



2015 Performance Review and Assistance Program

Report to the Minnesota Legislature

February 2016

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
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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.

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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 units of government constituting Minnesota's local delivery system for conservation of water and related land resources. 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—administrative mandates and 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.

2015 Program Summary

- Completed 20 Level II performance reviews.
- Surveyed 29 LGUs reviewed from 2008-2013 to assess implementation of BWSR's recommendations for organizational improvements. Of the 22 LGUs that completed the survey, 38% reported fully completing, and 38% reported partially completing the recommendations in their Level II performance review reports.
- Updated PRAP Assistance Fund application criteria and information.

2015 Results of Annual Tracking of 240 LGUs' Plans and Reports (PRAP Level I)

Overall compliance with LGU plan revision and reporting requirements improved slightly in 2015. All drainage buffer reports were submitted on time, and while WMO compliance continues to be lower than it should be, there were improvements in the past year.

- **Long-range Plan Status: the number of overdue plans decreased to 6 in 2015.**
 - Counties: one local water management plan is overdue; three metro county groundwater plan revisions are overdue.
 - Watershed Districts: one watershed management plan is overdue.
 - Watershed Management Organizations: one watershed management plan is overdue
- **LGUs in Full Compliance with Level I Performance Standards: 81%.**
 - Soil & Water Conservation Districts: 87% compliance (77/89).
 - County Water Management: 91% compliance (79/87).
 - Watershed Districts: 65% compliance (30/46).
 - Watershed Management Organizations: 44% compliance (8/18).

Selected PRAP Program Objectives for 2016

- Track 240 LGUs' Level I performance.
- Take measures to improve WMO and WD reporting.
- Maintain the target of 24 Level II performance reviews per year.
- Maintain the focus on resource outcomes in Level II performance reviews.

- Analyze and update the Level II PRAP Review process to ensure performance standards and review efforts are in line with BWSR program changes.
- Survey LGUs from 2014 Level II PRAP reviews to track LGU implementation of PRAP recommendations.
- Reach 100% compliance within 18 months for required Action Items assigned during a Level II review.
- Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.
- Determine the benefits and consequences of using the watershed-based approach to PRAP Level II reviews in watersheds where there is no existing watershed based organization or structure in place.
- Update the PRAP page of the BWSR website to provide more detailed information about the program.

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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. The primary focus is on how well LGUs are implementing their long-range plans. The LGUs reviewed are soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), watershed districts (WDs), watershed management organizations (WMOs), and the water management function of counties—a total of 240 distinct organizations. PRAP, authorized in 2007 (see Appendix A), is coordinated by one BWSR central office staff member, with assistance from BWSR's 16 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 particular 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 (or benchmark) standards specific to each type of LGU. (For more detail see www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html.)

Multi-level Process

PRAP has three operational components:

- performance review
- assistance
- reporting

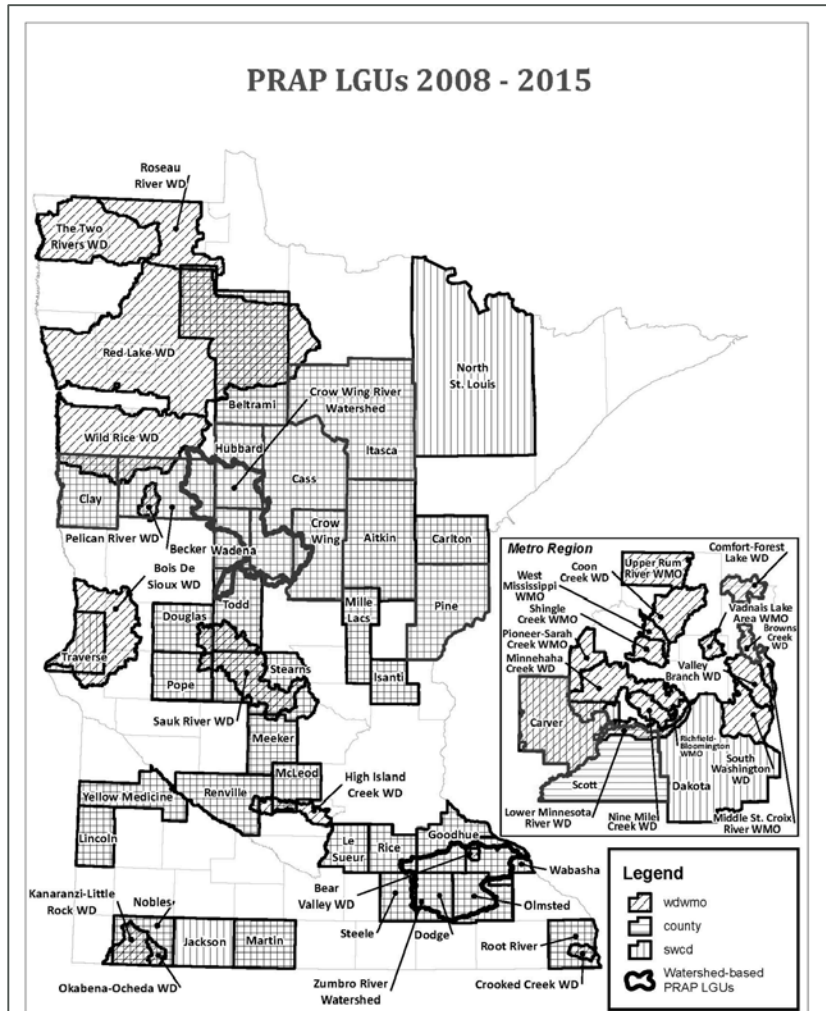
The **performance review** component is applied at four levels (see pages 5-9).

Level I is an annual tabulation of required plans and reports for all 240 LGUs. Level I 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 map on page 2 shows which LGUs have received a Level II review.

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. BWSR regularly monitors all LGUs for challenges that would necessitate a Level III review.

Level IV is for LGUs w 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 cases.

Assistance (page 10) 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 service for activities identified by the LGU, or recommended by BWSR in a performance review.

Reporting (pages 12-13) makes information about LGU performance accessible to the LGUs' stakeholders and constituents. Reporting methods specific to PRAP include links to performance review summaries, the database of Level I compliance, and this annual report to the legislature, which can all be accessed via the

PRAP page on BWSR's website (<http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html>). In addition, the PRAP Coordinator has presented results from Level II performance reviews to county boards when requested to do so by LGU staff.

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. No significant changes were made to the program in 2015. The additional program elements of resource outcome tracking and recommendation implementation tracking were continued from 2014.

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 2015 program activities with the corresponding objectives from the 2014-2015 PRAP legislative report.

| PERFORMANCE REVIEW OBJECTIVES | |
|--|---|
| What We Proposed | What We Did |
| Maintain the target of 24 Level II performance reviews per year. | In 2015, 20 Level II performance reviews were completed, including 10 in the Crow Wing Watershed, and 10 in other areas. (Note: In early 2015, the PRAP coordinator accepted a different position within BWSR, and a new PRAP coordinator didn't start until the end of April. This transition resulted in four fewer Level II PRAP reviews being completed in 2015.) |
| Adapt PRAP performance review methods for assessing the One Watershed-One Plan pilots. | Worked with One Watershed-One Plan program staff to identify how existing performance review measures can be adapted for future One Watershed-One Plan efforts. |
| Schedule surveys to track LGU compliance with Level II PRAP recommendations. | A follow-up survey was sent to 29 LGUs who had Level II reviews completed between 2008 and 2013. Of the 22 LGUs who responded to the survey, 38% reported fully implementing and 38% reported partially implemented BWSR's recommendations. |
| Evaluate WMO and metro WD jurisdictional alignments in Level II performance reviews for potential water management benefits of LGU realignments. | Jurisdictional alignments did not arise as issues during the 2015 Level II PRAP reviews. |
| Track 240 LGUs' Level I performance with emphasis on improving WMO and WD reporting. | All LGUs were tracked for basic plan and reporting compliance. Level I Compliance is documented in the PRAP Legislative report. |

| ASSISTANCE OBJECTIVES | |
|--|---|
| What We Proposed | What We Did |
| Promote the use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness. | 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. As a result, six applications were awarded for a total of \$27,600. |

| REPORTING OBJECTIVES | |
|--|--|
| What We Proposed | What We Did |
| Maintain the focus on resource outcomes in Level II performance reviews. | All 2015 Level II reports featured Resource Outcome information. Seven of the plans have resource outcome targets in their planned goals, and 6 of those had follow-up data that addressed the identified targets. |

2015 LGU Performance Review Results

Level I Results

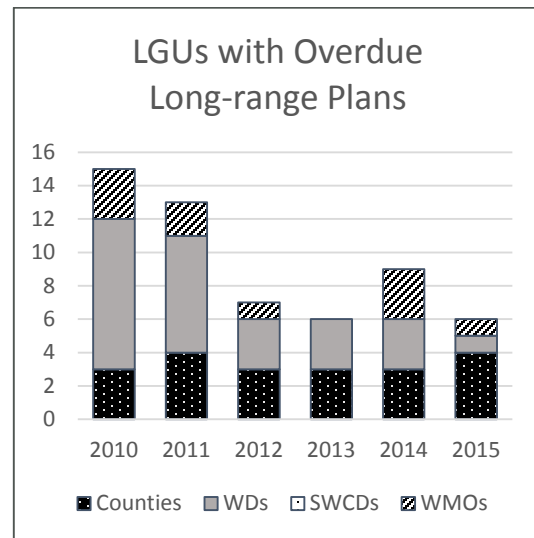
The Level I Performance Review monitors and tabulates all 240 LGUs’ long-range plan updates and their annual reporting of activities, ditch buffer reports, grants, and finances. BWSR tracks these performance measures each year to provide oversight of legal and policy mandates, but also to screen LGUs for indication of potential problems. Chronic lateness in financial or grant reporting, for example, may be a symptom of operational issues that require BWSR assistance.

| | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 240 LGUs | 81% | 79% | 68% |
| SWCDs (89) | 87% | 88% | 82% |
| Counties (87) | 91% | 87% | 62% |
| WMOs (18) | 44% | 28% | 61% |
| WDs (46) | 65% | 65% | 57% |

Overall, LGU compliance with Level I standards improved only slightly in 2015. However, BWSR began tightening Level I compliance tracking in 2013, and as can be seen in the table above, improvement in overall compliance has occurred since that time.

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. At the time of this report, 16 Local Water Management plans were operating under extensions granted by the BWSR Board. The number of overdue plans declined in 2015. One WMO and one Watershed District have

overdue plans. There is one County with an overdue Local Water Management Plan, but the update has been submitted to BWSR and is expected to be reviewed in January 2016. Until these plans are revised and approved, these organizations are ineligible for Clean Water Fund grants. As in each of the past five years, there are still three metro area county groundwater plans that need updating. The Carver County Groundwater management plan was approved by the BWSR Board in January, 2016, but was still considered to be overdue in this report based on a Dec. 31, 2015 deadline.



Appendix D (page 19) lists the LGUs that are overdue for plan revisions.

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

As in 2014, there was a significant improvement in on-time submittal of drainage system buffer strip reports by both

County and WD drainage authorities in 2015. Of the 96 LGUs that must submit annual buffer reports, 100% met the February 1, 2015 deadline, compared to 91% in 2014 and 67% in 2013. This continued increase is attributed to persistent efforts by BWSR staff to contact LGUs with missing reports before the due date.

SWCDs and counties showed a slight improvement in their on-time submittal of grant status reports via BWSR's on-line eLINK system, with 95% of LGUs meeting the deadline compared with 93% in 2014 and 86% in 2013.

Watershed district and metro area WMO compliance with the annual activity report requirement was slightly higher than last year (80%) but is not as good as it should be.

Appendix E (page 20) contains more details about reporting.

Annual financial reports and audits. All SWCDs submit annual financial reports to BWSR, and most are required to prepare annual audits of their financial records. SWCDs whose annual expenditures fall below a certain threshold do not have to prepare audits. In 2015, 94% of SWCDs submitted their financial reports on time, and 91% met the audit performance standard.

Watershed Districts and WMOs are also required to prepare annual audits. In 2015, 80% of WDs met the audit performance standard, and 56% of WMOs met the standard. See Appendix F (page 22) 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 uses two approaches in conducting Level II reviews: standard and watershed-based.

Standard Level II Performance Reviews

BWSR conducted standard Level II reviews of 10 LGUs in 2015: **Clay County and SWCD, Itasca County and SWCD, Pine County and SWCD, the Brown's Creek Watershed District and the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District, the Scott County WMO and the Carver County WMO.** In the instances where the County and the SWCD share the same local water plan (Clay, Itasca and Pine) the reviews were conducted jointly. The remaining LGUs received individual reviews. Appendix G (page 23-29) contains summaries of the performance review reports. Full reports are available from BWSR by request.

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

1. Add PTM specifics into water plan. All of the non-watershed based Level II PRAP reviews resulted in a recommendation that organizations include, or expand on existing use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measured 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 pilot projects, the degree to which this criteria is currently being used varies. However, continued and expanded use of these criteria by all organizations would be beneficial even before One Watershed – One Plan becomes the prevailing format for water planning efforts.

2. Analyze staffing and compensation.

Anticipated workload increases corresponding to new and developing programs at the state level (such as the Buffer Program) are likely to impact

Minnesota's SWCDs. With this in mind, recommendations for staffing capacity and compensation analysis were included in all three of the SWCD Level II Reviews. The recent allocation of additional funding could be a resource for the districts should they discover that existing capacity is not enough to implement new programs in addition to their existing workload. Therefore it is a good time to conduct organizational analysis on this level.

3. Include water quality trends on website.

Another common thread seen in many of the 2015 Level II reviews was the lack of reporting of resource trends on websites and in annual reports. While many of the organizations reviewed are conducting water quality monitoring, few take the time to make the results available in formats that are easy for the public to access and understand. Additional efforts to report resource trends would help the organizations, as well as the State identify progress resulting from water quality improvement efforts. (See Program Conclusions, page 14.)

Watershed-based Level II Performance

Reviews. In late 2014 BWSR began the third watershed-based performance review focused on LGUs with jurisdiction in the same watershed. In addition to evaluating plan implementation, the watershed-based review process examines the extent to which LGUs share a watershed focus and collaboration. BWSR selected the Crow Wing River watershed for this review because the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency completed a WRAPS (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies) project in the watershed just a few months prior. WRAPS identifies water quality conditions and trends in the lakes and streams, stressors affecting impaired waters, pollutant sources, and restoration and protection strategies targeted to particular resource priorities. The final WRAPS report was issued in December 2014 just as this performance review was getting started. BWSR was interested in examining the effect the

WRAPS process had on collaboration among the involved LGUs.

The 10 LGUs included in this performance review participated in developing the WRAPS, along with other local and state agencies, during the past four



years. Unlike the two previous watershed based PRAP reviews, the LGUs in the watershed had no formal, or even informal collaborative structure other than the WRAPS project. The Crow Wing River Watershed review included 10 LGUs: **The counties and SWCDs in Becker, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard and Wadena counties.**

BWSR completed the process with the delivery of a joint report and individual reports to all LGUs. Appendix H (pages 30-34) contains the summaries from all the reports.

As part of the process, BWSR compared the priority concerns of each of the five county plans. A comparison of these broad plan elements showed that there were three concerns addressed by nearly all of the plans; protect drinking water/groundwater quality, protect surface water quality, and stormwater management.

In general, the LGUs operating in the Crow Wing River watershed are making good progress in implementing their planned projects and programs. However, the format of the plans themselves vary widely based on age of the existing plan. For example, the Crow Wing plan, adopted in 2013, contained the standard Goal,

Objective, and Action listing with implementation organized according to minor watershed and with measureable outcomes for each plan objective. Older plans were comprised of different variations on this structure.

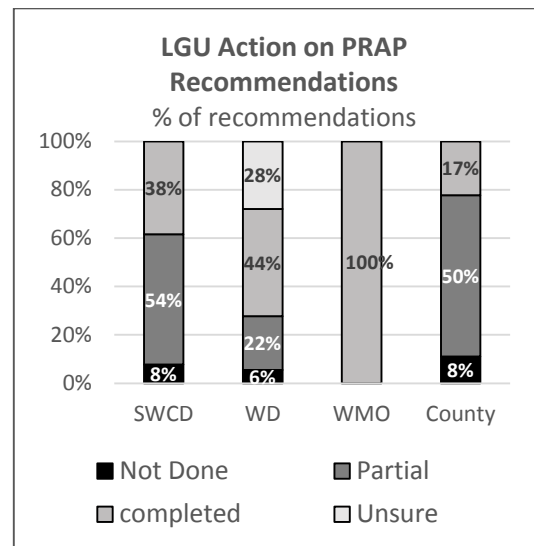
Due to a high degree of variability in reported compliance with watershed based performance standards, it was difficult to draw conclusions about the actual amount and type of collaboration that is occurring among these 10 LGUs in the Crow Wing River watershed. However, there appeared to be reasonably good collaboration within each county between the county water management staff and the SWCD staff. Based on discussion among the LGU lead staff during this performance review process, the WRAPS process that was managed by the Minnesota PCA did not foster a significant level of watershed identity or collaboration among the 10 LGUs. While some LGUs will consult the WRAPS data in their plan updates, others found little use or applicability to their planning process

The survey results and subsequent discussion revealed that there is little if any collaboration on a major watershed scale among LGUs in the Crow Wing River watershed. BWSR believes that the size and diversity of this watershed requires a smaller scale as the focus for improved collaboration on implementation. The use of a common method of minor watershed analysis would identify areas in each jurisdiction within the major watershed that can be managed similarly. With collaboration on plan development over the next few years, there will be the opportunity to continue with good communication and coordination through implementation.

Coordination with One Watershed-One Plan. Elements of the watershed-based performance review process were used in BWSR’s *One Watershed-One Plan* initiative. In a few years, BWSR will use the PRAP watershed-based process to assess the implementation of these new watershed plans.

Survey of LGU Implementation of PRAP Recommendations

A PRAP program goal for 2015 was to find out to what extent LGUs are following through on the recommendations BWSR offers as part of each performance review.



BWSR surveyed a sample of 29 of the 63 LGUs that had a Level II performance review between 2008 and 2013. Lead staff were asked to indicate the level of completion for each of the recommendations included in their PRAP reports.

22 of the 29 LGUs (76%) responded. Survey results showed that LGUs self-reported fully completing 38% of the recommendations and partially completing another 38%, meaning that 76% of BWSR’s recommendations were addressed to some degree.

These survey results indicate that LGUs find the majority of the recommendations contained in the PRAP reports to be useful for their organizations. Additional follow up is needed to determine why some recommendations are implemented while others are not.

Level III Results

There were no Level III performance reviews conducted in 2015.

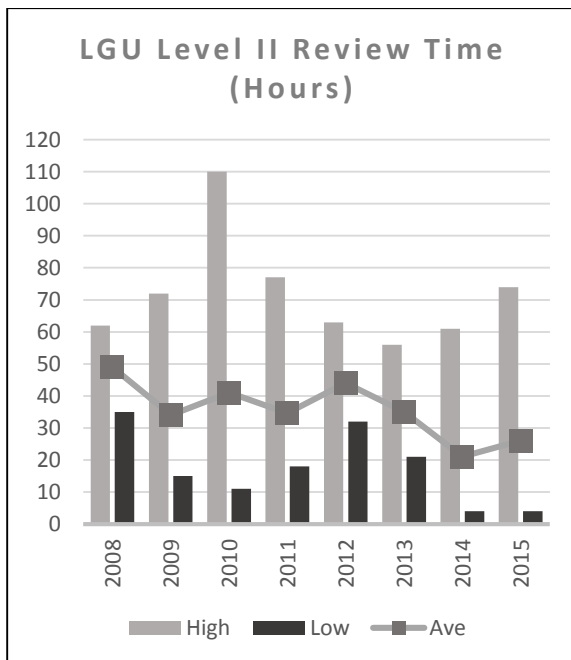
performance of the LGU, and offer realistic and useful recommendations for improving performance.

Level IV Results

No Level IV actions were conducted in 2015.

PRAP 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 2015 LGU staff spent an average of 26 hours on their Level II review, consistent with recent trends.



Not including overall performance review administration and process development, BWSR staff spent an average of 24 hours for each Level II performance review, consistent with the past few years.

While BWSR seeks to maintain a balance between getting good information and minimizing the LGU time required to provide it, spending less time on a PRAP review isn’t always desirable. Our goal is to gather as much pertinent information as needed to assess the

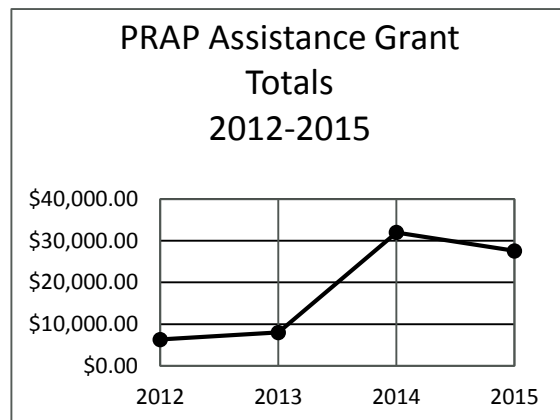
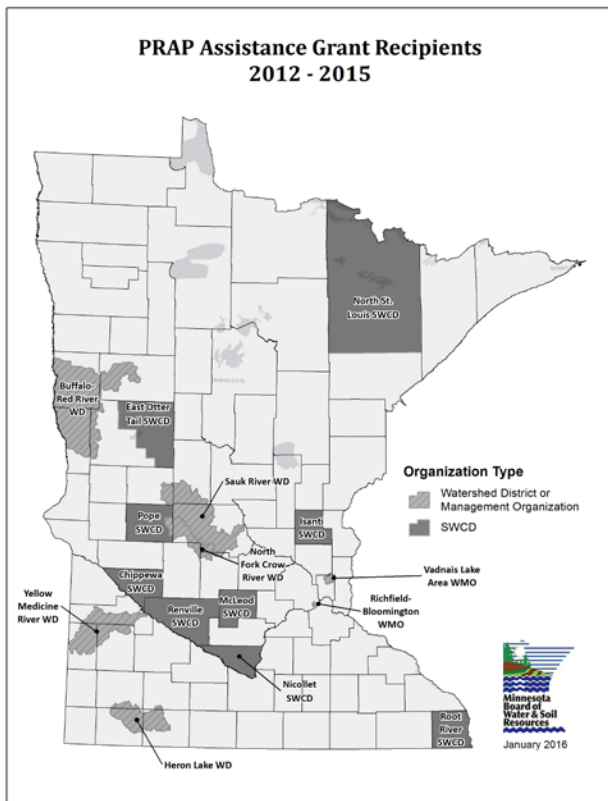
Assistance Services to Local Governments

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 \$73,000 has been awarded to LGUs around Minnesota. Priority is given to applicants submitting projects related to eligible PRAP Level II, III, or IV recommendations, but other organizations are also eligible. The grants are made on a cost-share, reimbursement basis with a cap of \$10,000 per LGU. 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 as long as funds are available.

In 2015, the BWSR Board again 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). This resolution differed from previous years in that it did not tie the approval authority to a specific biennium. As a result, the board will continue to receive annual updates on the program, but will not need to renew the resolution each biennium until they choose to modify the program.



Grants totaling \$27,600 were issued to the Isanti SWCD, McLeod SWCD, Richfield-Bloomington WMO, Renville SWCD, the North Fork Crow River watershed District and the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District. The awarded funds will be used for the development of operating policies, employee compensation assessments, organizational assessments, strategic planning and goal setting.

In 2015, 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 new guidance and application information maintains the streamlined

process used in the past, but now asks applicants to describe how their Board will be involved in the project, to outline a scope of work, and to provide more detailed budget information as part of the application. The revised application information can be found in Appendix C.

The BWSR Executive Director regularly informs Board members of assistance grant status. 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.

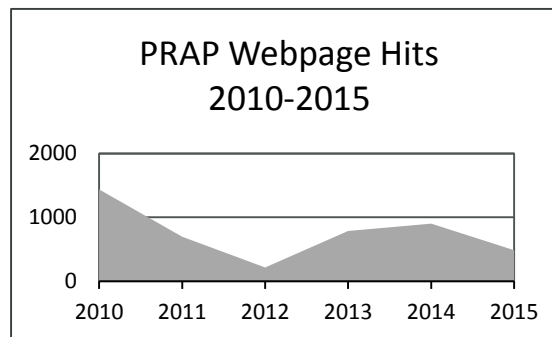
LGU-Generated

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 gives users access to a searchable database of basic Level I performance information that BWSR has collected for each LGU from 2008-2013. The reporting years of 2014 and 2015 are pending updates. In the future, BWSR plans to convert this database to BWSR's eLink system and add a portal to allow public access to the data. However that conversion is still not scheduled.

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). In 2014 BWSR added a resource outcomes feature to all Level II reports, highlighting those changes in resource conditions related to LGU projects and program. This feature was continued in 2015.

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 J.)

For those LGUs that undergo a Level II performance review, their report lists a "commendation" for compliance with each high performance (or benchmark) performance standard, demonstrating practices over and above basic requirements. All 2015 standard Level II LGUs received such commendations.

Program Conclusions and Future Direction

Conclusions from 2015 Reviews

- **Reminders and incentives contribute significantly to on-time reporting by LGUs.** Overall reporting performance and plan status increased slightly in 2015. This is especially true in the case of buffer strip reporting, which reached 100% compliance in 2015, and can be attributed to close attention from BWSR staff.
- **While some organizations have begun including prioritized, targeted and measurable as criteria for goals and objectives in their water plan, continued encouragement is needed.** PRAP will continue to highlight the presences of PTM criteria in existing plans, and make recommendations for inclusions in plans where it is absent.
- **Website reporting of resource trends could be improved.** Many of the LGUs included in 2015 Level II reviews participate in or lead water quality monitoring programs, yet the use of websites to report trends and results is

limited. Additional efforts to make these results easily accessible to the public would be beneficial.

- **The three watershed based reviews conducted between 2013 and 2015 have shown us that the watershed based PRAP level II process will be useful for the One Watershed One Plan approach in the future, and elements of this approach have been used in the One Watershed-One Plan initiative.** Further analysis is needed to determine if there is a benefit to applying the watershed-based PRAP level II process to organizations not currently involved in a watershed-based planning effort.
- **76% of the PRAP Level II recommendations for LGU improvements are seen as useful or necessary, as shown by the rates at which LGUs have adopted them.** However, BWSR must do more to follow-up with LGUs to find out why some recommendations are not being adopted, and to promote PRAP Assistance Grants as a means to implement improvements.

PRAP Program Objectives for 2016

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- Take measures to improve WMO and WD reporting.
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- Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.
- Determine the benefits and consequences of using the watershed-based approach to PRAP Level II reviews in watersheds where there is no existing watershed based organization or structure in place.
- Update the PRAP page of the BWSR website to provide more detailed information about the program.

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 Resolution # 15-37

**Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
Board Authorization of Delegation for PRAP Assistance Grants to LGUs**

WHEREAS the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is mandated under Minnesota Statutes Chap 103B.102 to regularly review the performance of local government water management entities in the state and provide assistance for “underperforming entities,” and

WHEREAS BWSR routinely monitors the performance of Minnesota’s local government water and land management entities, and during the course of those reviews has identified the need for specialized assistance to improve their operational performance, and

WHEREAS BWSR receives other requests for specialized assistance to address particularly difficult operational or performance problems that cannot be addressed by routine BWSR staff support, and


WHEREAS the legislature has specifically authorized use of cost share rollover funds for local government assistance to address specialized assistance needs, and

WHEREAS the BWSR board has previously authorized the PRAP Assistance Grants as a delegated authority to the Executive Director,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the BWSR Board authorizes the Executive Director to expend up to \$10,000 per grant or contract for specialized assistance to local government water management entities to address operational or service delivery needs identified through a PRAP assessment or specialized assistance request, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the BWSR Board requires that all such funds awarded be cost shared by the grantee at a percentage dependent on the size of the grant and determined by the Executive Director, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the aggregate amount of expenditures for the PRAP program and awards are consistent with any appropriation conditions set by the legislature and are reported to the Board at least once per year.


Brian Napstad, Chair

Date: 6/24/15

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

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. 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 Jenny Gieseke, PRAP Coordinator (jenny.gieseke@state.mn.us) 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: 2015 LGU Long-Range Plan Status as of December 31, 2015

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 Revisions

All but one local water management plans are current. The BWSR Board has approved extensions for 16 plans.

- The Hubbard County LWM plan expired in October of 2015. This plan has been submitted for State review and is on the agenda for the Northern Committee meeting in January.

Metro County Groundwater Plan Revision Overdue

- Carver (Carver Groundwater Plan is near completion)
- Ramsey
- Scott

Anoka and Hennepin Counties have chosen not to participate in this optional program.

Watershed Districts

10-Year Watershed Management Plan Revision Overdue

- Crooked Creek

Watershed Management Organizations

- Vermillion River WMO plan expired in December, 2015

Appendix E

Level I: Status of Annual Reports for 2014 as of December 31, 2015

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

eLINK Status Reports of Grant Expenditures

Three SWCDs submitted late reports; two SWCDs did not submit reports.

Late Reports:

- Aitkin SWCD
- Le Sueur SWCD
- Washington Conservation District

Reports Not Submitted:

- Carver SWCD
- Hennepin County*

* On December 18, 2013, the BWSR Board issued an order for the discontinuance of the Hennepin Conservation District (HCD) and transferred all District duties and authorities to the Hennepin County Board, including eLINK reporting duties for grants assigned to the HCD.

Counties

Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Reports

All reports submitted on time.

eLINK Status Reports of Grant Expenditures

Two counties submitted late reports; Three counties did not submit reports.

Late Reports:

- Chisago County
- Scott County

Reports Not Submitted:

- Hennepin County
- Le Sueur County
- Morrison County

Watershed Districts

Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Reports

All reports submitted on time.

Annual Activity Reports Not Submitted:

- Cormorant Lakes WD
- Joe River WD
- Pelican River WD

Annual Activity Reports Submitted Late:

Six reports were submitted late

- Brown's Creek WD
- Clearwater River WD
- Lower Minnesota River WD
- Middle Snake-Tamarac River WD
- Sand Hill WD
- Thirty Lakes
- Roseau River WD

Metro Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations

Annual Activity Reports Not Submitted:

- Grass Lake
- Eagan-Inver Grove Heights

Annual Activity Reports Submitted Late:

Two reports were submitted late

- Black Dog WMO
- Middle St. Croix WMO

Appendix F

Level I: Status of Financial Reports and Audits for 2014 as of December 31, 2015

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Annual Financial Reports (all 89 Districts)

All 89 SWCD's submitted financial reports. However, 5 submitted their reports late, after being granted extensions.

Late Financial Reports:

- Chippewa
- Lyon
- Nicollet
- East Ottertail
- Wabasha

Annual Audits (56 required)

Annual Audits Not Submitted

- Aitkin
- Anoka
- Itasca
- Lyon

Annual Audits Submitted Late

- Chisago

Watershed Districts

Annual Audits Not Completed:

- Yellow Medicine River WD
- High Island Creek WD
- Thirty Lakes WD
- Joe River WD
- Cormorant Lakes WD
- Pelican River WD

Annual Audits Submitted Late:

- Capital Region Watershed District
- Coon Creek Watershed District
- Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District
- Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

Metro Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations

Annual Audits Not Submitted:

- North Cannon River WMO
- Upper Rum River WMO*
- Scott WMO
- Sunrise River WMO*

* The Upper Rum River WMO and the Sunrise River WMO Audits were in process at the time of this report, and expected to be complete and submitted to BWSR in January 2016.

Annual Audits Submitted Late:

- Black Dog WMO
- Vermillion River WMO
- Middle St. Croix WMO
- Lower Rum WMO

Appendix G

Standard Level II Performance Review

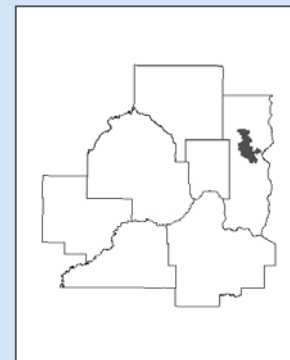
Final Report Summaries

Brown's Creek Watershed District

Key Findings and Conclusions

The strong engagement and commitment of the Watershed District Board in combination with the proficiency of the Watershed District Administrator makes Brown's Creek Watershed District a very effective organization.

The organization consistently works toward achieving the goals outlined in their Water Management Plan, and has been successful in creating partnerships and joint efforts to do so.



Resource Outcomes

The BCWD watershed management plan contains specific, measureable resource outcomes as objectives for lakes and streams. In addition, the district has assigned goals to waterbodies in the watershed district through the Brown's Creek TMDL Implementation plan, and individual Lake Management Plans.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Brown's Creek WD met 13 out of 15 Watershed District Basic Performance Standards
- Brown's Creek WD met 12 out of 12 Watershed District High Performance Standards

The high marks given to the BCWD by their partners in the areas of communication, quality of work, relationships and follow through serve as further proof that the organization is on track, and highly functioning.

Action Items

- Submit annual, on-time Activity Reports
- Provide a link to all grant reports on the BCWD website

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Continue and expand the use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable as criteria for Goals and Objectives in the next water management plan as appropriate.

Recommendation 2: Address Action Items

Recommendation 3: Consider expanding partnerships with neighboring Watershed Districts

Carver WMO

Key Findings and Conclusions

The Carver WMO has a solid record of accomplishment in all areas of their water management plan. The organization can serve as an example of how a systematic approach to water management can be delivered.

Resource Outcomes

The Carver WMO watershed management plan contains specific, measurable resource outcomes goals for water quality. The WMO annual water quality report contains information about the water quality results achieved in area streams. According to the information available at the time of this review, the water quality of streams within the WMO is variable, with some watercourses showing improved water quality, while others show declines or do not appear to have trends in either direction.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Carver WMO met 13 out of 13 Water Management Organization Basic Performance Standards
- Carver WMO met 10 out of 12 Water Management Organization High Performance Standards

The WMO's compliance with BWSR performance standards puts them among the top performers in meeting the essential, administrative, planning and communication practices that lead to an effective, efficient organization.

The WMO's partners reinforce these conclusions in their high marks for communication, quality of work, relations with customers and follow-through.

Action Items

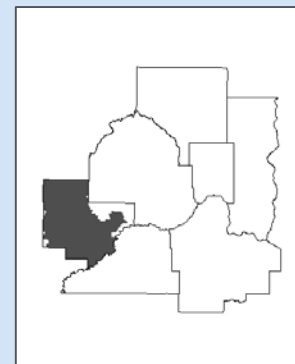
There are no Action Items for the Carver WMO

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Continue and expand the use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable as criteria for Goals and Objectives in the next water management plan as appropriate.

Recommendation 2: Identify and track outcomes of educational efforts.

Recommendation 3: Make lake water quality data and trends easily accessible to the public.



Clay County and Clay SWCD

Key Findings and Conclusions

Clay County and the Clay SWCD are doing an adequate job of administering local water management and land conservation programs and projects. For the most part, both organizations are getting the work done, but more effort could be made to achieve higher performance.

Resource Outcomes

The Clay Local Water Management Plan does contain some resource outcome goals and objectives. However, progress toward those goals is not routinely reported.

Performance Standards Compliance

Clay County

- Clay County met 11 out of 11 County Basic Performance Standards
- Clay County met 8 out of 12 County High Performance Standards

Clay SWCD

- Clay SWCD met 10 of 12 SWCD Basic Performance Standards
- Clay SWCD met 10 of 15 SWCD High Performance Standards

With the upcoming revision of the comprehensive local water plan, there is an opportunity for Clay County and SWCD to reorient its local water plan to problems and priorities specific to the county's major waterbodies, and to provide resource specific outcomes.

Action Items

- A Data practices policy describing how the SWCD responds to requests for information submitted under the Minnesota Data Practices Act (MS Chap. 13) must be developed for the District.
- TAA (or JAA) levels of district staff need to be reviewed and reported annually

Recommendations

Joint Recommendation 1: Consider using Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria for Goals and Objectives in the next water management plan.

Joint Recommendation 2: In the next Water Plan update, take care to identify realistic activities that will be accomplished within a 10 year time frame.

Clay SWCD Recommendation 1: Address Action Items and consider adding Benchmark standards.

Clay SWCD Recommendation 2: Conduct a strategic assessment of the District to determine whether existing mission, goals, staff capacity is sufficient to meet the needs and demands for conservation services in the district.

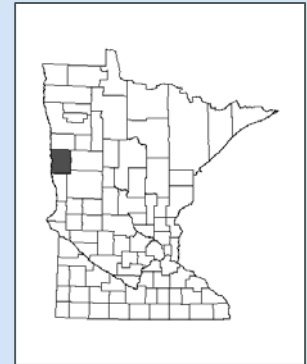
Clay SWCD Recommendation 3: Develop a plan and improve efforts to gather water quality data and post results to the website and include in annual reports.

Clay SWCD Recommendation 4: Establish stronger working relationships with partners.

Clay SWCD Recommendation 5: Work to improve communication with partners.

Clay County Recommendation 1: County staff should work to improve Communication with their partners.

Clay County Recommendation 2: Select benchmark performance standards to improve organizational performance.

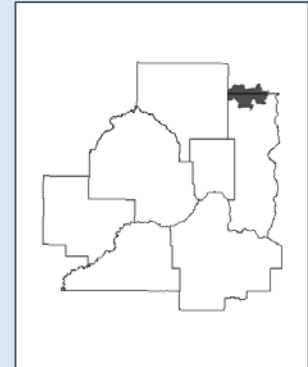


Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

Key Findings and Conclusions

A general theme that emerged from this performance review is that the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District is a proactive organization, one that is willing to set ambitious goals for itself. The Board shows a willingness to challenge itself and staff to achieve impressive results.

Progress on the Watershed Management Plan is good. The District has shown intentional efforts toward completing action items outlined in the plan and is taking the initiative to amend/update the plan as issues and opportunities arise. The District should be commended for their efforts to keep the plan current in addressing issues and opportunities that avail themselves to the District. One potential challenge the CLFLWD may face is the potential to overextend District capacities to achieve scheduled activities and complete projects.



Resource Outcomes

The CLFLWD watershed management plan contains specific, measureable resource outcomes, particularly in regard to Lake Water Quality. The WD annual reports and monitoring reports contain detailed information about water quality in the lakes and streams of the watershed.

According to the information available at the time of this review, trends in stream water quality cannot be deduced based on existing data due to changes in sampling techniques. Most of the lakes monitored show a neutral trend – neither declining nor improving, but two lakes show a declining trend.

Performance Standards Compliance

- CLFLWD met 16 out of 16 Watershed District Basic Performance Standards
- CLFLWD met 10 out of 13 Watershed District High Performance Standards

Action Items

There are no Action Items for the CLFLWD at this time.

Recommendations

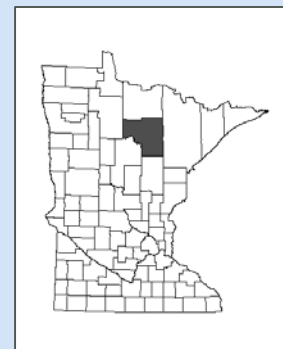
Recommendation 1: Implement Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria for Goals and Objectives in the next water management plan.

Recommendation 2: To ensure that District resources are sufficient for meeting planned goals and objectives, conduct a detailed workload analysis of planned activities for next three years.

Itasca County ENVS and Itasca SWCD

Key Findings and Conclusions

The Itasca county ENVS and the Itasca SWCD have fostered a strong working relationship that serves both agencies well. This performance assessment has confirmed their effective administration of local water management and land conservation programs and projects. For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Recent staff turnover at the SWCD has created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners, but there is a strong base to build upon for future local water management in Itasca County.



With the upcoming revision of the comprehensive local water plan, there will be an opportunity for Itasca County and SWCD to reorient its local water plan to specific problems and priorities county's waterbodies.

Resource Outcomes

The Itasca Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes.

Performance Standards Compliance

Itasca County

- Itasca County met 13 out of 14 County Basic Performance Standards
- Itasca County met 9 out of 11 County High Performance Standards

Itasca SWCD

- Itasca SWCD met 12 of 12 SWCD Basic Performance Standards
- Itasca SWCD met 12 of 15 SWCD High Performance Standards

The partners who responded to the PRAP survey provided consistently high marks in their judgement of the performance of the ENVS, and mixed marks in the performance of the SWCD. This appears to be due to lack of experiences working with the new district staff, and not a reflection of staff performance.

Action Items

- Organize Local Water Management plan priority concerns, objectives and/or action items by major watershed

Recommendations

Joint Recommendation 1: Use the major or minor watershed scale for plan organization.

Joint Recommendation 2: Consider using Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria for Goals and Objectives in the next water management plan.

Joint Recommendation 3: Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals.

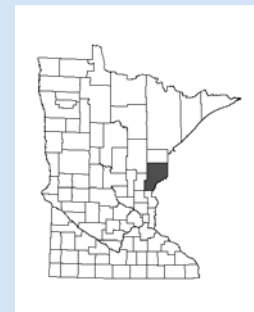
Joint Recommendation 4: Reassess organizational lead responsibilities in next water plan update.

Itasca SWCD Recommendation 1: Conduct a staff capacity and compensation assessment to determine whether existing staff capacity & compensation is sufficient to meet the needs and demands for conservation services in the district.

Pine County and Pine SWCD

Key Findings and Conclusions

The Pine county P&Z and the Pine SWCD meet the basic requirements of this assessment. The P&Z and SWCD show good compliance with BWSR's basic and benchmark performance standards, and the 2015, 5 year amendment of the Pine County Local Water Management Plan is likely to result in improved targeting and measurement of progress in plan implementation.



Resource Outcomes

One of the goals in the 2010 Pine County Local Water Management Plan was related to resource outcomes, but the plan did not contain measurable actions for that resource outcome. Therefore, this report of plan accomplishments does not include information about resource changes resulting from projects undertaken by the Pine P&Z or the Pine SWCD. However, it should be noted that the 2015, 5 year amendment does contain some resource outcome goals and measurable actions. Information about resource changes resulting from projects described in the 2015 amendment should be available for future PRAP assessments.

Performance Standards Compliance

Pine County

- Pine County met 9 out of 10 County Basic Performance Standards
- Pine County met 6 out of 11 County High Performance Standards

Pine SWCD

- Pine SWCD met 12 of 12 SWCD Basic Performance Standards
- Pine SWCD met 9 of 15 SWCD High Performance Standards

For the most part, surveyed partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Staff turnover at both organizations has likely impacted some working relationships, but there is a strong base to build upon for future local water management in Pine County. In addition, there are opportunities for creating larger partnership networks for both entities that should be considered. Joint recommendation 1 provides more detail.

Action Items

There are no action items for either entity.

Recommendations

Joint Recommendation 1: Be proactive in establishing partnerships with additional organizations to assist in the implementation of water plan activities and other conservation actions.

Joint Recommendation 2: Conduct a staff capacity and compensation assessment to determine whether existing staff capacity, compensation and benefits are sufficient to meet the needs and demands for conservation services.

Pine SWCD Recommendation 1: Utilize water quality information and report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals.

Pine SWCD Recommendation 2: Use Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable (PTM) criteria when selecting and implementing conservation projects.

Scott WMO

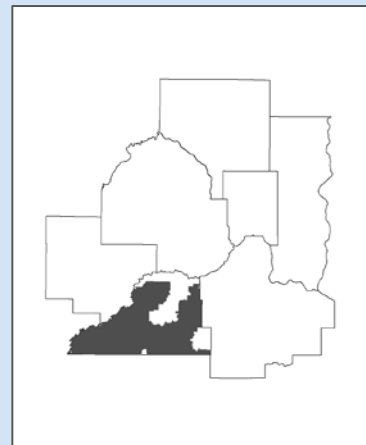
Key Findings and Conclusions

The Scott WMO can serve as an example of how a systematic approach to water management can be delivered. The WMO has a solid record of accomplishment in all areas of their water management plan.

The WMO's compliance with BWSR performance standards puts them among the top performers in meeting the essential, administrative, planning and communication practices that lead to an effective, efficient organization.

The responses of the WMO's partners reinforce these conclusions with high marks for communication, quality of work, relations with customers and follow-through.

The designation of 4 out of the seven goals in the water resource management plan as resource outcome goals is an innovative step toward outcome based tracking of progress in improving water quality. However, this designation could be improved through the creation of resource specific, measurable water quality and habitat objectives within the plan (see Recommendation 1).



Resource Outcomes

Four of the seven goals in the Scott WMO Water Resources Management plan are related to resource outcomes. The WMO uses long term metrics to track progress toward those resources goals each year in their annual report. No significant trends in the water quality of local resources have been reported since 2011. However, the 2014 reports an increase in the native plant diversity and coverage in Cedar Lake.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Scott WMO met 12 out of 13 Water Management Organization Basic Performance Standards
- Scott WMO met 11 out of 12 Water Management Organization High Performance Standards

Action Items

- Complete annual audit on time

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Consider using Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria for Goals and Objectives in the next water management plan.

Recommendation 2: Structure annual reports or website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals.

Appendix H

Crow Wing River Watershed Based Level II Review

Final Report Summaries

Crow Wing River Watershed PRAP Summary of Performance Review

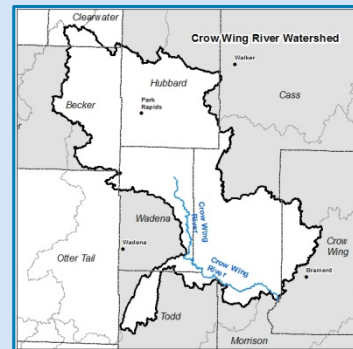
Becker County Planning and Zoning and Becker SWCD

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The Becker LGUs operate well-defined programs to accomplish local water and related resource management. The PZD has delegated many areas of environmental management to the SWCD and then operates to implement its own regulatory programs. Better communication is needed to ensure maximum collaboration.

The upcoming local water management plan revision will present several challenges for the on-going work of these LGUs given the new information and context resulting from the MPCA's Crow Wing River WRAPS document and the DNR's Straight River Groundwater Management Area Plan. Both LGUs will have to determine the implications of these reports for local implementation within the limitations of local funding and staff capabilities.

The reported accomplishment of action items in the local water management plan is reasonably good given the amount staff turnover for both entities within the timeframe of the plan. Recent improvements to SWCD staff capacity and technological capability will serve the District and county well.



Resource Outcomes

The Becker County local water management plan does include targeted objectives for resource outcomes. However the targeted resources are not within the Crow Wing River watershed area.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Becker PZD met 9 out of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards
- Becker SWCD met 18 out of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards

Coordination between the county and SWCD, as recommended in bullet one below, is already occurring in a measured and effective way, according to reports from the SWCD.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Establish a regular mechanism to foster communication and collaboration between the county PZD and SWCD.

Recommendation 2: Develop an annual work plan to focus on SWCD priorities.

Crow Wing River Watershed PRAP Summary of Performance Review

Cass County Environmental Services and Cass SWCD

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

Since their service agreement in 2009 the Cass ESD and Cass SWCD have worked effectively as a team with a good allocation of staff among the various programs of both entities. The conservation, resource management and local water management work is generally well-respected, based on BWSR staff observation in working with the county.

The inclusion of resource trend assessments as a specific action in their comprehensive local water plan is commendable. The assessment data should be widely reported.



Resource Outcomes

The Cass County comprehensive local water management plan contains objectives or actions that focus on resource outcomes (e.g., Action C.1.12, Action G.2.1). The plan contains actions that require assessment of lake water quality trends and the cumulative effects of development on receiving surface waters. Lake data is reported on the county ESD webpage.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Cass ESD & SWCD met 17 out of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards

The upcoming comprehensive local water plan revision will provide an opportunity for the county and SWCD to take their conservation work to another level and to facilitate even more collaboration, especially across jurisdictional boundaries.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Update information about lake water quality trends and use it in the next plan revision to set priorities.

Recommendation 2: Use the minor watershed scale for plan organization.

Recommendation 3: Seek funding for a shared position to promote county objectives for forest management.

Crow Wing River Watershed PRAP Summary of Performance Review

Crow Wing County Local Water Management and Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

During the past several years these two Crow Wing County water and resource management agencies have developed a strong, cooperative working relationship. There is good communication at the staff level and a good understanding of their respective spheres of operation. Their list of plan accomplishments is impressive for a recently revised plan. And the plan itself is a model for local water management guidance in this part of the state, with its minor watershed approach and emphasis on resource outcomes.

The reported compliance with watershed-based collaboration standards is reasonably good and the areas where one entity is weaker is compensated for by the strengths of the other.

Resource Outcomes

The Crow Wing County local water management plan does contain objectives for resource outcomes and targeting for a variety of priority areas and resource issues. The plan and the County LSD website reports trends for water quality of priority lakes.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Crow Wing County met 13 out of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards
- Crow Wing SWCD met 13 out of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards

The recent acquisition of a DNR grant for private forest management is another notable accomplishment. The pursuit of similar grants for shared positions with other LGUs in the watershed will serve the interests of Crow Wing County as a downstream area dependent on upstream counties to implement strong conservation programs.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Continue to seek funding for shared positions with neighboring counties to promote county objectives for resource management.

Recommendation 2: Seek opportunities to participate in the development of the upstream counties' local water plans to ensure that Crow Wing County's objectives are addressed.



Crow Wing River Watershed PRAP Summary of Performance Review

Hubbard County Environmental Services and Hubbard SWCD

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The Hubbard Environmental Services Department (ESD) and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) operate within well-defined boundaries to accomplish local water and related resource management in Hubbard County. The County ESD has delegated many areas of environmental management to the SWCD and then operates to maintain its own regulatory program responsibilities.

The upcoming local water management plan revision will present several challenges for the on-going work of these agencies given the new information and context resulting from the MPCA's Crow Wing River WRAPS document and the DNR's Straight River Groundwater Management Area Plan. The Hubbard LGUs will have to determine the implications of these reports for local implementation within the limitations of local funding and staff capabilities.



Resource Outcomes

The Hubbard County local water management plan does not have objectives or targets for resource outcomes. However the plan does include objectives that call for monitoring of ground and surface water resources. Presumably, the results of this monitoring activity are available for review and analysis.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Hubbard ESD met 2 out of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards
- Hubbard SWCD met 17 out of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards

The reported accomplishments of objectives (action items) in the existing local water management plan are reasonably good given the amount of SWCD staff turnover within the timeframe of the plan. The arrangement whereby the SWCD handles the multijurisdictional coordination of the county's water management projects and programs appears to be working, as well.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Use the minor watershed scale for plan organization.

Recommendation 2: Seek funding for a shared position to promote county objectives for resource management.

Crow Wing River Watershed PRAP Summary of Performance Review

Wadena County Planning & Zoning Department and Wadena SWCD

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

The Wadena LGUs operate within well-defined boundaries to accomplish local water and related resource management. The SWCD has improved service delivery and funding support since the start of the shared services agreement with East Otter Tail SWCD. The county PZD provides good service in their areas of responsibility, including the sub-surface sewage treatment system and shoreland regulatory programs. The division of responsibilities for plan implementation between the county and SWCD appears to be working well. Both LGUs have reported good progress on action items in their local water management plan.



The biggest challenge for the delivery of local environmental and conservation services is the limited funding base in Wadena County to meet the needs. Consequently, in their upcoming plan revision the LGUs need to explore shared service delivery options that expand current limited staff capacity. The LGUs' compliance rating is lowest for performance standards regarding collaboration on program execution, confirming that more could be done in this area.

Resource Outcomes

The Wadena County local water management plan does not have objectives or targets for resource outcomes. Therefore, there are no resource outcomes to report. However, the SWCD does report well monitoring data on their website.

Performance Standards Compliance

- Wadena PZD and SWCD met 10 of 21 Watershed Collaboration Performance Standards

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Use the minor watershed scale for plan organization

Recommendation 2: Seek funding for a shared position to promote county objectives for resource management.

Appendix I

Performance Standards Checklists used in Level II Reviews

| COUNTY LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------|--------|--|
| Performance Area | Performance Standard | | Rating | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic practice or statutory requirement ★ High Performance (formerly called "benchmark") standard (see instructions at http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html for explanation of standards) | Yes, No, or Value | | |
| | | YES | NO | |
| Admin | ■ eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time | | | |
| | ■ Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time | | | |
| | ■ NRBG Allocation and Contribution Report submitted & approved | | | |
| | ★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines | | | |
| Planning | ■ Local water mgmt plan: current, with 5-year update | | | |
| | ■ Metro counties: groundwater plan up-to-date | | | |
| | ■ Biennial Budget Request submitted on-time | | | |
| | ■ LWM Plan organizes priority concerns, objectives and/or action items by major watershed | | | |
| | ★ LWM Implementation Plan completed within 5 yrs of plan adoption | | | |
| | ★ Water quality trend data used for short- and long-range plan priorities | | | |
| Execution | ■ Progress on plan priority concern #1 | | rating | |
| | ■ Progress on plan priority concern #2 | | rating | |
| | ■ Progress on plan priority concern #3 | | rating | |
| | ■ Progress on plan priority concern #4 | | rating | |
| | ■ Progress on plan priority concern #5 | | rating | |
| | ★ State \$ leveraged at least 1.5 times in non-state \$ | | | |
| | ★ Data collected to track outcomes for each priority concern | | | |
| | ★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies | | | |
| Communication & Coordination | ■ Grant report(s) posted on website | | | |
| | ■ Communication piece: sent within last 12 months | | | |
| | ★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs | | | |
| | ★ Partnerships: liaison with SWCDs/WDs and cooperative projects/tasks done | | | |
| | ★ Annual report to water plan advisory committee on plan progress | | | |
| | ★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan | | | |
| | ★ County local water plan on county website | | | |
| | ★ Water management ordinances on county website | | | |

| SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS | | | | |
|---|---|--|-------------------|----|
| Performance Area | Performance Standard | | Rating | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement ★ High Performance (formerly called "benchmark") standard (see instructions at http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html for explanation of standards) | | Yes, No, or Value | |
| | | | YES | NO |
| Administration | ■ Financial statement: annual, on-time and balances | | | |
| | ■ Financial audit: completed within last 3 yrs or \$500K | | | |
| | ■ eLINK Grant Report(s) submitted on-time | | | |
| | ■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | | |
| | ■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | | |
| | ■ Technical approval authorities: reviewed and reported annually | | | |
| | ★ Operational guidelines exist and current | | | |
| | ★ Board training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each board member | | | |
| | ★ Staff training: orientation and cont. ed. plan and record for each staff member | | | |
| Planning | ■ Comprehensive Plan: updated within 5 yrs or current resolution adopting unexpired county LWM plan | | | |
| | ■ Biennial Budget Request submitted on time | | | |
| | ★ LWM or Comp Plan organizes priority concerns, objectives and/or action items by major watershed | | | |
| | ★ Strategic plan sets priorities based on resource trend data and available capacity | | | |
| | ★ Annual Plan of Work: based on comp plan, strategic priorities | | | |
| Execution | ■ State cost share \$ spent in high priority problem areas | | % | |
| | ■ Total expenditures per year (over past 10 yrs) | | see below | |
| | ■ Months of operating funds in reserve | | | |
| | ★ State \$ leverage at least 1.5 times in non-state \$ | | | |
| | ★ Certified wetland delineator: on staff or retainer | | | |
| | ★ Outcome trends monitored and reported for key resources | | | |
| Communication & Coordination | ■ Website contains all required content elements | | | |
| | ★ Website contains additional content beyond minimum required | | | |
| | ★ Track progress on I & E objectives in Plan | | | |
| | ★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs | | | |
| | ★ Annual report communicates progress on plan goals | | | |
| | ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, non-governmental organizations | | | |
| | ★ Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff | | | |

| GREATER MN WATERSHED DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS | | | | |
|---|---|--|-------------------|----|
| Performance Area | Performance Standard | | Rating | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ High Performance (formerly called "benchmark") standard ■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement (see instructions at http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html for explanation of standards) | | Yes, No, or Value | |
| | | | YES | NO |
| Administration | ■ Annual report: submitted by mid-year | | | |
| | ■ Financial audit: completed within last 12 months | | | |
| | ■ Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time | | | |
| | ■ eLink Grant Report(s): submitted on time | | | |
| | ■ Rules: date of last revision or review | | mo/yr | |
| | ■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | | |
| | ■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | | |
| | ■ Manager appointments: current and reported | | | |
| | ★ Administrator on staff | | | |
| | ★ Board training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each board member | | | |
| | ★ Staff training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each staff person | | | |
| | ★ Operational guidelines exist and current | | | |
| | ★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines | | | |
| Planning | ■ Watershed management plan: up-to-date | | | |
| | ★ Biennial Budget Request submitted within last 24 months | | | |
| | ★ Strategic plan identifies short-term activities & budgets based on state and local watershed priorities | | | |
| | ★ Local water plans reviewed | | number | |
| Execution | ■ Engineer Reports: submitted for DNR & BWSR review | | | |
| | ■ Total expenditures per year (past 10 yrs) | | attach | |
| | ★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies | | | |
| | ★ Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / reported | | | |
| Communication & Coordination | ■ Website: contains annual report, financial statement, board members, contact info, grant report(s), watershed mgmt plan | | | |
| | ■ Functioning advisory committee: recommendations on projects, reports, maintains 2-way communication with Board | | | |
| | ■ Communication piece sent within last 12 months | | | |
| | ★ Website: contains meeting notices, agendas & minutes; updated after each board mtg; additional content | | | |
| | ★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs | | | |
| | ★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan | | | |
| | ★ Coord with County Board and City/Twp officials | | | |
| | ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, soil and water districts, non-governmental organizations | | | |

| METRO WATERSHED DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS | | | |
|--|---|-------------------|----|
| Performance Area | Performance Standard | Rating | |
| | | YES | NO |
| | ★ High Performance (formerly called "benchmark") standard | Yes, No, or Value | |
| | ■ Basic practice or statutory requirement (see instructions at http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html for explanation of standards) | | |
| Administration | ■ Activity report: annual, on-time | | |
| | ■ Financial report & audit completed on time | | |
| | ■ Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time | | |
| | ■ eLink Grant Report(s): submitted on time | | |
| | ■ Rules: date of last revision or review | mo/yr | |
| | ■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | |
| | ■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | |
| | ■ Manager appointments: current and reported | | |
| | ■ Consultant RFP: within 2 yrs for professional services | | |
| | ★ Administrator on staff | | |
| | ★ Board training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each board member | | |
| | ★ Staff training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each staff person | | |
| | ★ Operational guidelines exist and current | | |
| | ★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines | | |
| Planning | ■ Watershed management plan: up-to-date | | |
| | ■ City/twp. local water plans not yet approved | % | |
| | ■ Capital Improvement Program: reviewed every 2 yrs | | |
| | ★ Biennial Budget Request submitted within last 24 months | | |
| | ★ Strategic plan identifies short-term priorities | | |
| Execution | ■ Engineer Reports: submitted for DNR & BWSR review | | |
| | ■ Total expenditures per year (past 10 yrs) | attach | |
| | ★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies | | |
| | ★ Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / reported | | |
| Communication & Coordination | ■ Website: contains annual report, financial statement, board members, contact info, grant report(s), watershed mgmt plan | | |
| | ■ Functioning advisory committee(s): recommendations on projects, reports, 2-way communication with Board | | |
| | ■ Communication piece: sent within last 12 months | | |
| | ★ Website: contains meeting notices, agendas & minutes; updated after each board mtg; additional content | | |
| | ★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs | | |
| | ★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan | | |
| | ★ Coordination with County Bd and City/Twp officials | | |
| | ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, soil and water districts, non-governmental organizations | | |

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

| Performance Area | Performance Standard | Rating | |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------|--------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement ★ High performance (optional) standard (see instructions at http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html for explanation of standards) | Yes, No, or Value | |
| | | YES | NO |
| Administration | ■ Activity report: annual, on-time | | |
| | ■ Financial report & audit completed on time | | |
| | ■ eLink Grant Report(s): submitted on time | | |
| | ■ Consultant RFP: within 2 yrs for professional services | | |
| | ■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | |
| | ■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs | | |
| | ★ Board training: orientation and cont ed record for each board member | | |
| | ★ Staff training: orientation and cont ed record for each staff member | | |
| | ★ Operational guidelines exist and current | | |
| Planning | ■ Watershed Management Plan: up-to-date | | |
| | ■ Capital Improvement Program: reviewed every 2 years | | |
| | ■ City/twp. local water plans not yet approved | | % |
| | ★ Biennial Budget Request submitted within last 24 months | | |
| | ★ Strategic plan identifies short-term activities & budgets based on state and local watershed priorities | | |
| Executio | ■ Total expenditures per year (past 10 years) | | attach |
| | ★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies | | |
| | ★ Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / reported | | |
| Communication & Coordination | ■ Website: contains annual report, financial statement, board members, contact info, grant report(s), watershed mgmt plan | | |
| | ■ Functioning advisory committee: recommendations on projects, reports; 2-way communication with Board | | |
| | ■ Communication piece: sent within last 12 months | | |
| | ★ Website: contains meeting notices, agendas & minutes; updated after each board mtg; additional content | | |
| | ★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan | | |
| | ★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs | | |
| | ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks done with neighboring districts and organizations, counties, cities, non-governmental organizations | | |
| | ★ Coordination with County/City/Twp by WMO Board members or staff | | |

WATERSHED BASED PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

| | Performance Standard | Rating | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------|----|-------------------------------------|
| | <i>Indicate your LGU's compliance with each standard. (see instructions at http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html for explanation of standards)</i> | YES | NO | Quantity or Type (see instructions) |
| Awareness & Communication | Send newsletters/reports to contributing LGUs | | | |
| | You know the priorities and problem areas of other contributing LGUs | | | |
| | Website contains links to federal/state agency watershed reports, TMDL implementation plans | | | |
| | Training for Board and staff in watershed problem areas and targets | | | (date of last) |
| | Invite contributing LGUs to special events/presentations/training | | | (no. in past 3 yrs.) |
| | Public education materials contain watershed focus | | | |
| Planning | Plan identifies/describes watershed area(s) | | | |
| | Contributing LGUs participate in your plan updates/revisions | | | |
| | Adopted/incorporated goals & objectives of other LGUs | | | (LGUs) |
| | Adopted a comprehensive watershed management plan | N/A | | |
| | Formal regular joint strategic planning with contributing LGUs | | | (date of last) |
| Execution | Accessible menu of local water management skills/services is established and used | | | |
| | Party to a JPA for shared skills/services/equipment | | | |
| | Common fund for WS-wide projects/programs | | | (LGU & balance) |
| | Accounting system tracks \$ spent by priority area(s) | | | |
| | Partnerships: projects/programs with contributing LGUs that used cost sharing (\$ or in-kind) | | | (# of projects) |
| Outcomes & Accountability | Intensive watershed monitoring and assessment report completed | | | (year) |
| | Obtained stakeholder input at appropriate scale & within last 5 yrs | | | (date of last) |
| | Water quality trends monitored / widely reported | | | (date of last rep.) |
| | Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / widely reported | | | (date of last rep.) |
| | Contributing LGUs agree on conclusions about resource conditions and trends based on monitoring data | | | |
| | Contributing LGUs have developed and agree on targets for watershed resources | | | |

Note: Watershed Performance standards are used in place of LGU-specific performance standards during Watershed-based Level II reviews.

Appendix J

2015 Local Government Performance Awards and Recognition

(Awarding agency listed in parentheses.)

Outstanding SWCD Employee

(Board of Water and Soil Resources)

Brad Mergens, West Otter Tail SWCD and Darren Newville, East Otter Tail SWCD

Outstanding SWCD Supervisor Award

(Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts)

Dr. Kathryn Kelly, Renville SWCD

SWCD of the Year

(Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts)

West Ottertail SWCD

SWCD Appreciation Award

(Department of Natural Resources)

Wilkin SWCD

Outstanding Watershed District Employee

(Board of Water and Soil Resources)

Dan Wilkens, Sand Hill Watershed District

Watershed District of the Year

(Department of Natural Resources)

Buffalo-Red River Watershed District

WD Program of the Year

(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)

Riley-Purgatory Creek Watershed District

WD Project of the Year

(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)

Buffalo-Red River Watershed District - Manston Slough Project

County Conservation Award

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

Lake of the Woods County