

2022 BWSR legislative wrap-up

Actions taken during the 2022 legislative session create opportunities for the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to make meaningful progress on water quality, habitat and related conservation initiatives. Legislation passed this year emphasizes funding for conservation easements, wetland protection and watershed and forestland restoration.

The 2022 Legislature adjourned in May, concluding its work for the biennium unless Gov. Tim Walz calls a special session sometime before the end of the year. In even-numbered years, the Legislature traditionally focuses on policy, supplemental funding and bonding since agency budgets are typically passed during the biennial budgeting process that takes place in odd-numbered years.

Passed: Outdoor Heritage Fund bill

This omnibus bill was passed and signed by Walz. While the original House bill contained supplemental funding for the Clean Water Fund, the Senate's bill only funded Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) provisions. The final version of the bill contains OHF projects with limited policy language changes from the Clean Water Council's recommendations.

BWSR-related projects in the final bill included:

- Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Grassland Reserve, Phase IV
- RIM Buffers for Wildlife and Water, Phase X
- RIM Wetlands, Phase IX
- Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Army Compatible Use Buffer



Photo Credit: Minnesota Historical Society

- (ACUB) Program, Phase X – BWSR is partnering with Morrison Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Wild-Rice Shoreland Protection, Phase VIII
 - Integrating Habitat and Clean Water (identified through One Watershed, One Plan)
 - Mississippi Headwaters Corridor Project, Phase VII (through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources) – BWSR is partnering with the Mississippi Headwaters Board

Total OHF project appropriations for BWSR: \$21,589,000

Passed: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund bill

This Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) bill, also referred to as the Legislative-

Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) bill, went through significant changes throughout the legislative session. With no formal recommendation from the LCCMR, different versions of the bill moved forward in the House and Senate. Ultimately, an agreement was reached in conference committee that excluded land acquisition-related projects and included some projects that did not go through the standard LCCMR process.

Direct appropriations to BWSR included:

- Watershed and Forest Restoration: What a Match!
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) state incentives
- Strategic framework to guide local water storage implementation

Total ENRTF project appropriations for BWSR: \$4,268,000

Not passed: Environment Omnibus bill

The House and Senate each passed different versions of this bill. In conference committee, a final version was agreed upon on the last night of session, but not in time for a vote in the Senate or House. BWSR provisions found in the final conference committee report included General Fund appropriations for a tribal liaison position and for the Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program (LGRWRP): \$1.58 million in Fiscal Year 23; \$765,000 in future years for LGRWRP funding.

Not passed: Omnibus Tax bill

The House and Senate passed

different versions of the Omnibus Tax bill with the House providing SWCD funding and the Senate providing a tax buffer credit. The conference committee reached an agreement to provide a new appropriation of \$6 million per year from the General Fund via a Department of Revenue aid payment to SWCDs starting in 2023. This bill – which would have provided additional funding separate from Clean Water Fund-backed SWCD capacity funding – was ultimately not voted on by the House and Senate by the time the legislative session concluded.

Not passed: Bonding bill

Neither the House nor the Senate passed a bonding bill during the 2022 Regular Session. While there were BWSR provisions for the RIM

Reserve Program and the LGRWRP mentioned in earlier versions of bills, a conference committee was not called, and therefore a final bill did not pass.

