

Trainings tailored to conservation

BWSR spearheads free, online ‘Core Competency’ series developed with partners including NRCS, MASWCD, MACDE

A new training series designed to equip Minnesota conservation professionals from all levels of government with a solid foundation of knowledge is available for free online.

[Core Competency Conservation Training](#) is a series of 19 training modules that aim to provide consistent baseline knowledge of conservation planning, soils and water quality in a Minnesota-focused context. Each module takes about one hour to complete. Staff from soil and water conservation districts, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) are all encouraged to complete the modules.

“Consistency of information is an important facet of these trainings,” said Jon Sellnow, BWSR Technical Training and Certification Program coordinator, who helped launch the series. “There’s definitely an advantage to having employees at



various levels of government operating within the same general framework and with the same background knowledge.”

The first seven training modules were released on a [new website](#) in November; the final modules were released in January. Sellnow said modules will be updated as needed.

The Technical Training and Certification Program (TTCP) delivers the training. TTCP is a collaborative effort among BWSR, NRCS, the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), and the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE). Its mission is to develop and maintain a highly trained, technically skilled workforce of natural resource professionals capable of



Cover slides depict Core Competency Conservation Training modules. Nineteen modules are offered by the new training series.

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— Jon Sellnow, BWSR TTCP coordinator

meeting Minnesota's conservation delivery needs.

Core competency trainings are one option to fulfill continuing education hours for [Conservation Planner Certification](#). Level II certified conservation planners complete roughly 250 hours of training that enable them to write conservation plans, identify resource concerns and recommend options to landowners.

Kelly Voigt, BWSR's Brainerd-based northern regional training conservationist, said training series development started about five years ago. When the TTCP was formed in 2015, the steering committee identified the need for core competency trainings to form a foundation of technical abilities for Minnesota conservation workers.

“BWSR worked with a variety of partners to help develop and review the content and narrate the modules,” said Voigt. “This includes subject matter experts from NRCS, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the University of Minnesota – among others.”

Topics covered by the trainings include the history of conservation in Minnesota, soils information, best management practices for water quality, and planning on a watershed basis. Sellnow said he recommends the “Conservation Planning Module 1: How Did We Get Here? History of Minnesota's Conservation Efforts” to anyone interested in Minnesota's natural resources – regardless of vocation.

“That course is all about why we are here, what we do, and why we as conservation professionals at different levels of government have been working together for the last 90 years,” Sellnow said. “I have 20 years' experience in this field, and I still learned something new.”

To take the Core Competency Conservation Training modules, create a free account on the [MNC3 website](#).

