



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

September 2023 Administrator report

From: Linda Loomis, Administrator

To: LMRWD Board of Managers

In addition to items on the meeting agenda, the following District projects and issues were addressed during the month:

Other Work

Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

There is no action required on this item in September, so the update is here in the Administrator Report rather in the meeting materials.

The August Policy Committee meeting was held on August 17, 2023. In July, the Policy Committee voted to form a joint powers entity to implement the LMRE 1W1P. A draft Joint Powers Agreement was distributed. The LMRWD Board of Managers asked legal counsel to review the JPA and provide the LMRWD Board with his perspective. The minutes from the August Policy Committee meeting are attached.

The next meeting of the Policy Committee is scheduled for September 21, 2023. The meeting is scheduled to be hybrid. The in-person meeting will be held at the Le Sueur SWCD office in LeCenter.

The August Advisory Committee meeting was held at 10:00am on August 16, 2023. The Steering Committee meeting followed the same day. Both meetings were in-person at the Scott SWCD offices in Jordan. Notes from the Steering Committee meetings are attached. Members of the Advisory Committee were asked to begin reviewing the portions of the plan that have been written and to provide comments. The next meeting of the Advisory Committee and Steering Committee is September 20, 2023. Both meetings will be virtual.

BWSR held a meeting for all stakeholders on August 31, 2023, to discuss the 1W1P process and how all the various water management plans relate to each other and the roles of the stakeholders in implementation of the plans.

Project website: [website](#).

2024/2025 Watershed Based Implementation Funding

On August 24, 2023, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources approved the FY24-25 Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) Program. The BWSR Board order is attached for information. The Lower MN River East will receive \$538,396 in 2024 and the LMRWD Watershed Planning Area has been allocated \$217,485. The LMRWD Watershed Planning Area corresponds to the boundaries of the LMRWD. No guidance has been received on the convene process that will be required. New this year, Minnesota Tribal Nations will be eligible to receive funding. Funding will not be available until July 1, 2024.

10300 Great Plains Boulevard

The City and the LMRWD have discussed the issues with this property. The owner is not in violation of any regulations, rules, or ordinances. It is only an issue of erosion that is happening and is threatening an out-building on the property. It has been suggested to the owner that he retain a professional engineer to develop a plan to protect the out-building. Both the City and the LMRWD have cost share programs that could be used by the owner, however, the city nor the LMRWD is able to provide professional engineering assistance. The ravine system that is causing issues for this property is one that the LMRWD has not been able to get into to evaluate the gullies and ravines.

Lower Minnesota - Planning Assistance to States

There is not any update on this item.

Ike's Creek

The LMRWD met with USFWS and the MN Valley Land Trust to review proposals received to restore Ike's Creek. Four proposals were received: EOR, Inter-Fluve, ISG and WSB. All the proposals were comparative in price, however, USFWS had worked with Inter-Fluve in the past and were pleased with the work and level of service received. USFWS and the Land Trust chose the proposal from Inter-Fluve.

USFWS has held conversations with two of the commercial property owners, WhirlyBall and Home2 Suites by Hilton. Conversations were positive and property owners and property managers are planning to help better manage winter maintenance activities.

On September 12, 2023, I was able to observe USFWS and DNR electro-fishing at Ike's Creek. DNR Fisheries staff walked the creek netting fish. The fish were then weighed, measured and marked (so that no fish was counted twice). Below the old control structure, a variety of fish was found; trout, some northern pike and one or two other varieties. Above the control structure all fish captured were brown trout. There was a healthy number of fish of all sizes. Data will be shared once it has been made available. A second day of electro-fishing was planned for September 13, 2023.

The DNR plans to electro-fish Eagle Creek the week of September 18th.

LMRWD Bylaws

The LMRWD Bylaws require the Board to review the Bylaws at least once every 5 years. The Board reviewed Bylaws last year and made revisions. Bylaws are attached to the Administrator Report for the Board's information.

BWSR Snapshots

The September issue of the BWSR Snapshots had two articles that may be of interest to the LMRWD Board.

The first is titled Rain Check: State funding aims to increase floodwater storage. It discusses projects in the MN River Basin aimed at increasing upland storage, albeit to control flooding.

The second article highlights a project in Wilkin County to improve soil health. While Wilkin County is not in the MN River Basin, one of the benefits to improving soil health is the reduction in run-off and the sediment it carries.

MPCA – Lower Minnesota River Watershed Assessment

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is conducting another round of Watershed Assessment work in the [Lower Minnesota River Watershed](#) in 2025. The last assessment was completed in 2015. MPCA is inviting partners to attend the first virtual meeting in which they will present the

watershed monitoring process and first round findings, TMDLs and WRAPS process, what's new in this next watershed assessment, and what's coming up next.

The dates MPCA is looking to hold this meeting are the weeks of October 30-November 2 and November 13-16. The meeting will take approximately 2 hours with options of 9-11 am or 1-3 pm

The meeting will be recorded. Anyone interested in attending and should email Brittany.Faust@state.mn.us with their contact information so they can be added to the mailing list for future communication.

MPCA - Comment periods open

(This is the same information that was provided to the Board in a September 6, 2023 email)

The MPCA is accepting public comment on several issues that may be of interest to the Board:

The comment period for the Twin Cities Metro Solid Waste Policy Plan is open for public comment until September 17, 2023. The Plan describes broad regional objectives and potential strategies for solid waste management that counties can select from to meet the region's needs. It also sets goals for reduction, recycling, and organics recovery; utilizing existing resource recovery facility capacity; and minimizing land disposal. The plan established a framework for managing waste in the seven-county metro area over a 20-year period. This is of interest to the LMRWD as there are 5 (open and closed) within the LMRWD boundaries – Freeway Dump and Landfill (closed); Burnsville Landfill (open); Flying Cloud Landfill (closed); Louisville Landfill (closed) Dem-Com Landfill (open). Use this [link](#) to review the draft plan.

The MPCA has released the draft Remediation Guidance for PFAS (per and polyfluoroalkyl substances) for public review and comment. The PFAS Guidance outlines the approach used to identify, investigate, evaluate, and remediate PFAS contamination at impacted sites in the MPCA Remediation program across Minnesota. The comment period is open until October 5, 2023. This is of interest to the LMRWD because PFAS have been detected at landfills within the boundaries of the LMRWD. The PFAS Remediation Document can be viewed using this [link](#).

This is the third in a series of PFAS-related documents launched by MPCA including the [PFAS Blueprint](#) and the [PFAS Monitoring Plan](#).

A preliminary decision has been made by the MPCA to provide Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 Water quality Certification for the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Regional General Permits for the State of Minnesota. The LMRWD was notified on August 28, 2023, that the draft 401 Water Quality Certification was available for comment. The comment period closes September 11, 2023. More information about the 401 Water Quality Certifications can found using this [link](#). (This link was provided by the MPCA, it goes only to the comments page and there is not any information about the decision)

Watershed Plan Projects

MAC Boundary Adjustment: Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC, on behalf of the LMRWD, has received the GIS file for the proposed boundary changes from the Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC). Erica Bock is coordinating the proposed changes with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. A petition and board resolution, that will be sent to the MN Board of Water & Soil Resources, have been drafted and are being reviewed by LMRWD legal counsel. It is anticipated that the petition and resolution will be on the agenda for the October 2023 Board of Managers meeting.

MN River Floodplain: No new information to report on this project since the last update

Eden Prairie Area #3 Stabilization: An update on this project in on the September 20th meeting agenda. Project website: <http://lowermnriverwd.org/projects/mn-river-corridor-management-project>.

Vegetation Management Plan: No new information to report since the last update.

Sustainable Lake Management Plan: Trout Lakes: There is no new information to report since the last update.

Spring Creek Cost Share: This item is on the September 20th meeting agenda.

Project website: <http://lowermnriverwd.org/projects/spring-creek>

West Chaska Creek Re-meander: No new information to report since the update.

Project website: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1695a2cf90b44ddba730aad399196405>

Seminary Fen Ravine Restoration Area C2: The 2024 LMRWD Budget has been adjusted to reflect changes to the implementation plan. All funding allocated to Chaska Seminary Fen projects will be allocated to Ravine C-2 in 2024. This is reflected in the Proposed 2024 Budget. Here is a link to the [feasibility report](#) Area C-2.

Upcoming meetings/events

Managers are invited to attend any of these meetings. Most are free of charge and if not the LMRWD will reimburse registration fees. Please contact LMRWD administrator if you have any questions.

- Lower MN River East 1W1P Advisory Committee meeting, Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 10:00 am to 1:00pm – [virtual](#)
- Lower MN River East 1W1P Steering Committee meeting – Wednesday, August 16, 2023, 1:30 pm to 3:30pm – [virtual](#)
- UMWA (Upper Mississippi Waterway Association) monthly meeting – September 21, 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, Lilydale Pool & Yacht Club – in-person only
- Lower MN River East 1W1P Policy Committee meeting – August 17, 2023, 3:00pm to 5:00 pm, hybrid on at 181 W Minnesota Street, Le Center, MN or virtual (MS Teams) or [virtual](#)
- LMRWD Citizen Advisory Committee meeting – Tuesday, October 3, 2023, 4:30pm location to be announced
- Metro MN Watersheds -
- [MN Water Resource Conference](#) – October 17 & 18, St. Paul Rivercentre
- [BWSR Academy](#) – October 24-26, Cragun’s Conference Center, Brainerd
- [MN Watershed Annual Conference](#) – November 28 – December 1, 2023, Arrowwood Conference Center, Alexandria, MN

Lower Minnesota River East 1W1P

Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: 3:00-5:00pm, Thursday, August 17, 2023

Location:

Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District Office
181 W Minnesota Street, Le Center, MN 56057

And

Virtual – Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County); Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD); Greg Entinger (Le Sueur SWCD); Roger Bongers (Rice SWCD); Laura Amundson (LMRWD); Danny O'Keefe (Le Sueur County) (chair); Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD); Jeff Docken (Rice County); Rita Weaver (Scott County/SWMO); Linda Loomis (Lower MN River Watershed District); Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD); Anne Sawyer (BWSR); Melissa Bokman Ermer (Scott County/SWMO); Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD); Brad Behrens (Rice County)

I. Welcome & Review Agenda - Policy Committee Chair

Chair O'Keefe called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm. Holly gave an introduction on the agenda and what will be covered in today's meeting.

II. Review and Approval of Agenda

Holly indicated that there is an addition to the Organizational Arrangement update.

Motioned by Docken; Seconded by Entinger to approve the agenda.

The Motion carried unanimously for the agenda to be approved as presented.

III. Review and Approval of July 20th Meeting Minutes

Motioned by Entinger; Seconded by Bongers to approve the July 20th meeting minutes.

The Motion carried unanimously for the approval of the July 20th meeting minutes.

III. Advisory Committee & Subcommittee Updates (Informational Item)

Subcommittee Updates

Urban & Shoreland Subcommittee: Monday, August 14th

Education & Outreach Subcommittee Meeting: Wednesday, August 16th during Advisory Committee meeting.

The Groundwater subcommittee meeting was highly attended. Holly received a lot of good input to incorporate into the plan. There will be an additional meeting on August 31st, for other entities including tribal communities to make sure they understand what this plan means for them.

Laura Amundson (LMRWD) asked for examples of what other 1W1Ps are doing for subcommittees.

Holly gave an update on the planning activities completed to date. The Advisory Committee (AC) has been working on additions to the implementation table and discussion occurred on plan administration and coordination ideas.

IV. Review Plan Content: Plan Administration & Coordination: Decision Making and Staffing & Organizational Structures or Formal Agreements Sections (Informational Item)

Holly gave a presentation on the Plan content requirements from a BWSR handout regarding Plan Administration and Coordination, there were discussions at yesterday's Steering Committee meeting. Holly gave examples of subcommittee types other 1W1P groups are using and indicated those decisions will need to be made eventually. Holly gave examples of some of the duties and processes subcommittees perform in other 1W1Ps partnerships. Holly recommended hiring out legal services because most county attorneys are busy with county work and have other priorities.

Holly gave examples of shared services that Le Sueur County is involved in. Holly gave examples of collaborations or partnerships that would be beneficial for the partnership. These decisions will need to be made eventually to be added to the Administration and Collaboration chapter in the plan. Cmsr. Docken indicated there are other 1W1Ps and examples that we could pull ideas from. Staff indicated the Policy Committee (PC) could consider setting aside funds (i.e. 20% technical assistance, 10% Education and Outreach).

Cmsr. Docken asked if there is going to be other sources of funding towards these projects. Mike indicated that there will be Clean Water Funds (state funding) and federal funding available once they start getting some feasibility studies done to show the funding needs for projects.

IV. Organizational Arrangement (Informational & Decision item)

Melissa gave an update on Scott County/Scott WMO choice to withdraw from the Plan implementation process. We will continue with the plan process but not join the plan implementation.

Draft Joint Powers Agreement

Holly included an example Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) in the packet and discussed some of the main points of the JPA. A discussion on what the name this partnership ensued. The Policy Committee (PC) agreed to have staff come up with the name suggestions.

Holly continued with discussing voting language in the JPA. Mike indicated we would need to consider how many entities join the implementation JPA to see what the quorum would be. Holly continued with discussing budgeting and funding section of the JPA and some considerations for the draft. Holly gave examples of the Cannon Plan and what their process is with member dues as an example. It was asked that Commissioners ask what their boards would like to see for JPA content. The JPA will go before all the boards for approval. Cmsr. O'Keefe asked what the Cannon 1W1P member dues have been used for. Staff indicated legal fees, outreach that wasn't grant eligible, match on lake management plans, and lake monitoring. Dues are revisited each year in the Cannon group plan. Holly advised to look over the Powers section to understand what powers the board would like to have.

Cmsr. Entinger asked about the Property section of the JPA. Mike responded that we would like to get the plan completed first and some of these questions may be better answered. Steve Pahs indicated that individual agencies (i.e. Rice SWCD), would purchase equipment, the entity would not purchase equipment itself. The equipment is then shared with the partners. Mike gave examples of other equipment the partnership shares.

Holly asked if there were any other examples the PC board would like to see regarding the JPA. Mike asked if the PC feels member dues necessary. No PC members were opposed to member dues. Holly indicated it would be important to have a backup plan for staff changes for specific positions of the partnership board.

The PC stated 60 days is realistic for the Withdrawal section of the JPA.

V. Planning Effort Timeline & Policy Committee Meeting Schedule (Informational Item)

Holly provided a handout of the plan timeline. Staff will have ISG come to the PC in September to present the table. Staff will ask for a 60-day review in January. The PC will see a draft plan in October. ISG will start giving us sections of the plan to review. Holly indicated we may have pieces of the implementation plan to review in September as well as the Land & Water Resources Chapter and Ch. 2-3 for the PC to review. In November ISG will have a revised plan, so there will likely be no PC meeting. The official 60-day review will begin in January.

VIII. Updates & Next Steps

Updates & Next Steps

- Updates – Ch. 2 Issue Prioritization & Ch. 3 Priority Issues, Targeting, Measurable Goals will be made available in the next couple of weeks for the Policy Committee, Steering Committee & Advisory Committee to review and provide comments.
- Next Steering Team Meeting: **Wednesday, September 20th 1:30pm-3:00pm**
- Next Policy Committee Meeting: **Thursday, September 21st 3:00pm-5:00pm**
- Advisory Committee Meeting: **September 20th 10:00am-1:00pm**

IX. Meeting Adjourn

Motioned by Entinger, Seconded by Docken at 4:20 pm

The Motion carried unanimously for the approval to adjourn at 4:20pm.

Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

August 16, 2023

Attendees at meeting: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD) Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD), Brad Behrens (Rice County), Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Linda Loomis (Lower Minnesota River WD), Melissa Bokman-Ermer (Scott County/WMO), Vanessa Strong (Scott County/WMO), Barb Piechel (BWSR), and Anne Sawyer (BWSR)

Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on Wednesday, August 16, 2023. The meeting was held in person. Holly mentioned that the agenda was going to be amended today. The first priority was to address concerns that Scott County/WMO staff had with the implementation table. If the Steering Committee had additional time, we would talk about the Policy Committee tomorrow, and lastly discuss the Advisory Committee and related plant content (ex: implementation table).

Implementation Table Discussion-LGU Feedback

- Vanessa stated she was confused on how the activities work and how they impact existing metro plans.
 - Her concerns were over duplicative efforts and competing with one another.
 - Potentially have multiple funding sources to implement the same projects.
 - Did not want the partnership to account for projects, practices, and funding that the County/WMO is using within the implementation table and funding sources table.
- Multiple staff members from other LGUs were asking follow up questions and expressing thoughts about how they believe it will benefit Scott County/WMO and thought the table was not duplicate, but rather this was a way to leverage more dollars to get projects done and expand opportunities for Scott County/WMO for additional projects.
- After discussion amongst partners, Vanessa requested that we remove activities and funding from Scott County and WMO.
 - Troy suggested that we determine the percentage of projects that are implemented by the SWCD and funded by Scott County/WMO and remove that proportion from the implementation table. This will reduce the total amount of

projects, pollutant loads, and dollars that are within each subwatershed that are located within Scott County/WMO's jurisdictional boundary.

- Vanessa stated that Scott County/WMO will continue to be apart of planning efforts until the plan is complete and approved.

Decision Making and Staffing, Organizational Structures Formal Agreements, and Collaboration with other Units of government Sections of Plan

- Holly mentioned that throughout the next few Steering Committee meetings we will be going through plan content requirements for different sections of the plan. The goal is to first discuss them as staff and then bring forward to the policy committee for review and feedback. All of these sections are summarized and vary by each watershed in details that are provided.
- The first section that the Steering Committee went through is the Decision Making and Staffing Section. Holly provided examples from 4 different watershed partnerships. Each partnership had one or numerous similarities with the Lower MN River East partnership.
 - For the Decision Making process, Holly asked the Steering Committee how they believe we should review and approve projects?
 - There was discussion about having dollar thresholds set. This way projects under a certain dollar amount would not need full Lower MN River East JPB approval. It would make the decision-making process more effective and continue to get projects out the door.
 - The Steering Committee thought this was a good suggestion to bring forward to the Policy Committee.
 - Another discussion item under this section was development of Committees. This has varied across the board within watersheds. There at minimum is some kind of technical committee that involves local, state, and federal agencies (similar to the current TAC). Additionally, many watersheds have some kind of plan implementation work group/committee to discuss workplans, where to prioritize first, budgets, project tracking/reporting, and so forth.
 - Additionally, there are options for other committees. Holly used the example within the Cannon Watershed we have an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is able to make some decisions without the full board. Again, helps with efficiency and reducing number of meetings.
 - The other part of this section that the Steering Committee discussed was staffing. We will need to identify a day to day, fiscal agent, and legal staff at a minimum.

Discussion Policy Committee Meeting

- The Steering Committee decided moving forward we would split up the implementation table into a few different meetings for the Policy Committee. Additionally, having a few summary slides before we review the table would be helpful.
- There was a request for the Policy Committee to repeat motions before voting. Sometimes it is difficult for those joining virtually to hear.

Advisory Committee Meeting Recap and Discussion

- The Steering Committee thought the meeting went well.
- We decided to send the plan to the municipalities and tribal community only during the 60 day review period and not during the informal review process.

Updates & Next Steps

- The next steering committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, September 20th** from **1:30pm-3:00pm**.
- The next policy committee meeting will be held **Thursday, September 21st** from **3:00pm-5:00pm**.
- Next Advisory Committee Meeting will be held **Wednesday, September 20th** **10:00am-1:00pm**.



BOARD ORDER

Clean Water Fund Watershed Based Implementation Funding Program

PURPOSE

Authorize the fiscal years 2024-2025 Clean Water Fund Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) Program and adopt the Program Policy.

FINDINGS OF FACT / RECITALS

1. The Laws of Minnesota 2023, Chapter 40, Article 2, Section 6 (a) appropriated \$39,500,000 for fiscal year 2024 and \$39,500,000 for fiscal year 2025 to implement activities in watershed plans.
2. The Board has authorities under Minnesota Statutes §103B.101 to award grants and contracts to accomplish water and related land resources management.
3. The Board has authorities under Minnesota Statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14 and 103B.801 to approve comprehensive watershed management plans, Minnesota Statutes §103B.255 to approve county groundwater plans, Minnesota Statutes §103C.401 to approve soil and water conservation district plans, and Minnesota Statutes §103B.231 to approved watershed management plans.
4. WBIF is based on a comprehensive and holistic approach to watershed management and includes funding local implementation actions to restore and protect both groundwater and surface water.
5. The fiscal years 2024-2025 Clean Water Fund WBIF Program policy was created to provide expectations for subsequent implementation activities conducted with these funds.
6. The Grants Program and Policy Committee, at their July 24 and August 14, 2023 meetings, discussed and recommended allocations of fiscal years 2024-2025 Clean Water Fund WBIF that includes: a) a \$250,000 base per watershed planning area outside of the Metro, b) a \$100,000 base per watershed planning area inside of the metro, and c) a distribution of funds based on a weighting of 90% private land and 10% on public waters to all eligible areas.
7. The Grants Program and Policy Committee, at their July 24 and August 14, 2023 meetings, reviewed the fiscal year 2024-2025 Clean Water Fund WBIF Program policy, and proposed funding allocations, and recommended approval to the Board.

ORDER

The Board hereby:

1. Adopts the attached fiscal years 2024-2025 Clean Water Fund WBIF Program Policy.
2. Adopts the attached map in Figure 1: Twin Cities Metropolitan Area Allocation Boundaries for depicting the metro allocations in Table 2.
3. Authorizes staff to establish a schedule and enter into grant agreements consistent with statutory appropriations and the attached:
 - a. Table 1: FY2024 and FY2025 WBIF Grant Allocations (excludes 7-county metro area)
 - b. Table 2: FY2024 and FY2025 WBIF Metro Only Grant Allocations

Note: Fiscal 2025 funds will not be available until July 1, 2024, and some recipients may not receive funds until after this date.

4. Authorizes staff to adjust the timing and availability of funding identified in Tables 1 and 2 based on timing of plan approval, sufficiency of partner coordination, readiness to proceed, commitment of nonstate match, or expenditure of previously awarded Watershed Based Implementation Funds.
5. Authorizes staff to distribute remaining or otherwise undesignated grant funds from FY2024-2025 and previous WBIF appropriations, consistent with the purpose of the WBIF program.

Dated at Apple Valley, Minnesota, this August 24, 2023.

MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES



Todd Holman, Chair
Board of Water and Soil Resources

Date: 8/24/2023

Attachments:

- FY 2024-2025 Clean Water Fund WBIF Program Policy

Table 1. FY 2024-2025 WBIF Grant Allocations (excludes 7-county metro area)

1W1P Planning Area #	1W1P Name	FY 24-25 Allocation Amount	Allocation Year
35	Bois de Sioux-Mustinka	\$ 1,594,226	2025
37	Buffalo-Red River	\$ 1,906,278	2024
54	Cannon River	\$ 1,536,990	2025
33	Cedar River	\$ 974,677	2024
20	Chippewa River	\$ 2,163,227	2024
43	Clearwater River	\$ 1,485,882	2025
23	Cottonwood River	\$ 1,958,370	2025
7	Crow Wing River	\$ 1,677,248	2025
34	Des Moines River	\$ 1,736,891	2025
30	Greater Zumbro River	\$ 1,897,768	2024
53	Hawk Creek - Middle Minnesota	\$ 1,504,444	2024
27	Kettle and Upper St. Croix	\$ 1,412,047	2024
18	Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank	\$ 1,228,526	2025
51	Lake of the Woods	\$ 621,173	2024
1	Lake Superior North	\$ 1,043,910	2024
26	Le Sueur River	\$ 1,355,872	2024
4	Leech Lake River	\$ 598,665	2024
9	Long Prairie River	\$ 1,032,278	2025
56	Lower Minnesota River East	\$ 538,396	2024
55	Lower Minnesota River West	\$ 1,004,297	2025
29	Lower St. Croix River	\$ 778,691	2025
44	Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers	\$ 1,620,713	2025
5	Mississippi River - Grand Rapids	\$ 1,324,119	2025
61	Mississippi River Brainerd	\$ 1,492,655	2024
3	Mississippi River Headwaters	\$ 1,013,278	2024
11	Mississippi River St. Cloud	\$ 1,271,008	2025
52	Missouri River Basin	\$ 2,096,184	2024
64	Nemadji River	\$ 469,317	2025
12	North Fork Crow River	\$ 1,518,486	2024
36	Otter Tail	\$ 1,507,070	2025
6	Pine River	\$ 634,381	2024
17	Pomme de Terre River	\$ 1,006,033	2025
50	Rainy - Rapid River	\$ 520,667	2024
67	Rainy Lake Koochiching Co (butterfly)	\$ 558,419	2025
47	Rainy River Headwaters - Vermillion River	\$ 1,004,508	2024
41	Red Lake River	\$ 1,700,439	2024
8	Redeye River	\$ 1,112,800	2025
32	Root River	\$ 2,300,950	2024
46	Roseau River	\$ 864,534	2025
15	Rum River	\$ 1,331,559	2025

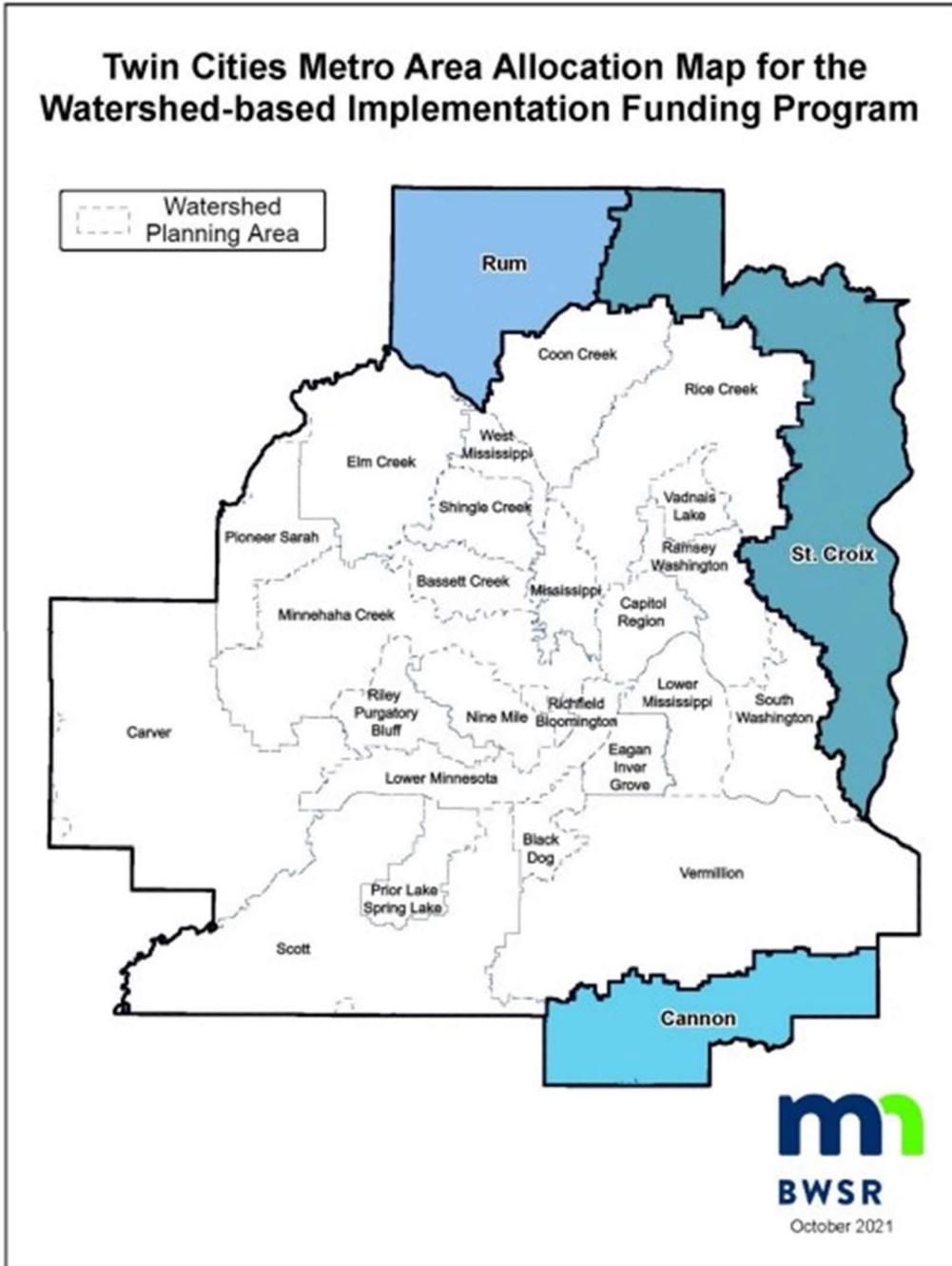
39	Sand Hill River	\$ 705,267	2024
10	Sauk River	\$ 1,212,865	2024
63	Shell Rock River/Winnebago Watershed	\$ 547,409	2024
28	Snake River	\$ 1,024,471	2024
13	South Fork of the Crow River	\$ 1,286,465	2024
2	St. Louis River	\$ 2,228,654	2024
42	Thief River	\$ 702,239	2024
45	Two Rivers Plus	\$ 1,662,685	2024
16	Upper Minnesota River	\$ 675,322	2024
40	Upper/Lower Red Lake	\$ 782,449	2025
25	Watonwan River	\$ 1,136,479	2024
38	Wild Rice - Marsh	\$ 1,993,181	2025
31	Winona/La Crescent	\$ 896,267	2025
19	Yellow Medicine River	\$ 1,323,460	2024

TOTAL \$ 67,574,192

Table 2. FY 2024-2025 WBIF Grant Seven County Metro Allocations

1W1P Planning Area #	Metro Watershed Planning Area (WPA) or 1W1P Name	FY24-25 Funding Amount	Allocation Year
Metro	Bassett Creek WPA	\$ 183,256	2025
Metro	Black Dog WPA	\$ 151,542	2025
54	Cannon River (Metro)	\$ 395,361	2025
Metro	Capitol Region WPA	\$ 176,241	2025
Metro	Carver County WPA	\$ 721,325	2025
Metro	Coon Creek WPA	\$ 294,100	2025
Metro	Eagan-Inver Grove WPA	\$ 162,370	2025
Metro	Elm Creek WPA	\$ 373,590	2025
Metro	Lower Minnesota River WPA	\$ 217,485	2025
Metro	Lower Mississippi River WPA	\$ 208,410	2025
29	Lower St. Croix River (Metro)	\$ 1,266,380	2025
Metro	Minnehaha Creek WPA	\$ 424,534	2025
Metro	Mississippi WPA	\$ 176,951	2025
Metro	Nine Mile Creek WPA	\$ 195,026	2025
Metro	Pioneer-Sarah Creek WPA	\$ 240,415	2025
Metro	Prior Lake-Spring Lake WPA	\$ 169,935	2025
Metro	Ramsey Washington Metro WPA	\$ 230,182	2025
Metro	Rice Creek WPA	\$ 448,016	2025
Metro	Richfield-Bloomington WPA	\$ 114,644	2025
Metro	Riley-Purgatory-Bluff Creek WPA	\$ 197,194	2025
15	Rum River (Metro)	\$ 569,378	2025
Metro	Scott County WPA	\$ 646,054	2025
Metro	Shingle Creek WPA	\$ 191,662	2025
Metro	South Washington WPA	\$ 228,539	2025
Metro	Vadnais Lake Area WPA	\$ 147,921	2025
Metro	Vermillion River WPA	\$ 717,191	2025
Metro	West Mississippi WPA	\$ 152,299	2025
Metro Subtotal		\$ 9,000,000	

Figure 1. Twin Cities Metropolitan Area Allocation Boundaries



Watershed-Based Implementation Funding FY24-25 Policy

From the Board of Water and Soil Resources, State of Minnesota

Effective: August 23, 2023
Approval: Board Decision #23-55

Policy Statement

This policy provides expectations for implementation activities conducted via the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Clean Water Fund Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) program as defined by the Clean Water Fund appropriation under Laws of Minnesota 2023, Chapter 40, Article 2, Section 6 (a).

The Clean Water Fund was established to implement part of Article XI, Section 15, of the Minnesota Constitution, and Minnesota Statutes §114D with the purpose of protecting, enhancing, and restoring water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water sources from degradation.

Reason for the policy

These funds are specifically to be used to advance Minnesota’s water resource goals through prioritized and targeted cost-effective actions with measurable water quality results. The primary purpose of activities funded through this program is to implement projects and programs that protect, enhance, and restore surface water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams; protect groundwater from degradation; and protect drinking water sources.

Grant Administration

BWSR will use grant agreements for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules and established policies. Willful or negligent disregard of relevant statutes, rules and policies may lead to imposition of financial penalties or future sanctions on the grant recipient. BWSR’s Grants Administration Manual (GAM) provides the primary framework for local management of all state grants administered by BWSR (<http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/>).

Program Requirements

1. Eligibility

All grantees must be in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, policies, ordinances, rules, and regulations. Recipients who have previously received a grant from BWSR must be in compliance with BWSR requirements for grantee website and eLINK reporting before grant execution and payment

For areas outside of the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area: To be eligible, local governments must have a current state approved and locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan authorized under Minnesota statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14 or §103B.801 and have entered into an implementation agreement with other members of the planning partnership. If a local government within the geographic area of the plan has not adopted the plan, these funds can still be spent on implementation in that area by another eligible local government.

In the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan (Metro) Area: To be eligible, counties, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, soil and water conservation districts¹, and municipalities² must have a current state approved and locally adopted watershed management plan as required under §103B.231, county groundwater plan authorized under §103B.255, or soil and water conservation district comprehensive plan under Minnesota statutes §103C.331, Subd. 11. Participants, including one representative from each watershed district, watershed management organization, soil and water conservation district³, county with a county groundwater plan, up to two municipalities, must coordinate within the designated watershed planning areas before submitting a watershed-based implementation funding budget request that is prioritized, targeted and measurable.

Federally Recognized Minnesota Tribal Nations are eligible if they are implementing projects or programs for the purpose of this funding that are identified in a state approved 1) comprehensive watershed management plan developed under the One Watershed, One Plan program, or 2) plan developed under the seven-county metropolitan groundwater or surface water management frameworks.

BWSR staff will work with Minnesota Tribal Nations and implementing partners regarding tribal interest in this program.

2. Match Requirements

All grants require a non-state match equal to at least 10% of the amount of the Watershed Based Implementation Funding received. Match can be provided by landowners, land occupiers, private organizations, local governments or other non-state sources. Match can be in the form of cash or the cash value of services or materials contributed to the accomplishment of grant objectives.

3. Eligible Activities

All eligible activities must have a primary benefit towards water quality. Activities that result in multiple benefits are strongly encouraged. Eligible activities must be identified in the implementation section of a state approved,

¹ BWSR has established the content and process for metro soil and water conservation districts to develop an enhanced comprehensive plan consistent with Minnesota Statutes §103C.331 if the SWCD determines that an eligible 103B plan does not sufficiently and comprehensively include their activities. The plan content must include priority issues, measurable goals, and a targeted implementation action table. The process must include stakeholder input, establishment of an advisory committee, a public notice and comment period, a public hearing, and BWSR Board approval. See the [Metro Enhanced SWCD Comprehensive Plan Options](https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2022-02/Metro%20SWCD%20Comp%20Plan%20Options_v2.pdf) document on the BWSR website: https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2022-02/Metro%20SWCD%20Comp%20Plan%20Options_v2.pdf

² Municipalities (cities and townships) in the seven-county metropolitan area are eligible if they have a water plan that has been approved by a watershed district or a watershed management organization as provided under Minn. Stat. 103B.235.

³ Including Hennepin and Ramsey Counties if they have an enhanced comprehensive plan authorized under Minn. Statute 103C.331.

locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan developed under Minnesota statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14 or §103B.801, watershed management plan required under §103B.231, county groundwater plan authorized under §103B.255, or a Metro soil and water conservation district enhanced plan as identified in the “Metro Enhanced SWCD Comprehensive Plan Options Guidance Document” (<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/watershed-based-implementation-funding-program>) and authorized under §103C.331.

Eligible activities can consist of structural and non-structural activities; program and project support, including staffing; easements; and grant management and reporting. Technical and engineering assistance necessary to implement these activities are considered essential and are eligible to be included. The BWSR website has activity category and practice lists (not all are eligible for this grant), see <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink-guidance-activity-categories>; <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink-guidance-practices>.

The following categories describe the eligible activities in more detail:

Structural and non-structural practices and activities

- All structural practices must be designed and maintained for a minimum effective life of ten years for best management practices and 25 years for capital improvement practices. The beginning date for a practice’s effective life is the same date final payment is approved and the project is considered complete. Where questions arise under this section, the effective lifespan of structural practices and projects shall be defined by current and acceptable design standards or criteria as defined in Section 5: Technical Expertise.
- Incentive payments should be reasonable and justifiable, supported by grant recipient policy, consistent with prevailing local conditions, and must be based on established standards. BWSR reserves the right to review and approve incentive payment rates established by grant recipient policy. Incentives to install or adopt best management practices must have a maximum duration of three years with a goal of ongoing landowner adoption unless otherwise approved by the Assistant Director of Regional Operations prior to work plan approval.
- Non-structural practices and activities that supplement or exceed current minimum state standards or procedures for protection, enhancement, and restoration of water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams or that protect groundwater and drinking water sources from degradation are eligible. Any projects proposing to provide financial assistance for installing or adopting non-structural land management practices for a duration longer than three years must be reviewed by BWSR staff and approved by the Assistant Director of Regional Operations prior to workplan approval.

Program and project support

- Staffing and/or technical and engineering assistance necessary to implement these activities.

- Public participation and engagement, equipment⁴, and other activities necessary for the implementation of water quality practices and programs consistent with the purposes of these funds.
- Actual technical and administrative expenses to advance plan implementation, site investigations and assessments, design and cost estimates, construction or installation supervision, and inspections.
- Developing of ordinances to protect water quality (example: Minimal Impact Design Standards) and must supplement existing federal/state/local requirements.

Easements

Easements and payment amounts must be reviewed and approved by BWSR staff prior to expenditure of grant funds to acquire an easement. When implementing perpetual easements, state easement payments shall not exceed current standard Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) rates.

Grant management and reporting

Eligible activities include local grant administration, management, and reporting that are directly related to and necessary for implementing the project or activity. All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of Clean Water Fund grants. Grant management and reporting expenditures must be documented according to the Grants Administration Manual (See Reporting Requirements for BWSR Grants).

WBIF Specific Requirements

The following activities have specific definitions and requirements in addition to the Grants Administration Manual:

In-lake or in-channel treatment

Eligible practices include management practices such as rough fish management, vegetation management, lake drawdown, and alum treatments that have been identified as an implementation activity in a TMDL study or Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies report and/or in a comprehensive watershed management plan or metro watershed management plan. Eligible expenses include only initial costs for design and implementation. All subsequent applications and treatments under this subsection are considered to be a local operation and maintenance expense responsibility. A feasibility study must be completed, reviewed and approved by BWSR staff prior to these activities being proposed in a grant work plan. The feasibility study must include:

- a) Lake and watershed information based on data that has been collected within the last 10-years (at minimum, include lake morphology and depth, summary of water quality information, and the assessment of aquatic invasive species);
- b) Description of internal load vs. external load nutrient reductions needed to meet the state's water quality standard;

⁴ See the Allowable and Unallowable Costs section of the Grants Administration Manual for Capital Equipment Purchases.

- c) History of projects completed in the lake's watershed (if none have been completed, that should be stated), as well as other in-lake activities if applicable;
- d) Cost benefit analysis of all options considered and reasons given for why you are choosing the proposed activities;
- e) Projected effective life of the proposed activities;
- f) Expected water quality outcome of the proposed activity;
- g) Plan for monitoring water quality to assure the proposed activity's total phosphorus goal will be achieved during its effective life (monitoring plans should include monitoring through the effective life), and
- h) For activities related to rough fish (example carp), the feasibility study must also include:
 - i. Methods used to estimate adult and juvenile carp populations;
 - ii. Description of the known interconnectedness of waterbodies (lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, etc.);
 - iii. Identified nursery areas;
 - iv. Methods used to track carp movement;
 - v. Proposed actions to limit recruitment and movement; and
 - vi. Proposed actions to reduce adult carp populations.

Feedlots

Eligible practices are limited to: livestock management systems that were constructed before October 23, 2000; and livestock operations registered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Database or its equivalent, not classified as a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO), and with less than 500 animal units (AUs) in accordance with Minnesota Rule Chapter 7020. BWSR reserves the right to deny, postpone or cancel funding where financial penalties related to violations have been imposed on the operator.

- a) Funded projects must comply with standards in MN Rule Chapter 7020 upon completion.
- b) Eligible practices are limited to best management practices listed by the Minnesota NRCS.
- c) Eligible practices and project components must meet all applicable local, State, and federal standards and permitting requirements.
- d) Feedlot roof structures are eligible up to \$100,000 per project with state grant funds and not to exceed 100% of construction costs.
- e) Feedlot relocations are eligible, up to \$100,000 per project with state grant funds and not to exceed 100% of the construction costs. The existing eligible feedlot must be permanently closed in accordance with local and State requirements. The existing and relocated livestock waste management systems sites are considered one project for grant funding.

Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems.

- a) Local governments should first exhaust SSTS grant funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.
- b) Eligible activities are limited to identified imminent threat to public health systems (ITPHS) and systems that fail to protect groundwater. Land occupiers must meet low-income thresholds. Low-income guidelines from U.S Rural Development are strongly encouraged as the basis for the definition of low income.
- c) Proposed community wastewater treatment solutions involving multiple landowners are eligible for funding but must be listed on the MPCA's Project Priority List (PPL) and have a Community Assessment Report (CAR)

or facilities plan (Minn. Rule 7077.0272) developed prior to work plan submittal. For community wastewater system applications that include ITPHS, systems that fail to protect groundwater are also eligible.

- d) In an unsewered area that is connecting into a sewer line to a municipal wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), the costs associated with connecting the home to the sewer line is eligible for funding if the criteria in b. and c. above are met.

Drainage Systems

Funds can be used as an external source of funding for Minnesota Statutes §103E.011 Subd. 5 to facilitate multi-purpose drainage management practices with a primary purpose of improving water quality to reduce erosion and sedimentation and provide secondary benefits of reducing peak flows and flooding while protecting drainage system efficiency and reducing drainage system maintenance.

4. Ineligible Activities

Activities that do not have a primary benefit of water quality are ineligible. Common examples include:

- a. Water quality monitoring such as, but not limited to, routine, baseline, diagnostic, or effectiveness monitoring. This includes both surface and groundwater monitoring activities.
- b. Household water conservation appliances and water fixtures.
- c. Wastewater treatment systems with the exception of Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems that are listed in the Eligible Activities section above.
- d. Municipal drinking water supply facilities or individual drinking water treatment systems.
- e. Stormwater conveyances that collect and move runoff, but do not provide water quality treatment benefit.
- f. Replacement, realignment or creation of bridges, trails or roads.
- g. Aquatic plant harvesting.
- h. Routine maintenance activities or repair of capital equipment and infrastructure within the effective life of existing practices or projects.
- i. Feedlots
 - 1) Feedlot expansions beyond state registered number of animal units, and
 - 2) Slats placed on top of manure storage structures.
- j. Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS)
 - 1) Small community wastewater treatment systems serving over 10,000 gallons per day with a soil treatment system, and
 - 2) A small community wastewater treatment system that discharges treated sewage effluent directly to surface waters without land treatment.
- k. Drainage management
 - 1) Drain tile, except for tile outlets required for water and sediment control basins, tile required to make eligible drainage water management practices function, tile required to collect and move runoff to treatment system, and dense pattern tile to replace open tile inlet(s).
 - 2) Ditching except if needed for the creation of a storage and treatment wetland restoration.

- 3) Back-flow preventing flap gates on side inlet structure pipes where a system-wide analysis has not been completed.
 - 4) Continuous berms greater than an average of 3 feet high (above existing ground) along Chapter 103E drainage ditches.
- l. Fee title land acquisition or easement costs, unless specifically allowed. If not specifically allowed, land acquisition and easement costs can count toward the required match if directly associated with the project and incurred within the grant period (costs may count towards match).
 - m. Buffers or other alternative practices that are required by law (e.g., Buffer Law, Drainage Law, Shoreland Law).
 - n. Contribution to a contingency or reserve fund or payment(s) to an equipment replacement fund that extends beyond the grant agreement period.
 - o. Activities that outlet landlocked basins.
 - p. Development and delivery of educational activities and curriculum that do not support or lead to the implementation of water quality practices.
 - q. Components required by 103E Drainage Law.
 - r. Any project that contributes to, or otherwise is used to replace wetlands impacted under the Wetland Conservation Act (per Minn. Rules 8420).
 - s. Activities required under the Groundwater Protection Rule.
 - t. Permanent stormwater treatment activities required to only meet the minimum requirements in Section 15 (Permanent Stormwater Treatment System) of the NPDES Construction Stormwater Permit which addresses development projects that creates a net increase of one or more acres of cumulative impervious surface.

5. Technical Expertise

Consistent with the Grants Administration Manual (GAM), grantees have the following responsibilities to ensure long-term public benefit of projects. See the following sections of the GAM for more details: Technical Quality Assurances (TQA), Projects and Practices Assurances (PPA), Operation, Maintenance, and Inspection of Practices (OMIP), and Implementing Contracts with Landowners (ICL).

- **Technical Assistance Providers.** Ensure that identified technical assistance provider(s) have the appropriate technical expertise, skills, and training to their assigned role(s). (TQA)
- **Standards.** Ensure the use of appropriate standards for design and installation. Innovative approaches may be incorporated on a case-by-case basis. (TQA)
- **Vegetation Requirements.** Non-structural vegetative practices must follow the Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, see <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/node/8806>.
- **Project Assurances.** Provide assurances that landowners or land occupiers receiving this funding will keep the practice in place for its intended use for the expected lifespan of the practice. (PPA)
- **Certification.** Certify that the project was installed according to applicable plans and specifications. (TQA)
- **Operation and Maintenance.** Ensure an appropriate operation and maintenance plan is developed by qualified staff that identifies necessary activities and timing. (TQA, OMIP)

- **Periodic Project Inspection.** Conduct periodic project inspections to confirm the operation and maintenance plan is being followed and the project has not been altered or removed. (TQA, OMIP)

6. BWSR Grant Budget Request, Work Plan, Reporting and Reconciliation Requirements

Activities must be first submitted through a budget request and work plan that will be reviewed by BWSR. The work plan must be approved by BWSR prior to funds being distributed. Metro grantees must request state funds that equal or exceed \$50,000. Applications submitted that do not meet this minimum dollar amount will not be accepted.

BWSR staff is authorized to develop grant agreements and requirements and processes for budget requests, work plans, project outcomes reporting, fiscal reconciliations, and grant closeouts. In the event there is a violation of the terms of the grant agreement, BWSR will enforce the grant agreement and evaluate appropriate actions, up to and including repayment of grant funds at a rate up to 100% of the grant agreement.

Important information below:

- All grantees must follow the relevant elements of the Grants Administration Manual policy and guidance including requirements for proposed work plan revisions and grant amendments.
- The grantee board has the authority and responsibility to approve the expenditure of funds within their own organization. The approval or denial of individual expenditures of funds must be documented in the grantee board's meeting minutes.
- Funds repaid to a grantee from a landowner or other land occupier who has failed to maintain a practice for its effective life must be reallocated to a local cost share program or project account consistent with MN Statutes Chapter 114D.50, less the administrative cost of the grantee.

7. Assurance Measures

WBIF assurance measures are based upon fiscal integrity and accountability for achieving measurable progress towards water quality elements of eligible watershed management or comprehensive watershed management plans. BWSR will use the measures to summarize and communicate about the use of WBIF relative to BWSR's expectations in accelerating clean water outcomes. The following assurance measures are supplemental to existing reporting and on-going grant monitoring efforts.

1. Prioritized, targeted, and measurable work is making progress toward achieving clean water goals.
2. Programs, projects, and practices are being implemented in priority areas.
3. Grant work is on-schedule and on-budget.
4. Leverage of non-state funds.

History

This policy may be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Description	Date
This policy was originally created in 2019.	9/25/19
This policy was updated in 2021 to add a few ineligible activities and clarify language related to eligible activities and entities and change Metro soil and water conservation district annual work plans to enhanced plans under eligible activities.	10/27/2021
This policy was updated in 2023 to add tribal nations to eligibility list, and clarify language related to eligible and ineligible activities.	6/28/2023

**BY-LAWS OF
LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT**

(By-Laws adopted by Lower Minnesota River Watershed District under Minn. Stat. § 103D.315: Subd. 11. “Administration By-Laws: *“The managers shall adopt bylaws for the administration of the business and affairs of the watershed district.”*”)

ARTICLE I.

NAME

Section 1. **NAME:** Lower Minnesota River Watershed District.

Section 2. **ABBREVIATIONS:** Throughout these By-Laws whenever it is desirable to abbreviate the name of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, the initials “LMRWD” or the word "District" shall be used.

ARTICLE II.

PURPOSE

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 103D.201, the District's General Purpose is as follows:

1. Protect, preserve, and use natural surface and groundwater storage and retention systems.
2. Minimize public capital expenditures needed to correct flooding and water quality problems.
3. Identify and plan for means to effectively protect and improve surface and groundwater quality.
4. Establish more uniform local policies and official controls for surface and groundwater management.
5. Establish, adopt and enforce standards to promote responsible and sustainable land use and development.
6. Prevent erosion of soil into surface water systems.
7. Promote groundwater recharge.
8. Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities.
9. Secure the other benefits associated with the proper management of surface and groundwater.
10. Cooperate with, aid and assist the state and/or federal government to provide for commercial river transportation.

ARTICLE III

LMRWD OFFICE and WATERSHED DISTRICT'S BOUNDARIES

Section 1. DISTRICT OFFICE: LMRWD office is located at 112 East 5th Street, Suite 112, Chaska, MN 55318.

Section 2. BOUNDARIES of LMRWD: The LMRWD covers an area of 64 square miles of Carver, Hennepin, Dakota, Scott and Ramsey counties. It also includes the Minnesota River Valley from Fort Snelling at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, upstream to Carver Minnesota. The width of the District includes the bluffs on both sides of the Minnesota River within this reach of the river. In addition, included in its boundaries are fourteen (14) cities or townships, partially or in their entirety.

ARTICLE IV

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Section 1. DISTRIBUTION of MANAGERS and APPOINTMENT THEREOF: Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 103D.301, Distribution of Manager Positions, Subd. 1: More than one affected county. *“If more than one county is affected by a watershed district, the board must provide that managers are distributed by residence among the counties affected by the watershed district.”* Minn. Stat. § 103D.301 Subd. 3: *“...The county board of commissioners of a county affected by the watershed district...”* appoints the manager.

Section 2. COMPOSITION OF LMRWD BOARD OF MANAGERS: The LMRWD is composed of five managers appointed by the four counties in the District: Hennepin County, two (2) managers; Dakota County, one (1) manager; Carver County, one (1) manager; and Scott County, one (1) manager. Ramsey County is no longer represented because there is no population from Ramsey County in the District.

Section 3. TERMS OF OFFICE: Appointments made by the respective counties' Board of Commissioners to the LMRWD Board of Managers are for three-year terms. Terms of office begin in March of the year they are appointed unless a county delays in the appointment of a manager. Per Minn. Stat. § 103D.315, Subd. 6., a manager's term continues until a successor is appointed and qualified.

Section 4. BONDING: Before assuming the duties of a Board member, each Board member, at District expense, will obtain and file a bond in accordance with Minn. Stat. §103D.315, Subd. 2. The Board, at District expense, will provide for insurance for its members to provide liability protection on such terms and in such amounts as the Board decides.

Section 5. VACANCIES: Any manager who is unable to fulfill his/her three-year term of office on LMRWD Board of Managers shall notify his/her respective county Board of Commissioners of the fact he/she will leaving his/her position as manager on the LMRWD so the

county he/she represents can appoint another manager as soon as possible to complete the departing manager's term in office.

Section 6. COMPENSATION: Minn. Stat. § 103D.315 Subd. 8: *“The compensation of managers for meetings and for performance of other necessary duties may not exceed the amount specified by law. Managers are entitled to reimbursement for traveling and other necessary expenses incurred in the performance of official duties.”*

Managers shall be compensated the statutory maximum per diem for meetings and the performance of other necessary duties authorized by the Board. Managers are entitled to reimbursement for mileage, travel expenses, and lodging in accordance with the LMRWD travel policy. Managers cannot be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages.

Section 7. SUBMISSION OF MANAGER'S EXPENSES: A claim form shall be filled out by each Manager and submitted to the LMRWD office to be processed and approved in the same manner as other claims in June and December. In order to facilitate proper audit and closure of the fiscal year, all claims for expenses or per diem incurred in a preceding fiscal year, shall be submitted within 60 days of the close of the fiscal year.

Section 8. DUTIES OF MANAGERS IN STATUTE: Minn. Stat. § 103D.315
“Managers” defines additional duties of the District’s Managers.

In addition to statutory duties, Managers shall abide by the following principles:

- (a) The Board of Managers acts as the unified voice of LMRWD and the president serves as the spokesperson for the Board of Managers..
- (b) No individual Manager may provide direction, instructions or authorization to the Administrator or a District consultant unless specifically authorized to do so by the Board of Managers.
- (c) A Manager’s request for information that would require a significant amount of the Administrator’s time must be approved by the Board of Managers.
- (d) A Manager must notify the Administrator when a request for information is made from consultants to the District.
- (e) A Manager may not request or authorize on behalf of the District performance of services by the Administrator or consultant unless authorized by action of the Board of Managers.
- (f) Individual managers cannot bind the District to agreements or expenditures.

ARTICLE V OFFICERS

Section 1. ELECTION OF OFFICERS: The following officers shall be elected each calendar year on or before the first regularly scheduled meeting in September: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. Terms are for one-year unless re-elected.

Section 2. OFFICER VACANCIES: Minn. Stat. § 103D.315 Subd. 3: *“The managers must fill vacancies occurring in the officers’ positions.”*

Section 3. TEMPORARY AND CONCURRENT APPOINTMENTS OF OFFICERS: The Board may appoint a Board member as officer *pro tem* if an officer is absent or disabled and action by that officer is required. When the composition of the Board is less than five members, a member may hold concurrent offices or the office of Assistant Treasurer may remain vacant.

Section 4. DUTIES OF OFFICERS:

- (a) President: The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Managers. The President shall serve under the supervision and direction of the Board and shall see that all orders and resolutions of the Board are carried into effect. The President shall execute all contracts or instruments requiring an officer’s signature, unless otherwise directed by the Board, and shall have the general powers and duties usually vested in the office of President of the Board and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as the Board may from time to time prescribe.
- (b) Vice-President: In the absence of the President at a regularly held LMRWD meeting, the Vice-President shall preside at the meeting. The Vice-President shall exercise and perform the authorities and duties of the President in the event of the latter’s absence, death, disqualification, or incapacity until the LMRWD Board of Managers elects a new President. The Vice-President shall exercise and perform such other authorities and duties as may be prescribed or limited from time to time by the Board of Managers.
- (c) Secretary: The Secretary shall cause to be recorded all votes and the minutes of all proceedings of the Board of Managers in a book to be kept for that purpose. The Secretary shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all meetings of the Board, and shall perform such other duties as may from time to time be prescribed by the Board or by the President. These duties may be delegated to the Administrator as directed by the Board of Managers.
- (d) Treasurer: The Treasurer shall have the care and custody of the funds and securities and shall disburse the funds of the LMRWD as may be ordered from time to time by the Board. The Treasurer shall keep or cause to be kept full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the LMRWD, and shall deposit all monies, securities and other valuable effects of the LMRWD in the name and to the credit of the LMRWD in such depositories as

may be designated from time to time by the Board. Except to the extent that some other person or persons may be specifically authorized by the Board to do so, the Treasurer shall make, execute, and endorse all checks and other commercial paper on behalf of the LMRWD when requested by the Board and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board.

- (e) Assistant Treasurer: In the absence of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer shall perform the duties of the Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer shall exercise and perform the authorities and duties of the Treasurer in the event of the latter's absence, death, disqualification, or incapacity until the LMRWD Board of Managers elects a new Treasurer. The Assistant Treasurer shall exercise and perform such other authorities and duties as may be prescribed or limited from time to time by the Board of Managers.

Section 5. AUTHORIZED SIGNATORIES BY MANAGERS: All checks, drafts, or orders for the payment of money, notes or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the LMRWD shall be signed by two members of the LMRWD Board of Managers. Checks may be endorsed through electronic signature.

Section 6. COMMUNICATIONS: Unless it is a personnel issue, when communicating with the LMWRD consultants Board members should inform the Administrator about the communication to keep her/ him updated about ongoing issues and business of the LMRWD.

Section 7. HARRASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION: Board members and those with whom they work have the right and responsibility to work in an environment free from harassing or discriminating behavior. It is the responsibility of each Board member to refrain from creating a discriminatory or harassing environment. Each Board member is also responsible for treating others with dignity and respect and to report all incidents of harassment immediately so that they can be quickly and fairly resolved.

Section 7. REMOVAL FROM OFFICE: Any officer may be removed at any time, with or without cause, upon the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Board of Managers.

ARTICLE VI. MEETINGS OF LMRWD BOARD OF MANAGERS

Section 1. MEETINGS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: All meetings of the District, whether regular, special or emergency, shall be noticed and held in accordance with the State's Open Meeting Law, Statutes Chapter 13D.

Section 2. REGULAR MEETINGS: The Managers shall hold regular meetings at least once a month according to a schedule adopted by the Board and filed with the District. The regular meeting schedule shall be made available to the public by posting on the District's website. The meetings may be cancelled and rescheduled at any time that the Managers deem necessary.

Section 3. SPECIAL MEETINGS: Special meetings to conduct the business of the LMRWD may be called by the President independently or upon the request of a member of the Board. Special meetings shall be noticed as required by the Open Meeting Law.

Section 4. PUBLIC HEARINGS: Public hearings shall be conducted as required by law or, in addition, as directed by the Board of Managers.

Section 5. MEETING CALLED BY MANAGER: Minn. Stat. § 103D.315 Subd. 10, states: *“A meeting may be called at any time at the request of any manger. When a manager requests a meeting, the secretary of the watershed district must mail a notice of the meeting to each member at least eight (8) days before the meeting.”* The District’s office administrator shall notify the Managers as soon as possible of the time and place of the pending meeting and shall provide other notice as required by law. Statutory notice may be waived with the consent of all Managers.

Section 6. QUORUM and ADJOURNED MEETING: At all meetings of the Managers, a majority of the appointed Managers shall constitute a quorum to do business but a smaller number may adjourn from time to time. Unless otherwise required by law, all decisions must be approved by the affirmative vote of a majority of the Managers present at a meeting where there is a quorum.

Section 7. CHAIR of MEETINGS: The President shall preside as chairperson at all meetings of the Managers. In the absence of the President, the Vice-President shall preside. In the absence of both, the Secretary shall serve as temporary President. The President and temporary President shall have the same privileges.

Section 8. MEETINGS HELD BY REMOTE MEANS: When necessary, the Board may allow remote participation in meetings by interactive video teleconference or comparable technology. When any member of the Board is participating in a meeting by remote means, the requirements of Statutes Section 13D.02 must be met.

Section 9. MEETING FORMAT:

- (a) At the hour appointed for a meeting of the Board of Managers of the LMRWD, upon reaching a quorum, the Managers shall be called to order by the President or in his/her absence, by the acting President. The Managers shall proceed to do business following a set agenda.
- (b) The President shall preserve order. The President may make motions, second motions or speak on any question, provided, however, that in order to do any of these things, upon demand of any Manager, the President shall vacate the chair and designate a temporary President. The President, or acting President, shall be entitled to vote like other Managers.
- (c) Every Manager, prior to his/her speaking, shall address the President and shall not proceed until he/she has been recognized by the President.

- (d) If a Manager has a personal interest in a matter that comes before the LMRWD Board of Managers, to the extent that it creates a conflict of interest as a matter of law, the Manager shall not vote on said issue.
- (e) No person other than a Manager shall address the Board except with the consent of the President or by a vote of the majority of the Managers present.
- (f) The President has the authority to set a time limit that a Manager or a person addressing the Board may speak, except upon vote of the majority of the Board of Managers present.
- (g) All committees shall be appointed by the President unless expressly ordered by the Board. It shall be the duty of committees to act promptly and faithfully in all matters referred to them, to comply with the Open Meeting Law, if applicable, and to make reports at a future set time/date established by the Board.
- (h) Minutes of all meetings of the LMRWD Board of Managers shall be recorded, reviewed by the Board, adopted and kept at the District's office. They shall be signed by the Secretary and shall constitute an official record of the procedure.
- (i) Any Manager may request that the yeas and nays be recorded on any motion voted on by the Board and such request will be granted by the President.

Section 10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: LMRWD seeks to assure public confidence in the integrity of its proceedings by holding itself to high ethical standards. Ensuring that conflicts of interest do not affect the efforts of LMRWD is an essential element of maintaining high ethical standards. If a Manager has a conflict of interest in a matter, he or she shall state that such an interest exists, which will be noted in the minutes. The Manager must abstain from participating in any discussion, offering any motion, or voting on any matter in which the conflict of interest exists. "Conflict of interest" means a material financial interest of the Board Manager, a family member or a close associate; a relationship that limits the Manager's ability to be objective; or that creates the appearance of impropriety. At the request of the President or by any Board Manager, in a matter in which a Manager has a conflict of interest a roll call vote shall be taken and recorded in the minutes, as well as the abstention of the Manager with the conflict of interest.

Section 11. APPEAL OF A CHAIR RULING: A Board Manager may appeal to the Board from a ruling of the President. If the appeal is seconded, the Board Manager may speak once solely on the question involved and the President may explain his or her ruling, but no other Board Manager will participate in the discussion. The appeal will be sustained if it is approved by a majority of the Board Managers present exclusive of the President.

**ARTICLE VII.
PARLIMENTARY AUTHORITY**

Section 1. PARLIMENTARY AUTHORITY: The most current version of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the LMRWD’s meetings in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with state law, these By-Laws and, or any special rules of order the LMRWD may adopt.

Section 2. SUSPENSION: Robert’s Rules of Order may be temporally suspended by consent of the majority of the Board Managers present. Proceeding in a manner contrary to Robert’s Rules of Order without objection shall be deemed suspension by consent of the Managers.

**ARTICLE VIII.
ANNUAL REPORT**

Section 1. ANNUAL REPORT: Minn. Stat. § 103D.351: “(a) *The managers must prepare a yearly report of the financial conditions of the watershed district, the status of all projects, the business transacted by the watershed district, other matters affecting the interests of the watershed district, and a discussion of the managers plans for the succeeding year.*”

Section 2. COPIES DISTRIBUTED: Minn. Stat. § 103D.351: “(b) *Copies of the report must be transmitted to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the commissioner, and the director within a reasonable time.*”

**ARTICLE IX.
ANNUAL AUDIT**

ANNUAL AUDIT: Minn. Stat. § 103D.355, Subd 1. Requirement: “*The managers must have an annual audit completed of the books and accounts of the watershed district. The annual audit may be made by a public accountant or by the state auditor.*”

**ARTICLE X.
WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN**

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN. Minn. Stat. § 103D.401, Subd. 1. Contents:

- (a) “*The managers must adopt a watershed management plan for any and all of the purposes for which a watershed district may be established. The watershed management plan must give a narrative description of existing water and water-related problems within the watershed district, possible solutions to the problems, and the general objectives of the watershed district. The watershed management plan must also conform closely with watershed management plan guidelines as adopted and amended from time to time by the Board of Water and Soil Resources.*”

- (b) *“The watershed management plan may include a separate section on proposed projects. If the watershed district is within the metropolitan area, the separate section of proposed projects or petitions for projects to be undertaken according to the watershed management plan is a comprehensive plan of the watershed district for purposes of review by the Metropolitan Council under section 473.165.”*

**ARTICLE XI.
AMENDMENT TO BY-LAWS**

Section 1. AMENDMENT TO BY-LAWS. These by-laws may be amended, repealed, or adopted by a majority of the LMRWD Board of Managers during any meeting of the LMRWD Board of Managers upon thirty (30) days written notice of the proposed change in its entirety. Notice may be waived by unanimous consent of the Managers. Notice of such alteration or amendment shall be indicated on the agenda of such meeting. The alteration/s or amendment/s must pass by a majority vote of the LMRWD Board of Managers.

Section 2. INTERPRETATION of the By-Laws and any amendment or additions thereto shall rest with the LMRWD Board of Managers.

Section 3. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF BYLAWS: These rules may be temporarily suspended by consent of a majority of the Managers present.

**ARTICLE XII.
REVIEW OF BY-LAWS**

THESE BY-LAWS shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised if needed. These bylaws govern internal LMRWD matters and do not create rights in any third parties.

Duly adopted on the 19th day of October, 2022 by the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers and signed by the President and Secretary of the organization.

By: Jesse Hartmann
President

September 20, 2023

Date

By: Lauren Salvato
Secretary

September 20,2023

Date

Rain check: State funding aims to increase floodwater storage



Some projects supported by BWSR's Water Quality and Storage Grant Program also tap Clean Water Fund grants.

New funding will help the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) support water storage projects that make landscapes more resilient as Minnesota experiences increasingly heavy and frequent rains.

BWSR's Water Quality and Storage Grant Program received \$17 million in general funds from the state Legislature this year. BWSR created the program in 2021 to offer financial assistance to local governments to control water rates and volumes.

The program is part of a suite of legislation passed in recent years to mitigate negative environmental impacts caused by climate change. Increasingly frequent and intense rains have created a need for additional water storage. The program's goal is to protect infrastructure, reduce erosion and improve water quality by temporarily



Weaver

holding water on the landscape after heavy rains or runoff events.

"BWSR's programs implement water storage in many different ways," said BWSR Chief Engineer Rita Weaver. "Water

can be stored through soil health practices and water is stored through structural projects. This program focuses more on those structural storage practices like grade stabilizations (small dams) and retention basins."

Since the program launched, BWSR has awarded six grants to four organizations: Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects (Area II), the Bois de Sioux Watershed District, the Lyon County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Le Sueur County SWCD. Grants require

An Area II grade stabilization structure (a small dam) in Redwood County's Springdale Township was constructed in 2021. BWSR Water Quality and Storage Grant Program funds will help Area II implement grade stabilization structure projects in two other townships within its nine-county region.
Photo Credit:
Bolton & Menk Inc.

a 25% match from the recipient.

The program prioritizes projects in the Minnesota and Lower Mississippi river basins. Both areas contain topography with steep elevation changes that make flooding and erosion pressing concerns. Five of the funded projects are within the Minnesota River basin.

The Bois de Sioux Watershed District received the largest grant: \$1 million from BWSR will combine with \$7.7 million in leveraged funds to construct a gated impoundment along the Mustinka River at Traverse County Road 13. The project anticipates increased flood storage capacity of 19,000 acre-feet (1 acre-foot is equal to the volume of water contained on 1 acre of land at a depth of 1 foot). Other funding sources for the project include Clean Water Funds from BWSR; an Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources; an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council; and a grant from the Red River Watershed Management Board.

The Le Sueur County SWCD plans to use its \$408,187 water storage grant plus \$102,047 in matching funds to increase the storage capacity of an existing wetland. The project is slated to involve four landowners, converting degraded wetlands and farmland and creating 150 acre-feet of water storage. Estimates show the project would reduce phosphorus by 274 pounds and sediment by 44.9

“ Floodwater storage isn’t just for flood damages, there’s a lot of other benefits down the road. Ponding water has some resiliency benefits: It helps with groundwater infiltration, it’s helpful for climate change and soil health.



— Kerry Netzke, executive director, Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects

tons per year.

The Lyon County SWCD will also pursue wetland modifications, plus a grade stabilization structure to add storage capacity. A \$340,940 BWSR water storage grant plus \$85,235 in matching funds will help reduce erosion and flooding impacts. The project is estimated to reduce phosphorus by 172 pounds per year and sediment by 172 tons per year, plus add 47 acre-feet of water storage.

“Our partners play an important role in finding projects,” Weaver said of participating local governments. “They identify areas with flooding or water-quality issues and then work with landowners to come up with ideas for storage.”

Area II — a Marshall-based joint powers organization comprised of nine southwestern Minnesota counties — received three of the six grants. Executive Director Kerry Netzke said the Water Quality and Storage Grant Program is a good fit for the type of projects Area II typically pursues.

“We kind of specialize in structural projects — we provide financial and technical assistance to get these projects on the ground,” Netzke said. “There’s many ways to do

water storage, but they all involve some temporary impoundment of floodwater.”

A planned grade stabilization structure in Lyon County’s Custer Township would add 30.4 acre-feet of flood storage capable of holding water on the landscape for 18 hours. The project would remove an estimated 213 tons of sediment per year and reduce flows to a downstream ravine by 46%. Work is slated to begin this fall and finish by late December. BWSR’s Water Quality and Storage Grant Program will contribute \$94,723 toward the project. Area II and a landowner associated with the project will contribute a \$31,577 match.

“People downstream will benefit from reduced flows,” Netzke said. “By reducing the flows, we’re going to reduce damage to properties and streambanks.”

In Redwood County, Area II will use a \$140,214 BWSR water storage grant paired with a \$46,737 local match to install terraces and a grade stabilization structure to address gully erosion. Redwood SWCD staff will assist with engineering work associated with the terraces on the north side of the Redwood River. These terraces fill and

empty quickly, holding approximately 46 acre-feet of water for about an hour. The terraces would reduce sediment by approximately 1,935 tons per year. Directly downstream on the south side of the Redwood River, a small grade stabilization structure would be designed to store 10 acre-feet of water for 18 hours, removing 125 tons of sediment per year. Sediment reductions would benefit the Redwood River and Lake Redwood. Work on this project is slated to begin this fall or in spring 2024.

Area II’s third grant would target a culvert replacement in Lincoln County at the intersection of two township roads, where steep and sloughing banks are creating public safety concerns. The project involves a dry dam that would reduce flows by 25% and hold 96 acre-feet of water for 36 hours. Annual sediment reductions are estimated at 971 pounds. BWSR’s contribution totals \$586,813. Local partners contributing to the \$195,605 match include Area II, Alta Vista Township and the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District. Construction is expected to begin in fall 2024 or spring 2025.

Netzke said each of the planned projects would yield multiple benefits.

“Floodwater storage isn’t just for flood damages, there’s a lot of other benefits down the road,” Netzke said. “Ponding water has some resiliency benefits: It helps with groundwater infiltration, it’s helpful for climate change and soil health.”

More [BWSR Water Quality and Storage Grant Program](#) grants will be available to local governments in early 2024.

Wilkin SWCD leverages private funds to expand soil health options



*Sugarbeets were planted between rows of cereal rye, seen here in spring 2021 in a Wilkin County field 3 miles east of Breckenridge. The cereal rye was planted on Sept. 20 the previous fall. **Photo Credits:** Kim Melton, Wilkin SWCD*

Producers working with Wilkin Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) staff have incorporated soil health practices into their operations, leveraging Clean Water Funds from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) with private funds — including contributions from Cargill and General Mills.

Two watersheds that cover Wilkin County — the Buffalo-Red River and the Bois de Sioux-Mustinka watersheds — prioritized sedimentation as a concern in their comprehensive watershed management plans, developed under BWSR's One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) program. Wilkin SWCD staff members were involved in developing both plans. The goal: improve water quality by curbing

runoff and the sediment it carries.

A \$200,000 Clean Water Fund grant BWSR awarded to the Wilkin SWCD in 2022 supports its soil health efforts. Partners include Wilkin County, the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) and the Bois de Sioux Watershed District (BDSWD). More recently, the SWCD partnered with two private companies Cargill and General Mills, securing an additional \$1.45 million that allowed the SWCD to expand soil health incentives.

The Wilkin SWCD started its Cover Crop Incentive (CCI) program in 2019. Farmers could enroll up to 50 acres in a yearlong contract and receive a per-acre payment, which helped to cut the financial risk of trying something new. Farmers can enroll in the program



Clean Water Funds from BWSR contributed to the Wilkin SWCD's soil health efforts.



A turnip, radish and clover cover crop mix was broadcast in June 2019 along the edges of in Wilkin County field where compaction from field equipment made it difficult to grow a crop. It is pictured here in August 2019.

for up to five years. Those who signed up also received free annual soil health assessments. The program launched with funds from the BRRWD and the BDSWD plus Wilkin County.

“(CCI) expired every fall, but after they put down cover crops, they weren’t allowed to do any tillage and so it kind of gave us a gateway into not doing tillage after cover crops are down, and it tried to lessen the tillage passes in the fall,” said Kim Melton, Wilkin SWCD technician.

Wilkin County lies within the fertile Red River Valley, where the soils range from heavy clay to sandy. Melton said some farmers were hesitant about trying cover crops in areas with heavy clay soils, which tend to take longer to dry out.

“Farmers think they need tillage because they’ve got to open up their soil,

Wilkin SWCD Soil Health Stats

In 2022, producers entered into 92 contracts, covering 7,391 acres through three programs that included a total of \$257,835 in incentives for cover crop implementation.

In 2022, Wilkin SWCD’s soil health programs include:

SHIP: 50 contracts, 6,395 acres, \$312,701 in incentives

CCI: 39 contracts, 1,900 acres, \$66,310 in incentives

WBIF: 3 contracts, 374 acres, \$12,000 in incentives

they’ve got to aerate it and they don’t want to cover it or do no-till because they don’t think it’ll ever dry out,” Melton said.

“Our soils are a challenge here in the valley, and incorporating cover crops is something that I like to tell farmers, ‘Let’s armor your soil and let’s protect it. Let’s cover it. Let’s build infiltration and aggregation and be able to combat these fluxes that Mother Nature is throwing at us with the weather.’ Farmers are sick of watching their dirt blow

away. They pay for that soil. They purchase the field. They want that soil to help them with production,” Melton said.

Farmers enrolled about 700 acres the first year CCI was available.

The next year, Wilkin SWCD staff sought additional funding to offer incentives for enrolling more acres. Partnerships with Cargill and General Mills secured \$1.45 million in private funds. [MBOLD](#), a coalition of Minnesota agriculture

and food companies, contributed an additional \$45,000.

The SWCD created the Soil Health Incentive Program (SHIP) with the funding from Cargill, General Mills and MBOLD. The three-year contract offered via SHIP gave producers the option to implement one or more soil health practices — cover crops, nutrient management, crop rotation and reduced tillage — on up to 160 acres. Participating producers received a financial incentive per acre of practice. If producers sign up for all four practices, they receive \$65 per acre.

“We were able to offer farmers a better incentive program to install four practices instead of just one, and so this sold like hotcakes,” Melton said. “The money was all encumbered in two months.”

With private funds, the

SWCD could offer more flexibility in applying soil health practices than what is allowed through state or federal program-backed incentives. For example, growers could use a lower cover crop seeding rate than what might typically be required to meet Natural Resources Conservation Service standards.

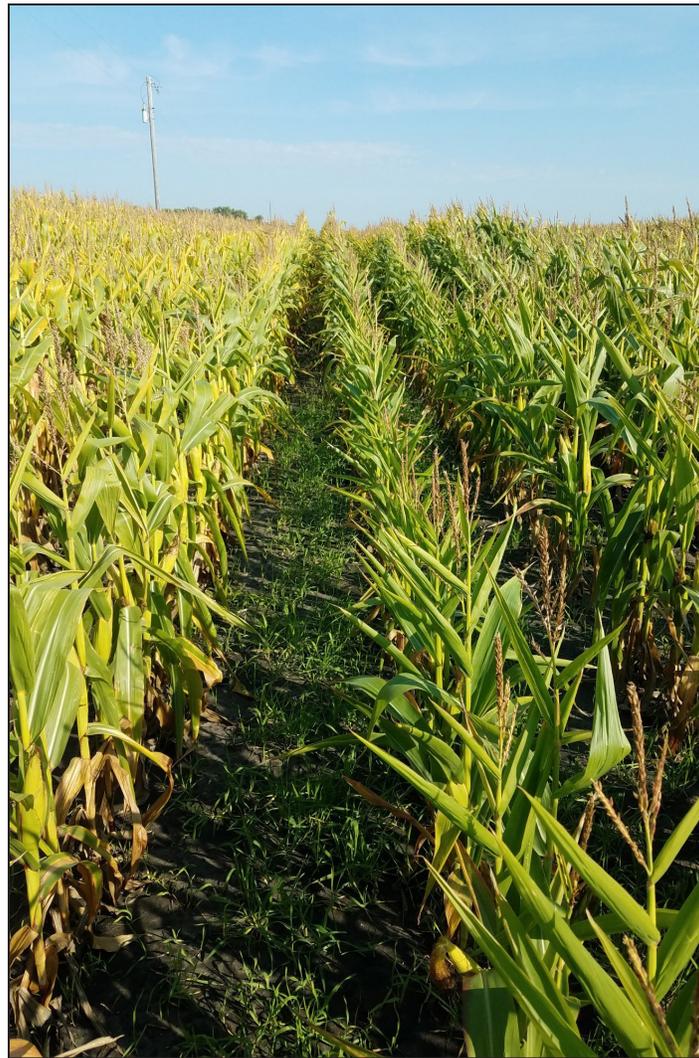
“It’s nice to be able to try to experiment and work with these farmers and give them the flexibility that they need,” Melton said. “We’re supporting their ideas on how to get these incorporated in the valley.”

In 2022, SHIP covered 50 contracts and 6,395 acres. That year, farmers throughout Wilkin County enrolled a total of 7,391 acres in one of the SWCD’s cover crop programs — including SHIP, CCI and a third program funded through Watershed-Based Implementation Funding.

With the SWCD’s private funding, the SWCD gives farmers one year, if they do not plant or if weather or field conditions make planting impossible, they can opt out. They do not get paid for the practices they do not complete. Despite last fall’s dry conditions, no one backed out of the contract.

“That is telling me that these guys are in it; it’s here to stay,” Melton said. “They’re going to try to combat Mother Nature and they’re going to make that attempt to improve their soil health and improve their organic matter and keep farming sustainable because that’s what we need for the next generation.”

Melton noted another indication that soil health



After an aerial cover crop seeding in late summer, cereal rye grew between corn rows in fall 2020 in Wilkin County.

practices are catching on in Wilkin County: Some landowners are taking small chunks of land out of their “production crop” rotation and planting rye to use as a cover crop seed source for the fall.

Melton said area agronomists have helped to make producers more aware of conservation practices such as cover crops, and the SWCD’s incentives that support them. For the past five or six years, Melton has invited agronomists into the office where she lets them know what is available so they can relay that information to producers.

Greg LaPlante is an

independent crop consultant with decades of experience in regenerative farming practices, and whose working territory includes Wilkin County. Since the severe wind erosion that occurred in spring 2021 and 2022, LaPlante said producers in the watershed have been more receptive to soil conservation options.

LaPlante said one of his clients enrolled 500 acres in SHIP. That client is in the third year of planting rye cover crops in the fall, and minimally tilling sugarbeets, corn, soybeans and sunflowers.

“Growers have been

implementing different types of cover crops, especially for the sugarbeets. Mostly a barley or oats spring-seeded cover crop ahead of the sugarbeets,” LaPlante said, adding that growers sometimes get nervous about planting a winter rye cover crop because they are not sure when to terminate it. That is where he can help.

“I’ve seen the continuous degradation of our soils, either through wind or water erosion. And I’ve been involved in soil sampling those profiles in those fields for 40 years and I see that our topsoil degradation has been pretty severe,” LaPlante said.

“I get more involved in trying to change perspectives based upon I think we’re running out of time as far as productivity of our soils,” he said, adding that he’s seen how topsoil erosion negatively affects yield.

Healthier soil leads to reduced runoff, which in turn means less flooding downstream and less sediment and pollutants such as phosphorous and nitrogen in the water.

“It’s the foundation of all living things,” Melton said. “I like to tell kids to name one thing that they don’t think comes from the soil, and they always yell, ‘Pizza!’ And I’m like, ‘Hey the crust comes from wheat; your cheese comes from dairy, and where do you think (the cows) get their food? Corn. Even the clothes you’re wearing can be tied back to our soil producing crops for us to utilize to sustain life. We need healthy soil.’”