

Meet the Drainage Management Team

Many know the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for its essential conservation work with local government units — including grants for conservation implementation, conservation easements and local water planning.



But our agency has become more diversified.

BWSR staff now works with buffers, disaster recovery, local

government technical training, and drainage — agricultural drainage, to be specific.

In 2010, the state officially gave BWSR the authority and responsibility to coordinate drainage stakeholders. The idea, according to state law, was “to foster mutual understanding and provide recommendations for drainage system management and related water management.”

The team

Since 2006, BWSR staff has facilitated the Drainage Work Group (DWG), volunteer stakeholders focused on drainage law and policy. Early on, the DWG recommended BWSR coordinate the effort among



A drone image depicts a wood-chip bioreactor under construction in Fairbault County.
Photo Credit:
Fairbault County

drainage stakeholders and involved agencies. In 2008, BWSR initiated the Drainage Management Team (DMT), which focuses on technical aspects of drainage.

The DMT is composed of technical staff from state and federal agencies plus the University of Minnesota. The team currently includes 25 members. They meet regularly, primarily to coordinate and discuss agricultural drainage topics.

Members come from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, and Pollution Control Agency; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Geological Service; the University of Minnesota; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service and Agricultural Research Service.

The purpose

The DMT’s primary purpose is to develop and share common understandings about drainage issues, exploring ways to apply relevant science in programs and topics associated with agricultural drainage.

The topics explored have included adequate drainage, water storage, drainage water management, saturated buffers, wood-chip bioreactors, two-stage ditches, the benefits of soil health, erosion and sediment source reduction, and achieving pollution reduction goals.

In its first decade of operation, the DMT developed many shared understandings.

The team helped update the Minnesota Public Drainage Manual. It’s served as a source for advisory reviewers of BWSR

and Minnesota Department of Agriculture grant applications associated with drainage management and research. The DMT leads workshop and conference presentations and discussions about the science, programs and issues affecting drainage management.

Now, the team is preparing several drainage management practice fact sheets and writing a paper about altered hydrology that’s slated for fall publication.

Most importantly, the DMT seeks to develop common technical understanding, terminology and direction among its members and associated drainage stakeholders. The DMT strives to improve efficiency and consistency among the many local, state and federal partners involved with drainage management practices, programs and research in Minnesota.