



Another Successful BWSR Academy

December 2016 Snapshots

The 2016 BWSR Academy was held October 24-26 at Cragun's Conference Center in Brainerd, MN. The goal of the BWSR Academy is to provide high quality training for local government staff that maintains and improves the delivery of conservation work in Minnesota. In previous years, we have offered a variety of beginner, intermediate and advance level sessions. However, this year we felt it was important to address the high volume of new staff who have joined Minnesota's conservation workforce in the past few years, so we designed the 2016 Academy to focus on providing staff development for recently hired local government unit (LGU) staff.

Based on this decision, we dedicated one of our seven training tracks to covering the "Basics". This track included sessions that would help provide a foundation for LGU staff who are new to the programs, policies and land use that drive conservation in Minnesota. One of the most well received sessions offered in the Basics track was a two-part workshop entitled Ag 101. This session was frequently mentioned in our follow up evaluation as one of the most useful for participants. As one participant told us, "Ag 101--best session I've attended at BWSR EVER. All of the presenters were very engaging and offered a lot of insight into farmer decision making."

The other training tracks offered at Academy include Organizational Capacity, Technical, Wetlands, Programs, Workshops and a Repeat track. These diverse tracks and the many sessions within these tracks provide an opportunity to meet the various training topic needs identified through surveys to LGUs, BWSR staff, BWSR partners, and state agencies represented on the BWSR Board.



Hands on training at BWSR Academy

One aspect that sets the BWSR Academy apart from other conferences and symposiums, is that we emphasize interactive learning opportunities that can be readily applied by attendees when returning to their work sites. Participants recognize the value in this training approach with one attendee commenting, "sessions that have a hands on component or are more interactive are easier to listen to and remember."

In addition to providing quality training, BWSR Academy also provides an opportunity for LGU staff to network with other LGU staff across the state and with BWSR staff in attendance. This opportunity for networking is highly valued by attendees.

Of the 200+ evaluations completed, 97% of the respondent's indicated the Academy met their professional development expectations. Academy is made possible through the efforts of many BWSR staff local government staff and state agency staff who provide input to what sessions should be offered and serve as trainers at the Academy.

Participants tell us that BWSR Academy is meeting the training needs of LGUs as 98% of individuals who completed the post-Academy survey indicated they would attend future Academies. As one attendee shared, "already looking forward to BWSR Academy next year." Hope you are too!

