



# Evolving technical training for conservation professionals

September 2016 Snapshots

In a collaborative partnership with the Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE), and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), BWSR created the Technical Training and Certification Program. This program is designed to develop and maintain a highly trained, technically skilled workforce of conservation professionals capable of meeting the conservation delivery needs of Minnesota. In 2014 BWSR, MACDE, MASWCD and NRCS signed an MOU establishing an interagency team to develop a comprehensive strategy for joint technical training and certification. The Technical Training and Certification Strategy for Conservation Delivery in Minnesota was completed in 2015 and established a framework for development and implementation of training and certification of conservation professionals.

The need for this program stems from the demands placed on Minnesota's local conservation delivery system which faces growing and evolving demands and challenges. Through the strong partnership of agencies supporting it, the program connects allies and resources efficiently to provide training and enhanced technical skills so local government conservation staff can effectively perform their jobs and meet expanding conservation needs.

This partnership between NRCS, BWSR, MASWCD, and MACDE is committed to providing resources and leadership to achieve the program goals of: a renewed commitment to technical training, a streamlined and a coordinated approach to assessing needs and training delivery, and increasing opportunities for obtaining job approval authority for conservation practices. Training and certification of Minnesota's conservation professionals are key quality assurance elements of an effective conservation delivery system. Seven key strategies were designed to achieve program goals. The strategies are:

- Endorsement of Core Competencies
- Identification of conservation practices by priority resource concerns
- Creation of individual development plans
- Identification of training needs
- Identification of training roles and responsibilities
- Issuance and tracking of credentialing
- Maintaining skills through continuing education and training



*The new program will do more than just expand on current training offerings, it will help create a system that identifies evolving training needs of all levels of conservation professionals.*

Development and rollout of the new program is divided into three phases: Initiation, Development and Implementation. Phase I (Initiation) focuses on building out the framework that was identified in the Technical Training and Certification Strategy for Conservation Delivery document. The Interim State Technical Training Committee provides programmatic support and is working to establish Area Technical Training Teams and develop curriculum for Core Competency trainings. While much of the time spent so far has focused on developing the systems, processes and structures necessary for an effective program, there are early successes including Statewide RUSLE2 trainings, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning training, and coordination with partners for planning next year’s training offerings.

**Technical Training & Certification Program - Anticipated Implementation Schedule**

