

## Planning Guidebook

### Plan Amendments Overview

To be useful and relevant over their life span, plans need to be amended from time to time. There are different processes for amending different types of plans (as described in statute, rule or policy). However, many best practices and the considerations for amending a plan are similar regardless of plan type.

This document offers a general discussion about amendments as part of regular plan maintenance and generally applies to all types of water plans. See the summary table at the end of the document for plan types, available amendments (minor, regular, plan renewal), and statute references. Procedures and other specific information for most plan types will be described in separate documents.

### Why Should You Amend a Plan?

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Water plans are developed with robust public engagement to ensure that local natural resource managers address resource needs and local values. By integrating scientific data, community perspectives, and best practices, plans enable local governments to demonstrate to residents and other levels of government that proposed actions and expenditures are necessary, planned, and supported by public input.

Plans typically have a 10-year life span. While most natural resource issues will likely be present beyond the 10-year planning cycle, the realities of implementation (e.g., funding availability, social and political conditions, local capacity) can shift significantly in a 10-year time period. New data or issues will also emerge during the plan's life.

Regular review and, if necessary, amendment of the plan ensures that it remains relevant and effective in addressing emerging challenges and opportunities. Amendments allow natural resource managers to incorporate new information, public feedback, and innovative practices, while ensuring that the plan continues to reflect community priorities. This flexibility is essential for maintaining public trust and achieving long-term natural resource protection and restoration goals.

Specific reasons for amending a plan may include:

- To address a specific resource need or priority that was not included in the plan.
- To adjust the implementation program/schedule by adding a new project or removing one that is no longer feasible.
- To refine plan goals following an assessment of implementation progress.
- To incorporate new data or societal/political/economic change that warrants a shift in priorities or actions.
- To refine overall plan organization or utility. Some examples: consolidating or refining issue statements and associated goals; rewriting goals and metrics to improve measurability; and clarifying priority areas.

# When Should You Amend a Plan?

**Timing.** Regular and minor amendments can happen at any time. Timing for amendments will depend on the specific driver for the amendment, the type of amendment, timing of plan assessments and availability of new data, and the expiration date of the plan.

**Plan Evaluations.** Periodically reviewing implementation progress is an important adaptive management approach. BWSR recommends periodic evaluation of plan implementation for all plan types. An evaluation should look at progress toward the stated plan goals as well as new information that’s become available since the plan was last reviewed. A plan amendment may be needed based on the results.

## Minor Amendment or Regular Amendment?

Depending on the scope and implications of the amendment, plan type, and other factors, a minor amendment process may be available. The minor amendment, unlike other amendment types, offers a streamlined process that is administered by BWSR staff and does not require approval by the BWSR Board. See the summary on the last page for the plan types that allow a minor amendment.

The minor amendment process is intended to allow for plans to be easily amended, particularly when the reason for and content of the amendment is supported by local partners and plan review authorities. On the other hand, the regular amendment ensures more robust public engagement in situations where there is a significant fiscal or regulatory impact or change to plan priorities or goals.

Two important considerations are **whether the local government or partnership has done their due diligence in reaching out to potentially interested and affected parties** and **whether the amendment has the potential to be controversial**. Depending on the source and nature of any objections, BWSR will work with the local government or partnership to determine whether a minor amendment can proceed.

BWSR staff must agree with the local government or partnership that the amendment can proceed as a minor amendment. Below are some common questions BWSR considers when determining whether the minor amendment process can be used:

**Table 1: Common questions for distinguishing between minor and regular amendments.**

Question	Amendment Type	Notes
Are the overall plan <b>priorities or goals</b> changing?	If yes: Regular If no: Minor	This refers to a shift away from an existing priority or goal and toward one that has not been previously discussed. Re-configuring or consolidating priority issues, areas, or goals could be a minor amendment.
Will the amendment have a <b>significant fiscal impact</b> ?	If yes: Regular If no: Minor	If the amendment is associated with creating a new funding mechanism (e.g., water management district) or a new program that would have significant implications for local

		funding or taxing, the regular amendment process must be used.
Will the amendment support a significant change to or creation of a <b>regulatory program</b> ?	If yes: Regular If no: Minor	<p>If the plan amendment is needed to justify creating or significantly changing a regulatory program, the regular amendment process must be used.</p> <p>A minor amendment can be used to ensure the plan is up to date with the most current regulatory aspects in situations where changes to regulatory programs don't trigger a (regular) amendment.</p>
Does the amendment create a <b>new program or direction</b> ?	If yes: Regular If no: Minor	If the amendment modifies an existing program or creates a new program without fiscal impacts to implement an existing plan goal, it can be minor. If the amendment takes the plan in a direction not previously discussed, it is regular.
Is the amendment <b>adding one or more projects</b> to achieve existing goals?	If yes: Minor	Adding projects or other implementation actions is an appropriate use of the minor amendment process. If the funding mechanism is in place (e.g., ad valorem levy) even a project with a high price tag could be a minor amendment (see above re: due diligence).

## Documenting Plan Changes

It is useful to clearly document plan changes to ensure the most recent version of the plan is easily identifiable. This documentation should be in a prominent location. For example, on the cover or inside the cover, on the page(s) where the amendment was made, or in a summary table (appendix). Information could include:

- Date approved\* by the BWSR Board
- Dates of amendments\*
- Plan adoption date
- Plan expiration date

When plans are submitted to BWSR for approval, they may contain “placeholders” for this information with the understanding that the dates would be filled in after state approval and local adoption (when applicable). Plans that say “draft for BWSR review” should be marked “final” or “approved” with the relevant dates before printing or posting online (the final plan document should not say “draft for BWSR review/approval”).

\*this information should also be on the website(s) where the plan is housed.

## Quick Reference: Policies for Amendments

The following table summarizes plan life span, types of amendments and statutory / policy references (where applicable).

### Summary of amendment types by plan type

Plan Type, Enabling Statute, and Life Span	Amendment Types	Amendment Policy
<b>Comprehensive plan (SWCD)</b> <a href="#">§103C.331</a> up to 10 years	Regular	These plans are optional. No specific requirements for amendments are listed in statute.
	Plan Update	
<b>Comprehensive watershed management plan (1W1P)</b> <a href="#">§103B.801</a> 10 years	Minor	One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures, section IV.F
	Regular	The Operating Procedures are Board adopted policy; See M.S. 103B.101 Subd 14
	Plan Renewal	
<b>County groundwater plan</b> <a href="#">§103B.255</a> 5 to 10 years	Regular	103B.255 Subd 12
	Plan Update	
<b>Metro watershed management plan</b> <a href="#">§103B.231</a> and <a href="#">M.R. 8410</a> 5 to 10 years	Minor	M.R. 8410.0140
	Regular	103B.231 Subd 7-11
	Plan Update	
<b>Watershed management plan</b> <a href="#">§103D.401</a> 10 years	Minor	103D.401, Subd 7
	Regular	
	Revised Plan	103D.401, Subds 2-4, 6