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BWSR receives \$1M in federal funding to support wetlands

St. Paul, Minn. — The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) announced today \$1 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in support of the Minnesota Wetland Bank for Agriculture. Agricultural wetland mitigation banking uses a market-based approach to restore high quality wetlands, which then can be used to compensate for impacts to other degraded wetlands, preferably in the same watershed. Wetland mitigation requires the replacement of all lost wetland functions, values, and acres.

“Wetlands are important natural resources that provide water quality, flood control, and wildlife habitat benefits,” BWSR Wetlands Section Manager Les Lemm said. “Most wetlands are protected by federal or state law – here it’s the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act – and mitigation banking programs like this one provide flexibility to agricultural producers while also improving our state’s wetland resources. It’s really a win-win for agriculture and conservation.”

The Ag Banking Program broadens the conservation options available to farmers. Established in 2012 and the first program of its kind in the nation, Minnesota’s program has approved over 20 individual bank sites with over 1,000 acres of wetlands restored.

“In a short amount of time, Minnesota was able not just to get this program up and running, but to establish it as the most advanced and successful program in the country,” BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke said.

“We’ve become a national model, and these funds will allow us to expand on an already strong track record.”

Federal funding was also awarded to projects in nine other states as part of the announcement. The USDA sought projects that support local efforts to conserve wetlands in areas where the potential for agricultural demand on those acres is high. The USDA news release is available here:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1261608>.