



**For Immediate Release**

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## Reinvest In Minnesota – Wetlands Reserve Program Partnership Receives The Minnesota Environmental Initiative Partnership of The Year Award

The Minnesota Environmental Initiative presented its 2009 Partnership of the Year award to the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) - Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Partnership during a May 21 awards ceremony. RIM-WRP is a local-state-federal partnership that works with private landowners to restore wetlands, and to protect the restored wetland by enrolling it in a permanent conservation easement. About 300 attendees at the event heard presentations about each of the 15 finalists, and RIM-WRP received the highest number of votes.

“The people who vote on the MEI award are all involved in achieving environmental outcomes through partnerships, so this is especially meaningful recognition,” said John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director. “BWSR board members and staff take pride in our ability to make the most of the state tax dollars that are provided to us by leveraging other funding sources, and by leveraging the enthusiasm and expertise of people in other organizations.”

The RIM-WRP Partnership is widely recognized as the premier private wetland restoration program in the nation and is implemented locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

This year, State RIM funds totaling \$13.5 million leveraged \$19.3 million of federal WRP funding provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The combined funds are used to secure voluntary conservation easements on privately owned lands and will result in the restoration of 9,775 acres of wetlands and associated uplands. These lands will provide enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, protect and improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and sequester carbon.

Other organizations contributing to the partnership include The Minnesota Waterfowl Association (MWA), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Pheasants Forever, and Ducks Unlimited (DU). Funding provided through the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) Habitat Conservation Partnership project, will also be used to get these projects built.

The RIM-WRP Partnership is expected to continue into future years as the state goals to restore thousands of additional acres of previously drained wetlands back to their pre-settlement condition are pursued.

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