

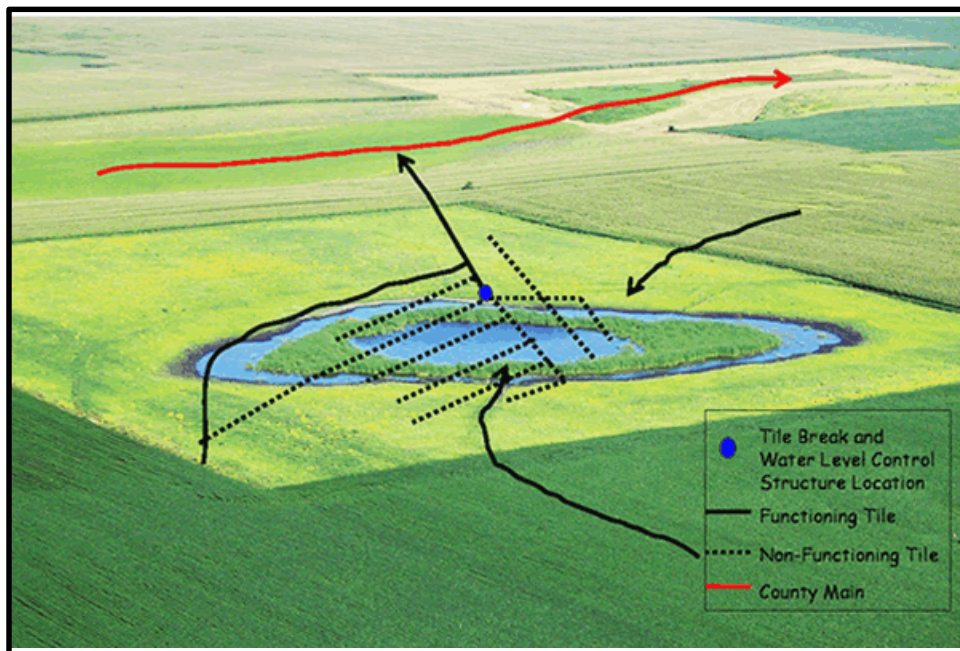
Farming a Different Crop.....Wetlands

Wetlands were once a dominant feature of the prairie landscape in South-Central Minnesota. Today, fewer than 10% of the original wetlands exist as a result of our intensive efforts to drain the fertile land for agricultural production. Some concerns related to this loss include: water quality degradation, increased flood frequency and intensity along rivers and major tributaries, and loss of critical habitat and diversity for wildlife.

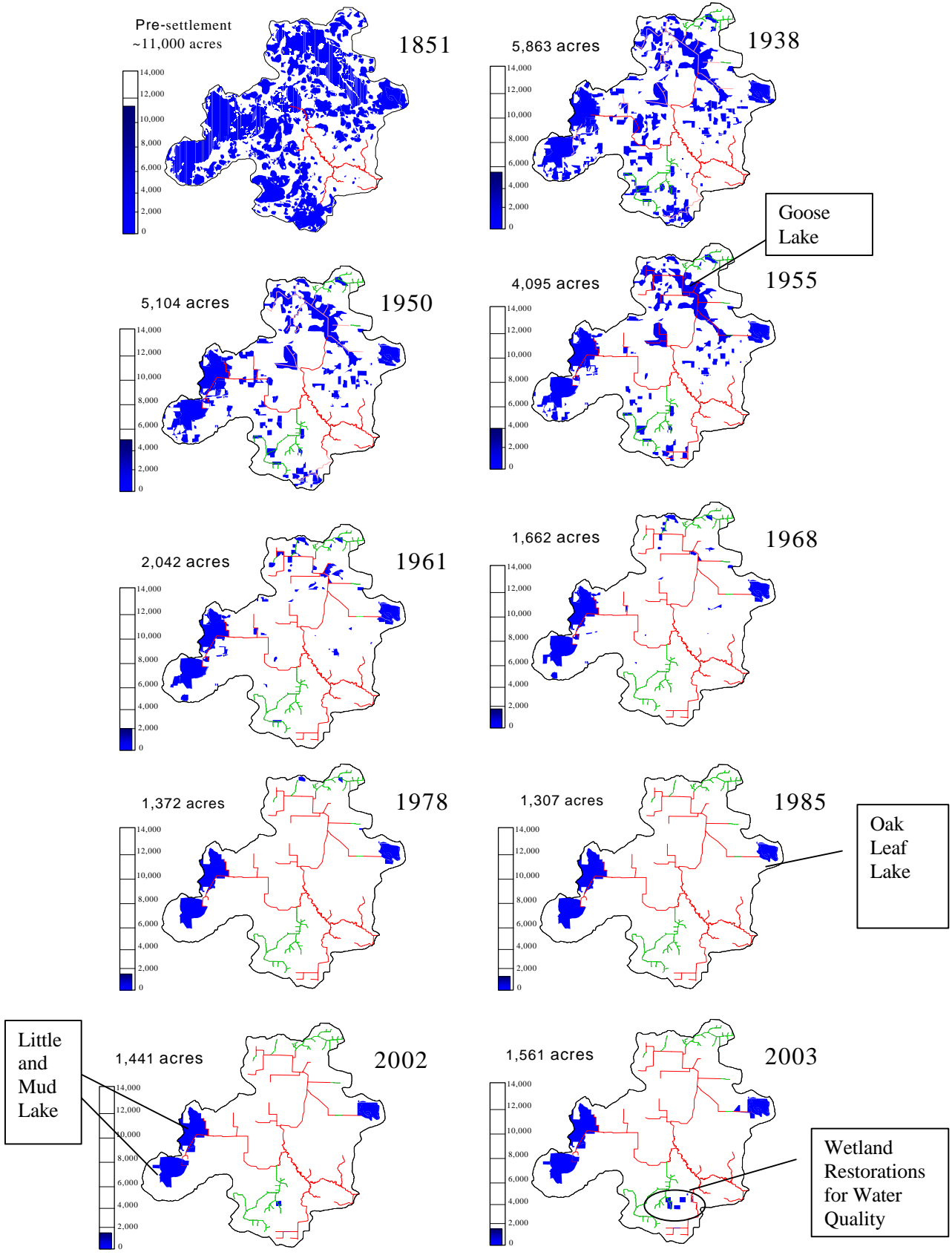
Today, wetland restoration is increasingly favored as a means of providing multiple natural resource and socio-economic benefits including flood abatement, water quality enhancement, and wildlife habitat restoration. In Brown and Nicollet Counties, landowners and farmers are restoring wetlands as a means of treating water from drainage systems before it is released into nearby rivers or streams. Research on wetlands recently restored in Nicollet County has shown 80-90% nitrate reductions in tile water exiting the wetlands. Other research conducted on the Rush River suggests that if just 5% of that watershed was restored back to wetlands, a calculated river flow reduction of 44% could be possible during the 100-year storm event.

There are several great voluntary programs available to agricultural landowners interested in wetland restorations. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Through CRP, landowners can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to convert cropland back to wetlands. The program makes annual rental payments based on the agriculture rental value of the land, and it provides cost-share assistance for up to 90 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved conservation practices. Participants enroll in CRP contracts for 10 to 15 years. After the program expires the landowner has the opportunity to farm it again or re-enroll it into another conservation program. With incentives provided public and private partnerships, payment rates can reach up to \$180.00/acre.

The program is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and program support is provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and local Watershed Projects. For more information contact 507-931-2550 or 507-934-4140.



Restored Wetland One Year After Restoration Near County Road 13 in Nicollet County.
(5-acre basin and 15 acres of native grass buffer)



Historical Distribution of Wetland areas in Seven Mile Creek Watershed, Nicollet County.