

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

SWCD OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

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SPECIAL PROGRAMS

RURAL RAINFALL MONITORING PROGRAM

During the summer of 1976, the state climatologist approached the Soil and Water Conservation Board (now known as the Board of Water and Soil Resources [BWSR]) with a rainfall monitoring program. At that time, precipitation observations were being received from several networks throughout the state. However, some large and important areas existed without adequate observations. Available data did not permit complete analysis of precipitation patterns.

A pilot program was launched in southwestern Minnesota counties through the local soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) to place rain gauges in areas where observations were missing. This new SWCD network complemented existing networks (Future Farmers of America, National Weather Service) and provided for a combination of stability, density, and a uniform distribution providing systematic coverage of the state.

The SWCD program continues today and has increased in the numbers of volunteer rain gauge monitors keeping daily records of rainfall amounts. Many southern Minnesota counties now have rain gauges located at or near the corners of every township. This kind of density doesn't exist on a county-wide scale anywhere else in the country. After a major storm, the state climatologist can obtain rainfall information from SWCDs, who receive rain fall data from their volunteer rain gauge monitors. Within 24 hours of receiving the data, precipitation maps are ready and available for use by the media.

To continue this effective rural rainfall monitoring network, a four-pointed partnership has to work closely together.

1. The BWSR will:
 - Provide administrative service through regional staff.
 - Make rain gauges and data forms available to the SWCDs.

2. The SWCDs will:
 - Place rain gauges near the predetermined locations.
 - Collect monthly reports from the volunteer monitors.
 - Mail monthly reports to the state climatologist.
 - Provide information back to the volunteer monitors.

3. The volunteer monitor will:
 - Record daily rainfall data following the instructions found on the back of the data form.
 - Mail monthly reports to the SWCD.

4. The state climatologist will:
 - Compile and distribute precipitation information back to the SWCDs and the BWSR.

COUNTY SALE OF TAX FORFEIT LANDS

The 1991 State Legislature made significant amendments to the procedures for selling tax forfeited lands. Counties may be asking SWCDs for assistance in identifying the occurrence of wetlands and marginal soils on tax forfeit parcels. Counties must give notice to prospective purchasers of the existence of wetlands or marginal lands, and the deed will contain a restrictive covenant precluding enrollment of the land in state funded programs providing compensation for conservation of marginal land and wetlands.

Listed below is additional information about this program.

Legal Authorities

Minnesota Statutes, [Section 282.018, subd. 2.](#), and [103F.535](#).

Review Authorities

1. The SWCD, if no county land commissioner exists or if the county appoints the SWCD.
2. The county land commissioner, if one exists in the county and the county appoints the land commissioner to function in this capacity.

Key Questions

The county is responsible for making the determinations to answer questions 1 and 2.

1. Is the land sale under Minnesota Statutes (M.S.)? See M.S. Section 282.018, subd. 2.
2. Is the land to be disposed of (sold) exempt by statute? See M.S., Section 103F.535, subd. 1.

The county then asks the SWCD or the land commissioner to make the determinations to answer questions 3 and 4.

3. Is any part of the parcel to be disposed of non-forested marginal land?
4. Are there any wetlands on the parcel to be disposed of?

The SWCD (or land commissioner) prepares the determination using the resource inventories indicated on the form provided by the BWSR. The completed and signed determination and notice form is returned to the county. The county then works with the MN DNR to obtain their approval and then conducts the sale of the tax forfeited lands.

SWCDs and county auditors were mailed information about this program in July, 1991. Additional copies can be requested from the BWSR.