

S.F. No. 1983 – Water and Soil Conservation Provisions Modifications

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Section 1 [Agreements with Other Entities] authorizes the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to enter into agreements, including grant agreements, with Tribal nations, federal agencies, higher education institutions, local governments, and private sector organizations to carry out programs and other responsibilities authorized by statute.

Section 2 [Work with Tribal Nations on Conservation Practices] requires BWSR to work with Tribal nations to foster mutual understanding and provide recommendations for standardized specifications related to conservation practices.

Section 3 [Work with Stakeholders to Enhance Native Vegetation] requires BWSR to work with state and federal agencies, Tribal nations, academic institutions, local governments, practitioners, and stakeholders to foster mutual understanding and to provide recommendations for standardized specifications to establish and enhance native vegetation. Authorizes BWSR to convene work groups for this purpose.

Section 4 [Easement Stewardship Accounts Modifications] expands permissible uses of the water and soil conservation easement stewardship account to include repairing or replacing structures and requires BWSR to consider the estimated annualized costs for repairing and replacing water control structures in determining the amount of the financial contribution to the account it seeks when it acquires a conservation easement.

Section 5 [Habitat-Friendly Utilities Program] authorizes BWSR to provide financial and technical assistance to promote the successful establishment of native vegetation as part of utility projects, including solar and wind projects, pipelines, and electrical transmission corridors.

Section 6 [Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program] authorizes BWSR to provide financial and technical assistance to establish or enhance areas of diverse native vegetation.

Section 7 [Expansion of Permissible Uses of Cost-Share Program Money] expands permissible uses of money provided under what is currently known as the BWSR cost-share program. Currently, that money can be used for practices for erosion or sedimentation control or water quality improvement, but this section would expand permissible uses to include improvements related to water quantity, habitat enhancement, plant biodiversity, energy conservation, or climate adaptation, resiliency, or mitigation. This section is one of several sections related to the cost-share program that facilitate its transformation from a cost-share program into a more general program providing technical and financial assistance.

Section 8 [Expansion of Permissible Uses of Cost-Share Program Money] expands permissible uses of cost-share program money by limiting permissible uses to include projects identified in state-approved plans that are related to water and natural resources and established under chapters 103B, 103C, 103D, 103F, 103G, and 114D.

Section 9 [Cost-Share Program Conforming Changes; Repeal of Contract Requirements] makes various conforming changes to reflect changes to the cost-share program statutes made elsewhere in the bill. This section also repeals statutory language governing the length of a cost-share contract and penalties to be paid for nonperformance.

Section 10 [Cost-Share Program Conforming Changes] makes various conforming changes to reflect changes to the cost-share program statutes made elsewhere in the bill.

Section 11 [Technical Changes] makes technical changes to a statute that governs watershed district projects.

Section 12 [Establishment of Soil Health Practices Program] requires BWSR to establish a soil health practices program to provide technical and financial assistance to support no till, field borders, prairie strips, cover crops, and other practices designed to produce soil health practices that achieve water quality, soil productivity, climate change resiliency, or carbon sequestration benefits. Under the program, BWSR would provide support to local units of government, private sector organizations, and farmers.

Section 13 [RIM Purposes Expansion] expands the purposes of the Reinvest in Minnesota Resources Law to include establishing perennial vegetation, restoring and enhancing marginal land, and protecting environmentally sensitive areas, including wellhead protection areas, grasslands, peatlands, shorelands, and forest lands in priority areas.

Section 14 [Grasslands Definition] adds a definition of grasslands to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103F.

Section 15 [Establishment of Reinvest in Minnesota Working Lands Program] requires BWSR to establish a Reinvest in Minnesota Working Lands Program that would complement the existing Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve Program.

Section 16 [Expansion of Wetland Value Replacement Program] requires BWSR to adopt rules for mitigating and banking water and water-related resources other than wetlands as part of its wetland value replacement plan rules.

Section 17 [Repealer] repeals statutes and rules to conform to changes made elsewhere in the bill.