

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH
LOWER-LEVEL BOARD ROOM
ST. PAUL, MN 55155
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2026**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Eunice Biel, Jayne Hager Dee, Jill Crafton, Joe Collins, Kevin Paap, Kevin Wilson, LeRoy Ose, Lori Cox, Mark Zabel, Mike Runk, Neil Peterson, Paul Fish, Ron Staples, Ted Winter, Todd Holman, Sarah Strommen, DNR; Joel Larson, University of Minnesota Extension; Melissa Lewis, MPCA; Steve Robertson, MDH; Brad Jordahl Redlin, MDA

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

John Jaschke, Rachel Mueller, Tom Gile, Travis Germundson, Craig Engwall, Marcey Westrick, Gretchen Asuncion, Laruen Peterman, Josh Norman, Melanie Bomier, Mandy Duong, Denise Lauerman, Mike Nelson, Jenny Gieseke

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brian Martinson, AMC; Jan Voit, Minnesota Watersheds; Allison Kletscher, Brown County; Robert Santaella, Brown County; Greg Williams, Valley Branch Watershed District; John Hanson, Valley Branch Watershed District; Michael Miller, Steven Nyhus

Chair Todd Holman called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

26-29 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA - Moved by Mark Zabel, seconded by Joe Collins, to adopt the agenda as presented. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

26-30 **MINUTES OF MAY 27, 2026 BOARD MEETING – Moved by Kevin Paap, seconded by Ron Staples, to approve the minutes of May 27, 2026, as circulated. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

PUBLIC ACCESS FORUM

No members of the public provided comments to the board.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Marcey Westrick introduced Gretchen Asuncion, OAS Senior. Jenny Gieseke introduced Lauren Peterman, OAS Senior.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

Chair Holman read the statement:

“A conflict of interest, whether actual, potential, or perceived, occurs when someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests, and these competing interests make it difficult to fulfill professional duties impartially. At this time, members are requested to declare conflicts of interest they may have regarding today’s business. Any member who declares an actual conflict of interest must not vote on that agenda item. All actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest will be announced to the board by members or staff before any vote.”

REPORTS

Chair & Administrative Advisory Committee – Chair Todd Holman reported Lori Cox was not reappointed to the BWSR Board and thanked her for her service; LeRoy Ose has been reappointed for another term. Chair Holman reported he attended the Environmental Quality Board meeting last week.

Executive Director’s Report – John Jaschke reported the Clean Water Council, the Outdoor Heritage Council and the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources are holding their public meetings to vet various ideas and proposals that will be submitted to the legislature for recommendations ahead. Local governments are also having area meetings over the summer to develop resolutions. Stated they will be putting together Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposals. Most Tribal Governments had their elections in the last couple months and will engage with new leadership if needed. Will be meeting with Bois Forte and Fond du Lac in the upcoming months.

Reviewed the Day of Packet that included a completed version of the Projects and Practices Grants Program Recommendations, the Drainage Work Group handouts, and Snapshot articles. Noted there will be committee updates sent out.

Jayne Hager Dee stated the Snapshot article on Classroom Conservation is from Two Rivers High School where they put in a bio retention pond. Since then, the same school district is now working on native and pollinator gardens. Jill Crafton stated students are doing this in other districts too.

Chair Holman asked if John could follow-up with information on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) if he learns anything more. John stated Colton Buckley is now in the NRCS Chief role and will follow up with information.

Lori Cox attached the following RCPP link in the chat: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/regional-conservation-partnership-program/news/usda-invests-up-to-310-million>.

Audit and Oversight Committee – Joe Collins reported they have not met.

Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report – Travis Germundson reported one new appeal has been filed bringing the total number of appeals to 13.

File 26-10 is an appeal of a restoration order for a property located in Morrison County. The restoration regards the unauthorized wetland impacts associated placement of fill adjacent to Platte Lake. The petitioner intends to conduct an onsite survey and investigation with a consultant. No decision has been made on the appeal.

Travis was notified that the decision made by the board last month regarding a WCA appeal for the property located in Morrison County has been appealed to the Court of Appeals for judicial review.

File 25-10 is an appeal of a WCA notice for a decision on a property located in Brown County that is up for a Board decision later in the agenda.

Grants Program & Policy Committee – Mark Zabel reported they have a couple items on the agenda for today. Stated they will meet again before the August board meeting.

RIM Reserve Committee – Jayne Hager Dee reported they have not met.

Water Management & Strategic Planning Committee – Joe Collins reported they met on June 1st to begin preliminary discussions regarding comprehensive plan requirements.

Wetland Conservation Committee – Jill Crafton reported they will be scheduling a meeting the first week of August.

Buffers, Soils & Drainage Committee – LeRoy Ose reported they have not met and will likely meet in August.

Drainage Work Group (DWG) – Neil Peterson reported they met June 11th but was unable to attend the meeting. Tom Gile reported they initiated a couple updates and overviews from the legislative session on a number of different topics. There is some work going on with the Plumbing Board that has the attention of some members of the work group and will stay up to date as things progress. Tom stated they worked through their prioritization list of topics for the year. It includes potentially exploring an abandonment process that is being brought forward with some concepts from St. Louis County and some of the northeastern counties.

Paul Fish asked if Tom could elaborate about St. Louis County. Tom stated they had a drainage repair project petitioned a few years ago and were missing some of the original construction plans and had to go through a little effort to document where the system was. They also needed to do a redetermination of benefits to ensure that people were paying into the system appropriately. As they worked through

that process, the cost to do the repair exceeded what was in the system for benefits. The drainage law ended up preventing them from being able to move forward with the repair that was proposed as the cost benefits exceeded the benefits of a project. St. Louis County is interested in exploring ways to navigate that sort of abandonment process.

AGENCY REPORTS

Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Brad Jordahl Redlin reported a press release was given on the Minnesota Ag Weather Network development. Applications for the Soil Health Financial Assistant Program will be opening in August.

Jill Crafton asked about electrical machinery available for farmers. Brad stated through the Climate Smart Food Systems, dollars from the EPA through the MPCA provide financial support for electrical farm equipment to management farming operations.

Mark Zabel asked when the Soil Health Financial Assistant program will start. Brad stated it will start August 1st.

Chair Holman stated if Brad or Commissioner Peterson have any information on RCPP it would be good to collaboratively know where everything is.

Minnesota Department of Health – Steve Robertson reported next week the Health Risk Assessment Group will be meeting to consider nominations for the development of new health based guidance information. New guidance on arsenic will be available in July.

There was a special meeting of the Plumbing Board to consider the revisions to Chapter 15. The planning board decided to pause rulemaking and will meet again in July. Steve stated the Health Department's role is to identify health risks but not to oppose any use of sources for water reuse. They strongly support stormwater reuse.

Joe Collins clarified that what was being proposed is that you cannot use stormwater as an alternative water source. Watershed Districts are concerned about not having the use of stormwater to irrigate land. Steve stated the subject of the considerations by the committee addresses multiple different kinds of alternative sources. Concern has been around.

Jill Crafton provided examples for stormwater reuse and hopes the Department of Health is open to good ideas and helps support in a reasonable approach. Steve stated the examples Jill provided are great examples of appropriate risk management and they would be supportive of those to manage the risk as they understand it.

Steve will be retiring in early August; this will be his last meeting. Board Members congratulated Steve and thanked him for his service.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Sarah Strommen reported last week they had the Mississippi Headwaters and the Missouri Big Sioux Watersheds move into the drought warning phase; the rest of the state is in a drought watch phase. Earlier this month they rolled out their new electronic hunting and fishing licensing system.

Minnesota Extension – Joel Larson reported an Irrigation and Nutrient Management Field Day will be held at the Sand Plain Research Farm on July 9th. Field school for Ag Professionals will be at the St. Paul

campus July 29th and 30th. A Strip-Till Expo is being held at their Southwest Research and Outreach Center in Lamberton on September 9th. The Water Resource Conference will be October 13th and 14th at the Saint Paul RiverCenter.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Melissa Lewis reported an EIS is not being required for West River Dairy, and their permit was issued yesterday. Melissa thanked Steve Robertson for the background information on the Plumbing Board and stated agencies don't have special influence over the Board. The *We are Water* exhibit has moved from Capitol Region Watershed District to Itasca State Park. Stated the MPCA has an app available to receive air quality alerts.

ADVISORY COMMENTS

Association of Minnesota Counties – Brian Martinson reported they posted their District Meetings and were able to visit with District Members about what's important to them. They hosted a spring meeting for their Planning and Zoning Administrators. One of the hot topics at the meeting was Data Centers, particularly when talking about land use and local resources. CWC and legacy groups are looking at budgeting for the next biennium. DWG is an open group that is heard by all.

Paul Fish asked if counties are supportive of the Data Centers. Brian stated counties are asking questions about what they need to know and what they should be concerned about.

Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees – No report was provided.

Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts – No report was provided.

Minnesota Association of Townships – Eunice Biel reported they are getting election judges ready for the primary election. In August they will have 13 district meetings throughout the state to go over any concerns. They held two in-person sold out sessions on CTAS, which is the City and Town Accounting System. On October 5th they will hold a Town Hall Review Event that will focus on complex areas of township governance and operations.

Paul Fish asked if there will be training for the upcoming elections. Eunice stated they will have three hour long sessions along with sessions for the head judge.

Minnesota Watersheds – Jan Voit reported she shared her DWG notes with Tom Gile from last year's committee meetings due to some technical difficulties they had. Jan attended the Clean Water Council Public Input meeting. She also attended the Plumbing Board meeting. Registration is live for the summer tour, and they are finalizing the route.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – No report was provided.

Chair Holman called a recess at 10:17 a.m. and reconvened at 10:28 a.m.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Central Region Committee

Valley Branch Watershed District 2026-2035 Watershed Management Plan – Josh Norman presented the Valley Branch Watershed District 2026-2035 Watershed Management Plan.

Background

The Valley Branch Watershed District (VBWD) is located mostly within central Washington County with a small portion extending into Ramsey County in the eastern Twin Cities metropolitan area (metro). Its 70 square mile jurisdiction includes the entire drainage area of Valley Creek and covers portions of 15 cities and townships. VBWD is bounded by South Washington Watershed District to the south, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District to the west, Rice Creek and Browns Creek Watershed Districts to the north, and the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization and the St. Croix River to the east, the latter of which the entire VBWD drains to. Land use is developing steadily, with the majority (>25%) of the VBWD being classified as residential, and that number is expected to rise in the coming decades with anticipated population growth, putting increased pressure on the water resources within the watershed. With 11 DNR public waterbody-designated lakes, two trout streams, and public lands like the Lake Elmo Regional Park Reserve and a portion of Afton State Park boasting many recreational opportunities to residents and visitors, the VBWD is a uniquely positioned watershed in the metro.

Plan Process and Highlights

On March 3, 2023, the VBWD sent notification of initiation of the planning process for the development of the 2026-2035 Watershed Management Plan (Plan) to the plan review agencies and other parties as required by MR 8410, and solicited each agency's priority issues, summaries of relevant water management goals, and water re-source information. An initial planning meeting/public kickoff event was hosted by the Board of Managers on December 12, 2023. The VBWD convened a Technical Advisory Committee that included the plan review authorities and other governmental units within the watershed that met on December 13, 2024, and June 25, 2025. VBWD continued to solicit input on the draft Plan from relevant stakeholders up to and during the release of the 60-day draft Plan in November of 2025.

VBWD organized goals and implementation activities into six broad prioritized resource-based issue categories (in order from highest to lowest priority):

1. Surface water quality
2. Water quantity, flood risk, and climate resiliency
3. Stormwater management
4. Groundwater
5. Wetlands
6. Uplands/natural areas

Each goal included associated district tools to address specific issues. The newest iteration of this Plan is largely shaped from past accomplishments and progress toward meeting continuing goals. Plan priorities are mostly similar to those in the 2015 Plan. Water quality across the watershed remains stable in many basins but are still degraded in others. There are many properties with elevated flood risks due to prolonged wet conditions, underscoring the need for climate resiliency efforts in the watershed. There are planned studies that are aimed at understanding emerging issues such as chloride and climate resiliency and to identify areas for improvement. Several proposed water quality and quantity projects, such as a restoration of the main stem of Valley Creek and a landlocked basin flood risk reduction (acquisition/floodproofing), could greatly move the needle toward meeting goals if funding becomes available. Continuation of monitoring, inter-agency coordination, small scale BMP cost-share, and regulation will continue the success the VBWD has consistently achieved over the years.

Mike Runk supports their plan.

Jill Crafton appreciated agency comments and inquiries.

John Hanson, Valley Branch Watershed District, appreciates the comments that the state agencies and various partners made throughout the process.

26-31 Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Valley Branch Watershed District 2026-2035 Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Grants Program and Policy Committee

FY26 and FY27 Lake Superior Basin Implementation Grants – Melanie Bomier presented the FY26 and FY27 Lake Superior Basin Implementation Grants.

The Clean Water Council (CWC) FY26-27 Clean Water Fund and Policy recommendations recommended funding to support SWCD capacity in Lake Superior Basin in order to seek out and implement matching Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funds and other federal funds in an amount of \$1 million to be formula distributed to North St. Louis SWCD, South St. Louis SWCD, Cook SWCD, Lake SWCD, and Carlton SWCD. The legislature appropriated \$500,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$500,000 in fiscal year 2027. This agenda item is to allocate funds consistent with the Clean Water Council recommendations and Legislative appropriation.

Jill Crafton asked if we could add ecosystem based criteria for restoring water quality language someplace. Director Jaschke stated we could incorporate it into the grant agreement.

Ted Winter asked how many miles of lakeshore we have on Lake Superior Minnesota. Melanie stated she does not have that number but could look it up. Other Board Members thought it was 147 miles.

Paul Fish thinks it's a great step to keep moving forward with Lake Superior.

26-32 Moved by Paul Fish, seconded by Ted Winter, to approve the FY26 and FY27 Lake Superior Basin Implementation Grants. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

FY 2027 Clean Water Fund Projects and Practices Grants Program Recommendations – Marcey Westrick presented the FY 2027 Clean Water Fund Projects and Practices Grants Program Recommendations.

On January 28, 2026 the Board adopted Board Order #26-05 which authorized staff to conduct a request for proposals from eligible local governments for the fiscal year 2027 Clean Water Fund Projects and Practices Grant Program. Applications for the FY2027 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants were accepted from February 11 through March 25, 2026. Local governments submitted 34 eligible applications requesting \$11,621,782 in Clean Water Funds. BWSR staff conducted multiple processes to review and score applications and involved staff from other agencies to develop the proposed recommendations for grant awards per the attached board order.

26-33 Moved by Jill Crafton, seconded by Mike Runk, to approve FY 2027 Clean Water Fund Projects and Practices Grants Program Recommendations. Motion passed on a roll call vote.

Dispute Resolution Compliance Committee

WCA Appeal (File 25-10) of an Exemption and No-Loss Decision, Brown County – Kevin Wilson and Travis Germundson presented WCA Appeal (File 25-10) of an Exemption and No-Loss Decision, Brown County.

The appeal was filed with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) on August 29, 2025, by the Appellant challenging a WCA Notice of Decision issued by the County regarding property known as Shirley's Park and Country Retreat. The appeal contests the County's August 1, 2025 decision denying the after-the fact exemption and no-loss application submitted following the issuance of a restoration order. The Appellant and the County had previously entered into a settlement agreement addressing earlier wetland impacts and wetlands located on the property. Subsequent alterations on the site resulted in issuance of a restoration order on April 23, 2025 and submission of an after-the-fact application. The record indicates that unauthorized wetland impacts occurred in connection with the development of the property.

In its August 1, 2025 decision, the County concluded that the Appellant's application did not qualify for an exemption/no-loss. The County found that the purpose of the project was the construction and operation of a commercial campground and that the wetland impacts were not the result of agricultural activities.

The Appellant argues that the County's decision was erroneous, and the actives qualify for an exemption. Specifically, the Appellant asserts eligibility for the agricultural activities exemption under Minn. Stat. 103G.2241 Subd. 1 (1) and Minn. Rule 8420.0420 Subp 2(A). The Appellant contends that the property meets the definition of agricultural land and that, to qualify for the exemption, wetland impacts need not be directly associated with agricultural activities or remain in agricultural use. The Appellant also requests authorization to supplement the record with additional evidence in the form of a wetland hydrology assessment.

The County argues that the principal use of the property is a campground for recreational vehicles and that the wetland impacts were directly related to the construction and operation of a commercial campground rather than agricultural activities. Accordingly, the County maintains that the wetland impacts do not qualify for the agricultural exemption. The County further argues that a wetland boundary cannot be challenged through an appeal of no-loss or exemption decision and instead must be addressed through a separate application process. Finally, the County contends that BWSR should not consider additional evidence that was not part of the record when the County rendered its decision.

The Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) heard oral arguments from the parties during a public hearing held at the Central Office on May 8, 2026. After reviewing the record, written briefs, and oral arguments, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend affirming the Brown County's decision, thereby denying the appeal.

The DRC also denied the Appellant's request to supplement the record with additional evidence. The Committee determined that additional information was generated after the County issued its decision and that consideration of the information would require a separate application process.

Additional details and the rationale supporting the recommendation are provided in the Board Order. The DRC recommends that the BWSR Board approve the attached Order.

Mark Zabel asked if we could see this item again. Travis stated this could be brought forward through the Court of Appeals.

26-34 Moved by Kevin Wilson, seconded by Jayne Hager Dee, to approve the WCA Appeal (File 25-10) of an Exemption and No-Loss Decision, Brown County. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

NEW BUSINESS

Bridging Conservation RFP Update – Mandy Duong presented the Bridging Conservation RFP Update.

The purpose of the Bridging Conservation program is to create new or expand existing outreach and education pro-grams to non-native English-speaking communities about conservation. Administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), this program provides funding to partners in engaging with non-native English-speaking communities.

During this Request for Proposals (RFP) period, a total of eighteen applications were submitted by NGO/nonprofits, watershed management organizations, cities, counties, and soil and water conservation districts by the close of the RFP date of April 2, 2026. These requests totaled \$614,512, exceeding the available funding of \$135,000. This allowed three grants to be awarded and one grant to be partially awarded.

Jill Crafton asked where Lyndale neighborhood is located. Mandy stated it's in Minneapolis.

Steve Robertson asked if there has been any interest in this program in other parts of the state besides the metro area. Mandy stated there were applications from other parts of the state but primarily in the surrounding metro area.

Paul Fish asked with the presence of ice if people are hesitant to participate. Mandy hasn't heard much about the relationship between ice presence and participation in the program.

Lori Cox wanted to highlight that the good part of this program is to ensure that everyone has accessibility to these types of programs, regardless of where they live but that they understand what conservation is.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Next BWSR Meeting is scheduled for 9:00 AM, August 27, 2026, in Detroit Lakes and by MS Teams.

Todd Holman thanked Lori Cox for her service on the Board. Lori thanked Board Members.

Chair Holman adjourned the meeting at 11:24 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Todd Holman
Chair