

BWSR seeks to boost climate resiliency in community spaces



The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is working with state and local partners to develop a project that aims to increase biodiversity and landscape resiliency in community spaces such as public parks and schools.

The primary goal of the Biodiverse and Resilient Community Spaces project is to produce a climate resiliency and biodiversity planning guide that local governments and residents can apply to their unique landscapes to both protect and enhance biodiversity in community spaces. The guide will outline six key aspects of landscape resiliency, defined as the ability of landscapes to withstand and

recover from climate impacts: community engagement, human health, plant diversity, pollinator and wildlife health, soil health and water resource protection.

“Summer droughts, extreme precipitation, invasive species, loss of biodiversity, and other impacts are stressing our landscapes and decreasing their ability to protect water resources and other important functions,” said Dan Shaw, BWSR senior ecologist and vegetation specialist, who is leading project development. “Many communities across Minnesota are asking what can be done to increase landscape resiliency, and this project aims to answer those questions by exploring innovative strategies



for native plant restoration, soil health practices, use of biochar and other emerging approaches.”

An advisory team will assist with developing the guide. Advisory team members include representatives from BWSR, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Minnesota Department of Health, the University of Minnesota, the Metropolitan Council, Great River Greening,

Local residents visited a community rain garden in White Bear Lake in September 2025. The project was implemented as part of a Pollinator Pathways grant from BWSR. BWSR’s developing Biodiverse and Resilient Community Spaces project will support similar projects in public spaces such as schools, parks and neighborhood boulevards.

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“ This project will help Minnesota take positive steps toward building resiliency in community spaces, strengthening partnerships, and building a foundation of knowledge and experience to benefit a wide range of landscapes. Community conservation has a big role to play in solving climate related challenges. ”



— Dan Shaw, BWSR senior ecologist and vegetation specialist

Metro Blooms and the Audubon Upper Mississippi River. The guide will build on existing community conservation resources such as the MPCA’s [Minnesota Stormwater Manual](#), the MPCA’s [GreenStep Cities and Tribal Nations program](#), BWSR’s [Habitat Friendly Solar and Ecological Health](#) assessment forms, BWSR’s [Pollinator and Biodiversity Toolbox](#) and more.

The project is funded by a \$612,000 appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) approved by the legislature earlier this year. Funding from the ENRTF comes from Minnesota State Lottery proceeds and is overseen by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

The advisory team is currently reviewing applications for study sites. Four community spaces with different site conditions and climate challenges will be selected to test the guide. Local organizations were eligible to apply for these study site projects, and applications are currently being reviewed by the advisory team.

Study sites will incorporate several different project types based on site conditions. These may include prairie plantings, climate-adapted woodland groves, food forests, pollinator plots, turf alternatives, soil health practices, shoreline protections or sustainable lawn care practices.

“We’re looking for test projects that will allow us to

try out innovative strategies, track project benefits over time, and bring a variety of community partners together to learn about resiliency strategies,” Shaw said.

The ENRTF appropriation will also be used to support several on-site trainings for community members in 2028 at study sites where work has been completed. Two webinars will also be held to summarize the new planning guide and test project outcomes.

The project will also provide technical assistance to 15 communities such as municipalities, park districts, school districts, and Tribes across the state. Along with BWSR staff, nonprofit partners Great River Greening, Metro Blooms and Audubon

Upper Mississippi River will play a key role in working with these communities. Interested communities should contact Dan Shaw at dan.shaw@state.mn.us.

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Learn more about BWSR’s [Community Conservation work](#).

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