

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES  
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH  
ST. PAUL, MN 55155  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2022**

**AGENDA**

**9:00 AM CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**MINUTES OF DECEMBER 16 BOARD MEETING**

**PUBLIC ACCESS FORUM** (10-minute agenda time, two-minute limit/person)

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF**

- Lucy Dahl, Easement Supervisor
- Michelle Jordan, Board Conservationist
- Annie Felix-Gerth, Clean Water Coordinator
- Kristin Brennan, Southern Region Training Conservationist

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION**

*A conflict of interest, whether actual, potential, or perceived, occurs when someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests, and these competing interests make it difficult to fulfill professional duties impartially. At this time, members are requested to declare conflicts of interest they may have regarding today's business. Any member who declares an actual conflict of interest must not vote on that agenda item. All actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest will be announced to the board by staff before any vote.*

**REPORTS**

- Chair & Administrative Advisory Committee – Gerald Van Amburg
- Executive Director – John Jaschke
- Audit & Oversight Committee – Joe Collins
- Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report – Travis Germundson/Rich Sve
- Grants Program & Policy Committee – Todd Holman
- RIM Reserve Committee – Jayne Hager Dee
- Water Management & Strategic Planning Committee
- Wetland Conservation Committee – Jill Crafton
- Buffers, Soils & Drainage Committee – Kathryn Kelly
- Drainage Work Group – Neil Peterson/Tom Gile

**AGENCY REPORTS**

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Thom Petersen
- Minnesota Department of Health – Steve Robertson
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Sarah Strommen
- Minnesota Extension – Joel Larson

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Katrina Kessler

#### **ADVISORY COMMENTS**

- Association of Minnesota Counties – Brian Martinson
- Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees – Nicole Bernd
- Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts – LeAnn Buck
- Minnesota Association of Townships – Eunice Biel
- Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts – Emily Javens
- Natural Resources Conservation Service – Troy Daniell

#### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### ***Southern Region Committee***

1. Hawk Creek – Middle Minnesota Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Jeremy Maul, Mark Hiles, and Ed Lenz – **DECISION ITEM**

##### ***Northern Region Committee***

1. Red River Basin Commission FY22/23 Grant Approval – Henry Van Offelen – **DECISION ITEM**
2. Boundary Change Petition for Bois de Sioux Watershed District and Upper Minnesota River Watershed District – Pete Waller – **DECISION ITEM**

##### ***Grants Program and Policy Committee***

1. Water Quality and Storage Pilot Grant Program – Rita Weaver – **DECISION ITEM**

##### ***Audit and Oversight Committee***

1. 2021 Performance Review and Assistance Program Legislative Report – Jenny Gieseke and Brett Arne – **DECISION ITEM**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Clean Water Act Section 404 Assumption – Report on Funding Estimates – Les Lemm – **INFORMATION ITEM**
2. Vice Chair Nomination – John Jaschke – **DECISION ITEM**

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- RIM Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 4, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. in the BWSR Conference Room at 520 Lafayette Road North, St. Paul by Skype.
- BWSR Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. in the Lower Level Conference Rooms at 520 Lafayette Road North, St. Paul and by WebEx.

#### **ADJOURN**

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES  
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH  
LOWER LEVEL BOARD ROOM  
ST. PAUL, MN 55155  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Joe Collins, Jill Crafton, Andrea Date, Jayne Hager Dee, Kathryn Kelly, Neil Peterson, Rich Sve, Gerald Van Amburg, Ted Winter, LeRoy Ose, Kelly Kirkpatrick, Eunice Biel, Todd Holman, Ronald Staples, Mark Zabel, Katrina Kessler, MPCA; Joel Larson, University of Minnesota Extension; Thom Petersen, MDA; Steve Robertson, MDH; Sarah Strommen, DNR

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

John Jaschke, Angie Becker Kudelka, Rachel Mueller, Kevin Bigalke, Tom Gile, Travis Germundson, Dan Shaw, Shaina Keseley, Mark Hiles, Brad Wozney, Steve Christopher, Sharon Doucette, Dave Weirens, Dave Copeland, Marcey Westrick, Ryan Hughes

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Jeff Berg, MDA; Brian Martinson, AMC; Emily Javens, MAWD; Troy Danielle, NRCS; Glenn Skuta, MPCA; Jason Garms, DNR; Don Bajumpaa, Amanda Bilek, Jan Voit

**Chair Gerald VanAmburg called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**\*\*  
21-53** **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** - Moved by Rich Sve, seconded by Todd Holman, to adopt the agenda as presented. ***Motion passed on a roll vote.***

**\*\*  
21-54** **MINUTES OF OCTOBER 27, 2021 BOARD MEETING** – Moved by Neil Peterson, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the minutes of October 27, 2021, as amended. ***Motion passed on a roll vote.***

**PUBLIC ACCESS FORUM**

No members of the public provided comments to the board.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION**

**Chair Van Amburg read the statement:**

*"A conflict of interest, whether actual, potential, or perceived, occurs when someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests, and these competing interests make it difficult to fulfill professional duties impartially. At this time, members are requested to declare conflicts of interest they may have regarding today's business. Any member who declares an actual conflict of interest must not vote on that agenda item. All actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest will be announced to the board by staff before any vote."*

**REPORTS**

**Chair & Administrative Advisory Committee** – Chair Gerald Van Amburg reported the committee has not met. Attended MAWD annual conference virtually and thanked BWSR staff that were involved and helped with programs.

Congratulated Rich Sve for serving a historic two year presidency with the Association of Minnesota Counties. Chair Van Amburg stated Governor Walz declared a Rich Sve Day at the convention. Rich Sve thanked Chair Van Amburg for acknowledging it and stated it was an honor.

**Executive Director's Report** - John Jaschke reported the annual meetings of the Counties, Watershed Districts, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been completed. Conservation awardees for the AMC/BWSR acknowledgment were tied this year and were presented to Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership (Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Pine and Washington Counties) and to Community Conservation Partnerships by the Crow Wing County Highway Department. MAWD held their conference virtually and was well put together. Information from the conference has been made available on their website. SWCD had their meeting this week in Bloomington and stated it was also very well put together.

A petition from the Watershed Association regarding rulemaking was received. It is being evaluated with legal counsel and will be responded to between now and early January.

Kevin Bigalke will be taking a position in the private sector and BWSR will work to get that Assistant Director position filled along with other vacancies. Annie Felix-Gerth has filled the position vacated by Marcey Westrick as the Clean Water Coordinator.

John stated they are working along with other agencies on ideas for the Governor's consideration on budget and policy. State has a budget surplus with a number of components to it.

Executive Director Jaschke thanked Andrea Date for her service on the BWSR Board. Andrea will be stepping aside from her board position as the Metro City representative at the end of December.

Jill Crafton stated she attended the SWCD meeting and that it was a great experience and would encourage more people to attend.

**Audit and Oversight Committee** – Joe Collins reported they have not met. Meeting is scheduled for January 20th.

**Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report** – Travis Germundson reported there are presently five appeals pending. All the appeals involve the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). There have been four new appeals filed since the last Board Meeting. Two are identified in the current report in the board packet.

File 21-7 appeal of WCA notice of a decision in Pope County. Appeal regarding the approval of tile lines around water of a US Fish and Wildlife Service property allegedly impacting wetlands. Issue is the elevation at which the tile lines were approved. No decision has been made on this appeal.

File 21-6 appeal of WCA restoration order in Brown County, filling and grating of two alleged wetland areas. Petition states they are not wetlands and alterations that occurred were approved previously by local unit of government. No decision has been made on this appeal.

File 19-7 (12-20-19) This is an appeal of a WCA replacement plan decision in Hennepin County. The appeal regards the denial of a replacement plan application associated with wetland impacts described in a restoration order. The restoration order was appealed and placed in abeyance until there is a final decision on the wetland application (File 18-3). The appeal has been placed in abeyance until there is no longer mutual agreement on the viability of proposed actions for restoration. The LGU has since notified BWSR that there is no longer mutual agreement on continuing to hold the appeal in abeyance. As a result, a decision was made to grant and hear the appeal. The hearing proceedings have been extended by mutual agreement. A settlement agreement was executed and it dismisses the appeal filed with BWSR.

File 18-3 (10-31-18) This is an appeal of a WCA restoration order in Hennepin County. The appeal regards the alleged filling and draining of over 11 acres of wetland. Applications for exemption and no-loss determinations were submitted to the LGU concurrently with the appeal. The appeal has been placed in abeyance and the restoration stayed for the LGU to make a final decision on the applications. That decision has been amended several times to extend the time frame on the stay of the restoration order. The LGU decision was appealed (File19-7). A settlement agreement was executed and it dismisses the appeal filed with BWSR.

Buffer Compliance Status Update: BWSR has received Notifications of Noncompliance (NONs) on 93 parcels from the 12 counties BWSR is responsible for enforcement. Currently there are no active Corrective Action Notices (CANs) and 6 Administrative Penalty Orders (APOs) issued by BWSR that are still active. Of the actions being tracked over 86 of those have been resolved.

Statewide 31 counties are fully compliant, and 50 counties have enforcement cases in progress. Of those counties (with enforcement cases in progress) there are currently 701 CANs and 67 APOs actively in place. Of the actions being tracked over 1,915 of those have been resolved.

**Grants Program & Policy Committee** – Todd Holman thanked Andrea Date for chairing the previous two committee meetings. Last meeting was on November 29 and will have action items later in the agenda. The next meeting is January 10. Todd stated they will be looking at the watershed based

implementation funding formula again at a future meeting. Todd congratulated and thanked Kevin for his service.

Todd thanked staff for their participation at the MASWCD conference. Stated the Mark Crampton family was nominated by the Wadena Soil and Water Conservation District for a certificate of achievement using the Crow Wing River Healthy Water Partnership RIM program.

**RIM Reserve Committee** – Jayne Hager Dee reported they met and there is an action item on the agenda.

**Water Management & Strategic Planning Committee** – Andrea Date reported they met November 29 and there is an action item on the agenda.

Chair Van Amburg thanked Andera for all her work on the board.

**Wetland Conservation Committee** – Jill Crafton reported they had a 404 Assumption Workshop and hope to be hearing more about it in the future.

**Buffers, Soils & Drainage Committee** - Kathryn Kelly reported the committee has not met. Kathryn Congratulated and thanked Kevin and Andrea for their work. Kathryn stated she attended the AMC conference and congratulated Rich Sve. Kathryn stated she is at the end of serving her two year term and thanked everyone.

**Drainage Work Group (DWG)** – Neil Peterson and Tom Gile reported the Drainage Work Group has not met and is planning to meet January 13.

#### **AGENCY REPORTS**

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture** – Thom Petersen reported the Ag Water Quality Certification Program continues to move toward their goal. Stated they have started to form teams for the Groundwater Protection Act in areas that have high nitrate. Department is still looking at some kind of drought package to provide some relief to farmers. Stated fertilizer could be an issue this spring; farmers are looking at rates and alternative practices. Stated Bob Patton is retiring from the Department and oversees agriculture preserve programs. They will be bringing in new people to help run the programs.

**Minnesota Department of Health** – Steve Robertson reported he went to Minnesota Ground Water Association conference. Content from the conference was recorded and is available on their website. Steve stated the Infrastructure bill passed and will bring money to Minnesota for drinking water and clean water activities. The PFAS monitoring program is about 50% done, results will be available in January. EPA announced they will be working on developing maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for PFO and PFAS. Also indicated they will be revising their approach towards health risk where values will be lower than what they have now for the health advisory levels.

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources** – Sarah Strommen reported it was nice to see people in person at the MASWCD and AMC conferences. In partnership with MPCA, a press event was held at Medicine lake in the Three River Parks District at French Park to talk about new data around climate and in particular the loss of ice days on Minnesota Lakes. On average Minnesota lost 10-14 lake ice days over the last 50 years.

Sarah stated she spent two days in Lac qui Parle County talking with members of the Lac qui Parle County Board and staff from the Lac qui Parle Yellow Bank Watershed District. Stated it was a great two days spent trying to figure out better ways to work together.

**Minnesota Extension** – Joel Larson reported at the Minnesota Groundwater Association there was a presentation from Jeff Broberg from the Minnesota Well Owners Organization. They have been working on a project with the Groundwater Association with running a series of drinking water testing clinics for different regions across the state. Joel stated they have been talking with them on how to build up that program in partnership with them. They are in the early stages of those conversations and as it develops Joel will bring back more information.

Joel stated they will be holding their Nutrient Management Conference on February 8 in Mankato. The Nitrogen Conference will be February 25 in St. Cloud. Both will have online options.

They are continuing to work through Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership efforts. One of the projects they are working on is to develop a statewide more detailed and fine downscaled climate projection data. Climate Adaptation Awards Ceremony is being held on January 31 and looking to hold a broader conference in April.

**Minnesota Pollution Control Agency** – Glenn Skuta reported the 2022 Agriculture-Urban Partnership Forum on Water Quality is being held January 18.

#### **ADVISORY COMMENTS**

**Association of Minnesota Counties** – Brian Martinson reported AMC recently held its annual conference in Bloomington. Thanked Executive Director Jaschke and Commissioners Petersen, Kessler, Strommen, and their staff for participating and contributing to various events during the conference. Conservation awards were presented to Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership (Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Pine, and Washington Counties) and to a Community Partnership via the Crow Wing County Highway Department.

Brian stated they are setting priorities for next year and updating their platform. The top two priorities they will focus on are mental health and behavior health issues as well as updates to legislature dealing with the recent opioid settlement. For the Environmental and Natural Resources there are two priorities, one is dealing with the public waters inventory. The second is maintaining and reinforcing county ability to manage solid waste. The Resources Committee reviewed nine potential platform changes or additions and adopted seven. One is to update and expedite the ability to get septic system professionals onboarded and trained. Need for more septic systems professionals around the state and want to see that addressed.

Underground utility mapping is a new item that came from language adopted by the Clean Water Council and comes from collaborated work at the state with Geospatial and Gopher State One to provide more environmental protection and safety.

**Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees** – No report was provided.

**Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts** – No report was provided.

**Minnesota Association of Townships** – Eunice Biel reported this fall they had district meetings throughout the state that went well. There was a presentation on American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funding. Stated the spending for the ARPA money in township is limited on how it can be spent. Stated they are involved in a Workman's Compensation audit for townships.

They will be offering web classes through MAP for township officer; 2022 is an election year. There will also be training on best practices.

**Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts** –Emily Javens reported they submitted a legal petition on November 8 in regard to a rulemaking item from the last board meeting. Stated their platform for the next year is to make sure that all Watershed Districts have the capacity to fund their work.

Emily stated they held their annual conference virtually and all sessions were recorded. Stated that MAWD gave two awards, the project of the year was awarded to Sand Hill River Ecosystem Enhancements. The Watershed District Program of the year was awarded to Comfort-Lake-Forest Lake for their citizen assisted tributary monitoring program. DNR awarded Valley Branch for Watershed District of the year. The Administrator Award went to Jamie Byer, Bios de Sioux Watershed District. BWSR gave an award for an Outstanding Employee awarded to Cody Fox who is a program manager for Cedar River. The Video Award for best picture was awarded to Bassett Creek.

Chair Van Amburg thanked Emily and Maddy Bohn for their work on the conference.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service** – Troy Daniell reported he attended the MASWCD conference and stated almost every presentation talked about partnerships. Troy thanked the BWSR Board and staff for their partnerships.

## **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **RIM Committee**

**Amendment to Board Order #19-34 Wellhead Protection Partner Grants (Pilot)** – Sharon Doucette presented Amendment to Board Order #19-34 Wellhead Protection Partner Grants (Pilot).

ML21 1st Special Session, Ch.1, Art. 2, Sec. 6(g) designated the following:  
\$2,500,000 the first year and \$2,500,000 the second year are for permanent conservation easements on wellhead protection areas under Minnesota Statutes, section 103F.515, subdivision 2, paragraph (d), or for grants to local units of government for fee title acquisition to permanently protect groundwater supply sources on wellhead protection areas or for otherwise ensuring long-term protection of groundwater supply sources as described under alternative management tools in the Department of Agriculture Minnesota Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan, including using low-nitrogen cropping systems or implementing nitrogen fertilizer best management practices. Priority must be placed on land that is located where the vulnerability of the drinking water supply is designated as high or very high by the commissioner of health, where drinking water protection plans have identified specific activities that will achieve long-term protection, and on lands with expiring conservation reserve program contracts.

ML17 Ch. 91, Art. 2 Sec. 7(g) and ML19 1st Special Session, Ch. 2, Art. 2, Sec. 7(g) both contained similar language allowing for grants to local units of government for wellhead protection.

In 2019, the Board approved a pilot Wellhead Protection Partner Program to utilize all available options given by the legislature for wellhead protection. The board order for the pilot authorized \$1 million for the pilot program. Since that time, we have funded 3 successful local acquisition projects which have utilized most of the \$1M, but we have not piloted a long-term easement/contract via a local partner. Staff is requesting that the pilot grant program continue with added funding to learn from these additional options provided in the program as well as to allow for development of a wellhead specific RIM rate that will be in conjunction with updated RIM rates presented to the board within the next 6 months.

Jill Crafton stated she supports this order and was glad to hear the need of inspections and building in accountability.

**\*\*  
21-55** Moved by Jill Crafton, seconded by Jayne Hager Dee, to approve the Amendment to Board Order #19-34 Wellhead Protection Partner Grants (Pilot). ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Chair Van Amburg recessed meeting at 10:30 a.m. and called the meeting back to order at 10:35 a.m.

**Grants Program and Policy Committee**

**Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP)** – Dan Shaw presented Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP).

Declines of bees, butterflies, dragonflies, and other at-risk species that support ecosystems and food systems have raised significant alarm among scientists and conservation professionals both locally and globally. This cost share grant program is made possible through an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). The program is focused on restoring and enhancing strategically located, diverse native habitat across Minnesota to benefit populations of pollinators and beneficial insects as well as overall plant and animal diversity.

Kathryn Kelly thanked Dan for his work and asked if the grant money is approved, can it be marketed to CRP landowners to enhance their CRP lands. Dan stated CRP land is eligible for this program.

Jill Crafton stated this would be good opportunity to do sampling for soil organic matter and asked if we could implement it into policy. Dan stated this is something they have been talking about for a variety of programs. They are working with conservation districts to do more testing of soil before and after installation of projects.

Ron Staples asked if the deadline of February 3 is a short period of time or if that's a normal time frame for submittals. Dan stated for this type of grant they provide around 2 months for applications. Most of the potential applicants are aware this is happening. Another email will be going out letting them know it was passed by the board and more detail about the grant will be provided.

Joe Collins asked if this was applicable for urban areas. Dan stated city and park lands are eligible for the program.

Jill Crafton asked if the Lawns to Legumes Program is still going on. Dan stated it is still going on and there is currently an RFP out now. Might have a little bit of overlap, more applicants for this program will be on larger more intact natural habitat where lawns to legumes has more of an urban focus to it.

**\*\*  
21-56** Moved by Kathryn Kelly, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP). ***Motion passed on a roll vote.***

**Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA)** – Dan Shaw presented Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA).

Cooperative Weed Management Areas are partnerships of federal, state and local government agencies along with tribes, individual landowners and various other interested groups that manage noxious weeds or invasive plants in a defined area. The BWSR Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) Program was developed in 2008 to establish strong and sustainable CWMAs across Minnesota for the collaborative and efficient control of invasive species and protection of conservation lands and natural areas. \$200,000 is proposed for FY2022 and FY2023 for newly developing and existing CWMAs/terrestrial weed management partnerships in Minnesota.

Kathryn Kelly noted a couple typos on page 7, under number 15, Conflict of Interest, under number 1 completing duties is run together and under number 3 all competitors is also run together.

**\*\*  
21-57** Moved by Neil Peterson, seconded by Kathryn Kelly, to approve the Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA). ***Motion passed on a roll vote.***

**FY 2022 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Award** – Shaina Keseley and Mark Hiles presented FY 2022 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Award.

The purpose of this agenda item is to allocate FY22 Clean Water Competitive Grants. On June 23, 2021, the Board authorized staff to distribute and promote a request for proposals (RFP) for eligible local governments to apply for Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants in three program categories: Projects and Practices, Projects and Practices Drinking Water Subprogram and Multipurpose Drainage Management (Board order #21-16).

Applications for the FY2022 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants were accepted from June 30 through August 17, 2021. Local governments submitted 66 applications requesting \$22,066,713.66 in Clean Water Funds. BWSR Clean Water staff conducted multiple processes to review and score applications and involved staff from other agencies to develop the proposed recommendations for grant awards. The BWSR Senior Management Team reviewed the recommendations on November 9th, 2021 and made a recommendation to the Grants Program and Policy Committee. The Grants Program and Policy Committee reviewed the recommendation on November 29th, 2021 and made a recommendation to the full Board. A draft Order is attached based on that recommendation of the Grants Program and Policy Committee.

Jill Crafton asked if the funds going forward will stay with competitive grants and won't get diverted to other programs. Shaina stated what is in those application tables is what it will go to it. John Jaschke stated shifting would need to be done though a future board order.

**\*\*  
21-58** Moved by Jill Crafton, seconded by Joe Collins, to approve the FY 2022 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Award. ***Motion passed on a roll vote.***

**General Fund Feedlot Grant to TSA 7** – Kevin Bigalke presented General Fund Feedlot Grant to TSA 7.

Since 2016, BWSR has partners with TSA 7 (SE Minnesota) and the NRCS on a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant to address feedlot management in the Lower Mississippi River Watershed. The RCPP grant has been completed and the project generated more interest than the RCPP grant could fund. During the 2021 Legislative Special Session, BWSR was appropriated general fund dollars for feedlot water quality grants for feedlots under 500 animal units and nutrient and manure management projects. This request is to provide the \$260,000 in FY2022 & \$260,000 in FY2023 General Fund Feedlot grant dollars to TSA 7 to continue the work started with the RCPP project. The Grants Program and Policy Committee met on November 29, 2021 and recommended approval to the full Board.

Thom Petersen asked if they could talk more about the interest and the demands for these grants. Dave Copeland stated they have done a good job of communicating the availability of funds and projects. With this grant they anticipate addressing two or three feedlots that are backlogged. They will also look at the potential to work with NRCS to coordinate state money with Federal EQIP dollars. In talking to TSA staff, they don't see any issue in being able to get projects done and utilize the funds. It won't address all the back log but will certainly help.

Ted Winter asked about the current feedlot grants and if there is any percent of local interest that has to be a part of it and if there are any guidelines. Kevin stated in the past these grants matched with RCPP and have been a 90/10 split. Landowner would be contributing 10% of the overall cost of the project and the grant would cover up to 90%.

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21-59 Moved by Thom Petersen, seconded by Joe Collins, to approve the General Fund Feedlot Grant to TSA 7. ***Motion passed on a roll vote.***

**Water Management and Strategic Planning Committee**

**Revision of the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPFP)** – Brad Wozney presented Revision of the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPFP).

Since late 2020, BWSR staff have evaluated the current NPFP to determine its value and relevance. From this evaluation staff believe in taking the necessary time to revise it to better reflect and align with the changes in state planning and programming since the last revision in 2018. Staff are proposing another extension to December 2023. Senior Management Team approved the proposed board order deferring development of the NPFP to the Water Management and Strategic Planning Committee (WMSP). The WMSP discussed the proposed process and basis for alternative content and recommended approval of the order for the NPFP to the Board.

Jill Crafton stated she would like to see this come to the Water Management Strategic Planning Committee and the Grants Program and Policy Committee. Brad stated it is on the schedule to bring to the committees to get their involvement as well.

Joe Collins stated in the metro they have comprehensive watershed management plans. Joe asked what the reference to local comprehensive watershed management plan via 1W1P program is and if they are trying to focus only on 1W1P with this. Brad stated they will not be exclusively citing the 1W1P. One of the components of the non-point priority funding plan is estimating the need for non-point costs so they will be using metro plans as well as 1W1P comprehensive plans to help acquire that estimated need. It won't be exclusive to outstate plans.

Ted Winter asked why we don't list them, instead of via the 1W1P. Kevin stated it wasn't the intent to have it exclusive of metro water plans but linking local comprehensive water management plans via the 1W1P program but a matter of stating 103b.801 1W1P and the 103b.235, which is the metro comprehensive watershed management plans. They are locally driven and state supportive. John Jaschke stated it might be simpler in the board order, sub item 2b, to remove the specific reference to that program and link to local watershed plans in general so it would be inclusive to both.

Language in the board order under number 2b in the Order section will be changed to read: linking to local watershed management plans which are locally driven and state supported.

Ted Winter asked for clarity on going from the traditional clean water fund competitive grants to noncompetitive watershed based implementation funding approach.

Kevin stated the nonpoint priority funding plan is a statutorily required plan that talks about how clean water funds in a general sense of project and programs activities would be prioritized for utilization. With the proposed revision to the nonpoint priority funding plan, it's providing a better context to the more comprehensive watershed based planning approach that Minnesota is now undertaking and is utilizing those plans that incorporate the state driven data. This information is put into a prioritized approach at the local level, balancing both state priorities with local priorities and initiatives. The watershed based implementation approach utilizes comprehensive watershed management plans to

allocate funds. The local government uses their implementation plans that are prioritized and targeted to determine how to use those funds based on the development and what their comprehensive plans say. It eliminates and provides a more stable predictable level of funding for each biennium. With watershed based implementation funding a particular set of local government partners in a watershed area, there will be a relative sense based on legislative appropriations every year and an amount of money that will be going to the watershed for utilization partnership. They'll know based on their priorities that are set in their plan where they're going to be working and which projects they are going to be working on without needing to go through the competitive process.

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21-60 Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Revision of the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPFP). **Motion passed on a roll vote.**

**Central Region Committee**

**Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization Watershed Management Plan** – Steve Christopher presented Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization Watershed Management Plan.

*Background:*

The Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization (LRRWMO) is approximately 56 square miles in the southwestern portion of Anoka County, bisected by the Rum River. It is bound by the Mississippi River to the south, Sherburne County to the west, the Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization to the north and the Coon Creek Watershed District to the east. The WMO includes all or part of the Cities of Andover, Anoka, and Ramsey. The LRRWMO is moderately developed with suburban land use.

The LRRWMO was formed in 1985 through a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) signed by the Cities of Andover, Anoka, Coon Rapids, and Ramsey. Since establishment, the JPA has been revised and amended to incorporate statutory and rule changes, the Wetland Conservation Act, and cost sharing on LRRWMO projects. The JPA was also revised in 2014 to revise its legal boundary as the City of Coon Rapids was transferred to the Coon Creek Watershed District.

*Plan Process and Highlights:*

The LRRWMO initiated the process on updating its Watershed Management Plan (Plan) in 2019 soliciting input from its stakeholders, holding kickoff meetings, and convening Citizen Advisory and Technical Advisory Committee meetings. The LRRWMO also completed an analysis of potential 2011 Plan gaps.

Through the process identified above, the LRRWMO Board identified the following as the most relevant issues:

- Adverse impacts from stormwater runoff
- Degraded water quality of lakes, streams, and rivers
- Flood risk and water quantity issues
- Excessive erosion and sedimentation
- Integrity of wetlands, shoreland, and natural areas
- Groundwater contamination
- Efficacy and efficiency of the LRRWMO permit program
- Limited funding and capacity
- Opportunities for increased education and engagement

The Plan states measurable goals associated with each of the issues identified including those related to the LRRWMO's organizational effectiveness/capacity such as funding and engagement.

The Plan's Implementation Program is structured around Administration, Programs and Projects which is consistent with the current Plan, however it adds specificity to the actions the LRRWMO will undertake. The identified projects will largely rely on grant funds for implementation. The LRRWMO partners and the Watershed-based Implementation Funding program should provide strong opportunities for advancement recognizing that need.

Joe Collins thanked Kevin Bigalke, Andrea Date, and Kathryn Kelly for their work.

Jill Crafton stated she appreciated the Metropolitan Council and the MPCA pushing for specificity.

**\*\*  
21-61** Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Kathryn Kelly, to approve the Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll vote.***

Gerald Van Amburg thanked Kevin Bigalke for all his work and Kathryn Kelly and Andrea Date for their time on the board.

Kevin Bigalke thanked Board Members for their work.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- Southern Region Committee is scheduled for Monday, December 20, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. at Murray Soil and Water Conservation District, 2740 22nd Street, Slayton and by Microsoft Teams.
- Audit and Oversight Committee is scheduled for January 20, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. in Conference Room 101 at 520 Lafayette Road, North, St. Paul and by WebEx.
- BWSR Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 26, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. in the Lower Level Conference Rooms at 520 Lafayette Road North, St. Paul and by WebEx.

Chair Van Amburg stated in the day of packet there is a letter from the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board. John Jaschke stated each board member should be receiving a letter directly.

Chair VanAmburg adjourned the meeting at 12:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald Van Amburg  
Chair



# 2021 Performance Review and Assistance Program

Report to the Minnesota Legislature

January 26, 2022

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
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[www.bwsr.state.mn.us](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us)

This report has been prepared for the Minnesota State Legislature by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in partial fulfillment of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B.102, subdivision 3.

Prepared by Brett Arne, PRAP Coordinator (temporary) ([brett.arne@state.mn.us](mailto:brett.arne@state.mn.us))

The estimated cost of preparing this report (as required by Minn. Stat. 3.197) was:

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BWSR is reducing printing and mailing costs by using the Internet to distribute reports and information to wider audiences. This report is available at [www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP.index](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP.index) and available in alternative formats upon request.

## **MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP)**

### **Executive Summary**

Since 2008, BWSR's Performance Review and Assistance Program has assessed the performance of the local units of government constituting Minnesota's local delivery system for conservation of water and related land resources. These local units of government include 88 soil and water conservation districts, 87 counties, 45 watershed districts and 18 watershed management organizations. The program goal is to assist these local government partners to be the best they can be in their management of Minnesota's land and water resources.

#### **PRAP focuses on three aspects of Local Governmental Unit (LGU) performance:**

- 1) Plan Implementation—how well an LGU's accomplishments meet planned objectives.
- 2) Compliance with performance standards—meeting administrative mandates and following best practices.
- 3) Collaboration and communication—the quality of partner and stakeholder relationships.

BWSR's PRAP uses four levels of review to assess performance ranging from statewide oversight in Level I, to a focus on individual LGU performance in Levels II and III, and to remediation in Level IV.

#### **2021 Program Summary**

- Completed 16 Level II performance reviews, falling short of the target of 17 set for 2021. The shortfall in this goal was due to the retirement of the PRAP Coordinator, hiring freeze, temporary assignment of a BWSR staff person to fill the role, and the reformat of the PRAP program to accommodate the ongoing transition toward watershed-based planning.
- Updated Performance Standards and guidance for soil and water conservation districts, counties, watershed districts and watershed management organizations. BWSR staff began using these performance standards for 2021 Level II PRAP Reviews.
- Designed a reformatted PRAP program and review structure for 2022. The new approach incorporates new assessment types and provides a basis for comprehensive watershed management plan reviews consistent with BWSR's 1W1P program.
- Initiated a pilot comprehensive watershed management plan assessment which will conclude in 2022.
- Tracked 238 LGUs' Level I performance.
- Provided PRAP Assistance Grants for 5 local government units.
- Continued review of Wetland Conservation Act program implementation as part of Level II assessments to measure local government unit compliance.
- Stressed the importance of measuring outcomes in all 16 Level II performance reviews conducted in 2021. Discussed ways of demonstrating resource outcomes resulting from plan implementation, and specific expectations for reporting resource outcomes by LGUs.

## 2021 Results of Annual Tracking of 238 LGUs' Plans and Reports (PRAP Level I)

Overall compliance with LGU plan revision and reporting requirements rose to 99% in 2021. All drainage buffer reports were submitted on time, and WMO compliance jumped to 100%, compared to 72% in 2020, 87% in 2019 and 89% in 2018. The most significant change in compliance was identified in SWCD annual audit submittals. This was a new requirement for SWCDs in 2020. Staff efforts will continue in 2022 to identify issues with the audit submittals and improve overall LGU compliance.

- **Long-range Plan Status:** the number of overdue plans is 2 in 2021 (*unchanged from 2 in 2020*).
  - Counties: One local water management plan is overdue (extension requested).
  - Soil and Water Conservation Districts: Full plan compliance in 2021.
  - Watershed Districts: One watershed management plan is overdue.
  - Watershed Management Organizations: No watershed management plans are overdue.
- **LGUs in Full Compliance with Level I Performance Standards: 88%.**
  - Soil & Water Conservation Districts: 82% compliance (72/88).
  - County Water Management: 95% compliance (83/87).
  - Watershed Districts: 84% compliance (38/45).
  - Watershed Management Organizations: 100% compliance (18/18).

## Selected PRAP Program Objectives for 2022

- Track 238 LGUs' Level I performance.
- Continue efforts to improve Level I performance review reporting of all LGUs through LGU cooperation and persistent follow-up by BWSR staff and increase compliance with SWCD audit requirements.
- Set target of 16 Level II performance reviews for 2022.
- Complete pilot watershed assessment in 2022.
- Evaluate and adapt watershed assessment process based on pilot review results.
- Implement new PRAP assessment format.
- Provide leadership in emphasizing the importance of measuring outcomes in PRAP Reviews, ways of demonstrating resource outcomes resulting from plan implementation, and set specific expectations for reporting resource outcomes by LGUs.
- Survey LGUs from 2018 and 2019 Level II PRAP reviews to track LGU implementation of PRAP recommendations.
- Continue monitoring and reviewing compliance with Action Items identified during a Level II review to measure progress toward the goal of 100% compliance within 18 months for required Action Items.
- Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.
- Train in new full-time PRAP coordinator.

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# What is the Performance Review & Assistance Program?

## Supporting Local Delivery of Conservation Services

PRAP is primarily a performance assessment activity conducted by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The subjects of the assessments are the local governmental units (LGUs) that deliver BWSR's water and land conservation programs, and the process is designed to evaluate how well LGUs are implementing their long-range plans. The LGUs reviewed include soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), watershed districts (WDs), watershed management organizations (WMOs), and the water management function of counties—a total of 238 distinct organizations. PRAP, authorized in 2007 (see Appendix A), is coordinated by one BWSR staff member, with assistance from BWSR's 18 Board Conservationists and 3 regional managers, who routinely work with these LGUs.

## Guiding Principles

PRAP is based on and uses the following principles adopted by the BWSR Board.

- Pre-emptive
- Systematic
- Constructive
- Includes consequences
- Provides recognition for high performance
- Transparent
- Retains local ownership and autonomy
- Maintains proportionate expectations
- Preserves the state/local partnership
- Results in effective on-the-ground conservation

The principles set parameters for the program's purpose of helping LGUs to be the best they can be in their operational effectiveness. Of note is the principle of proportionate expectations. This means that LGUs are rated on the accomplishment of their own plan's objectives. Moreover, BWSR rates operational performance using both basic and high-performance standards specific to each type of LGU. (For more detail see <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/prap> )

## Current Multi-level Structure

PRAP has three operational components:

- performance review
- assistance
- reporting

The outgoing **performance review** structure for 2021 is applied at four levels.

**Level I** review is an annual tabulation of required plans and reports for all 238 LGUs. Level I review is conducted entirely by BWSR staff and does not require additional input from LGUs.

**Level II** is a routine, interactive review intended to cover all LGUs at least once every 10 years. A Level II review evaluates progress on plan implementation, operational effectiveness, and partner

relationships. This review includes assessing compliance with Level II performance standards. The maps on pages 3-4 show which LGUs have gone through a Level II review since the program started in 2008.

**Level III** is an in-depth assessment of an LGU's performance problems and issues. A Level III review is initiated by BWSR or the LGU and usually involves targeted assistance to address specific performance needs. Since 2008, BWSR has conducted Level III reviews for three LGUs at their request and in 2017 we completed two more. BWSR regularly monitors all LGUs for challenges that would necessitate a Level III review.

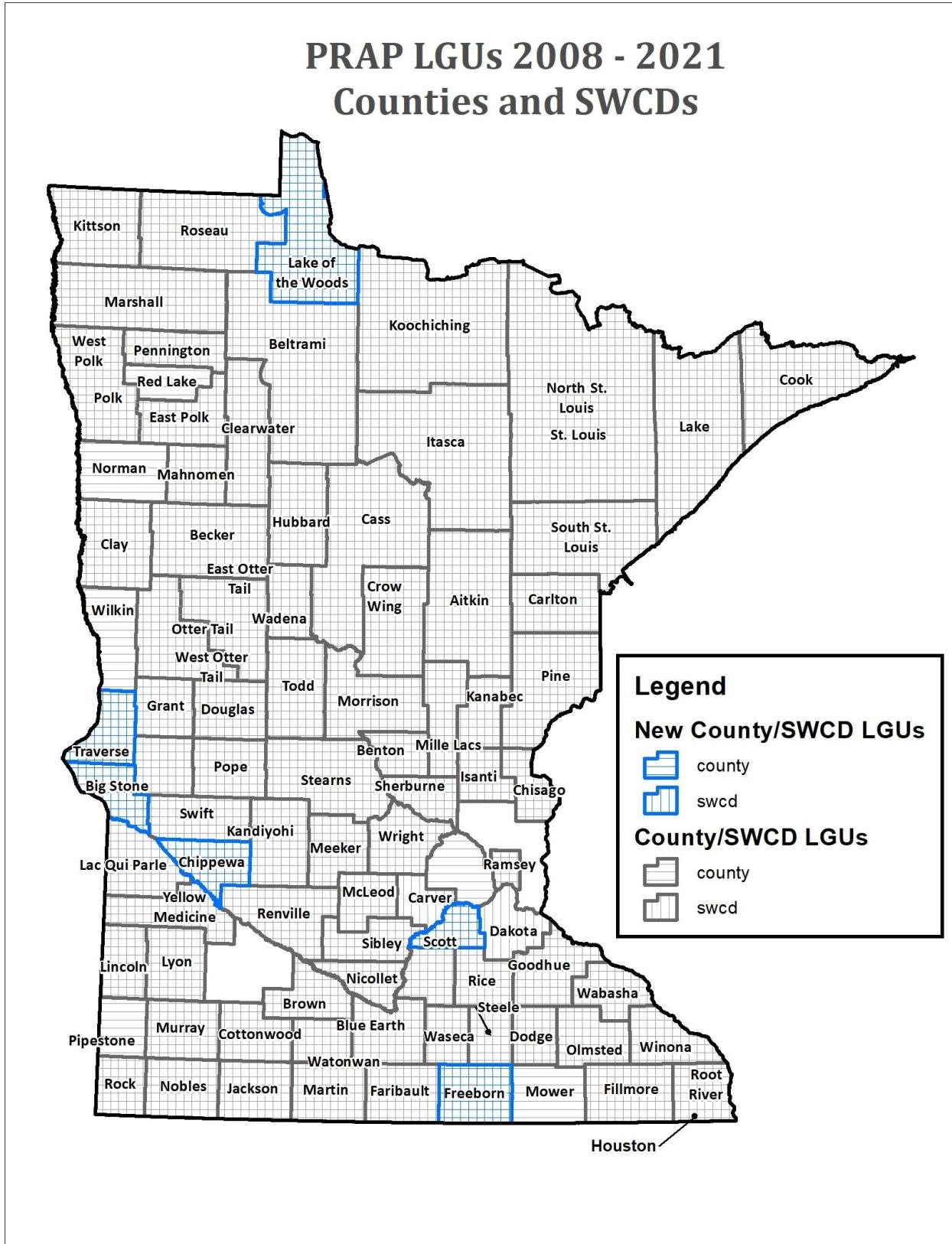
**Level IV** is for LGUs with significant performance deficiencies and includes BWSR Board action to assign penalties as authorized by statute. Levels I-III are designed to avoid the need for Level IV. To date there have not been any Level IV reviews.

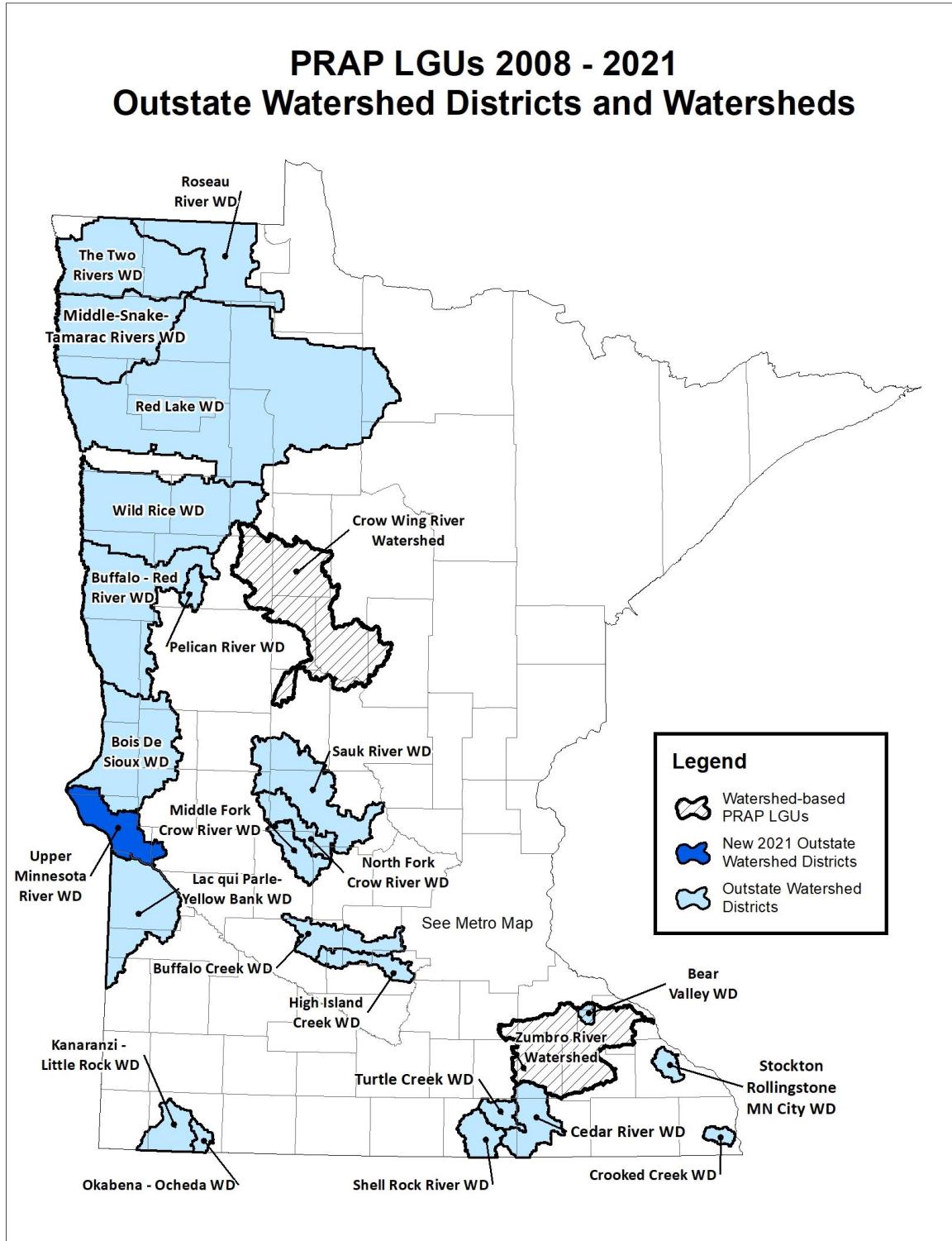
**Assistance** (pages 12-13). In 2012, BWSR began awarding PRAP assistance grants to assist LGUs in obtaining practical and financial assistance for organizational improvements or to address performance issues. The grants are typically used for consultant services for activities identified by the LGU or recommended by BWSR in a performance review. In 2021 BWSR awarded five PRAP assistance grants to LGUs and updated the application and grant award structure to accommodate new partnerships.

**Reporting** (pages 14-15) makes information about LGU performance accessible to the LGUs' stakeholders and constituents. Reporting methods specific to PRAP include links to performance review summaries and this annual report to the Legislature, which can be accessed via the PRAP page on BWSR's website <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/prap-legislative-reports>. In addition, the PRAP Coordinator presents results from Level II performance reviews to LGU boards at the completion of the review, and to additional boards/committees upon request.

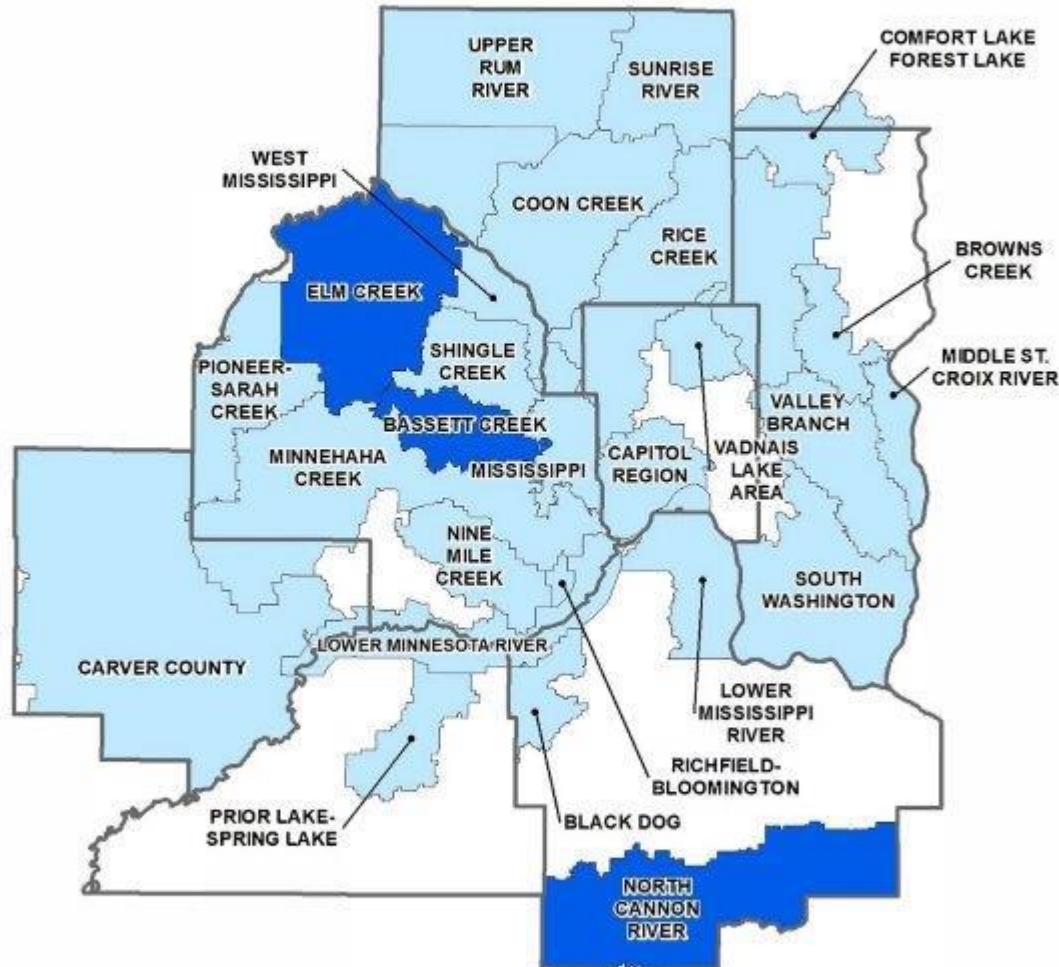
## **Accountability: From Measuring Effort to Tracking Results**

The administration of government programs necessitates a high degree of accountability. PRAP was developed, in part, to deliver on that demand by providing systematic local government performance review and then reporting results. In 2017, BWSR added review of local government unit's implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act program. In 2018, BWSR expanded the scope of PRAP to lay the groundwork for future evaluation of SWCD Technical Service Areas (TSA) and in 2021, initiated an assessment on the implementation of a comprehensive watershed management plan to be piloted and subsequently highlighted in the 2022 report.





## PRAP LGUs 2008-2021 Metro Watershed Districts and Management Organizations



### Legend

- New 2021 Watershed Districts and Management Orgs
- Metro Watershed Districts and Management Orgs

# Report on PRAP Performance

## BWSR's Accountability

BWSR continues to hold itself accountable for the objectives of the PRAP program. In consideration of that commitment, this section lists 2021 program activities with the corresponding objectives from the 2020 PRAP legislative report.

### PERFORMANCE REVIEW OBJECTIVES

What We Proposed	What We Did
Track 238 LGUs' Level I performance.	All LGUs were tracked for basic plan and reporting compliance. Overall, Level I performance dropped in 2021 to 88% compliance. This was in large part due to a change in SWCD audit requirements. Overdue long-range water management plans totaled 2 in 2021.
Continue efforts to improve Level I performance review reporting of all LGUs through cooperation and persistent follow up by BWSR staff.	WD compliance held steady in 2021 at 84%. In 2021 100% of Watershed Management Organizations met reporting or auditing requirements compared to just 72% compliance in 2020.
Set Target of 18 Level II performance reviews in 2021.	In 2021, 16 Level II performance reviews were completed. The shortfall in this goal was due to the retirement of the PRAP Coordinator, hiring freeze, temporary assignment of a BWSR staff person to fill the role, and the reformat of the PRAP program to accommodate the ongoing transition toward watershed-based planning.
Complete up to 2 Level III performance reviews, if needed, in 2021.	Discussed need for Level III performance reviews with BWSR Regional Managers and Organizational Effectiveness Manager and concluded that no Level III or IV reviews were needed in 2021.
Survey LGUs from 2018 Level II PRAP reviews to track LGU implementation of PRAP recommendations.	This activity was not conducted in 2021 to allow time for the PRAP coordinator to focus on building the process for comprehensive watershed-based plan reviews, and to redesign overall PRAP protocols. This work will resume in 2022.
Continue monitoring and reviewing compliance with Action Items identified during a Level II review. This will allow us to determine if we are meeting the goal of 100% compliance within 18 months established for required Action Items.	All Action Items identified during 2021 PRAP Level II reviews were assigned an 18-month timeline for completion.

Continue evaluating and updating protocol for PRAP Level I and Level II reviews for performance-based funding for implementation of watershed based One Watershed-One Plans.	The PRAP protocols were completely redesigned in 2021 for use starting in 2022. The redesign included a new category for comprehensive watershed management plan assessments, separation of organizational assessments to acknowledge participation in watershed planning and combining level III and IV assessments into one category.
Work with BWSR Water Planning Team to develop protocol for tracking, assessment, evaluation and reporting for One Watershed, One Plans.	PRAP Coordinator worked with the BWSR Assessment team and other internal teams to develop a pilot process for assessing watershed implementation for plans developed through the One Watershed One Plan program. A pilot assessment utilizing the new criteria will be conducted in 2022.

## ASSISTANCE OBJECTIVES

What We Proposed	What We Did
Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.	The PRAP assistance grant program was updated in 2021 to acknowledge the need for partnerships, newly formed or existing to access adequate assistance funding for their development. Beginning in 2021 partnerships are eligible for up to \$20,000 in assistance funds, while individual LGUs remain eligible for up to \$10,000. The first partnership to utilize the new structure was the Red River Valley Conservation Service Area – to define roles and responsibilities and conduct an in-depth workload analysis in response to new watershed-based implementation funding and associated required outcomes. Other LGUs funded in 2021 include Cook SWCD, Kandiyohi SWCD, North St. Louis SWCD, and Vadnais Lake Area WMO. Total grant funds awarded in 2021: \$40,730

## REPORTING OBJECTIVES

What We Proposed	What We Did
Provide leadership in communicating the importance of measuring outcomes in Level II performance reviews, ways of demonstrating resource outcomes resulting from plan implementation, and set specific expectations for reporting resource outcomes by LGUs.	All 16 Level II performance reviews included a review of the LGUs water plans for targets or objectives for resource outcomes and if outcomes are being reported. There were only a few plans in 2021 that had resource outcomes listed in their plans, and many of them had no reference at all to resource issues or measurable outcomes. This was our top recommendation for our LGUs in 2021, as outcomes will continue to be a requirement of the comprehensive watershed management plans developed via the One Watershed One Plan program.

## 2021 LGU Performance Review Results

### Level I Results

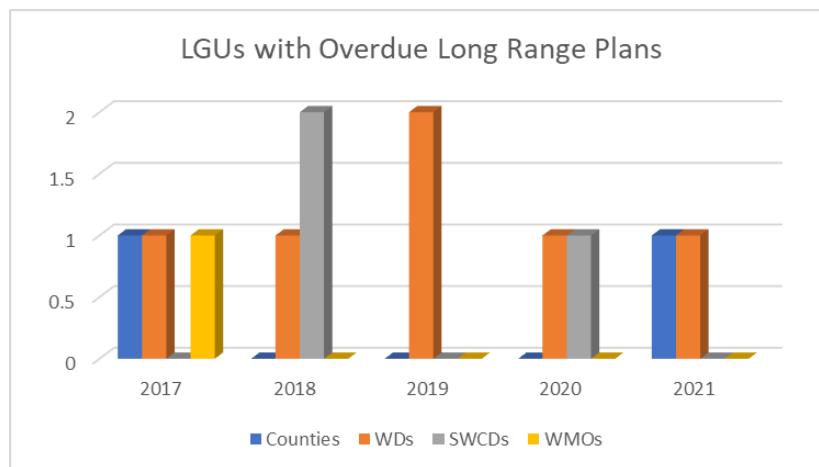
The Level I Performance Review monitors and tabulates all 238 LGUs' long-range plan updates and their annual reporting of activities, ditch buffer reports, grants, and finances. BWSR tracks these performance measures each year to provide oversight of legal and policy mandates, but also to screen LGUs for indications of potential problems. Chronic lateness in financial or grant reporting, for example, may be a symptom of operational issues that require BWSR assistance.

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
<b>238 LGUs</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>90%</b>
SWCDs (88)	82%	95%	96%	96%	93%
Counties (87)	95%	95%	100%	98%	94%
WMOs (18)	100%	72%	94%	89%	89%
WDs (45)	84%	84%	87%	87%	80%

Overall, LGU compliance with Level I standards dropped to 88% in 2021. BWSR began tightening Level I compliance tracking in 2013, and as can be seen in the table above, improvement in overall compliance occurred from 2016 through 2019. The drop in compliance in 2021 is in large part due to a change of SWCD audit requirements starting in year 2020.

### Long-range plans

BWSR's legislative mandate for PRAP includes a specific emphasis on evaluating progress in LGU plan implementation. Therefore, helping LGUs keep their plans current is basic to that review. Level I PRAP tracks whether LGUs are meeting their plan revision due dates. For the purposes of Level I reviews, LGUs that have been granted an extension for their plan revision are not considered to have an overdue plan.



### Many Local Water

Management plans were operating under extensions granted by the BWSR as LGUs continue transitioning to development of One Watershed One Plans. The number of overdue plans is 2 in 2021, unchanged from 2020. One Watershed District water management plan is overdue at the end of 2020 and one county local water plan had expired as of December 31, 2021. All other counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and watershed management organizations are operating under an approved or extended plan. Local government units without an approved water management plan are not eligible for Clean Water grant funds awarded by BWSR.

Appendix D (page 26) lists the LGUs whose plans are overdue for a plan revision.

### **Annual activity and grant report**

LGU annual reports are an important means of providing citizens and BWSR with information about LGU activities and grants expenditures. The Level I review tracks both missing and late reports.

In 2021, there was complete on-time submittal of drainage system buffer strip reports by both County and WD drainage authorities. Of the 96 LGUs that must submit annual buffer reports, 100% met the February 1, 2021 deadline, maintaining the 100% compliance achieved from 2015 through 2020. This continued compliance is attributed to persistent efforts by BWSR staff to contact LGUs with missing reports before the due date.

SWCDs and counties maintained a high level of compliance for on-time submittal of grant status reports via BWSR's on-line eLINK system, with 99% of LGUs meeting the deadline in 2021 compared with 98% in 2020, 98% in 2019, 97% in 2018, and 97% in 2017.

Watershed district compliance with the annual activity report requirement was slightly better in 2021 at 91% compliance compared with 89% in 2020, and 87% in 2019. Continued improvement in reporting will continue to be an objective of BWSR staff in 2022, with a goal of reaching 100% compliance.

Appendix E (page 27) contains more details about reporting.

### **Annual financial reports and audits**

Starting in 2020, all SWCDs were required to prepare annual audits of their financial record and submit audited financial statements to BWSR. In 2020, BWSR staff sent reminders to SWCD's of the new requirement. In 2021, additional reminders were not sent out because the rule had been in effect for more than a year. Unfortunately, compliance with this requirement dropped to 82% in 2021. In 2022, BWSR staff will diligently work with SWCDs to ensure they are meeting requirements of the Office of the State Auditor as well as relevant statutes and agency policies in 2022.

Watershed Districts and WMOs are also required to prepare annual audits. In 2021, 93% of WDs met the audit performance standard compared to 93% in 2020, 89% in 2019 and 91% in 2018. In 2021, 100% of WMOs met this standard, compared to just 72% in 2020. See Appendix F (page 28) for financial report and audit details.

BWSR does not track county audits because counties are accountable to the Office of the State Auditor.

## **Level II Performance Review Results**

The Level II performance review process is designed to give both BWSR and the individual LGUs an overall assessment of the LGU's effectiveness in both the delivery and the effects of their efforts in conservation. The review looks at the LGU's implementation of their plan's action items and their compliance with BWSR's operational performance standards. Level II reviews also include surveys of board members, staff, and partners to assess the LGU's effectiveness and existing relationships with other organizations.

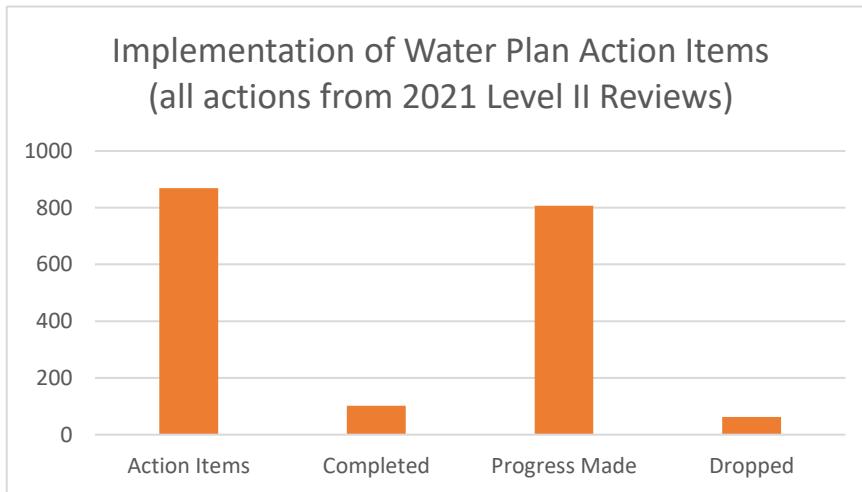
BWSR conducted standard Level II reviews of 16 LGUs in 2021: **Bassett Creek WMC, Big Stone SWCD, Big Stone County, Chippewa SWCD, Chippewa County, Elm Creek WMC, Freeborn SWCD, Freeborn County, Lake of the Woods SWCD, Lake of the Woods County, North Cannon River WMO, Scott SWCD, Scott County, Traverse SWCD, Traverse County, Upper Minnesota River WD.** (Yellow

Medicine River watershed assessment was initiated in 2021 but will be completed and highlighted in the 2022 report).

In the instances where the County and the SWCD share the same local water plan the reviews were conducted jointly. The remaining LGUs received individual reviews. Appendix G (pages 29-38) contains summaries of the performance review reports. Full reports are available from BWSR by request.

### Implementation of Water Plan Action Items

Each year BWSR regional and program staff meet to discuss which LGUs should be selected for PRAP reviews. Some of the factors considered include the expiration date of water plans, whether the LGU has had a review in the past and other factors such as recent LGU staff turnover.



For the 16 local government water plans reviewed in 2021, those plans identified a combined 869 action items. Of those action items, 807 had at least some progress made, with 102 actions being completed. 62 action items were not started or dropped. Ninety three percent of the total actions were implemented to some extent (either completed or ongoing). That is a high rate of implementation considering that most of the 10-year plans reviewed still had several years remaining to initiate additional projects.

### Common Recommendations in 2021

While none of the findings or conclusions from these reviews apply to all LGUs, there were general observations and commonly used recommendations to improve LGU performance worth noting.

**1. Resource Outcomes** – Most county water plans developed prior to 2015 did not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes. These County Local Water Management Plans were developed prior to the statewide focus on resource outcomes, so most plans did not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes. All the newer One Watershed One Plans and LGU water plans developed in past few years do include targets and objectives for resource outcomes.

**2. Citizen Participation** – Several local governments reviewed in 2021 were advised to improve participation in their Water Plan Advisory Task Force to ensure that agency and citizen representation is adequate and schedule enough meetings to efficiently develop comprehensive local water management plans through the 1W1P Program.

This recommendation recognizes the importance of keeping the water plan advisory task force engaged in both the watershed planning and implementation phases. The LGUs were encouraged to ensure that all local, state, and federal agencies and citizens involved in water management can

participate in these advisory groups. Some counties call task force meetings quarterly, however, at a minimum, the recommendation was made to have an annual meeting that would allow staff to communicate accomplishments in implementation of the plan for the past year and help prioritize projects for the coming year.

**3. Add Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable (PTM) specifics into water plan.** Each of the Level II PRAP reviews conducted in 2021 resulted in a recommendation that organizations include, or expand on existing use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable as criteria in their next water planning efforts. The PTM criteria are the new standard for One Watershed-One Plan efforts currently underway and beyond those projects, the degree to which these criteria are currently being used varies. Very few of the previous generation water plans acknowledged PTM when developing goals or objectives.

**4. Restructure plan organization.** Similar to the PTM issue, several plans were recommended to review current water quality and quantity issues and utilize a more straightforward plan structure in future plans to directly address those issues. Many plans included numerous action items grouped under broad categories, however they did not have a clear tie back to specific resources of concern but were merely a catalog of practices addressed to one of the general categories. Future plans, especially those created via the 1W1P program will need to reach a higher bar in addressing specific issues and associated measurable outcomes.

**5. Encourage strong participation and leadership in development and implementation of One Watershed One Plans (1W1P).** This recommendation focused on leadership in implementation of 1W1Ps where they have already been developed. For the rest of the SWCDs and counties that were reviewed in 2021, recommendations focused on strong participation and leadership in development of the 1W1P within their counties.

**6. Recommendation to conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD (*or county department*) to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are enough to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.** This recommendation focused on the increasing expectations and SWCD responsibilities in recent years. To meet new conservation challenges and to manage the workload associated with an increase in watershed-dedicated funding the SWCDs were encouraged to consider conducting a strategic assessment of the to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are enough to meet the conservation needs in their respective jurisdictions. This recommendation recognizes that even the most competent organizations will need to determine if higher expectations and dollar amounts will cause workloads to exceed staffing resources over an extended period and offers assistance through the PRAP assistance grants to help identify those potential needs.

**7. Evaluate, maintain, or improve implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.** 2021 was the fifth year that Level II reviews included an evaluation of the LGU's performance in implementing the Wetland Conservation Act. In general, most local government units were doing a good job implementing the program. However, the Level II reviews did identify several weaknesses in LGU implementation of the program. Examples of Wetland Conservation Act recommendations provided to LGUs in 2021, included update flawed LGU resolutions adopting the program, to clarify wetland appeal processes and to improve coordination with DNR Enforcement.

### Action Items

During a Level II or Level III review, the LGU's compliance with performance standards is reviewed. Action items are based on the LGU's lack of compliance with BWSR's basic practice performance standards. LGU's are given an Action Item in the PRAP Report to address lack of compliance with one or more basic standards.

All Action Items identified during 2021 PRAP Level II reviews were assigned a 6-month timeline for completion. BWSR will follow up with LGUs to verify completion within 18 months. The PRAP follow-up survey demonstrated that all the action items included for 2017 LGUs were implemented within 18 months (*sixteen total action items*).

### Level III Implementation Results

No Level III reviews were completed in 2021 as there was no expressed desire by BCs or regional supervisors to conduct this level of review on any LGUs.

### Level IV Results

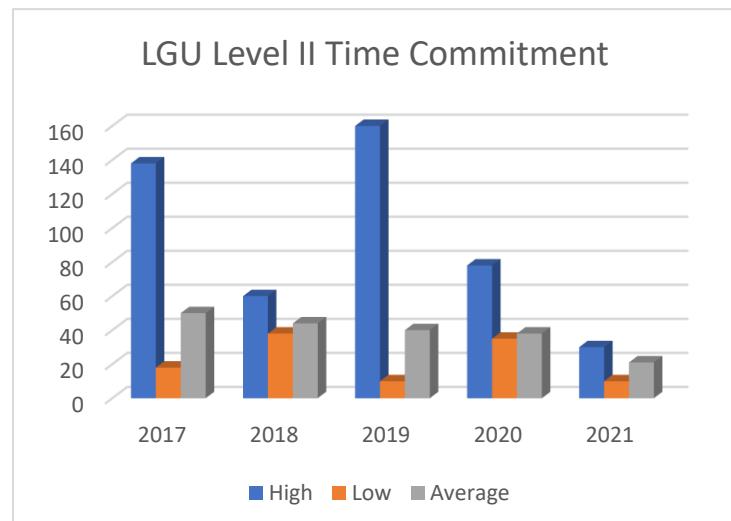
No Level IV actions were conducted in 2021.

### Performance Review Time

BWSR tracks the time spent by LGUs in a performance review as a substitute for accounting their financial costs. Factors affecting an LGU's time include the number of action items in their long-range plan, the number of staff who help with data collection, and the ready availability of performance data.

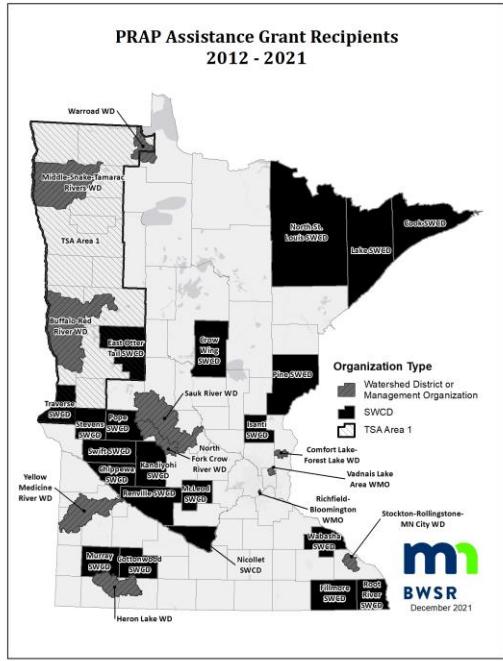
In 2021 LGU staff spent an average of about 20 hours on their Level II review, lower than the previous years. Not including overall performance review administration and process development, BWSR staff spent an average of 82 hours for each Level II performance review, about the same as in 2019.

While BWSR seeks to maintain a balance between getting good information and minimizing the LGU time required to provide it. Our goal is to gather as much pertinent information as needed to assess the performance of the LGU and offer realistic and useful recommendations for improving performance.



## Assistance Services to Local Governments

### PRAP Assistance Program



In 2012, BWSR developed the PRAP Assistance program to provide financial assistance to LGUs for improving operating performance and executing planned goals and objectives. Since the program started, more than \$190,000 has been awarded to LGUs around Minnesota. Priority is given to applicants submitting projects related to eligible PRAP Level II and Level III recommendations, but other organizations are also eligible. The grants are made on a cost-share, reimbursement basis with a cap of \$10,000 per single LGU or \$20,000 for partnerships that agree to apply as a group (new for 2021). The application process requires basic information about the need, the proposed use of funds, a timeline, and the source of match dollars. BWSR staff assess the LGU need as part of the application review process, and grants are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis if funds are available.

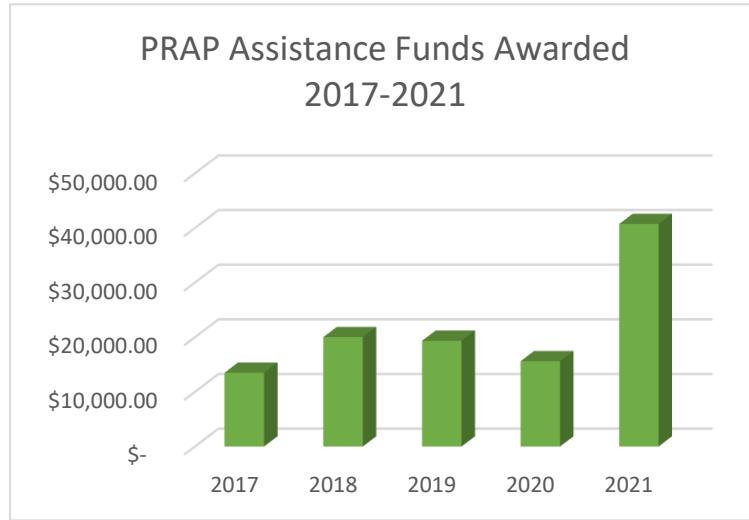
In 2015, the BWSR Board delegated authority to the Executive Director to award grants or contracts for the purpose of assisting LGUs in making organizational improvements (see resolution in Appendix B). The Executive Director regularly informs Board members of assistance grant status.

In calendar year 2021, PRAP Assistance Grants were provided for Cook SWCD, Kandiyohi SWCD, North St. Louis SWCD, Area 1 TSA, and Vadnais Lake Area WMO. Board Conservationists were encouraged to work with LGUs who could benefit from PRAP Assistance grants. LGUs undergoing a Level II PRAP review were also notified of PRAP assistance funding when recommendations were made for activities that would be eligible for PRAP funds.

The awarded funds will be used for the development of operating policies, organizational assessments, strategic planning, and goal setting.

In 2021 BWSR changed some of the application requirements for PRAP assistance funds and provided more clarity about what types of activities and expenses are eligible for the grants. The board order was also updated to reflect two new changes to the grant program; an increase to \$20,000 for

**PRAP Assistance Funds Awarded  
2017-2021**



partnerships that apply for assistance funding (Area 1 TSA was the first). And a \$50,000 annual cap on PRAP assistance awards was also removed to accommodate the potential for more partnership applications and because the funding sources utilized for PRAP assistance grants can change periodically and have unpredictable expiration dates. The application information for PRAP assistance grants can be found in Appendix C (pg. 24-25).

Potential applicants can find information on the BWSR website  
<http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html>.

# Reporting

## Purpose of Reporting

BWSR reports on LGU performance to:

- meet the legislative mandate to provide the public with information about the performance of their local water management entities, and
- provide information that will encourage LGUs to learn from one another about methods and programs that produce the most effective results.

## Report Types

PRAP either relies on or generates different types of reports to achieve the purposes listed above.

### LGU-Generated

These include information posted on the LGU websites and the required or voluntary reports submitted to BWSR, other units of government, and the public about fiscal status, plans, programs, and activities. These all serve as a means of communicating what each LGU is achieving and allow stakeholders to make their own evaluations of LGU performance. PRAP tracks submittal of required, self-generated LGU reports in the Level I review process.

### BWSR Website

The BWSR website contains a webpage devoted to PRAP information. The site provides background information on the program including:

- Guiding principles for the program
- a description of the 4 Levels of PRAP
- Application information for PRAP grants
- Background on the PRAP Legislative Report
- Description of Level I Reporting

For more information see: <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/prap>

The BWSR website also includes regularly updated maps of long-range plan status by LGU type. Visitors to the PRAP webpage can find general program information, tables of current performance standards by LGU type, summaries of Level II performance review reports, and copies of annual legislative reports.

### Performance Review Reports

BWSR prepares a report containing findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each LGU subject of a Level II or Level III performance review. The LGU lead staff and board, or water plan task force members receive a draft of the report to which they are invited to submit comments. BWSR then sends a final report to the LGU. A one-page summary from each review is included in the annual legislative report (see Appendices G and H).

### Annual Legislative Report

As required by statute, BWSR prepares an annual report for the legislature containing the results of the previous year's program activities and a general assessment of the performance of the LGUs providing land and water conservation services and programs. These reports are reviewed and approved by the BWSR board and then sent to the chairpersons of the senate and house environmental policy committees, to statewide LGU associations and to the office of the legislative auditor.

### Recognition for Exemplary Performance

The PRAP Guiding Principles include a provision for recognizing exemplary LGU performance. Each year this legislative report highlights those LGUs that are recognized by their peers or other organizations for

their contribution to Minnesota's resource management and protection, as well as service to their local clientele. (See Appendix I, page 47).

For those LGUs that undergo a Level II performance review, their report lists "commendations" for compliance with each high-performance standard, demonstrating practices over and above basic requirements. All 2021 standard Level II LGUs received such commendations.

# Program Conclusions and Future Direction

## Conclusions from 2021 Reviews

**All Action Items identified during 2021 PRAP Level II reviews were assigned a 6-month timeline for completion.** BWSR was not able to follow up with the LGUs who participated in 2019 Level II reviews to verify completion of action items due to the vacancy in the PRAP Coordinator Position. The last PRAP local government unit follow-up survey conducted in 2019 demonstrated that all the action items included for 2017 LGUs were implemented within 18 months (16 total action items assigned in 2017).

**A common recommendation for several local government units in 2021 was to conduct a strategic assessment** of the LGU to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands and need for conservation services in the district. This recommendation was used where there appeared to be underperformance of the LGU due to shortage of staff or lack of focus on targeted land treatment and resource improvement.

### Evaluate, maintain, or improve implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.

2021 was the fifth year that Level II reviews included an evaluation of the LGU's performance in implementing the Wetland Conservation Act. In general, most local government units were doing a good job implementing the program. However, the Level II reviews did identify several weaknesses in LGU implementation of the program. Examples of Wetland Conservation Act recommendations provided to LGUs in 2021, included:

- To pass a new clarifying resolution for delegation of responsibilities for the Wetland Conservation Act,
- To develop policies for documenting "informal" exemption determinations that include noticing technical evaluation panel members.
- To review and ensure that County policies and ordinances are consistent with WCA by updating ordinances and office procedures.

**Reminders and incentives contribute significantly to on-time reporting by LGUs.** Overall reporting performance and plan status increased in 2021. Buffer strip reporting was maintained at full LGU compliance after reaching 100% compliance in 2015 through 2020 which can be attributed to close attention from BWSR staff. In the last year WMO overall compliance jumped up to 100% in 2021 compared to just 72% in 2020. WD overall compliance maintained the same 84% in 2021.

## Future Direction

### New Structure – for implementation starting in 2022

In 2021, BWSR staff redesigned the existing structure of the PRAP program to better accommodate the ongoing statewide transition from county-based water planning to watershed-based planning and partnerships. The new structure will be implemented starting in 2022 and is summarized below:

The **Basic Standards** summary takes the place of the current "Level I" annual tabulation of required plans and reports for 238 LGUs. This summary will continue to be collected solely by BWSR staff and will be updated annually for this report.

**Watershed Assessment** is the newest addition to PRAP and was developed to accommodate the transition of local county water planning to watershed-based comprehensive plans via LGU partnerships. This assessment type will be used when groups have implemented their approved watershed-based plans for 5-7 years and is designed to closely follow our current “Level II” process, but on a much larger, more comprehensive scale.

**Organizational Assessments** are now subdivided into two distinct categories: Routine Assessments, and Special Assessments.

- **Routine Assessments** take the place of our current “Level II” assessments. Many of our individual LGUs will be implementing a comprehensive watershed management plan, and in those cases plan progress will be removed from the assessment. These assessments will continue as previously designed, on a 10-year rotation for all 238 LGUs.
- **Special Assessments** are conducted on an as needed basis and include an in-depth assessment of an LGU’s performance in response to identified issues. Special Assessments are used to provide targeted assistance to an LGU to address specific performance needs. In situations where an LGU has significant performance deficiencies, penalties as authorized by statute may be assigned. A Special Assessment can be initiated by BWSR, or the LGU. Special Assessments will replace current “Level III” and “Level IV” reviews for 2022.

## PRAP Program Objectives for 2022

- Track 238 LGUs’ Level I performance.
- Continue efforts to improve Level I performance review reporting of all LGUs through LGU cooperation and persistent follow-up by BWSR staff and increase compliance with SWCD audit requirements.
- Set target of 16 Level II performance reviews for 2022.
- Conduct pilot watershed-based assessment, evaluate, and adapt process based on pilot review results.
- Implement new PRAP Program assessment format (Basic, Watershed-based, Organizational)
- Provide leadership in emphasizing the importance of measuring outcomes in PRAP Reviews, ways of demonstrating resource outcomes resulting from plan implementation, and set specific expectations for reporting resource outcomes by LGUs.
- Survey LGUs from 2018 and 2019 Level II PRAP reviews to track LGU implementation of PRAP recommendations.
- Continue monitoring and reviewing compliance with Action Items identified during a Level II review to measure progress toward the goal of 100% compliance within 18 months for required Action Items.
- Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.
- Train in new full-time PRAP coordinator.

## Appendix A

### PRAP Authorizing Legislation

#### 103B.102, Minnesota Statutes 2013

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#### **103B.102 LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT.**

##### **Subdivision 1. Findings; improving accountability and oversight.**

The legislature finds that a process is needed to monitor the performance and activities of local water management entities. The process should be preemptive so that problems can be identified early and systematically. Underperforming entities should be provided assistance and direction for improving performance in a reasonable time frame.

##### **Subd. 2. Definitions.**

For the purposes of this section, "local water management entities" means watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts, metropolitan water management organizations, and counties operating separately or jointly in their role as local water management authorities under chapter 103B, 103C, 103D, or 103G and chapter 114D.

##### **Subd. 3. Evaluation and report.**

The Board of Water and Soil Resources shall evaluate performance, financial, and activity information for each local water management entity. The board shall evaluate the entities' progress in accomplishing their adopted plans on a regular basis as determined by the board based on budget and operations of the local water management entity, but not less than once every ten years. The board shall maintain a summary of local water management entity performance on the board's Web site. Beginning February 1, 2008, and annually thereafter, the board shall provide an analysis of local water management entity performance to the chairs of the house of representatives and senate committees having jurisdiction over environment and natural resources policy.

##### **Subd. 4. Corrective actions.**

- (a) In addition to other authorities, the Board of Water and Soil Resources may, based on its evaluation in subdivision 3, reduce, withhold, or redirect grants and other funding if the local water management entity has not corrected deficiencies as prescribed in a notice from the board within one year from the date of the notice.
- (b) The board may defer a decision on a termination petition filed under section 103B.221, 103C.225, or 103D.271 for up to one year to conduct or update the evaluation under subdivision 3 or to communicate the results of the evaluation to petitioners or to local and state government agencies.

##### **History:**

2007 c 57 art 1 s 104; 2013 c 143 art 4 s 1

## Appendix B

### Board Authorization of Delegation for PRAP Assistance Grants



BOARD DECISION # 21-22

#### BOARD ORDER

##### **Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) Assistance Service Grants**

###### **PURPOSE**

Authorize PRAP Assistance services and delegate approval of payment to the Executive Director.

###### **FINDINGS OF FACT / RECITALS**

1. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (Board) regularly monitors and evaluates the performance and activities of local water management entities and provides assistance in improving performance under the authorities and requirements of Minnesota Statutes §103B.102.
2. In December 2018, the Board through Resolution #18-71 “approved the allocation of designated or available funds to eligible local water management entities and reconfirmed the delegation of authority to the Executive Director to approve individual PRAP Assistance grants up to \$10,000 requires that program awards are reported to the Board at least once per year.”
3. The Board continues to receive requests for PRAP assistance services to address operational or service delivery needs identified through a PRAP assessment or specialized assistance request noting an increase in requests from multiple entities or partnerships.
4. The Board has authorities under Minnesota Statutes §103B.3369 and 103B.101 to award grants and contracts to accomplish water and related land resources management.
5. The Grants Program and Policy Committee, at their August 11, 2021 meeting, reviewed this request and recommended the Board approve this order.

###### **ORDER**

The Board hereby:

1. Approves the allocation of designated or available funds, consistent with the appropriation of the designated or available funds, to eligible local government water management entities for fulfilling the provisions of Minnesota Statutes §103B.102.
2. Confirms the delegation of authority to the Executive Director to approve PRAP Assistance grants or contracts up to \$10,000 per contract for single entity requests and \$20,000 for projects that involve multiple entities or partnerships and requires that program awards are reported to the Board at least once per year.
3. Establishes that all PRAP Assistance awards be cost shared by the grantee at a percentage determined by the Executive Director.
4. Authorizes staff to enter into grant agreements or contracts for these purposes.
5. Establishes that this order replaces previous Board resolution #18-71.

Dated at Austin, Minnesota, this August 26, 2021.

**MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES**

Gerald Van Amburg, Chair  
Board of Water and Soil Resources

Date: August 26, 2021

## **Appendix C**

### **PRAP Assistance Grant Application Information**

The PRAP Assistance program provides financial assistance to LGUs to improve operating performance and execution of planned goals and objectives. Funding priority is given to activities recommended as part of a Level II, III or IV PRAP review.

**Examples of eligible activities:** facilitation, mediation or consulting services related to organizational improvement such as reorganizations/mergers, strategic planning, organizational development, assessments for shared services, benchmarking, non-routine audits, and staff and board capacity assessments.

**Activities that are not eligible for grant funds, or to be used as LGU match:** Technology upgrades (computer equipment, software, smartphones, etc.), infrastructure improvements (vehicles, office remodel, furniture), staff performance incentives (bonuses, rewards program), basic staff training (BWSR Academy fees and expenses; Wetland Delineator Certification, subjects offered at BWSR Academy, training for promotion, basic computer training), water planning, conservation practices design or installation, publication or publicity materials, food & refreshments, (other than costs associated with meetings and conferences where the primary purpose is an approved, eligible grant activity) lodging, staff salaries, and regular board member per diems.

**Note:** Board member per diems and associated expenses outside of regular meetings, and associated with an approved, eligible activity are eligible for grant funds or can be used as match.

**Grant Limit:** \$10,000 for individual LGUs, \$20,000 for LGU partnerships. In most cases a 50 percent cash match will be required.

**Who May Apply:** County water management/environmental services; SWCDs; watershed districts; watershed management organizations. In some cases, LGU joint powers associations or boards, or other types of LGU water management partnerships will be eligible for grants. Priority is given to applicants submitting projects related to eligible PRAP Level II, III, or IV recommendations.

**Terms:** BWSR pays its share of the LGU's eligible expenditures as reimbursement for expenses incurred by the LGU after the execution date of the grant agreement. Reporting and reimbursement requirements are also described in the agreement. Grant agreements are processed through BWSR's eLINK system.

**How to Apply:** Submit an email request to the PRAP Coordinator with the following information:

- 1) Description, purpose, and scope of work for the proposed activity (If the activity or services will be contracted, do you have a contracting procedure in by-laws or operating guidelines?)
- 2) Expected products or deliverables
- 3) Desired outcome or result

- 4) Does this activity address any recommendations associated with a recent Level II, III or IV PRAP Assessment? If so, describe how.
- 5) How has your Board indicated support for this project? How will they be kept involved?
- 6) Duration of activity: proposed start and end dates
- 7) Itemized Project Budget including
  - a. Amount of request
  - b. Source of funds to be used for match (cannot be state money nor in-kind)
  - c. Total project budget
- 8) Have you submitted other funding requests for this activity? If yes, to whom and when?
- 9) Provide name and contact information for the person who will be managing the grant agreement and providing evidence of expenditures for reimbursement.

## **Appendix D**

### **Level I: 2021 LGU Long-Range Plan Status as of December 31, 2021**

#### **Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

(Districts have a choice of option A or B)

**A. Current Resolution Adopting County Local Water Management Plan**

All resolutions are current.

**B. Current District Comprehensive Plan**

All comprehensive plans are current.

#### **Counties**

**Local Water Management Plan Revision Overdue: Plan Revision in Progress**

- Mahnomen County extension in progress.

#### **Watershed Districts**

**10-Year Watershed Management Plan Revision Overdue: Plan Revision in Progress**

- High Island Creek Watershed District is overdue

#### **Watershed Management Organizations**

- All plans are current

## Appendix E

### Level I: Status of Annual Reports for 2020

as of December 31, 2021

#### **Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

##### **eLINK Status Reports of Grant Expenditures**

- All reports submitted on time

#### **Counties**

##### **Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Reports**

All reports submitted on time.

##### **eLINK Status Reports of Grant Expenditures**

###### **Late Reports:**

- Dakota County

#### **Watershed Districts**

##### **Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Reports**

All reports submitted on time.

##### **Annual Activity Reports Not Submitted (or submitted late):**

- Ramsey Washington WD
- Lower Minnesota WD
- Joe River WD
- Warroad River WD

#### **Metro Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations**

##### **Annual Activity Reports not submitted (or submitted late):**

All reports submitted on time.

## Appendix F

### Level I: Status of Financial Reports and Audits for 2020 as of December 31, 2021

#### Soil and Water Conservation Districts

##### **Annual Audits**

##### **Annual Audits Not Submitted (or submitted late)**

- Aitkin SWCD
- Crow Wing SWCD
- Goodhue SWCD
- Martin SWCD
- Murray SWCD
- Nobles SWCD
- West Otter Tail SWCD
- Pipestone SWCD
- West Polk SWCD
- Rock SWCD
- Root River SWCD
- North St. Louis SWCD
- South St. Louis SWCD
- Wabasha SWCD
- Washington CD
- Anoka CD

#### Watershed Districts

##### **Annual Audits Not Completed (or submitted late):**

- Stockton Rollingstone – Minnesota City WD
- Crooked Creek WD
- Joe River WD

#### Metro Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations

##### **Annual Audits Not Submitted (or submitted late):**

All audits submitted on time

## Appendix G

### Standard Level II Performance Review Final Report Summaries

#### Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission



##### **Key Findings and Conclusions**

The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, rules, the Wetlands Conservation Act, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and administrative consultants are viewed very favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing their watershed management plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the metro area have created the necessity to forge stronger working relationships among partners to improve local water management within the watershed, and the switch to comprehensive watershed management plans throughout the state means new opportunities for increased prioritization of projects and available funding.

The Bassett Creek WMC is commended for meeting all of the basic performance standards including having data practices policies, updated capital improvement program, and completing required annual reports. They are also commended for their effective administration of the Wetlands Conservation Act, and also for meeting several high performance standards, a testament to the quality of work they are recognized for by their partners.

##### **Resource Outcomes**

The current Bassett Creek watershed management plan did not have clearly stated measurable resource outcomes which is included as one of BWSRs recommendations for future planning efforts.

##### **Commendations:**

**The Bassett Creek WMC is commended for meeting all of their applicable basic standards as well as 8 of 11 high performance standards. Bassett Creek WMC is also commended for their excellent plan implementation progress with progress noted for 115 of 122 action items.**

##### **Recommendations:**

- Recommendation 1 – Prioritize developing an education and outreach strategy for BCWMC constituents
- Recommendation 2 – Conduct a review of the BCWMC capital improvement program (CIP)
- Recommendation 3 – Develop clear, measurable goals and actions for future plan implementation
- Recommendation 4 – Prioritize all training opportunities for staff implementing WCA
- Recommendation 5 – Consider a WCA appeals fee and clarify the appeals process

##### **Action Items:**

Bassett Creek WMC had no action items to address.

## Big Stone County and Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Big Stone County should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, the Wetlands Conservation Act, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff of both local governments are viewed favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing their local water management plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the region have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Big Stone County, specifically with the Upper Minnesota River

WD as was pointed out numerous times in the surveys. The opportunity for participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provides collaboration opportunities for Big Stone SWCD, County, and partners to reorient water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the local waterbodies. Big Stone SWCD and County are both commended for meeting all of their basic performance standards including having data practices policies, staff training plans, and completing required annual reports. They are commended for their effective administration of the Wetlands Conservation Act, and also for meeting several high performance standards, a testament to the quality of work they are recognized for by their partners.

### Resource Outcomes:

The current Big Stone County local water management plan did not have clearly stated measurable resource outcomes which is included as one of BWSRs recommendations for future planning efforts.

### Commendations:

**The Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 13 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and the Big Stone County is commended for meeting 9 of 12 high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Joint Recommendation: Continue to refine Prioritized, Targeted, and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in water management throughout Big Stone County.

Recommendation 2 – Joint Recommendation: Improve communication and coordination between the SWCD and County, and with agency partners.

Recommendation 3 – Joint Recommendation: Conduct a detailed staff compensation and workload analysis.

Recommendation 4 – SWCD Recommendation: Develop detailed training strategies for newer staff as they are hired for the SWCD.

Recommendation 5 – WCA: Attend Regional WCA trainings.

Recommendation 6 – WCA: Schedule Regular TEP meetings.

Recommendation 7 – WCA: Improve documentation of issuing extensions, and also improve documentation of TEP findings.

### Action Items:

Big Stone County and the Big Stone SWCD had no action items to address at the time of this report.

## Chippewa County and Chippewa Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Chippewa SWCD and Chippewa County should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, the Wetlands Conservation Act, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff of both local governments are viewed favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing the Chippewa County Local Water Management Plan. Ongoing water management challenges in the region have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to collaborate to address local water management issues and improve conservation delivery in Chippewa County. The opportunity for participation in the development of comprehensive watershed management plans through the One Watershed, One Plan program provides additional collaboration opportunities for Chippewa SWCD, County, and partners to focus on specific problems and priorities for the local waterbodies.

Chippewa SWCD and Chippewa County are both commended for meeting all of their basic performance standards including having data practices policies, staff training plans, and completing required annual reports. They are commended for their effective administration of the Wetlands Conservation Act, and also for meeting several high performance standards, a testament to the quality of work they are recognized for by their partners.

### Resource Outcomes:

The current Chippewa County local water management plan did not have clearly stated measurable resource outcomes which is included as one of BWSRs recommendations for future planning efforts.

### Commendations:

**The Chippewa Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 15 of 21 high performance standards for SWCDs and Chippewa County is commended for meeting 12 of 15 high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Joint Recommendation: Continue to refine prioritized, targeted, and measurable criteria for goals and objectives in water management throughout Chippewa County

Recommendation 2 – SWCD Recommendation: Develop a strategy to manage the Chippewa SWCD reserve fund balance

Recommendation 3 – SWCD Recommendation: Conduct an operational analysis for workspace and potential future SWCD growth

Recommendation 4 – SWCD Recommendation: Develop or enhance communication and outreach strategies to connect with partners

Recommendation 5 – County Recommendation: Develop or enhance communication and outreach strategies to connect with partners

### Action Items:

Chippewa County and the Chippewa SWCD did not have any action items to address at the time of this report.

## Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission



### **Key Findings and Conclusions**

The Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, rules, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and administrative consultants are viewed very favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing their watershed management plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the metro area have created the necessity to forge stronger working relationships among partners to improve local water management within the watershed, and the switch to comprehensive watershed management plans throughout the state means new opportunities for increased prioritization of projects and available funding.

The Elm Creek WMC is commended for meeting several high performance standards, a testament to the quality of work they are recognized for by their partners.

### **Resource Outcomes:**

The Elm Creek watershed management plan did include TMDL reductions as part of their goal identification process, however there were few actions that tied directly to those goals and a recommendation was made in this report for Elm Creek WMC to develop more clear resource outcomes as part of future planning efforts.

### **Recommendations:**

**The Elm Creek WMC is commended for meeting 9 out of 11 applicable High Performance Standards.**

### **Recommendations:**

Recommendation 1 – Develop clear prioritized, targeted, and measurable actions for future watershed management plans

Recommendation 2 – Complete an internal analysis of the ECWMC Capital Improvement Program

Recommendation 3 – Conduct a review of the ECWMC regulatory program requirements and standards

Recommendation 4 – Assess and develop a coordinated communication and outreach strategy for engaging individual landowners

### **Action Items:**

Elm Creek WMC did not have a data practices policy at the time of this report. Elm Creek was given six months to address this issue with follow-up assistance from BWSR staff.

## Freeborn County and Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Freeborn SWCD and Freeborn County should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, the Wetlands Conservation Act, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff of both local governments are viewed favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing the Freeborn County Local Water Management Plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the region have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to collaborate to address local water management issues and improve conservation delivery in Freeborn County. The opportunity for participation in the development of comprehensive watershed management plans through the One Watershed,

One Plan program provides additional collaboration opportunities for Freeborn SWCD, Freeborn County, and partners to focus on specific problems and priorities for the local waterbodies.

Freeborn SWCD and Freeborn County are both commended for meeting all of their basic performance standards including having data practices policies, staff training plans, and completing required annual reports. They are commended for their effective administration of the Wetlands Conservation Act, and also for meeting several high-performance standards, a testament to the quality of work they are recognized for by their partners.

### Resource Outcomes

The Freeborn County local water management plan did not contain specifically identified measurable resource outcomes which was a recommendation made in this report by BWSR staff. It is recognized that Freeborn County and SWCD are actively engaged in a comprehensive watershed management plan effort via the 1W1P program which requires measurable outcomes to be addressed in the plan.

### Commendations

**The Freeborn SWCD is commended for achieving 15 of 22 high performance standards, and Freeborn County is commended for achieving six out of 13 applicable high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – SWCD Recommendation: Engage in a strategic planning effort to address several issues of significance to Freeborn SWCD operations

1a. Develop or enhance communication and outreach strategies to connect with partners

1b. Develop a strategy to manage the Freeborn SWCD reserve fund balance

1c. Conduct a workload analysis to assess the need for future staff, current staff workload, and gaps analysis

Recommendation 2 – County Recommendation: Obtain stakeholder input annually or on a regular schedule

Recommendation 3 – Joint Recommendation: Continue to refine prioritized, targeted, and measurable criteria for goals and objectives in water management throughout Freeborn County

Recommendation 4 – WCA Recommendation: Administration

Recommendation 5 – WCA Recommendation: Execution and Coordination

### Action Items:

Freeborn County and the Freeborn SWCD did not have any action items to address at the time of this report.

## Lake of the Woods County and Lake of the Woods Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Lake of the Woods Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Lake of the Woods County should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, the Wetlands Conservation Act, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff of both local governments are viewed favorably by their partners who had many great comments to contribute to the report and they have made significant progress toward implementing their local water management plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the region have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local

water management in Lake of the Woods County. The opportunity for participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provides numerous collaboration opportunities for the local water management entities and partners to reorient water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the local waterbodies.

Lake of the Woods SWCD and County are both highly commended for meeting all of their basic performance standards including having data practices policies, staff training plans, and completing required annual reports. They met all basic WCA standards, and they also met several high performance standards, a testament to the quality of work they are recognized for by their partners.

### Resource Outcomes

The Lake of the Woods county local water management plan did contain a few specific measurable resource outcomes, however they were not the focus of the action item development, therefore it was recommended by BWSR staff that measurable resource outcomes are identified in future planning efforts.

### Commendations

**The Lake of the Woods SWCD is commended for achieving 16 of 22 high performance standards and Lake of the Woods County is commended for achieving eight of 15 applicable high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Joint Recommendation: Continue to refine Prioritized, Targeted, and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in water management throughout Lake of the Woods County

Recommendation 2 – Joint Recommendation: Identify potential gaps in communication with customers and partners

Recommendation 3 – Joint Recommendation: Conduct a workload analysis of current and projected work and determine staff capacity and expertise needed

Recommendation 4 – WCA: Provide a copy or pass a resolution clearly identifying the local appeals process.

### Action Items:

Lake of the Woods County and the Lake of the Woods SWCD had no action items to be address at the time of this report.

## North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization



### Key Findings and Conclusions

The North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (NCRWMO) should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff are viewed favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing their watershed management plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the metro area have created the necessity to forge stronger working relationships among partners to improve local water management within the watershed, and new opportunities for increased prioritization of projects and available funding.

The NCRWMO is commended for meeting most of the applicable basic performance standards including completing required annual reports, maintaining an updated management plan, and keeping a dedicated website up to-date on projects and programs. They are also commended for meeting some high performance standards, including monitoring key water resources and maintaining cooperative partnerships.

### Resource Outcomes

The North Cannon River watershed management plan did not contain specific resource outcomes. Some, but not all action items in the plan were tied to TMDL reductions. BWSR staff recommends they identify specific resource outcomes in future planning efforts.

### Recommendations:

**The North Cannon River WMO is commended for achieving three of eight applicable high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Develop clear prioritized, targeted, and measurable actions for future watershed management plans

Recommendation 2 – Combine utilization of an Advisory Committee with a periodic review of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Recommendation 3 – Conduct a strategic planning exercise to analyze organizational needs for future operations

### Action Items: North Cannon River WMO had three action items to address.

- Non-current data practices policy (6 months to correct)
- No regular review of Capital Improvement (6 months to correct)
- No functioning advisory committee (follow-up by BWSR staff annually)

## Scott County and Scott Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Scott SWCD and Scott County should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, the Wetlands Conservation Act, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff of both local governments are viewed favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing each organization's respective local comprehensive and water management plans.

Ongoing water management challenges in the region have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to collaborate to address local water management issues and improve conservation delivery in Scott County. The opportunity for participation in the development of comprehensive watershed management plans through the One Watershed, One Plan program provides additional collaboration opportunities for Scott SWCD, County, and partners to focus on specific problems and priorities for the local waterbodies.

Scott SWCD and Scott County are both commended for meeting all of their basic performance standards including having data practices policies, staff training plans, and completing required annual reports. They are commended for their effective administration of the Wetlands Conservation Act, and also for meeting several high performance standards, a testament to the quality of work they are recognized for by their partners.

### Resource Outcomes:

For this review we analyzed progress toward the Scott SWCD comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan did not identify specific resource outcomes, however Scott SWCD and Scott County are actively engaged in the implementation of the Scott Watershed Management Organization watershed management plan and are active partners in current comprehensive watershed management plan efforts via the 1W1P program.

### Recommendations:

**The Scott Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 18 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and Scott County is commended for meeting 15 of 15 high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Joint Recommendation: Continue to refine prioritized, targeted, and measurable criteria for goals and objectives in water management throughout Scott County

Recommendation 2 – Joint Recommendation: Communicate individual organizational roles and responsibilities clearly with partners

Recommendation 3 – SWCD Recommendation: Conduct a workload analysis to aid in project planning for future anticipated watershed-based implementation funding

Recommendation 4 – County Recommendation: Develop or enhance varied communication and outreach strategies to connect with partners

Recommendation 5 – WCA Recommendation: Attend regional and statewide WCA trainings

Recommendation 6 – WCA Recommendation: Coordinate with BWSR wetland specialist in assessing violations

### Action Items:

Scott County and the Scott SWCD had no action items to address at the time of this report.

## Traverse County and Traverse Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Traverse Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Traverse County should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, plan efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff of both local governments are viewed favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing their local water management plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the region have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Traverse County. The opportunity for participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provides collaboration opportunities for Traverse SWCD, County, and partners to reorient water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the local waterbodies.

### Resource Outcomes:

The current Traverse County local water management plan does not contain specifically identified measurable resource outcomes and was a recommendation made by BWSR for this report.

### Recommendations:

**The Traverse Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 16 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and Traverse County is commended for meeting 8 of 12 high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Joint Recommendation 1: Continue to refine Prioritized, Targeted, and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in water management throughout Traverse County.

SWCD Recommendation 2: Establish a policy to manage the reserve fund balance carried by the Traverse SWCD

SWCD Recommendation 3: Conduct a wage scale analysis to aid in staff retention

WCA Recommendation 4: Attend Regional WCA trainings

WCA Recommendation 5: Implement Regularly Scheduled TEP meetings

### Action Items:

Traverse County and Traverse SWCD had no action items to address at the time of this report.

## Upper Minnesota River Watershed District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

The Upper Minnesota River Watershed District should be commended for their work in implementing core programs, rules, planning efforts, and building partnerships. The board and staff are viewed very favorably by their partners and have made significant progress toward implementing their revised watershed management plan.

Ongoing water management challenges in the area have created the necessity to forge stronger working relationships among partners to improve local water management within the watershed, and the switch to comprehensive watershed management plans throughout the state means new opportunities for increased prioritization of projects and available funding.

The Upper Minnesota River WD is commended for meeting all of the basic performance standards including having data practices policies, updated rules within the last 6 months, maintaining an advisory committee, and completing required annual reports. They are also commended for meeting all the high performance standards, a testament to the quality of work and high achievement they are recognized for by their partners.

### Resource Outcomes:

The current Upper Minnesota River WD plan does contain some measurable resource outcomes, most specifically related to Big Stone Lake. Other action items did not address clearly stated measurable resource outcomes which was a recommendation made by BWSR staff in this report.

### Recommendations:

**The Upper Minnesota River WD is commended for achieving all 16 high performance standards.**

### Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Continue to refine Prioritized, Targeted, and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives for developing and implementing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Recommendation 2 – Improve communication and coordination with local government and agency partners

Recommendation 3 – Review current workload and assess the benefit of a staffing analysis

### Action Items:

The Upper Minnesota River WD had no action items to address at the time of this report.

## Appendix H

### Performance Standards Checklists used in Level II Reviews

#### COUNTY LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Area	Performance Standard	Level of Review	Rating	
			Yes, No, or Value	YES NO
Administration	■ Basic practice or statutory requirement ★ High Performance standard (see instructions for explanation of standards)	I Annual Compliance II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)		
	■ eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I		
	■ County has resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and delegation resolutions (if needed).	II		
	■ County has knowledgeable and trained staff to manage WCA program or secured a qualified delegate.	II		
	■ Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time	I		
Planning	★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II		
	■ Local water mgmt. plan: current	I		
	★ Metro counties: groundwater plan up-to-date	I		
	★ Prioritized, Targeted & Measurable criteria are used for Goals, Objectives and Actions in local water management plan	II		
Execution	★ Water quality trend data used for short- and long-range plan priorities	II		
	■ WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with WCA requirements.	II		
	■ WCA TEP reviews and recommendations are appropriately coordinated.	II		
	★ Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer	II		
	★ WCA Communication and Coordination	II		
	★ Water quality data collected to track outcomes for each priority concern	II		

	★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies and/or groundwater	II		
	■ BWSR grant report(s) posted on county website	I		
	★ Communication piece sent within last 12 months: indicate target audience below	II		
<b>Communication Target Audience:</b>				
Communication & Coordination	★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 12 months	II		
	★ Partnerships: liaison with SWCDs/WDs and cooperative projects/tasks done ( <i>in addition to 1W1P</i> )	II		
	★ Annual report to water plan advisory committee on plan progress	II		
	★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan	II		
	★ Coordination with state watershed-based initiatives	II		
	★ County local water plan on county website	II		
	★ Water management ordinances on county website	II		

## SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name:

Performance Area	Performance Standard	Level of Review	Rating	
			YES	NO
Administration	■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement	I Annual	Yes, No, or Value	
	★ High Performance standard (see instructions for explanation of standards)	II Compliance BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)		
	■ Financial statement: annual, on-time and complete	I		
	■ Financial audit: completed as required by statute (see guidance) or as per BWSR correspondence	I		
	■ eLINK Grant Report(s) submitted on-time	I		
	■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs.	II		
	■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs.	II		
	■ <b>Technical professional appointed and serving on WCA TEP</b>	II		
	■ <b>SWCD has an adopting resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and appropriate decision delegation resolutions as warranted (If WCA LGU)</b>	II		
	★ Job approval authorities: reviewed and reported annually	II		
	★ Operational guidelines and policies exist and are current	II		
	★ Board training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each board member	II		
	★ Staff training: orientation and cont. ed. plan/record for each staff	II		
Planning	■ Comprehensive Plan: updated within 5 yrs. or current resolution adopting unexpired county LWM plan	I		
	★ Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria are used for Goals and Objectives in the local water management plan as appropriate.	II		
	★ Annual Plan of Work: based on comp plan, strategic plan priorities	II		
	★ <b>SWCD is currently actively involved in at least one 1W1P</b>	II		
	★ <b>SWCD has received a competitive CWF grant in past 2 years</b>	II		
	★ <b>Strategic Plan or Self-Assessment completed within last 5 years</b>	II		
Execution	■ Are state grant funds spent in high priority problem areas	II		
	■ Total expenditures per year (over past 10 yrs.)	II	see below	
	■ Months of operating funds in reserve	II		
	■ <b>Replacement and restoration orders are prepared in conformance with WCA rules and requirements.</b>	II		

<b>Communication &amp; Coordination</b>	<b>■ WCA TEP member knowledgeable/trained in WCA technical aspects</b>	II							
	<b>■ WCA TEP member contributes to reviews, findings &amp; recommendations</b>	II							
	<b>■ WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with all WCA requirements (if WCA LGU)</b>	II							
	<b>■ WCA TEP reviews/recommendations appropriately coordinated (if LGU)</b>	II							
	<b>★ Certified wetland delineator: on staff or retainer</b>	II							
	<b>★ WCA Coordination and Communication</b>	II							
	<b>★ Water quality data collected to track outcomes for each pr. concern</b>	II							
	<b>★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies</b>	II							
	<b>■ Website contains all required content elements</b>	I							
	<b>★ Website contains additional content beyond minimum required</b>	II							
<b>Communication Target Audience:</b>									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>★ Outcome trends monitored and reported for key resources</b></li> <li><b>★ Track progress on I &amp; E objectives in Plan</b></li> <li><b>★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 12 months</b></li> <li><b>★ Annual report communicates progress on water plan goals</b></li> <li><b>★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, NGOs or private businesses</b></li> <li><b>★ Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff</b></li> </ul>									
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018

## METRO WATERSHED DISTRICT and WMO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Area	Performance Standard	Level of Review	Rating	
			I Annual Compliance	II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)
<b>Administration</b>	★ High Performance standard	I	Yes, No, or Value	
	■ Basic practice or statutory requirement  (see instructions for explanation of standards)	II	YES	NO
	■ Activity report: annual, on-time	I		
	■ Financial report & audit completed on time	I		
	■ Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time	I		
	■ eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I		
	■ Rules: date of last revision or review	II	<b>mo./yr.</b>	
	■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II		
	■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II		
	■ Manager appointments: current and reported	II		
	■ Consultant RFP: within 2 yrs. for professional services	II		
	■ <b>WD/WMO has resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and appropriate delegation resolutions as warranted (N/A if not LGU)</b>	II		
	■ <b>WD/WMO has knowledgeable &amp; trained staff that manages WCA program or has secured qualified delegate. (N/A if not LGU)</b>	II		
	★ Administrator on staff	II		
	★ Board training: orientation and continuing education plan, record for each board member	II		
	★ Staff training: orientation and continuing education plan and record for each staff	II		
	★ Operational guidelines for fiscal procedures and conflicts of interest exist and current	II		
	★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II		
<b>Planning</b>	■ Watershed management plan: up-to-date	I		
	■ City/twp. local water plans not yet approved	II		
	■ Capital Improvement Program: reviewed every 2 years	II		

	★ Strategic plan or self-assessment completed in last 5 years	II		
	★ Strategic plan identifies short-term priorities	II		
<b>Execution</b>	■ Engineer Reports: submitted for DNR & BWSR review	II		
	■ <b>WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with all WCA requirements. (if delegated WCA LGU)</b>	II		
	■ <b>WCA TEP reviews &amp; recommendations appropriately coordinated. (if delegated WCA LGU)</b>	II		
	★ Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer	II		
	■ Total expenditures per year (past 10 yrs.)	II	see below	
	★ Water quality trends tracked for key water bodies	II		
	★ Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / reported	II		
<b>Communication &amp; Coordination</b>	■ Website: contains information as required by MR 8410.0150 Subpart 3a, i.e. as board meeting, contact information, water plan, etc.	II		
	■ Functioning advisory committee(s): recommendations on projects, reports, 2-way communication with Board	II		
	■ Communication piece: sent within last 12 months	II		
	<b>Communication Target Audience:</b>			
	★ Track progress for Information and Education objectives in Plan	II		
	★ Coordination with County Board, SWCD Board, City/Township officials	II		
	★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring organizations, such as counties, SWCDs, WDs, Non-Government Organizations	II		

## GREATER MN WATERSHED DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Area	Performance Standard	Level of Review	Rating	
			YES	NO
Administration	★ High Performance standard ■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement <i>(see instructions for explanation of standards)</i>	I Annual Compliance II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)	Yes, No, or Value	
	■ Annual report: submitted on time	I		
	■ Financial audit: completed on time	I		
	■ Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time	I		
	■ eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I		
	■ Rules: date of last revision or review	II	Mo./yr.	
	■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II		
	■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II		
	■ Manager appointments: current and reported	II		
	■ WD has resolution assuming WCA responsibilities & appropriate delegation resolutions as warranted. <i>(N/A if not LGU)</i>	II		
	■ WD has knowledgeable & trained staff that manages WCA program or has secured a qualified delegate. <i>(N/A if not WCA LGU)</i>	II		
	★ Administrator on staff	II		
	★ Board training: orientation and continuing education plan and record for board members	II		
	★ Staff training: orientation and continuing education plan/record for each staff	II		
	★ Operational guidelines exist and current	II		
	★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II		
Planning	■ Watershed management plan: up-to-date	I		
	★ Prioritized, Targeted, Measurable criteria used in WD Plan	II		
	★ Strategic plan identifies short-term activities & budgets based on state and local watershed priorities	II		

	★ Member of County Water Plan Advisory Committee(s)	II		
Execution	■ Engineer Reports: submitted for DNR & BWSR review	II		
	■ <b>WCA decisions and determinations made in conformance with all WCA requirements. (N/A if not LGU)</b>	II		
	■ <b>WCA TEP reviews/recommendations coordinated (N/A if not LGU)</b>	II		
	★ Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer	II		
	■ Total expenditures per year for past 10 years	II		attach
	★ Water quality trends tracked for key water bodies	II		
	★ Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / reported	II		
Communication & Coordination	■ Functioning advisory committee: recommendations on projects, reports, maintains 2-way communication with Board	II		
	■ Communication piece sent within last 12 months	II		
	■ Website: contains annual report, financial statement, board members, contact info, grant report(s), watershed management plan, meeting notices, agendas & minutes, updated after each board meeting	II		
	★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 12 months	II		
	★ <b>Coordination with watershed-based initiatives</b>	II		
	★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan	II		
	★ Coordination with County Board, SWCD Board, City/Township officials	II		
	★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, soil and water districts, non-governmental organizations	II		

2009      2010      2011      2012      2013      2014      2015      2016      2017      2018

**TOTAL= \$**

## Appendix I

### **2021 Local Government Performance Awards and Recognition\***

(Awarding agency listed in parentheses.)

#### **Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Employee**

(Board of Water and Soil Resources)

**Doug Bos, Assistant Director, Rock Soil and Water Conservation District**

#### **Soil and Water Conservation District of the Year**

(Minnesota Association of Soil and Water conservation Districts)

**Mower Soil and Water Conservation District**

#### **Outstanding Administrator of the Year**

(Minnesota Association of Watershed District Administrators)

**Jamie Beyer – Administrator, Bois de Sioux River Watershed District**

#### **Outstanding Watershed District Employee**

(Board of Water and Soil Resources)

**Cody Fox – Project Manager, Cedar River Watershed District**

#### **Program of the Year Award**

(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)

**Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District – Citizen-Assisted Tributary Monitoring Program**

#### **WD Project of the Year**

(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)

**Sand Hill River Watershed District – Sand Hill River Ecosystem Enhancements**

#### **County Conservation Awards**

(Association of Minnesota Counties and Board of Water and Soil Resources)

**Crow Wing County Highway Department Community Partnership**

**Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership**

***Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Pine, and Washington Counties***

# Clean Water Fund delisting sampler



## BWSR-backed water quality work with landowners, SWCDs and watersheds across Minnesota contributed to some of the proposed removals from the state's impaired waters list

Clean Water Funds from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) supported conservation work that contributed to some lakes, rivers and streams earning a spot on the list of waters slated to be removed from the state's impaired waters list in 2022.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) [proposed list of removals and additions](#) includes 53 lakes, and segments of rivers and streams, slated for delisting.

U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency approval finalizes that status. The MPCA's initial draft noted 13 of the 53 could be directly tied to a particular restoration effort. The number directly attributed to restoration efforts likely will change as conservation staff respond to the draft.

Following are a few examples where Clean Water Funds from BWSR played a direct role in restoration work. Clean Water Fund grants require a match. Total project costs may draw from local, state and federal funding sources.

Pope Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Manager Holly Kovarik, who serves on the Clean Water Council, considered the bigger picture that might unfold as more projects targeting impaired waters are implemented across the state: "The goal is to move that needle of progress towards improvement in our resources, and this is what we may see in the future, on a grander scale."

In Chisago County, the proposed delisting of School Lake, one of 20 in the Chisago Lakes Chain of

Lakes, reflects increased communitywide awareness and lake stewardship — a cumulative effect of years-long outreach on the part of Chisago SWCD and its partners, including the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), cities and lake associations.

School Lake's proposed delisting is not tied to a specific restoration effort.

Chisago SWCD Water Resource Specialist Casey Thiel said few grant-funded projects were completed directly on School Lake.



**Top, from left:** Birch Lake's water quality has improved as a result of Clean Water Fund-backed stormwater retrofits. **Photo Credit:** Sherburne SWCD An angler fished from the pier at Lily Lake in Stillwater. **Photo Credit:** Ann Wessel, BWSR A kayaker paddled on Sunfish Lake. **Photo Credit:** Lower Mississippi River WMO  
**Above:** Pelican Creek flows through Grant County to the Pomme de Terre River. **Photo Credit:** Grant SWCD

Communitywide projects included increased street sweeping and improved stormwater control.

"It's more mindset and behavior changes is what I think is happening there," Thiel said. "All of the lakes that we're actively working in are seeing improved water quality. That's kind of as good as it gets. It's a little bit better each year."

### Sherburne County

Birch Lake, a 150-acre lake with a township boat launch and swimming beach, saw water quality improve as a result of five targeted stormwater retrofits installed from 2016 through 2018. A \$70,005 Clean Water Fund grant Sherburne SWCD received from BWSR in 2016 supported the Big Lake Township project, which keeps an estimated 10 pounds of phosphorus and 3,000 pounds of sediment out of the lake annually.

A 2013 accelerated implementation grant from BWSR allowed Sherburne SWCD staff to identify projects with the highest per-dollar pollutant reductions. Listed in 2006 as nutrient-impaired for aquatic recreation, Birch Lake had seen occasional late-summer algae blooms. But it was close to meeting water quality standards. The SWCD used local capacity dollars from BWSR to fund additional shoreline restorations.

"We realized meeting water quality standards was very much an achievable, feasible goal for us to work towards," said Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD senior water resource specialist.

Sherburne SWCD detailed



Outlet Creek flows from Lake Minnewaska to Lake Emily in Pope County.

**Photo Credit:** Pope SWCD

**“As more projects are being targeted in areas where these impaired waters are, this is a little bit of what is to come in the future as things get ramped up and implementation (continues) across the state.”**

— Holly Kovarik, Pope SWCD manager

its efforts in [an update](#), released when four of the five grant-funded projects were complete.

### Pope County

Outlet Creek, which flows from Lake Minnewaska across rolling farmland to Lake Emily southwest of Starbuck, was listed in 2012 as impaired for aquatic life. The creek lies within the Lake Emily watershed, the focus of four BWSR Clean Water Fund grants.

"As more projects are being targeted in areas where these impaired waters are, this is a little bit of what is to come in the future as things get ramped up and implementation (continues) across the state. There are a fair number that were on this list that are being delisted. That's the goal,"

Kovarik said.

A \$38,160 Clean Water Fund grant award in 2015 supported assessment and prioritization.

Implementation grants followed. Thirty-four of the 54 erosion control practices backed by a \$287,500 grant in 2016 directly affected Outlet Creek. All 27 water and sediment control basins backed by a \$162,500 grant in 2017 affect Outlet Creek. Those projects combined keep an estimated 2,237 tons of sediment and 2,565 pounds of phosphorus out of the creek annually.

The third phase of the Lake Emily watershed targeted implementation project is funded by a \$182,500 grant awarded in 2018. Three more projects are planned before that grant closes in April.

"You get a project accomplished that worked well, and it builds upon the next project," Kovarik said.

### Washington County

Lily Lake, a picturesque 41-acre lake bordered by a Stillwater city park with a fishing pier and boat launch, achieved the phosphorus reductions necessary for delisting after a regional filtration basin was installed and a subsequent alum treatment completed in fall 2021.

The Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization (WMO) project drew from a \$513,500 Clean Water Fund grant — the fifth [BWSR has awarded to the WMO since 2011](#). Previous projects — achieved by working closely with the city of Stillwater — included commercial and residential stormwater retrofits, gully stabilizations and residential rain gardens. Combined, they'll reduce annual phosphorus-loading to the lake by about 145 pounds. Throughout the subwatershed Clean Water Funds have supported 19 rain gardens, three regional filtration basins, a gully stabilization, irrigation reuse project and the alum treatment.

"The Lily Lake delisting was a massive multi-year, multi-stakeholder project — both public and private — that took thousands of hours of collaboration and outreach to reach this point," said Bryan Lynn, Washington Conservation District watershed restoration specialist.

Lily Lake was listed as impaired for aquatic recreation in 2002. The WMO and city started work on water quality

improvements in 2008.  
MSCWMO Administrator  
[Matt Downing explained the final project.](#)

## **Stearns County**

Situated in downtown St. Cloud, surrounded by a park and encircled by a paved walking path, 8.5-acre Lake George draws paddlers and ice skaters. A free weekly summer music series attracts thousands. For two decades, the Stearns County SWCD and city of St. Cloud have worked together to improve water quality and clarity of the nutrient-impaired lake.

Early projects included 2002's shoreline naturalization and stabilization.

The most recent, backed by a \$697,000 Clean Water Fund grant the SWCD received in 2019, constructed an underground regional stormwater management structure in 2020. Designed to trap and remove sediment and nutrients from runoff before it enters the lake, it targets a 47-acre drainage area and will reduce phosphorus by an estimated 27 pounds and sediment by 7 tons a year.

Cumulative work by the SWCD and city of St. Cloud contributed to improved water clarity, from 5.8 feet in 2010 to nearly 10 feet in 2021. Find details in an [MPCA article](#) and on the city of [St. Cloud's website](#).



*The regional stormwater management structure supported by a Clean Water Fund grant is buried under this parking lot near Lake George in St. Cloud. The Stearns County SWCD project contributed to improved water quality.*

**Photo Credit:** Stearns County SWCD

## **Dakota County**

Sunfish Lake, a 47-acre water body in the small city of the same name, saw an estimated 80% reduction in internal phosphorus-loading, the result of an in-lake alum treatment supported by a \$196,000 Clean Water Fund grant. Treatment took place in 2017. BWSR awarded the grant to the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (WMO) in 2016. The grant also covered a Lake Augusta alum treatment.

"This project is a really great example from start to finish of how state and local agencies can work

together to get results," said Joe Barten, Lower Mississippi River WMO administrator.

The MPCA's Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) identified internal loading as the No. 1 source of phosphorus-loading, and identified the treatment. The WMO hired a contractor and kept residents informed. A few residents went door-to-door to contact fellow lakeshore property owners.

"The residents that lived on the lake provided the matching funds," Barten said.

Read more in an [MPCA article](#).

## **Grant County**

From the Grant County line near Ashby, the delisted segment of Pelican Creek flows southwest, skirting Pelican Lake and meandering across farmland to the Pomme de Terre River.

Grant SWCD's conservation work in the area dates to the 1970s. The Pelican Creek subwatershed is a focus of the current Pomme de Terre River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

A fenced cattle exclusion on 10 acres adjacent to the creek, and another landowner's five water and sediment control basins directly affecting the creek drew from Clean Water Fund grants awarded to the Pomme de Terre River Association Joint Powers Organization (JPO) in 2012 and 2014. The JPO is the fiscal agent; SWCDs approve grant-funded projects.

In 2012 the creek was listed as impaired for aquatic life.

"Essentially that is an indicator of everything upstream, and some of our biggest recreational lakes in the county are there, Pelican Lake being one. That's an indicator of what's going on in that lake," said Jared House, Grant SWCD administrative manager. "Additionally, this creek is a conduit to the Pomme de Terre River, which is a huge recreational river for fishing and kayaking."



# Backyard bounty: Planting for pollinators



**Left:** A Lawns to Legumes gardener used a template provided by the program to plan and install a pocket planting. **Middle:** A bumblebee visits a blue giant hyssop plant in a pollinator garden planted by an individual support grant recipient. **Right:** Native plants can be attractive additions along driveways, sidewalks and fences. **Contributed Photos**

Anyone can access Lawns to Legumes' free planting guides and resources

**M**innesota residents have until Feb. 15 to apply for \$300 reimbursement grants to create pollinator habitat in their yards through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) Lawns to Legumes program.

Launched in 2019 with a \$900,000 appropriation from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF), Lawns to Legumes offers a combination of cost-share funding, workshops, coaching and planting resources to help state residents create new pollinator habitat in outdoor residential spaces. BWSR partners with Metro Blooms and Blue Thumb – Planting for Clean Water to administer the program.

Since installations began in spring 2020, the Lawns to Legumes program

has helped residents plant more than 1.2 million square feet of pollinator habitat. By January 2022, the program had supported 279 pollinator pocket plantings, 70 bee lawn projects and 61 pollinator meadow projects. More installations are expected to be completed this spring. To date, Minnesotans have planted more than 1,100 trees and shrubs through the program.

"(Lawns to Legumes) helps promote people taking care of their yards and the landscapes around them," said Dan Cariveau, an associate professor of entomology at the University of Minnesota Bee Lab, who primarily focuses on native bees. "It's a way to see that we're directly linked to the natural world."

Anyone who lives in Minnesota can

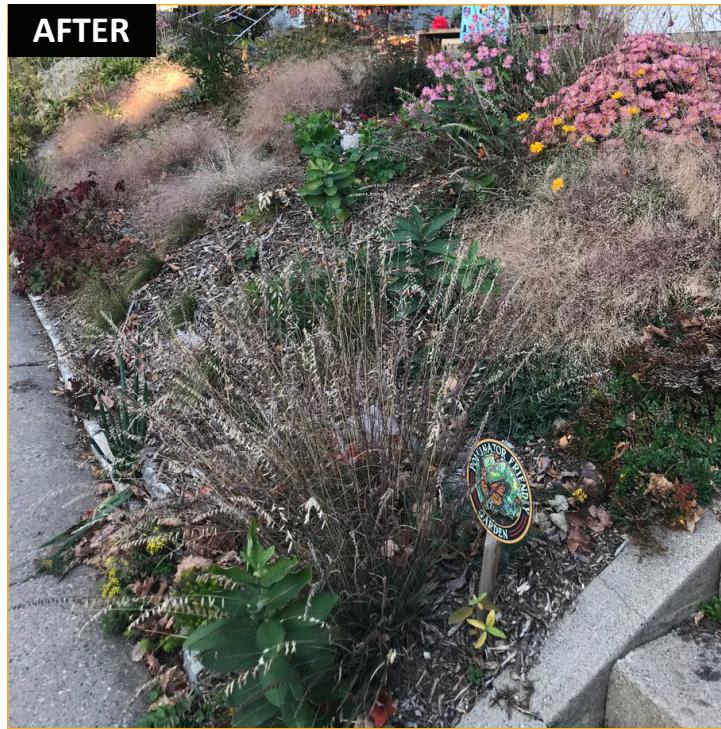
apply to receive a reimbursement grant, also referred to as an individual support grant.

The program also includes demonstration neighborhoods, which are pollinator programs run by local and tribal governments and nonprofits with support from BWSR. Twelve organizations currently oversee demonstration neighborhoods. BWSR is accepting applications for a new round of grants through Feb. 3.

Lawns to Legumes received an additional \$2 million in ENRTF funding last year. Program staff plans to use this new funding to provide



**your yard  
CAN BEE  
the CHANGE**  
#Lawns2Legumes

**BEFORE****AFTER**

additional grants, amplify outreach and education efforts, and expand planting opportunities to schools and community organizations.

"We've seen an incredible response to this program so far, with nearly 10,000 people applying for individual support grants to date," said Dan Shaw, BWSR's senior ecologist and vegetation specialist. "This new funding will help us extend more opportunities to Minnesotans who want to take action to protect pollinators."

Lawns to Legumes seeks to develop habitat corridors

— pathways that offer food and nesting resources to pollinator species with limited flight ranges. While some species can fly for miles, Cariveau said some other small bee species can only fly a few hundred yards at a time.

"Some pollinators have pretty short flight distances, and also, flight is costly — it takes time and energy," said Sarah Foltz Jordan, senior pollinator conservation specialist with the Xerces Society. "The more we can configure our plantings to have some degree of proximity to each other or to other nature areas, the better equipped insects will be to expand their populations and respond to threats like climate change."

Cariveau said it's important to remember that protecting pollinators

isn't just about providing food sources — shelter is another important factor in supporting populations. Pollinator species that don't live in colonies often nest in twigs, soil, dried leaves and plant stems.

"We mostly think of bees feeding on flowers, but bees need to live somewhere," Cariveau said. "Many species visit their nests multiple times each day. Nesting habitat can include soil, so keeping parts of your yard bare is important. Keeping some stems in your garden can also be beneficial."

Building pollinator corridors with plantings near one another can have a secondary benefit, Shaw said.

"When you have multiple people on a street or in a

## How to apply

Visit [Blue Thumb — Planting for Clean Water](#)'s website to apply for \$300 individual support reimbursement grants. Applications are due Feb. 15.

neighborhood doing this kind of work at the same time, it can create its own sense of community," Shaw said. "We try to encourage program participants to learn from each other, to share seeds or propagated plants and compare notes on what's working in their immediate area."

Free resources including gardening templates, planting guides and best management practices can be found [here](#).



# RIM grassland easements take root

**Outdoor Heritage Fund-backed permanent easements target moderate-quality remnant prairie and surrounding grassland, giving farmers an option for untillable acreage that benefits wildlife. The first sign-up exceeded goals; the fourth round of funds becomes available July 1.**

**D**oes the land have a cropping history?

Until the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Grassland Reserve Program launched, answering no to that question meant soil and water conservation district staff had nothing to offer landowners seeking permanent RIM easements.

Cottonwood SWCD program technician and Farm Bill assistant Becky Buchholz tucked



**Buchholz**

those names away. Since the grasslands option became available in 2019 with \$2.3 million from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, Buchholz has worked with six landowners to enroll nearly 332 acres in the program. Three of those easements are recorded; three are being processed. To date, Cottonwood County has the most enrolled acreage among eligible counties — those in the southern two-thirds of the state within Minnesota's prairie ecoregion.

Across eligible counties, landowners from Cottonwood, Rock, Redwood, Murray and Mahnomen counties have signed up just over 1,520 acres — including about 1,200 acres of native prairie. The initial sign-up



*John Voz, BWSR RIM easements and working lands specialist, adds to the mix in a broadcast seeder at a dormant prairie planting site this winter in Mahnomen County. Hand-collected seed from remnant prairies sown into surrounding grasslands improves the diversity and quality of those grasslands. **Contributed Photos***

## Details

**LAND USE:** Hunting is allowed on land enrolled in RIM grassland easements, as are temporary deer stands. It remains privately owned, and may be posted. Some existing trails for some uses are allowed. Buildings are not. The grasslands program offers more flexibility for haying and grazing.

**MAINTENANCE:** Landowners are responsible for long-term maintenance. SWCD staff monitors enrollments. BWSR covers 100% of the cost of seeding an easement, and helps with weed control for the first three years.

**PRairie INDICATORS:** Among the plants that indicate a remnant prairie: hoary puccoon, ground plum, Flodman's thistle, prairie blue-eyed grass, silky aster.

**WHO'S INVOLVED:** SWCD staff members work directly with landowners to sign up and develop a conservation plan. Eleven established Prairie Conservation Plan Local Technical Teams — which include SWCD, DNR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and landowner representatives — help to identify potential sites and rank projects.

## To date, Cottonwood County landowners in the Minnesota River valley have enrolled the most acreage among eligible counties.



Prairie plants bloom in a RIM grassland easement in Cottonwood County, where the easement option has drawn interest from landowners with hilly, rocky remnant prairie in the Minnesota River valley.

**Photo Credit:** Cottonwood SWCD

exceeded its 500-acre enrollment goal, with five easements totaling 460.4 acres recorded, and two more totaling 156.4 acres in the process of being recorded.

The Legislature appropriated Outdoor Heritage Funds in each of the next three years, making \$3.2 million available in July 2020 with the goal of enrolling 710 acres, \$4.4 million in July 2021 with an 830-acre goal, and \$4.4 million available in July 2022 with an 880-acre goal.

Funds available in 2020 and 2021 have resulted in 15 more pending easements totaling 903.7 acres.

The 2022 funds become available July 1.

"It's the first RIM program

that we've ever offered that's not (targeted to) cropland, which is really a paradigm shift," said John Voz, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM easement and working lands specialist. "Most of the non-cropland now — at least the uplands — there's a reason it hasn't been farmed. It's too steep; it's too rocky. Really that's the remnant prairies that we're targeting. A lot of landowners don't understand the value of remnant prairie. It's land they never did anything with."

In Cottonwood County, that untouched land tends to lie within the steep Minnesota River valley where bedrock is close to the surface, making tillage impossible.

"We do have these pockets of native prairie throughout the county — of land that just was never valuable farming-wise," Buchholz said.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) estimates no more than 2% of the state's native prairie remains intact. A [DNR map](#) shows the acreage.

But Voz said that figure is just an estimate.

"Maybe there's more than 1 or 2 percent. Maybe there's 3, 4, 5. We're so caught up in retiring marginal cropland that sometimes we lose that focus," Voz said. "There may be remnant prairies that we didn't know about."

Like the DNR's [Native Prairie Bank program](#), BWSR's [RIM Grassland](#)

**DNR PRAIRIE PLAN:** The DNR's [Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan](#) lays out a 25-year strategy.

[Reserve Program](#) aims to preserve prairie remnants. One big difference: RIM targets moderate-quality remnant prairies that can be improved with prescribed burns and other disturbance. The DNR targets pristine prairies.

The voluntary, permanent RIM grassland easements can include once-farmed grassland — such as expiring federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage or restored wetlands — that surrounds the remnant prairie. One payment rate applies to the remnant prairie, another applies to the cropland. There is no

minimum acreage.

Payment rates are based on the township's average assessed market value — 90% of the average value for cropland, 60% of the average value for non-cropland. In Cottonwood County, per-acre rates range from about \$5,300 to \$7,800 for cropland, and from about \$3,500 to \$5,200 for non-cropland.

"For a lot of landowners, to get a non-crop payment on a remnant prairie — that's attractive. A lot of landowners view these areas as just wasteland. But in reality, they're remnant native prairie," Voz said. "We're always preaching that these prairies are so valuable, but there's hardly any programs that (actually) pay a landowner to put it in a permanent easement."

Buchholz has worked with seven landowners; six applications were funded. This spring, she'll visit the sites of a few more potential sign-ups. She and Voz both encourage landowners to carefully consider the ramifications of a permanent easement.

"You need to decide what's right for you, your family and your land. My job is not to push you to say you have to sign up for RIM," Buchholz said. "If you don't think this is right for you, my job is to find a program that is. For some, the permanency of the program is foreboding. I look them in the eye and say, 'This is



Sneezeweed blooms in a RIM grassland easement in Cottonwood County.

**Photo Credit:** Cottonwood SWCD

forever. There is no buyout and there probably won't be."

Money is only one consideration. Buchholz said some believe in "farming the best and setting aside the rest." Some see easements as a legacy. Many are hunters who want to preserve habitat.

Deer, prairie chickens, pheasants, songbirds, butterflies and bees are among the critters that benefit from preserving prairie tracts and establishing habitat



**FUNDING:** BWSR has received four rounds of Outdoor Heritage Funds from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for RIM Reserve easements that protect current grasslands or buffer native prairie within wildlife habitat complexes not covered by other conservation programs.

corridors. Carbon sequestration is another benefit. An easement that squares up an acreage may make fieldwork easier.

**We're always preaching that these prairies are so valuable, but there's hardly any programs that (actually) pay a landowner to put it in a permanent easement.**

—John Voz,  
BWSR RIM easement and working lands specialist

"The first priority is a moderate-quality remnant prairie. That's No. 1. You absolutely have to have that," Voz said. Then it's looking at building habitat complexes. Generally, when you look at some of these remnant prairies, they're close to other good permanently protected easements. We can create this bridge of grass between these habitat complexes, which is the main mission of the Minnesota Prairie Plan."

The remaining slivers of native prairie are irreplaceable. It would take 1,000 years for the mycorrhizae in the soil to build up to the same levels and for the ecosystem to be restored to what it once was.

"Once you lose it, you'll never get it back," Voz said.

# Virtual training site boosts access

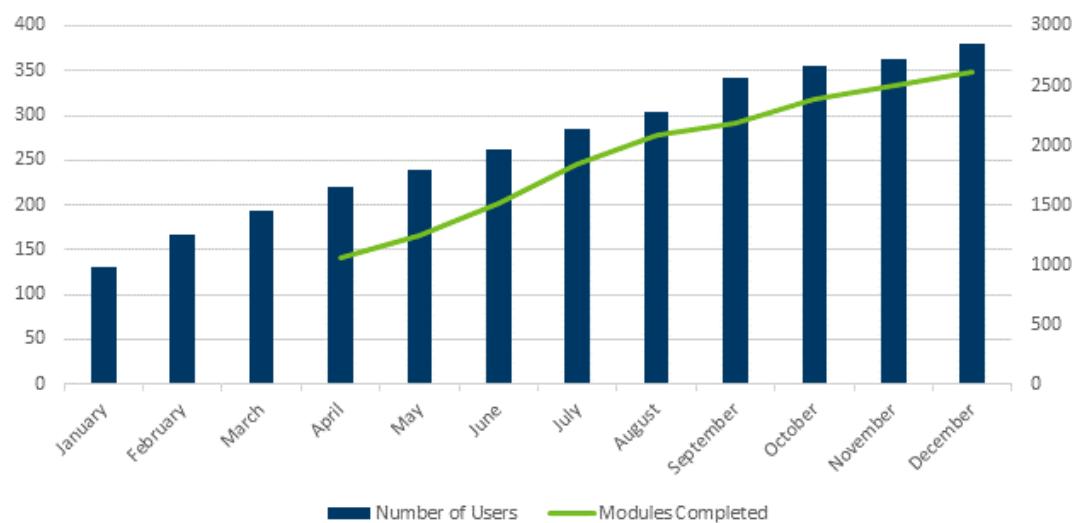
## 2021 Core Competency Module Use

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) [MNC3 virtual training website](#) helped more than 370 people complete more than 2,300 training modules during its first year.

MNC3 launched in January 2021 as a platform for conservation professionals to access [Core Competency Trainings](#), a series of 19 free training modules designed to provide consistent foundational knowledge of conservation planning and water quality issues through a Minnesota-focused lens. Additional stand-alone trainings on topics such as agronomy, soil erosion and nutrient management were later added.

BWSR's Technical Training and Certification Program (TTCP) delivers the training. TTCP is a collaborative effort among BWSR, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees. Its mission is to develop and maintain a highly trained, technically skilled workforce of natural resource professionals capable of meeting Minnesota's conservation delivery needs.

"Conservation staff at the



local, state and federal levels all have access to the same basic training through MNC3, and I think that's fundamental to our shared work to implement soil and water conservation practices on the landscape," said BWSR TTCP Coordinator Jon Sellnow.

Sellnow said although local government staff is the primary audience, anyone with an interest can create an account and complete the trainings.

Over the past year, 67 people completed all 19 Core Competency Training modules. Core competency trainings are one option to fulfill continuing education



hours for [Conservation Planner Certification](#). Level

III certified conservation planners complete roughly 250 hours of training, which enables them to write conservation plans, identify resource concerns and recommend options to landowners.

"The MNC3 site offers introductory trainings that are often used as a prerequisite for more advanced training," said Kelly Voigt, BWSR's Brainerd-based northern regional training conservationist. "It's beneficial for conservation

staff from a variety of backgrounds to have the same baseline knowledge of common practices and resource concerns."

Comments gathered in a survey of past participants included the following explanations of how the training would benefit them:

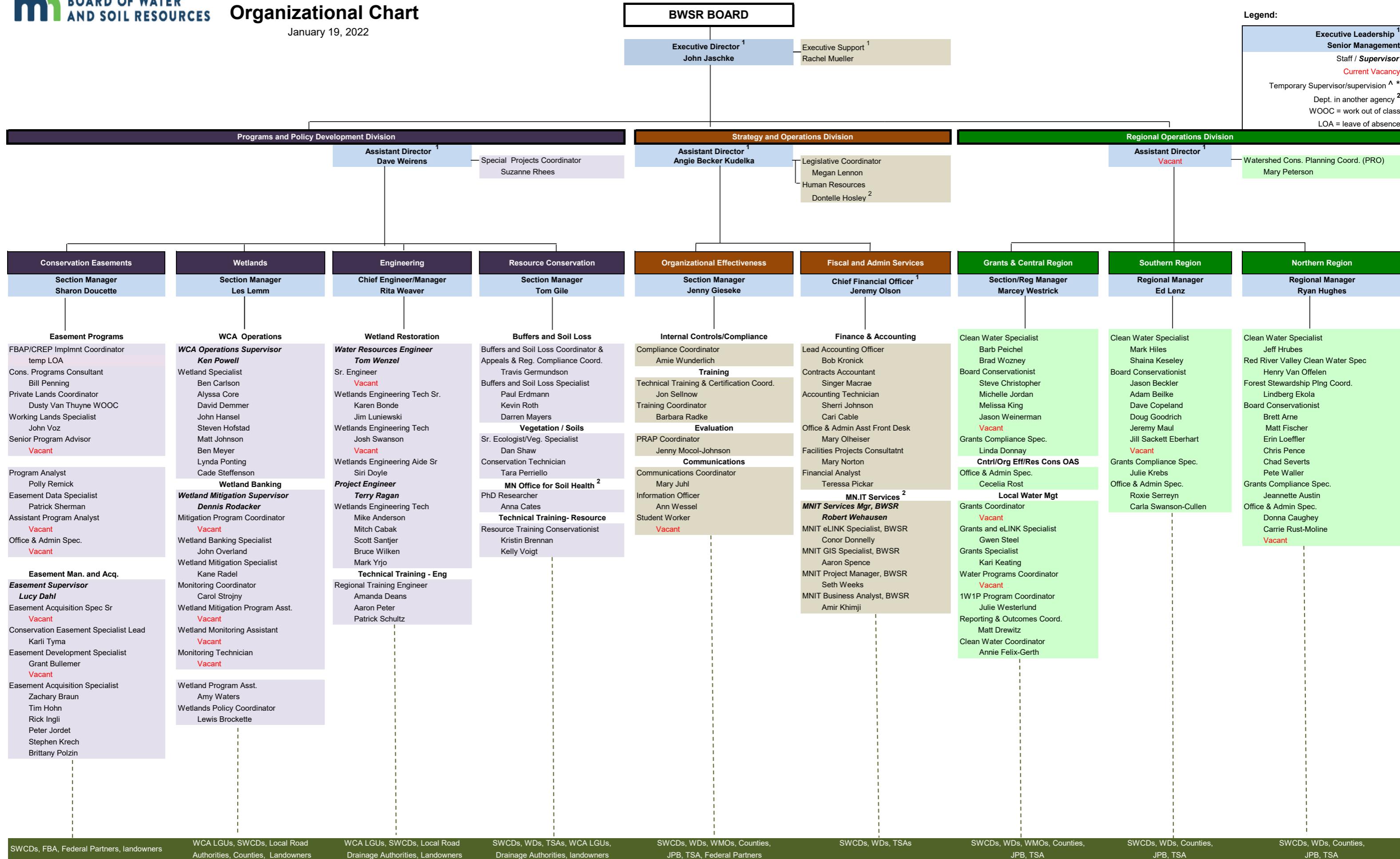
"I will use this almost every day in identifying, predicting and solving soil erosion," one respondent said.

"I will use this to better understand the landowners' descriptions of the problems they are experiencing," another respondent said.

New training modules about wind erosion prediction and erosion control practices are being developed. To access free training opportunities, create a free account on the [MNC3 website](#).

# Organizational Chart

January 19, 2022



<input type="checkbox"/> IN-STATE	<input type="checkbox"/> SHORT TERM ADVANCE	<input type="checkbox"/> OUT-OF-STATE	<input type="checkbox"/> RECURRING ADVANCE	SEMA4 EMPLOYEE EXPENSE REPORT								<input type="checkbox"/> Check if advance was issued for these expenses	<input type="checkbox"/> FINAL EXPENSE(S) FOR THIS TRIP?					
Employee Name		Home Address (Include City and State)			Permanent Work Station (Include City and State)				Agency		1-Way Commute Miles		Job Title					
Employee ID		Rcd #	Trip Start Date	Trip End Date	Reason for Travel/Advance (30 Char. Max) [example: XYZ Conference, Dallas, TX]								Barg. Unit	Expense Group ID (Agency Use)				
Chart String(s)	A	Accounting Date	Fund	Fin DeptID	AppropID	SW Cost	Sub Acct	Agncy Cost 1	Agncy Cost 2	PC BU	Project	Activity	Srce Type	Category	Sub-Cat	Distrib %		
	B																	
		A. Description:														B. Description:		
Date	Daily Description		Itinerary			Trip Miles	Total Trip & Local Miles	Mileage Rate		Meals ✓			Total Meals (overnight stay)	Total Meals (no overnight stay taxable)	Lodging	Personal Telephone	Parking	Total
			Time	Location						B	L	D						
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Depart								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Arrive								<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				0.00		
		Vehicle Control #				Total Miles 0							Total MWI/MWO 0.00	Total MEI/MEO 0.00	Total LGI/LGG 0.00	Total PHI/PHO 0.00	Total PKI/PKO 0.00	Subtotal (A) 0.00
<b>MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT CALCULATION</b>									<b>OTHER EXPENSES – See reverse for list of Earn Codes.</b>									
Enter the rates, miles, and total amounts for the mileage listed above. Get the IRS rate from your agency business expense contact.				Rate	Total Miles	Total Mileage Amt.	Date	Earn Code	Comments						Total			
1. Enter rate, miles, and amount being claimed at <b>equal to the IRS rate</b> .						0.00												
2. Enter rate, miles, and amount being claimed at <b>less than the IRS rate</b> .						0.00												
3. Enter rate, miles, and amount being claimed at <b>greater than the IRS rate</b> .						0.00												
4. Add the total mileage amounts from lines 1 through 3.						0.00												
5. Enter IRS mileage rate in place at the time of travel.																		
6. Subtract line 5 from line 3.				0.000														
7. Enter total miles from line 3.					0				Subtotal Other Expenses: (B) 0.00									
8. Multiply line 6 by line 7. This is <b>taxable</b> mileage.						0.00 (Copy to Box C)			Total taxable mileage greater than IRS rate to be reimbursed: (C) 0.00 MIT or MOT									
9. Subtract line 8 from line 4. If line 8 is zero, enter mileage amount from line 4. This is non-taxable mileage.						0.00 (Copy to Box D)			Total nontaxable mileage less than or equal to IRS rate to be reimbursed: (D) 0.00 MLI or MLO									
If using private vehicle for out-of-state travel: What is the lowest airfare to the destination? Total Expenses for this trip must not exceed this amount.									Grand Total (A + B + C + D) 0.00									
I declare, under penalty of perjury, that this claim is just, correct and that no part of it has been paid or reimbursed by the state of Minnesota or by another party except with respect to any advance amount paid for this trip. I AUTHORIZE PAYROLL DEDUCTION OF ANY SUCH ADVANCE. I have not accepted personal travel benefits.									Less Advance issued for this trip: 0.00									
									Total amount to be reimbursed to the employee: 0.00									
									Amount of Advance to be returned by the employee by deduction from paycheck: 0.00									
Approved: Based on knowledge of necessity for travel and expense and on compliance with all provisions of applicable travel regulations.									Appointing Authority Designee (Needed for Recurring Advance and Special Expenses)									
Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____ Work Phone: _____									Signature _____ Date _____									

## EMPLOYEE EXPENSE REPORT (Instructions)

**DO NOT PAY RELOCATION EXPENSES ON THIS FORM.**

See form FI-00568 Relocation Expense Report. Relocation expenses must be sent to Minnesota Management & Budget, Statewide Payroll Services, for payment.

**USE OF FORM:** Use the form for the following purposes:

1. To reimburse employees for authorized travel expenses.
2. To request and pay all travel advances.
3. To request reimbursement for small cash purchases paid for by employees.

**COMPLETION OF THE FORM:** **Employee:** Complete, in ink, all parts of this form. If claiming reimbursement, enter actual amounts you paid, not to exceed the limits set in your bargaining agreement or compensation plan. If you do not know these limits, contact your agency's business expense contact. Employees must submit an expense report within 60 days of incurring any expense(s) or the reimbursement comes taxable.

All of the data you provide on this form is public information, except for your home address. You are not legally required to provide your home address, but the state of Minnesota cannot process certain mileage payments without it.

**Supervisor:** Approve the correctness and necessity of this request in compliance with existing bargaining agreements or compensation plans and all other applicable rules and policies. Forward to the agency business expense contact person, who will then process the payments. Note: The expense report form must include original signatures.

**Final Expense For This Trip?**: Check this box if there will be no further expenses submitted for this trip. By doing this, any outstanding advance balance associated with this trip will be deducted from the next paycheck that is issued.

**1-Way Commute Miles:** Enter the number of miles from your home to your permanent workstation.

**Expense Group ID:** Entered by accounting or payroll office at the time of entering expenses. The Expense Group ID is a unique number that is system-assigned. It will be used to reference any advance payment or expense reimbursement associated with this trip.

**Earn Code:** Select an Earn Code from the list that describes the expenses for which you are requesting reimbursement. Be sure to select the code that correctly reflects whether the trip is in state or out-of-state. **Note:** Some expense reimbursements may be taxable.

**Travel Advances, Short-Term and Recurring:** An employee can only have one outstanding advance at a time. An advance must be settled before another advance can be issued.

**Travel Advance Settlement:** When the total expenses submitted are less than the advance amount or if the trip is cancelled, the employee will owe money to the state. Except for rare situations, personal checks will not be accepted for settlement of advances; a deduction will be taken from the employee's paycheck.

**FMS ChartStrings:** Funding source(s) for advance or expense(s)

**Mileage:** Use the **Mileage Reimbursement Calculation** table to figure your mileage reimbursement. Mileage may be authorized for reimbursement to the employee at one of three rates (referred to as the equal to, less than, or greater than rate). The rates are specified in the applicable bargaining agreement/compensation plan. Note: If the mileage rate you are using is above the IRS rate at the time of travel (this is not common), part of the mileage reimbursement will be taxed.

**Vehicle Control #:** If your agency assigns vehicle control numbers follow your agency's internal policy and procedure. Contact your agency's business expense contact for more information on the vehicle control number procedure.

**Personal Travel Benefits:** State employees and other officials cannot accept personal benefits resulting from travel on state business as their own. These benefits include frequent flyer miles/points and other benefits (i.e. discounts issued by lodging facilities.) Employees must certify that they have not accepted personal travel benefits when they apply for travel reimbursement.

**Receipts:** Attach itemized receipts for all expenses except meals, taxi services, baggage handling, and parking meters, to this reimbursement claim. The Agency Designee may, at its option, require attachment of meal receipts as well. Credit card receipts, bank drafts, or cancelled checks are not allowable receipts.

**Copies and Distribution:** Submit the original document for payment and retain a copy for your employee records.

Description	Earn Code		Description	Earn Code	
	In State	Out of State		In State	Out of State
Advance	ADI	ADO	Membership		MEM
Airfare	ARI	ARO	Mileage > IRS Rate	MIT*	MOT*
Baggage Handling	BGI	BGO	Mileage < or = IRS Rate	MLI	MLO
Car Rental	CRI	CRO	Network Services		NWK
Clothing Allowance		CLA	Other Expenses	OEI	OEO
Clothing-Non Contract		CLN	Parking	PKI	PKO
Communications - Other		COM	Photocopies	CPI	CPO
Conference/Registration Fee	CFI	CFO	Postal, Mail & Shipping Svcs. (outbound)		PMS
Department Head Expense		DHE	Storage of State Property		STO
Fax	FXI	FXO	Supplies/Materials/Parts		SMP
Freight & Delivery (inbound)		FDS	Telephone, Business Use	BPI	BPO
Hosting		HST	Telephone, Personal Use	PHI	PHO
Laundry	LDI	LDO	Training/Tuition Fee		TRG
Lodging	LGI	LGO	Taxi/Airport Shuttle	TXI	TXO
Meals With Lodging	MWI	MWO	Vest Reimbursement		VST
Meals Without Lodging	MEI*	MEO*	Note: * = taxable, taxed at supplemental rates		