



# Grants Quarterly

2015 Year End Reporting Edition

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## February 1st annual reporting deadline

As we prepare to turn the page on 2015, it's time to begin preparing for annual grant administration activities. The February 1st, 2016 reporting deadline applies to most BWSR grants, including:

- Final reporting on grants that expire December 31, 2015
- Annual reports for most open grants
- Annual program activity reports

To assist you in your reporting, please be sure to check out the library of [eLINK](#) Guidance Documents, the [Grants Administration Manual](#), and the materials on the [Grant Program Reporting Overview](#) page of BWSR's website. These include:

- **Grants Expiration Dates:** a list of all open grant allocations and their original expiration dates (this list does not include extensions to the original grant agreements)
- **eLINK Reporting at a Glance:** outlines the basic eLINK reporting expectations for all open grant allocations
- **Grant Profiles:** summarize the purpose and reporting requirements of individual grant programs

Any grants that expire on December 31, 2015 will require a final report by February 1, 2016. Reference your grant agreements and any amendments to determine the reporting requirements and deadlines as they apply to the specific grants your organization has received. Per BWSR policy, a grantee must contact their board conservationist three to six months prior to the grant expiring to request an extension. If you might need an extension, please remember that an extension must be requested, approved, and executed prior to the end of the grant period.

We strongly recommend that you begin working on your reporting early so that you can access help if you should

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need it. Please contact your Board Conservationist for grant-specific reporting issues, or email [elinksupport@state.mn.us](mailto:elinksupport@state.mn.us) for eLINK related issues.

## eLINK development now under a new support contract

Development of the eLINK conservation tracking tool is now underway under a contract with Houston Engineering. The contract includes ongoing maintenance and new feature development.

Planned improvements include development of a Biennial Budget Request reporting tool, a public-facing GIS portal, and report template improvements. Additional planned improvements will increase the efficiency of processing grant agreements and payments.

## Important upcoming dates

**December 31:** Expiration date for many grants  
**February 1:** Annual reporting deadline for grants and other programs

- ☐ Watch for more details about the **BBR** and **CWF Grant Guidelines** in early 2016.

## Reminder: Review 2015 revisions to the Grants Administration Manual

Several sections of the Grants Administration Manual (G.A.M.) were revised during the past calendar year, with changes going into effect for grants issued after July 1, 2015. Some of these revisions reflect changes in BWSR's business processes, such as procedural changes necessitated by updates to eLINK, while other revisions reflect changes in BWSR policy or statute.

BWSR strongly encourages you to reference the version of the G.A.M. posted on our website, and to review the sections that were revised within the last calendar year. The updated dates for chapters revised in 2015 have been noted in red.

As always, if the guidance you need cannot be found in the GAM, contact your Board Conservationist for assistance.

## Changes to BWSR's Allowable and Unallowable Costs policy

The **Allowable and Unallowable Costs Policy** chapter of the BWSR *Grants Administration Manual* has been revised. The effective date of the chapter is January 1, 2016. Costs charged to BWSR grants before January 1, 2016 will be evaluated using the policy described in the previous version of the chapter, which is now archived on the BWSR *Grants Administration Manual* page. Costs charged to BWSR grants on or after January 1, 2016 will be evaluated for allowability using the policy described in this revised chapter.

A revision was recommended after receiving several questions from local partners that were not answered in the previous chapter. Clearer guidance was requested about the best way to purchase a vehicle with a BWSR grant, or whether vehicle purchases are even allowable. For assets that the LGU capitalizes (that is, the cost of which is spread out over a period of time), other questions concerned whether the cost of depreciation can be charged as overhead to BWSR grants, or what kinds of "use allowances" are permitted under BWSR grants.

The chapter was also revised to furnish more details and examples about allowable costs, and to bring its cost categories more closely in line with other BWSR guidance, such as the definition of facilities and administration costs in the "Determining a Billing Rate" chapter.

For fiscal year 2016, updated sections include:

- **Grant Terminology** (updated 7/1/15)
- **Processing a Grant** (updated 7/1/15)
- **Amendments to Grants and Workplans** (updated 7/1/15)
- **Grant Noncompliance** (updated 7/1/15)
- **Time and Effort Documentation** (updated 1/1/15)
- **Determining a Billing Rate** (updated 1/1/15)
- **Contracts with Land Occupiers** (updated 7/1/15)
- **Conservation Practice Contract** (updated 7/1/15)
- **Conservation Practice Contract Amendment** (updated 7/1/15)

The following is effective for all costs charged to BWSR grants after January 1, 2016:

- **Allowable and Unallowable Costs** - Please read the update below for important details.

Although the revised chapter is more descriptive about what are allowable and unallowable costs to be charged to BWSR grants than the previous chapter, it is not more restrictive. The most notable example is a change upward in the purchase price of capital equipment that requires preapproval before it can be charged as a direct cost to a BWSR grant. Before, grantees were advised that "Capital expenditures for equipment" greater than \$3,500 were allowed "only as expressly approved in a work plan." The revised chapter raises the preapproval limit for equipment purchases to \$10,000, charged to any one grant, and offers three options for attaining preapproval: including the item to be purchased in the LGU's approved budget, in the grant workplan, or via an approved written request from a BWSR Board Conservationist.

If you have questions about these revisions, please email or call:

- Tim Dykstal, Fiscal Compliance Coordinator, at [tim.dykstal@state.mn.us](mailto:tim.dykstal@state.mn.us) or (651) 296-1208.

You may also contact the Grants Compliance Specialist for your region:

- Northern Region: Jeannette Austin, [jeannette.austin@state.mn.us](mailto:jeannette.austin@state.mn.us), (218) 203-4479.
- Southern Region: Julie Krebs, [julie.krebs@state.mn.us](mailto:julie.krebs@state.mn.us), (507) 344-2823.

## Annual program reporting

Several grants require supplemental annual program activity reports in addition to eLINK reporting. These include:

- **BWSR Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)**
- **BWSR Ditch Buffer Strip**
- **BWSR NPEA Accomplishments**
- **DNR Shoreland Activity**
- **MPCA SSTS**
- **MPCA County Feedlot Program**

Reporting forms for WCA, Ditch Buffer Strip, and NPEA will be available on BWSR's website. DNR and MPCA reporting forms and guidance will originate from those respective agencies.

## Targeted Watershed RFP

The Targeted Watershed Request for Interest will be open from February 1 through March 9, 2016.

The program focuses on watersheds where the amount of change necessary to improve water quality is known, the actions needed to achieve results are identified, and a majority of those actions can be implemented within a four-year time period. While protection of high quality resources is important and a critical part of the Clean Water effort, this program focuses on demonstrating water quality improvements, not on sustaining high quality systems.

## Multipurpose Drainage Management grants awarded

At their meeting on December 16, the BWSR Board approved six grants under the new Multipurpose Drainage Management program. An RFP was open from August 31 through October 30th, 2015, and BWSR received 12 applications with requests totaling \$2,284,359.

This program funds multipurpose drainage management practices, targeting critical pollution source areas to reduce erosion and sedimentation, reduce peak flows and flooding, and improve water quality, while protecting drainage system efficiency and reducing drainage system maintenance for priority Chapter 103E drainage systems. More information about this grant can be found in the [Grant Profile](#).

Total \$ Amount Available	Number of Applications Submitted	Total \$ Amount Requested	Number of Applications Awarded
\$675,000	12	\$2,284,359	6

## Changes coming for the Biennial Budget Request in Spring of 2016

Development of the next Biennial Budget Review (BBR) reporting period is now underway. The biggest change is that the 2016 BBR will be entered through a new module being developed in eLINK. Programming and development are underway and BWSR plans to have a beta version available for testing early next year. If you would be willing to volunteer to help test the process, please contact your Board Conservationist. The information requested will be similar to the older spreadsheet version, but will take advantage of some information about your organization already included in the eLINK conservation tracking tool.

It seems like a long way off, but state agencies must begin budget development for the 2017 legislative session by early summer. The information provided through the BBR about projects and activities identified in local water management plans that could be implemented during the FY 2018-19 biennium are an important part of that preparation.

While the process will look a bit different, the core goals of the BBR remain unchanged:

- The goal of putting local water management plans at the beginning of the State budget process by providing data to the Clean Water Council and Governor for funding recommendations to the legislature.
- Collecting information on projects and activities for the next State biennium found in state-approved, locally adopted water management plans. Categories of activities are included in the state NonPoint Funding Plan.
- Serve as the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) annual request for program and operations grants (Conservation Delivery, State Conservation Cost-Share, etc.)
- Request LGU funding needs from other state agencies for a variety of programs they offer to LGUs (DNR, MDH, MDA, MPCA) in addition to BWSR funding.

## FY 2016 CWF Competitive Grants awarded

More than \$34 million was requested as part of the FY 16 Clean Water Fund competitive grant application period that closed August 28<sup>th</sup>. This RFP included Accelerated Implementation, Community Partners, and Projects and Practices.

The applications were reviewed by an interagency scoring team that included staff from Minnesota's Pollution Control Agency (PCA), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Agriculture (MDA), Department of Health (MDH), and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

The BWSR Board will be asked to consider and approve the list of recommended projects at their meeting on Wednesday, December 16.



Successful applicants will be notified via email by the end of the day on Friday, December 18th. Once awarded, grantees can begin working on their workplan(s) in eLINK. Workplans must be completed no later than March 18, 2016. As grant agreements will be issued via eLINK, please be sure that the Day-to-Day Contact for the organization and the grant is up to date.

### Next steps in the process:

**December 16, 2015** - BWSR Board authorizes grant awards

**January 2016** - BWSR grant agreements sent to recipients

**February 19, 2016** - Work plan submittal deadline

**March 18, 2016** - Grant execution deadline

FY16 CWF Competitive Grants	Total \$ Amount Available	Number of Applications Submitted	Total \$ Amount Requested	Number of Applications Awarded
Accelerated Implementation	\$2,000,000	35	\$3.7M	19
Community Partners	\$675,000	4	\$403K	4
Projects and Practices	\$8,650,000	94	\$27.3M	35

## Cooperative Weed Management Area grants awarded

A competitive RFP for the Cooperative Weed Management Area program was conducted from August 31-October 30, 2015. At their meeting on December 16, the BWSR board approved 14 grant awards.

The 2015 legislature appropriated \$200,000 to this program for financial assistance to SWCDs. BWSR received 16 applications during the RFP period totaling \$239,296.

Cooperative Weed Management Areas are partnerships of

federal, state, and local government agencies along with tribes, individual landowners, and various other interested groups that manage noxious weeds or invasive plants in a defined area. Cooperative Weed Management grants provide funding to manage invasive species across LGU boundaries, control emerging weed threats, and facilitate the removal of invasive species.

Total \$ Amount Available	Number of Applications Submitted	Total \$ Amount Requested	Number of Applications Awarded
\$200,000	16	\$239,296	14