

**Board of Water and Soil Resources**  
**Performance Review and Assistance Program**

**Instructions for Part 2 Performance Standards Checklist**

**LGU Type: Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

**General Instructions:** The Part 2 Performance Standards checklist is intended to be used as part of the Board of Water and Soil Resources' review of local governmental unit performance in the delivery of land and water conservation services. The purpose of this part is to provide an overview of your district's operations in four areas: administration, planning, execution and communication/coordination. The performance standards cover basic or required practices (■) and high performance practices (★). We expect each district to meet all of the basic practice standards. The high performance standards describe optional practices that are met less frequently. Districts will receive BWSR commendations for compliance with high performance standards. Any unmet high performance standards can serve as stretch goals for performance improvement.

Where the performance standard lists multiple criteria (e.g., "written and reviewed/updated"), all criteria must be met in order to check the "yes" box on the form. While these instructions refer to a district comprehensive plan, if the district has adopted the county local water management plan as the district's long-range plan, then the standards that refer to the comprehensive plan would apply to the local water management plan instead.

The performance standards are labeled as being either Level I or Level II. BWSR will monitor and report Level I standard compliance annually for all districts. Level II standards are applied to those districts selected for the once-in-five-years PRAP Level II performance review. Those districts will receive special notification and additional instructions for completing the checklist.

**Administration**

- Financial statement: annual, on-time and balances  
*This is the financial statement that is due to BWSR by March 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.*
- Financial audit: completed within last 3 years or \$500K  
*The audit is required by MS Chap. 103C.325.*
- eLINK 4Web Annual Report: submitted on time  
*The deadline for filing this report is February 1 of each year.*
- Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years  
*A data practices policy describes how the SWCD responds to requests for information submitted under the Minnesota Data Practices Act (MS Chap. 13). Guidance for local governments is available at <http://www.ipad.state.mn.us>. To check "yes" you must have a local policy and have reviewed it (determined that it is up-to-date) or updated it within the past 5 years.*
- Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years  
*A personnel policy includes such procedures as how staff are compensated, hired and dismissed, and also how benefits are provided and used. Some districts may choose to have their employees managed through the county personnel system in which case they should ensure that the county has personnel policies that meet this standard.*

- Technical approval authorities: reviewed annually  
*Technical approval authorities are granted by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service and are required to maintain staff ability to design and certify conservation practices. If all project design services are provided by the joint-powers board NPEA engineers, then you may mark N/A in this box.*
- ★ Operational guidelines exist and current  
*Operational guidelines are written procedures and policies that are used to inform and guide the operation of the district. There is no prescribed format or content for these. However, the Minnesota Office of the State Auditor website ([osa.state.mn.us](http://osa.state.mn.us)) has very helpful information regarding standard audit procedures for local government, including guidelines for meeting minutes content, fiscal procedures and conflict of interest. Operating guidelines serve two purposes: they establish standard procedures and policies thereby saving time at board meetings and by using them the district holds itself to a standard of accountability for how it manages public funds and discharges public duties.*
- ★ Board training: orientation and cont. ed. plan and record for each board member *and* Staff training: orientation and cont. ed. plan and record for each staff member  
*These optional standards have the same content but apply to either board members or staff. Districts who meet these standards will have a mandatory orientation class(es) for both new board and staff members. There will also be a training plan, which can be individually tailored for each board member and staff person that is intended to improve their skills or technical expertise related to their service in the district. The district will also maintain a record of what elements of the plan each board and staff member has completed.*

### **Planning**

- Comprehensive Plan: updated within 5 yrs or current resolution adopting unexpired county LWM plan  
*This standard identifies whether the district is operating under a comprehensive plan or a resolution adopting the county local water management plan as the district plan and whether the plan and resolution are current.*
- Annual Plan of Work: on time; content compliant  
*This is the annual plan of work required under MS Chap. 103C.331, subp. 11 and 103C.501 subp. 2, which must be submitted to BWSR, or posted on the district's website, by March 15<sup>th</sup> of each year. Annual work plans that meet this standard, in addition to meeting the content requirements, will identify how proposed activities relate to the high priority erosion, sedimentation and water quality problems in the district.*
- ★ Comp and Annual Plans arrange objectives by major watersheds in district  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will identify the major watershed(s) within their district in their comprehensive plan, or in the county local water plan, and organize goals, objectives and action items, as well as annual plan projects and programs, with respect to watershed area.*
- ★ Annual plan priorities based on natural resource quality trend data  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will use natural resource quality trend data (e.g., water quality measurements, index of biotic integrity for streams, etc.) to identify where or what programs to focus on in their annual plan of work.*

**Execution**

- State cost share grant productivity  
*For the four most recent closed-out cost share grants, record the average of the three highest percentages of the grant total spent on eligible projects and practices. “High” productivity is defined as spending 80% or more, “medium” as 60% - 79%, and “low” as <60%, of their grant on practices. These expenditures do not include technical and administrative costs.*
- State cost share \$ spent in high priority problem areas  
*The district’s high priority problem areas should have been identified in the comprehensive plan and annual work plan, according to MS Chap. 103C.331 subd. 11c and e. Enter the average annual percent for the last 3 years of total grant dollars for both active and closed-out grants.*
- Total expenditures per year (over past 10 years)  
*This is the district’s total expenditures from all sources of funds with a total dollar amount (in constant dollars) for each of the last 10 years for which data are complete. A table is provided at the bottom of the Part 2 checklist to enter these amounts.*
- Months of operating funds in reserve  
*This value is based on data collected and maintained by BWSR. BWSR will compare the value reported with guidance issued by the Office of the State Auditor and will ask districts to explain values above 12 months or below 4 months.*
- ★ State \$ leverage at least 1.5 times in non-state \$  
*For the last 5 complete years add up all non-state money spent to match or cost share any state grant money to the district. Sources of non-state dollars include county (not including NRBG funds granted to the district), federal, private landowner share, and district revenue from other sources. If the amount of non-state dollars leveraged exceeds 1.5 times the state funds spent, the district has met this optional high performance standard.*
- ★ Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer  
*Check the “yes” box if a member of the district staff is certified as a WCA wetland delineator or if the district has a standing contract with a certified private delineator who represents the district on TEPs.*
- ★ Outcome trends monitored and reported for key resources  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will have a program for regular, long-term monitoring of key resources beyond what is required in eLink. These trends will be regularly reported (e.g., in annual activity report). Resource parameters could include water quality, native vegetation, land use, soil loss, shoreland/aquatic habitat.*

**Communication and Coordination**

- Website: contains all 10 minimum content requirements  
*BWSR has provided guidance to SWCDs regarding the statutorily required elements of district websites. In order to check “yes” for this item, all 10 minimum elements must be included on the website.*
- ★ Website: contains additional content beyond minimum required

- Districts that meet this optional standard will include items such as the comprehensive plan and/or the local water plan, links to related programs, or a district newsletter.*
- ★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will have public information and education objectives in their comprehensive plan, and will have developed measures and data that they are tracking to determine their progress in meeting those objectives. Types of outcomes could include changed attitudes and behaviors, increased participation in district programs, and increased demand for district assistance with conservation projects. Districts without I & E objectives in their long range plan can indicate N/A (“not applicable”) for this standard.*
  - ★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 years  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will have conducted, either solely or in partnership with other local entities, a general formal or informal survey of stakeholder opinions or interest in water management issues. This effort can take several forms and need not be a scientifically based, random sample survey. One approach would be to establish a standing or ad hoc advisory committee of key district stakeholders. Such broad-based public input is particularly valuable in conjunction with major plan updates in order to give district stakeholders an opportunity to inform priority setting.*
  - ★ Annual report communicates progress on plan goals  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will organize or include in their annual report an accounting of work done with respect to each of the comprehensive plan (local water management plan) goals. This can be as simple as indicating which of the comprehensive plan goals or objectives was addressed by a particular action item or project. A more elaborate accounting would show the percent of the goal or objectives accomplished to date.*
  - ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks done with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, non-governmental organizations  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will have conducted programs and projects in cooperation with other local government, or non-governmental entities (e.g., Pheasants Forever, local lake association). Programs will include sharing in educational, monitoring, planning and implementation efforts. In general this standard implies a level of partnership that goes beyond the customary project cost share match.*
  - ★ Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff  
*Districts that meet this optional standard will have regular, periodic contact and coordination with their county commissioners, usually by providing periodic status reports at county board meetings, inviting county board members or staff to attend district board meetings, or a regular consultation between county and district staff.*