



RIM Wetlands: the evolution of wetland restoration

December 2015 Snapshots

Since the mid-1980s, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Re-Invest in Minnesota (RIM) Program has been working with local governments and private landowners to provide permanent protection of private lands. One of the key components of the RIM program has been wetland restorations. Since it began, RIM has protected 75,000 acres of wetland restorations and their surrounding upland habitat.

Wetland restorations provide several benefits, including habitat for wildlife, reduction in downstream flooding, filtering of nutrients and pollutants, and recreational value. Once wetlands are restored, aquatic invertebrates quickly become established. Soon afterward, amphibians and waterfowl move in, using not only the wetland area, but also the upland habitat that surrounds these wetlands. These restorations benefit water quality, wildlife, and the people who enjoy them.

This program builds on the successes of our previous wetland restoration program partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services' (NRCS) Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), which took a 30-year WRP Easement and turned it into a Perpetual RIM Easement. In 2015, BWSR launched the RIM Wetlands program, which continues BWSR's focus on providing wetland habitat and all of the other environmental benefits found with wetland restorations.

The first sign-up was held in March 2015, and was an immediate success. As in previous RIM sign-ups, interest in the program far exceeded available funding. Forty-three Soil and Water Conservation Districts submitted 177 applications, requesting a total of \$73 million. Since only \$24 million was available for this sign-up, 46 of the highest-ranking applications were chosen from the pool of candidate sites, totaling an additional 5,000 acres of wetland restorations and their surrounding upland habitat.

As landowner interest in the program increases, BWSR is seeking more funding to support wetland restoration easements. The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council has recommended an additional \$13.8 million for the program, which, if approved by the Legislature, will represent our largest funded request to date. Additionally, BWSR is working towards Minnesota's third Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which could stretch state wetland restoration funds even further, leveraging additional Federal dollars for each State dollar invested. Stay tuned for future updates.



Wetland restorations like this one include RIM Wetlands easements.