



# Minnesota's Wetland Bank for Agriculture gets \$1 million boost

## October 2016 Snapshots

Minnesota's Wetland Bank for Agriculture was established in 2012, the first program of its kind in the nation. Last month, BWSR received \$1 million in funding from the U.S Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in support of this banking program.

This funding comes from a \$7 million investment to fund agricultural wetland mitigation banks in 10 states. The NRCS Wetland Mitigation Banking Program was created in 2014 as a part of the Farm Bill to assist states, local governments, and other qualified partners develop wetland mitigation banks. The states receiving funding from the NRCS are: Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, and South Dakota. Wetland mitigation development through the NRCS focuses on creating banks that restore, create, or enhance wetland ecosystems as a way to broaden conservation options available to farmers and ranchers so they can maintain eligibility for USDA programs.

The Minnesota Wetland Bank for Agriculture is a subset of the State's wetland bank and is dedicated solely to the replacement of farmed wetlands drained or filled for agricultural purposes. It has provided credits to producers to meet wetland replacement requirements under the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), the Federal Farm Program (Swampbuster), and in some cases the Federal Clean Water Act.



BWSR operates the state wetland bank to provide a source of mitigation credits to individuals and organizations that impact wetlands as part of an approved project under one or more state or federal programs. In this capacity, BWSR oversees the development, review, and approval of wetland mitigation

credits generated by third parties or individual landowners for future use, and manages the accounting for approved banks. In certain cases, BWSR may also develop mitigation credits by completing wetland restoration and enhancement projects in response to a specific need. Wetland Banking saves landowners time and money during the project review and approval process, while also providing additional options for those landowners who don't have the opportunity to establish their own replacement wetlands.

Further development of the Wetland Bank for Agriculture is vital to ensuring an adequate supply of mitigation credits for agricultural activities that impact wetlands. At a time when many landowners are considering improvement projects on agricultural lands, the mitigation credits generated by wetland restoration projects provide a suitable offset for these impacts and help maintain a balance between economic development and conservation of the State's resources.

Since 2012, Minnesota's agricultural wetland banking program has approved over 20 individual bank sites with over 1,200 acres of wetlands restored.