

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

SWCD OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK

BWSR GRANT PROGRAMS

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General Services Grants

General Services Grants provide each soil and water conservation district (SWCD) with funds for the general administration of the district, including staff salaries, supervisor compensation, and district operational expenses. The grants are intended to give districts a certain degree of funding stability.

Erosion, Sediment Control, and Water Quality Cost-Share Program (C-S Program)

The Erosion, Sediment Control, and Water Quality Cost-Share Program (C-S Program) provides funds to soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) to cost-share on priority projects. This program was one of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR's) first implementation programs which began in 1977. The C-S Program provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who install permanent, nonproduction-oriented practices designed to protect and improve soil and water resources.

The C-S Program's funding is appropriated from the state's general fund. That means that public tax dollars are collected and made available to the BWSR and SWCDs to share the costs associated with reducing soil erosion or improving or protecting a water resource. Enabling Minnesota Statutes guide the administration of the program to ensure program funds are used to effectively treat problems having a significant environmental consequence, on-site and off-site.

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program

The Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program strives to protect and improve water quality through encouraging landowners to retire environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and return it to its natural habitat. The program reimburses landowners for enrolling their land in a permanent conservation easement and then provides assistance to restore the area to grass, trees, or wetlands. Other benefits of the program include reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, flood control, and groundwater recharge.

The program is managed on the state level by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Locally, soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) implement the program.

Local Water Resources
Protection and Management Program (LWRPMP)
a.k.a. Comprehensive Local Water Planning (CLWP)

The Local Water Resources Protection and Management Program (LWRPMP), also known as Comprehensive Local Water Planning (CLWP), provides financial and technical assistance to counties to aid in the development and implementation of local water plans. Traditionally, local water planning has been divided into two programs: the Local Water Planning Program and the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Program. Authorization for this program is found in Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) 103B.

Counties in greater Minnesota plan under the Local Water Planning Program. This program evolved from a 1989 pilot program in which 52 counties, organized into six groups, were given a special grant to develop local water plans.

In the metropolitan area, watershed management organizations (WMOs) have traditionally been responsible for surface water planning under the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act. Counties are responsible for ground water planning.

Both metro area counties and greater Minnesota counties may receive grants under the LWRPMP. Eligibility for grants is linked to county adoption of a state-approved water plan and implementation of a water planning levy. Two types of grants are available: base grants and challenge grants.

Base grants are noncompetitive and are intended to give counties a chance to begin working on the priority items addressed in their local water plans.

Challenge grants are competitive and are intended to give counties and water management organizations a chance to enhance, accelerate, and implement activities in their water plans. Challenge grants require a local one-to-one match. Challenge grant applications are usually once per biennium.

Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG)

The Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG) is a composite of base and challenge grants formulated to assist local government units (LGUs) in implementing four state-mandated programs. These programs are comprehensive local water plan implementation, the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), Department of Natural Resources (DNR) shoreland management, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) feedlot permit program. These grants are made to counties.

The WCA and the feedlot permit program each have two grant components, base and challenge, for a total of six grant categories in all. A county may apply for any or all of these components. They must also provide the required match. Due to funding levels, all categories are not available every year.

Wetland Conservation Act

The purpose of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) is to maintain and protect Minnesota's wetlands and the benefits they provide.

In 1991, the Minnesota Legislature approved the Wetland Conservation Act. The project began in 1993 in response to concerns about wetland management processes such as permitting, unclear state policies, and methods to achieve the state's goal of no net loss of wetlands. The law requires anyone proposing to drain or fill a wetland first to try the following:

- To avoid disturbing the wetland;
- Try to minimize any impact on the wetland; and
- Replace any lost wetland acres, functions, and values.

Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act is considered one of the most comprehensive wetland laws in the country. It recognizes a number of benefits wetlands provide, including:

- Water quality benefits, including filtering pollutants out of surface water and groundwater, using nutrients that would otherwise pollute public waters, trapping sediments, protecting shoreline, and recharging groundwater supplies;
- Floodwater and storm water retention benefits, including reducing the potential for flooding in the watershed;
- Public recreation and education benefits, including hunting and fishing areas, wildlife viewing areas, and nature areas;
- Commercial benefits, including wild rice and cranberry growing areas and aquaculture areas;
- Fish and wildlife benefits;
- Low-flow augmentation benefits during times of drought; and
- Other public uses.

Statutes and rules: [Minnesota Rules 8420](#) Wetland Conservation

Feedlot Water Quality Management Grant Program

The Board of Water and Soil Resources administers the Feedlot Water Quality Management Program in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) across the state. Local implementation is ongoing throughout the year. This includes financial and technical assistance coordination. SWCDs work with local producers to evaluate feedlots, identify water-quality problems, and develop solutions.

Clean Water Legacy

The Board of Water and Soil Resources is responsible for implementing non-point pollution reduction activities through the Minnesota Clean Water Legacy Act. The purpose of the Clean Water Legacy Act is to protect, restore, and preserve the quality of Minnesota's surface waters by providing authority, direction, and resources to achieve and maintain water quality standards for surface waters as required by [section 303\(d\) of the Federal Clean Water Act](#).

Native Buffer Cost-Share

Grants for cost-sharing contracts to establish and maintain diverse native vegetation buffers using seeds of local ecotype regions.

Cooperative Weed Management Areas

Cooperative Weed Management Areas are partnerships of federal, state and local government agencies along with tribes, individual landowners and various other interested groups that manage noxious weeds or invasive plants in a defined area.

Benefits of the Program:

- Development of strong partnerships based on cooperation among agencies, landowners and other interested partners to control invasive species.
- The creation of long-term and sustainable Cooperative Weed Management Areas.
- The removal of invasive plant species and the restoration/reconstruction of native communities.
- Funding to supplement other invasive species control efforts.

Southern Minnesota River Basin Area II Program

The Southern Minnesota River Basin Area II Program was established in 1976 to provide technical and financial assistance to local units of government for flood water retarding and retention projects. Area II of the Minnesota River basin encompasses five major watersheds between Ortonville and Mankato, Minnesota. Area II is characterized by broad upland and lowland plains connected by a steep transition known as the Coteau des Prairie, fertile soils, frequent flooding, and substantial erosion. Over 200,000 acres of agricultural land and numerous urban communities are plagued by recurrent flooding within Area II. Although the primary objective of the program is to reduce flood damages, it also benefits water quality, recreation, and fish and wildlife in the area.

This program provides grants to local units of government covering up to 75% of eligible costs when federal funds are not utilized or 50% of the nonfederal costs when federal funds are utilized. A joint powers group of nine counties within Area II, called Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, Inc. (also known as Area II), provides technical, administrative, and local cost-share assistance for projects, in cooperation with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Counties included in Area II are Brown, Cottonwood, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, and Yellow Medicine. The Area II office is located in Marshall, Minnesota.

Nine major flood control reservoirs have been constructed within Area II. Many of these reservoirs include a permanent low pool which provides recreation, as well as fish and wildlife benefits. Numerous smaller temporary impoundments have been constructed in conjunction with culvert and bridge replacements in the area. These projects are known as "road retention" projects, which typically involve downsizing of culverts or replacement of old bridges with culverts. Road retention projects are designed and constructed in cooperation with the associated road authorities and affected landowners. These flood water retarding and retention structures reduce downstream flooding and erosion by temporarily holding back flood waters in the upper reaches of the watersheds and metering the water out over a longer time period than would otherwise occur.

Nonpoint Engineering Assistance Grant
a.k.a. State Revolving Fund (SRF)
Implementation Program

The Non-Point Engineering Assistance Program provides engineering assistance to private landowners, via soil and water conservation districts, for a variety of non-point water quality management practices.

This program was established in 1994 in conjunction with the Agricultural Best Management Practices and Clean Water Partnership Loan Programs, which receive funding from the State Revolving Fund. Eleven joint powers groups of soil and water conservation districts were created statewide in early 1995 to employ professional engineer and technician teams to provide technical assistance in cooperation with member soil and water conservation districts. The associated joint powers boards are composed of a supervisor from each of the member soil and water conservation districts. One of the member soil and water conservation districts serves as the host district and manager for the engineer and technician team employed by the joint powers boards. The same, or another member soil and water conservation districts, serves as the fiscal agent for the joint powers boards.

Non-point Engineering Assistance teams provide technical assistance through member soil and water conservation districts and in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other local, state, and federal agencies. The Board of Water and Soil Resources provides policy, training, administrative, and technical consultation to the joint powers boards and their staff.

Return of Unspent Grant Funds

Any funds allocated to conservation districts that are not encumbered at the end of the grant agreement period must be returned to the state board within 30 days.

The Return Check Form is available at this [link](#).