



# Soil and Water Conservation District

## Performance Standards Checklist Guidance

### General Instructions

The Performance Standards checklist is to be used as part of BWSR’s Organizational Assessment review process. The purpose of the checklist is to provide an overview of your district’s operations in four areas: administration, planning, execution, and communication/coordination.

**The performance standards cover two areas: basic requirements and high-performance practices.** We expect each district to meet all the basic practice standards. The high-performance standards describe the practices of high performing districts and are met less frequently. Districts will receive BWSR commendations for compliance with high performance standards. Any unmet high-performance standards can serve as stretch goals for performance improvement.

### Administration

Performance Standard Type	Performance Standard
Basic	<p><b>Financial statement: annual, on-time and complete.</b></p> <p><i>This is the financial statement package that is due to BWSR by March 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>Financial audit: completed as required by statute or as per BWSR Correspondence.</b></p> <p><i>The audit is required by MS Chap. 103C.325 minimum every 3 years, or sooner if cumulative revenues since last audit reach \$500K. If required, audit, audit draft is due to Office of State Auditor by October 31 and final audit to BWSR by December 31. In special circumstances, BWSR may request an audit outside of this schedule.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>eLINK Grant Report(s) submitted on time.</b></p> <p><i>The deadline for eLINK reporting is February 1 of each year.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>Data practices policy exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years.</b></p> <p><i>A data practice policy describes how the SWCD responds to requests for information submitted under the Minnesota Data Practices Act (MS Chap. 13). Guidance for local governments is available at <a href="#">Data Practices / Data Practices Office</a>. To check yes you must have a local policy and have reviewed it (determined that it is up to date) or updated it within the past 5 years.</i></p>

Basic	<p><b>Personnel policy exists and reviewed/updated by the County Attorney or Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT) within last 5 years.</b></p> <p><i>A personnel policy includes such procedures as how staff are compensated, hired and dismissed, and how benefits are provided and used. Some districts may choose to have their employees managed through the county personnel system in which case they should ensure that the County Attorney or MCIT has reviewed the policy within 5 years.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>A technical professional with expertise in water resource management has been designated to serve on the WCA TEP and to prepare restoration and replacement orders associated with WCA enforcement.</b> The SWCD must designate a staff member to fulfill these functions. The BWSR wetland specialist will verify this.</p>
Basic	<p><b>SWCD has an adopting resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and appropriate decision delegation resolutions as warranted.</b></p> <p><i>LGU must have an adopted resolution assuming its responsibilities under the WCA. LGU may through resolution, rule or ordinance place decision-making authority with staff. Copies of resolutions, rules and/or ordinances will be reviewed to determine if the LGU has an appropriate adopting resolution and if all decision-making authorities have been formally and properly delegated. (N/A if SWCD has not been delegated LGU responsibilities for WCA).</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>SWCD has knowledgeable and trained staff to manage WCA program (if WCA LGU)</b></p>
High	<p><b>Job approval authorities: reviewed and reported annually.</b></p> <p><i>Job approvals are granted by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service and are required to maintain staff ability to design and certify certain conservation practices. SWCDs should maintain records of all employees JAA's and review annually.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Operational guidelines and policies exist and current.</b></p> <p><i>Operational guidelines are written procedures and policies that are used to inform and operate the district. There is no prescribed format or content for these. However, the BWSR Operational Handbook provides comprehensive guidance for district operational procedures. Also, the Minnesota Office of the State Auditor website (<a href="http://osa.state.mn.us">osa.state.mn.us</a>) has very helpful information regarding standard audit procedures for meeting minute content, fiscal procedures, and conflict of interest.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Board training: orientation and continuing education plan and record for each board member.</b></p> <p><i>Districts who meet these standards will have a mandatory orientation session(s) for new board members. There will also be a training plan, which can be individually tailored for each board member that is intended to improve their skills or technical expertise related to their service in the district. The district will also maintain a record of what elements of the plan each board member has completed.</i></p>

High	<p><b>Staff training: orientation and continuing education plan and record for each board member.</b></p> <p><i>Districts who meet these standards will have a mandatory orientation session(s) for new staff members. There will also be a training plan, which can be individually tailored for each staff person that is intended to improve their skills or technical expertise related to their service in the district. The district will also maintain a record of what elements of the plan each staff member has completed.</i></p>
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## Planning

Performance Standard Type	Performance Standard
Basic	<p><b>Comprehensive Plan: updated within 5 years or current resolution adopting unexpired county, LWM, or CWM plan.</b></p> <p><i>This standard identifies whether the district is operating under a comprehensive plan or a resolution adopting local water management plan, or a comprehensive watershed management plan(s) as the district plan and whether the plan and resolution are current.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Prioritized, targeted and measurable criteria used for goals and objectives of adopted plan(s) as appropriate.</b></p> <p><i>This standard identifies whether the district is using PTM applications to develop strategies for implementing best management practices to meet water quality goals.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Annual work plan: based on adopted plan(s) priorities.</b></p> <p><i>Districts can meet this high-performance standard by developing an annual work plan that allocates staff and financial resources to activities identified in their adopted plan(s).</i></p>
High	<b>SWCD is currently actively involved in at least one 1W1P.</b>
High	<b>SWCD has received a competitive CWF grant in past 2 years</b>
High	<p><b>Strategic Plan or Self-Assessment completed within last 5 years.</b></p> <p><i>Districts meet this high-performance standard if they developed a strategic plan or completed a self-evaluation that reflects on strengths, weaknesses, and improvement strategies.</i></p>

## Execution

Performance Standard Type	Performance Standard
Basic	<p><b>Are state grant funds spent in high priority problem areas?</b></p> <p><i>The district's high priority problem areas should have been identified in the district's adopted plan(s).</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>Total expenditures per year (over past 10 years).</b></p> <p><i>Document the total expenditures from all sources of funds for the last 10 years in the table provided at the bottom of the checklist.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>Months of operating funds in reserve.</b></p> <p><i>This value is based on data collected and maintained by BWSR. BWSR will compare the value reported with guidance from the Office of the State Auditor and ask districts to explain values above 12 months or below 4 months.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>Replacement and restoration orders are prepared in conformance to WCA rules and requirements.</b></p> <p><i>WCA rules require that promptly upon being informed by the enforcement authority or the LGU of the need, an SWCD staff person must inspect a violation site and prepare a plan to restore the site and/or replace the impacted wetland. BWSR wetland specialists will review a sample of restoration and replacement orders issued in the county to ensure that the SWCD is adequately fulfilling this requirement.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>WCA TEP members are knowledgeable and trained in the technical aspects of WCA.</b></p> <p><i>The designated TEP member must understand WCA rules and the technical aspects of wetland functions and wetland delineations to meet this requirement. BWSR wetland specialists will review the background, training and experience of the designated TEP representative to determine if this requirement is met.</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>WCA TEP member contributes to TEP reviews, findings and recommendations as appropriate.</b></p> <p><i>WCA rules require that the TEP make findings and recommendations to the LGU regarding decisions and various technical aspects of rule requirements. The SWCD must provide a staff member to serve on the TEP. The SWCD representative should actively participate in and add value to the TEP findings and recommendations. BWSR wetland specialists will review a sample of projects and associated TEP recommendations and evaluate the participation and effectiveness of the SWCD TEP member to determine if this requirement is met.</i></p>

Basic	<p><b>WCA decisions and determinations made in conformance with all WCA requirements. (if LGU).</b></p> <p><i>WCA requires LGUs to make decisions and determinations in conformance with specific noticing, timeline and other procedural and substantive requirements. BWSR wetland specialists will review a sample of decisions and determinations made by the LGU to determine if WCA rules are being followed (N/A if SWCD has not been delegated LGU responsibility).</i></p>
Basic	<p><b>WCA reviews and recommendations appropriately coordinated. (if LGU).</b></p> <p><i>WCA rules require that the TEP make findings and recommendations to the LGU regarding decisions and various technical aspects of rule requirements. The LGU must provide a staff member to service on the TEP and must coordinate TEP reviews and recommendations to ensure that they are technically sound and timely. BWSR wetland specialists will review a sampling of various decisions and associated TEP recommendations to determine if this requirement is met. (N/A if SWCD has not been delegated LGU responsibility).</i></p>
High	<p><b>Certified wetland delineator: on staff or retainer.</b></p> <p><i>Check the yes box if a member of the district is certified as a WCA wetland delineator or if the district has a standing contract with a certified private delineator who represents the district on TEPs.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Effective WCA Coordination and Communication with other agencies and the public.</b></p> <p><i>This is a high-performance standard. Some of the items the wetland specialist will consider when evaluating will be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Coordinating with other permitting authorities (particularly when the WCA LGU is not involved in building/septic/other permits)</i></li> <li>• <i>Communicating/coordinating with road authorities, county ditch inspectors, other entities or departments affecting wetlands or affected by WCA</i></li> <li>• <i>Communicating with elected officials</i></li> <li>• <i>Developing internal forms, policies, procedures and documents to help landowners comply with WCA.</i></li> </ul>
High	<p><b>Water quality data collected to track outcomes for each priority concern.</b></p> <p><i>SWCDs that mee this high-performance standard will have identified outcomes or indicators for each of the priority concerns in their local water plan and be collecting water quality data to measure those outcomes.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Water quality trends are tracked for priority water bodies.</b></p> <p><i>SWCDs that meet this high-performance standard will have identified priority water bodies and have an established monitoring program to track the water quality of those water bodies.</i></p>

## Communication & Coordination

Performance Standard Type	Performance Standard
Basic	<p><b>Website contains all required content elements.</b></p> <p><i>To check yes for this item, all required elements must be included on the district’s website. For website requirements see: <a href="#">Reporting Requirements for BWSR Grants   MN Board of Water, Soil Resources</a></i></p>
High	<p><b>Website contains additional content beyond minimum required.</b></p> <p><i>Districts that meet this high-performance standard will include items such as links to the comprehensive plan(s), programs, project descriptions, information and education information, or monitoring results for key resources.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Coordination with state watershed-base initiatives.</b></p> <p><i>SWCDs that meet this high-performance standard will actively participate in state level watershed initiatives, intensive watershed monitoring, watershed restoration and protection strategies development, or one watershed-one plan development.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Communication piece sent within last 12 months indicate audience.</b></p> <p><i>A communication piece can be a newsletter, press release for publication in local newspapers, website article, public service announcement, enclosure with regular mailings, etc. that highlight the work and program opportunities of the local water management program. Other forms of communication might be through Facebook, twitter or other social media. Check yes if your SWCD has sent out a communication piece within the last 12 months and indicate who the targeted audience(s) for the piece was.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Outcome trends monitored and reported for key resources.</b></p> <p><i>SWCDs who meet this high-performance standard will have identified priority water bodies within their adopted plans and have an established monitoring program in place to track the water quality of those water bodies.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Track progress on Information and Education objectives in plan.</b></p> <p><i>Districts that meet this high-performance standard will have public information and education objectives in their adopted plan(s) and will have developed measures and data that they are tracking to determine their progress in meeting those objectives. Types of outcomes could include changed attitudes and behaviors, increased participation in district programs, and increased demand for district assistance with conservation projects. Districts without I &amp; E objectives in their plan(s) can indicate (N/A) for this standard.</i></p>

High	<p><b>Obtain stakeholder input within last 12 months.</b></p> <p><i>Districts that meet this high-performance standard will have obtained stakeholder opinions or interest in water management issues within the past 12 months. This effort can take several forms and need not be scientifically based, random sample survey. One approach would be to establish a standing or ad hoc advisory committee of key district stakeholders. Such broad-based public input is particularly valuable in conjunction with major plan updates to give district stakeholders an opportunity to inform priority setting.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Annual report communicates progress on water plan goals.</b></p> <p><i>Districts that meet this high-performance standard will organize or include in their annual report (outside of eLINK and financial reports) an accounting of work done with respect to each of your adopted plan(s) goals. This can be as simple as indicating which of the goals or objectives was addressed by a particular action item or project.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, tribes, NGOs, or private businesses.</b></p> <p><i>Districts that meet this high-performance standard will have conducted programs and projects in cooperation with other local government, or non-governmental entities (e.g., Pheasants Forever, local lake association, and businesses). Programs will include sharing in educational, monitoring, planning and implementation efforts. In general, this standard implies a level of partnership that goes beyond the customary project cost share match.</i></p>
High	<p><b>Coordination with county board of supervisors or staff.</b></p> <p><i>Districts that meet this standard will have regular, periodic contact and coordination with their county commissioners, usually by providing periodic status reports at county board meetings, inviting county board members or staff to attend district board meetings, or a regular consultation between county and district staff.</i></p>