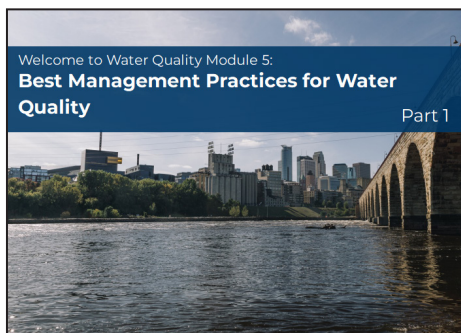


# Core competency trainings offer flexible learning options for conservation pros



BWSR's Minnesota Core Competency Conservation Training program aims to help conservation professionals develop consistent, baseline competencies in three primary areas (from left): water quality, soils and conservation planning. **Graphic Credits:** BWSR

A series of online trainings that familiarize conservation professionals with real-world scenarios has trained 1,000-plus individuals since it launched five years ago.

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) Minnesota Core Competency Conservation Training (MNC3) program is a series of online trainings that aims to help conservation professionals develop consistent, baseline competencies in three primary areas: water quality, soils and conservation planning. Trainings on additional topics such as continuous living cover, habitat management and soil erosion are also available. Thirty-four modules are currently available within eight training topics; each takes approximately one hour to complete.

Staff from soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), BWSR and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are all encouraged to

complete the modules.

"The MNC3 site provides a wide range of self-paced technical training opportunities developed with Minnesota-specific content for local conservationists," said Kelly Voigt, BWSR northern regional training conservationist, who oversees the trainings. "By providing standardized, accessible training, we're helping strengthen conservation efforts across Minnesota by ensuring every team member is equipped to make a meaningful difference."

Voigt said the MNC3 team continues to develop new training modules in partnership with subject-matter experts. Some modules come together quickly, while others require more extensive research and involve developing complex interactive elements.

"Our goal is to create interactive, real-world scenarios that mirror the decisions and problem-solving

situations employees face in the field," Voigt said.

BWSR's 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 meeting Minnesota's conservation delivery needs.

BWSR TTCP Coordinator Jon Sellnow, who helped develop MNC3, said making free, online training available has improved how employees learn and succeed in their roles. For example, new hires can quickly gain the foundational knowledge needed to perform their jobs and understand Minnesota's voluntary conservation framework.

"Our goal is to make high-quality conservation training accessible anytime, anywhere — so employees can build the skills they need on their own schedule and apply them confidently in the field," Sellnow said. "With MNC3, staff are able to create an account and start training on their first day on the job."

Voigt said because all modules are recorded, the program doesn't rely on trainers' availability.

"In recent years, there have been fewer trainers available statewide," Voigt said. "This has made the MNC3 trainings more important than ever to ensure consistent, up-to-date knowledge reaches conservation professionals, no matter where they are."

To take the training modules, create a free account on the [MNC3 website](#).

BWSR staff members write and produce Snapshots, a monthly newsletter highlighting the work of the agency and its partners.