

PRAP report shows increased compliance

A program that evaluates local governments implementing conservation projects in Minnesota has identified positive trends over the past four years.

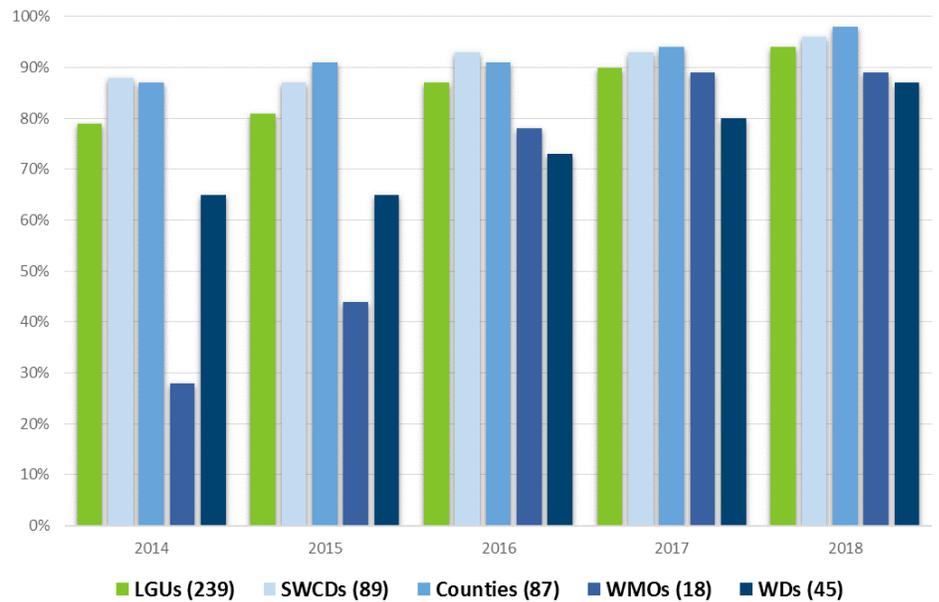
The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) assesses how well a local government unit (LGU) complies with basic project standards such as on-time reporting, auditing and maintaining up-to-date water plans.

According to the 2018 legislative report by PRAP program staff, overall compliance has improved by 15 percent since 2014. BWSR recognized the trend as an indicator of significant progress at its January board meeting, and discussed the need for continued progress.

At least once a decade, PRAP reviews an LGU's progress toward implementing water plans. BWSR PRAP Coordinator Dale Krystosek said the county water plans, watershed district and watershed management organization plans evaluated by PRAP are implemented at a high level.

Each year, BWSR regional and program staff meet to discuss which LGUs should be selected for PRAP reviews. Some of the factors considered include the expiration date of water plans and whether the LGU has had a review in the past. BWSR staff also consider factors specific to an LGU, such as recent staff turnover.

"For the 24 local government plans



Local Government Units' (LGUs) Compliance Rates

we reviewed in 2018, those plans identified a combined 1,239 action items. Eighty-three percent of those actions were implemented," Krystosek said. "That is a very high rate of implementation considering that most of the 10-year plans we reviewed still had several years remaining to initiate additional projects."

Since the program began in 2008, more than 200 LGUs have gone through the review process. This includes 89 soil and water conservation districts, 87 counties, 45 watershed districts, and 18 watershed management organizations. BWSR also uses PRAP to provide organizational improvement or assistance grants to LGUs, and prepares an annual report for the legislature outlining the work conducted under the program.

Common goals for these assistance grants include conducting strategic assessments and staffing capacity studies to help LGUs work toward their conservation goals.

PRAP reviews are typically initiated by a meeting between BWSR and LGU staff. The evaluation process includes four main components: completing a performance standards checklist; developing a contact list for a BWSR survey of partners, staff and the LGU's governing body or board; a progress report produced by the LGU on the implementation of their water plan; and a review of the LGU's implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.

"The primary goal is to assist these local government partners to be the best they can be in their management of Minnesota's land and water resources," Krystosek said.