



FY2018-19 Biennial Budget Request Update:

January 21, 2016

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) will be soliciting planned activities and associated budgets for the third Biennial Budget Request (BBR) this March. BWSR is working on a new module in eLINK for submitting the BBR rather than the spreadsheets of the past. This FY2018-19 BBR Information Update will include information on what's the same and different from the last BBR, discuss the connection between your local water management plan and the BBR, provide an overview of what you should include in your BBR, and discuss the benefits of doing the BBR.

What's the Same and What's Different?

Much of the information requested in the BBR is the same as the last one. The following is a short list of what remains unchanged from the BBR conducted in 2014.

- The goal of putting local water management plans at the beginning of the State budget process.
- The data requested is very similar to the FY 16-17 BBR
- Collecting information on projects and activities for the next State biennium found in state-approved, locally adopted water management plans.
- Serve as the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) annual plan of work for program and operations grants (Conservation Delivery, State Conservation Cost-Share, etc.) and as a budget planning device for the Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG).
- Collect information on the demand for clean water funds to be used in the Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants process.
- No funding is awarded based on BBR information submitted. Local funds estimated as match or leverage are not funding commitments. Required match amounts will be identified in executed grant awards or as workplans associated with grant agreements during the FY 18-19 biennium.

We also seek to improve the process over time including responding to your suggestions. Differences you will see in the BBR being conducted this year include:

- **The format is different. A new module is being created in eLINK that is similar to the application windows for competitive grants**
- Data collected will not only be targeted to BWSR funding programs, but should include all State water management implementation programs that could potentially be used to implement activities identified in local plans including those administered by the Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and Minnesota Department of Health and USDA.
- The schedule is moved up to accept BBRs with a tentative window for submission of March 1 through April 15.
- To improve consistency across BWSR water and soil implementation programs, the activity categories are the same ones used for the rest of eLINK workplans, applications and reporting.
- Several new potential sources of funding are available including SWCD capacity, Buffer Implementation and Ag Water Quality Certification.
- SWCDs that serve as Technical Service Area (TSA) host districts will be required to enter BBR information separately on behalf of the TSA rather than including that information in the host district's request.

What's the Connection to Local Water Management Plans?

The water management system in Minnesota is based on a State-local partnership. Under this partnership, local governments work to develop plans, provide funding and data, and work with landowners and other partners to implement projects that will protect and restore water quality, control erosion and improve soil health. They provide technical and engineering assistance to implement conservation practices, guide landowners through rules and ordinances toward successful project completion and provide the expertise to apply data and professional judgement needed to prioritize, target and measure water quality solutions. The State provides additional funding, data, and support for local planning, project development and implementation.

A primary purpose of the BBR is to generate the information necessary to support the State-local partnership by ensuring that local water management implementation priorities included in state approved, locally adopted water management plans are available to be used in the development of the State budget not just react to the budget after passage by the legislature and signature by the governor. The FY2018-19 BBR is expected to gather information on projects and activities that are funded by all state agencies, not just BWSR. This is important as many local governments have water management relationships with other State agencies, and the BBR can provide information to support these relationships.

What should be in your BBR?

Counties and SWCDs should provide information on what will be accomplished in FY2018 and 2019 with current fund levels that are allocated under the NRBG, and SWCD conservation program and operations grants. Providing this information will ensure eligibility for counties and SWCDs to be awarded these funds from BWSR in the next biennium.

All local water management plans include projects and activities beyond the implementation of required activities funded through the County NRBG and SWCD program and operations grants. The BBR should include targeted actions to protect or restore surface and/or groundwater that are a priority for the local government, and could realistically be accomplished during the FY2016-19 biennium.

As a module in eLINK, the information that you provide will be similar to what is requested in Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant applications. However, the project planning and development timeline is different. Project implementation will be about two years after the BBR is submitted, whereas for current grant cycles, implementation is typically initiated within one year after applications are submitted.

What are the benefits to the State and Local Governments?

Why do the BBR when everybody is already busy? Competition for State General and Clean Water Funds is intense, and can only be expected to increase as time goes by. Information provided in the BBR can help quantify the activities and projects that are ready to be accomplished through the advanced planning and hard work of our local conservation partners. In addition, the need to be transparent and show results with State funds is increasing. The BBR helps demonstrate that there is a plan to prioritize, target and measure implementation activities.

The BBR is one response by BWSR to address these issues. By demonstrating that our local government partners are prepared and capable of identifying, developing and implementing prioritized, targeted and measurable water quality projects and activities, State decision-makers have increased confidence that State funds appropriated for water management projects and activities will achieve their purpose to protect and improve Minnesota's waters.

What can you do now?

- Review your water management plan along with your local partners and their related plans to begin considering the priorities you might include in your BBR.
- Review the previous BBR that you submitted for the type of information that was requested.
- Watch for further communication about the upcoming FY 2018-19 BBR process.