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Local Governments Join Forces to Plan for Water Management

Six watershed planning partnerships join One Watershed, One Plan Program

St. Paul, Minn. – Continuing statewide work to shift local water planning to a more holistic, coordinated approach, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) approved six new planning grants for the *One Watershed, One Plan* program. The June 28 board action allocates up to \$1,500,000 in Clean Water Fund grants to fund six planning projects to address water quality and other water issues on a watershed basis.

The program aligns planning on major watershed boundaries through watershed plans that are developed and implemented locally. Local governments build on existing efforts, using current local water plans, state and local knowledge and a systematic, science-based approach to watershed management. The resulting plans identify actions that address the largest threats and provide the greatest environmental benefits to priority water resources. Planning efforts involve a broad range of stakeholders, including local governments, state agencies, and community members as partners in the planning process.

Key to the process is bringing together counties, soil and water conservation districts and watershed districts to identify shared goals in a planning partnership. “One Watershed, One Plan represents a big leap forward in water management in Minnesota,” said BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke. “The idea is to bring these groups together as upstream and downstream neighbors so they can address issues according to how water flows instead of being limited by jurisdictional boundaries.”

The six new planning areas are:

- **Buffalo-Red River watershed**, which includes parts of Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties.
- **Lower St. Croix watershed**, which includes parts of Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Pine, Ramsey, and Washington Counties
- **Mustinka/Bois de Sioux watershed**, which includes parts of Big Stone, Grant, Otter Tail, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin Counties.
- **Pine River watershed**, which includes parts of Cass and Crow Wing Counties.
- **Sauk River watershed**, which includes parts of Douglas, Pope, Stearns, and Todd Counties.
- **Watonwan River watershed**, which includes parts of Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Jackson, Martin, and Watonwan Counties.

In all, BWSR has divided Minnesota into 63 suggested “planning boundaries,” which are based on major watersheds. The legislature has set a participation goal of all planning boundaries by the year 2025. Thus far, four of five pilot plans have been approved by the BWSR board and seven groups have begun the planning process over the past several months. These new planning grants bring the number of watersheds participating in the program to 18.

More information about the One Watershed One Plan program, including a map of the participating watersheds, is on BWSR’s website: www.bwsr.state.mn.us.

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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.