

**WE ARE  
WATER**



**Minnesota  
Humanities  
Center**

# Partnership Report

July 2015 – January 2016

Prepared by Minnesota Humanities Center



***We Are Water MN* is a partnership formed to tell Minnesota's water stories collaboratively, bringing together personal narratives, historical materials, and scientific information. Combining these ways of knowing water strengthens Minnesotans' relationships with and responsibilities to water.**

From July 2015-April 2017, we are working with six Minnesota host sites and communities: Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center (Spicer), Nicollet County Historical Society (St. Peter), Goodhue County Historical Society (Red Wing), Audubon Center of the North Woods (Sandstone), Lanesboro Arts (Lanesboro), Becker County Historical Society (Detroit Lakes).



**Smithsonian**



**MINNESOTA  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**



**Minnesota  
Department of Health**



**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE  
Humanities**



**Minnesota Pollution  
Control Agency**



**American Water Works Association  
Minnesota Section**

This interim report was prepared for the *Water/Ways* and *We Are Water MN* partnership (the Partnership) using information collected by the Improve Group and the Minnesota Humanities Center. The partners are the Minnesota Humanities Center, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Minnesota section of the American Water Works Association.

**This report is intended to reflect progress toward the Partnership’s seven goals for this project; the results identified are** for activities from July, 2015-January 6, 2017, unless otherwise specified. A full report of project activities will be shared after the tour closes. The primary activities of the Partnership are the co-curation of exhibit content, development of community engagement activities, host site/local community capacity building and support, and strengthening the network of those who protect and affect water.

## We Are Water MN Partnership Goals

The Partnership has two different types of goals: partner relationships and visitor experiences.

### Partner Relationships Goals

1. Deepen relationships among state level partners
2. **Build host site capacity to practice the Humanities Center’s relationship-based approach**
3. Support the expansion of local networks within host communities

### Visitor Experiences Goals

1. Share national, state, and local histories and narratives about water
2. **Reinforce Minnesotans’ individual relationships with water**
3. **Reinforce Minnesotans’ individual responsibilities to water**
4. Build relationships between Minnesotans through community engagement events and activities preceding, during, and after the exhibit

## Partner Relationships

Deepen Relationships Among State Level Partners.....	3
Build Host Site Capacity to Practice Relationship-Based Approach.....	4
Support the Expansion of Local Water Networks.....	4

## Visitor Experiences

Highlights.....	5
Share National, State, and Local Water Narratives.....	6
<b>Reinforce Minnesotans’ Individual Relationships with Water</b> .....	6
<b>Reinforce Minnesotans’ Individual Responsibilities to Water</b> .....	6
Build Relationships Between Minnesotans Through Community Engagement .....	7

## Individual Host Site Relationship Maps

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center (Spicer).....	8
Nicollet County Historical Society (St. Peter).....	9
Goodhue County Historical Society (Red Wing).....	10
Audubon Center of the North Woods (Sandstone).....	11
Lanesboro Arts (Lanesboro).....	12
Becker County Historical Society (Detroit Lakes).....	13

# Partner Relationships

## Deepen Relationships Among State Level Partners

Deepening relationships among the state partners is a primary goal of the Partnership. While our evaluators, **the Improve Group**, will provide a more complete report examining the partner relationships they've observed, the Humanities Center can share ways we are collaborating.



### 1. We make *We Are Water MN* together.

Our organizations jointly define what we want to say about water in Minnesota and how we want to say it. By working together, we are able to tell a more complete story. We also ask people and organizations from the host site communities to share their stories, amplifying the expertise that is already in each of these communities. The Partnership intentionally uses the opportunity of gathering exhibit content to build relationships among partner agencies, individuals and organizations in host site communities, and potential partners.

### 2. The Partnership is more than a working group.

While there are lead staff\* from each partner organization, those lead staff invite others from their organization to share their expertise, to share in the work, to share in the learning, and to share in the celebration of this project. In July of 2015, 15 individuals from four organizations attended the kick-off retreat with representatives from host sites. In 2016 over 70 individuals from six organizations took part in events like meetings, opening ceremonies, and presentations.



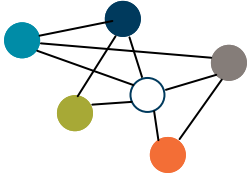
### 3. We tell our story together.

Lead staff have made presentations about the partnership to broader groups within our own organizations (the Drinking Water Protection Statewide Section Meeting for the Department of Health, the Environmental Analysis and Outcomes Division meeting for the Pollution Control Agency), at professional conferences (the Preserve Minnesota conference), and to the general public (the Minnesota State Fair).

\*Partner lead staff:

Jennifer Tonko, Minnesota Humanities Center; Britt Gangenes, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; David Grabitske and Todd Mahon, Minnesota Historical Society; Leslie Winter, Minnesota Department of Health; Carmelita Nelson, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

# Partner Relationships



## Build Host Site Capacity to Practice Relationship-Based Approach

The Improve Group is interviewing host sites to formally measure this. Lead staff observations indicate that host sites are making an effort to amplify indigenous voices, work in partnerships, and focus on story in their work.

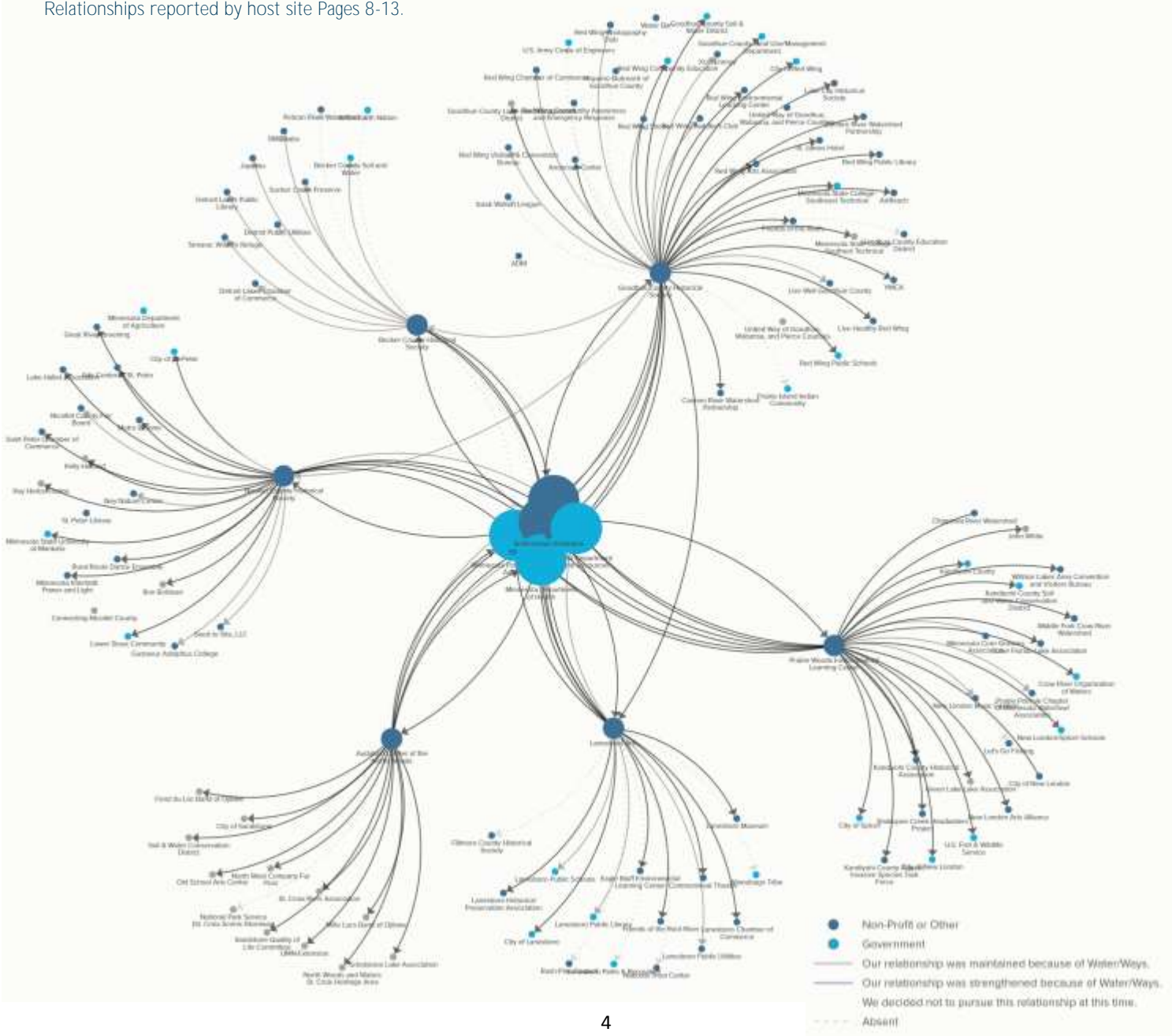
## Support the Expansion of Local Water Networks

Host sites were asked to report on the effect that participating in the *Water/Ways* and *We Are Water MN* program has had on their relationships with select organizations and individuals.

- 68% of relationships were strengthened because of *Water/Ways*
- 18% of relationships were maintained because of *Water/Ways*
- Host sites didn't report any relationships that were weakened because of *Water/Ways*

## Relationships Reported by Host Site, July 2016

Relationships reported by host site Pages 8-13.



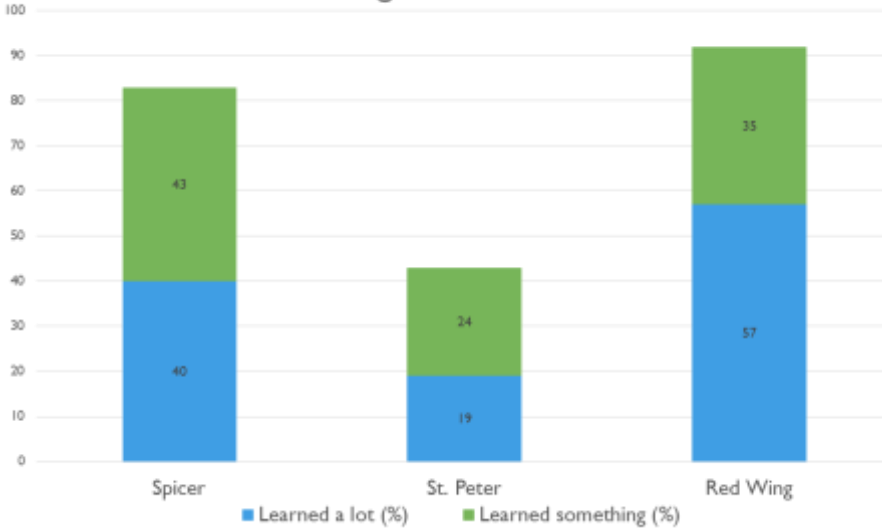
# Visitor Experiences Highlights



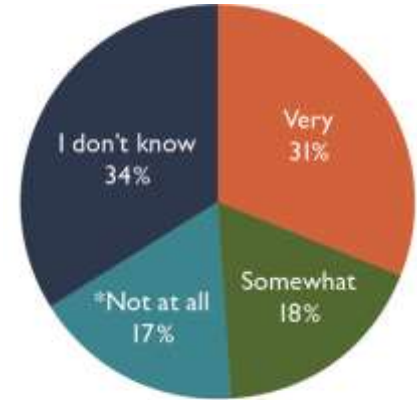
4,587 exhibit visitors

Most surveyed visitors said they learned a lot or learned a little.

Percent learning about local water issues



After viewing the exhibit, how knowledgeable do you feel you are about the state of water in Minnesota?



In a 2014 MPCA survey, 42% identified themselves as "not at all knowledgeable" about the condition of Minnesota lakes and rivers.

Survey results from the first three sites indicate that visitors learn new things and are satisfied with their experience. They like:

- The interactive, hands on experience and kid-friendly exhibit components
- **The level of information provided and the exhibit's messages about water**
- The local components of the project
- *"Lots of good information presented in fun & interactive ways. High quality of videos and oral presentations."*



# Visitor Experiences

## Share National, State, and Local Water Narratives



**Interviewers' Stories:** 113 (all six host sites, plus statewide stories)  
Inspiration Stories: 36 (all six host sites)  
Regional Water Issues: 54 (all six host sites)  
**Visitors' Stories:** 396 (first four host sites)

A key tactic of *We Are Water MN* is to focus on personal and local stories to draw in visitors at each host site. There are three exhibit components that share this content: the Story Map, the Inspiration Stories, and the Regional Water Issues panel.



The Story Map has two main components: a two-sided kiosk where visitors can watch five videos with statewide water stories and listen to audio of interviews with local people and a **4' x 6' map of the host site and surrounding area. Visitors can write on cards provided at the site and locate their story about water on the map.** The content included on the Story Map, both in the interviews and that visitors add, is usually focused on personal experiences...memories of family trips, tales of floods, descriptions of religious rituals.

The Inspiration Stories are about people or organizations who have worked to protect water in their community. This content is more expository, sharing the history of a local farm or celebrating the good work of a municipal water employee, for example.

The Regional Water Issues panel highlights local water conditions, challenges, and opportunities.

## Reinforce Minnesotans' Individual Relationships with Water; Reinforce Minnesotans' Individual Responsibilities to Water

Visitors can share how they will protect Minnesota's water to the **You + Me + Water** panel by writing their pledges on water drops. Visitors are also sharing reflections on their relationships with and/or responsibilities to water in the Story Map. We will be conducting a thematic analysis of the stories and water drops when the tour is over. For now, lead staff have done a preliminary sort of the water drops and the types of pledges that have emerged are summarized in the chart below.



# Visitor Experiences

## Build Relationships Between Minnesotans Through Community Engagement: Activities Preceding, During, and After Exhibit

**This information is primarily being gathered through the Improve Group's interviews with host sites and lead staff; we don't yet have that report. However, some indicators include:**

Participation at *We Are Water* sponsored community engagement events:

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center: 50  
Nicollet County Historical Society: 29  
Lanesboro Arts: 32

Attendance at Opening Ceremony Events:

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center: 64  
Nicollet County Historical Society: 34  
Goodhue County Historical Society: 72  
Audubon Center of the North Woods: 111  
Lanesboro Arts: 82

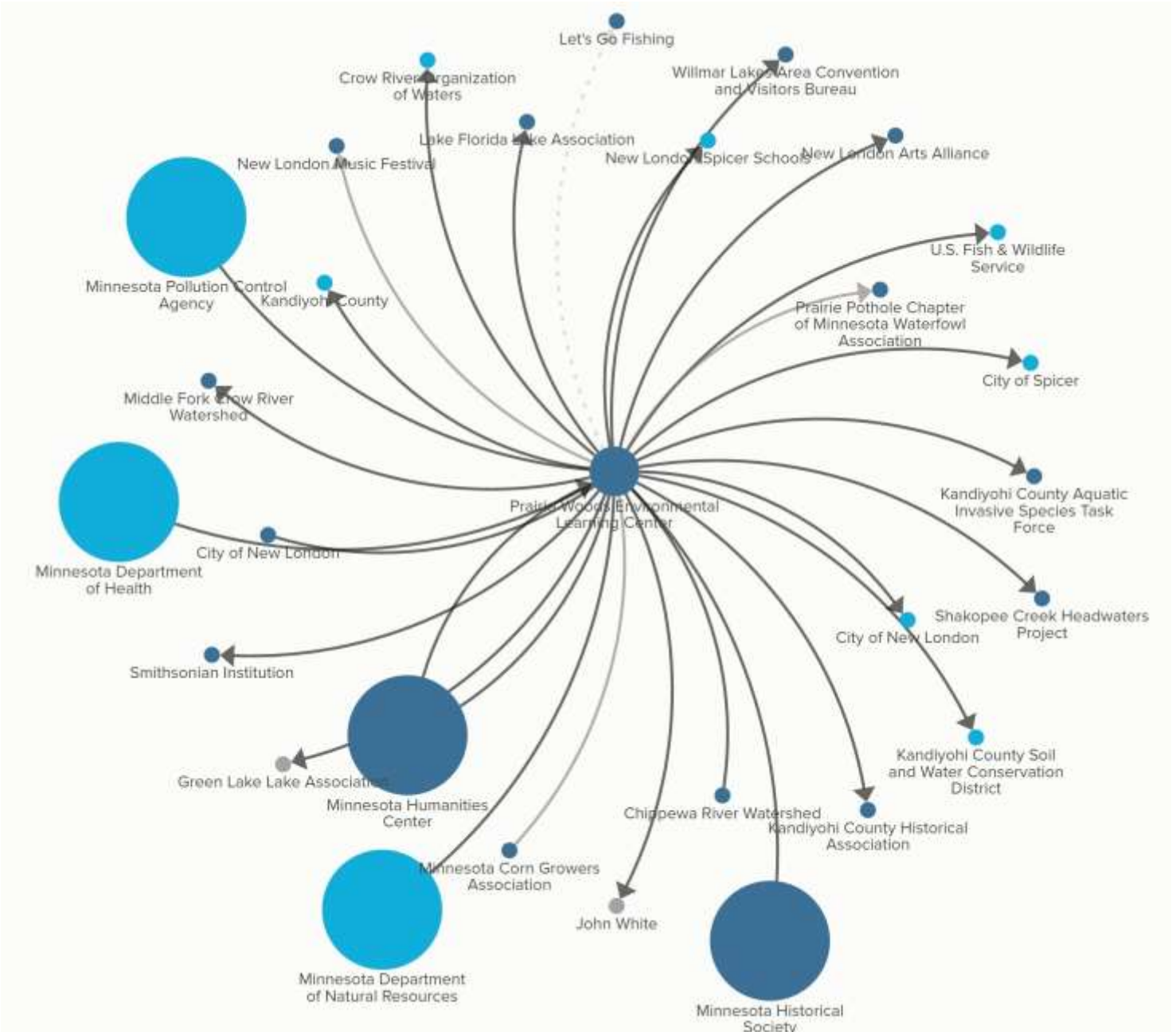


# Local Networks



## Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center

- 23 of 27 relationships were strengthened because of *Water/Ways*
- 3 of 27 relationships were maintained because of *Water/Ways*
- 1 of 27 relationships is still absent



- Non-Profit or Other
- Government
- Our relationship was maintained because of *Water/Ways*.
- Our relationship was strengthened because of *Water/Ways*.
- We decided not to pursue this relationship at this time.
- - - Absent

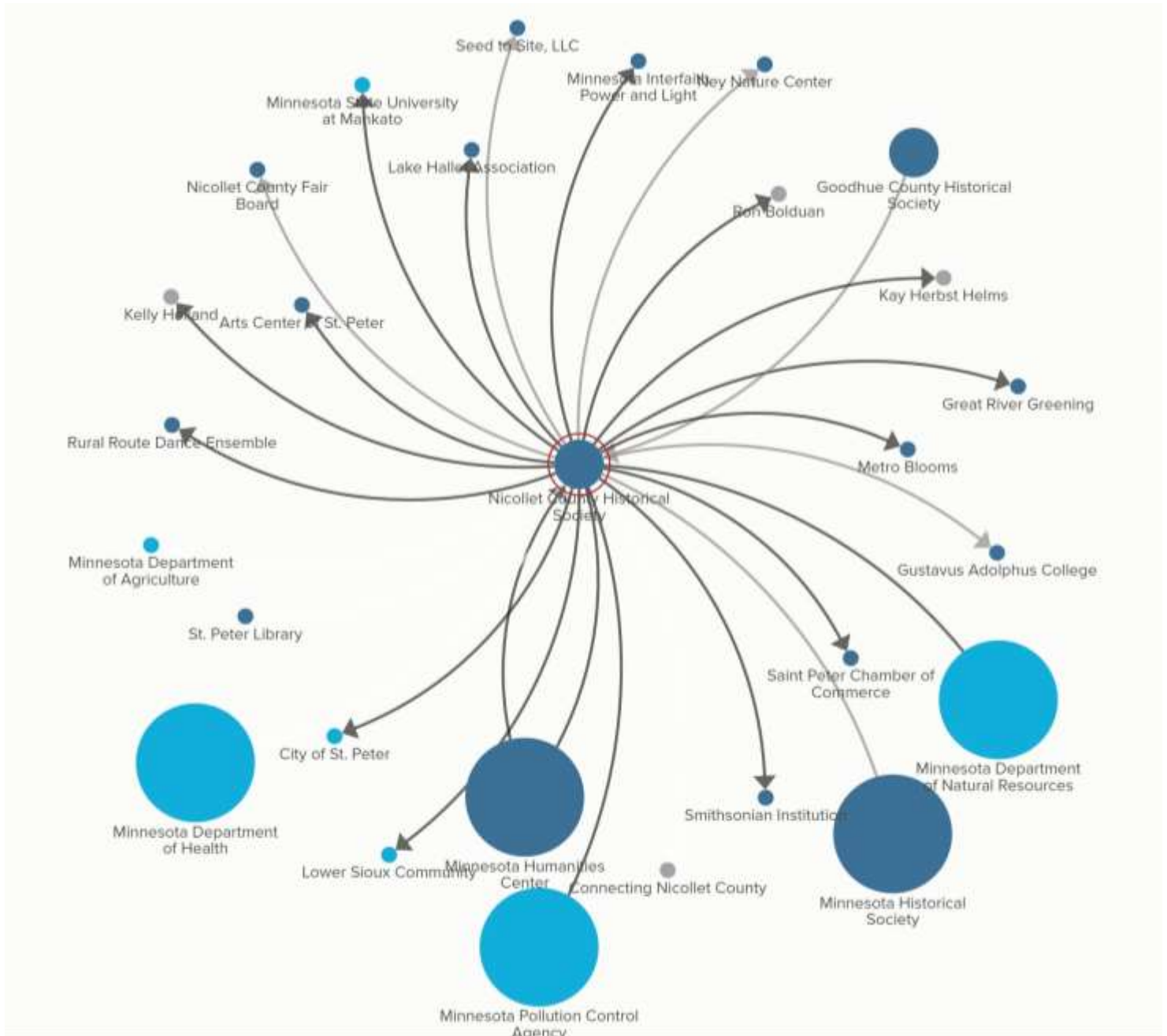


# Local Networks



## Nicollet County Historical Society

- 17 of 26 relationships were strengthened because of Water/Ways
- 5 of 26 relationships were maintained because of Water/Ways
- Nicollet County Historical Society decided not to pursue 4 of 26 relationships



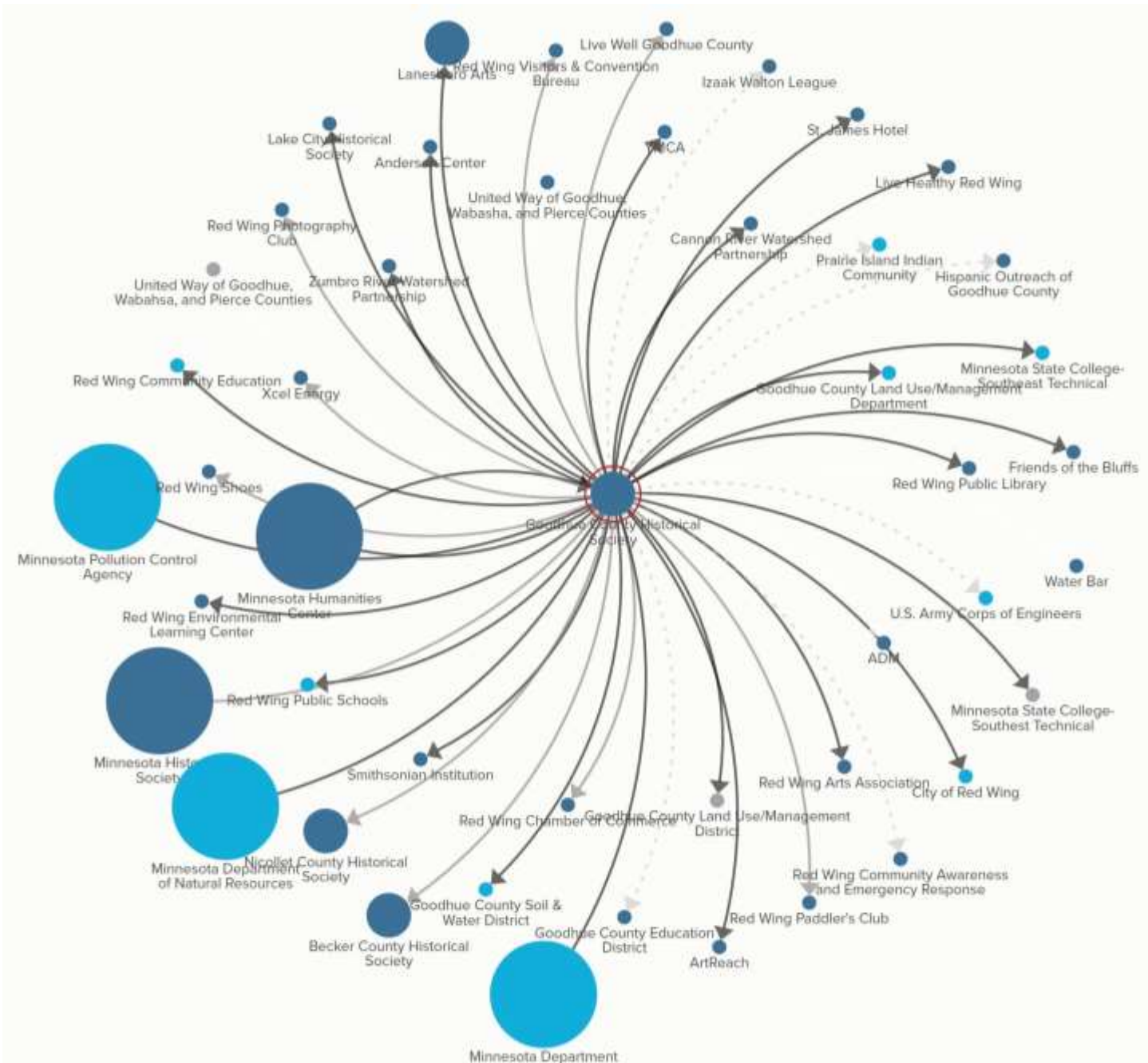
- Non-Profit or Other
- Government
- Our relationship was maintained because of Water/Ways.
- Our relationship was strengthened because of Water/Ways.
- - - We decided not to pursue this relationship at this time.
- ..... Absent

# Local Networks



## Goodhue County Historical Society

- 24 of 43 relationships were strengthened because of *Water/Ways*
- 10 of 43 relationships were maintained because of *Water/Ways*
- 6 of 43 relationships are still absent
- Goodhue County Historical Society decided not to pursue 3 of 43 relationships



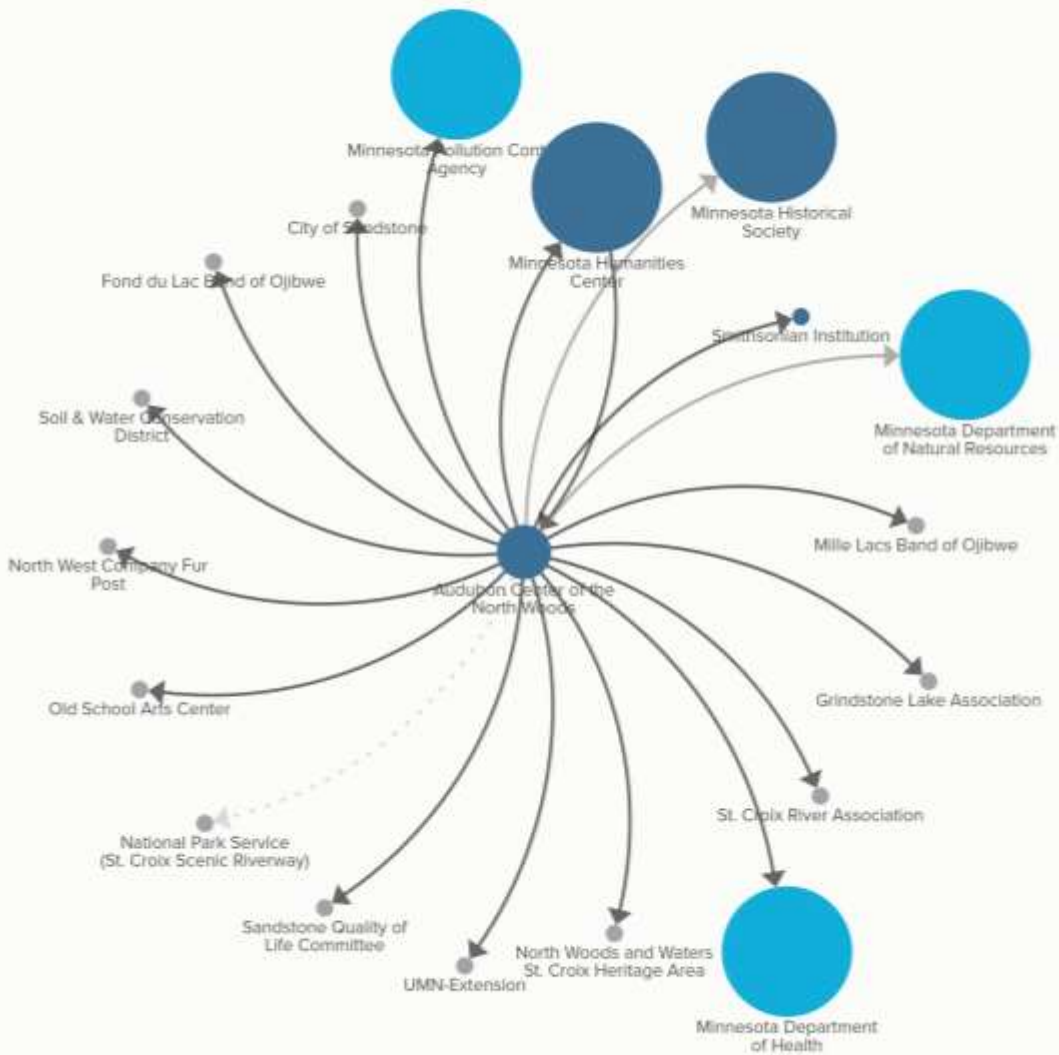
- Non-Profit or Other
- Government
- Our relationship was maintained because of *Water/Ways*.
- Our relationship was strengthened because of *Water/Ways*.
- We decided not to pursue this relationship at this time.
- - - Absent

# Local Networks



## Audubon Center of the North Woods

- 15 of 18 relationships were strengthened because of *Water/Ways*
- 2 of 18 relationships were maintained because of *Water/Ways*
- 1 of 18 relationships are still absent



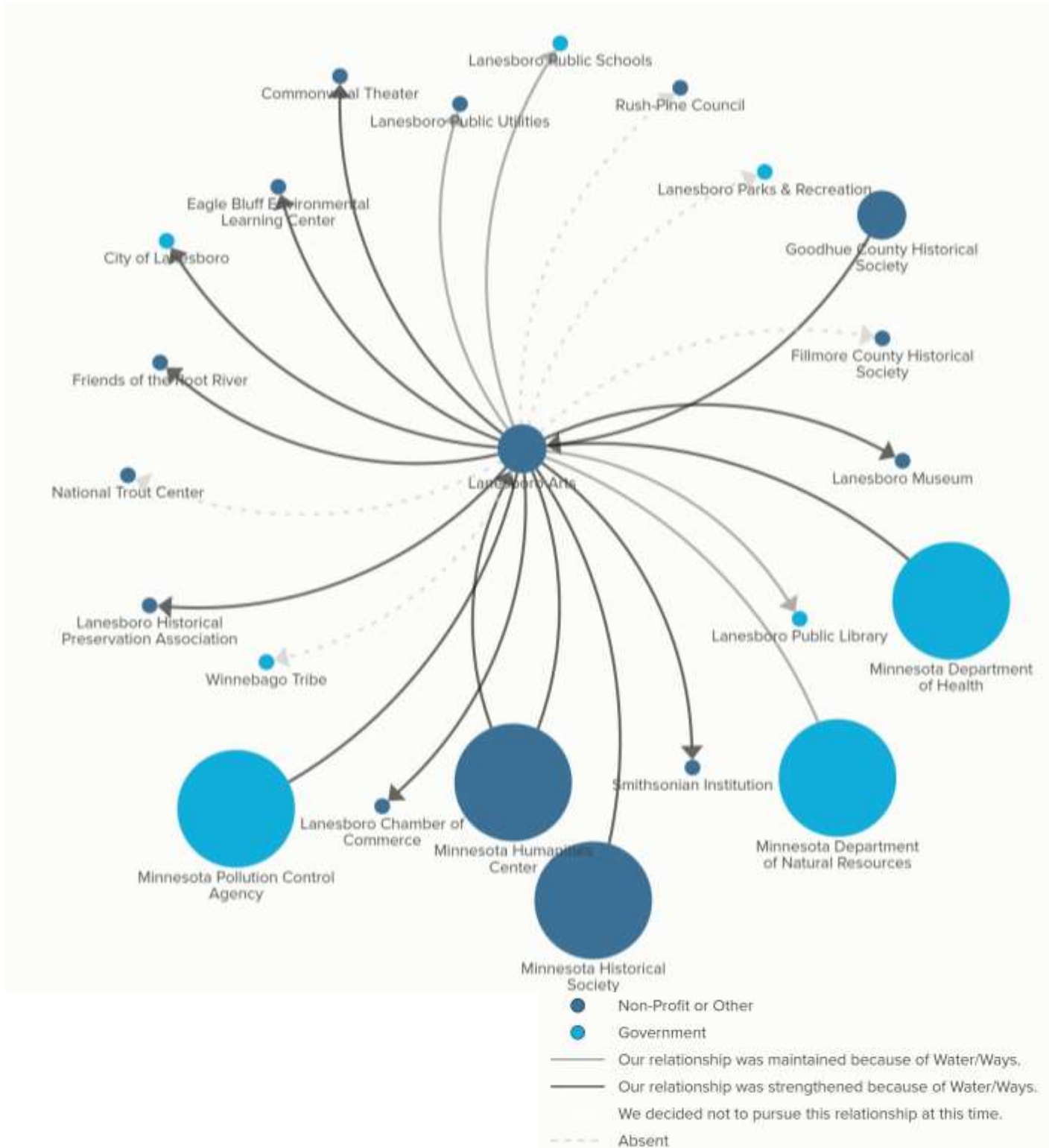
- Non-Profit or Other
- Government
- Our relationship was maintained because of *Water/Ways*.
- Our relationship was strengthened because of *Water/Ways*.
- We decided not to pursue this relationship at this time.
- Absent

# Local Networks



## Lanesboro Arts

- 12 of 21 relationships were strengthened because of *Water/Ways*
- 4 of 21 relationships were maintained because of *Water/Ways*
- 5 of 21 relationships are still absent

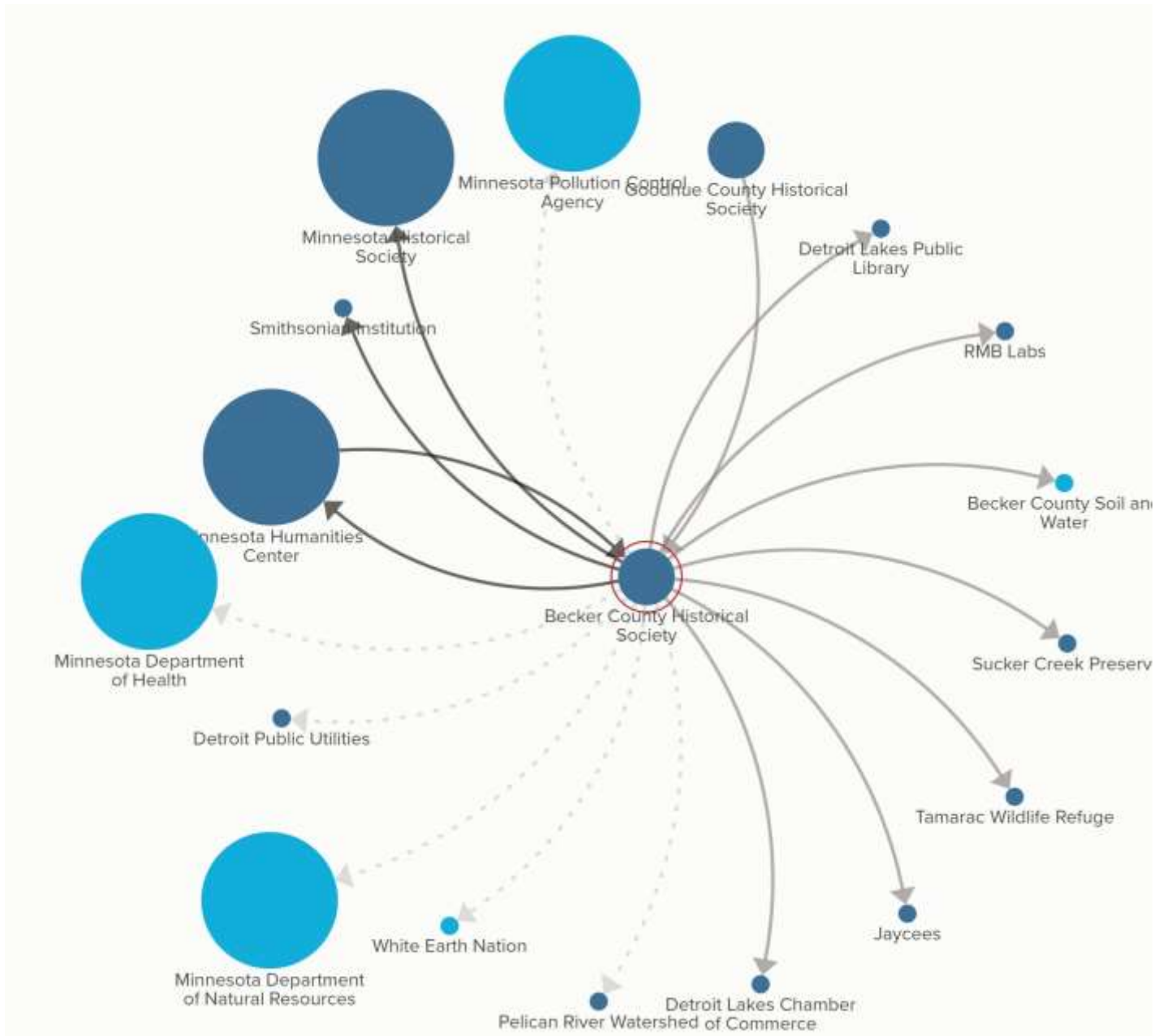


# Local Networks



## Becker County Historical Society

- 3 of 16 relationships were strengthened because of *Water/Ways*
- 7 of 16 relationships were maintained because of *Water/Ways*
- 6 of 16 relationships are still absent



- Non-Profit or Other
- Government
- Our relationship was maintained because of *Water/Ways*.
- Our relationship was strengthened because of *Water/Ways*.
- We decided not to pursue this relationship at this time.
- - - Absent