



Partnership Project Fact Sheet

What is a partnership project?

A partnership project is where BWSR and a local government, state agency, landowner, or other entity work together to design and construct a wetland mitigation bank. BWSR is then able to access a pre-determined amount of wetland mitigation credits from the bank at a cost that reflects the value of BWSR's role in the partnership (which is defined by the terms established in the partnership agreement).

How does it work?

The specific responsibilities of the partners are determined through a series of meetings, but they generally follow the lists below. Alternative arrangements for tasks can also be negotiated depending on site-specific circumstances, the strengths of a given partner, and other factors. After the specific responsibilities and tasks have been determined, the partner submits a final proposal that includes the number and price of credits they intend to provide to BWSR through the partnership.

BWSR Responsibilities

- Bank Plan development and coordination
- Engineering design and construction documents
- Pre project-data collection and wetland delineations
- Obtain regulatory approval of the mitigation bank plan under the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act and Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act

Partner Responsibilities

- Physical elements of project construction (*grading, adding, or removing structures*)
- Native vegetation establishment (*seeding project site*)
- Vegetation Maintenance (*controlling invasive species and promoting native species*)
- Post construction monitoring for a five-year period
- Credit deposit administration
- Final wetland delineation report

Benefits of a Partnership Project

Partnership projects are intended to be mutually beneficial; both partners bring something to the table that benefits the project as a whole and provides value to the other partner. The best partnership projects take advantage of the experience, capabilities, and technical resources of each partner. Important benefits that BWSR can provide to a partnership project include:

- Considerable technical expertise and experience in wetland restoration and regulation, helping to ensure:
 - An efficient and sustainable site-specific engineering design for restoration.
 - Timely regulatory approvals resulting from the development of thorough and accurate wetland banking plans, including frequent coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other regulatory agencies.
- Utilization of the proper equipment and expertise necessary for accurate pre-project hydrology monitoring and wetland delineation.
- Reduced risk and increased financial certainty from a guaranteed high-volume credit purchase(s) after the project is constructed in accordance with the contract.

- A known and predictable process and timeline for project completion, including regular guidance and communications throughout the life of the partnership.

BWSR Expectations for Project Partners

When evaluating potential partnership projects, BWSR will consider multiple factors to determine if in-fact the projects is beneficial to the state, including the public and taxpayers we represent. For a partnership project to be viable, BWSR will expect that:

- Partners will have a basic knowledge of the wetland banking process, and a full understanding of the technical and financial commitments associated with the proposed project.
- Partners will have the financial means to support implementation of a wetland banking project, specifically land ownership/acquisition, construction, and other tasks for which the partner will be responsible for.
- The per-credit sale price offered to BWSR by the partner will reflect the value of the contributions and benefits BWSR provides to the partnership (i.e. the credit price offered should be substantially lower than market value). This will be the primary factor that will determine if the proposed partnership will provide the expected mutual benefits.
- Construction of the project can begin no later than October 2022 (with exceptions allowed due to weather conditions).
- Nothing will prevent the partner from complying with all other wetland banking requirements, conditions, and criteria.

Who can participate?

Any person or entity with the land ownership rights or interests to complete or commit to a wetland restoration project may respond to this announcement. The applicant is not required to be the landowner, but applicants will be asked to demonstrate that they have sufficient legal interest in the property, or access to it, in order to complete the activities necessary to restore wetlands and manage the site long-term.

Application and Review Process

The applicant will submit the Partnership Project Plan application. The evaluation of partnership proposals will be conducted using a two-step process, (1) an initial screening and (2) final credit cost proposal evaluation.

Step 1:

BWSR will use the information provided by the applicant and conduct initial screening to assess technical feasibility, credit yield, credit type, ecological sustainability, and easement compatibility. Upon completion of this initial screening, applicants whose projects score well will be invited to an initial screening virtual meeting. At this meeting we will discuss the merits of the project and the fundamental aspects of the partnership process. After this meeting applicants will be notified if their application will be considered for Step 2.

Step 2: BWSR will prepare a concept plan for the site and invite selected applicants to a second virtual meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to jointly review and discuss the concept plan, forecasted credit yield, roles and responsibilities and a preliminary project budget. Following the meeting, BWSR will provide the applicant with the preliminary design plan, narrative, credit yield and quantities consistent with the level of detail at this stage of the design.

The applicant uses the information from the meetings and develops a final project budget and submit the number of credits and cost per credit proposal. This cost proposal will be evaluated against all other applications received by BWSR.

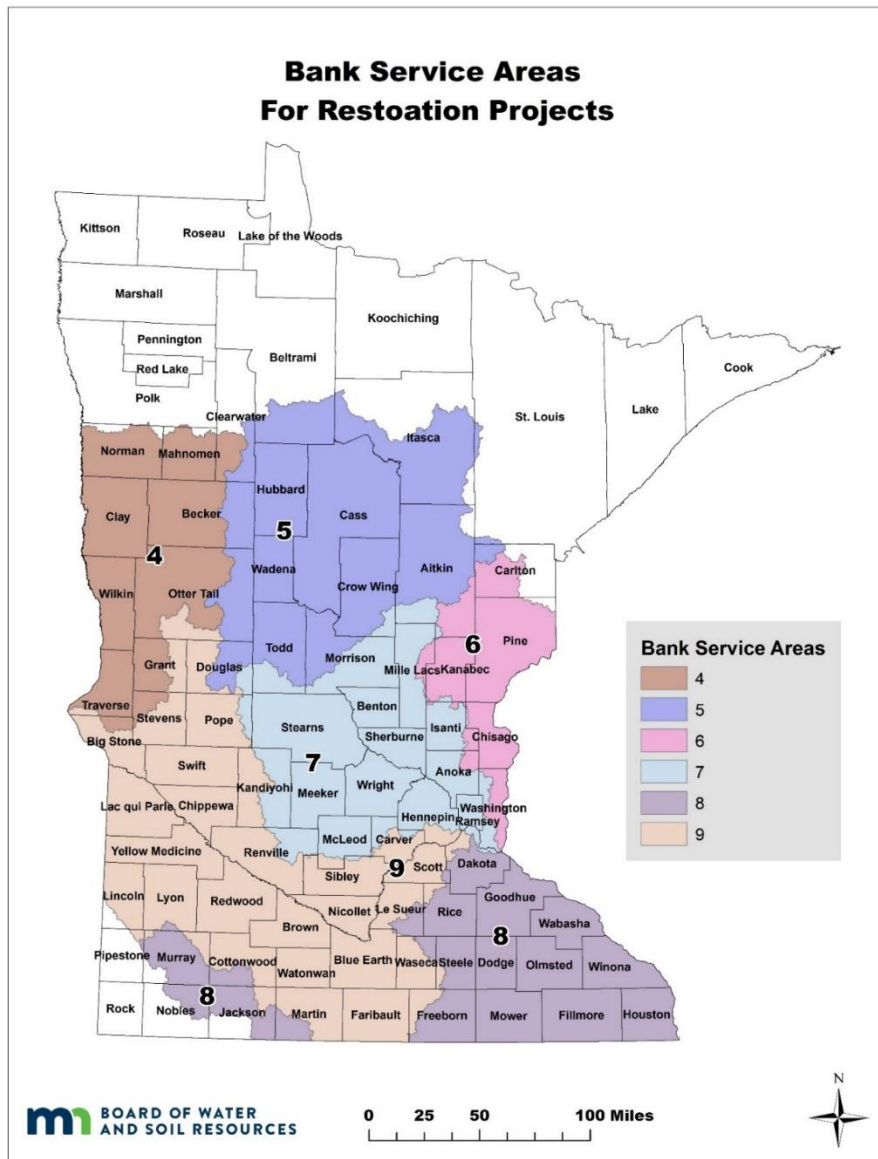
What criteria does BWSR use when evaluating projects?

Restoration projects will be evaluated using the following criteria. However, a technical feasibility assessment will be completed prior to the evaluation of the other criteria. The percentage in parentheses is the contribution of the criterion towards the total score for the project:

1. Credit Yield (20%)
2. Technical Feasibility (20%)
3. Functional Benefit for the Watershed (10%)
4. Rare or Difficult to Replace Wetland Functions or Characteristics (10%)
5. Qualifications of the Applicant (10%)
6. Cost per Credit (30%)

Does the location of the site matter?

Yes, BWSR is restricting this sign-up to the following Wetland Bank Service Areas (BSAs) 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 (see figure below).



What type of sites are eligible?

BWSR is seeking to restore wetlands on the landscape that have been lost or significantly degraded as a result of drainage, fill, or excavation. To meet program requirements and maximize the amount of credits generated by the restoration, eligible sites should meet the following criteria:

- Wetlands were historically present at the site or are present in a degraded condition and the physical characteristics of the site will allow for hydrologic and vegetative restoration.
- Sites that are at least 40-acres.
- More than 50% of the acres within the proposed easement area should be restorable wetlands.
- The proposed easement boundary should support an upland buffer adjacent to restored wetlands.
- The property must be free of other easements or legal agreements that may conflict with or serve the same purpose as the wetland banking easement.

What types of sites are preferred?

In general, sites which have fully restorable wetlands are preferred because they will yield the greatest amount of wetland banking credits. For example, restoration of an effectively drained and cropped wetland will yield more credit than a partially drained wetland with infrequent cropping or haying due to periodic wetness. Other characteristics of preferred sites include:

- Sites that address aquatic resource impairments or goals for wetland restoration established in an approved watershed plan.
- For proposals in the St. Croix River watershed (BSA 6) and the Middle Mississippi River Watershed (BSA 7), sites that are located in a catchment prioritized for wetland banking by BWSR.
- Sites that are 80-acres or larger.
- Sites restored as closely as possible to a historical condition without reliance on structures.
- Sites that historically had wetland types that are declining in numbers in the watershed or region, provide habitat for threatened or endangered species, or serve as wildlife corridors.

Application Review Schedule?

The steps in the review and selection process relevant to the landowner/applicant are provided below:

1. Applications due on or before 2:30 PM on April 7, 2021
2. Initial screening and evaluation of application materials (April 7 to May 5, 2021)
3. Partnership Meeting Notices May 12, 2020
4. Partnership Step 1 Meetings (May 17-28, 2021)
5. Partnership Step 2 proposals due on or before June 16, 2021
6. Sites selected and notification provided to landowners July 7, 2021.

Depending on characteristics of the site and weather conditions, a field inspection/investigation may take place during the review of submitted applications. Landowners should continue to utilize their property during this period. BWSR only requests that applicants allow the agency reasonable access to the site.

Further Questions?

Questions can be directed to the SWCD where the project site is located or to the following BWSR Wetland Banking Staff

BWSR Staff: Dennis Rodacker, Wetland Mitigation Project Manager, dennis.rodacker@state.mn.us or (651) 666-0913.