



# State Agency Participation in One Watershed, One Plan

December 21 2016

A key element of BWSR’s vision for One Watershed, One Plan is to align local water planning with state strategies. This requires both meaningful participation by the state as well as a local responsibility to invite, include, and incorporate state agencies and their feedback into the planning process. This guidance document provides a general overview of the roles and responsibilities for local partnerships and state agencies: BWSR, DNR, MDA, MDH, MPCA, and the Met Council.

## The value of state agency involvement

Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans are locally led, locally owned plans. While the state’s role is *advisory*, it is not *optional* (see relevant laws, statues, and policy). Involving state agencies can benefit local governments by directing state implementation actions in a way that helps achieve local priorities (and vice versa). State agency involvement will also ensure the most recent and applicable data and information are used to develop the plan. Finally, aligning with state priorities will also help local governments tap into state funding.

## Roles and responsibilities for state and local government

State agencies are involved in One Watershed, One Plan in two primary ways: as members of the **Advisory Committee** and as a **plan review authority\*\***. The table below summarizes roles for state and local participants when it comes to including state agencies in the locally led planning process.

A note about workloads: The ability of a particular state agency to participate in a given watershed may vary according to a variety of factors including agency budget, proximity of staff, and the staff person’s primary job responsibilities. Agency staff should work with their supervisors, who may coordinate across executive branch agencies, to manage expectations and maximize effectiveness of agency participation.

	Plan Element or Step	Local Partnership roles for including state agencies	State Agency roles for participating
Advisory Committee Role	Establish Advisory Committee	Invite state agencies to participate as a full advisory committee member.	Assign one person to be the initial/main point of contact for your agency.
	Advisory Committee meetings	Include agencies in discussions where plan content is being developed or deliberated. Set clear agendas, distributed in advance, so members can prepare and bring the right people along.	Participate meaningfully in advisory committee meetings and discussions. Bring agency subject matter experts in as appropriate/needed.
		<b>Planning Work Group:</b> The planning work group (local partners and consultants) meets regularly to discuss process and	<b>Interagency Watershed Core Team:</b> State agencies occasionally need to meet independently of the local process to improve the state’s participation. Teams should aggregate and clarify state priorities;

		logistics. Discussion should focus on advancing the planning effort (vs. writing the plan).	develop shared vision/language; and resolve confusing or conflicting language, or points of view. They can also consider submitting “shared” comments from multiple agencies reflecting a single point of view from the state. BWSR convenes.
Advisory Committee Role	Prioritization and plan development	Consider state priorities as local priorities are being developed. When state and local priorities do not align, clearly communicate why not. Consider acknowledging the priority (or difference) in the plan.  Select strategies and actions that will result in multiple benefits toward both local and state goals.	Be knowledgeable about State Strategies* with which the local plan can/should align. Clearly communicate state data, tools, and priorities in a way that is relevant to local concerns and implementation actions.  Submit comments (formal and informal) in a timely way to avoid costly back-tracking or delays in the process.  Clarify and commit to the state’s contributions as part of a local/state implementation partnership. These could include projects, programs, and policies, as well as financial and technical help.  Focus on helping shape and identify how locally-selected implementation actions can be measured and will achieve multiple benefits (rather than whether your agency’s priority issue(s)/concern(s) were ranked highly).
	Policy Committee and public hearings	Use agency staff as resources to communicate data, issues, and goals to the public and policy makers.	Be available to present data, issues, and goals to the public and policy makers so that participants base their decisions on a solid understanding of the issues and the science.
Plan Review Authority Role**	Initial Comment Letter	Invite agency to provide initial comments.	Clearly communicate what data and information your agency has and how it is relevant to the local process, your priority issues and concerns, and your commitment to participation.
	60-day Comment Period	Respond to comments in a timely manner.	Clearly communicate practical and valuable comments that will help strengthen the plan. Feedback that criticizes but is not constructive can lead to time-consuming responses that don’t add value to the plan.
	Final Plan Review	Commit to an ongoing partnership for plan implementation	Clearly communicate your agency’s recommendation to BWSR** for plan approval. Commit to an ongoing partnership for plan implementation.

\*See [Using WRAPS Reports in Local Water Planning](#) and [State Strategies Summary](#).

\*\*See [Best Practices for Agency Comments on Water Plans](#) for more details about the best way to provide comments.

Note that the EQB is a Plan Review Authority but is only expected to participate in the Final Plan Review step.