



# Easement Year in Review

## December 2014 Snapshots

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In 1986, Minnesota moved to protect soil and water quality and support fish and wildlife habitat through the Reinvest in Minnesota Resources Act. 28 years later, our Easement program is still hard at work putting land into permanent protection. In 2014, that meant closing 214 easements and protecting 10,486 acres of land throughout the state.

Our buffer program continues to be highly successful. In fact, there's so much interest in the buffer program that demand exceeds available funds. 210 applications were received during the June 2014 sign-up, but of that number only 20 could be funded. The level of the enthusiasm for the program among landowners is exciting, and our agency will continue to work for funding increases to better meet the need.



Minnesota is the epicenter of the world's natural wild rice stands, and our agency's Wild Rice Shoreland Protection program continues to show success. Phase Four was recommended for funding this fall by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The previous three phases have resulted in protection of over 20 miles of wild rice shoreland.



Wrapping around the perimeter of Camp Ripley, the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program leverages federal and state funding to keep land around the base in an undeveloped state. This helps the National Guard avoid future interference with troop training activities, and it's also of great benefit to Minnesota, as environmentally important land is permanently protected through easements. In July of this year, Executive Director John Jaschke and Easements Section Manager Bill Penning joined commissioners from the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture as well as the MN National Guard Adjutant General in a meeting with state and local officials as well as Department of Defense staff to talk about Minnesota's model, lauded as one of the most successful in the country.

*Top: A RIM easement in Otter Tail County. This easement site contains approximately 91 acres of restored native grasses and wildflowers, 34 acres of existing wetlands, and 10 acres of forest land. Bottom: BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke joins other government officials for a flyover of the ACUB Program at Camp Ripley.*

BWSR's Reinvest in Minnesota-Wetlands Reserve Program (RIM-WRP) began a transformation this year toward a new, streamlined RIM Wetlands program that will allow our agency to acquire easements and complete restorations faster.

These programs rely on the support of the state, local government partners, nongovernmental organizations, landowners, and our staff to be successful. This year for the first time we had a dedicated staff member working on easements in the Red River Valley and Northwest Minnesota. We also added a Farm Bill Partnerships Assistance Coordinator, who works closely with our local government partners to help private landowners understand their options for establishing conservation practices on their land.

Work is already underway for 2015, with RIM Wetlands sign-up opening early in the year. We're pursuing, with numerous partners, a new 100,000 acre Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program targeting water quality and wildlife benefits for Minnesota. We're also pursuing the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, new in the most recent Farm Bill, which keeps working grasslands on the landscape in perpetuity. We will continue work to move the needle for Minnesota's water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat.