



Grants Quarterly

July 2015

Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources • www.bwsr.state.mn.us

FY 2016 Grants Approved

At its meeting on June 24, 2015, the BWSR Board approved funding for FY16 Natural Resource Block Grants (NRBG), SWCD Program and Operations grants, Farm Bill Assistance, and Nonpoint Engineering Assistance grants.

Beginning FY 2016, the Board has authorized grantees to flex NRBG grant and match dollars across Local Water Management, Wetland Conservation Act, and Shoreland allocations. Please review the [Flex Spending](#) guidance document for instructions on how to record flexed funds in eLINK.

Grant agreements will be issued via eLINK. To ensure you receive notification of your grant agreements, please be sure to verify that your organization's Day-to-Day Contact in eLINK is up to date. For grants that operate under a biennial grant agreement, which includes the Natural Resource Block Grants and SWCD Program and Operations grants, a new grant agreement will be issued this year for FY16-17.

A number of policy and procedural changes, outlined in BWSR's Grants Administration Manual, will also go into effect for BWSR grants effective July 1, 2015. These changes are highlighted in this issue of the Grants Quarterly.



Mower SWCD & BWSR staff visit projects that are part of the Dobbins Creek Targeted Watershed Demonstration Program. Visit our [Facebook](#) page to see more grants in action!

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Upcoming Grant Deadlines

August 6: Clean Water Fund RFP webinar

August 28: Application deadline for FY16 CWF RFP

October 27-29: BWSR Academy at Breezy Point

Disaster Relief Assistance Program Guidance

BWSR's [Disaster Relief Assistance Program \(DRAP\)](#) policy was developed in 2013 to provide a standard operating procedure for BWSR staff and local governments in response to conservation-related issues following a natural disaster or extreme environmental impact. This framework allows BWSR and local governments to respond quickly and efficiently when state or federal funds are appropriated.

This spring, BWSR released its [DRAP guidance](#) for local governments, detailing the sequential steps, parties, roles, and programs, and funding sources that may be involved.

Please visit the [Disaster Recovery Assistant Program](#) page of BWSR's website to view the guidance or policy.

FY16 Clean Water Fund RFP

The application period for the Clean Water Fund Request for Proposals (RFP) opened on Monday, July 6th, and will close at 4:30 pm on Friday, August 28th.

The application process will be hosted in eLINK, BWSR's grant management system. We encourage applicants to begin the process early so that they may request help if they need it.

Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must submit a request to establish an eLINK account no later than 7 days prior to the application deadline.



FY16 Clean Water Fund Timeline:

July 6, 2015 - Application period begins

August 6, 2015 - Training webinar (details and registration will be posted on our [Training](#) page)

August 28, 2015 - Application deadline at 4:30 PM

December 16, 2015 - BWSR Board authorizes grant awards (tentative, pending board approval)

January 2016 - BWSR grant agreements sent to recipients

February 19, 2016 - Work plan submittal deadline

BWSR Board Conservationist Work Areas

As a result of recent staffing and organizational changes at BWSR, many Board Conservationist work areas have changed. Download a [PDF map](#) of the new work areas, or use our new interactive [Board Conservationist map](#).

BWSR Academy

Save the date for the [2015 BWSR Academy](#)! This year's BWSR-sponsored training for local governments will be held at Breezy Point from October 27 through October 29. This hands-on, three-day training event is designed for conservation-based local government staff with an emphasis on peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

Through the Academy, BWSR aims to improve the performance of local governments in delivering local conservation. Additional details will be posted on our [website](#) as they become available.

FY2016 Clean Water Competitive Grants

Projects and Practices **\$9,150,000¹**

Funds are to be used to protect, enhance and restore water quality in lakes, rivers and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water. Activities include structural and vegetative practices to reduce runoff and retain water on the land, livestock water quality projects, Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS) abatement grants for low income individuals, and stream bank, stream channel and shoreline protection projects.

Accelerated Implementation **\$2,000,000¹**

Funds are for projects and activities that supplement or exceed current state standards for protection, enhancement, and restoration of water quality in lakes, rivers, streams and tributary Chapter 103E drainage systems or that protect groundwater from degradation.

Community Partners Conservation Program **\$675,000¹**

Funds are to be used for community partners within a LGU's jurisdiction to implement structural and vegetative practices to reduce stormwater runoff and retain water on the land to reduce the movement of sediment, nutrients and pollutants. LGUs will be the primary applicant and provide subgrants to community partners who are implementing practices to accomplish restoration, protection or enhancement of water quality in lakes, rivers and streams and/or protection of groundwater and drinking water.

MN Dept. of Agriculture – AgBMP Loans **\$1,500,000**

These low interest loans to farmers, rural landowners, and agriculture supply businesses support agricultural Best Management Practices that prevent or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields and other pollution problems identified by the county in local water plans. Any LGU may apply, but awards will be coordinated through existing contract holders.

¹ Amounts shown are estimates, actual amounts will be determined prior to the end of the application period. ² Cities must have a state approved local water management plan. BWSR recognizes metropolitan area city water plans approved by a Watershed District or a Watershed Management Organization (WMO) as a State approved plan.

So...you are getting a grant. Now what?

You put forth all the hard work of drafting, polishing, and submitting your grant application. You wait through the BWSR review and ranking process. Months later, the BWSR email arrives: “Congratulations! You are getting a grant!”

The BWSR [Grants Administrative Manual \(GAM\)](#) can help grantees sift through the administrative and programmatic requirements to successfully implement a local grant project or program. The GAM is arranged by topic and is divided into four sections: Administrative Procedures, Implementing Practices, Programmatic Requirements, and forms with examples. The GAM is accessed through the BWSR website so it can be utilized in the field or office.

Do you have questions on how to process your grant agreement? What kind of financial records do you need

to keep? How is reporting done? These and many other topics are only a click away.

Grant program requirements, administrative policies and procedures can change from year to year. New administrative procedures may be added, change due to technology (such as eLINK updates), or may be discontinued. BWSR will make every attempt to limit updates to the manual to once

per year, with changes effective at the beginning of the fiscal year. However, we strongly recommend referencing the version of the Grants Administration Manual on the website rather than maintaining a printed paper copy. Staying up to date may save you valuable time and effort, and keep your grant in compliance.

So when you ask “Now what?”, you will know to look to the [GAM](#)! Of course, if the guidance you need cannot be found in the GAM, contact your Board Conservationist for assistance.

For fiscal year 2016, updated sections include:

- **Grants Terminology**
- **Processing a Grant**
- **Amendments to Grants and Workplans**
- **Grant Noncompliance**
- **Contracts with Land Occupiers**
- **Conservation Practice Contract**
- **Conservation Practice Contract Amendment**

Grant Noncompliance Chapter Revised

As far back as 1986, with the advent of required paper reporting, BWSR has been monitoring the performance of its grant recipients. Since 2011, that monitoring has taken on a new importance, as the Office of Grants Management has required grant-making state agencies to monitor grantees; to reconcile their spending on grants; and to award future grant payments, in part, on an assessment of a grantee’s past performance.

In order to specify the consequences of *noncompliance*, however, BWSR has been relying on a somewhat outdated “Grants Noncompliance” chapter in the existing *Grants Administration Manual*. That chapter grew out of the state cost share grant program, and was tailored to its specific goals and procedures. Effective July 1, 2015, the Grants Noncompliance chapter has been revised. The revision had these four goals:

- to simplify the understanding of noncompliance, for both grantor and grantee
- to clarify what happens when an instance of noncompliance is detected
- to align the consequences of noncompliance with current practice, and

- to specify an appeal process, when BWSR and the grantee cannot agree about those consequences.

For example, the previous chapter had four levels of noncompliance. This revision has two: less serious and more serious. Level 1 (less serious) noncompliance covers mistakes in the administration of grants. Level 2 (more serious) noncompliance covers mistakes that go against statute, policy, or rule, as specified in the grant agreement or elsewhere. In general, we wanted to take even less serious mistakes in the administration of grants—those that get corrected as soon as they are noticed—out of the realm of noncompliance altogether. According to this revision, instances of noncompliance require corrective action.

The revision also had the goal of clarifying the policy as a *policy*. The BWSR Board has now resolved “to establish levels of noncompliance and procedures that are to be followed when grant noncompliance is identified.”

The revised [Grant Noncompliance Policy](#) will apply to grants issued on or after July 1, 2015. If you have questions about this policy, please contact [Tim Dykstal](#), Fiscal Compliance Coordinator, or your regional Grants Compliance Specialist.