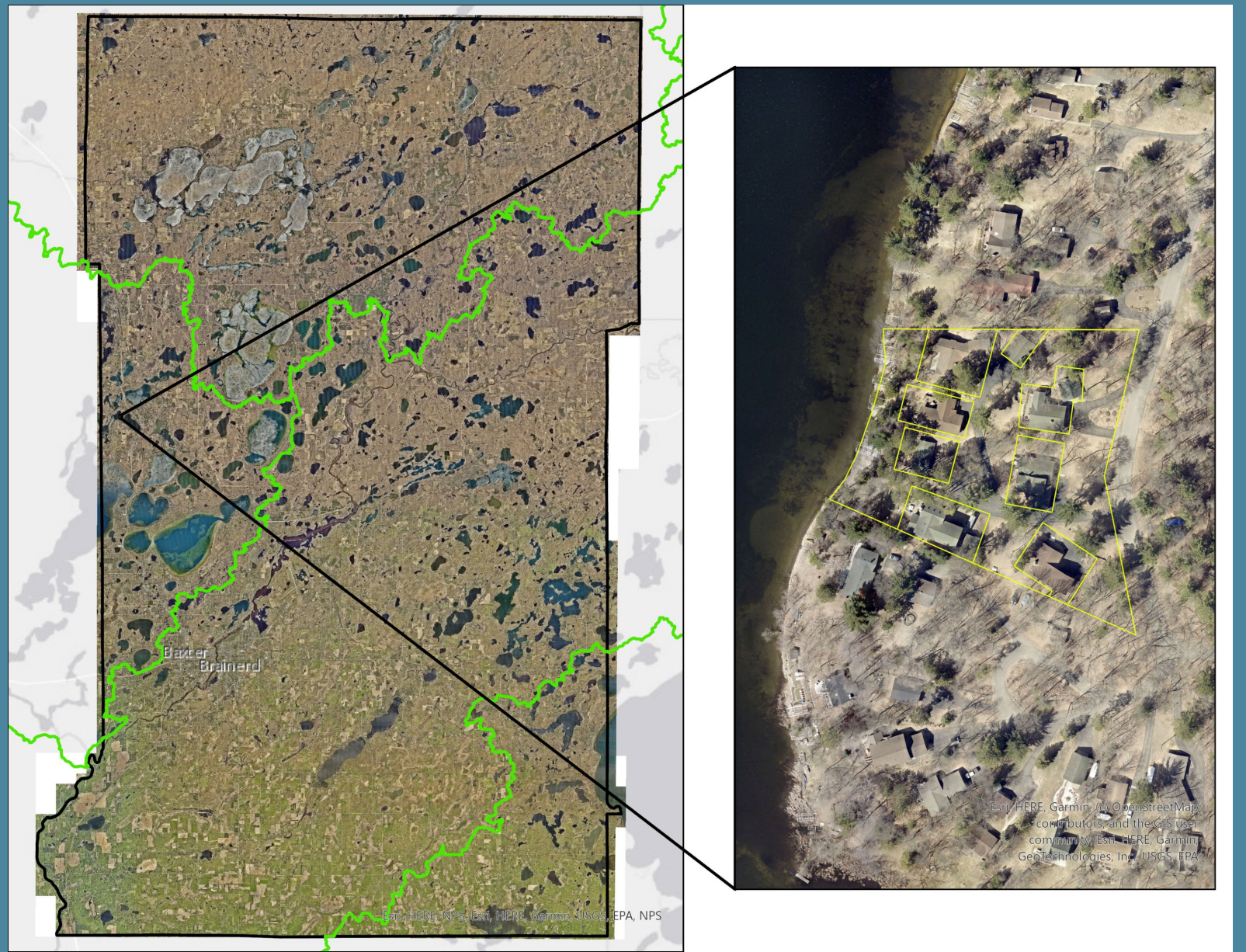




Results

- Minimize grazing adjacent to Daggett Brook
- Conversion of 26.4 Acres of Corn Row Crop to Pasture
- Improve forage availability and diversity
- Improve Soil Health by adding organic matter with diverse forage and incorporating livestock
- Allows rotational grazing to be implemented

Roy Ridge Stormwater Erosion



Before





Before





Current Status

- Their issue was beyond what the SWCD could handle
- The SWCD gave them a grant to have a private engineer develop a management plan
- The HOA is working with Widseth to develop a plan set that will properly mange the stormwater and prevent erosion

2025 Accomplishments

Mississippi-Brainerd River

- 18,000 Square Feet of Shoreline Restoration
- 128 Acres of Agricultural practices
- 475 Acres permanently protected through Conservation Easements

Pine River

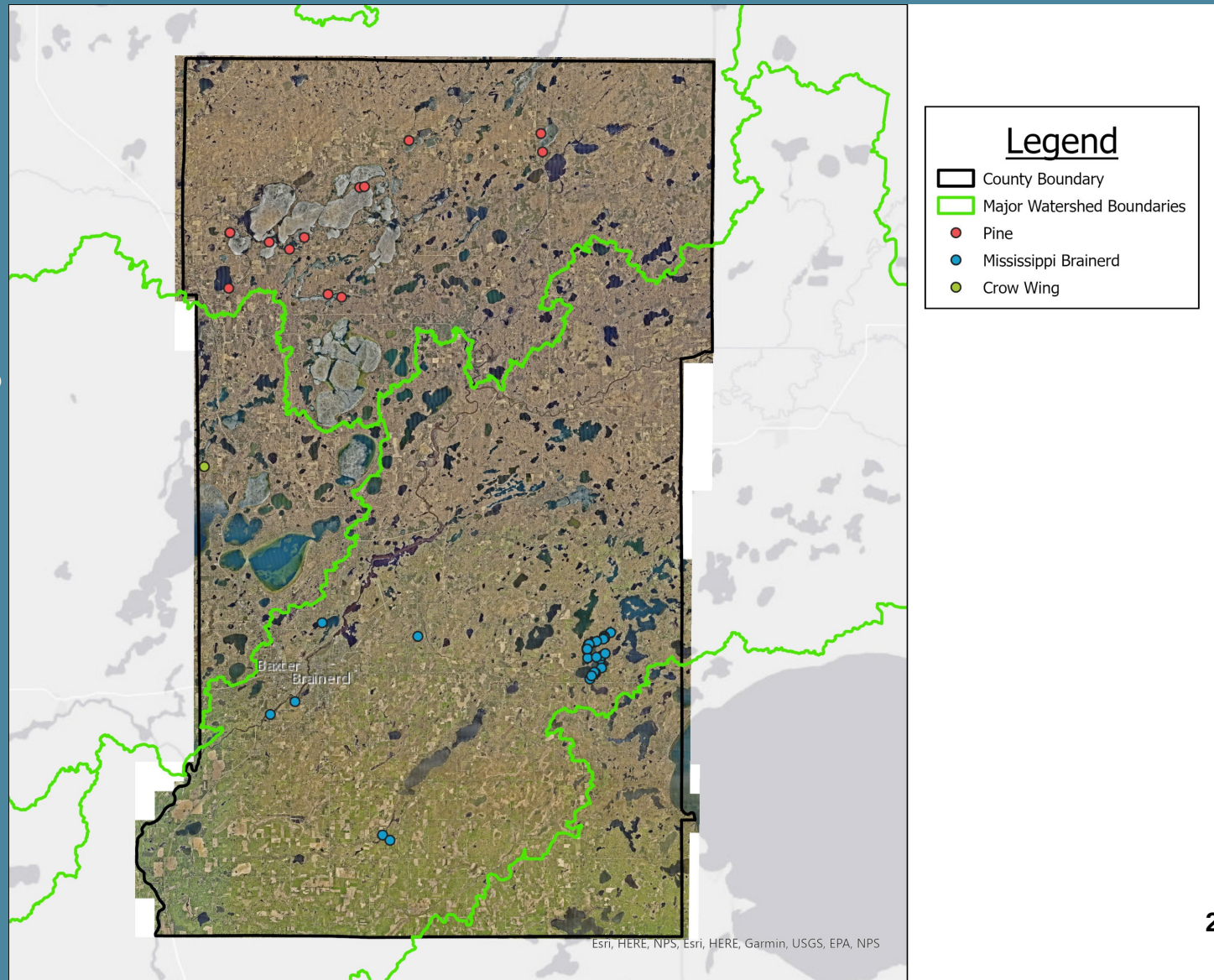
- 25,500 Square Feet of Shoreline Restoration
- 2000 Acres Enrolled in SFIA
- 180 Acres permanently protected through Conservation Easements

Crow Wing River

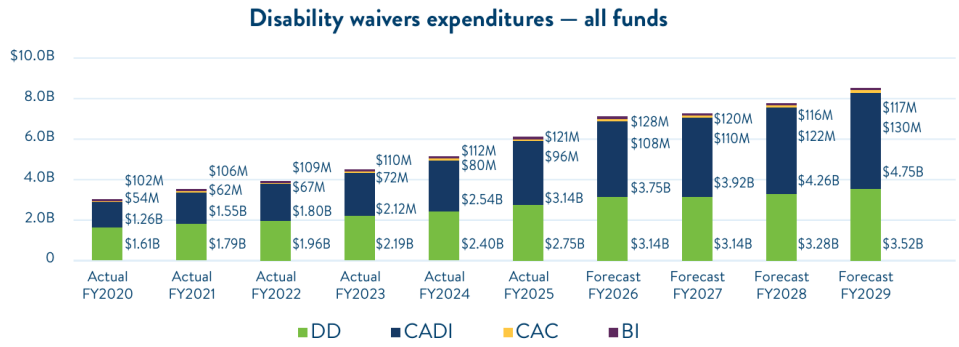
- 330 Square Feet of Shoreline Restoration
- 7 Priority Lakes plans developed
- 306 Acres permanently protected through Conservation Easements
- 2 Projects slated for installation this year

Overall 2025 WBIF Reduction Estimates

- 41 Total Projects
- 94 Lbs of Phosphorus (Equivalent to 47,000 Pounds of Algae)
- 109 Tons of Sediment
- 106 Tons of Soil Savings



Long Term Services and Supports – Bending the Cost Curve



In the 2025 Legislative session, counties received a contingent cost share for residential services funded under disability waivers. This equates to $89.5 million in the FY 28-29 biennium of property taxes to fund a state/federal program. Based on the trajectory of spending, this amount will only continue to escalate.

Also, during the 2025 Legislative session, an LTSS Advisory Council was formed to find cost savings in the LTSS programs. If the Council is not successful, the contingent cost shares go into effect.

Counties have been working since the spring of 2025 and were joined by DHS for technical assistance to generate ideas to bend the cost curve. The original goal was to enhance the work of the LTSS Advisory Council and bring all ideas to the Council for consideration. However, DHS confirmed that given the technical timeframe needed to enact any change, due to the legislative and CMS approval timelines, it is unlikely that any ideas produced by the Council in their December 2026 report will occur in time to prevent the contingent cost share.

Counties approached this effort with the goals of minimizing loss of essential services to people, increasing the integrity of the programs, and resulting in a more sustainable cost trajectory.

This list represents some of the ideas generated by the counties, although not an exhaustive list.

1. **Standardizing limits for Paid Parent of Minor / Spouse** by capping the approved hours of service at the individual's assessed service level. Current rules allow PPOM/Spouse to be paid for providing 40 or 80 hours per week of services, regardless of the individual assessment results.
2. **Modifying the Nursing Facility Level of Care Criteria for CADI/BI waivers**. This criteria change would require documentation of the conditions that creates a significant and ongoing risk to health and safety. It would also eliminate criteria #5 (clinical monitoring), which is rarely, if ever, the only criteria for which a person qualifies. Current rules do not require the person to provide professional documentation about having met the criteria in the assessment (i.e., a fall resulting in a fracture, a sensory impairment impacting abilities, at risk of maltreatment or neglect.
3. **Reinstating TEFRA Parental Fees** for children receiving MA under TEFRA Option and HCBS waivers. These fees were eliminated in 2023. Parental fees should be reinstated for families above a certain income threshold. Since July 1, 2023, more families have accessed disability waiver services for children which is unsustainable in the future. Reinstating parental fees will offer a cost sharing mechanism for incomes with financial capacity and may also eliminate and reduce service needs not necessary.

4. **Requiring Level 1 Behavior Documentation** for those whose eligibility is due to a behavioral support need. Policy is not clear on what constitutes such eligibility, which results in inconsistent policy application across the state. Requiring documentation of behavioral support needs from a professional eliminates any question of need. This is a key factor that determines quantity of services authorized. Having this level of information will ensure that the right number of services are being authorized.
5. **Requiring State Plan Services Before Accessing Waiver Services** is a federal requirement that cannot be consistently applied due to current state policy. Minnesota's waivers are to support people who need more services than the state plan can provide. Policy should be clarified to require state plan services to be tried prior to accessing more expensive waiver services unless extenuating circumstances are present that require an exception to this rule. Policy should not allow state plan services of a similar or like kind, when receiving waiver services. Individuals are also allowed to use both state plans services and waiver services, which can seem duplicative.
6. **Setting Firm Limits on Certain Services** is necessary to apply policy consistently. While some waivered services have clearly defined limits, others do not. Counties cannot enforce a limit on a service when there is not one set, resulting in people receiving services beyond a documented need.
7. **Requiring the Transition to Elderly Waiver at Age 65** for those coming from a disability waiver would align the program with the original intention. Elderly waiver services generally cost less than other disability services. An exception needs to be made for those living in a Community Residential Setting, to prevent loss of housing. Currently, individuals can choose to remain on the waiver they were on prior to age 65. As the number of services available under CADI is higher, many people choose to stay on CADI.
8. **Requiring Disability Certification Prior to Receiving a MnCHOICES Assessment** will reduce duplicate work at the county level. The MnCHOICES Assessment is time intensive, and having a certified disability is a primary eligibility criterion that is known prior to the assessment occurring, yet counties are required to do the assessment even if the person is not certified disabled. This creates avoidable administrative waste.
9. **Strengthening the Appeals Process** is necessary to create consistency in policy application statewide. By requiring the appeal to first go to the lead agency (county) for an administrative redetermination, counties may be able to address the concerns raised by the person without the need for costly and time-intensive DHS appeals. Narrowing the scope of the appeal and providing definitive guidelines in the assessment can strengthen the integrity of the program and the appeal.
10. **Adjusting Policy for the Vehicle Modification Allowance** from every year to every five years, implementing a 5-year depreciation methodology, and requiring income from the sale of a vehicle to be used towards the purchase of another vehicle prior to accessing additional waiver funds would reduce unnecessary expenses in this area.
11. **Adjusting Policy for Home Modification Allowance** from an annual allowance to a three-year allowance would align it with other relocation related policies. Additionally, caps on specific types of home modifications should be set (i.e. fencing, ramps, etc.) Lastly, "stacking" the annual allowance should be permitted once every 5 years, with these policy changes.
12. **Clarifying Standards and Requiring Documentation for Overnight Staffing Terms and Implementing Electronic Visit Verification** for residential settings would result in more consistent assessment results and rates that more accurately reflect the needs of the

individual. Also, providers should report within a specified timeframe when they are not able to provide the level of staffing specified within the rate, and the rate should be temporarily adjusted.

13. **Clarifying Rate Exception Request Policy** for when an individual with exceptional needs requires services at a higher rate than the standard framework due to extraordinary costs is needed. These high-cost requests are occurring more than originally anticipated, and policy is not clear on definitions and decision-making authority. Policy should clarify the definition of exceptional needs, specify the county role is limited to determining the person's level of need, and affirming the state's decision-making role for an acceptable financial rate.
14. **Adjusting Waiver Rates for Home and Community Based Services** is a central theme and root cause to many of the practices that occur that lead to program integrity concerns, rate exception requests, increasingly costly services. Many rates have not been adjusted in over a decade, and others are not sufficient to retain service providers based on the market. A rate study would provide credible information for lawmakers to consider adjusted rates, improving the stability of policy and the program.

Dear Community Provider,

Crow Wing County recognizes the vital role providers play in supporting individuals in our community. To better address the complexities of the Rate Management System (RMS) and ensure rates accurately reflect the level of care required, Crow Wing County has implemented changes to the rate exception request process.

We now request that all rate exception information be submitted to the affiliated case manager **at least 60 days prior** to the end of the current service agreement. To streamline the process and reduce administrative burden, we ask that all required information be submitted at one time and verified for accuracy before submission.

Rate exception requests are inherently complex for both providers and the lead agency. Our goal is to make this process as efficient and transparent as possible.

Key Elements of the Updated Process

- **Review Team**: An internal team has been established to review rate exception requests, provide feedback, and offer recommendations to case managers and/or providers.
- **Required Information**: Requests will only be considered if they include all required documentation (outlined below).
- **Incomplete Requests**: Requests missing required information will not be supported.
- **Provider Discretion**: If a provider chooses to proceed with an incomplete request, Crow Wing County will submit it to the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) per DHS policy, noting that the County does not support the request.

Please address all the following cost drivers that you have included within your rate exception request. Please ensure that there is not duplication within categories (Ex. If staff training is identified under Average Direct Care Wage it should not also be within Program-Related Supports).

Exception Requirements Effective 7/1/2026:

- ❖ Excessive Leave/Absence is now limited to persons receiving hospital services or persons receiving crisis respite services. Providers cannot limit a person's absences to a specific number of days.
- ❖ Exceptions can no longer be approved for increased community time.
- ❖ Exceptions can no longer be approved for transportation. Transportation is built into the framework.
- ❖ CRS exceptions must not include positive support costs.
- ❖ For rate exceptions related to behavioral needs, a documented behavioral diagnosis or determined assessed needs for behavioral supports as identified in the person's most recent assessment or reassessment must be included.

Required Documentation for Rate Exception Requests (as applicable)

1. **Average Direct Care Wage**

- RMS calculation tools or spreadsheets
- Specific staffing schedules
- Proof of payment/expenditure
    a. Payroll records citing current direct care and supervisory hourly wages for one month.
    b. Records or receipts of other allowable costs cited in request.
    c. Documentation of expenses paid as cited in request.
- Verify experience required to meet the needs of the specific person.

2. **Supervisory Wage Documentation**
Supervisor wage rates (exclude names; show role titles, hours, rates).

3. **Supervisor Span of Control** - Percentage meant to cover amount of time supervisor is available to support direct care staff or the person more than average due to the extraordinary needs of the person or increased need for supporting direct care staff.

- Show supervisor does not provide direct care, no overlap with billable direct care. Demonstrate separation.
- Time allocation logs: onsite and remote supervision tied to this client.
- Supervisor needs to provide additional hours of oversight or mentoring to direct staff due to nature of the person's needs.
- Supervisor receives numerous calls from staff for consultation.
- Remote supervision evidence is provided: call logs, Teams/Zoom notes, incident debriefs, training check-ins, policy updates, coaching documentation-dated and client-linked.
- Records of supervisory support beyond the framework rate, including charting and incident reports

4. **Specialized Training and Staff Qualifications**

- Documentation of experience and qualifications beyond the framework rate
- Training logs exceeding 245D requirements, including dates and staff involved (Who is providing the training and share their credentials; how much time needed to provide training: hours per staff x # staff x frequency; cost of training).
- Time spent on incident/maltreatment reports and additional paperwork
- Specialized training examples:
    - Mental health symptom management
    - De-escalation techniques
    - Seizure protocols
    - Lactose-controlled diets
    - Use of manual restraints (with supporting evidence)
- Documentation of complex behaviors and interventions beyond the framework rate
    - Behavior charting and medical records supporting the request
    - Behavioral diagnoses (if applicable)
    - Documentation of:
        - Physical aggression toward staff
        - Staff injuries and medical absences

5. **Taxes and Workers' Comp -** Costs related to provider paying required workers' compensation benefits which are relevant if a person has high behavioral incidents resulting in higher-than-average injuries to staff.

- Taxes: list FICA (7.65%), FUTA, SUTA (state-specific), and any local payroll taxes (use your actual %s and attach payroll vendor summary).
- Workers' Comp (WC): if requesting extra cost due to violent behaviors:
- Attach incident reports showing staff injuries and time off due to injuries.
- Attach insurer documents or payroll class code rate sheets indicating rate increases or claims costs affecting premiums.
- Tie incidents to additional training, heightened staffing ratios, and supervisor oversight required.

6. **Non-Delegable Nursing Tasks**
   - Daily tasks performed by an RN that cannot be delegated
   - Time associated with each task

7. **Client Program and Support Details**
   - Detailed information on specific supports provided to the individual beyond the framework rate not covered in other sections

9. **DHS 5820C Documentation**
   - Clear mathematical breakdown or spreadsheet of how each cost drivers were calculated

For Repeat Exception Requests
Update the 5820C annually with data relevant to the past year

As a reminder, please ensure all submitted information is complete and accurate, and provided **60 days prior** to the current service agreement renewal date.

Thank you for your continued partnership and the essential work you do. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,
Crow Wing County Disability Services Team

Evidence Checklist

Instructions: For each section below, provide the required information and attach all supporting documents. Clearly label each attachment with the corresponding section number and title. Do **not** duplicate information across sections. To keep things efficient, please only send documents that are directly relevant. This will help us move forward more quickly.

1. □ Proof of payment/expenditure

- Payroll records citing current direct care and supervisory hourly wages for one month.
- Records or receipts of other allowable costs cited in request.
- Documentation of expenses paid as cited in request.

2. ☐ Supervisor logs: on-site hours, remote supervision records (dates, topics, staff coached).
3. ☐ Training above 245D: curriculum outline, vendor/credential, invoices/quotes, attendance, backfill schedule.
4. ☐ Incident reports: injury details, medical documentation (if WC claimed).
5. ☐ Workers Comp rate sheet / insurer letter showing rate or premium impact (if applicable).
6. ☐ Daily tasks performed by an RN that cannot be delegated
7. ☐ Benefits summary with employer cost
8. ☐ MA/Waiver coverage screen-outs: denials or policy references showing items are not covered.
9. ☐ Training: level required, frequency, competencies beyond 245D.
10. ☐ Consult contracts or quotes (rates, hours).
11. ☐ Policy note acknowledging Absence/Transportation restrictions as of 7/1.
12. ☐ Documentation of mathematical breakdown of calculations.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- No math on the 5820: Always show how each number was derived (hours × rates, %s).
- Supervisor's time mixed with direct care: Keep roles and hours separate and documented.
- Training labeled "245D" when it's standard: Clearly describe why content is above and beyond (advanced competencies, clinical depth).
- Benefits/WC %s with no source: Attach proof (plan cost, insurer rate).
- Requests covered by MA/Waiver: Screen out or provide denial/coverage language.
- Sending large amounts of documentation that is not directly related to the areas above.
    - Ensure data is concise to the related cost drivers.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Home and Community-Based Services Lead Agency Review

Crow Wing County

Lead Agency Review: March 2025
Report issued: September 2025

651-431-4300 or 866-267-7655

Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

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ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية لترجمة هذه الوثيقة، اتصل على الرقم أعلاه.

သတိ။ ဤစာရွက်စာတမ်းအားအခမဲ့ဘာသာပြန်ပေးခြင်း အကူအညီလိုအပ်ပါက၊ အထက်ပါဖုန်းနံပါတ်ကိုခေါ်ဆိုပါ။

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請注意，如果您需要免費協助傳譯這份文件，請撥打上面的電話號碼。

Attention. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide gratuite pour interpréter le présent document, veuillez appeler au numéro ci-dessus.

Thov ua twb zoo nyeem. Yog hais tias koj xav tau kev pab txhais lus rau tsab ntaub ntawv no pub dawb, ces hu rau tus najnpawb xov tooj saum toj no.

ဟ်သူဉ်ဟ်သးဘဉ်တက့်. ဖဲနမ့်လိဉ်ဘဉ်တ်မၤစၢၤကလိလၢတ်ကကျိးထံဝဲဒဉ်လံာ် တိလံာ်မိတခါအံၤန္ဉ်,ကိးဘဉ် လိတဲစိနိ်ဂံ်လၢထးအံၤန္ဉ်တက့်.

알려드립니다. 이 문서에 대한 이해를 돕기 위해 무료로 제공되는 도움을 받으시려면 위의 전화번호로 연락하십시오.

ໂປຣດຊາບ, ຖ້າຫາກ ທ່ານຕ້ອງການການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປເອກະສານນີ້ຟຣີ, ຈົ່ງໂທຣໄປທີ່ໝາຍເລກຂ້າງເທິງນີ້.

Hubachiisa. Dokumentiin kun tola akka siif hiikamu gargaarsa hoo feete, lakkoobsa gubbatti kenname bilbili.

Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в устном переводе данного документа, позвоните по указанному выше телефону.

Digniin. Haddii aad u baahantahay caawimaad lacag-la'aan ah ee tarjumaadda qoraalkan, lambarka kore wac.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para interpretar este documento, llame al número indicado arriba.

Chú ý. Nếu quý vị cần được giúp đỡ dịch tài liệu này miễn phí, xin gọi số bên trên.

LB2 (8-16)

ADA Advisory

For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, call 651-431-4300 (local) or 866-267-7655 (toll free), write to dhs.info@state.mn.us or use your preferred relay service. (ADA1[2-18])

For more information, contact

Minnesota Department of Human Services Lead Agency Review Team:

Lead Agency Review email

Lead Agency Review website

Printed on recycled paper.

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About the HCBS Lead Agency Review process

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for developing and monitoring Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver policies and programs in accordance with federal and state guidelines. Lead agencies, including counties, tribal nations, and managed care organizations (MCOs), are responsible for administering these programs. This arrangement requires a high level of partnership between the state and lead agencies to ensure Minnesotans receive high-quality support and services for which they qualify.

The Lead Agency Review (LAR) process is how Minnesota's Department of Human Services (DHS) monitors and evaluates the administration of home and community-based services (HCBS) provided by lead agencies throughout the state. HCBS programs are the long-term services and support a person needs due to a chronic health condition or disability, delivered in the person's home or other community-based setting of choice. As of Calendar Year (CY) 2023, 120,866 people were served through HCBS programs statewide, representing a 14.6% increase from CY 2019. During this period, each waiver program also experienced a steady increase in serving those with higher levels of need. As of FY2023, 91% of people on Developmental Disabilities (DD) and Community Alternative Care, Community Access for Disability inclusion, and Brain Injury (CCB) waivers, and 72% of people on Elderly Waiver (EW) and the Alternative Care (AC) programs were those with high needs.

LAR supports the department's mission to ensure long-term care services and supports continue to improve the quality of life of Minnesotans and are sustainable over time. The LAR team examines the six Medical Assistance waiver programs in each lead agency across the state. The six programs are:

- Alternative Care (AC) program
- Brain Injury (BI) Waiver
- Community Alternative Care (CAC) Waiver
- Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI) Waiver
- Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver
- Elderly Waiver (EW).

NOTE: BI, CAC, and CADI are often grouped into one category, referred to as CCB.

Effective state monitoring and partnerships with counties, tribal nations, and other agencies involved in administering and delivering the programs are pivotal to ensuring Minnesotans receive the necessary services to meet their needs.

Mixed Methods Approach

The Lead Agency Review process uses a mixed-method approach to review data, much of which is gathered during a multi-day review. These methods provide a comprehensive picture of compliance, context, and practices within each lead agency, further explaining how individuals benefit from the HCBS programs. The multi-source data collected informs the strengths, recommendations, and corrective actions (if necessary) that are issued to a lead agency. These methods also allow DHS to document and report compliance and remediation (if necessary) to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Mixed method approaches used to determine lead agency HCBS waiver compliance include:

- Case file review
- Lead agency survey
- Supervisor and leadership interview(s)
- Assessor and case manager focus group(s).

Goals of the HCBS Lead Agency Review:

- Assure the compliance of counties and tribal nations in the administration of HCBS programs
- Share performance on key measures and outcomes to better support the people of Minnesota
- Promote collaboration amongst lead agencies with best practices and innovation approaches
- Share best practices and feedback to DHS to promote state improvements.

Summary of Previous Lead Agency Review

During Crow Wing County's 2020 review, DHS issued several recommendations and corrective actions to prompt lead agency improvements. The review team identified these as opportunities where additional actions by the lead agency would further benefit its staff and people receiving services.

Table 1: Results from previous Lead Agency Review

Previous recommendation	Update on lead agency action
Consider expanding case management and assessor capacity.	The Adult Services Division Supervisor proposed the addition of two staff members to establish a MnCHOICES Re-Assessment Team, a request that has since been approved.
Develop succession planning strategies to help retain knowledge and expertise.	The MnCHOICES team consists of three staff members, each with designated areas of expertise. For every area, there are established backups, supported by mentors and lead workers to ensure continuity and depth of knowledge.

Snapshot of Crow Wing County

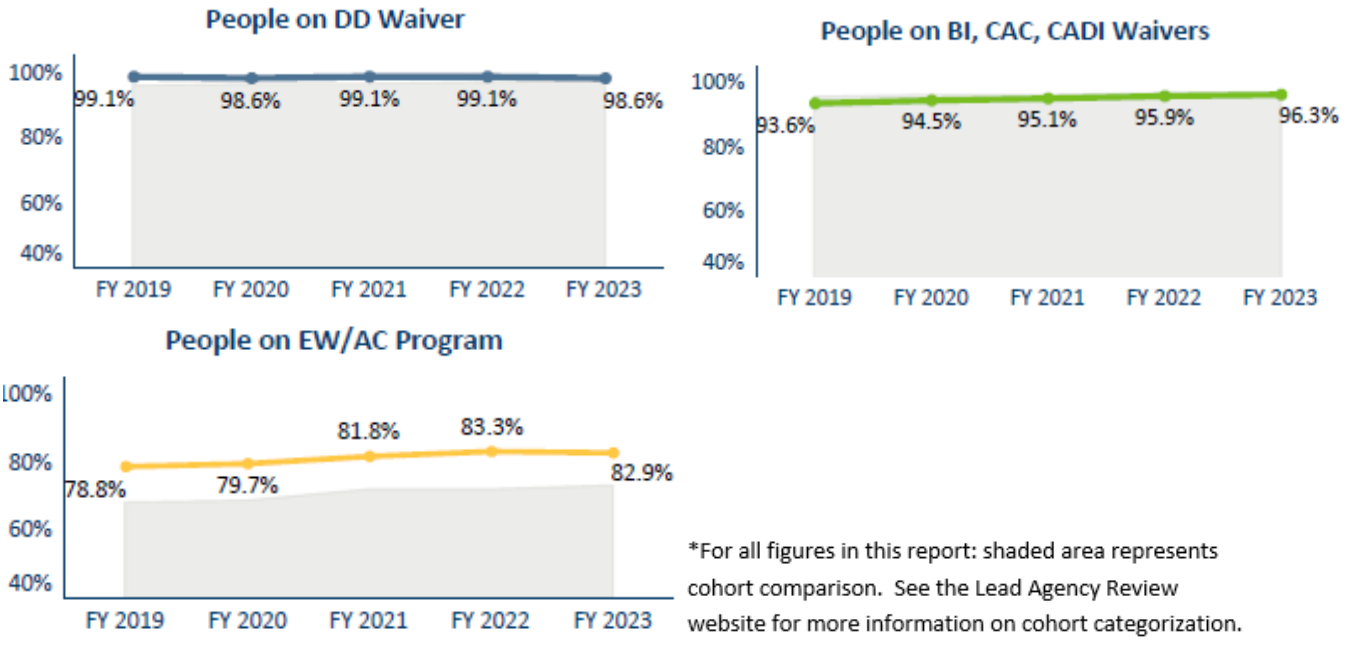
Crow Wing County is a rural county located in northcentral Minnesota; the city of Brainerd is the county seat. As of July 2022, the county's population was 67,948 people, ranking 15th out of 87 counties in Minnesota for population size. As of January 2022, Crow Wing County served 1,291 individuals with Long-Term Services and Support (LTSS) program, with 1,185 of those individuals served by HCBS programs. From January 2019 to January 2023, the number of individuals served by the HCBS programs within Crow Wing County increased by 5.8%, while the overall population of the county increased by 4.6%. The LTSS program summary data indicates that Crow Wing County is serving more people through its CCB and DD waiver programs over institutional settings when compared to its cohort and statewide performance. Figure 3 shows that most notably in the

EW/AC programs, Crow Wing County is serving more people who are eligible for LTSS with HCBS versus institutional care. According to Lead Agency staff, this may be reflective of Crow Wing County's culture amongst their seniors of being very independent and seeking services through the aging programs as a last resort.

The LTSS demographic dashboard indicates that a larger number of people served by Crow Wing County's HCBS programs are under 65 years old, and the most significant increase in HCBS program enrollment occurred in the under-5 age group, with a 138.5% increase from FY2019 to FY2023. The most significant decrease in HCBS program enrollment occurred in the 85+ age group, with a 27.1% decrease from FY2019 to FY2023. Lead agency staff reported that the influx of younger populations is a result of the effective collaboration with schools, clinics, and internal children's mental health professionals, all of which supported families in learning about HCBS. Lead agency staff also reported several factors that may have resulted in a decrease in enrollment among 65+ populations, including challenges with the Medical Assistance renewal process which resulted in people fall off programs and higher mortality rates among this age group.

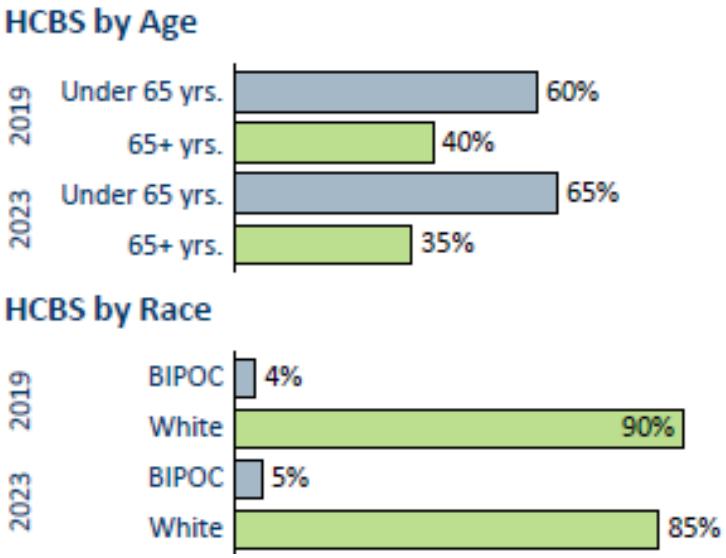
Of the individuals receiving HCBS, 94.3% identified as white, 1.3% identified as Hispanic, 1.3% identified as Multiracial, 0.9% identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0.8% identified as Black. As demonstrated in Figure 4., from January 2019 to January 2023, Crow Wing County has seen a slight increase in racial and ethnic diversity in its HCBS programs, as shown in Figure 4. When asked about how Crow Wing County ensures that all community members have access to HCBS, leadership reported that staff have access to several county-wide trainings, social cohesion groups, cultural wellness groups, and a social justice roundtable. Lead agency staff reported that DEI training and incentives will no longer be a priority, according to county board communications. Lead agency staff shared that they serve individuals who speak Russian and Spanish, as well as use American Sign Language (ASL). The use of interpreters can be challenging through language lines as reception is poor in the most rural areas of Crow Wing County, which often leads to difficulty in hearing and understanding complex conversations. As a result, individuals often prefer to have family members interpret despite being offered other options. Additionally, there are conversation and chat groups that offer opportunities for new residents to connect with the community.

Figure 3: Percent of people receiving HCBS



*For all figures in this report: shaded area represents cohort comparison. See the Lead Agency Review website for more information on cohort categorization.

Figure 4: Changes in HCBS by race and age in Crow Wing County



Organizational design and processes

As a lead agency, Crow Wing County oversees and provides assessment and case management for the HCBS programs administered within the county. These programs are administered by Crow Wing County and are divided into two departments: Public Health and Community Services. Within Public Health, the Aging Services Unit serves older adults and administers Long-Term Care Consultations. Within Community Services, the Adults Waiver Services unit administers the CCB and DD waiver programs. Between both departments, there are case managers, assessors, and case aides. The lead agency does not use contracted case management services. Crow Wing County collaborates with Medica, UCare, and Blue Cross Blue Shield as managed care organizations (MCOs).

Since their last review, Crow Wing County has made several changes to support HCBS services and staff. The county has established an assessment department, separating assessment from case management. A new manager leads this team, which is housed alongside intake and adult protection services. The team consists of nine assessors, three of whom specialize exclusively in reassessments. The Aging Services and Adult Waiver Services both have designated leads on their teams, and the teams share two case aides to support them with clerical tasks.

Crow Wing County has a centralized phone number and email for new referrals; intake staff take phone calls and monitor intake emails, and then the assessment team completes initial assessments for both Aging and Adult Services. Crow Wing County assessors report completing between 10 to 15 assessments per month. Lead agency staff and supervisors have identified a 45-60-day waitlist for an assessment. During times of increased need, all team members help with assessments to support the team in getting caught up.

Overall, the staff at Crow Wing County is highly experienced, with tenure ranging from 5 to 25 years. They have developed and maintained strong relationships with the individuals they serve, as well as the professionals who serve the individuals. Staff reported recent changes with MnCHOICES, CFSS, and increasing complexity of client needs have made managing their average caseload of 59 more challenging. Staff report very supportive relationships with each other, supervisors, and other internal departments at Crow Wing County. Survey respondents reported that they maintain program expertise by attending internal and external

trainings and f work to improve program compliance through internal audits of case files. Finally, lead agency staff report they learn of policy changes through discussion at staff meetings, subject matter experts, and supervisor direction.

Community Integration (Choice, Community Participation, and Inclusion)

Minnesota continues moving toward person-centered practices in all service delivery. As a state, Minnesota strives to ensure that people with disabilities and older Minnesotans live, learn, work, and enjoy life in the most integrated setting. This means building or maintaining relationships with their families and friends, living more independently, engaging in productive activities (such as employment), and participating in their home community. Increasing the availability of service options, particularly in the areas of housing and employment, helps support independence and gives the person the ability to choose the services and supports that best fit their needs. As it is the lead agency's responsibility to monitor the ongoing provision of services for efficacy and people's satisfaction, the review evaluates how a lead agency connects people to opportunities and services that enhance the quality of life and how they ensure quality services are being delivered.

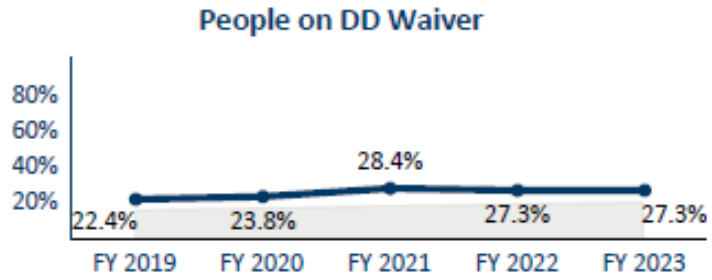
Self-Directed Services

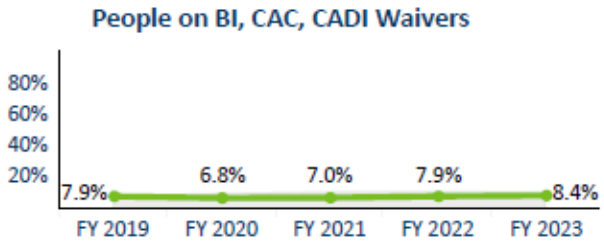
Individuals served by HCBS programs have access to self-directed service delivery as an alternative to traditionally delivered and managed services. Self-directed services empower people by giving them greater control and choice over their services and supports. These programs include Community First Services and Supports (CFSS), and Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS).

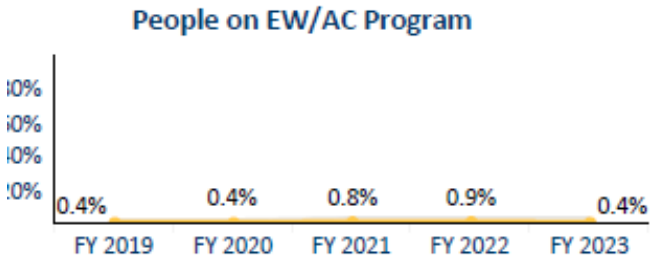
Crow Wing County has seen an increase in CDCS utilization in the DD waiver program from FY2019 to 2023. For the DD waiver, 27.3% of individuals used CDCS in FY 2023, which was higher than the cohort average of 20.1% but slightly lower than the statewide average of 29.9%. For CCB waivers, Crow Wing County had 8.4% of individuals using CDCS in FY 2023, which was lower than the cohort average of 10.7% as well as the state average of 10.9%. Crow Wing County had very low usage of CDCS for EW/AC waivers at 0.4% in FY 2023, which is below both the cohort and state average of 3.6%. Staff report that individuals lack local informal supports, which greatly limits an individual's choice to utilize CDCS because many people do not have people in their lives, they could hire for CDCS staffing. Many times, people on the DD waiver are more likely to be younger and living with family members who can work as staff for their family members. This fills the gaps in service providers, especially those living in remote areas of the community.

In Crow Wing County, focus group participants shared they each have a few families or individuals on CDCS. Case Managers noted the strength of having an approval committee that meets to review various requests and that individuals on the committee have vast knowledge and fresh eyes that support decisions made regarding home modifications and CDCS plans. Staff shared that they had initially hoped CFSS would decrease the CDCS workload, but they have not yet experienced that. Further, Crow Wing County staff noted additional challenges with using CDCS and the rollout of CFSS in conjunction with one another and some irregularities regarding CDCS budget changes.

Figure 5: Percent of people utilizing CDCS







*For all figures in this report: shaded area represents cohort comparison. See the Lead Agency Review website for more information on cohort categorization.

Housing and Services

When people live in their own homes, it supports independence, giving them more control over the day-to-day aspects of their lives. As these services involve coming into a person's home, they must be flexible, well-coordinated, and dependable. Minnesota continues to develop service options that are adaptable and customizable to support more people living in their own homes. This effort aligns with the state's Olmstead Plan, which established the following statewide goal: "By June 30, 2024, the number of people with disabilities who live in the most integrated housing of their choice, where they have a signed lease and receive financial support to pay for the cost of their housing, will increase by 2,467 (from 2021 through 2024)." — MN Olmstead Plan, April 2022.

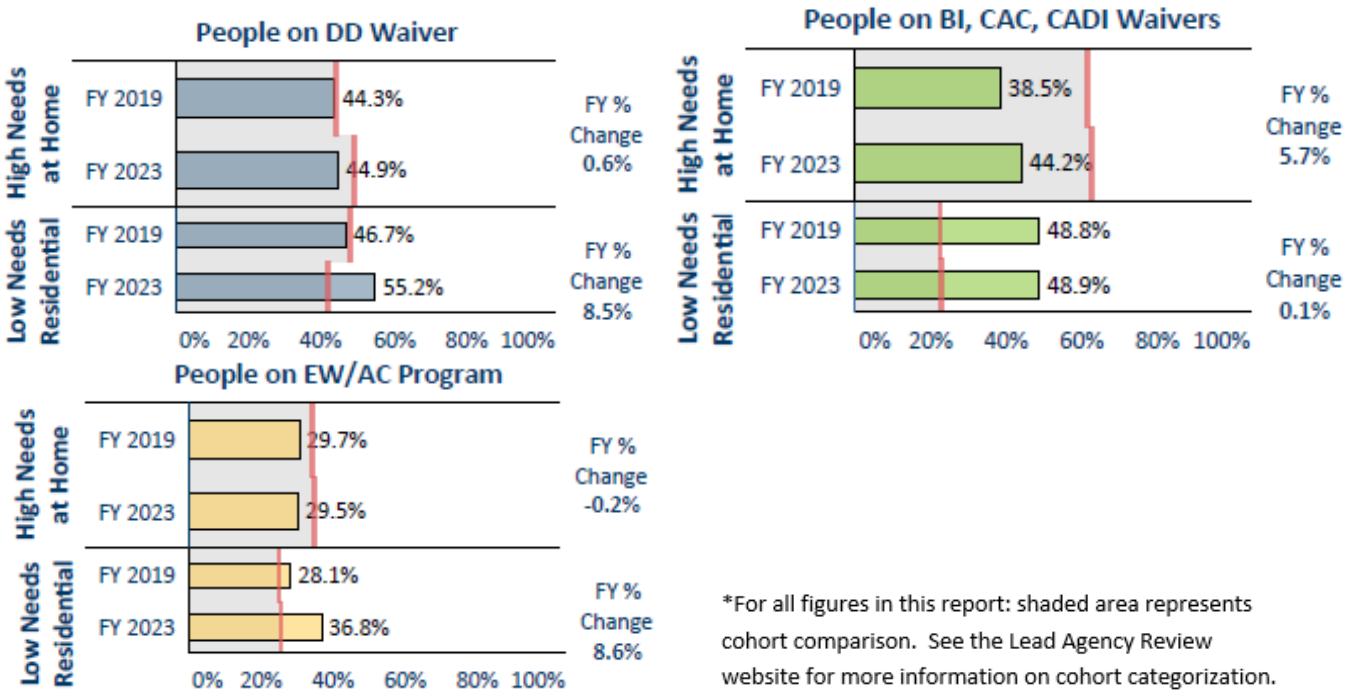
The Program Summary shows that Crow Wing County serves a lower percentage of individuals on HCBS waivers at home when compared to cohort and statewide averages. Lead agency staff report this is largely due to the county's remoteness and waiver recipients' preference to remain in their home county. As reflected in Figure 6, Crow Wing County has increased the percentage of people with high needs served at home, most notably in CCB programs, with a 5.7% increase from FY2019 to FY2023. The EW/AC program experienced a decrease in the number of people with high needs at home and an increase of low needs in residential by 8.6% from FY2019 to FY2023. Staff report this is due to a lack of in-home providers, especially in the more remote areas of the county. Program summary data confirm that Crow Wing County is seeing an increase in individuals with more complex needs being served by CCB and aging programs.

Case Manager survey respondents identified the most significant barriers to housing in Crow Wing County as affordability, accessibility, housing support, and chosen location. Furthermore, the survey notes the lack of expansion of in-home services, customized living, or housing stability services. Staff and supervisors reported problem-solving with individuals on how informal connections can become formal service providers. Staff reported that housing coordination works well when they have enough time before a move, and there is currently a waitlist for housing coordination.

Crow Wing County staff reported that negotiating rates for clients in housing takes a significant amount of their time, and the rates sought often do not correlate with a client's true needs. Individuals sometimes must seek housing in the metro area because there is more capacity to support people with more complex mental health and medical needs; however, it is challenging for families to trust their loved ones to receive quality care when they are so far from home. Case managers also noted a lack of in-home providers or family support

that makes it hard to keep people in their own homes. Further, housing with wheelchair accessibility is very difficult to find, which has led to older adults going to assisted living sooner than they wanted. Staff and Supervisors shared that the community has great Assisted Living Facilities, which makes the move for individuals easier. Supervisors reported that existing community providers want to help people and meet their needs. There are local community aging coalitions and community meetings for community residential providers, which encourage problem-solving and resource-sharing to support person-centered practices and outcomes.

Figure 6: Percent of individuals living at home, with high needs in Crow Wing County



*For all figures in this report: shaded area represents cohort comparison. See the Lead Agency Review website for more information on cohort categorization.

Employment

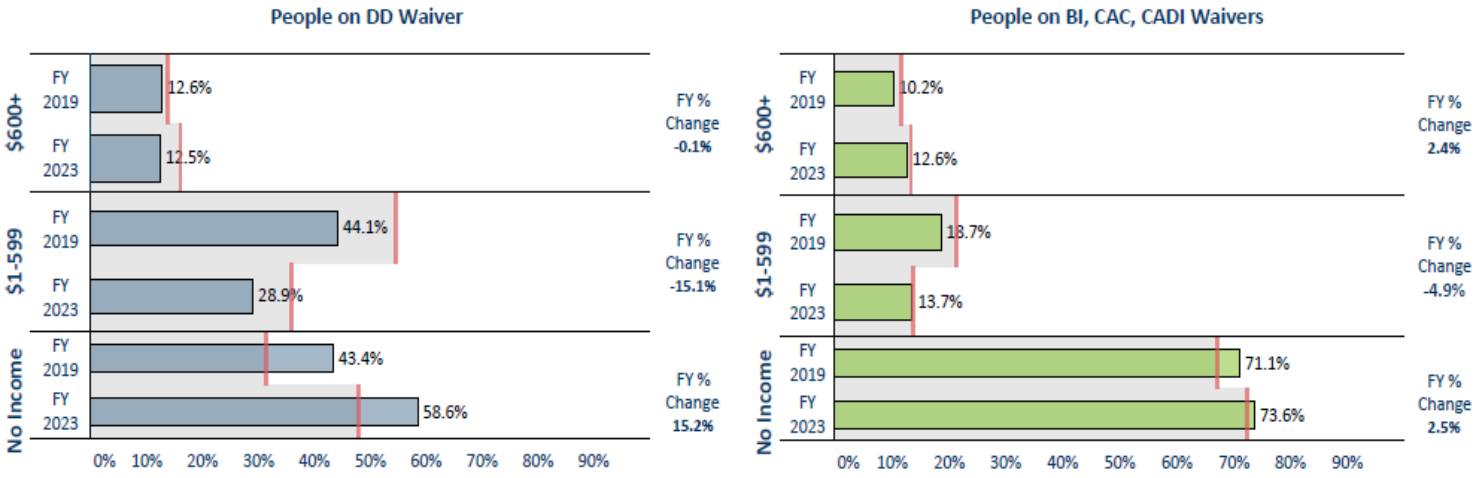
When people have higher monthly earnings, it indicates that community-based employment, along with the supportive services sometimes needed to maintain employment, is available. Employment not only provides income for people, but it also makes people feel valued as they can participate in and contribute to their communities. The Minnesota Olmstead Plan establishes statewide goals to increase employment and earnings for people with disabilities. Figure 7 shows the percent of earnings for those who are working by program.

Crow Wing County experienced a decrease in the number of individuals on CCB and DD waivers with any income from FY2019 to FY2023; however, there was a 2.4% increase in the number of individuals on CCB waivers earning $600 or more per month, a benchmark for competitive integrated employment (Figure 7). People utilizing the DD program with income from $1-$599 decreased by 15.1%, and the CCB program had a reduction of 4.9% in the same category from FY2019 to FY2023.

Lead agency staff reported there is currently no waitlist for Employment Services, and providers work hard to think outside the box to connect community members to employment opportunities. The lead agency survey also indicates strong collaboration with employment service providers. It was noted that many transition-age youth require additional assistance to become employed. According to the survey, the biggest barriers to employment are transportation, employment support, and employment opportunities. Staff further reported

that some individuals prefer sheltered workshops or a day support model, and currently, there is a year-and-a-half waitlist for day programming.

Figure 7: Percent of working-age people on CCB and DD waivers with earned income (monthly) in Crow Wing County



Results and Findings

Strengths

The following findings focus on the strengths observed during the recent review of Crow Wing County. By maintaining strong practices over the years and implementing new initiatives to enhance Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) in its community, Crow Wing County continues to achieve positive outcomes for the individual's receiving services.

Crow Wing County has integrated support and oversight for staff, leading to knowledgeable and capable assessors and case managers. Staff possess strong knowledge of program requirements and person-centered planning practices. This has resulted in excellent compliance outcomes from the case file review, with no corrective actions. With the many changes to LTSS programs at national and state levels with Pandemic era policy waivers ending, along with rolling out a completely new CFSS program and MnCHOICES platform, Crow Wing County has been able to ensure staff understand these changes and have integrated them into their practices. Changes to the program structure have supported staff capacity during these many policy and practice changes. This is not to state that the process was easy, this review identified the exceptional leadership and support for staff, and exceptional staff who have been able to meet compliance requirements in an ever-changing environment. For example, 100% of cases reviewed met face to face visit requirements and contained a current assessment and or screening. Overall, 100% of the support plans reviewed were current, 100% of support plans were sent to the person, and 94% of all cases reviewed met timeliness standards for support plans being sent within 60 days of the assessment.

Crow Wing County has built strong relationships among its waiver team and with internal and external partners. Leadership and staff shared high esteem among internal and external partners, holding a shared priority for quality customer service and person-centered practices to address needs and support people's preferred goals. They rely on each other's professional expertise and specialized knowledge when serving people on HCBS waiver programs. These strong working relationships and ability to bring multiple perspective

on the community resources, services, and supports has allowed Crow Wing County to address an increase in complex cases and growth in children's services with pragmatic approaches in a time of immense change.

Recommendations

Recommendations are developed by the Lead Agency Review Team and are intended to prompt improvements in the lead agency's administration of HCBS programs. The following recommendations could benefit Crow Wing County and the people who receive services.

Consider making changes within the waiver units' structures to provide additional supports to leadership and staff, and gain efficiencies in administrative functions. LTSS programs in Minnesota have undergone major changes in recent years where waivers have become more complex, cases are more complicated with an increase in higher needs, and there are service shortages and gaps. Some ideas to investigate include more specialization to allow staff to focus on a program area; add more administrative supports for waiver units to free up capacity for supervisors, leads, and case managers to focus on more complex case management activities and higher-level issues. Additionally, Crow Wing County should focus on how to effectively and efficiently deliver CM to out of county placements. This includes comparing contracted case management costs and administrative needs compared to restructuring internal case management roles to meet out of county placement needs.

Develop relationships across the community beyond current HCBS waiver service providers and partner with community initiatives. Crow Wing County leadership and staff identified limited options transportation, in home services, and employment support that do not meet the needs of many HCBS participants. These gaps in services and supports can be seen in the higher rates of people with lower needs living in provider owned homes, and lower rates of competitive employment. These issues around employment, housing, and transportation also affect the greater community and will require leveraging resources and ideas that meet the community's needs. This recommendation also includes bringing in leaders from cultural communities on how to better understand and serve the greater Crow Wing County community.

Continue efforts to make support plans person-centered by adding critical content to each support plan. The support plan is the one document that all people receive, and it should include individualized and detailed personal information about the person and their services and supports. Assessors and case manager have done excellent work in maintaining technical compliance with their support planning and record keeping. Reviewers found most support plans would benefit from more details to understand the person, their needs, and their wishes. The support plan is a communication tool and providers and supports who use the support plan cannot read between the lines or pull implied information about the person. Now is a time to focus on best practices in person-centered planning, such as adding more individualized details about people, using active and direct language, and describing the person's strengths and wishes directly. It is recommended that Crow Wing County develop a practice group or incorporate best practices into auditing protocols, so staff can have discussions and support about how to apply best practices in person-centered planning into their daily work.

Corrective Action Requirements

Corrective action(s) are issued when the state determines that a pattern of noncompliance exists in one or more HCBS program requirements (NOTE: In instances where five or fewer cases are reviewed, compliance is reported as a percentage). The lead agency must develop a corrective action plan and submit it to DHS. The plan must outline how the lead agency will bring all items into full compliance. Crow Wing County received no corrective actions during this review.

Required Remediation

Findings indicated that some case files did not contain all the required documentation. Following the Lead Agency review, Crow Wing County worked to promptly remediate all instances of non-compliance identified during the site visit.

Case file compliance worksheet: 40 of 99 cases reviewed required remediation. As of the report's publication, remediation has been completed.

Table 2: Case file compliance dashboard

REQUIRED ITEMS	TOTAL	AC	EW	CAC	DD	BI	CADI
Documentation that face to face visits with the person has occurred within the required timelines for each HCBS program.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Current Assessment - LTCC (DHS-3428), DD (DHS-3067) or MnCHOICES Assessment.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
ICF/DD Related Conditions Checklist (DHS-3848) is completed annually for a person with a related condition.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Documents are signed correctly when a person has a public guardian.	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	N/A
Documentation that a person received Right to Appeal information in the last year.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Assessment and Program Acknowledgment form is completed and signed annually by the person.	99%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Timelines between assessment and support plan have been met.	94%	80%	94%	88%	93%	100%	100%
The support plan (ISP, CSSP, etc.) was completed in the last year.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
The current support plan was signed by all required parties.	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	96%
The needs that were identified in the assessment/screening process are documented in the support plan.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

REQUIRED ITEMS	TOTAL	AC	EW	CAC	DD	BI	CADI
A person's health and safety concerns are documented in their support plan.	99%	100%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%
*Natural supports and/or services are included in the support plan.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Risks are identified in the support plan, and it includes a plan to reduce any risks.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
The services to address assessed needs are documented in the support plan.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Service details are included in the support plan (frequency, type, cost, and name).	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
An emergency back-up plan has been completed within the last year.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
The person acknowledges choices in the support planning process, including choices in community settings, services, and providers.	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	96%
Provider Signatures were requested or evidenced as part of the support planning process.	100%	N/A	100%	N/A	100%	100%	100%
*For those who chose a different living arrangement than their current living arrangement, a plan is in place on how to help the person move to their preferred setting.	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
*Has the person (adult 18 and older) chosen a different living arrangement than their current living arrangement? If so, were they offered the opportunity to live independently?	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
*The person's postsecondary education, employment and career goals are assessed annually.	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%
*The person was provided information to make an informed decision about postsecondary education or competitive employment.	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%

REQUIRED ITEMS	TOTAL	AC	EW	CAC	DD	BI	CADI
*The person was offered an opportunity to make an informed decision about postsecondary education or competitive employment.	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%
*A decision about employment has been documented.	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%
*My Move Plan present for individuals that moved in the past 18 months.	100%	N/A	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
Support Plan Developed using Person Centered Planning elements. (Need 9 of the following 12 measures)	99%	100%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**The support plan includes details about what is important to the person.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**The person's strengths are included in the support plan.	90%	100%	78%	100%	100%	100%	89%
**The support plan describes goals or skills that are related to the person's preferences.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**The support plan incorporates other health concerns e.g., mental, chemical, chronic medical.	99%	100%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**The support plan includes a global statement about the person's dreams and aspirations.	80%	100%	69%	75%	87%	100%	79%
**The support plan identifies who is responsible for monitoring implementation of the plan.	88%	60%	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**Action steps describing what needs to be done to achieve goals or skills are documented.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**The person's current rituals and routines (quality, predictability, and preferences) are described.	94%	100%	81%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**Social, leisure, or religious activities the person wants to participate in are described.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**The person's preferred work activities are identified.	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	100%	100%	100%

REQUIRED ITEMS	TOTAL	AC	EW	CAC	DD	BI	CADI
**The person's preferred living setting is identified.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
**Opportunities for choice in the current environment are described.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Support Plan was developed using person centered record keeping and documentation. (Need all 7 following measures.)	97%	100%	100%	100%	93%	83%	96%
***The support plan is written in plain language.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
***The support plan records the alternative home and community-based services that were considered by the person.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
***The support plan includes strategies for solving conflict or disagreement within the process.	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	96%
***The support plan includes a method for the individual to request updates to the plan.	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	96%
***The person's level of involvement in the planning process is described.	99%	100%	100%	100%	93%	100%	100%
***Documentation that the plan was distributed to the individual.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
***Documentation that the plan was distributed to other people involved.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Key:
***Not requiring Corrective Action Planning at this time**
****Measure is part of the overall category of: Support Plan Developed Using Person Centered Planning**
*****Measure is part of the overall category of: Support Plan Developed Using Person Centered Record Keeping**
N/A - No case files reviewed that reflected particular measure
A green shaded box indicates full compliance
An orange shaded box indicates a corrective action has been issued
A yellow shaded box indicates measure is below the level for compliance, but no individual corrective action has been issued.

LONG TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS)

CROW WING COUNTY – TRISH EXSTED, MORGAN ALTHAUS, HANNAH JUDE & TAMI LUECK



DISCUSSION

- Lead Agency Home and Community-Based (HCBS) Waiver Review
- Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) - Bending the Cost Curve
- Crow Wing County Strategies

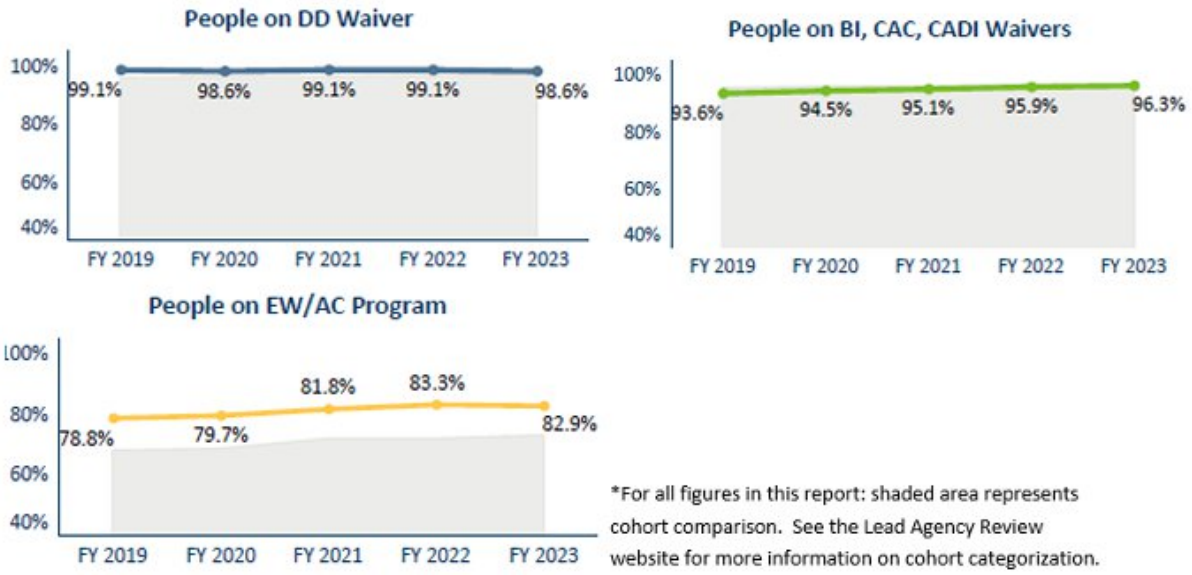
LEAD AGENCY HCBS REVIEW EXAMINES SIX PROGRAMS

- Alternative Care (AC) program
- Brain Injury (BI) Waiver
- Community Alternative Care (CAC) Waiver
- Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI) Waiver
- Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver
- Elderly Waiver (EW)

NOTE: BI, CAC, and CADI are often grouped into one category, referred to as CCB.

CROW WING COUNTY HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

Figure 3: Percent of people receiving HCBS



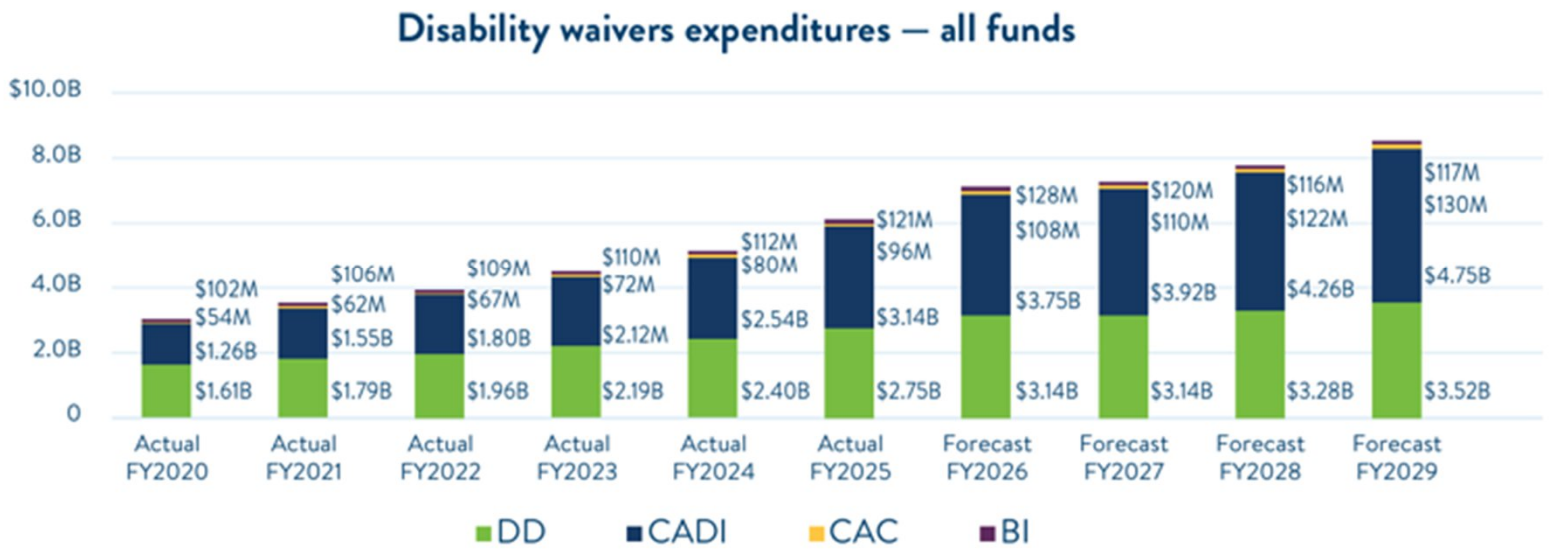
*For all figures in this report: shaded area represents cohort comparison. See the Lead Agency Review website for more information on cohort categorization.

LEAD AGENCY WAIVER REVIEW SUMMARY

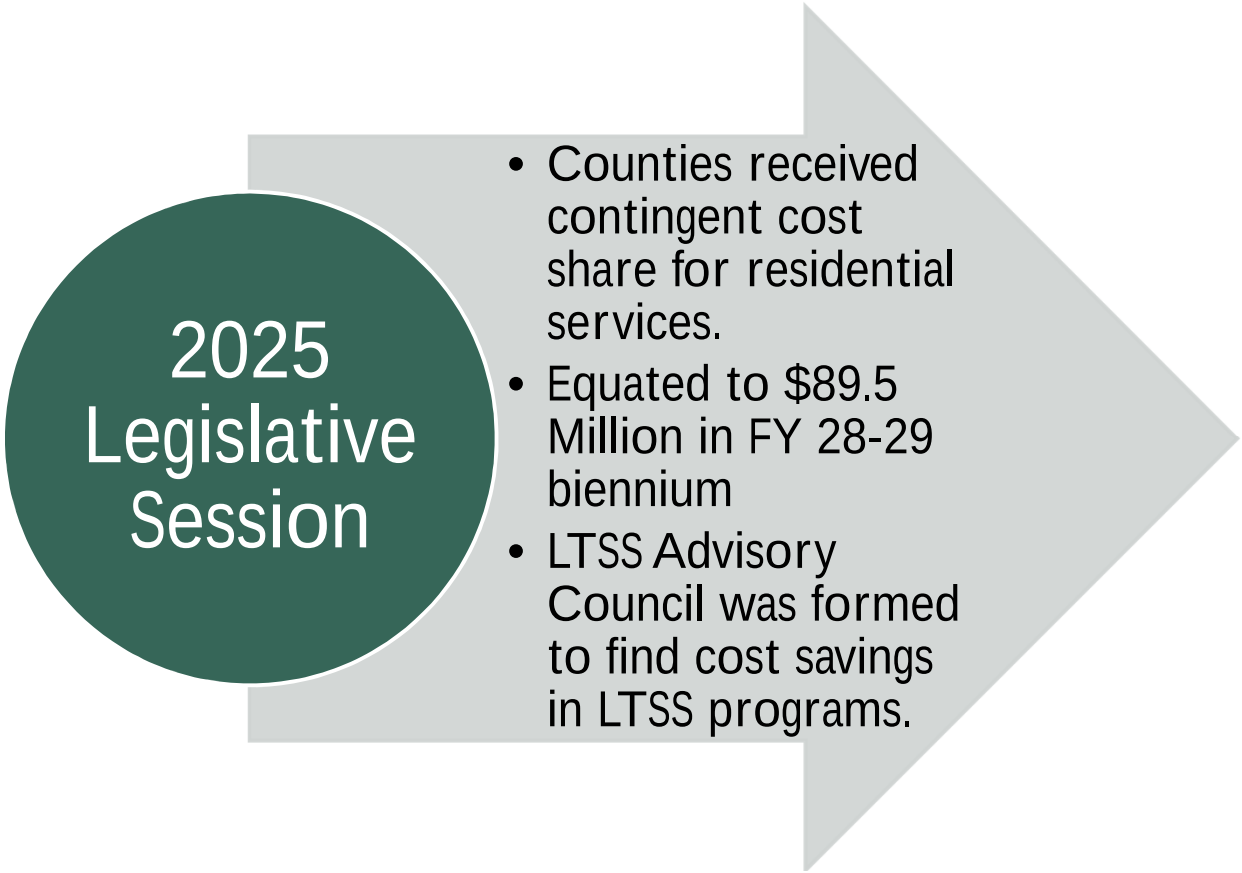
- Results
  - 100% compliance across face-to-face visits, assessments, and support plans
  - 94% timeliness for support plan distribution
  - Zero corrective actions issued
- Key Strengths
  - Highly knowledgeable, adaptable staff
  - Strong leadership, coaching, and communication
  - Effective collaboration with providers and partners
- DHS Recommendations
  - Explore staffing/structural adjustments
  - Expand community partnerships (housing, transportation, employment)
  - Strengthen individualized person-centered support plans
- Overall

  Crow Wing County's HCBS system demonstrates exceptional quality, resilience, and person-centered practice during major statewide Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) transitions.

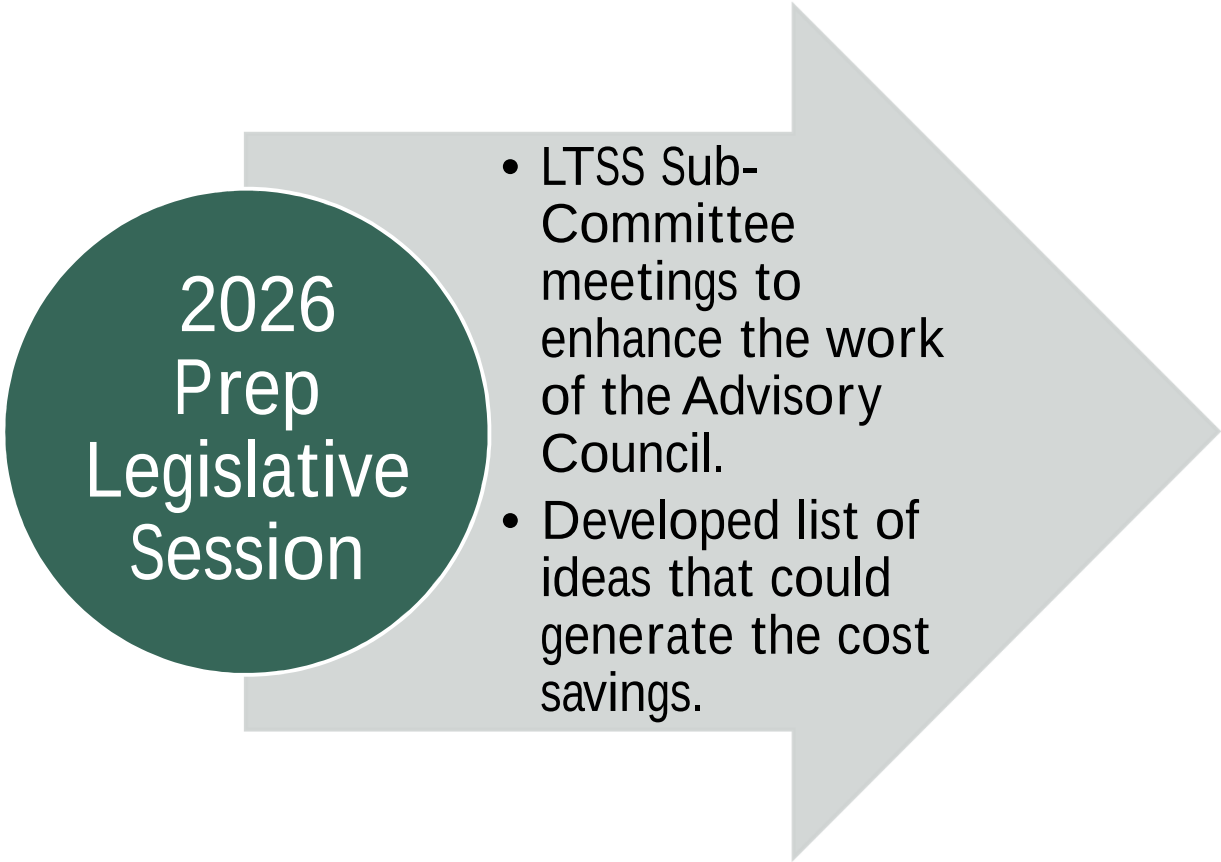
LONG TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS) - BENDING THE COST CURVE



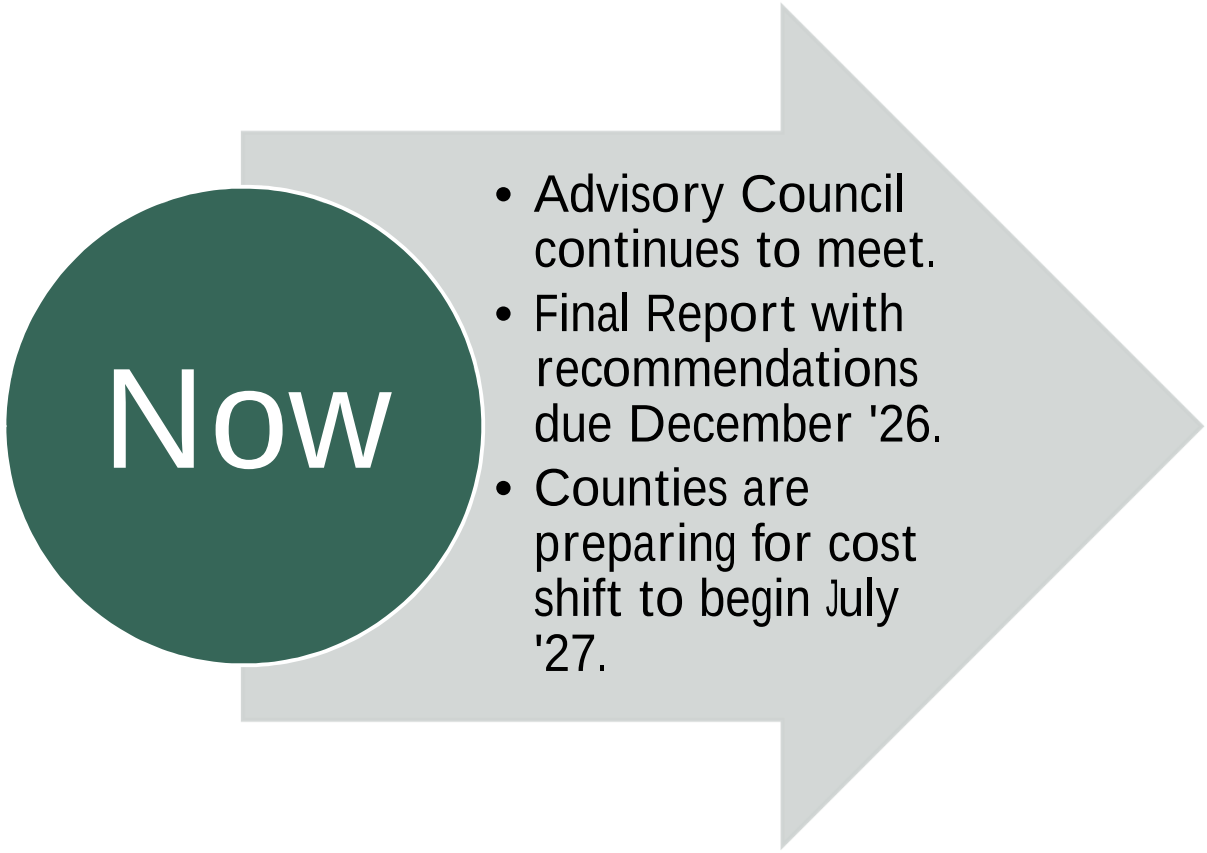
LONG TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS) - BENDING THE COST CURVE



LONG TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS) - BENDING THE COST CURVE



LONG TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS (LTSS) - BENDING THE COST CURVE



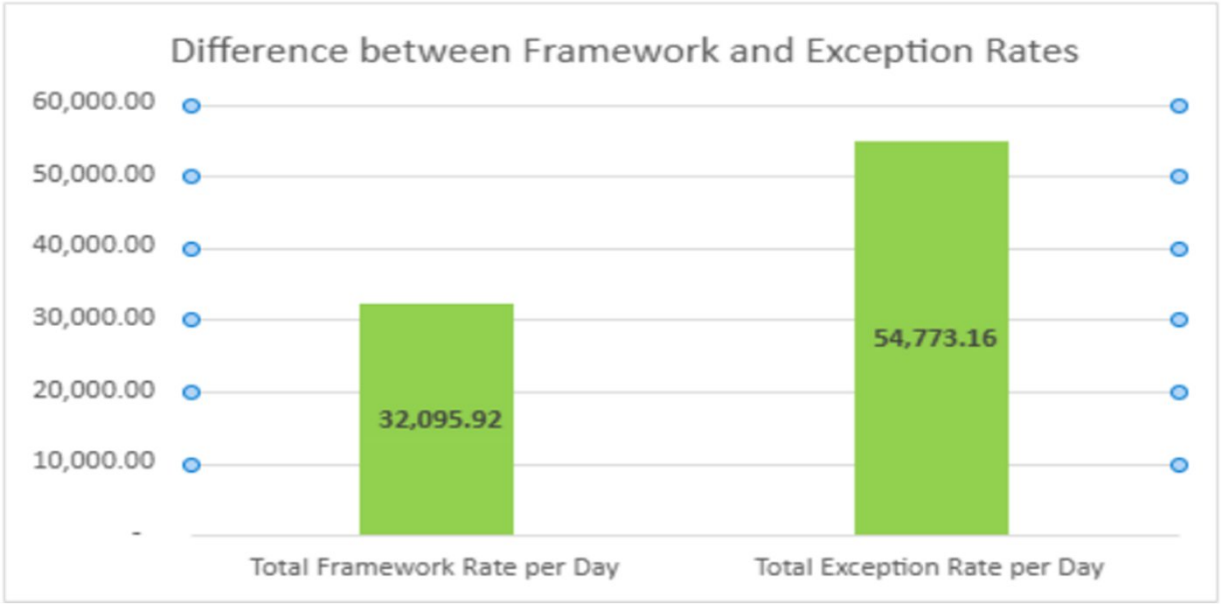
CROW WING COUNTY POTENTIAL COST SHIFT

- Contingent Cost Share goes into effect July 1st, 2027
  - Based on 24-25 data we have projected $283,000 in 2027 Budget
  - Currently, we are projected $578,670, with potential increase due to inflationary costs in 2028 Budget
- LTSS Advisory Council report due December 2026
- 2027 legislative session will determine final cost shift.

2025-2026 ACTIVE RATE EXCEPTIONS

2025/2026 – Snapshot in time of active exception service agreements - CWC				
Rate Exception Type	Total Exceptions	Framework Rate Total	Exception Rate Total	Total Cost Difference
Community Residential	47	$29,804.97	$51,797.25	$21,992.28
Family Residential	3	$1,333.57	$1,738.96	$405.39
Day Support Services	4	$48.48	$181.22	$132.74
Individual Home Supports	2	$24.46	$29.53	$5.07
Integrated Community Supports	1	$884.44	$1,026.20	$141.76
Totals:	57	$32,095.92 per day	$54,773.16 per day	$22,677.24 per day

2025-2026 ACTIVE RATE EXCEPTIONS



RATE EXCEPTIONS

Rate Exception Request Process

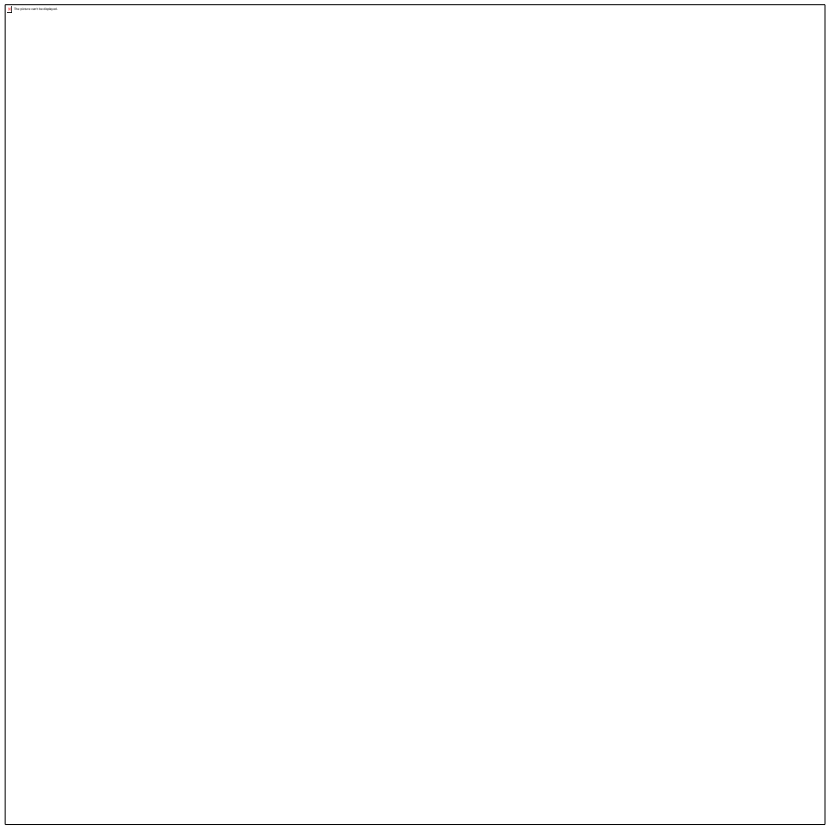
- Provider asks for exception rate
- Provider letter sent out
  - Eight areas of information requested from the provider
  - Case Manager reviews with RERT
- Provider may be asked for follow up information

Rate Exception Review Team (RERT)

- Meets weekly
- Reviews documentation from provider
- Reviews clients assessed needs
- Determine follow up questions
- Ensures consistency among cases
- Provides recommendation to state for final decision
  - All requests are reviewed and determined by DHS

SERVICE APPROVALS

- Service Approval Committee
  - Meets weekly
  - Efforts toward ensuring consistent program administration based on assessed needs.
  - Committee approves, denies, or requests follow up information on services.
- Supervisor Approval of Service Agreement Process
  - July 1st, 2026, required by the state
  - All service agreements increased from prior year need supervisor review and approval
  - CWC will average an additional 60 hours per month to meet this new requirement



QUESTIONS

Committee of the Whole
Subject: County Burial Program – Funeral Home Requests and Policy Recommendations
Prepared by: Tami Lueck, Division Manager
Date: July 21, 2026

Purpose
To present recent requests from local funeral homes, provide regional rate comparisons and cost/budget context, and request board action on identified policy items.

Background
Funeral homes providing services under the County Burial Program have raised operational and rate-related concerns. The county's current reimbursement rates were last substantively updated June 1, 2017, with a minor adjustment made January 1, 2026, to include the $75 medical examiner's fee in addition to the $2,900 cremation rate. Current county rates are:
• Earth burial: $3,900
• Cremation: $2,975

The county averages approximately 60 burial approvals (earth and cremation combined) annually, with about three earth burials per year. Through June 2026, the program has approved 23 burials.

Funeral Home Requests

1. **Cremation Timing:** Funeral homes request the ability to proceed with cremation within the state-mandated five-day requirement, even if county approval has not yet been issued. They will continue to hold the remains and will not release remains until county approval or denial is received.
2. **Policy Language on Family Upgrades:** Funeral homes request removal of the policy statement requiring families to pay the entire cost of the burial if they choose upgraded items (e.g., a different casket). They report that families often purchase enhancements outside the funeral home regardless, and the current policy restricts them from receiving additional legitimate revenue.
3. **Rate Increase:** Funeral homes request an increase in the cremation reimbursement rate from $2,975 to $3,995, along with an automatic 3% annual increase thereafter to maintain alignment with actual costs.

Regional Rate Comparison
Regional Rate Information (Provided by Morrison, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, and Aitkin)
• Morrison County: Maximum reimbursement of $3,400 for earth burial and $2,500 for cremation.

• Stearns County: Burial assistance approved up to the actual burial cost or $3,400, whichever is less, based on available financial resources of the deceased.
• Todd County: Maximum reimbursement of $3,500; funeral home indicates confusion about certain additional costs the county may cover.
• Wadena County: Earth burial rate of $3,894; cremation with service $3,245; immediate cremation (no service) $2,163.
• Aitkin County: Earth burial $3,150; immediate cremation (no service) $1,700; cremation with minimal service $2,150.

Budget and Program Costs
County burial budget and annual expenditures:
• 2022: Budget $145,000; Expenditures $135,751
• 2023: Budget $150,000; Expenditures $180,235
• 2024: Budget $150,000; Expenditures $130,257
• 2025: Budget $150,000; Expenditures $137,691
• 2026 (through June): Expenditures $54,130

Budgets remain stable at $150,000 since 2023, with actual costs fluctuating.

Request for Board Input

1. **Cremation Timing**
   Funeral homes have requested authorization to proceed with cremation within state guidelines (within five days), even if county burial approval has not yet been issued. Funeral homes will continue to hold remains and will not release them until county approval or denial is provided.
   • This is an administrative clarification of practice and **does not require board action**. Included for informational purposes.
2. **Policy Language on Family Upgrades**
   Current policy states:
   "If family and/or friends choose to enhance or make substitutes, such as a casket of their choice, they will be obligated to pay for the entire cost of the funeral/burial."
   Funeral homes request removal of this language, citing that families often purchase enhancements outside of the funeral home regardless, and the current wording prevents funeral homes from receiving legitimate additional revenue.
   • This is a policy change and **requires board approval**.
3. **Cremation Rate Increase Request**
   Crow Wing County's current earth burial rate ($3,900) is higher than all surrounding counties, with only Wadena ($3,894) close. The cremation rate ($2,975) is mid-range—higher than

Morrison, Todd, Aitkin, and Wadena's immediate cremation rate, but lower than Wadena's cremation with service rate. Stearn's has a max rate set regardless of earth burial or cremation. No surrounding county exceeds Crow Wing County's current rate for earth burial or standard cremation other than Stearns as they have a max rate for both earth burial and cremation.

• Rate or rate structure changes **requires board approval.**

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LEASE

This Lease (the "Lease") is made by and between the undersigned, **State of Minnesota, County of Crow Wing**, and successors and assigns ("Lessor"), on the one hand, and **Great River Energy,** a Minnesota cooperative corporation and successors and assigns ("Lessee"), on the other hand, and is effective as of the date last signed below (the "Effective Date").

Lessee desires to obtain from Lessor, and Lessor desires to grant to Lessee, a lease for ingress and egress, and for construction workspace, equipment or materials storage, laydown yard, and other purposes related to Lessee's construction of electric transmission facilities, in, through, over, under, and across certain real property located in Crow Wing County, State of Minnesota, which is owned by Lessor, and is further described and/or depicted on the attached Exhibit A ("Leased Premises"). Therefore, Lessor hereby lets and leases the Leased Premises to Lessee, and Lessee does hereby lease the Leased Premises from Lessor, in exchange for the mutual covenants contained herein and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, on the following terms and conditions:

1. Initial Lease Term. The initial term of this Lease shall be until December 31, 2031 beginning on the Effective Date, Effective Date shall be upon execution by Lessor and Lessee. ("Initial Lease Term"). Lessee shall pay to Lessor $1,500.00 monthly prior to construction and $3,500.00 monthly following the commencement of construction on or before July 1, 2027 for the Initial Term ("Initial Lease Term Payment"). The Initial Lease Term Payment shall be paid by Lessee promptly upon execution hereof.

2. Annual Renewal Term Option. Lessee shall have the option to extend this Lease, by an additional twelve (12) month period ("Annual Renewal Lease Term"), upon the same terms and conditions as applicable during the Initial Lease Term (each, an "Annual Renewal Term Payment"), paid in advance by the first of the month during the Annual Renewal Lease Term, except in the event that Lessee chooses to terminate this Lease prior to the end of an Annual Renewal Lease Term. Lessee shall exercise its option to the Annual Renewal Lease Term by delivering written notice and the first monthly payment to Lessor, prior to expiration of the Initial Lease Term.

3. Additional Month-to-Month Renewal Terms Option. If Lessee has exercised its option to the Annual Renewal Lease Term, then Lessee shall have additional, successive options to extend this Lease for periods of one (1) month (each a "Monthly Renewal Term") to begin after expiration of the Annual Renewal Lease Term, upon the same terms and conditions as applicable during the Initial Lease Term, (each a "Monthly Renewal Term Payment"), paid in advance by the first of the month of each Monthly Renewal Term. Lessee's tender of a Monthly Renewal Term Payment to Lessor shall constitute Lessee's exercise of a Monthly Renewal Term.

4. Right of Termination. Lessee shall have the option to terminate this Lease upon thirty (30) days' written notice to Lessor. If Lessee terminates this Lease during the Initial Lease Term not for cause, Lessor shall be entitled to be paid the entire Initial Lease Term Payment. If Lessee terminates this Lease during the Initial Lease Term because any of the Approvals (defined below) reasonably necessary for Lessee to use the Leased Premises for the purposes intended were not obtained on terms or at a time acceptable to Lessee, then Lessee shall be entitled to the return of a portion of the Initial Lease Term Payment on a pro rata basis. If Lessee terminates this Lease during the Annual Renewal Lease Term not for cause, Lessor shall be entitled to keep all Annual Renewal Term Payments made prior to the effective date of termination. If Lessee terminates this Lease during a Monthly Renewal Term not for cause,

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Lessor shall be entitled to keep all Monthly Renewal Term Payments made prior to the effective date of termination. Lessor shall have the option to terminate the lease upon providing 180 days written notice.

5. Property Condition; Improvement and Restoration by Lessee. Lessee accepts the Leased Premises in the condition "as is." Lessee shall have the right to improve the Leased Premises to suit its use thereof during the Lease. Lessee and Lessor shall coordinate regarding Lessee's access through the Leased Premises to the remainder of Lessee's property while the Lease is in effect. Upon the termination of the Lease, Lessee shall surrender the Leased Premises in substantially the same condition in which it was at the beginning of Lessee's occupancy and shall remove all of Lessee's materials and/or equipment stored on the Leased Premises, except that Lessee may leave in their as-improved conditions improvements such as drive lanes, storage pads, gravel, grading, and the like. Further, Lessee may leave in its as-improved condition any fences placed on the Leased Premises with the consent of Lessor, which shall not be unreasonably denied, delayed, or conditioned, and subject to applicable permit requirements. In the event that Lessee's restoration obligations under this agreement or pursuant to applicable permit(s) extend beyond the end of the Lease, Lessor hereby grants Lessee access to and use of the Leased Premises as reasonably necessary to complete such restoration.

6. Right to Lease. Lessor covenants with Lessee that Lessor is the owner of the Leased Premises and has the right to convey the rights created herein to Lessee in the manner and form aforesaid.

7. Approvals. After the Effective Date, Lessee may, at any time, prepare and file any applications and take other applications necessary to obtain permits or approvals that Lessee deems appropriate, in its sole discretion, to enjoy the Lease, including but not limited to, obtaining, at Lessee's sole cost, any special or conditional use permits, zoning amendments, variances, and/ or any other approvals pursuant to any applicable statutes, ordinances, rules, codes, regulations, or the like (all of the foregoing, collectively the "Approvals"). Lessor shall reasonably cooperate, at no material cost to Lessor, with Lessee to secure the Approvals, which may include Lessor's execution of applications and/ or other documentation.

8. Memorandum of Agreement; Agreement Runs with the Property. Lessor agrees that it will execute, acknowledge, and deliver a standard Memorandum of Lease if requested by Lessee and that Lessee may thereafter, at its expense and in its discretion, cause the Memorandum of Lease to be recorded. The provisions of this Lease shall run with the land and be binding upon the Leased Premises.

9. Entire Agreement; Governing Law. It is mutually understood and agreed that this instrument covers all agreements and stipulations between Lessor and Lessee and that the terms herein may only be modified in writing. This instrument shall be governed by the law of Minnesota.

10. Severability. The provisions of this Lease shall be deemed severable. If any part of this Lease is rendered void, invalid, or unenforceable, such rendering shall not affect the validity and enforceability of the remainder of this Lease. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the ability of Lessee to use the Leased Premises for the purposes described herein is essential to this Contract and if rendered void, invalid, or unenforceable such rendering will terminate this Lease.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this instrument to be duly executed as of the day and year indicated below.

[SIGNATURE PAGE FOLLOWS]

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Docusign Envelope ID: 3A81D641-4C32-87C0-8132-E560B8DD02F8

LESSOR:

State of Minnesota

BY: Crow Wing County Board of Commissioners

_____

NAME: _____

ITS: _____

BY: Crow Wing County

_____

NAME: _____

ITS: _____

LESSEE:

Great River Energy, a Minnesota Cooperative Corporation

By: Matthew R. Hagelin

Name: Matthew Hagelin

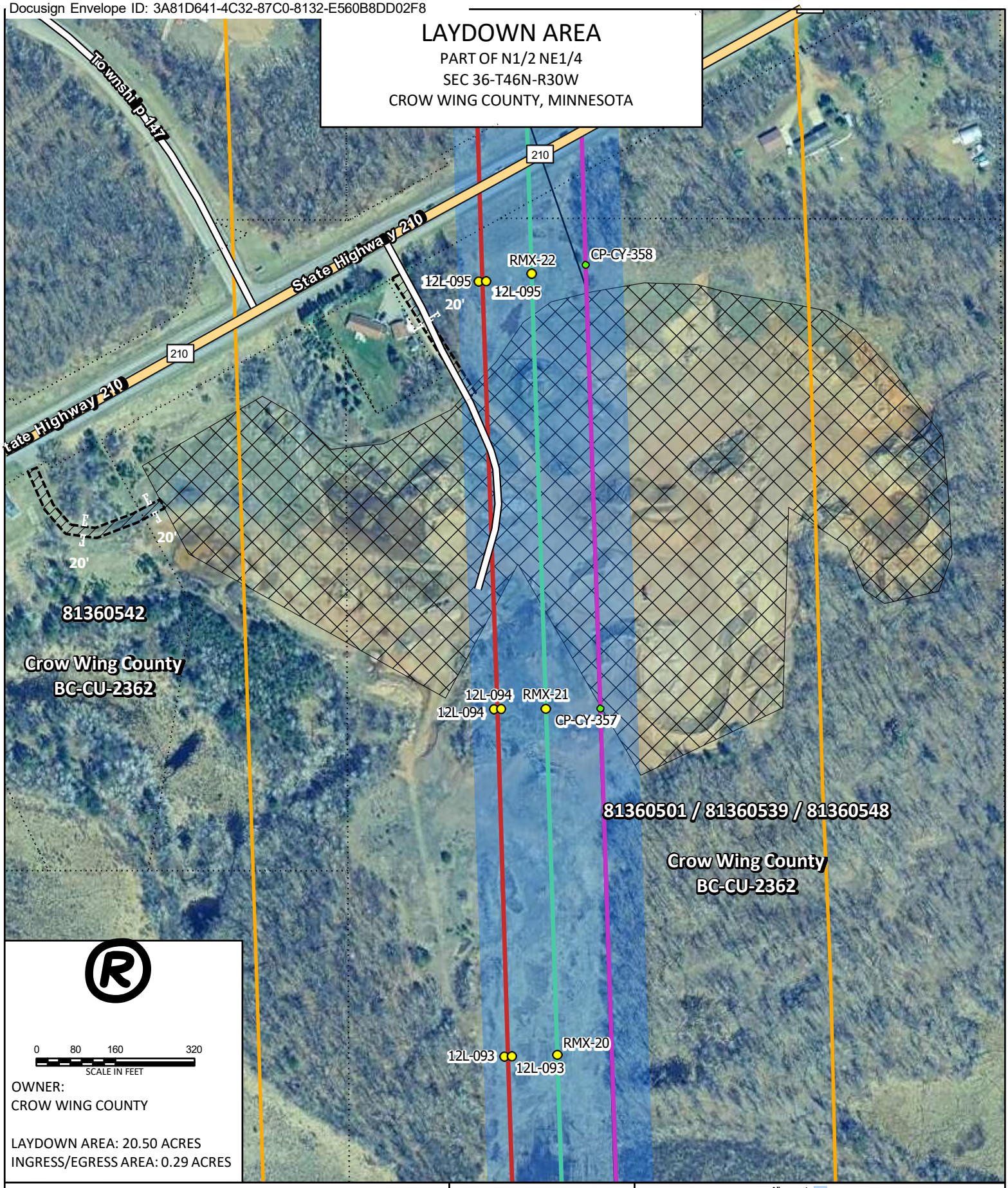
ITS: Supervising Manager, Land Rights

DATED: 7/8/2026

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LAYDOWN AREA

PART OF N1/2 NE1/4
SEC 36-T46N-R30W
CROW WING COUNTY, MINNESOTA



0 80 160 320
SCALE IN FEET

OWNER:
CROW WING COUNTY

LAYDOWN AREA: 20.50 ACRES
INGRESS/EGRESS AREA: 0.29 ACRES

JCG LAND SERVICES, INC.
224 SOUTH BELL AVE, SUITE A
AMES, IOWA 50010
(515) 382-1698

www.jcgland.com

JCG LAND SERVICES

DRAWN: EASTRIDGE

NORTHLAND RELIABILITY PROJECT

SCALE: 1" = 250'

DATE: 6/18/2026

Property Line
Structures
Cherry Park-Cuyuna
Riverton
Alignment
12L
CP-CY
RMX
ROW
NRP Corridor
Laydown Area
Ingress/Egress

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for, or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes.

EXHIBIT NOT TO SCALE

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING LOCAL EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A REGIONAL MULTI-USE TRAIL CONNECTION WITHIN THE CSAH 16 RIGHT-OF-WAY CORRIDOR BETWEEN THE CITIES OF CROSSLAKE AND JENKINS

WHEREAS, the City of Crosslake, City of Jenkins, Jenkins Township, Ideal Township, and other local agency partners have formally demonstrated their support for establishing a regional multi-use trail connection linking existing local trail systems to the Paul Bunyan State Trail (the Regional Trail Connection) and desire to pursue available state and federal grant funding to advance the Regional Trail Connection utilizing portions of the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 16 right-of-way corridor between the Cities of Crosslake and Jenkins; and

WHEREAS, the Crow Wing County Board recognizes that regional multi-use trail connections can enhance transportation choices, outdoor recreation, tourism, economic development, and quality of life while strengthening connections between neighboring communities; and

WHEREAS, Crow Wing County supports the efforts of the local agency partners to advance the planning, engineering, environmental review, and other activities necessary to evaluate, develop, and implement the Regional Trail Connection; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Trail Connection remains in the conceptual stage, and its scope, design, environmental requirements, right-of-way needs, and associated project costs have not yet been determined; and

WHEREAS, the Crow Wing County Highway Department Cost Participation Policy provides that local agencies are responsible for all costs associated with recreational trails located within County highway right-of-way.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Crow Wing County Board of Commissioners expresses its support for the continued development of the Regional Trail Connection and authorizes the local agency partners to identify the CSAH 16 right-of-way corridor in applications for available state and federal grant funding to advance the Regional Trail Connection.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution expresses the County's support for pursuing grant funding and does not constitute approval of a specific Regional Trail Connection or create any obligation on the part of Crow Wing County to approve, construct, fund, acquire property for, or otherwise participate in the Regional Trail Connection beyond the commitments expressly stated herein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any future Regional Trail Connection within the CSAH 16 right-of-way corridor shall remain subject to the Crow Wing County Highway Department Cost Participation Policy and approval by the County Engineer and the Crow Wing County Board, as required.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the local agency partners shall serve as the Lead Agency and be responsible for all costs associated with project development, right-of-way acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance, and any required local matching funds. Approval may be withheld if the proposed Regional Trail Connection is determined to adversely affect the safety, operation, maintenance, drainage, or future improvement of CSAH 16.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Crow Wing County will not exercise its authority of eminent domain solely for the purpose of acquiring property for the Regional Trail Connection.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Crow Wing County agrees to act as the sponsoring agency and may serve as the fiscal agent for awarded grant funds when required by the applicable grant program.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that continued development of the Regional Trail Connection is consistent with Crow Wing County's interest in improving regional connectivity, transportation options, recreation, tourism, and quality of life while preserving the County's authority over the management and use of its highway right-of-way.

DRAFT 6/26/26

CITY OF CROSSLAKE
RESOLUTION NO. 26-20

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE LAKE FOUNDATION'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION

WHEREAS, the City of Crosslake expresses their support for the LAKE Foundation's efforts to develop a regional trail connection between Crosslake and Jenkins; and

WHEREAS, the City of Crosslake recognizes the importance of regional trail infrastructure in promoting outdoor recreation, improving public health, and supporting local economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, the proposed trail would strengthen regional connectivity by linking communities to the broader network of trails throughout Crow Wing County and central Minnesota, including the Paul Bunyan State Trail; and

WHEREAS, partnership and coordination with Crow Wing County are essential to the successful planning, design, and implementation of the proposed trail, particularly in relation to right-of-way use and engineering; and

WHEREAS, projects such as this foster collaboration among communities while enhancing the quality of life for residents of all ages; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Crosslake City Council hereby supports the continued planning, design, and development of a regional trail connection, and hereby encourages Crow Wing County, other relevant agencies, and project partners to coordinate and collaborate in the use of the County Road 16 corridor for the purpose of advancing and completing this project.

ADOPTED by the City Council of Crosslake this 13th day of April, 2026.

Mayor, Jackson Purfeerst

Lori Conway, City Administrator

CITY OF JENKINS
COUNTY OF CROW WING, STATE OF MINNESOTA

RESOLUTION NO. 26-04-338

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE L.A.K.E. FOUNDATION'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION

WHEREAS, THE CITY OF JENKINS EXPRESSES ITS SUPPORT FOR THE L.A.K.E. FOUNDATION'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION BETWEEN JENKINS AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES; AND

WHEREAS, THE CITY OF JENKINS WOULD LIKE TO FORMALIZE ITS SUPPORT BY RESOLUTION, HAVING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE L.A.K.E. FOUNDATION, DRAFTED MARCH 22ND, 2026; AND

WHEREAS, THE CITY OF JENKINS RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE IN PROMOTING OUTDOOR RECREATION, IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH, AND SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMIC VITALITY; AND

WHEREAS, THE PROPOSED TRAIL WOULD STRENGTHEN REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY BY LINKING COMMUNITIES TO THE BROADER NETWORK OF TRAILS THROUGHOUT CROW WING COUNTY AND CENTRAL MINNESOTA, INCLUDING THE PAUL BUNYAN STATE TRAIL; AND

WHEREAS, PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION WITH CROW WING COUNTY ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESSFUL PLANNING, DESIGN, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED TRAIL, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO RIGHT-OF-WAY USE AND ENGINEERING; AND

WHEREAS, PROJECTS SUCH AS THIS FOSTER COLLABORATION AMONG COMMUNITIES WHILE ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE JENKINS CITY COUNCIL HEREBY SUPPORTS THE CONTINUED PLANNING, DESIGN, AND DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION, AND HEREBY ENCOURAGES CROW WING COUNTY, OTHER RELEVANT AGENCIES, AND PROJECT PARTNERS TO COORDINATE AND COLLABORATE IN THE USE OF THE COUNTY ROAD 16 CORRIDOR FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADVANCING AND COMPLETING THIS PROJECT.

ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF JENKINS THIS 28TH DAY OF APRIL, 2026.

ANDREW J. RUDLANG, MAYOR

ATTEST:

CASSANDRA M. DELOUGHERTY, CITY CLERK-TREASURER

TOWN OF IDEAL
CROW WING COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-08

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE LAKE FOUNDATION'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION

WHEREAS, the Town of Ideal expresses their support for the LAKE Foundation's efforts to develop a regional trail connection between Crosslake and Jenkins; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Ideal recognizes the importance of regional trail infrastructure in promoting outdoor recreation, improving public health, and supporting local economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, the proposed trail would strengthen regional connectivity by linking communities to the broader network of trails throughout Crow Wing County and central Minnesota, including the Paul Bunyan State Trail; and

WHEREAS, partnership and coordination with Crow Wing County are essential to the successful planning, design, and implementation of the proposed trail, particularly in relation to right-of-way use and engineering; and

WHEREAS, projects such as this foster collaboration among communities while enhancing the quality of life for residents of all ages; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ideal Township Board hereby supports the continued planning, design, and development of a regional trail connection, and hereby encourages Crow Wing County, other relevant agencies, and project partners to coordinate and collaborate in the use of the County Road 16 corridor for the purpose of advancing and completing this project.

ADOPTED by the Ideal Township board this 18th day of May, 2026.

J. Craig Wallace, Clerk/Treasurer

Dave Peterson, Board Chairperson

Jenkins Township
RESOLUTION NO. 26-01

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE LAKE FOUNDATION'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTION

WHEREAS, Jenkins Township expresses their support for the LAKE Foundation's efforts to develop a regional trail connection between Crosslake and Jenkins; and

WHEREAS, Jenkins Township recognizes the importance of regional trail infrastructure in promoting outdoor recreation, improving public health, and supporting local economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, the proposed trail would strengthen regional connectivity by linking communities to the broader network of trails throughout Crow Wing County and central Minnesota, including the Paul Bunyan State Trail; and

WHEREAS, partnership and coordination with Crow Wing County are essential to the successful planning, design, and implementation of the proposed trail, particularly in relation to right-of-way use and engineering; and

WHEREAS, projects such as this foster collaboration among communities while enhancing the quality of life for residents of all ages; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Jenkins Township Council hereby supports the continued planning, design, and development of a regional trail connection, and hereby encourages Crow Wing County, other relevant agencies, and project partners to coordinate and collaborate in the use of the County Road 16 corridor for the purpose of advancing and completing this project.

ADOPTED by Jenkins Township this 21st day of April

James Olsen

Jim Olsen

Township Clerk

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Parks and Trails Division
1601 Minnesota Drive
Brainerd, MN 56401

February 19, 2026

The L.A.K.E. Foundation
c/o The LAKE Trails Initiative
35808 County Rd 66
Crosslake MN 56442

RE: Jenkins to Crosslake Regional Trail Support

The Department of Natural Resources Parks and Trails Division supports the connection to the Paul Bunyan Trail of a regional trail from Jenkins to Crosslake, MN. When completed, this regional trail will connect the communities of Pequot Lakes, Jenkins, Jenkins Twp., Ideal Twp, and Crosslake throughout Crow Wing County. This regional trail will also access the Paul Bunyan State Trail which is connected to many other communities and counties throughout greater MN.

The Brainerd Lakes area is known for resorts, restaurants, camping and lakes. Upon completion, this trail will complement and connect people with those opportunities. This separated trail would not only provide a safer means for transportation and recreation, it would attract more users, which would have a significant economic impact to the surrounding communities.

Please accept this letter as support for the The L.A.K.E. Foundation and their efforts to provide and promote healthier lifestyles and economic benefits while providing a safe and sustainable outdoor recreational experience to residents and visitors to the Jenkins/Ideal Corners/Crosslake corridor.

Sincerely,

Keri Hull

Keri Hull
Brainerd Area Parks and Trails Supervisor

PAUL BUNYAN SCENIC BYWAY
paulbunyanscenicbyway.org
PO Box 401, Pequot Lakes, MN 56472

April 13, 2026

LAKE Foundation
35808 County Road 66
Crosslake, MN 56442

Re: LAKE Foundation's Regional Trail Connections project

The Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association supports the work of the LAKE Foundation to pursue a multi-year effort to connect existing trails in the Crosslake/Ideal/Jenkins area, and beyond. The nationally designated Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway driving route runs through this area with share-the-road paved shoulders. The LAKE Foundation's desire to seek separated trails as often as possible is a significant step toward increased safety along and around the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway, a route whose history began in support of creating safer biking conditions on the county roads that comprise the byway.

In 2024, the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association completed a Corridor Management Plan update. A survey sent out to the public as a part of that planning process showed significant interest in more biking trails. The LAKE Foundation's planned trail connections and its inclusive design is clearly in tune with what area residents and visitors are seeking.

Additionally, the linking of communities that the LAKE Foundation's trail connections will provide supports a PBSBA goal of encouraging cooperation and collaboration among the Scenic Byway jurisdictions.

The Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association is pleased to support the LAKE Foundation's Regional Trails Connection project and is thankful for the group's dedication to this important multi-year effort.

Sincerely,

Lynn Scharenbroich, Chair
Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association