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Board of Water and Soil Resources — Agency Profile

https://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/

AT A GLANCE

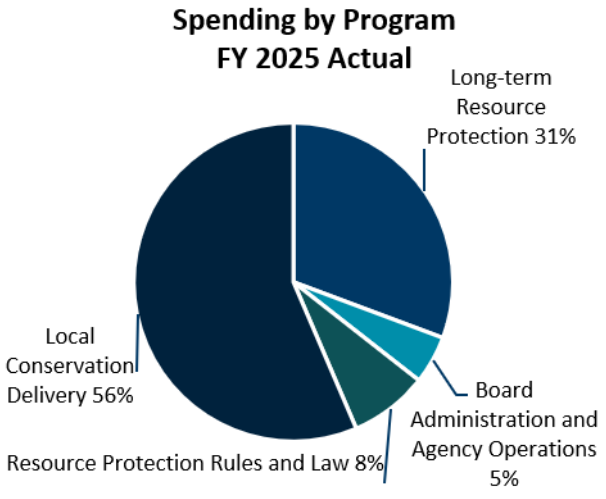
- Small agency of conservation professionals
- Local conservation delivery system
- Governing board of local officials, citizens, and agency partners
- Focus on conservation of private lands (more than 75 percent of Minnesota)
- Transition to comprehensive watershed plans (60 plans in total); since 2014:
  - 57 approved One Watershed, One Plan plans
  - 3 One Watershed, One Plan plans in progress
- Collaborative model for results since 1987 including:
  - Over 66,000 conservation practices installed
  - 8,950 easements funded
  - Over 21,000 wetland credits deposited into the state's wetland bank
- 238 local government accountability assessments completed annually

PURPOSE

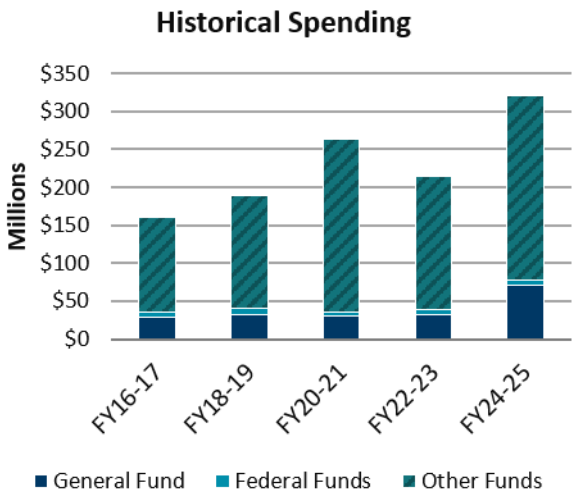
The Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR's) mission is to work with partners to improve and protect Minnesota's land and water resources. The agency does this by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners, and has a unique business model that is designed to:

- Operate as an efficient state-level source of technical and financial assistance to the local government delivery system
- Target implementation of conservation practices and projects that support local goals and meet state objectives
- Focus on Minnesota's private lands

BUDGET



Source: Budget Planning & Analysis System (BPAS)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

Funding for agency operations and conservation activities comes from a mix of state and federal funds. The Clean Water Fund (CWF) and Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) make up the majority of BWSR's budget. The other funds category is made up of these two legacy funds in addition to transfers from other agencies, the environment and natural resources trust fund, and special revenue funds.

The large majority (77 percent) of BWSR's budget is distributed to local governments and landowners for conservation programs, projects, and easements. The remaining 23 percent is retained for agency programs and agency operations, of which personnel is the largest expenditure.

STRATEGIES

BWSR's mission is implemented through the following core approaches:

- Ensure full support for BWSR programs, services, and operations
- Ensure broad financial support for locally-led conservation efforts
- Build local capacity to successfully implement BWSR programs
- Strengthen and sustain partnerships
- Increase implementation of conservation practices statewide
- Advance conservation through voluntary and regulatory programs
- Provide a high-performing, rewarding, and inclusive workplace

BWSR accomplishes its mission through these key functions:

- Developing programs that address priority state and local resource concerns (such as keeping water on the land, maintaining healthy soils, reducing pollutants in ground and surface water, assuring biological diversity, and reducing flood potential)
- Participating in statewide coordinated efforts to implement Minnesota's Climate Action Framework
- Prioritizing on-the-ground conservation projects in the best locations to achieve multiple benefits and measurable improvements to water and habitat resources
- Ensuring compliance with environmental laws, rules, and regulations including the Wetland Conservation Act, Riparian "Buffer" Law, and the Local Government Roads Wetlands Replacement Program
- Implementing agency operations through board and administrative leadership, internal business systems, planning and effectiveness evaluation, and operational support, including the board and board management, financial and accounting services, legislative and public relations, communications, and human resources

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The legal authority for the Board of Water and Soil Resources comes from the following Minnesota Statutes:

M.S. 103A www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103A
M.S. 103B www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103B
M.S. 103C www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103C
M.S. 103D www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103D
M.S. 103E www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103E
M.S. 103F www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103F
M.S. 103G www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103G

Program: Local Conservation Delivery

https://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/

AT A GLANCE

- 57 approved One Watershed, One Plan plans, 3 plans in process
- 90 Conservation Delivery grants issued in FY26, totaling $6.5 million
- 18 Clean Water Fund (CWF) Projects and Practices grants, totaling $6.6 million, issued in FY26
- $83.5 million in grants for watershed-based implementation funding in FY26-27
- Delivered conservation programs through local governments, in cooperation with private landowners
- Implemented high-priority erosion control, native buffers, feedlot, and weed management projects

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The goal of this program is to meet state objectives for clean water, productive soil, abundant fish and wildlife habitat, and to maintain local capacity to protect and enhance Minnesota's water and soil resources via state partnerships with local governments. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) works to achieve this goal by implementing targeted projects and practices on private lands to prevent soil erosion and to prevent pollution from entering surface and ground water. BWSR ensures adequate technical resources and capacity are in place at the local level by providing training, oversight, and accountability.

BWSR has oversight responsibilities to ensure that local water plans are prepared and coordinated with existing local and state efforts and that plans are implemented effectively with a focus on priority concerns, targeted response, and measurable outcomes. Projects are implemented through grants to local governments, including soil and water conservation districts, counties, cities, watershed districts, and watershed management organizations.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Conservation Projects

This program shares the cost of implementation between the state, local governments, and landowners. Grants to local governments provide funding for a variety of on-the-ground projects that address state conservation objectives. Specifically, these projects:

- **Keep water on the land:** natural hydrology restoration and runoff reduction is achieved by establishing water storage opportunities, restoring wetlands, and implementing conservation practices to prevent runoff
- **Maintain healthy soils:** healthy soils are supported through conservation tillage, cover cropping, and erosion control projects
- **Reduce pollutants in surface and ground water:** reducing pollution in sensitive ecological areas is accomplished by upgrading feedlots and subsurface sewage treatment systems
- **Ensure biological diversity:** protection of native plants and animals and their habitats is accomplished through installation of permanent native vegetation buffers and cooperative weed management programs addressing invasive species management
- **Maintain stream integrity:** healthy stream hydrology and abundant fish populations are achieved through streambank and shore stabilization

BWSR works through local government partners to ensure private landowners have access to a local, trusted natural resource professional that can help address conservation needs. BWSR provides funds to local governments for the costs of constructing conservation projects and practices in addition to the costs of project design, construction oversight, and fiscal and outcomes reporting. Eligibility for funding is contingent on a state-approved and locally adopted water management plan that links scientific information with local priorities to ensure state funds are targeted to the most critical needs. Local governments also leverage local and federal funds for these projects.

Conservation Delivery Grants

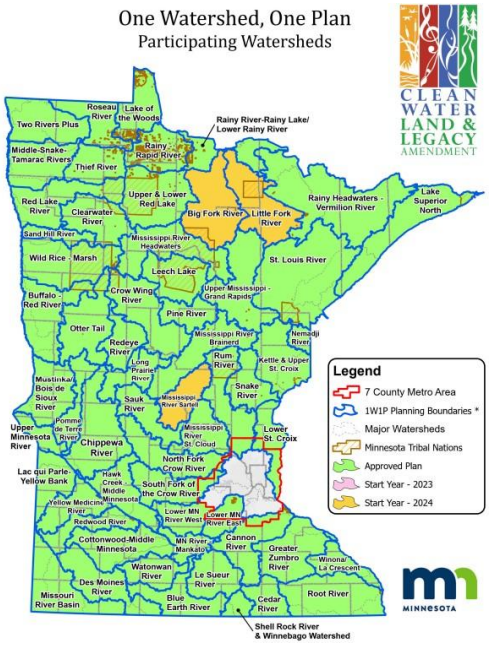
These general fund grants represent a long-standing partnership between state, local, and federal governments to provide base-level resources for operating expenses associated with the local delivery of state conservation programs by providing each soil and water conservation district (SWCD) with a certain degree of funding stability. These funds help provide shared engineering and technical assistance for SWCDs through eight regional Technical Service Areas. They also provide resources for SWCD staff to monitor Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve conservation easements to ensure compliance with those easements.

Water Management Planning

Protecting and restoring Minnesota's water resources relies on the knowledge, authorities, partnerships, commitment, and resources of state and local governments. Working with local governments on their water management plans ensures the water resources of the state will be effectively managed. Specifically, BWSR supports local government staff and boards as they develop and keep current comprehensive water management plans that address local priorities while meeting state requirements and goals. Local water plans include Comprehensive Local Water Management Plans (County Water Plans), Watershed District Watershed Management Plans, Metro Watershed Management Plans, Metro County Groundwater Management Plans, and Soil and Water Conservation Comprehensive Plans. BWSR's Board reviews and approves local water plans. Agency staff provide overall program guidance, process affiliated grants, and provide plan review and comments.

Watershed-Based Implementation

The watershed-based implementation funding model provides local governments throughout Minnesota with efficient, transparent, and stable funding. To achieve this, BWSR has been transitioning from project-by-project competitive grants to a coordinated watershed funding approach designed to increase water management outcomes, enhance accountability, and improve consistency and efficiency across the state. This approach depends on plans developed under the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) Program or the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act to provide assurance that actions are prioritized, targeted, and measurable. The efficiencies benefit both organizations and landowners by streamlining processes, shortening implementation timelines, and ensuring limited resources are spent where they are needed most. Watershed-based funding provides greater opportunities for local governments to leverage federal and private funding.



Water Quality Projects Implementation

Working through the local conservation delivery system, BWSR provides grants for local governments to execute water quality projects that are prioritized and targeted to the most critical source areas. These grants include projects and practices that protect and restore surface and drinking water, water quality-focused easements, conservation drainage, and other work that accelerates implementation. This strategic approach helps to meet locally identified water quality goals within the larger scope of Minnesota's clean water efforts, helping to meet statewide water quality goals through the prevention and reduction of non-point source pollution.

Grant Management

BWSR uses a comprehensive grant management system to track the use of state funds in the most efficient manner possible. It establishes eligibility criteria, determines grant program policies, reviews work plans, issues grant agreements, and conducts close-out reviews upon project completion. This grant management system is compliant with the policies adopted by the Department of Administration and the Office of Grants Management.

Pass-Through Grant Management

This includes general fund pass-through funding for three local water entities: Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, and the Red River Basin Commission. Area II was formed in 1978 as a non-profit organization and works to alleviate the recurrent flood problems in southwestern Minnesota—specifically in Brown, Cottonwood, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, and Yellow Medicine counties. Funding for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District is to defray the annual cost of sustaining the state, national, and international commercial and recreational navigation on the lower Minnesota River. The Red River Basin Commission works toward comprehensive and integrated natural resource planning, management, and implementation in the Red River Basin.

Climate Resiliency and Mitigation

BWSR oversees programs related to soil health practices and water storage. These programs address Minnesota's needs to accommodate changing weather patterns while continuing to protect our soil and water resources. These programs help mitigate the effects of extreme weather events by keeping soil on the land in the case of major precipitation events and reducing nutrient runoff and pollution into our waterways. BWSR has been able to utilize state funding to receive additional federal matching funds to further help implement our climate related efforts.

Habitat Enhancement and Pollinator Programming

BWSR oversees various programs that support the establishment of pollinator-friendly native plantings, including individual support grants to residents, incentives to largescale energy production and distribution systems such as solar and wind farms that host native plant plots, and grants for larger-scale projects that create large corridors of pollinator-friendly native plantings. Beyond funding, these programs also provide technical assistance, expertise, and public resources in pollinator-friendly gardening options.

Performance Review and Assistance Program

This program aims to ensure that SWCDs have a base level of capacity to address water and soil resource concerns. Since 2007, BWSR has been methodically assessing the performance of the local units of government that constitute Minnesota's delivery system for conservation of water and soils resources through the Performance Review and Assistance Program.

RESULTS

Part A: Performance Data

The measures in the table below represent BWSR's three key goals of this budget program: to reduce water pollutants to improve water quality, build pollinator habitat corridors and structure across all types of Minnesota landscapes, and to deliver services that build trust in government. Specifically, projects funded under this program contribute toward meeting the state's pollution reduction goals for sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen. It is important that landowners have access to a trusted local resource that is responsive to conservation needs. Experience and research support the notion that landowners trust local government more than state government and, therefore, are more likely to engage in a conservation activity if they have access to a valued and credible resource within their local community. For example, data from a December 2023 Pew survey shows that trust in local government has largely been stable around 61 percent, while trust in state and federal government has shown considerably more variation, with the most recent level at 50 percent trusting in state government, and 22 percent trusting in the federal government.

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
SWCDs meeting basic performance and accountability requirement	Quality	2025 Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) Annual Report*	97% in 2024	98% in 2025
Number of overdue water plans	Quality	2025 Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) Annual Report*	1 in 2024	1 in 2025
Pollinator habitat created	Result	2026 BWSR Pollinator Plan**	4.3 million square feet in 2024	Over 20 million square feet in 2026
Pollinator habitat training and education	Result	2026 BWSR Pollinator Plan**	New measure	20,000 residents
Pollinator habitat volunteer coaches	Results	2026 BWSR Pollinator Plan**	New measure	435 volunteer coaches in 50 counties

Part B: Evidence of Effectiveness

BWSR works in coordination and collaboration with other state agencies, local governments, and others to implement practices that improve our water and soil resources.

Local conservation delivery is grounded in scientific studies, often including randomized control and quasi-experimental design methods. However, specific evidence-based practices have not been inventoried for the program.

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* https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2026-01/2025%20Legislative%20Report%20Final_AC.pdf
BWSR 2025 Performance Review and Assistance Program Report to Minnesota Legislature.
**https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2026-03/2025%20Revised%20Pollinator%20Plan%203-11-26%20Accessible.pdf BWSR 2026 Pollinator Plan

The legal authority for Land and Water Conservation projects comes from Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 103B.104 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103B); Chapter 103B.105 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103B.105), Chapter 103B.106 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103B.106); Chapter 103C.501 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=103C.501); Chapter 103F.05 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103F.05); Chapter 103F.06 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103F.06); and Minnesota Administrative Rules, Chapter 8400 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=8400).

Program: Resource Protection Rules and Laws

https://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/

AT A GLANCE

- Assists and oversees the implementation of state laws by local governments, including rules concerning the Wetland Conservation Act, shoreland management, drainage law, subsurface sewage treatment systems, and riparian protection

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The Resource Protection Rules and Laws program supports state and local implementation of and compliance with environmental protection laws, rules, and regulations such as the Wetland Conservation Act, drainage law, and riparian protection.

Local implementation of state laws and resource management programs allows for regulation to occur in close proximity to the program activity and is more efficient and effective than state implementation alone. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) provides important coordination, program development, implementation assistance, and oversight to ensure that local governments have current knowledge as well as financial and staff capacity to properly implement state programs.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Oversight of the Wetland Conservation Act

The purpose of Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) is to retain the benefits and prevent the net loss of wetlands. WCA requires anyone proposing to drain, fill, or excavate a wetland first to try to avoid disturbing the wetland; second, to try to minimize any impact on the wetland; and, finally, to replace any lost wetland acres, functions, and values. Cities, counties, watershed management organizations, soil and water conservation districts, and townships implement the act locally; BWSR administers the act statewide, and it is enforced by the Department of Natural Resources.

BWSR supports local implementation of WCA by providing:

- Technical and administrative assistance
- Oversight through project review and annual reporting
- Administering the state wetland banking system; approving applications and managing credit accounting
- Providing an appeals process when disputes occur regarding local decisions
- Managing state wetland conservation requirements where overlap occurs with federal wetlands regulations
- Developing and implementing Rules for statewide wetland conservation laws

Natural Resources Block Grants

As required by statute, some state resource management programs are implemented by counties. To create efficiency, BWSR coordinates and packages financial support for these programs in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Pollution Control Agency (PCA). These programs include:

- Comprehensive Local Water Management
- Wetland Conservation Act
- Shoreland Management
- Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems

Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program

BWSR implements the Local Government Roads Wetland Replacement Program, a statutory mandate that requires the state to replace wetlands impacted as part of local transportation improvement projects. This approach consolidates the necessary technical, financial, and record-keeping components to provide high quality, cost-effective wetland replacement.

Riparian Protection

The purposes of Minnesota Statutes 103F.48, Riparian Protection and Water Quality Practices – commonly referred to as the Buffer Law – is to:

- Protect state water resources from erosion and runoff pollution
- Stabilize soils, shores, and banks
- Protect or provide riparian corridors (the land area adjacent to water)

As of summer 2025, over 99 percent of land adjacent to public waters and public ditches is compliant with the law.

Drainage Management

BWSR provides essential support to public drainage authorities and stakeholders through:

- Provide advice to watershed districts for drainage, flood damage reduction, water quality, and other natural resource enhancement projects
- Collection of data reported by Soil Water Conservation Districts on a parcel-by-parcel basis
- Facilitation of the Drainage Work Group (agency and stakeholder representatives) to develop recommendations of updates to drainage law and of the Public Drainage Manual, to promote uniformity in interpretation and implementation of drainage law, and facilitation of the Drainage Management Team, which coordinates local government information and technical assistance

RESULTS

Part A: Performance Data

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Number of wetland appeals made of local unit of government decisions	Quality	Processed and tracked by BWSR	4 LGU decisions in 2024 (of a total of 9 appeals)	9 LGU decisions in 2025 (of a total of 18 appeals)
Number of block grants issued to local governments for state resource management programs	Quantity	Processed and tracked by BWSR	87 in 2022	87 in 2024
Percent of public waters in compliance with riparian buffer requirements statewide	Result	Reporting by Soil Water Conservation Districts on a parcel-by-parcel basis	99.5% in 2022 99.9% in 2023	99.9% in 2025
Percent of public ditches in compliance with riparian buffer requirements statewide	Result	Reporting by Soil Water Conservation Districts on a parcel-by-parcel basis	98.5% in 2022 99.2% in 2023	99.4% in 2025

Part B: Evidence of Effectiveness

BWSR works in coordination with state agencies, local governments, and others to implement practices that protect our existing water and soil resources. BWSR provides funding to implement these practices. Work done to assist and oversee implementation of state laws by local governments is not typically studied by randomized control trials or quasi-experimental design. No evidence-based practices are known to be directly implemented by this program.

The legal authority for the Resource Protection Rules and Laws program comes from Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 103E https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=103E and 103G, https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=103G Minnesota Administrative Rules, chapter 8420 https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=8420

Program: Board Administration and Agency Operations

https://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/

AT A GLANCE

- 20-member governing board includes local officials, citizens, and agency partners
- 153 staff statewide in 9 offices

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The goal of the Administration and Agency Operations program at the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is to provide high-quality, timely, and cost-effective services.

In addition to providing resources to agency staff, it provides direct support to the 20-member Board, as well as support and information to external partners such as local governments, Tribal governments, non-governmental and other community groups, businesses, legislators, and citizens.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Administrative Services

Administrative Services provides budgeting, payroll, purchasing, contracting, accounting, facilities management, human resources, labor relations, fleet service, and financial reporting services to the agency.

Board Operations

The Board, as appointed by the Governor, provides direction and governance on policy development and grants to implement the BWSR's conservation and regulatory programs. The Board membership comprises of three citizens, representatives from local governments (two city, three county, one township, three watershed district, and three soil and water conservation district), and a state agency representative from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency, Department of Health, and University of Minnesota. Staff provide operational and logistical support to the Board.

Agency Leadership and External Relations

BWSR's Executive Team provides leadership and direction for the agency, develops and implements Board policies, manages regulatory and legislative affairs, and represents the agency in interactions with stakeholders and local, state, federal agencies, and Tribal governments. Agency leadership values and therefore prioritizes the Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers program, Tribal relations training, and affirmative action.

Internal Controls/Evaluation

Per Minnesota Statute 103B.101, BWSR is required to provide oversight and accountability for agency programs and grants to local governments. Internal Controls provides appropriate internal control policies and related oversight and accountability for agency programs, financial oversight and verification of grants to local governments, and assessment of local government performance.

Training

BWSR provides high-quality and intentional training for both its staff and local government partners to increase their effectiveness in implementing their work to improve and protect the state's soil and water resources.

Information Technology

Information Technology provides direction to MN.IT@BWSR and the business-side expertise to develop and implement essential state and local government and grantee reporting systems, coordinate geographic information systems, manage telecommunication and network infrastructure, and add transparency around our work and its outcomes to the general public.

Communications

Communications provides for strategic agency communication and the agency's External Communications Plan. Communications staff tell the story of our work via print and social media to the public and legislators, highlighting the work of locally led conservation and its outcomes. What do you do within this program or activity to achieve the stated goal?

RESULTS

Part A: Performance Data

To understand the impact of this budget program, BWSR reviews agency operations for efficiency and adequate internal controls. This includes completing an agency Risk Management Plan and implementing an annual internal control self-assessment certification. BWSR also seeks to understand the public's awareness of the agency's work. BWSR's communications work is directed by an External Communications Plan. Finally, BWSR reviews the efficiency and program effectiveness of its local government grantees. Since 2007, BWSR has been methodically assessing the performance of the local units of government that constitute Minnesota's delivery system for conservation of water and soil resources. BWSR also reviews grants for full compliance with the Office of Grants Management policy and other best management practices.

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Number of overdue local water plans	Quantity	2025 Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) Annual Report	1 in 2024	1 in 2025 (Plan revision in progress)
Social media coverage	Quantity	Processed and tracked by BWSR	9,341 Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube followers in 2023	13,211 Facebook, X, Instagram, Medium blog, YouTube followers in 2025
Social media impressions	Quantity	Processed and tracked by BWSR	532,926 Facebook reach in 2023	1,410,000 Facebook Reach, 24,830 Instagram in 2025
Technical craining and Certification	Quantity	Processed and tracked by BWSR	New measure	Provided over 21,000 hours of technical training to more than 4,000 local partners in recent biennium.

Part B: Evidence of Effectiveness

This program funds administration and operations which cannot be evaluated using randomized control or quasi-experimental design methods. BWSR works in coordination and collaboration with other state agencies, local governments, and others to implement practices that improve our water and soil resources. BWSR provides funding, guidance, and other assistance for practices, which are then monitored at the local level. We continue to work with local partners to identify, implement, and monitor evidence-based studies around program efficacy.

The legal authority for the Board of Water and Soil Resources comes from Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=103B.

Program: Long-Term Resource Protection

https://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/

AT A GLANCE

- Uses science-based conservation methods to achieve multiple benefits:
  - Creates and restores wildlife habitat
  - Improves hunting and fishing
  - Reduces soil erosion and improves water quality
  - Provides flood retention
  - Enhances groundwater recharge
- Secured more than 8,950 easements, currently protecting more than 357,000 acres since 1986

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The Long-term Resource Protection program is a critical component of the state's goals to protect and improve water quality, protect and enhance wildlife habitat, and reduce flooding. Through the voluntary Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) acquires conservation easements to permanently protect, restore, and manage resources while keeping the land in private ownership. Specifically, RIM Reserve easements protect the state's water and soil resources by:

- Retiring marginal agricultural lands
- Restoring drained wetlands and associated buffers
- Acquiring buffers in sensitive landscapes
- Reducing flood potential by expanding flood retention areas along rivers
- Protecting high-quality land in environmentally sensitive areas

Anchored in the work of local soil and water conservation districts, the RIM Reserve program uses an effective system of local delivery and federal and non-governmental organization partnerships.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Conservation Easement Acquisition

RIM consists of several sub-programs aimed at protecting and restoring wetlands and areas along lakes, rivers, and streams, protecting high-quality lands in environmentally sensitive areas, and local partnerships with soil and conservation districts and watershed districts to advance specific local goals. RIM is the state program that supports the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP), a federal-state partnership launched in 2017 that has already permanently protected or is in the process of protecting more than 43,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land in a 66-county area in western and southern Minnesota. The MN CREP leverages up to $350 million dollars in federal payments directly to landowners.

RIM Reserve targets the highest priority areas through science-based conservation methods. Conservation activities are prioritized in areas where dollars spent maximize return on investment. Agency staff provide the necessary administrative, legal, and engineering expertise to secure typically perpetual conservation easements with private landowners through local soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs). Minnesota holds conservation easements on restored wetlands, grasslands, buffers and forested land while the land remains in private ownership. RIM Reserve funds are primarily used for easement payments to landowners, project construction costs associated with restoring wetland basins and establishing native vegetation, and program implementation (surveying, engineering designs, and realty transactions).

BWSR also secures easements to protect land from intensive development within a three-mile radius around Camp Ripley, ensuring both the protection of high-quality wildlife habitat and continued use of Camp Ripley as a National Guard training facility.

Conservation Easement Management

Effective long-term easement management requires documenting baseline conditions at the time of acquisition as well as regular ongoing monitoring, and enforcement when necessary, to ensure compliance. Local SWCDs perform regular monitoring of all conservation easements and report potential violations to BWSR for follow-up and enforcement. BWSR maintains baseline, monitoring, and geospatial data.

RESULTS

Part A: Performance Data

Measuring performance of this program is guided by progress toward goals outlined in state habitat and water quality plans and strategies, like the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan and Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which call for increasing connected areas of wildlife habitat and using conservation easements in strategic locations to reduce the amount of pollutants reaching Minnesota's waters. For example, according to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency study on nitrogen in Minnesota surface waters, the two most significant treatments for reducing nitrogen are putting riparian land that is currently in corn into grass and putting into perennials those areas where corn grows only marginally.

To make sure this program is effective into the future, BWSR needs to ensure the long-term integrity of conservation easements. BWSR accomplishes this through regular easement monitoring.

Measure name	Measure type	Measure data source	Historical trend	Most recent data
Acres currently protected under RIM Reserve	Quantity	Processed and tracked by BWSR.	325,872 acres in 2022 340,329 acres in 2024	357,400 acres in 2026
Percent easements monitored on schedule	Quality	Inspections performed by SWCDs. Data processed and tracked by BWSR.	99% in 2021; 100% in 2023	100% in 2025
Percent of easements with compliance issues (should be <5%)	Results	Inspections performed by SWCDs. Data processed and tracked by BWSR.	0.5% in 2023	1% in 2025

Part B: Evidence of Effectiveness

BWSR works in coordination and collaboration with other state agencies, local governments, and others to implement practices that improve our water and soil resources. BWSR provides the funding to install these practices which are then monitored at a watershed level. Long-Term resource protection is grounded in scientific studies, often including randomized control and quasi-experimental design methods. However, specific evidence-based Practices have not been inventoried for the program.

The legal authority for the Permanent Resource Protection Program is found in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 103F.501-103F.535 (https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103F).