



One Watershed, One Plan

Frequently Asked Questions



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(minor updates August 2017)

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to highlight some of the questions frequently heard regarding *One Watershed, One Plan* (1W1P). If you have additional questions you would like to see covered in this document, please submit them to julie.westerlund@state.mn.us

General

Q1. What is One Watershed, One Plan?

One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) started as a policy recommendation from the [Local Government Water Roundtable](#) (LGWR) and was followed by legislation in 2012 that authorizes BWSR to adopt methods to allow comprehensive plans, local water management plans, or watershed management plans to serve as substitutes for one another; or to be replaced by a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. BWSR, in partnership with the LGWR and five participating pilot watersheds, initiated development of the 1W1P Pilot Program in 2014. The experiences of the pilot watersheds have informed the overall 1W1P Program, adopted by BWSR in March 2016. Additional legislation was passed in 2015 providing the purposes for and better definition of Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans. The 2015 legislation also requires BWSR to adopt a transition plan for moving to Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans, with a legislative goal for statewide implementation of 1W1P by 2025.

Q2. What is the difference between One Watershed, One Plan and a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan?

One Watershed, One Plan is a BWSR program that aligns local water planning on major watershed boundaries with state strategies towards prioritized, targeted and measurable implementation plans. Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans refers to the watershed-based plan created through the program with purposes and requirements defined by Minnesota Statutes §103B.801. These plans are also often referred to as One Watershed, One Plan or 1W1P.

Q3. Isn't One Watershed, One Plan just creating another layer of government?

No. One of the guiding principles of One Watershed, One Plan is that "implementation will be accomplished through formal agreements among participating local governments on how to manage and operate on a watershed." Decision-making spans political boundaries, which is essential to establish and achieve goals for the watershed, and is supported by an in-writing commitment from the participants to fully implement watershed management. Formal agreement does not inherently require establishment of another layer of government. Local participants are encouraged to analyze their own situation, with assistance from legal counsel and/or the Minnesota Counties Insurance Trust, to determine how future implementation may occur.

Q4. We have an existing county water plan, a watershed district plan, a WRAPS, and a TMDL; why do we need another plan?

The Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, or 1W1P, is intended to replace the existing county water plans, watershed district plans, and Soil and Water Conservation District comprehensive plans for the entire planning boundary while leveraging and incorporating WRAPS, TMDLs, and other valuable data and information.

Q5. Are there specific state funds tied to developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (through the One Watershed, One Plan program)?

In the fiscal years 2013-2014, BWSR received funds from the legislature to initiate development of the One Watershed, One Plan program and for the pilot planning grants. For the fiscal year 2015-2016 biennium, BWSR has received funds to continue the program and provide planning grants to local governments for development of Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans. Details for accessing these funds will be available in 2016.

Completed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans will be a resource for more thoroughly and competitively answering application questions regarding prioritization, targeting, and measurability of proposed Clean Water Fund competitive grants. In the future, funding **may** become more closely tied to One Watershed, One Plan in order to: leverage the intended efficiencies of watershed-based planning, further the recommendations of the Local Government Water Roundtable, and incentivize watershed-based planning.

Q6. Where and how are the state agencies going to be involved?

State agencies with a stake in water management—Board of Water and Soil Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, and the Pollution Control Agency—have all committed to a high-level water quality framework for the state of Minnesota that includes agency participation in development of water plans. This framework was developed by the agencies to enhance collaboration and clarify roles so that it's easier and more efficient for state and local partners to work together.

Initiating *One Watershed, One Plan*

Q7. We completed our county water plan recently; do we now have to start planning all over again?

The vision of One Watershed, One Plan recognizes a ten year transition period; therefore, if your local water plan was just completed recently, now may not be the time to start. Or, if your county is asked by neighboring partners to participate in a plan for a portion of your county, you may want to take a secondary or smaller role in the planning process, leveraging the data and information from your recently completed plan.

Q8. We just completed our county water plan last year and the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) will be completed next year; do we now have to start planning all over again?

No (see the question and answer above). You may want to consider an amendment to your water plan if the completed WRAPS provide new information or data that would benefit the plan, its implementation, and/or the competitiveness of grant applications. If not, you may want to wait until other entities are ready to undertake a Comprehensive Watershed Management planning effort or until your next scheduled update.

Q9. The WRAPS for our area is not completed yet; can we participate in One Watershed, One Plan?

Yes. The science and data from the WRAPS are very important in the development of a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, and having a completed WRAPS prior to starting a planning effort ensures this information is available and minimizes potential complexities. However, having a completed WRAPS is not an absolute requirement for participation at this time. Similar to Question 8 (above), a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan may need to be reassessed and amended after the WRAPS is completed.

Q10. We have a number of issues specific to our county in our existing plan, aren't we going to lose this valuable information in a larger, watershed-based plan?

Writing a plan on a watershed basis does not mean deleting what has already been developed or starting from scratch, but rather working together to organize existing plans on a watershed scale and determine the most

effective and efficient means for implementation of those programs and projects that are capable of achieving measureable results.

Q11. How do we keep local control (through the planning process)?

Part of the requirements for developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan is identifying how the plan will be implemented and how collaboration will occur in the future. While this is a local plan, to be comprehensive it should recognize that state and federal agencies have a role in watershed management. Additionally, the plan needs to describe how implementation will be funded. Through the planning process, local folks can leverage assistance from state and federal agencies to identify actions and activities that best align with state and federal priorities and funding sources. For local priorities that don't align with state and federal priorities, other funding sources will need to be found. Collaboration does not have to mean a loss of control.

Boundary Map and Boundary Framework

Q12. Why don't the boundaries in the Suggested Boundary Map align with the 81-majors used for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's 10-year approach and development of Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS)?

The 81-major watershed units (8-digit HUCs) were used as the basis for the Suggested Boundary Map. The boundaries were adjusted to reflect boundaries of existing organizations already operating on a watershed basis, plus some lumping and splitting of major watersheds. An example of lumping includes grouping adjacent major watersheds on the state borders. An example of splitting includes the Minnesota River–Granite Falls major watershed, which is bisected by the Minnesota River. This major watershed has active, separate organizations on both sides of the river. Even with these adjustments, WRAPS are still intended to inform the resulting plan.

Q13. I don't agree with the planning boundaries in my area; what do I do?

The boundaries within the One Watershed, One Plan final [suggested boundary map](#), adopted by the BWSR Board in April 2014, reflect planning boundaries (not jurisdictional boundaries) that may be adjusted. Criteria and procedures for making adjustments are outlined in the [One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures](#). Be sure to discuss any proposed revisions to the suggested boundary for your area with BWSR prior to initiating planning.

Q14. My county has more than one Suggested Planning Boundary; this seems like more work for my county, and what happens to the portions not included in a plan being developed through One Watershed, One Plan?

Planning on a watershed basis does mean that most counties will be participating in more than one plan. However, watershed management inherently requires work (planning and implementation) across jurisdictional boundaries based on where the water flows. A given county may not be the lead for every planning effort within the county, depending on the resource needs in the planning area. Additionally, One Watershed, One Plan has the potential, if fully implemented across the state, to reduce the overall number of local water plans in the state.

For the portions of the county not covered by One Watershed, One Plan, and where an existing county plan has not expired, the area will continue to be 'covered' by the county plan until One Watershed, One Plan is completed for the area. If the current plan has expired or if planning through One Watershed, One Plan is not anticipated to start for a significant amount of time, the county may be asked to update the county plan for this area. See also the BWSR Board adopted Plan Extension policy.

Future Plan Implementation

Q15. Will this program change the way planning and zoning is done by cities and counties?

One Watershed, One Plan is not intended to alter who is responsible for planning and zoning (P&Z) and who is authorized to do P&Z. The Comprehensive Watershed Management plan should recognize existing P&Z as an integral part of watershed management. Some examples where watershed management and P&Z responsibilities

may overlap might include: a plan goal to work with P&Z authorities towards larger, more uniform setbacks on sensitive lakes in the watershed; or tailoring of implementation actions in recognition of underlying zoning. The plan does not have the statutory authority to mandate the city or county to alter their zoning if the local authority chooses not to.

Q16. How is this plan going to be implemented?

Legislation passed in 2015 clarified that existing authorities granted to local governments through chapters 103B, 103C, and 103D are retained when a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan is adopted (Minnesota Statutes §103B.801, Subd. 6); therefore, this plan is implemented through these existing authorities. Additionally, part of the requirements for developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan is identification of how the plan will be implemented and how collaboration will occur in the future. These plans are written for a 10-year period with a minimum of biennial work planning and evaluation. If any given partner chooses not to adopt or implement the plan, the remaining partners will need to reassess the goals of the plan to determine if it can be successfully achieved without that partner.

Q17. BWSR has spoken about the idea of funding the plan. What does this mean?

‘Fund the plan’ is a term with a wide variety of meanings and no concrete definition. The Local Government Water Roundtable November 25, 2013 [Comprehensive Water Planning and Management Policy Paper](#) included a policy statement that “long-term predictable state funding should be provided for implementation of actions identified in watershed based plans.” This statement was followed by additional funding recommendations that are all being considered in ongoing discussions regarding future strategies for the distribution of state funds. However, what ‘fund the plan’ means and how it may be implemented is still under discussion and development.

Q18. Will BWSR provide administrative and implementation funding similar to what is provided through the existing local water management system that helps support a county water planner?

At this time, no change is anticipated in the distribution of the existing local water management funds allocated to counties through the Natural Resources Block Grant. Additionally, no new funds have been identified specifically for administration of a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. See also Q16 above.

Interaction with Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act (MSWMA)

Q19. I have heard One Watershed, One Plan doesn’t apply in the 7-county metro, then I heard it does—which is it?

Local governments within the 7-county metro area are not a *required* partner in plans developed for watersheds that straddle the metro area. This means that metro local governments should be invited to, but are not required to, sign the formal agreement for planning purposes; and these local governments should also be encouraged to participate.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Q20. How do non-governmental organizations interact with One Watershed, One Plan?

NGOs have always had a role in water planning as a stakeholder at the table through the planning and implementation process. This role continues through One Watershed, One Plan. However, the statutory language and intent is for the plan to be developed, approved, and funded through existing water planning authorities of local governments.