



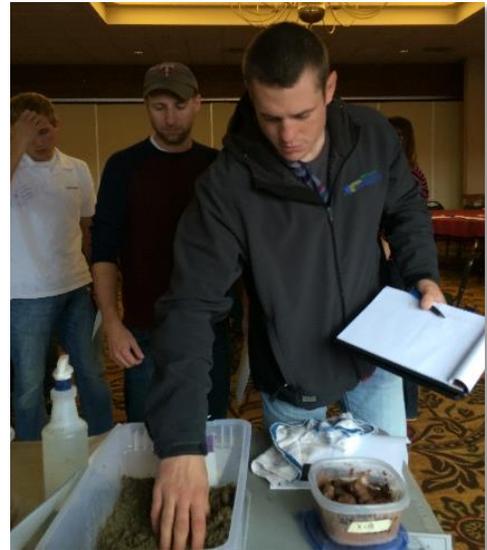
BWSR Academy: Applied Learning for Better Conservation

December 2014 Snapshots

The 2014 BWSR Academy wrapped up on October 30, sending hundreds of conservation professionals from Minnesota back to their jobs with new ideas, skills and hopefully a refreshed determination to improve the water and soil resources of our state.

The goal of the BWSR Academy is to provide high quality training for local government (LGU) staff that maintains and improves the delivery of conservation work and meets the shared expectations of BWSR and local resource management boards. In order to meet this goal, the Academy offers four main topic tracks: Organizational Development, Technical, Program and Wetlands. In addition, we offer a workshop track for subjects that can't fit into a regular, 90 minute session, and a "repeat" track offering participants additional opportunities to attend a few of the more popular sessions.

This year, we experienced a record-breaking number of registrations for the Academy. Over 400 people registered to attend at least one session during the three day event. Many of the sessions had to be closed to registration due to room capacity limits. In order to help accommodate the higher than expected numbers, a few "last minute addition" sessions were added to the agenda. Jenny Gieseke, BWSR Training Coordinator and Academy core team member at BWSR indicated that "despite the higher than anticipated number of participants, the sessions were still interactive, and the attendees were very engaged."



Participants had the chance to get their hands "dirty" during the Hydric Soils Lab



Fiscal Compliance Staff Jeannette Austin, Tim Dykstal and Julie Krebs prepare for a session.

Academy session topics are selected based on input from BWSR staff and LGU partners by a 10member "Academy Team." this year's session topics included Budgeting and Grant Tracking, Succession Planning, Tracking Landowner Contacts, Hydric Soils, Saturated Buffers, Urban Storm Water Management, RIM topics and many others.

"What really impresses me is the bottom-up nature of the Academy planning," said Ron Shelito, BWSR North Regional Supervisor and Academy core team member. "What I mean by that is how staff from all areas of BWSR pull together to make this Academy work. I can sense that they take it seriously, believe in the concept, and the need to provide great training to our clients."

But BWSR staff aren't the only ones who deserve credit. LGU staff who attend the event are a huge part of the success. As Jason Weinerman, BWSR Board Conservationist and Academy core team member noted, "You don't need to prompt anyone to find their session at BWSR Academy. They're in their seats, ready to work."

The crowds are interested, respectful, and genuinely enjoy the sessions they attend. As one of the attendees put it, “just when you think you can't put anything more in your head, you discover there is room for more. Just goes to show you, you *can* teach an old dog new tricks.”

On the whole, the BWSR Academy is something BWSR and LGU staff alike look forward to every year. As Brein Maki, Office Administrator from Winona SWCD, explained, “We are fortunate as local LGUs to have a support system (BWSR) that listens to our training and development needs so that we are able to hit the ground running in achieving our local goals. The Academy really encompasses a variety of learning objectives in a thoughtful and effective event.”