




DATE: March 18, 2025

TO: Board of Water and Soil Resources' Members, Advisors, and Staff

FROM: John Jaschke, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: BWSR Board Meeting Notice – March 26, 2025

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) will meet on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, beginning at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will be held in the lower-level Board Room, at 520 Lafayette Road North, St. Paul and by Microsoft Teams. Individuals interested in attending the meeting through Teams should do so by either 1) logging into Teams by [clicking here to join the meeting](#) or 2) join by audio only conference call by calling telephone number: 651-395-7448 and entering the conference ID: 494 929 717#. The following information pertains to agenda items:

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

RIM Reserve Committee

1. **RIM Easement Alteration Request for Benton County Public Road Improvements - Easement #05-01-20-18** – RIM Reserve Committee recommendation to approve the release of 1.1 acres from RIM easement #05-01-20-18 in Benton County, for bridge replacement and additional right-of-way acquisition along CSAH 22 and CSAH 7. Benton County will pay \$3666.00 for release of the acres in accordance with the Board's Easement Alteration Policy. **DECISION ITEM**
2. **Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) for Peatland Restoration** – BWSR has been awarded \$8 Million through the MPCA as part of a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). BWSR will plan and implement restoration of peatlands on private and other non-state lands, through RIM-Wetland easements and other agreements. BWSR will work with counties, state and federal agencies, Tribal governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interested parties to identify suitable restoration sites and plan and implement restoration projects. CPRG funds will supplement and leverage the 2024 General Fund appropriation for peatland-focused easements. **DECISION ITEM**
3. **Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Extension and Expansion** – Board Resolution 17-14 (January 25, 2017) authorized staff to: 1) utilize existing and anticipated appropriated RIM funds (Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund, and Capital Investment) and other (Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund) appropriated funds to implement MN CREP.

The purpose of the MN CREP was to permanently protect 60,000 acres of buffers, wetlands and wellhead areas with landowners by partnering the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program with the Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) program (administered by USDA- Farm Service Agency - FSA). Landowners participating in MN CREP enroll in the USDA-FSA- administered CRP for 14-15 years, and in the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)-administered RIM Reserve program — a state-funded perpetual conservation easement program. MN CREP is a voluntary conservation program that permanently protects environmentally sensitive land in targeted Minnesota counties by leveraging state and federal funds.

The BWSR and the USDA-FSA expanded the MN CREP to provide additional water quality, habitat and economic benefits to Minnesota communities. A recently approved amendment to the original MN CREP agreement authorized in 2017 will expand opportunities to 12 additional counties and increased the enrollment goal to 75,000 acres of buffers, wetlands, grasslands, and wellhead areas for Minnesota agricultural producers. The amendment also extended the agreement through 2039. **DECISION ITEM**

Northern Region Committee

1. **Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan** – The Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed planning area was approved for a One Watershed, One Plan planning grant at the regularly scheduled meeting of the BWSR on August 16, 2022. The planning partners established a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the purposes of writing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan and the organizations signing the MOA included Koochiching County, Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), City of Ranier, and City of International Falls. The final draft of the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments were submitted to the state review agencies on January 8, 2025, and the Northern Regional Committee reviewed and discussed the submitted information on March 5, 2025. The Committee recommends approval of the submitted Plan by the full Board. **DECISION ITEM**

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Minnesota 2005-2022 Legislative Report** – This report summarizes what we know about GHG emissions in Minnesota, including the major sources and trends over time. Tracking GHG emissions and identifying their sources are two important ways that state government can help Minnesotans understand how our actions contribute to our changing climate and how we can curb our climate pollution. **DECISION ITEM**
2. **Minnesota Forest Resources Council Report** – The Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) is a 17-member board created to develop policy recommendations to the Governor and federal, state, and local governments and to encourage the adoption of sustainable forest management policies and practices. Council members represent a wide range of forest resource interests and hold public meetings every other month to discuss key issues. The MFRC has commissioned a recently completed report, developed over the past 20 months, describing current Minnesota forest sector carbon storage, sequestration, and emissions (in the forest and in harvested wood products) that projects future alternative silvicultural management scenarios. **DECISION ITEM**

If you have any questions regarding the agenda, please feel free to call me at 651-539-2587. We look forward to seeing you on March 26th.

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH
ST. PAUL, MN 55155
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025**

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

9:00 AM CALL MEETING TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MINUTES OF JANUARY 22, 2025 BOARD MEETING

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

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

- Melissa Sjolund, NGO/Tribal Grants Specialist
- Janna Fitzgerald, eLINK Coordinator
- Julie Hendrickson, Easement Acquisition Specialist

REPORTS

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

AGENCY REPORTS

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Thom Petersen
- Minnesota Department of Health – Steve Robertson
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Sarah Strommen
- Minnesota Extension – Joel Larson
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Melissa Lewis

ADVISORY COMMENTS

- Association of Minnesota Counties – Brian Martinson
- Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees – Mike Schultz
- Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts – LeAnn Buck
- Minnesota Association of Townships – Eunice Biel
- Minnesota Watersheds – Jan Voit
- Natural Resources Conservation Service – Troy Daniell

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

RIM Reserve Committee

1. RIM Easement Alteration Request for Benton County Public Road Improvements - Easement #05-01-20-18 – Karli Swenson – ***DECISION ITEM***
2. Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) for Peatland Restoration – Suzanne Rhees, David Weirens, Sharon Doucette – ***DECISION ITEM***
3. Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Extension and Expansion – Dusty Van Thuyne – ***DECISION ITEM***

Northern Region Committee

1. Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Rich Sve and Ryan Hughes – ***DECISION ITEM***

NEW BUSINESS

1. Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Minnesota 2005-2022 Legislative Report – Carl Stenoien or Amanda Gorton, MPCA – ***INFORMATION ITEM***
2. Minnesota Forest Resources Council Report – Erick Schenck and Pete Aube – ***INFORMATION ITEM***

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- BWSR Board meeting is scheduled for April 23rd at 9:00 a.m. in St. Paul and by MS Teams.

ADJOURN

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH
LOWER-LEVEL BOARD ROOM
ST. PAUL, MN 55155
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2025**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joe Collins, Jill Crafton, Jayne Hager Dee, Mike Runk, Neil Peterson, Rich Sve, Lori Cox, Ted Winter, LeRoy Ose, Todd Holman, Ron Staples, Mark Zabel, Tom Schulz, Glenn Skuta, MPCA; Thom Petersen, MDA; Steve Robertson, MDH; Sarah Strommen, DNR

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Joel Larson, University of Minnesota Extension; Eunice Biel

STAFF PRESENT:

John Jaschke, Rachel Mueller, Tom Gile, Travis Germundson, Jenny Gieseke, Mandy Duong, Ed Lenz, Ann Gunness, Rita Weaver, Jared House, Zach Guttormson, John Shea, Don Bajumpaa, Ryan Hughes, Darren Mayers, Marcey Westrick, Mark Hiles, Luke Olson; Denise Lauerman, Chad Severts, Jeff Hrubes, Dave Weirens, Jared House, Craig Engwall, Annie Felix, Sharon Doucette, Suzanne Rhees, Julie Westerlund, Justin Hanson

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jeff Berg, MDA; Katie Smith, DNR; Brian Martinson, AMC; LeAnn Buck, MASWCD; Sheila Vanney, MASWCD; Ted Suss, Minnesota River Collaborative; Suzanne Jiwani, Minnesota River Collaborative; Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD; Tracy Halstensgard, Roseau River WD; Kerry Netzke, RCRC; Dennis Fuchs, Stearns Count SWCD; Jake Shaughnessy, Hubbard County SWCD; Katie Cassidy, Houston Engineering; Matt Gutzmann, Itasca SWCD; Sarah Boser, ISG; Daniel Gackle Beltrami County; Claire Hansen, Beltrami County; Andy Arens

Chair Todd Holman called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

25-01 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** - Moved by Mark Zabel, seconded by Joe Collins, to adopt the agenda as presented. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

25-02 **MINUTES OF DECEMBER 19, 2024 BOARD MEETING** – Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Tom Schulz, to approve the minutes of December 19, 2024, as circulated. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

PUBLIC ACCESS FORUM

No members of the public provided comments to the board.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Jenny Gieseke introduced Mandy Duong, Organizational Development/DEI Coordinator. Ed Lenz introduced Ann Gunness, Board Conservationist.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

Chair Holman read the statement:

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

REPORTS

Chair & Administrative Advisory Committee – Chair Todd Holman reported the survey for the Executive Director’s annual performance review will be sent to board members through email. Stated he attend the Environmental Quality Board meeting.

Executive Director’s Report - John Jaschke reported he attended the Red River Basin Commission’s conference last week. Also attended a staff meeting at Camp Ripley, which is a cost-effective place for business meetings. The legislative session started and had an overview hearing yesterday. John reviewed the Day of Packet that included an updated board order for the Drainage Work Group Policy Recommendation, the amended Minnesota CREP Agreement, and Snapshot articles.

Audit and Oversight Committee – Joe Collins reported they met January 15th and have an item on the agenda today.

Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report – Rich Sve reported they have not met. Travis Germundson reported there are two new appeals filed and three appeals pending.

File 25-1 is an appeal of a WCA restoration order for a property located in Pine County. The appeal regards placement of fill in a wetland within the shoreland district for allegedly expanding the lawn area. The petition claims all work was conducted in compliance with county zoning requirements. No decision has been made on the appeal.

File 24-9 This is an appeal of a WCA notice of decision in Morrison County. The appeal regards the approval of an exemption and no-loss decision for an access road associated with a township cartway.

Morrison SWCD Board of Supervisors affirmed a decision made by staff under a local appeal and now that decision is being appealed. Note this involves the same property and wetland area associated with previous appeals (Files 23-8 and 23-15) of a wetland boundary and type decision. The appeal has been remanded back to the local unit government to develop a record and for an expanded technical review.

Stated the amended APO plan that the board approved last month was placed in the Registry on Tuesday and becomes effective 30-days after. The annual recording and progress tracking was recently completed and the BuffCAT reporting tool has been updated. New compliance maps and data will be coming in the next few months.

Joe Collins thanked Travis for his work.

Grants Program & Policy Committee – Mark Zabel reported they met January 13th and have items on the agenda for today.

RIM Reserve Committee – Jayne Hager Dee reported they have not met.

Water Management & Strategic Planning Committee – Joe Collins reported they have not met.

Wetland Conservation Committee – Jill Crafton reported they have not met.

Buffers, Soils & Drainage Committee – LeRoy Ose reported they met last Friday. Tom Gile reported there are two items on the agenda for today.

Drainage Work Group (DWG) – Neil Peterson reported they have met. Tom Gile reported there are two items on the agenda for today. At the last meeting it was asked to see if there was support for a recommendation to the legislature on the repeal of the requirement in the viewers' report under 103E. It requires the report to be identified and laid out with benefits per 40-acre tract. Tom stated there wasn't support to move it forward.

AGENCY REPORTS

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) – Thom Petersen reported they have an overview today in the Senate Ag committee. The Corn and Soybeans Growers annual meetings are this week. Stated they are building their Weather Network across the state and are adding 70 new stations. Stated they are monitoring the avian influenza.

Lori Cox asked if they have an update on the EPA response from southeast Minnesota. Commissioner Petersen stated they don't have an update; they are waiting to hear from the new administration.

Lori asked about offering mitigation to residents and asked if it was temporary or permanent. Commissioner Petersen stated as long as they have funding it will continue.

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) – Steve Robertson reported in response to the EPA petition in southeast Minnesota, they have started to offer well testing to residents in eight counties. Stated MDA has been providing mitigation support for well owners that have contamination in their wells above threshold values. Steve provided a legislative update, programs with the Clean Water Funds are proceeding. Most of the environmental programs with the general fund have been pulled back in the governor's budget. Stated there are fee increases to support the Well Management Program and the Drinking Water Program.

Lori Cox asked what mitigation means. Steve stated it would be reverse osmosis treatment systems.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Katie Smith reported DNR held its annual Roundtable on January 10th. DNR gave an overview to the Senate Committee. Noted fee increases to support their groundwater management program.

Jill Crafton stated she attended the Roundtable event and appreciated the work that went into it.

Minnesota Extension – No report was provided.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Glenn Skuta reported with MDA and MDH they provide quarterly reports to the EPA on their efforts to address nitrate in groundwater in southeast Minnesota. The reports can be found on MDH's website. Stated they finalized the Feedlot General Permits; additional information is available on their website. They'll be looking at their Feedlot Rules next. The Nutrient Reduction Strategy revision is underway and will be presented Monday at the Clean Water Council meeting. Glenn attended the Red River Basin Commission's annual conference.

Lori Cox asked who the outreach group or stakeholders will be for the Nutrient Reduction Strategy revision. Glenn stated there are six committees and that it's not open to the public right now.

ADVISORY COMMENTS

Association of Minnesota Counties – Brian Martinson reported it will be important to pay attention to the budget work this session, stated a small percentage of the general fund budget is spent on environmental & natural resources issues. Brian stated during the Drainage Work Group discussion there was a decision to not advance other ideas beyond the buffer strips reporting repeal proposal at this time.

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

Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) – LeAnn Buck thanked those who worked on the water storage and soil health items on the agenda today. Stated they are following the legislative work closely, their key item is SWCD Aid.

Neil Peterson and Joe Collins thanked Minnesota Watersheds and MASWCD for their work.

Minnesota Association of Townships – No report was provided.

Minnesota Watersheds – No report was provided.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – No report was provided.

John Jaschke reported they met yesterday with NRCS staff to get ready to implement various pieces of the soil health efforts.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Grants Program and Policy Committee

Water Quality and Storage Program FY26 Criteria – Rita Weaver presented Water Quality and Storage Program FY26 Criteria.

This will be the fourth request for proposal under the Water Quality and Storage Program since 2021. While we received significant federal funding to support this program moving forward, we are not able to use the federal funding until the contracts are completed with the NRCS (likely 9-12 months). We

would like to utilize some of the remaining state funds in the meantime to keep up the momentum of the program.

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25-03 Moved by Jayne Hager Dee, seconded by Rich Sve, to approve the Water Quality and Storage Program FY26 Criteria. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

FY 25 Soil Health Practices Grants Authorization – Tom Gile and Jared House presented FY 25 Soil Health Practices Grants Authorization.

On November 1, 2023, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) was awarded a \$25 million allocation from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to support the implementation of soil health practices. On December 17, 2024, BWSR staff, in collaboration with NRCS, finalized and approved the negotiated agreements. BWSR staff, in coordination with NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation District personnel, developed comprehensive grant guidelines and requirements for this initiative.

Federal agreements mandate that BWSR perform quality assurance assessments on practices funded through the RCPP. The Laws of Minnesota 2021 First Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 6(p) appropriated \$4,000,000 for grants to farmers aimed at enhancing the adoption of cover crops and other soil health practices, with approximately \$197,052 currently unallocated. Furthermore, Section 6(t) authorizes the Board to reallocate funds within this section in order to leverage federal or non-state funds. The reallocation of unobligated funds from the 2021 Clean Water Fund (CWF) Soil Health allocation to the 2021 Accelerated Implementation fund will facilitate the fulfillment of technical oversight responsibilities outlined in RCPP agreement #3053.

Jill Crafton asked what soil resistance means in item number two of the board order. Jared stated its resisting negative impacts such as resiliency. Jill asked if we're getting farmer to farmer help. Tom stated they are doing third party spot checks.

Mark Zabel stated this follows the soil health staffing capacity grant, which has multiple models of delivery. Stated this is focused on the implementation side.

Lori Cox asked who is doing the spot checks. Tom Gile stated they are going through a process with the Department of Admin. and MMB to determine if they need to go out for bid. Lori asked what the recommendation or the requirement is, one year or seasons use. Jared stated for this program, it will be following the local SWCD financial assistance policies.

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25-04 Moved by Rich Sve, seconded by Neil Peterson, to approve the FY 25 Soil Health Practices Grants Authorization. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Chair Holman called a recess at 10:37 a.m. and called the meeting back to order at 10:49 a.m.

Central Region Committee

Mississippi River St. Cloud Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Zach Guttormson presented Mississippi River St. Cloud Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

The Mississippi River – St. Cloud Watershed is located in central Minnesota within the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The Mississippi River enters the watershed just upstream of the City of St. Cloud and exits the watershed in Elk River, with the upper reaches designated as Wild & Scenic. The watershed covers 1,080 square miles and varies in land cover. Much of the watershed (54%) is agricultural lands (i.e., cropland and pasture/hayland) but also includes large areas of deciduous forest and emergent wetlands.

Urban areas include the City of St. Cloud, Monticello, and Elk River. The watershed has over 374 lakes and 907 river miles.

The Plan actions generally focus on implementation of best management practices in agricultural and urban areas to address priority issues, development of studies and data collection to better target implementation actions, policy improvements where feasible and timely, and active public outreach and engagement by local partners. The total 10-year estimated cost of Plan implementation is \$102,379,500, of which 82% is budgeted for implementing practices on the ground. Technical Assistance is anticipated to utilize 12% and education/outreach and data, studies, and monitoring will utilize another 4%. The remaining funds will be spent on activities related to policy and regulation and Plan administration.

The Partnership held a 60-day review process that ended on September 6, 2025, and held a public hearing on December 16, 2024, in Becker – a central location within the watershed. The final draft of the updated Plan, all written public comments and responses, and public hearing comments and responses were submitted on December 16, 2024, to the state review agencies and the BWSR Board for the final 90-day review and approval of the Plan.

On January 6, 2025, the Central Region Committee met to review and discuss the Plan. The committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Mississippi River St. Cloud Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as submitted to the full Board per the attached draft Order.

Jill Crafton thanked them for their work.

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25-05 Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Lori Cox, to approve the Mississippi River St. Cloud Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Southern Region Committee

Approve Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Cottonwood- Middle Minnesota River –
Ted Winter and John Shea presented Approve Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Cottonwood- Middle Minnesota River.

The Cottonwood- Middle Minnesota partnership was selected for a 1W1P Planning Grant in August of 2022 and established a Memorandum of Agreement between the planning partners for the purposes of writing a Plan on December 29, 2022. The partners include: The Counties of Brown, Cottonwood, Lyon, Murray, and Redwood and The Brown, Cottonwood, Lyon, Murray and Redwood Soil and Water Conservation Districts, The Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects and Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area Joint Powers Organizations (RCRCA), and the City of Springfield. The 1W1P Planning Grant was executed on February 23, 2023. The Policy Committee was formally established with signing of bylaws on May 17th, 2023. A Request for Proposals (RFP) process was utilized, by invitation from the partnership to contract with a consultant on May 17, 2023. The partnership held a 60-day review process that ended August 30, 2024, and the required public hearing On September 18, 2024. The final draft of the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments and responses were submitted on October 17, 2024, to the state review agencies. The Southern Committee meet on December 9, 2024 and recommend approval of the Cottonwood-Middle Minnesota Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan to the full BWSR Board.

Joe Collins thought this was a good plan.

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25-06 Moved by Ted Winter, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Approve Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Cottonwood- Middle Minnesota River. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Audit and Oversight Committee

2024 Performance Review and Assistance Program Legislative Report – Don Bajumpaa presented 2024 Performance Review and Assistance Program Legislative Report.

BWSR is required to provide a report annually to the legislature on Performance Review and Assistance Program activities as prescribed by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B.102, Subdivision 3, effective February 1, 2008. BWSR staff have prepared a report that describes the program activities for 2024, including summaries of the activities of BWSRs local government partners, and goals and objectives for future PRAP activities. The report was presented to and has a recommendation from the BWSR Audit and Oversight Committee for BWSR Board approval.

Joe Collins appreciates Don’s PRAP work and its importance.

Jayne Hager Dee would like to see 100% participation.

Lori Cox asked if the audit is yearly for all or biennial for some. Don stated they are annually. Lori asked if the standards for those audits are the same or if they differ. Don stated timelines vary depending on statute.

Mark Zabel stated he would like to see a report of outcomes from the assistance grants in addressing and identifying needs. John Jaschke stated they could put together a summary of what they were for and the outcomes.

Todd Holman thanked Don for his work.

**
25-07 Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Ron Staples, to approve the 2024 Performance Review and Assistance Program Legislative Report. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Northern Region Committee

Crow Wing River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Tom Schulz and Ryan Hughes presented Crow Wing River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

The Crow Wing River Watershed (CWRW) is located in north-central Minnesota, where it drains nearly 2,000 square miles with numerous rivers, lakes, and forests. About two-thirds of the watershed is covered in forests or wetlands, which provides water storage, protects surface and groundwater quality, and provides habitat. The other third is productive land used for agriculture. The CWRW has over 400 lakes and 1,600 miles of streams, and many of these support aquatic life and recreation. The watershed includes Becker, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Morrison, Otter Tail, Todd, and Wadena Counties along with a portion of the White Earth Nation on the northeast corner.

The planning partnership received a grant through the One Watershed, One Plan program in 2021 to begin the process of developing a comprehensive watershed management plan. On December 3, 2024, BWSR received the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments and responses pertaining to the Plan for final State review. The planning partnership has responded to all comments received during the 60-day review period and incorporated appropriate revisions to the final plan.

BWSR staff completed its review and subsequently found the Plan meets the requirements of Minnesota Statutes and BWSR Policy.

On January 6, 2025, the Northern Regional Committee met to review and discuss the Plan. The Committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Crow Wing River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as submitted to the full Board per the attached draft Order.

Lori Cox stated in the Executive Summary, the Funding Level 3 description states "Other/Partner funding" and asked if it was to be determined. Ryan stated it is to be determined. Lori asked if there is a timeframe. Ryan stated that is also to be determined.

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25-08 Moved by Thom Petersen, seconded by Tom Schulz, to approve the Crow Wing River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. **Motion passed on a roll call vote.**

Upper Mississippi – Grand Rapids Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Ryan Hughes presented Upper Mississippi – Grand Rapids Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

The Upper Mississippi-Grand Rapids Watershed (UM-GR) is in north-central Minnesota, where it covers 1.3 million acres with numerous rivers, lakes, and forests. It has almost 2,000 miles of rivers and streams, vast amounts of peatlands and wetlands, 625 lakes larger than 10 acres, 79 designated wild rice lakes, and 48 cold water fishery lakes that support fish, like trout and cisco - truly the land of sky-blue waters. It spans five counties: Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Itasca, and St. Louis. The planning group received a grant through the One Watershed, One Plan program in 2021 to begin the process of developing a comprehensive watershed management plan. On December 2, 2024, BWSR received the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments and responses pertaining to the Plan for final State review. The planning partnership has responded to all comments received during the 60-day review period and incorporated appropriate revisions to the final plan.

BWSR staff completed its review and subsequently found the Plan meets the requirements of Minnesota Statutes and BWSR Policy.

On January 6, 2025, the Northern Regional Committee met to review and discuss the Plan. The Committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Upper Mississippi – Grand Rapids Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as submitted to the full Board per the attached draft Order.

Jill Crafton stated she appreciated to see a focus on protection.

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25-09 Moved by Tom Schulz, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Upper Mississippi – Grand Rapids Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. **Motion passed on a roll call vote.**

Upper/Lower Red Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – LeRoy Ose and Ryan Hughes presented Upper/Lower Red Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

The Upper/Lower Red Lake Watershed planning area was approved for a One Watershed, One Plan planning grant at the regularly scheduled meeting of the BWSR on August 16, 2022. The planning partners established a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the purposes of writing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. The organizations signing the MOA included Beltrami County, Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Red Lake Nation, and Red Lake Watershed District. Koochiching County and Koochiching SWCD, Itasca County and Itasca SWCD, and Clearwater County and Clearwater SWCD did not sign the Planning MOA due to the small area of their jurisdiction within the planning area.

The partnership held a 60-day plan review process that ended on September 20, 2024, and held the required public hearing on October 22, 2024. The final draft of the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments were submitted to the state review agencies on November 26, 2024. The partnership has addressed and documented agency and public comments received throughout the Plan review process.

On January 6, 2025, the Northern Regional Committee met to review and discuss the Plan. The Committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Upper/Lower Red Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as submitted to the full Board per the attached draft Order.

Jayne Hager Dee stated this plan considered people in this area as a resource with the history and narrative. Stated this stood out and she appreciated it.

**
25-10 Moved by LeRoy Ose, seconded by Glenn Skuta, to approve the Upper/Lower Red Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Buffers, Soils, and Drainage Committee

Drainage Work Group Recommendation for Minnesota Public Drainage Manual Adoption and Maintenance Plan – Tom Gile presented Drainage Work Group Recommendation for Minnesota Public Drainage Manual Adoption and Maintenance Plan.

2024 Legislation amended 103B.101 Sub 13 to include BWSR adoption of the Minnesota Public Drainage Manual (MPDM). The original MPDM was created in 1991 and the current web-based version of the MPDM represents the current working version recommended by the Drainage Work Group (DWG) for use. The MPDM does not replace drainage law or create associated rules for public drainage authorities to follow. It does not have legal precedent or authority other than that provided by the drainage law and associated case law. It does attempt to capture current practice, case law, and helpful forms/templates and information that can be utilized by drainage authorities, their key advisors and various stakeholders working with and interested in Chapter 103E public drainage systems. The DWG is a drainage stakeholder group facilitated by BWSR under 103B.101 Subd 13, which fosters mutual understanding and provide recommendations for drainage system management and related water management, including recommendations for updating the drainage law in chapter 103E, the Minnesota Public Drainage Manual, and other related provisions. In October of 2018 the DWG established a process summary which guides its decision-making process which was used to support this recommendation to the BWSR Board.

John Jaschke asked if the word "DRAFT" in the attachment to the board order should be removed. Tom stated the adopted copy will not be a draft and it will be removed.

Jill Crafton asked if this would allow the process to be more efficient and if it's reported to the legislature. Tom stated this piece doesn't have a legislative reporting component to it. It's to ensure there's a process to it.

Ted Winter asked if this will be a tool for people in drainage organizations. Tom stated it is a guidance document and would be utilized by drainage interested parties when it comes to implementation of drainage actions under 103B.

**
25-11 Moved by LeRoy Ose, seconded by Glenn Skuta, to approve the Drainage Work Group Recommendation for Minnesota Public Drainage Manual Adoption and Maintenance Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Drainage Work Group Recommendation for Repeal of 103E.067 (103E Ditch Buffer Annual Reporting)

– Tom Gile presented Drainage Work Group Recommendation for Repeal of 103E.067 (103E Ditch Buffer Annual Reporting).

The DWG is a drainage stakeholder group facilitated by BWSR under 103B.101 Subd 13 which fosters mutual understanding and provide recommendations for drainage system management and related water management, including recommendations for updating the drainage law in chapter 103E, the Minnesota Public Drainage Manual, and other related provisions. In October of 2018 the DWG established a process summary which guides its decision-making process which was used to support this recommendation to the BWSR Board.

The DWG has reviewed the supporting memo and recommends that the BWSR Board forward it for legislative consideration.

**
25-12 Moved by Neil Peterson, seconded by Ron Staples, to approve the Drainage Work Group Recommendation for Repeal of 103E.067 (103E Ditch Buffer Annual Reporting). ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

NEW BUSINESS

Minnesota River Collaborative – Ted Suss and Suzanne Jiwani presented Minnesota River Collaborative.

The Minnesota River Collaborative, now in its eighth year, is made up of individuals and NGOs who come together to support natural resources of the Minnesota River Valley. Their mission is improving and protecting Minnesota’s water and soil resources. They meet weekly where work plans and efforts are coordinated. Members under the umbrella of the Collaborative have formally engaged as intervenors or commenters on several drainage improvement projects and advocated for public policy such as Water Storage funding.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Grants Program and Policy Committee is scheduled for February 10th in St. Paul and by MS Teams.
- BWSR Board meeting is scheduled for March 26th at 9:00 a.m. in St. Paul and by MS Teams.

Chair Holman adjourned the meeting at 12:22 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Holman
Chair

BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Dispute Resolution/Compliance Report

Meeting Date: March 26, 2025

Agenda Category: Committee Recommendation New Business Old Business

Item Type: Decision Discussion Information

Keywords for Electronic Searchability: Wetland Conservation Act Appeals/Buffer Compliance

Section/Region: Resource Conservation/Central

Contact: Travis Germundson

Prepared by: Travis Germundson

Reviewed by: _____ Committee(s)

Presented by: Rich Sve DRC Chair and Travis Germundson

Time requested: 5 minutes

Audio/Visual Equipment Needed for Agenda Item Presentation

Attachments: Resolution Order Map Other Supporting Information

Fiscal/Policy Impact

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> General Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amended Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Heritage Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Water Fund Budget |

ACTION REQUESTED

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See attached report.

SUMMARY *(Consider: history, reason for consideration now, alternatives evaluated, basis for recommendation)*

The report provides a monthly update on the number of appeals filed with the Board of Water and Soil Resources and summary on buffer compliance/enforcement actions statewide.

Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report

March 10, 2025

By: Travis Germundson

There have been **two** new appeals filed since the last report and there are **four** appeals pending.

Format note: New appeals that have been filed since last report to the Board.

~~Appeals that have been decided since last report to the Board.~~

File 24-9 (12-20-24) This is an appeal of a WCA notice of decision in Morrison County. The appeal regards the approval of an exemption and no-loss decision for an access road associated with a township cartway. Morrison SWCD Board of Supervisors affirmed a decision made by staff under a local appeal and now that decision is being appealed. Note this involves the same property and wetland area associated with previous appeals (Files 23-8 and 23-15) of a wetland boundary and type decision. *The appeal was remanded back to the local unit of government to develop an adequate record that considers a written Technical Evaluation Panel report.*

File 24-8 (9-13-24). This is an appeal of a WCA Restoration Order for a property located in Beltrami County. The appeal regards the placement of fill material in wetland to create berms. The petition claims that drainage was in place prior to 1991, and the area is considered an artificial wetland. *The appeal was placed in abeyance and the Restoration Order stayed to allow time for completion of a wetland assessment and plan to comply with EPA's requirements of restoration and conditions of the WCA Restoration Order.*

~~File 25-1 (1-10-25). This is an appeal of a WCA Restoration Order for a property located in Pine County. The appeal regards the placement of 6,300 sq. ft. of fill material in wetland associated with the development of a residential property. The Restoration Order was affirmed in part and modified in part to allow a portion of the wetland impact to remain through the purchase of wetland back credits.~~

File 25-2 (1-31-25). This is an appeal of a WCA Restoration Order for a property located in Cass County. The appeal regards the placement of 2,639 sq. ft of wetland along both sides of Seven Mile Creek (DNR Public Watercourse) to construct a crossing. A DNR Public Waters Restoration and Replacement Order was also issued for the placement of culverts and fill in Seven Mile Creek. *No decision has been made on the appeal.*

File 25-3 (2-23-25). This is an appeal of a WCA notice of decision for a property located in St. Louis County. The appeal regards the denial of a replacement plan application for the placement of 3,158 sq. ft. of fill in a wetland for shoreland access. The initial staff decision was affirmed under local appeal proceedings by St. Louis County Board of Adjustment and now that decision is being appeal. *No decision has been made on the appeal.*

Summary Table for Appeals

Type of Decision	Total for Calendar Year 2024	Total for Calendar Year 2025
Order in favor of appellant		
Order not in favor of appellant	5	
Order Modified	1	1
Order Remanded	1	
Order Place Appeal in Abeyance	1	
Negotiated Settlement		
Withdrawn/Dismissed		

Buffer Compliance Status Update: BWSR has received Notifications of Noncompliance (NONs) on 67 parcels from the 12 counties BWSR is responsible for enforcement. Currently there are four Corrective Action Notices (CANs) and four Administrative Penalty Orders (APO) issued by BWSR that are still active. Of the actions being tracked over 58 of those have been resolved.

Statewide 37 counties are fully compliant, and 50 counties have enforcement cases in progress. Of those counties (with enforcement cases in progress) there are currently 303 CANs and 39 APOs actively in place. Of the actions being tracked over 2,957 of those have been resolved.

**Disclaimer: These numbers are generated monthly from BWSR's Access database. The information is obtained through notifications from LGUs on actions taken to bring about compliance and may not reflect the current status of compliance numbers.*

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

RIM Reserve Committee

1. RIM Easement Alteration Request for Benton County Public Road Improvements - Easement #05-01-20-18 – Karli Swenson – ***DECISION ITEM***
2. Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) for Peatland Restoration – Suzanne Rhees, David Weirens, and Sharon Doucette – ***DECISION ITEM***
3. Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Extension and Expansion – Dusty Van Thuyne – ***DECISION ITEM***

BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: RIM Easement Alteration Request for Benton County Public Road Improvements - Easement #05-01-20-18

Meeting Date: March 26, 2025

Agenda Category: Committee Recommendation New Business Old Business

Item Type: Decision Discussion Information

Section/Region: Conservation Easement Section

Contact: Sharon Doucette, Easement Section Manager

Prepared by: Karli Swenson, Conservation Easement Specialist

Reviewed by: RIM Reserve Committee(s)

Presented by: Karli Swenson

Time requested: 10 minutes

Audio/Visual Equipment Needed for Agenda Item Presentation

Attachments: Resolution Order Map Other Supporting Information

Fiscal/Policy Impact

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> General Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amended Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Heritage Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Water Fund Budget |

ACTION REQUESTED

Board approval to release 1.1 acres from RIM easement #05-01-20-18 in Benton County, for bridge replacement and additional right-of-way acquisition along CSAH 22 and CSAH 7. Benton County will pay \$3,666.00 for release of the acres in accordance with the Board’s Easement Alteration Policy.

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Easement Alteration Policy | MN Board of Water, Soil Resources \(state.mn.us\)](#)

SUMMARY *(Consider: history, reason for consideration now, alternatives evaluated, basis for recommendation)*

The Benton County Highway Department is requesting release of 1.1 acres from RIM Easement 05-01-20-18 to accommodate upcoming bridge replacement, roadway reconstruction and right-of-way expansion along CSAH #22 and CSAH #7, to improve public safety and to meet current MnDOT design standards. CSAH #22 right-of-way runs along the northern boundary of the RIM easement and CSAH #7 right-of-way runs along the eastern boundary of the easement.

The West Fork Rum River runs through the RIM easement, and there are two bridges along the adjacent highways that have been deemed structurally deficient. Exposed rebar, cracked concrete, and corroded steel reinforcements were noted. Therefore, replacement of both bridges is inevitable to protect the safety of the traveling public. In addition to the structural deficiencies, the road and bridge width is less than minimum standards and needs to be widened to safely accommodate use by large agricultural vehicles and equipment traveling over the bridge, and to allow traffic to flow safely in both directions. Further, the shoulders also need to be widened to accommodate gentler slopes and increase clear zone widths to meet current safety standards. An additional 27 feet of right-of-way is required to accomplish all necessary improvements.

The proposed width increases of the right-of-way to both CSAH #22 and CSAH #7 will result in a 1.1 acre overlap with the existing RIM easement. Because all the existing trees along the new right-of-way will need to be cleared, an easement boundary alteration is necessary.

BWSR's Easement Alteration Policy for public benefitted projects allows for release of land from the easement if the public entity compensates BWSR for the released acres at two times the current RIM payment rate, reimburses the state any funds paid for conservation practices, plus a \$500 administrative fee. Benton County has submitted the \$500 fee and has agreed to pay BWSR \$3,666.00 to release the 1.1 acres as calculated below. Note: 0.1 acres of the release area consists of a public water that was donated to the RIM easement so no compensation is required. Compensation is calculated for 1.0 easement acre.

Current RIM Rate for this parcel (based on 60% of 2024 tax assessed value) is \$1,833/acre.

Our policy requires compensation at 2x the current rate for the easement alteration. To release 1.0 acre at $2 \times \$1,833 = \$3,666$.

The state expended \$0 on conservation practices on this area since it was existing trees when the easement was acquired, so no conservation practice payment is required for the release.

Recommendation

The RIM Reserve Committee recommends approval to formally amend easement 05-01-20-18 to release 1.1 acres, as proposed. The Benton SWCD Board is also recommending approval of the easement alteration request and has submitted a letter of recommendation.

Board Resolution # 25 - _____

Easement Alteration Request for Public Road Project – RIM Easement #05-01-20-18

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) acquired the 17-acre RIM Easement adjacent to County State Aid Highway (CSAH) #22 and CSAH #7 in Granite Ledge Township, Benton County, on May 5, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the Benton County Highway Department will be undertaking bridge replacement, road reconstruction and right-of-way expansion along both above County State Aid Highways adjacent to the RIM easement to complete necessary safety improvements and to meet current MnDOT design standards; and

WHEREAS, both bridges have been deemed structurally deficient and their replacement is necessary to protect public safety; and

WHEREAS, additional road safety improvements will include widening of lanes and shoulders and flattening backslopes to increase clear zone widths; and

WHEREAS, the proposed safety improvements will require acquisition of an additional 27 feet of right-of-way adjacent to the RIM easement; and

WHEREAS, the County Highway Department is requesting the release of 1.1 acres from the RIM easement to accommodate the expanded road right-of-way; and

WHEREAS, MN Statute 103F.535 Subd. 5 states that the Board may alter or release an easement only if the Board determines that the public interests and general welfare are better served by the alteration; and

WHEREAS, the public interest and general welfare will be better served by replacing the structurally deficient bridges and widening lanes and shoulders to improve public safety; and

WHEREAS, the BWSR Easement Alteration Policy for public benefitted projects allows for the release of easement lands when the public entity compensates BWSR at 2x the current RIM rate per acre released; and

WHEREAS, Benton County Highway Department has agreed to pay BWSR the amount of \$3,666, in accordance with the policy, for the release of the 1.1 acres, in addition to the \$500 application fee required for the Board to consider the alteration; and

WHEREAS, the RIM Reserve Committee voted in favor of the easement alteration request at their meeting held 2/21/25 and are recommending approval to the Board;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, BWSR approves the alteration of RIM Easement #05-01-20-18, as proposed, releasing the 1.1 acres identified for public road right-of-way purposes; and authorizes staff to work with Benton SWCD staff to officially amend the necessary RIM easement documents.

Dated at Saint Paul, Minnesota this 26th day of March, 2025.

MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

Todd Holman, Chair
Board of Water and Soil Resources

Date: _____

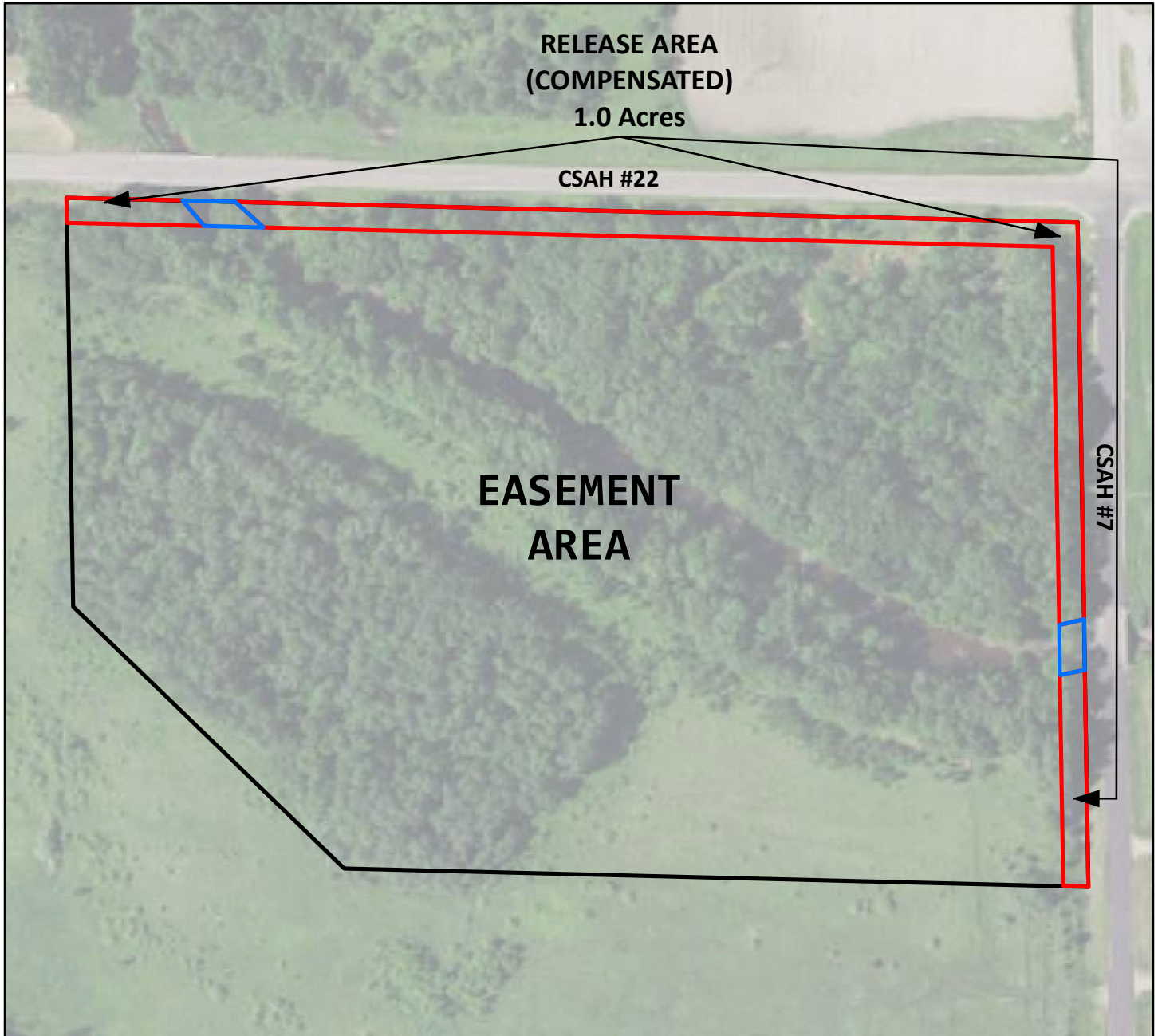


Easement Alteration Request

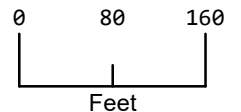
Benton County Public Roads

RIM Easement #05-01-20-18

Section: 9 , T. 38 N., R. 28 W., Benton County



- Easement Boundary
- Release Area - Public Water (0.1 Acres)
- Release Area - Compensated (1.0 Acres)



Dated:
Feb 07 2025

Prepared by:
Board of Water and Soil Resources



Quality Public Service

December 19, 2024

Benton County Soil & Water Conservation District
Attn: Gerry Maciej
14 2nd Ave W
Foley, MN 56329

SENT VIA EMAIL: Gerry.maciej@mn.nacdenet.net

RE: SP 005-622-016, CSAH 22 Bridge Replacement
Project Parcel No. 2, PID 050010300
Request to Release A Portion of A RIM Easement

Dear Mr. Maciej,

Benton County is planning to replace the existing structurally deficient Bridge #05505 on CSAH 22 (165th St NE) approximately 0.2 miles west of CSAH 7 (165th Ave NE). In order to properly replace the bridge and roadways, adjacent additional right of way is needed and that will impact an existing RIM Easement on PID 05.00103.00 (Easement 05-01-20-18).

The purpose of this project is to improve the safety for drivers by replacing the existing structurally deficient bridge and reconstruct the roadways adjacent to the existing bridge. The existing structure has exposed rebar, steel piles with severe cross-section section loss, concrete cracking and corrosion of other steel reinforcement. Nearby bridge 05504 on CSAH 7 was constructed within a year of bridge 05505 and has similar safety concerns with replacement also anticipated in the near future.

Additionally, the current roadway and bridge width is approximately 28 feet, which is significantly less than the minimum design standard. The State Aid design standard (MN Rule 8820.9920) states the bridge and road should be a minimum of 32 feet wide, which includes 2-12 foot driving lanes and 2-4 foot shoulders. The existing road is deficient by at least 4 feet. A large number of wide agricultural equipment must use this bridge which poses a safety risk for the road and bridge. Equipment and traffic cannot safely meet and cross the existing bridge. Furthermore, the existing roadway has steep shoulder slopes. If a vehicle veered off the driving surface, it could result in a serious roll-over accident. State Aid Standards require that the in-slope shall be 1V:4H or flatter.

The lack of clear zone is another issue. Clear zones are areas immediately adjacent to the road that are free of hazards. State Aid standards require clear zones of 25 feet from the edge of driving lane as the minimum. State Aid design standard (MN Rule 8820.9920) states the roadway inslopes in clear zone must be 1:4 or flatter. This road and bridge are serving the local community by providing access to

Public Works/Highway Department

Chris Byrd, P.E.
Director/County Engineer

Mark Loidolt, P.E.
Assistant Engineer

Mark Ebnet
Highway Superintendent

7752 Hwy 25 N
P.O. Box 247
Foley, MN 56329

Benton County's Website:
www.co.benton.mn.us

(320) 968-5051 Main
(320) 968-5333 Fax

Email Address:
highway@co.benton.mn.us

Benton County is an Equal Opportunity Employer



Quality Public Service

homes and fields by accommodating landowner and agricultural equipment traffic. It is imperative that this bridge be replaced, and the approach roadway be reconstructed to improve its safety.

During the planning phase of the project, our engineering team considered multiple options and evaluated them on their own merit. The options are summarized below:

Option 1) No Build: this is undesirable due to safety and access concerns. The roadway is too narrow, its in-slopes are too steep, the clear zones are dangerous, and bridge is deficient and narrow which would force the County to have to close the roadway.

Option 2) Change the alignment of the road: This is not possible due to the right-of-way restrictions and the need to provide access to the existing residences, farmers and landowner.

Option 3) Construct new bridge at the location of the existing bridge: This is the most economical, addresses safety concerns, satisfies State Aid standards, minimizes impacts to nearby residences and maximizes public benefit.

Reconstruction plans propose to replace bridge and widen roadways adjacent to 32 feet. The inslopes would be flattened to 1V:4H within the clear zone. Clear zones will be constructed with a minimum of 25 feet.

Due to the essential road and bridge construction work, additional right of way is needed. The adjacent parcel, the NE ¼ NE ¼ of Section 9, Township 38, Range 28 in Benton County, Minnesota (PID 050010300), has an existing RIM Conservation Easement (05-01-20-18). An additional 27 feet along the existing road right of way, is needed, see attached Right of Way Exhibit. The County is requesting that the existing Conservation Easement be released from the area of the proposed right of way so public safety improvements can be made. This request results in 1.1 acres to be released from the RIM Conservation Easement, and of those, 1.0 acre will be compensated for at 2x the current RIM rate of \$1,833/acre for a total of \$3,666.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Chris Byrd, PE
Public Works Director/County Engineer

Enclosures: Right of Way Exhibit, Aerial photo of requested change, Soil Map

Public Works/Highway Department

Chris Byrd, P.E.
Director/County Engineer

Mark Loidolt, P.E.
Assistant Engineer

Mark Ebnet
Highway Superintendent

7752 Hwy 25 N
P.O. Box 247
Foley, MN 56329

Benton County's Website:
www.co.benton.mn.us

(320) 968-5051 Main
(320) 968-5333 Fax

Email Address:
highway@co.benton.mn.us

Benton County is an Equal Opportunity Employer



**BENTON COUNTY STATE
AID HIGHWAY NO 22
RIGHT OF WAY EXHIBIT**

Benton County, MN

Benton County Surveyor



**Wittstock
Consultants**

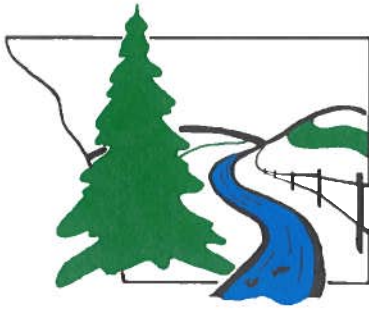
**PARCEL ID: 050010300
MARK ANDERSON
AND DENISE WICKTOR**

SHEET NUMBER:

1
OF
1

DATE: 8/10/2024

DESIGNED: _____
CHECKED: JCW
DRAWN: JCW
FIELD CREW: _____
FIELD WORK DATE: _____



Benton Soil & Water Conservation District

Benton SWCD
14 W. 2nd Ave.
Foley, MN, 56329

Tel. (320)968-5300 ext. 3
www.soilandwater.org

January 22, 2025

Benton County Public Works/Highway Department
Attn: Chris Byrd
7752 Highway 25
PO Box 247
Foley, MN 56329

SENT VIA EMAIL: CByrd@co.benton.mn.us

RE: SP 005-622-016, CSAH 22 Bridge Replacement
Project Parcel No. 2, PID 05.00103.00
Request to Release a Portion of a RIM Easement #05-01-20-18

Dear Mr. Byrd,

On January 22, 2025, the Benton Soil & Water Conservation District Board recommended approval to Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources for Benton County Public Works/Highway Department request to alter the existing RIM Easement #05-01-20-18 on PID 05.00103.00 by releasing 1.1 acres from the RIM easement for the greater public benefit.

The release of the 1.1 acres will improve the safety for drivers and public by allowing Benton County to replace the existing structurally deficient bridges and widening the roadway to meet State Aid design standard (MN Rule 8820.9920).

Thank you for your continued interest for Benton County!

Sincerely,

Chuck Rau
Benton SWCD Chair

BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) for Peatland Restoration

Meeting Date: March 26, 2025

Agenda Category: Committee Recommendation New Business Old Business

Item Type: Decision Discussion Information

Keywords for Electronic Searchability: Wetlands, peatlands, climate

Section/Region: all

Contact: David Weirens

Prepared by: Suzanne Rhees

Reviewed by: RIM Committee Committee(s)
Suzanne Rhees, David Weirens,

Presented by: Sharon Doucette

Time requested: 20 minutes

Audio/Visual Equipment Needed for Agenda Item Presentation

Attachments: Resolution Order Map Other Supporting Information

Fiscal/Policy Impact

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> General Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amended Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Heritage Fund Budget |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:
<u>New funding source</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Water Fund Budget |

ACTION REQUESTED

Approve Board Order authorizing staff to utilize funds awarded under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant.

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SUMMARY *(Consider: history, reason for consideration now, alternatives evaluated, basis for recommendation)*

BWSR has been awarded \$8 Million through the MPCA as part of a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). BWSR will plan and implement restoration of peatlands on private and other non-state lands, through RIM-Wetland easements and other agreements. BWSR will work with counties, state and federal agencies, Tribal governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interested parties to identify suitable restoration sites and plan and implement restoration projects. CPRG funds will supplement and leverage the 2024 General Fund appropriation for peatland-focused easements.

Board Order # 25-__

Climate Pollution Reduction Grant for Peatlands Restoration

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency has awarded a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; and

WHEREAS, \$8,000,000 of these funds are directed to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to restore approximately 4,000 acres of peatlands originally drained for agriculture, to transition from carbon sources to carbon sinks through collaboration across Tribal, state-administered, and private lands; and

WHEREAS, restoring the hydrology of peatlands supports their function as carbon sinks, supports culturally significant food sources including wild rice, forage plants, game animals, and fish, improves water quality and can reduce downstream flooding, and

WHEREAS, in 2023 the Minnesota State Legislature appropriated \$9,000,000 in Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve funds to BWSR to acquire conservation easements and to restore and enhance peatlands and adjacent lands, which funds are being deployed as a subprogram of the RIM Wetlands program; and

WHEREAS, this order is supplemental to BWSR Board resolution 21-44 and will remain in effect until material changes in the program warrant an amendment; and

WHEREAS, the BWSR RIM Reserve Committee met on March 25, 2025, and unanimously recommended the following.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources authorizes staff to:

1. Utilize funds awarded under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant.
2. Coordinate the use of State and CPRG funds.
3. Work with partners, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and Watershed Districts (WDs), to develop and implement the program.
4. Work with the DNR, non-governmental organizations, Tribal governments and private landowners to maximize opportunities to utilize CPRG and state funds for peatland restoration, through easements or other agreements with these partners to achieve program goals.

Date: _____

Todd Holman, Chair
Board of Water and Soil Resources

BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
Extension and Expansion

Meeting Date: March 26, 2025

Agenda Category: Committee Recommendation New Business Old Business

Item Type: Decision Discussion Information Non-Public Data

Keywords for Electronic Searchability: MN CREP, Easements, RIM

Section/Region: Easements

Contact: Dusty Van Thuyne

Prepared by: Dusty Van Thuyne

Reviewed by: RIM Committee Committee(s)

Presented by: Dusty Van Thuyne

Time requested: 10 minutes

Audio/Visual Equipment Needed for Agenda Item Presentation

Attachments: Resolution Order Map Other Supporting Information

Fiscal/Policy Impact

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amended Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Heritage Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Water Fund Budget |

ACTION REQUESTED

The Board is requested to approve the recommendation of the RIM Committee to authorize the extension and expansion of the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP).

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/mn-crep-landowners>

<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/node/13481>

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-events/news/01-14-2025/usda-minnesota-announce-expanded-conservation-reserve-enhancement>

SUMMARY *(Consider: history, reason for consideration now, alternatives evaluated, basis for recommendation)*

Board Resolution 17-14 (January 25, 2017) authorized staff to: 1) utilize existing and anticipated appropriated RIM funds (Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund, and Capital Investment) and other (Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund) appropriated funds to implement MN CREP.

The purpose of the MN CREP was to permanently protect 60,000 acres of buffers, wetlands and wellhead areas with landowners by partnering the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program with the Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) program (administered by USDA- Farm Service Agency - FSA). Landowners participating in MN CREP enroll in the USDA-FSA- administered CRP for 14-15 years, and in the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)-administered RIM Reserve program — a state-funded perpetual conservation easement program. MN CREP is a voluntary conservation program that permanently protects environmentally sensitive land in targeted Minnesota counties by leveraging state and federal funds.

The BWSR and the USDA-FSA expanded the MN CREP to provide additional water quality, habitat and economic benefits to Minnesota communities. A recently approved amendment to the original MN CREP agreement authorized in 2017 will expand opportunities to 12 additional counties and increased the enrollment goal to 75,000 acres of buffers, wetlands, grasslands, and wellhead areas for Minnesota agricultural producers. The amendment also extended the agreement through 2039.

Board Order # 25- _____

Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Extension and Expansion

WHEREAS, the Minnesota State Legislature has appropriated Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve funds to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) from Capital Investment, Outdoor Heritage Fund, Clean Water Fund, Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, and the General Fund to acquire and restore permanent RIM conservation easements under Minnesota Statutes, Section 103F.515 to 103F.531; and

WHEREAS, ML 2023 Chapter 60, Article 1, Section 4(m) designated funds “for conservation easements and to restore and enhance grasslands and adjacent lands consistent with Minnesota Statutes, sections 103F.501 to 103F.531, for the purposes of climate resiliency, adaptation, carbon sequestration, and related benefits”; and,

WHEREAS, RIM permanently protects and restores previously drained wetland and adjacent grasslands to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, while optimizing wildlife habitat and protecting water quality; and,

WHEREAS, RIM permanently protects and restores riparian buffers primarily to protect water quality and secondarily to provide wildlife habitat; and,

WHEREAS, RIM permanently protects and restores land within Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPA) identified by the Minnesota Department of Health and mapped as high or very high vulnerability to groundwater contamination; and,

WHEREAS, RIM permanently protects and restores grasslands and adjacent lands; and,

WHEREAS, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary land conservation program that combines CRP and other programs to help agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water; and,

WHEREAS, the Governor and the USDA Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs have signed the amended MN CREP Agreement in January of 2025 that includes up to 75,000 acres for buffer, grassland, wetland, and wellhead protection practices that will assist landowners in protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat; and,

WHEREAS, MN CREP will combine CRP contracts with perpetual RIM easements; and,

WHEREAS, future similar funds appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature must be used consistent with the appropriation language to acquire and restore Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) conservation easements under the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program; and,

WHEREAS, the Board previously approved Board Resolution 17-14 (CREP Implementation) on January 25, 2017; and,

WHEREAS, this order is supplemental to previously approved BWSR Board resolutions and orders; and

WHEREAS, the Board, by separate resolution, has established the process for determining Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program payment rates; and

WHEREAS, the RIM Reserve Conservation Easement Program is administered by BWSR in cooperation with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) under Joint Powers Agreements; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Water and Soil Resources RIM Reserve Committee met on March 25, 2025, and unanimously recommends the following provisions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources authorizes staff to:

1. Utilize existing and future appropriated funds of similar purpose to implement the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.
2. Work with partners to develop program guidelines and outreach efforts.
3. Utilize RIM easement payment rates as established for Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.
4. Conduct landowner sign-ups and select applications using available funding for the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.
5. Reimburse SWCDs for their services using the most current service rates as established.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, that Board Resolution 17-14 is hereby rescinded and replaced with this Board Order.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, this Order will remain in effect, as funding is available, until material changes in the program warrant an amendment.

Dated at Saint Paul, Minnesota this 26th day of March 2025.

MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

Todd Holman, Chair
Board of Water and Soil Resources

Date: _____

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Northern Region Committee

1. Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Rich Sve and Ryan Hughes
– ***DECISION ITEM***

BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Meeting Date: March 26, 2025

Agenda Category: Committee Recommendation New Business Old Business

Item Type: Decision Discussion Information

Keywords for Electronic Searchability: Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Section/Region: Regional Operations/Northern Region

Contact: Ryan Hughes

Prepared by: Ryan Hughes

Reviewed by: Northern Region Committee(s)

Presented by: Rich Sve and Ryan Hughes

Time requested: 5 minutes

Audio/Visual Equipment Needed for Agenda Item Presentation

Attachments: Resolution Order Map Other Supporting Information

Fiscal/Policy Impact

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> General Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amended Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Heritage Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Water Fund Budget |

ACTION REQUESTED

Approval of the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as recommended by the Northern Regional Committee.

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Rainy-River-Rainy-Lake-CWMP_BWSR-Approval-Draft_January-2025.pdf](#)

[Rainy-River-Rainy-Lake-CWMP-Appendices_BWSR-Approval_January-2025.pdf](#)

SUMMARY *(Consider: history, reason for consideration now, alternatives evaluated, basis for recommendation)*

The Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed planning area was approved for a One Watershed, One Plan program planning grant at the regularly scheduled meeting of the BWSR on August 16, 2022. The planning partners established a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the purposes of writing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. The organizations signing the MOA included Koochiching County, Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), City of Ranier, and City of International Falls.

The partnership held a 60-day plan review process that ended on November 29, 2024, and held the required public hearing on December 17, 2024. The final draft of the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments were submitted to the state review agencies on January 8, 2025. The partnership has addressed and documented agency and public comments received throughout the Plan review process.

On March 5, 2025, the Northern Regional Committee met to review and discuss the Plan. The Committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as submitted to the full Board per the attached draft Order.

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

In the Matter of the review of the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Sections 103B.101, Subdivision 14 and 103B.801.

**ORDER
APPROVING
COMPREHENSIVE
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Whereas, the Policy Committee of the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed submitted a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (Plan) to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (Board) on January 8, 2025, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Sections 103B.101, Subdivision 14 and 103B.801 and Board Resolution #21-08, and;

Whereas, the Board has completed its review of the Plan;

Now Therefore, the Board hereby makes the following Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Order:

FINDINGS OF FACT

- Partnership Establishment.** The Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed Partnership (Partnership) was established through adoption of a Memorandum of Agreement for the purposes of developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. The membership of the Partnership includes Koochiching County, Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), City of Ranier, and City of International Falls.
- Authority to Plan.** Minnesota Statutes, Sections 103B.101, Subdivision 14 allows the Board to adopt resolutions, policies or orders that allow a comprehensive plan, local water management plan, or watershed management plan, developed or amended, approved and adopted, according to Chapter 103B, 103C, or 103D to serve as substitutes for one another or be replaced with a comprehensive watershed management plan. Minnesota Statutes, Sections 103B.801, established the Comprehensive Watershed Management Planning Program; also known as the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) program and Board Decision #23-50 adopted the One Watershed, One Plan program Operating Procedures Version 3.0 and Board Decision #23-50 adopted the One Watershed, One Plan program Plan Content Requirements Version 3.0 policies.
- Nature of the Watershed.** The Rainy River-Rainy Lake (RRRL) Watershed is located on Minnesota's northern border and defined largely by the Rainy River and Rainy Lake, two significant water bodies shared with Canada. The RRRL has a unique shape and has extensive wetlands/peatlands across the watershed. The RRRL contains a large portion of Minnesota's only National Park, Voyageurs National Park (VNP), which attracts visitors from across the state, country, and abroad. The RRRL contains two major watersheds, the Rainy River-Rainy Lake and Lower Rainy River. For the purposes of this RRRL Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) and the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) planning process, these two HUC-8 watersheds are joined into one watershed. The RRRL's approximately 629,000 acres are mostly within Koochiching County, with only 16% of acreage in east neighbor St. Louis County and less than 1% of acreage in western neighbor Lake of the Woods County. Current landcover in the watershed is a majority of herbaceous or woody wetlands/peatlands (70%) and is relatively evenly distributed throughout the RRRL. Forests cover approximately 15% of the watershed and are concentrated in the eastern portion of the watershed. Open water covers 8% of the land. Other small

land uses include agriculture, mining, developed, and some grasslands. Only 1.5% of land in the watershed is developed. Approximately 56% of the watershed is publicly owned by city, county, state, or federal entities. Most of the public land is state forested land, managed by the DNR. Additionally, there are approximately 45,000 acres, or 7% of the watershed, owned by the Red Lake Band of Chippewa on the western side of the RRRL.

4. **Plan Development.** The Plan was developed as a single, concise, and coordinated approach to watershed management. The Plan consolidates policies, programs, and implementation strategies from existing data, studies and plans, and incorporates input from multiple planning partners to provide a single plan for management of the watershed. The Plan focuses on prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation efforts and lays out specific actions to manage water quantity, protect and restore water quality, natural habitat, recreational uses and drinking water sources in the watershed.
5. **Plan Review.** On January 8, 2025, the Board received the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments pertaining to the Plan for final State review pursuant to Board Resolution #21-08. During the development of the Plan, State agency representatives attended and provided input at advisory committee meetings. The following state review comments were received during the comment period.
 - A. Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): MDH staff thanked the partnership for addressing MDH's comments and noted that the plan was well written and thoughtful. MDH recommends approval of the Plan.
 - B. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR): DNR staff is satisfied with the responses to issues raised during the 60-day review of the draft Plan. DNR recommends approval of the Plan.
 - C. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA): MPCA staff noted that they appreciated the opportunity to participate and provide input and that the Plan is well written, concise, and thorough. MPCA recommends approval of the Plan.
 - D. Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB): EQB acknowledged receipt of the Plan.
 - E. Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA): MDA did not provide comments for the final Plan.
 - F. Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources regional staff: BWSR staff provided comments throughout the planning process and had no suggested or required changes to the Plan submitted for the final review. We commend the partners for their trust level and commitment to the resources of the Plan area. BWSR staff recommend approval of the Plan and look forward to working with the Partnership during implementation.
6. **Plan Summary and Highlights.** The highlights of the Plan include:
 - The Policy and Advisory Committees sought community engagement during the early stages of the planning process including public input from a public kick-off meeting and four topic meetings of expert and local stakeholders on the topics of water quality, water quantity and hydrology, groundwater and drinking water, and habitat and forests. The comments were used during plan development to inform issues, goals and actions and provided an opportunity for public input on the implementation actions.
 - The Advisory Committee identified 10 issues covering those resource categories and created eight measurable goals. Each goal includes issues addressed, outcomes, priority map, short-term goals and a desired future condition.
 - Key short-term goals include treating 1,500 acres of cultivated land with best management practices, replacing 50 failing septic systems, implement four stormwater projects, restoring 5,280 feet of streams/ditches and shoreline, conducting a peatland restoration or water storage feasibility study, addressing two culverts to mitigate connectivity barriers, sealing 50 unused wells, and completing 40 forest management plans for private land while implementing management on 2,000 acres.

7. **Northern Regional Committee.** On March 5, 2025, the Northern Regional Committee met to review and discuss the Plan. Those in attendance were Neil Peterson, Ron Staples, Todd Holman, Tom Schulz, Jeff Berg, Ben Bergey, and Chad Anderson. BWSR staff in attendance were Ryan Hughes, Northern Region Manager; Chad Severts, Board Conservationist; Jeff Hrubes, Clean Water Specialist; and Carrie Moline-Rust, Office & Administrative Specialist. The representatives from the Partnership were Eldon Voigt, Koochiching SWCD; Pete Kalar, City of International Falls; Matt Gouin, Koochiching County; Whitney Sims, Koochiching County; Mitch Brinks, TSA 8; Rachel Olm, Houston Engineering, Inc.; and Pam Tomevi, Koochiching SWCD, presented the Plan on behalf of the partnership. Board regional staff provided its recommendation of Plan approval to the Committee. After discussion, the Committee’s decision was to present a recommendation of approval of the Plan to the full Board.
8. This Plan will be in effect for a ten-year period until March 26, 2035.

CONCLUSIONS

1. All relevant substantive and procedural requirements of law have been fulfilled.
2. The Board has proper jurisdiction in the matter of approving a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Sections 103B.101, Subd. 14 and 103B.801 and Board Resolution #21-08.
3. The Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan attached to this Order states water and water-related problems within the planning area; priority resource issues and possible solutions thereto; goals, objectives, and actions of the Partnership; and an implementation program.
4. The attached Plan is in conformance with the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Section 103B.101, Subd. 14 and 103B.801 and Board Resolution #21-08.
5. The attached Plan when adopted through local resolution by the members of the Partnership will replace the comprehensive plan, local water management plan, or watershed management plan, developed or amended, approved and adopted, according to Chapter 103B, 103C, or 103D, but only to the geographic area of the Plan.

ORDER

The Board hereby approves the attached Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan of the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed, submitted January 8, 2025.

Dated at St. Paul, Minnesota, this twenty-sixth day of March 2025.

MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

BY: Todd Holman, Chair

March 26, 2025

Rainy River-Rainy Lake Watershed Planning Partnership
c/o Pam Tomevi
Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District
501 3rd St, Suite 100
International Falls, MN 56649

RE: Approval of the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Dear Rainy River-Rainy Lake Planning Partnership:

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is pleased to inform you the Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (Plan) was approved at its regular meeting held on March 26, 2025. Attached is the signed Board Order that documents approval of the Plan and indicates the Plan meets all relevant requirements of law, rule, and policy.

This Plan is effective for a ten-year period until March 26, 2035. Please be advised, the partners must adopt and begin implementing the plan within 120 days of the date of the Order in accordance with Minnesota Statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14, and the One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures. Per the One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures please provide a copy of resolutions to adopt the Plan to your Board Conservationist to be eligible for grants.

The members of the partnership and participants in the plan development process are to be commended for writing a plan that clearly presents water management goals, actions, and priorities of the Partnership, and for participating in the One Watershed, One Plan program. The BWSR looks forward to working with you as you implement this Plan and document its outcomes.

Please contact Board Conservationist Chad Severts of our staff at 651-539-2523 or chad.severts@state.mn.us for further assistance in this matter.

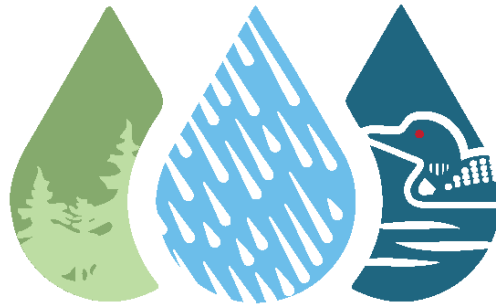
Sincerely,

Todd Holman, Chair
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

Enclosure: BWSR Board Order

CC: Listed on next page.

CC: Reid Christianson, MDA (via email)
Carrie Raber, MDH (via email)
Chris Parthun, MDH (via email)
Rian Reed, DNR (via email)
Darrell Schindler, DNR (via email)
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Catherine Neuschler, EQB (via email)
Ryan Hughes, BWSR (via email)
Chad Severts, BWSR (via email)
Julie Westerlund, BWSR (via email)
Rachel Mueller, BWSR (file copy)



Rainy River-Rainy Lake

ONE WATERSHED ONE PLAN

Rainy River-Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

BWSR Approval Draft: January 2025



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Project Partners

Koochiching County
Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District
City of Ranier
City of International Falls



Steering Committee

Matt Gouin, Koochiching County
Pam Tomevi, Koochiching SWCD
Sherril Gautreaux, City of Ranier
Jason Fisher, City of International Falls
Chad Severts, BWSR



Policy Committee

Destry Hell, Koochiching County
Eldon Voigt, Koochiching SWCD
Jen Lahmayer, City of Ranier
Pete Kalar, City of International Falls

Advisory Committee

Amy Mustonen, MPCA
Chris Parthun, MDH
Jeff Hrubes, BWSR
Jody Peek, USDA-NRCS
Kelly Condiff, DNR
Margaret Wagner, MDA
Rian Reed, DNR
Shane Bowe, Red Lake DNR - Tribal

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James Aasen, Koochiching SWCD
Sam Soderman, Koochiching SWCD
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Tristan Nelson, North St. Louis SWCD
Ryan Maki, Voyageurs National Park
Michael Steinhauer, NRCS
Will Lee, NRCS
Tony Lenocho, DNR

Prepared By

Houston Engineering, Inc.
7550 Meridian Circle North, Suite 120
Maple Grove, MN 55369

Cover and section divider photographs credited to and in honor of Jeff Kantor



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Appendices

- A. Memorandum of Agreement
- B. Public Kickoff Summary
- C. Topic Meeting Summary Reports
- D. Storage Analysis
- E. HSPF Load Reduction Estimates
- F. Formal Review Comments
- G. References



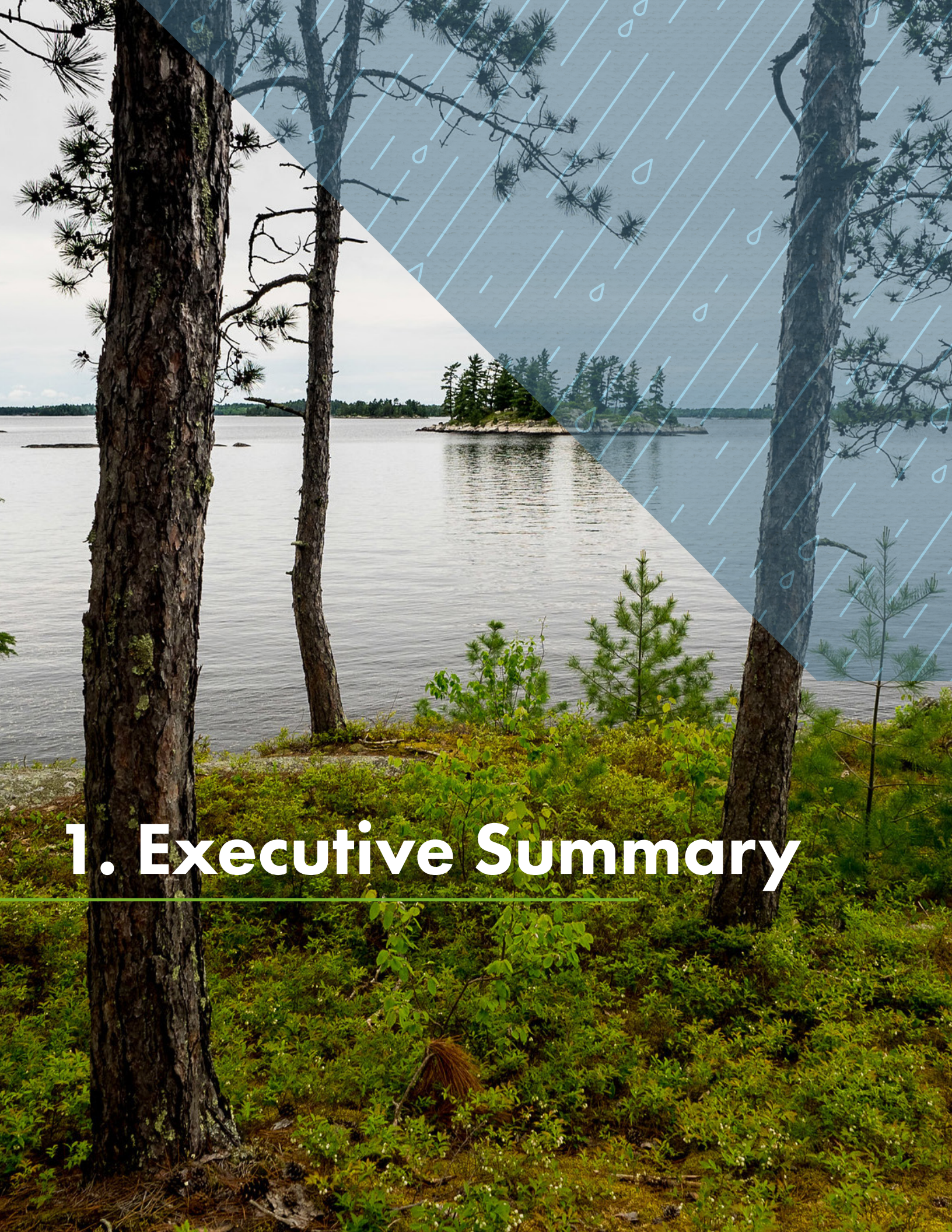
ACRONYMS

1W1P	One Watershed, One Plan
AC	Advisory Committee
AIS	Aquatic Invasive Species
BMP	Best Management Practice
BWSR	Board of Water and Soil Resources
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
CPF	Compensation Planning Framework
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
CSISS	Center for Spatial Information Science and Systems
CWMP	Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan
DNR	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
DO	Dissolved Oxygen
DWSMA	Drinking Water Supply Management Area
E. coli	Escherichia coli
EAB	Emerald Ash Borer
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
FSA	Farm Service Agency
HHW	Household Hazardous Waste
HSPF	Hydrologic Simulation Program – Fortran
HUC	Hydrologic Unit Code
IJC	International Joint Commission
LGU	Local Government Unit
LSP	Landscape Stewardship Plan
MDA	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
MDH	Minnesota Department of Health
MnDOT	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MPCA	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
NLCD	National Land Cover Dataset
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
PC	Policy Committee
PFAS	Per- and polyfluorinated substances
PWS	Public Water Supply
RAQ	Risk Adjacency Quality
RIM	Reinvest in Minnesota
RIM	Reinvest in Minnesota (Easement Program)
RRRL	Rainy River-Rainy Lake / Lower Rainy River
RRRL CWMP	Rainy River - Rainy Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan
SFIA	Sustainable Forest Incentive Act
SNA	Minnesota Scientific and Natural Area
SSTS	Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District



TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TSS	Total Suspended Solids
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
VNP	Voyageurs National Park
WBIF	Watershed-Based Implementation Funding
WCA	Wetland Conservation Act
WMA	Wildlife Management Areas





1. Executive Summary

SECTION 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the Watershed

The Rainy River-Rainy Lake/Lower Rainy River (RRRL) Watershed is located on Minnesota’s northern border and defined largely by the Rainy River and Rainy Lake, two significant water bodies shared with Canada. The RRRL has a unique shape, frequently described as “the butterfly,” and has extensive wetlands/peatlands across the watershed. The RRRL contains a large portion of Minnesota’s only National Park, Voyageurs National Park (VNP), which attracts visitors from across the state, country, and abroad.

The RRRL contains two major watersheds, the Rainy River-Rainy Lake (09030003) and Lower Rainy River (09030008). For the purposes of this RRRL Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) and the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) planning process, these two HUC-8 watersheds are joined into one watershed. This allows for smoother planning and implementation to help preserve the pristine watershed that is rich in cultural and economic resources. The RRRL’s approximately 629,000 acres are mostly within Koochiching County, with only 16% of acreage in east neighbor St. Louis County and less than 1% of acreage in western neighbor Lake of the Woods County.

Current landcover in the watershed is a majority herbaceous or woody wetlands/peatlands (70%) and is relatively evenly distributed throughout the RRRL. Forests cover approximately 15% of the watershed and are concentrated in the eastern portion of the watershed. Open water covers 8% of the land. Other small land uses include agriculture, mining, developed, and some grasslands. Only 1.5% of land in the watershed is developed. Approximately 56% of the watershed is publicly owned by city, county, state, or federal entities. Most of the public land is state forested land, managed by the DNR. Additionally, there are approximately 45,000 acres, or 7% of the watershed, owned by the Red Lake Band of Chippewa on the western side of the RRRL.



Roles and Responsibilities

This RRRL CWMP was developed under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Koochiching County, Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the City of International Falls, and the City of Ranier (**Appendix A**). The agreement created the collaborative Rainy River-Rainy Lake Partnership.

As the 1W1P process uses existing authorities, representatives from each entity of the RRRL Partnership were appointed by their respective boards to serve on the Policy Committee, the decision-making body for this plan.

The plan content was developed by members of the Advisory Committee, which consisted of local government staff from entities within the RRRL Partnership, Red Lake Nation, state agencies, and local topic experts. The Steering Committee, made up of local government staff from entities within the RRRL Partnership, Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) staff, and consultants guided the planning process and produced the final plan.



On approval of this plan, Koochiching County, Koochiching SWCD, the City of International Falls, and the City of Ranier entered into a formal agreement to implement this plan. The Policy, Advisory, and Steering Committees all serve roles to ensure efficient, collaborative, and effective implementation of the RRRL CWMP (see Section 6. Plan Administration).

Identifying and Prioritizing Issues

To begin the RRRL CWMP planning process, planning partners determined the most pressing issues facing natural resources in the watershed. An “issue” is defined as a risk, problem, or opportunity within the RRRL that can impact a natural resource. A “resource” is a water body that provides several services to all inhabitants of the watershed. These services include habitat, drinking water, recreation, aesthetics, refuge, and more. Figure 1.1. demonstrates the process of identifying and creating priority issues for the plan.

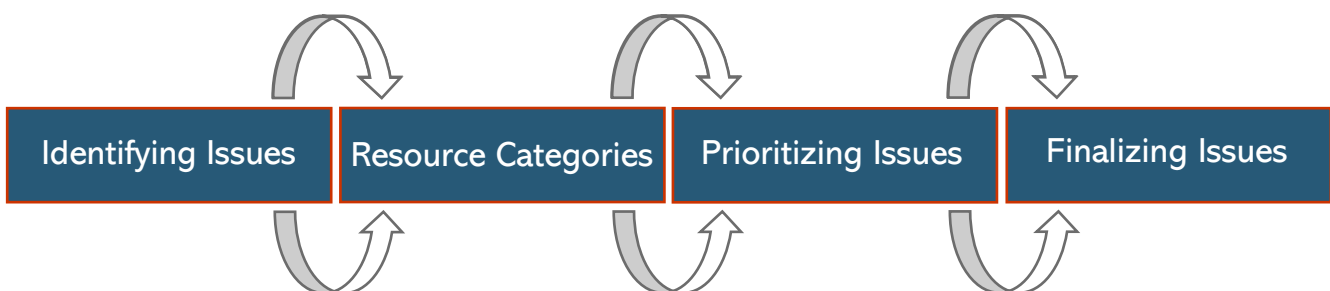


Figure 1.1 Process for identifying issues for the RRRL CWMP.



Identifying Issues

To identify plan issues, planning partners developed a comprehensive list of issues that impact resources in the watershed. The planning partners created this comprehensive list by conducting a review of existing documents authored by local experts, available data, and comprehensive studies of the region. As issues were identified, common themes for the issues were formed based on how issues impact resources. Thus, “resource categories” were created to better sort or organize identified issues important to the citizens and wildlife of the RRRL Watershed (Table 1.1).

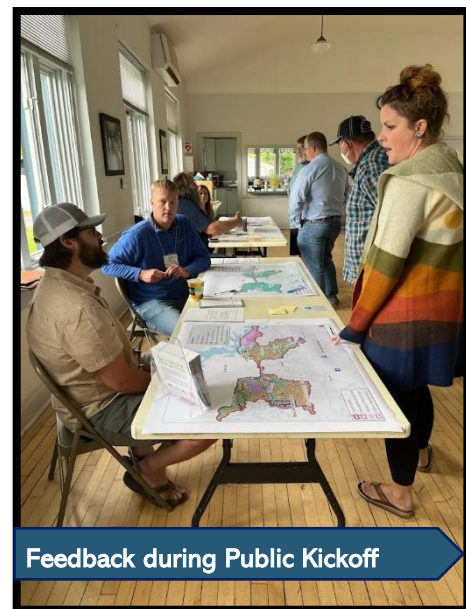
Table 1.1 Resource categories for the RRRL CWMP.

Resource Category			
<p>Water Quantity and Hydrology</p> 	<p>Water Quality</p> 	<p>Habitat and Forests</p> 	<p>Groundwater and Drinking Water</p> 

Getting Community Feedback

Feedback was needed from the public and local experts to create a final list of plan issues and prioritize issues as a focus of the plan. A public kickoff meeting was held in early September 2023 in Ranier to gather viewpoints from citizens in the watershed about issues they think should be the focus of the plan. Community members unable to attend were able to complete an online survey. A total of 27 people contributed public input between the survey and the public kickoff meeting.

Feedback captured during the meeting and with the online survey were valuable to the planning partners and shaped the development of the plan’s issue statements. A full report with results from the kickoff meeting and survey can be found in **Appendix B**.



Feedback during Public Kickoff



Following the collection of public input, the planning committees brainstormed and compiled a list of initial plan issues. These initial issues were then brought to a series of topic meetings with local experts, one for each resource category. The goal of these meetings was to further develop and establish issues related to each resource category in the RRRL Watershed. Outcomes from these topic meetings





also formed the backbone of the goals and actions summarized in this plan. Summary reports for each topic meeting are provided in **Appendix C**.

From these topic meetings, plan issues and issue statements were established. Table 1.2 below summarizes the following information: the resource category of the issue, the issue theme, a brief issue statement describing the issue, and the priority level as defined by the Policy Committee. “High” and “Medium” priority issues are the primary focus for developing plan goals and implementation actions that address these goals. It is important to note that “Low” priority issues are still important and are addressed by actions in the plan, but are not a plan focus as they are already addressed by existing, ongoing programs or will be addressed by other plan goals.

Table 1.2 Issue statements and priority issues for the RRRL plan.

Resource	Issue Theme	Issue Statement	Priority
 Surface Water Quality	Water Quality Contaminants	Nutrient, bacteria, mercury, sediment, chloride, and stormwater runoff has the potential to decrease water quality and impact aquatic recreation and aquatic life.	High
	Point Source Contaminants	Point sources of contamination from septic, gray water discharge, and other sources impact water quality conditions.	High
	Erosion and Shoreland Management	Streambank, ditch, and shoreline erosion increases sediment loading and reduces water and habitat quality.	High
	Aquatic Invasive Species	Aquatic invasive species can degrade lake, stream, and wild rice habitat, impact aquatic recreation, and cause shifts in aquatic ecosystems.	Low
 Water Quantity and Hydrology	Altered Hydrology	Historical ditching, damming, and stream straightening altered the natural flow of surface water and groundwater, increasing periods of low flow, backwater effects, flashiness and erosion, and degrading habitat.	Medium
	Wild Rice	Wild rice plants and beds are impacted by fluctuating water levels and other human activities.	Low
	Connectivity	Natural and human made barriers impact fish passage, water levels, sediment transport, and connectivity.	Medium
	Wetlands and Peatlands	Historically altered or drained wetlands and peatlands contribute to the loss of water storage, water quality (e.g. mercury), and biological diversity on the landscape.	Low





Resource	Issue Theme	Issue Statement	Priority
	Drinking Water Protection	Protection of groundwater and surface drinking water sources from contamination.	Medium
	Forest Health and Management	Forest health and management is required to mitigate the impacts of invasive species, changes in climate, and land use changes; it is important to protect economic viability, vulnerable forest types, wildlife, wetlands and peatlands, water quality, and water storage.	Medium






Measurable Goals

Measurable goals build upon the work of identifying priority issues by setting quantitative, measurable goals that directly address the priority issues of the plan. These measurable goals were informed by modeling, guidance from resources such as the Landscape Stewardship Plan (LSP), and knowledge of the financial resources and capacity of local staff. While goals are created to directly address priority issues, some goals address multiple issues, so there is not a direct one-to-one connection between goals and issues.

Table 1.3 Short-term and long-term goals for the RRRL CWMP.

 Water Quality Contaminants	
Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treat 1,500 acres of cultivated land or pasturelands with best management practices (10% of cultivated / pastureland acres). Develop 1 stormwater plan and implement 4 projects identified in the plan. 	Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement 7,500 acres of cultivated / pasturelands in best management practices (50% of cultivated / pastureland acres). Implement developed stormwater plans and improve management of all feasible stormwater from municipal areas.
 Wastewater Management	
Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace 50 failing septic systems (5 septic systems / year). 	Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet TMDL <i>E. coli</i> goals.



 Erosion and Shoreland Management	
Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore/stabilize 5,280 feet of streams/ditches and shoreline. 	Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore/stabilize 20,000 feet of streams/ditches. Restore/stabilize 7,500 feet of shoreline.
 Restore Hydrology	
Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct one peatland restoration or potential water storage feasibility study and implement temporary or permanent storage as part of water quality contaminants and connectivity goals. 	Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No net increase in discharge in the Lower Rainy River major watershed. Current analysis indicates an increased 1,517 acre-feet storage in the Rainy River – Rainy Lake major watershed is necessary to mitigate expected precipitation increases in the coming decades.
 Connectivity Enhancement	
Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and maintain culvert inventory and based on results, coordinate with local, state, and federal partners to address two culverts to mitigate connectivity barriers. 	Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address all priority barriers.
 Drinking Water Protection	
Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seal 50 unused wells (5 unused wells / year). 	Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seal all unused wells. Complete International Falls Intake Protection Plan.
 Forest Health	
Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete 40 plans for private forest land and implement management of 2,000 acres of privately owned forest land. 	Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support completion of LSP goals: Manage 80,442 acres of privately owned forest land through 378 forest stewardship plans on private forest land. Increase watershed protection to meet LSP goals of 75% protection in all subwatersheds.



Plan Implementation

Targeted implementation tables outline actions that will be taken during the ten-year timeframe of this plan to achieve measurable goals. Plan implementation will require a balance between four main implementation programs:

- “Manage It”: Planned Landscape Management
- “Fix It”: Constructed Environmental Enhancements
- “Keep It”: Protected Lands Maintenance
- “Know It”: Data Collection and Outreach

Each action in the plan is associated with one of the implementation programs listed above. Examples of these actions can be seen in Figure 1.2.

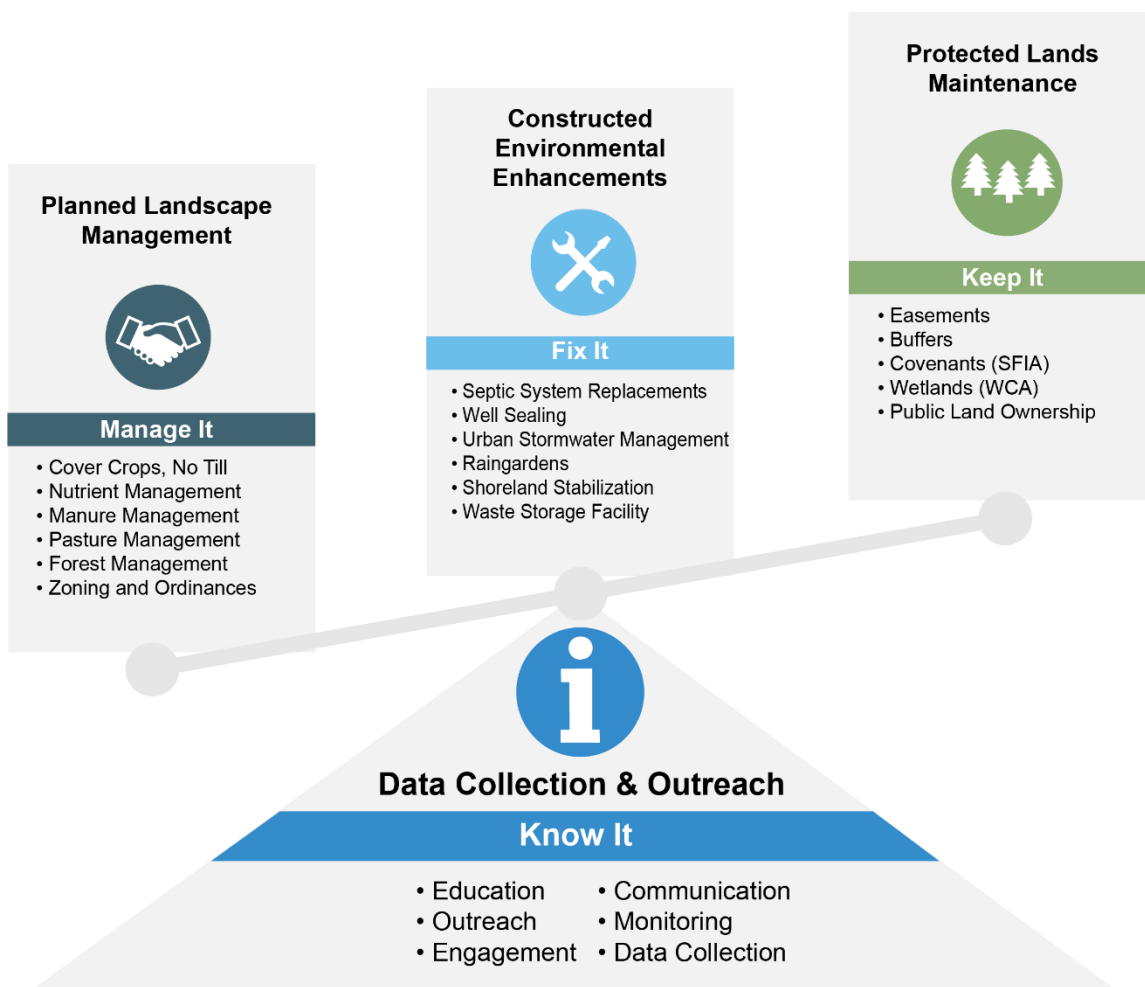


Figure 1.2 Implementation programs for the RRRL CWMP.



Each action in the implementation table also has an associated funding level (Table 1.4). “Base” funding level is the current amount of baseline funding (noncompetitive) being spent on by local partners on the protection, enhancement, and restoration practices and programs in the watershed. With approval of this RRRL CWMP, watershed partners are eligible to receive Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) administered through BWSR. This funding is noncompetitive and can be requested biennially by watershed partners to implement this plan. Thus, the “Base and WBIF” is the primary funding level for implementing actions in the plan with plan approval.

Collaborative, partner-sponsored projects and other funding sources will also be critical in making progress toward plan goals. These actions are identified in the implementation table as being funded in part, or entirely through “Other” funding. To implement the full extent of this plan, additional funding and capacity over current levels will be necessary.

Table 1.4 Funding levels for the RRRL CWMP.

Funding Level	Description	10-Year Total
Base and WBIF	Current Baseline Funding plus Watershed Based Implementation Funding	\$6,147,000
Other	Other Funding (319, Outdoor Heritage Fund, NRCS, DNR, MPCA, etc.)	\$7,000,000



COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

NEW BUSINESS

1. Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Minnesota 2005-2022 Legislative Report – Carl Stenoien or Amanda Gorton, MPCA – ***INFORMATION ITEM***
2. Minnesota Forest Resources Council Report – Erick Schenck and Pete Aube – ***INFORMATION ITEM***

BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Minnesota 2005-2022 Legislative Report

Meeting Date: March 26, 2025

Agenda Category: Committee Recommendation New Business Old Business

Item Type: Decision Discussion Information

Keywords for Electronic Searchability: Greenhouse gas emissions, Minnesota, Legislative Report

Section/Region: _____

Contact: _____

Prepared by: John Jaschke

Reviewed by: John Jaschke Committee(s)

Presented by: Carl Stenoien or Amanda Gorton, MPCA

Time requested: 30 minutes

Audio/Visual Equipment Needed for Agenda Item Presentation

Attachments: Resolution Order Map Other Supporting Information

Fiscal/Policy Impact

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> General Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amended Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Heritage Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Water Fund Budget |

ACTION REQUESTED

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota 2005-2022 Legislative Report](#)

SUMMARY *(Consider: history, reason for consideration now, alternatives evaluated, basis for recommendation)*

This report summarizes what we know about GHG emissions in Minnesota, including the major sources and trends over time. Tracking GHG emissions and identifying their sources are two important ways that state government can help Minnesotans understand how our actions contribute to our changing climate and how we can curb our climate pollution.

BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Minnesota Forest Resources Council Report

Meeting Date: March 26, 2025

Agenda Category: Committee Recommendation New Business Old Business

Item Type: Decision Discussion Information

Keywords for Electronic Searchability: Minnesota Forest Resource Council

Section/Region: _____

Contact: _____

Prepared by: John Jaschke

Reviewed by: John Jaschke Committee(s)

Presented by: Erick Schenck and Pete Aube

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Fiscal/Policy Impact

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> General Fund Budget |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> New Policy Requested | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Heritage Fund Budget |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Water Fund Budget |

ACTION REQUESTED

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [Minnesota Forest Resources Council \(MFRC\) / Minnesota Forest Resources Council](#)
- [MFRC Carbon Project FINAL REPORT tcm1162-661769.pdf](#)

SUMMARY *(Consider: history, reason for consideration now, alternatives evaluated, basis for recommendation)*

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) is a 17-member board created to develop policy recommendations to the Governor and federal, state, and local governments and to encourage the adoption of sustainable forest management policies and practices. Council members represent a wide range of forest resource interests and hold public meetings every other month to discuss key issues. The MFRC has commissioned a recently completed report, developed over the past 20 months, describing current Minnesota forest sector carbon storage, sequestration, and emissions (in the forest and in harvested wood products) that projects future alternative silvicultural management scenarios.