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Landowners have new options and a new website to help with Buffer law

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St. Paul, Minn.

Today, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources announced two additional resources for landowners working to come into compliance with the state's buffer law. The law, which was passed with bipartisan support in 2015 and signed into law by Governor Dayton, requires the implementation of a buffer strip on public waters by November 1, 2017 and a buffer on public drainage ditches by November 1, 2018.

"These additional resources, both financial and found online, are designed to help landowners be successful in complying with the law," explained John Jaschke, Executive Director BWSR. "Local SWCDs and landowners have been working together over the past 18 months and, we are making great progress with 64 counties already 60-100% compliant."

COST-SHARE PROGRAM

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources has approved a new buffer cost-share program, allocating almost \$5 million dollars to support landowners in meeting the requirements of the state buffer law.

The funds will be distributed to soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) and are to be used for cost-sharing contracts with landowners or their authorized agents to implement riparian buffers or alternative practices on public waters and public drainage ditches.

These Clean Water Funds, passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Dayton at the end of the 2017 legislative session, provide important support to the Governor's Buffer Initiative.

The 2017 legislation also recognizes that some landowners may have hardships (such as weather) in meeting the public waters deadline. The added language allows for an eight-month extension for implementation when a landowner or authorized agent has filed a riparian protection "compliance plan" with their local SWCD by **November 1, 2017**. Compliance waivers offer a buffer deadline extension until **July 1, 2018**.

NEW ONE-STOP WEBSITE

Minnesota landowners with questions about compliance waivers and other buffer topics also have another option available today with the launching of a new one-stop website for information and tips to implement the buffer law. The new site, mn.gov/buffer-law, is a user-friendly and convenient resource for landowners and the public to learn about the law, find answers about alternative practices, and get information about financial and technical assistance and more.

The new buffer site, launched by the State of Minnesota is found at mn.gov/buffer-law. For more information on the buffer law, including the cost-share program, contact your local soil and water conservation district.

COMPLIANCE

Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been hard at work with landowners statewide and progress toward compliance is being made. 64 of Minnesota's 87 counties are 60 – 100 percent in compliance with the buffer law. Statewide, preliminary compliance with the buffer law is 89%.

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BWSR is the state soil and water conservation agency, and it administers programs that prevent sediment and nutrients from entering our lakes, rivers, and streams; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; and protect wetlands. The 20-member board consists of representatives of local and state government agencies and citizens. BWSR's mission is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners.