



# The \$393 million question

February 2015 Snapshots

\$393 million. It's a big number, and it has statewide significance. If you're a Jeopardy fan, the question you're looking for here is "What is the value of conservation work local governments are prepared to undertake?"

BWSR can quote that figure because of its Biennial Budget Request (BBR) process. First initiated in 2012, and then again in 2014, the survey collects information on local government conservation and water management resource needs on a biennial – or two year – basis. The data is used in large part to inform the development of the state's biennial budget, hence the name.

The BBR takes a look at conservation projects and activities in state-approved, locally-adopted water management plan, or an approved total maximum daily load study, surface water intake plan or wellhead management plan. BWSR uses this information to provide other agencies with a high-level view of what local governments are planning. The data have been an important resource to share with the Clean Water Council, Legislature, and Governor's office as they develop BWSR's biennial budget.

Besides informing the budget process, BWSR uses the data collected from the BBR in a number of other ways. The data demonstrate that local governments are prioritizing and targeting projects and activities that result in measurable outcomes, which is a key expectation of Clean Water Fund grants.

Some of the other reasons BWSR collects BBR data is to

- Increase the efficiency of BWSR and other State grant programs because areas where grant programs overlap can be identified, better coordinating funds.
- Provide more effective support to the implementation of local water management plans by understanding what projects are planned up to two years in advance.

Local governments throughout the state provided a significant response to the 2016-17 BBR with over 260 different agencies submitting information. Local governments that expect to use State funds to implement local activities were asked to provide this information in spring 2014, and several summary documents are available on the BWSR website: <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/bbr/index.html>.

The information was requested for four program areas. Natural Resources Block Grants support local government work enforcing ordinances that are based on state rules (feedlots, the Wetland Conservation Act, and water planning, for example). Soil and Water Conservation Districts line indicates need for general support so these agencies can provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to install reasonable and effective conservation practices. Clean Water Fund Projects are those prioritized and targeted



*BWSR works closely with its partners, and the BBR is one way to help our agency understand conservation activity happening at the local level.*

projects identified in local water plans for water quality improvements. The Easements program line represents anticipated need for funds for protection for marginal farmland and other eligible land. The numbers shown in Table 1 represent state support, leveraged funds, and additional state funds needed to complete projects.

**Table 1. 2016-17 BBR Response by BWSR Program**

	Natural Resources Block Grant	Soil and Water Conservation Districts	Clean Water Fund Projects	Easements	Total
<b>FY2016-17 Total Estimated Program Need</b>	<b>\$38,356,000</b>	<b>\$43,017,000</b>	<b>\$256,095,000</b>	<b>\$56,185,000</b>	<b>\$393,653,000</b>

What is the value of conservation work local governments are prepared to undertake? The \$393 million answer is the amount of conservation activity that local governments are prepared to do. This is also significant because this number represents more than twice the total amount of funds generated by the Clean Water Fund portion of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendments. This speaks both to the dedication of local governments, as well as to the water quality and conservation need that exists across the state.