Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources

PRAP

PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

February 2010 Report to the Minnesota Legislature

counties

soil and water conservation districts

watershed districts

watershed management organizations

accountability

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About this Report

This report has been prepared for the Minnesota State Legislature by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B.102, subdivision 3. This statute requires BWSR to provide designated legislative committees with "an analysis of local water management entity performance" each year. This report covers the activities of the Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) during the 2009 calendar year. This is the third report prepared by BWSR for this program.

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Executive Summary

2009 Program Objectives

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) accomplished a limited roll-out of its new Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) in 2008. The Board's initial objectives for 2009 focused on program expansion. When it became clear that state funds were not available for full program implementation, BWSR shifted its focus to improvements in the process and continued acquisition of performance data from the state's watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts, counties and watershed management organizations—the local government units (LGUs) served by the program. Specifically, BWSR set out to test methods to make the performance review process more efficient, to conduct a similar number of performance reviews as in 2008, and to make performance data accessible via the BWSR website. The ultimate program objective continued to be a statewide system of locally based resource conservation and management entities that are the best they can be.

2009 Program Results

BWSR conducted in-depth performance reviews of nine local governmental units (compared with seven in 2008)—including a new approach using combined reviews. This method is intended to improve efficiency by combining the LGUs operating from the same long-range plan in a joint meeting for one part of the review process. By using this and other process improvements, LGUs spent an average of 30 percent less time to complete a PRAP in-depth review in 2009 compared with 2008.

BWSR has added a powerful new search feature to its website that makes LGU basic performance data available to the public. This web feature contains information for 238 LGUs about compliance with management plan revision due dates, timely submittal of required activity and financial reports, and, new this year, filing of drainage system buffer strip reports.

BWSR met its own performance standards for PRAP in 2009. BWSR remains committed to being accountable for how well PRAP is administered. BWSR completed program activities that matched each of the program objectives listed in the previous year's report.

LGU Performance

In general, Minnesota's local conservation services delivery system operates effectively. BWSR's basic statewide performance review showed improvement in compliance with drainage system buffer strip and annual activity reporting. However, more work is needed to update long-range management plans that are overdue for revision. The nine LGUs that received in-depth reviews reported progress on plan execution ranging from excellent to moderate. While each LGU met some of BWSR's high performance standards, each one also has one or more operational aspects that need improvement.

LGUs increasingly recognize the value of the program. They realize that acknowledging the high performance, as well as operational improvements, for individual LGUs benefits the entire system.

Objectives for 2010

In 2010 BWSR will add review of metro counties' groundwater plan implementation, expand the website database of LGU information, and conduct an additional 7-8 in-depth performance reviews.

Introduction

Gaining Ground

In 2009 the Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) continued to build on the foundation of the pilot performance reviews started in 2008. PRAP focuses on the local governmental units (LGUs) that deliver BWSR's water and land conservation programs. These include soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), watershed districts (WDs), water management organizations (WMOs), and the water management function of counties—a total of 238 distinct organizations.

Although limited funding has prevented full implementation of PRAP, the review and reporting methods developed during the previous two years were applied to nine LGUs by BWSR's PRAP program coordinator and seven board conservationists. A total of 17 LGUs have now received an in-depth performance review conducted by BWSR staff through a series of face-to-face meetings and electronic data reports. The focus for PRAP in 2009 was to increase the public's access to LGU performance data and to improve the efficiency of the performance review process. This report addresses accomplishments for both of those objectives. Since the program's start in 2007 the BWSR board continues to view PRAP as essential to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of Minnesota's local delivery system for resource management and conservation services.

Multi-level Process

PRAP has three operational components:

- **performance review**
- **assistance**
- **reporting.**

The **performance review** component is applied at four levels.

Level I: tabulation of required LGU reports and documents, website posting of results. Level I can be achieved with current program funding and does not require additional effort by LGUs.

Level II: a routine, interactive review with up to 40 LGUs per year to evaluate operational effectiveness and plan implementation progress as originally envisioned by the legislature and incorporated in the resulting statute (see Appendix A). Because of funding limitations, BWSR conducted only nine Level II reviews in 2009.

Level III: an in-depth assessment of an LGU's performance problems and issues initiated by BWSR or the LGU. BWSR continued one Level III review and is monitoring LGU activities for additional opportunities.

Level IV: for those LGUs that have significant performance deficiencies, requiring extensive assessment, monitoring and possible penalties beyond the existing programmatic sanctions. So far there have not been any Level IV cases.

Assistance varies with the needs of the LGU. Level I assistance is largely routine training for LGUs. At Levels II-IV assistance is targeted to the specific needs of the LGUs and can be provided by BWSR staff or consultants, depending on availability and the skills needed.

Reporting makes information about LGU performance accessible to the LGU's stakeholders and constituents. In 2009 BWSR added an LGU search capability to its PRAP webpage, allowing website visitors to view some of the performance data for all of the LGUs served by the program. Other features of the PRAP webpage are summaries of the 2009 Level II reports, and performance standards specific to each type of LGU.

Accountability: From Measuring Effort to Outcomes

Administration of government programs using public dollars demands and deserves a high degree of accountability. PRAP was developed, in part, to deliver on that demand by providing systematic government entity performance review and reporting the results. While many indicators have been developed and used to measure government program effectiveness, the results from the delivery of natural resource management and conservation services are perhaps the most difficult to measure. The challenge is to move from measuring effort (how much money was spent on buffers?) to outcomes (have buffers improved downstream habitat and water quality?). Resource management agencies across the country are slowly making progress in meeting this challenge. Through PRAP and in other ways, BWSR continues to encourage LGUs to apply measures that track resource outcomes and to build those datasets over time.

BWSR has committed to measuring the outcomes of its PRAP activity as well. The next section reports BWSR's own accountability for how this program has been implemented and, specifically, what was proposed and what was accomplished in 2009.

Guiding Principles

PRAP operates on the following principles adopted by the BWSR Board in 2007:

- **Pre-emptive**
- **Systematic**
- **Constructive**
- **Includes consequences**
- **Transparent**
- **Retains local ownership and autonomy**
- **Maintains proportionate expectations**
- **Preserves the state/local partnership**
- **Results in "more better" on-the-ground conservation**

Performance Review of PRAP

BWSR's Accountability

BWSR continues to hold itself accountable for the performance of the PRAP program. In consideration of that commitment, this section matches program objectives from last year's PRAP legislative report with corresponding program accomplishments during 2009.

BWSR'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW ACTIVITIES	
What We Proposed	**What We Did**
Test a consolidated Level II performance review that includes all LGUs in a county or watershed	BWSR conducted 3 combined Level II reviews: 2 combined SWCD and county reviews and 1 combined review of 2 WMOs
Develop instructions for the Performance Standards checklist	BWSR sent performance standards with detailed instructions to all 238 LGUs and posted the standards and instructions on the BWSR website
Expand SWCD and county expenditure statistics to include all fund sources	BWSR modified the SWCD and county performance standards for project and program expenditures to include all sources of funds
To save LGU time, send Level II LGUs a filled-in Performance Standards checklist for verification	BWSR staff completed certain items of the Part 2 performance standards checklist for all 9 Level II LGUs
Conduct 7 Level II performance reviews to provide further process testing	BWSR conducted 9 Level II performance reviews
Track and report Level I performance of all 238 LGUs	BWSR tracked performance standards: 5 for SWCDs, 4 for WDs, 3 for counties, 3 for WMOs, and 1 for all drainage authorities

BWSR'S ASSISTANCE TO LGUs	
What We Proposed	**What We Did**
Continue assistance to the 2008 Level III LGU	BWSR assisted the Middle Snake Tamarac WD in exploration of a strategic planning option
Monitor the performance of LGUs experiencing change	BWSR managers continue to track performance of LGUs experiencing change in staffing and board membership, finances, organization, etc.

BWSR'S PRAP REPORTING	
What We Proposed	**What We Did**
Add an LGU performance report feature to the PRAP webpage Track and report Level I performance of all 238 LGUs	BWSR website PRAP webpage now contains an LGU-search function that displays some of the Level I performance data by LGU

PRAP Advisory Team

The purpose of the Advisory Team is to advise BWSR on program implementation and help BWSR maintain a balance between the need for accountability and the need to minimize the administrative burden on LGUs. (See Appendix B) The Team did not meet in 2009; however, BWSR provides the members with annual program updates. Statewide association representatives on the Team received periodic notices of program changes and status reports for dissemination to their members. BWSR will continue to inform and make use of the Advisory Team as program needs warrant.

Performance Review Results

2009 Performance Review

The 2009 objectives for the PRAP performance review component were to improve the Level I compliance tracking for all LGUs, to conduct the same number of routine Level II reviews as in 2008, and to monitor the activities of LGUs undergoing significant change for opportunities to initiate Level III review or assistance.

Level I Results

Level I performance review consisted of monitoring and tabulating the plan revisions and routine annual activity and financial reports that LGUs are required to submit to BWSR throughout the year. Compliance with ditch buffer strip reporting was added to the list of Level I performance standards in 2009. In April BWSR notified all LGUs about the Level I review requirements, posted those requirements on the website, and sent end-of-the-year reminders to non-compliant LGUs.

Level I results are on the BWSR website
Visitors to the PRAP page on the BWSR website may now view Level I performance data for any of the 238 LGUs tracked by the program.

LGU performance improvements of note in 2009 are that all SWCDs (91 of 91) met the standard for website content (90 of 91 in 2008), all watershed districts (46 of 46) and all but two counties (85 of 87) complied with the drainage system buffer strip reporting requirement (in 2008, 41 of 46 and 65 of 87 respectively), submittal of watershed district annual reports improved from 34 to 39 out of 46. On the other hand, the number of watershed management plans overdue for revision is unimproved since last year. Details of the Level I tabulation are listed in Appendices C, D and E and on the website.

Level II Results

BWSR conducted nine Level II reviews in 2009. All nine LGUs were midway through implementation of their long-range plan. A Level II review at this stage provides LGUs with feedback on implementation progress and identifies factors that can help them refocus for completion of their plan's action items.

A major program modification in 2009 was to combine elements of the Level II review for LGUs that use the same long-range plan. For example, most SWCDs have adopted their county's local water plan as the district's comprehensive plan. In consideration of this joint responsibility for implementation of one plan, BWSR modified the performance review process for two combined county and SWCD reviews and one review of two metro watershed management organizations that use the same plan.

2009 Level II LGUs

- *Combined* County and SWCD: Dodge, Lincoln.
- *Combined* WMOs: Shingle Creek and West Mississippi
- WDs: Bois de Sioux, Valley Branch
- SWCDs alone: North St. Louis

The Level II review process uses three information gathering components: the LGU's report of accomplishments in implementing their plan's goals and objectives (Part 1), compliance with BWSR's checklist of performance standards (Part 2), and LGU board members' discussion of factors affecting plan implementation (part 3). The LGU performance standards by LGU type may be viewed on the PRAP webpage. (www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP)

For the combined reviews, the board and staff from both LGUs met in a joint session for the Part 3 discussion. In the case of Dodge County and the Dodge SWCD staff and supervisors, the meeting led to extended discussion about cooperative strategies for marketing programs to landowners. Shortly after that meeting, the county and SWCD signed a cooperative agreement for sharing staff to support SWCD administration. Based on the positive experience of those six LGUs and program cost savings reported below, BWSR will continue to combine reviews where possible.

The review of the North St. Louis SWCD included the use of a new assistance tool called a Performance Improvement Agreement (PIA). The SWCD had several administrative items needing attention. BWSR staff met with the board of supervisors and staff to write a PIA with action items and associated deadlines to be completed by both the SWCD and BWSR.

The BWSR PRAP coordinator and a board conservationist attended two meetings for each of the nine LGUs : the first to monitor board's discussion of plan implementation issues, the second to present the draft PRAP report to the LGU and discuss any follow-up.

Appendix F contains summaries of the nine Level II reviews BWSR conducted in 2009.

Level III Results

BWSR continued to provide assistance to the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District in 2009. A 2008 Level III review revealed an LGU that successfully carried out its basic mandates but struggled with internal conflicts that threatened its viability. With BWSR assistance, the managers took steps to begin a strategic planning/issue identification process using the services of an outside consultant. However, that process ended when the board members could not reach agreement on the initial protocols for the process. BWSR continues to monitor the performance of this organization and will work with them until the issues are resolved or the watershed managers decide to terminate the process.

Level IV Results

No Level IV actions were needed in 2009.

PRAP Program Costs

BWSR continues to record the amount of time required for both LGUs and BWSR staff to implement the mandates of this program. In 2009 BWSR took steps to reduce the LGU workload by completing parts of the Level II performance standards checklist prior to each review and by conducting combined reviews, as described above.

Min-Ave-Max Time (hrs.) Spent on PRAP Level II Review per LGU

	2008	2009
BWSR Staff:	31-58-102	36-51-97
LGU:	35-49-62	15-34-72

2009 Level III Assistance Time
BWSR Staff only: 107 hrs

As shown in the table, program modifications achieved a 30 percent reduction (from 49 to 34 hours) in average LGU time spent on Level II review. BWSR will continue to monitor the time required to accomplish the various program elements and seek ways to improve efficiency.

Assistance to Local Governments

Focus on Assistance

The term "assistance" is in the PRAP program title because assisting LGUs is a logical next step after performance review and a key objective of the program. BWSR field staff regularly provide LGUs with assistance to support and enhance their operational effectiveness. PRAP has increased the amount of assistance offered and resulted in LGUs requesting it.

During 2009 BWSR expanded its capacity to provide assistance to LGUs by hiring a Training Program Coordinator. An initial task for this person is to assess the needs for training among BWSR's clients and develop a comprehensive plan to help build their technical and organizational capacity.

BWSR held its second annual training academy for LGU staff in November. While the 2008 academy was targeted to LGUs in the northern half of the state, LGU personnel from the entire state were invited to the 2009 academy. The approximately 210 attendees had 36 different training sessions from which to choose.

Other assistance activities generated through PRAP reviews included specialized eLINK training and strategic planning assistance. Several LGUs used the PRAP performance standards to assess their own operations, even though they were not the subjects of a Level II review.

Assessing the Needs

With only limited staff resources to provide assistance to LGUs BWSR must target those efforts. In addition to the on-going training needs assessment, through PRAP there were opportunities for LGUs to identify the types of assistance that would be most helpful. During the open discussion activity of the Level II performance reviews, LGU board members are asked to express the types of assistance they would like to receive. LGUs requested assistance with:

- obtaining stability in funding,
- effective marketing of programs,
- applying for grants,
- reducing the complexity of the plan amendment process,
- developing more partnerships for programs and projects,
- providing opportunities for collaboration among county water planners, and
- updating sections of Chapter 103D.

At the 2009 BWSR academy participants in the PRAP training session were asked to complete an informal survey to identify activities for which LGUs would like BWSR assistance. Of the 28 surveys returned, primarily by SWCD staff, the top three requests were for assistance with getting more funding for projects and programs, citizen participation, and better marketing of programs to landowners.

Future of Assistance

BWSR staff assistance to LGUs will be closely coordinated with the needs assessment and programs developed by the Training Program Coordinator. PRAP will serve as one of the pathways for BWSR's delivery of targeted training and assistance as the comprehensive training plan is implemented.

Reporting

Purpose of Reporting

The purposes of reporting about LGU performance are:

- to provide a perspective on the progress in meeting statewide soil and water conservation goals through the efforts of local government-based activities and programs,
- to give stakeholders access to information about the effectiveness of their local water management entities,
- to provide both information and incentives that will encourage LGUs to learn from one another about methods and programs that produce the most effective results.

Report Types

PRAP either relies on or generates different types of reports to achieve the purposes noted above.

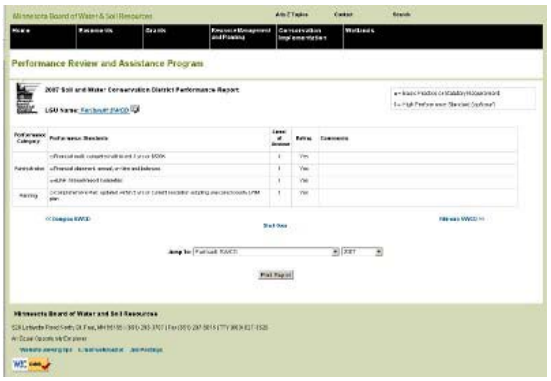
LGU Generated

These include information posted on the LGU web-sites and the required or voluntary reports submitted to BWSR, other units of government, and the public about fiscal status, plans, programs and activities.

These all serve as a means of communicating what each LGU is achieving and allow stakeholders to make their own evaluation of LGU performance. PRAP tracks submittal of required, self-generated reports by the LGUs in Level I.

BWSR Website

The BWSR website now includes a way for users to view Level I performance data that BWSR has collected for each LGU: (www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP) A requirement of the authorizing legislation, this new web search feature will be a powerful tool for LGU clientele.



Users can also find general program information, summaries of Level II and III performance review reports, and copies of annual legislative reports. During 2010 BWSR will add to the LGU performance information available to website visitors.

Level II Performance Review Reports

BWSR prepares a report containing findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each LGU that is the subject of a Level II performance review. Each LGU receives a draft of the report for their own review, and they are invited to comment on or correct the report content. BWSR prepares a final report that is sent to the LGU and a one-page report summary is included in this legislative report (see Appendix F) and posted on the BWSR website.

Annual Legislative Report

As required by statute, BWSR prepares an annual report for the legislature containing the results of the previous year's program activities and a general assessment of the performance of the local delivery system for land and water conservation services and programs.

Rewards and Recognition

BWSR seeks to ensure that PRAP pays as much attention to exemplary performance as it does to performance improvement. In 2009 BWSR added a commendation feature to the routine Level II performance review reports. LGUs receive commendations for compliance with the high performance (stretch goal) standards on the Part 2 checklist. All 2009 Level II LGUs received commendations, which are listed in the report summaries in Appendix F.

PRAP also provides an opportunity to highlight those LGUs that are recognized by their peers or other organizations for their outstanding performance or contribution to Minnesota's resource management and protection, as well as service to their local clientele. (See Appendix G.) The BWSR website also features some of these award recipients.

The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District was honored as the Department of Natural Resources Watershed District of the Year for 2009. Shown here are (L to R) Education Coordinator Claire Bleser, Administrator Kevin Bigalke, Manager Bob Kojetin, Manager LuAnn Tolliver and DNR Division of Waters Director Kent Lokkesmoe.

Program Revisions

Conclusions

After two years of PRAP implementation, BWSR is satisfied that the performance review component is looking in the right areas to assess the overall performance of individual LGUs, as well as of the overall delivery of conservation. LGUs increasingly recognize the value of the program. They realize that acknowledging the good performance, as well as possible improvements, for individual LGUs benefits the entire system. More important than reporting individual LGU performance, though, is discerning trends in that system. With the current PRAP program capacity, it will be several years before trends can be confidently reported. After 2010, BWSR will have been able to conduct in-depth reviews of only 10 percent of the program's target LGUs.

Changes for 2010

During 2010 BWSR will add some program elements, modify some, and continue others.

NEW PRAP Elements

- Add metro county groundwater planning as a PRAP review function
- Verify compliance with Level II Part 2 checklist items after the LGU self-reports
- Incorporate the new BWSR training needs assessment and plan into the PRAP Assistance component

MODIFIED PRAP Elements

- Expand LGU Level I performance information on the BWSR website
- Send LGUs periodic "check-the-website" e-mails to ensure accurate and timely Level I information
- Track both "late" and "not submitted" reports in Level I monitoring

CONTINUED PRAP Elements

- Conduct 7-8 Level II routine performance reviews
- Continue with existing Level III LGU and monitoring of LGUs experiencing change
- Track and report Level I performance of all LGUs

Challenges Long-Term

In 2010, the third year of PRAP implementation, BWSR will continue to address some of the issues that underlie the program's process and methodology. Improvements in the LGU local delivery system in the long-term will require successfully addressing such topics as:

- Finding the best indicators for measuring the performance of the overall conservation services delivery system.
- Measuring outcomes, not just effort.
- Melding the PRAP derived LGU assistance needs with the new training needs assessment and plan.
- Developing analytical tools for the expanding LGU performance database.

Appendices

A. PRAP Authorizing Legislation (Minn. Statutes Chapter 103B.102)

B. PRAP Advisory Team Members

C. Level I: 2009 Long-range Plan Status

D. Level I: Status of Annual Reports for 2008

E. Level I: Status of Audits and Financial Reports for 2008

F. Level II: Summaries of 2009 LGU Performance Review Reports

G. 2009 LGU Performance Awards and Recognition

Appendix A

PRAP AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

103B.102, Minnesota Statutes 2007

103B.102 LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT.

Subdivision 1. **Findings; improving accountability and oversight.** The legislature finds that a process is needed to monitor the performance and activities of local water management entities. The process should be preemptive so that problems can be identified early and systematically. Underperforming entities should be provided assistance and direction for improving performance in a reasonable time frame.

Subd. 2. **Definitions.** For the purposes of this section, "local water management entities" means watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts, metropolitan water management organizations, and counties operating separately or jointly in their role as local water management authorities under chapter 103B, 103C, 103D, or 103G and chapter 114D.

Subd. 3. **Evaluation and report.** The Board of Water and Soil Resources shall evaluate performance, financial, and activity information for each local water management entity. The board shall evaluate the entities' progress in accomplishing their adopted plans on a regular basis, but not less than once every five years. The board shall maintain a summary of local water management entity performance on the board's Web site. Beginning February 1, 2008, and annually thereafter, the board shall provide an analysis of local water management entity performance to the chairs of the house and senate committees having jurisdiction over environment and natural resources policy.

Subd. 4. **Corrective actions.** (a) In addition to other authorities, the Board of Water and Soil Resources may, based on its evaluation in subdivision 3, reduce, withhold, or redirect grants and other funding if the local water management entity has not corrected deficiencies as prescribed in a notice from the board within one year from the date of the notice.

(b) The board may defer a decision on a termination petition filed under section 103B.221, 103C.225, or 103D.271 for up to one year to conduct or update the evaluation under subdivision 3 or to communicate the results of the evaluation to petitioners or to local and state government agencies.

History: *2007 c 57 art 1 s 104*

Appendix B

PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

NAME	ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTING
Kevin Bigalke	Nine-Mile Creek WD	Metro WD
Ray Bohn	MN Assoc. of Watershed Districts	WD association
Brian Dwight	BWSR	BWSR-No. Region
Vacant		Greater MN WD
Annalee Garletz	Assoc. of Minnesota Counties	County government
Barbara Haake	Rice Creek WD	WD association
Todd Olson	Assoc. of Metropolitan Municipalities	Water management organizations
Kathryn Kelly	Renville SWCD	SWCD supervisors
Tim Koehler	USDA-Natural Res. Conservation Service	Federal agencies
Kevin Ostermann	MACDE / Nicollet SWCD	MACDE
Sheila Vanney	MN Assoc. of Soil &Water Cons. Districts	SWCD association
Steve Woods	BWSR-St. Paul	BWSR management

Appendix C

Level I: 2009 Long-Range Plan Status
as of December 31, 2009

Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Local Water Plan Adoption Resolution Expired
none; all are up-to-date

District Comprehensive Plan Expired:
none; all are up-to-date

Counties
Local Water Plan Revision Overdue: Plan Revision in Progress
Kittson
Roseau

Watershed Districts
Management Plan Revision Overdue: No Action
Belle Creek
Cormorant Lakes

Management Plan Revision Overdue: Plan Revision in Progress
Bear Valley
Buffalo-Red River
Crooked Creek
Lower Minnesota River
Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers
North Fork Crow River
Prior Lake-Spring Lake
Rice Creek
Riley-Purgatory-Bluff Creek
Sand Hill River
Stockton-Rollingstone-Minnesota City

Watershed Management Organizations
Management Plan Revision Overdue: Plan Revision in Progress
Carver County[1]
Lower Rum River
Six Cities
Sunrise River

Notes: [1]Exceeded intended due date but not statutory limit.

Appendix D

Level I: Status of Annual Reports for 2008
as of December 31, 2009

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

eLINK Reports of Grant Expenditures: Submitted late
North St. Louis[1]

Website Content: Compliance with 10 Content Elements
all districts comply

Counties

Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Report: Not Submitted
Grant
Murray

eLINK Reports of Grant Expenditures: Not Submitted
all reports submitted

Watershed Districts

Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Report: Not Submitted
all reports submitted

Annual Activity Reports: Not Submitted
Belle Creek
Buffalo-Red River
High Island Creek
Joe River
Kanaranzi-Little Rock
Lac Qui Parle-Yellow Bank
Warroad
Wild Rice

Metro Watershed Management Organizations

Annual Activity Reports: Not Submitted
Six Cities

Notes: [1]No penalty applied due to extenuating circumstances.

Appendix E

Level I: Status of Audits and Financial Reports for 2008
as of December 31, 2009

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Annual Financial Reports (all 91 Districts): Overdue or Not Submitted
all reports submitted

Annual Audits (51 required): Overdue or Not Submitted
Cass

Watershed Districts

Annual Audits: Not Completed
Bear Valley
Belle Creek
Crooked Creek
Kanaranzi-Little Rock
Shell Rock River
Wild Rice

Metro Watershed Management Organizations

Annual Audits: Not Submitted
Six Cities
Upper Rum River

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2009 Level II Review:

Bois de Sioux Watershed District *(Wilkin, Traverse, Grant, Stevens, Big Stone, Ottertail Counties)*

Why BWSR did this review

BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR is conducting Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **Bois de Sioux Watershed District** because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year watershed management plan.

This document includes findings and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the district. The board of managers is responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

Bois de Sioux Watershed District
Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found

The BdSWD has established in its 2003 overall plan an ambitious and comprehensive program for watershed management. Their experience with and confidence in the collaborative project team process is demonstrated by their consistent use of this approach in project development and implementation. The North Ottawa Impoundment project is an example of the managers' commitment to achieving all the goals of their overall plan, which are integrated in this one project.

Based on information provided by the managers, the board reviews the management plan objectives in the context of deciding whether to pursue potential projects. While some project development is inevitably opportunity driven, the overall management of the district may be enhanced by the managers annually reviewing their management plan goals and objectives and setting short-term objectives accordingly.

The district needs to take action to continue the development of their website by including a copy of their most recent annual report.

The Bois de Sioux Watershed District is commended for meeting these high performance standards:

- ★ Administrator on staff
- ★ Current operational guidelines exist
- ★ Plan goals and objectives guide annual budgeting
- ★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies
- ★ Watershed yield trends monitored and reported
- ★ Obtained stakeholder input in the past 5 years
- ★ Coordination with county, city and township officials
- ★ Cooperative projects/tasks done with other agencies.

In addition to the website content action item, BWSR recommends that the district add a plan review to its short-term (annual) planning, and consider how to maintain good communication with six counties and soil and water conservation districts. The watershed district sent a detailed response to the draft report.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP
Performance Review and Assistance Program
2009 Level II Review:
Dodge County Local Water Management *(Dodge County)*

Why BWSR did this review
BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **Dodge County Environmental Services Department** because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year watershed management plan.

This document includes findings and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the county's local water management. The county is responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

Dodge County Environmental Services
Local Water Management
Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found
The Dodge County Environmental Services Department is making good progress in implementing the core activities of its local water management plan. Moreover, the county has been able to pursue and apply resources to make progress on a majority of the accessory activities in the plan.

The county staff has taken a leadership position in the delivery of water management and land conservation services in Dodge County. They can point to successes in their engagement with citizens and landowners in the water monitoring program, expansion of capacity in their feedlot program, in expanded zoning authority, and in general environmental education. The county has also demonstrated the ability to work collaboratively with other local government entities to accomplish planned objectives.

The Dodge County Environmental Services Office is commended for meeting these high performance operational standards.

- ★ Annual plan priorities based on water quality trend data
- ★ Data collected to track outcomes for priority concerns
- ★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies
- ★ Obtained stakeholder input within last 5 years
- ★ Project Partnerships with SWCDs/watershed district
- ★ Track outcomes for public education objectives
- ★ Local water plan is linked on the county website
- ★ Water management ordinances on the county website

BWSR recommends that the county consider an annual reporting mechanism that ties accomplishments to planned objectives.

The county submitted comments to correct information that was contained in the draft of this report.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2009 Level II Reviews:

Dodge Soil and Water Conservation District

(Dodge County)

Why BWSR did this review

BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has selected the **Dodge Soil and Water Conservation District** for a routine Level II performance review because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year district comprehensive plan.

This document includes findings regarding district performance over the past several years and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the SWCD. The board of supervisors is responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

Dodge Soil and Water Conservation District Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found

The Dodge Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has benefited from a close working relationship with the Dodge County Environmental Services Department staff, which has contributed to the implementation of most of the core activities in the SWCD's adopted long-range management plan. District staff has made steady progress in working with landowners and state/federal partners to apply land conservation and natural resource protection practices in Dodge County.

In spite of their good efforts, the district finds itself in a difficult financial position. They have taken steps to address this issue by collaborating with the county and seeking ways to expand their partnerships with other local government entities.

The SWCD needs a person to serve in the role of district manager. In that regard, BWSR commends the district for recently developing a shared position with the county for program management and administrative services to partially address that need.

BWSR identified two action items that need the district's immediate attention:

- Adopt a data practices policy and procedures
- Review staff technical approval authorities.

BWSR commended the district for meeting the following high performance standards:

★ Board training and orientation
★ Staff training and orientation
★ Plans identify major watersheds in district
★ Annual plan priorities based on natural resource quality trends
★ Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer
★ Website contains content beyond minimum required
★ Obtained stakeholder input within last five years
★ Partnership projects
★ Coordination with county board

There are four recommendations to address action items and help enhance district operations. The district submitted information in response to the draft of this report.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP
Performance Review and Assistance Program
2009 Level II Reviews:
Lincoln County Environmental Office Local Water Management
(Lincoln County)

Why BWSR did this review
BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **Lincoln County Environmental Office's** local water management because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year local water management plan.

This document includes findings and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the county Environmental Office's local water management function. The county board and/or Environmental Office staff is responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

Lincoln County Environmental Office Local Water Management Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found
The Lincoln County Environmental Office is operating an effective local water management program. The County is successfully implementing the assigned action items from their 2004-2014 comprehensive local water management plan. The county has demonstrated the ability to work well with local and state agency partners. They have effectively delegated the local water management planning task and the leadership of the local water plan task force to the Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District.

The county's implementation of the feedlot program has provided the greatest challenge. While there has been effective implementation of feedlot improvements for the smaller operators, the lack of funds and other factors have made it difficult to develop improvements for the larger feedlots. BWSR encourages Lincoln County to explore alternatives for working with these feedlot operators to make the necessary improvements to their systems.

Action Items
There are no action items (immediate steps needed to correct operational deficiencies).

Commendations
The Lincoln County Environmental Office is commended for meeting the following high performance standards.
★Public drainage records meet modernization guidelines
★Annual plan priorities based on water quality trend data
★Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies
★Partnerships with SWCDs/WDs and cooperative projects
★Report to water plan advisory committee on plan progress
★County local water management plan on county website
★Water management ordinances on county website.

BWSR offered one recommendation to help the Lincoln County Environmental Office enhance its delivery of local water management services related to the feedlot program. Lincoln County staff submitted brief comments on the draft of this report.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2009 Level II Review:

Lincoln SWCD *(Lincoln County)*

Why BWSR did this review

BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR has conducted Level II performance reviews for nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District** because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year local water management plan.

This document includes findings and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the district. The board of supervisors is responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found

The Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a successful and effective conservation organization. The Lincoln SWCD has shown progress in accomplishing their stated goals and objectives that exceeds BWSR's expectations for a SWCD at the midpoint of their plan implementation cycle. The district has made excellent progress on implementing those plan elements for which they have sole or shared primary responsibility. Following the lead of a capable staff the organization is on the road to truly superior performance. Their recent reporting of five years of accomplishments in the preface to the 5-year management plan update provides a detailed account of how the district has used its human and financial resources since 2004.

BWSR's only significant concern with the Lincoln SWCD' performance is the district's relatively large fund balance. The amount is significantly higher than the state guideline for operating reserves. The district needs to address this issue.

The district has met all of the basic SWCD performance standards and the following high performance standards:

★Operational guidelines exist and current
★Comp and annual plans identify watersheds in district
★Annual plan priorities based on resource trend data
★Website contains additional content beyond minimum
★Obtain stakeholder input within last 5 years
★Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks done with neighboring organizations
★Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff

BWSR makes two recommendations for the district to consider: address their operating fund reserve balance, and modify their annual report format to track better with long range plan goals and objectives.

The district submitted comments on the draft of this report expressing their intent to implement the recommendation regarding annual report format and explaining the management of their operating fund balance.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2009 Level II Review:

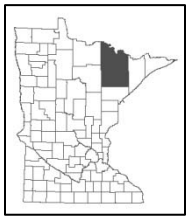
North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District
(St. Louis County)

Why BWSR did this review
BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District** because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 5-year comprehensive plan.

This document includes findings and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the district. The board of supervisors is responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District Summary of Performance Review Results



What BWSR Found
The North St. Louis SWCD has an ambitious plan for providing conservation services considering the large area of the district and the small size of their staff. The relatively large number of plan action items that have yet to be addressed is one indication of the challenges this district faces. Personnel issues, particularly staff turnover, have affected the district's ability to satisfy basic requirements. The development of partnerships with other agencies and outreach coordination efforts to involve private property owners, specifically in riparian areas, will be keys to the district's ability to achieve the goals and objectives of their Comprehensive Plan.

The supervisors and staff appear to be united in wanting to work hard to address the needs of the district. But with budget limitations affecting district capacity, the board has not explicitly focused their own and staff time on district priorities for the remainder of the plan implementation cycle.

The district has action items to work on in three areas: annual financial reports, eLink reports, and reviewing technical approval authorities.

The district is commended for:
- ★ Having current operational guidelines
- ★ Obtaining stakeholder input within the past 5 years
- ★ Working in partnership with neighboring entities.

BWSR recommends that the North St. Louis SWCD take action to address: improving compliance with basic performance practices, updating technical approval authorities, developing staff capacity, cross-referencing long-range plans with annual plans and reports, maintaining their website, seeking more partnerships and plans for supervisor continuing education. BWSR and the district have entered into a Performance Improvement Agreement to address the action items and recommendations. The district has submitted comments on the draft of this report.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2009 Level II Review:

Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission

(Hennepin County)

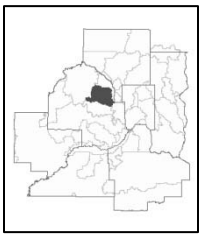
Why BWSR did this review

BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission** because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year watershed management plan.

This document includes findings and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the watershed management commission. The commission members are responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission
Summary of Performance Review Results



What BWSR Found

The Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission operates as an effective, collaborative entity for addressing complex watershed management issues in a developed urban area. They have aggressively pursued major program elements of their watershed management plan and have made significant progress in plan implementation.

The commission has met all but two of BWSR's watershed management organization basic performance standards. They need to address the timeliness and content of their annual activity reports, and they should adopt a data practices policy. They should also work to ensure that the two unapproved local water management plans in their watershed are processed quickly.

The commission is commended for meeting the following high performance standards:

- ★ Board member training
- ★ Operational guidelines
- ★ Plan goals and objectives guide annual budgeting
- ★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies
- ★ Website content compliance
- ★ Obtained stakeholder input
- ★ Partnerships/cooperative projects with others
- ★ Coordination with county/city/township

BWSR makes six recommendations for the commission to consider: ensure that their annual activity reports are content-compliant and submitted on time, adopt a data practices policy and procedures, ensure completion and approval of local water management plans, re-examine project funding limits, develop a cost share program, and begin tracking public education and outreach outcomes.

The commission submitted a written response to the recommendations in the report.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP
Performance Review and Assistance Program
2009 Level II Review:
Valley Branch Watershed District *(Ramsey and Washington Counties)*

Why BWSR did this review
BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR is conducting Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **Valley Branch Watershed District** because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year local water management plan.

This document includes findings and recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the watershed district. The board of managers is responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

Valley Branch Watershed District Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found
The VBWD is successfully implementing an ambitious mix of watershed management activities from their 2005 Watershed Plan. Implementation is well-balanced between administrative responsibilities and plan execution. The district benefits from a strong and involved board, focused on achieving goals. The VBWD is a competent and ambitious organization that achieves good projects using skillful watershed management.

The VBWD meets almost all of BWSR's basic and high performance standards for metro area watershed districts. While the district adequately meets basic responsibilities for coordination and communication, their many accomplishments are not broadly recognized.

BWSR identified two action items that need additional attention: encouraging the communities lacking district approved local water plans to complete their plans and to build on the recent citizen advisory committee start-up.

The Valley Branch Watershed District is commended for meeting these high performance standards.

- ★ Board training: orientation and continuing ed
- ★ Plan goals and objectives guide annual budgeting
- ★ Water quality tracked for priority water bodies
- ★ Website: additional content beyond minimum
- ★ Obtain stakeholder input within the last 5 years
- ★ Track outcomes for public information/education objectives
- ★ Coordination with local officials by managers
- ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects with local gov't

BWSR made recommendations regarding completion of local water plan approval, continuing progress on the citizen advisory committee, and considering how to increase the visibility of the district's accomplishments and priorities among the district's clientele. The district's board of managers submitted written comments on the draft of this report.

Appendix F

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2009 Level II Review:

West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission

(Hennepin County)

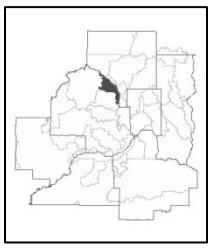
Why BWSR did this review

BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2009 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of nine different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission** because they are near the midpoint in implementing their 10-year watershed management plan.

This document includes findings and a few recommendations to enhance the overall operation and effectiveness of the watershed management commission. The commissioners are responsible for taking any actions they deem necessary in response to this report.

West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission
Summary of Performance Review Results



What BWSR Found

The West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission has taken good advantage of their partnership with the Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commission to start or complete a significant percentage of their watershed management plan action items.

However, some of the action items dealing with key aspects of watershed management, particularly monitoring of stream flow and quality, groundwater, and wetland quality, have not been pursued aggressively. By working from the same plan as the Shingle Creek Commission, the West Mississippi Commission has adopted goals for urban water management that may not apply as well to their watershed. Nevertheless, this PRAP review holds the commission accountable for progress on those goals and objectives. The commission should be further along in accomplishing their objectives at this point in the process.

The commission has met all but two of BWSR's basic performance standards for metro WMOs. They need to address the timeliness and content of their annual activity reports, and adopt a data practices policy.

The Commission is commended for meeting these high performance standards:

- ★ Board member training
- ★ Operational guidelines exist and current
- ★ Plan goals and objectives guide annual budgeting
- ★ Website content
- ★ Obtained stakeholder input
- ★ Partnerships/cooperative projects/tasks with others
- ★ Coordination with county/city/township

BWSR recommends that the commission consider: ensure that their annual activity reports are submitted on time, adopt a data practices policy and procedures, re-evaluate their mission and vision, and begin tracking public education outcomes.

Appendix G

2009 Local Government Performance Awards and Recognition

Association of Minnesota Counties and Board of Water and Soil Resources
County Conservation Awards

Chisago County
Cass, Crow Wing and Morrison Counties
St. Louis County

Department of Natural Resources Watershed District of the Year

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District

Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Program of the Year

Sauk River Watershed District (SHORE Program)

Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts Project of the Year

Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (Office Building and Landscaping)

Board of Water and Soil Resources Outstanding SWCD Employee

Brian Watson, Dakota SWCD

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
SWCD of the Year

Washington Conservation District

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Outstanding Supervisor Award

Duane Petrowiak, Martin SWCD

DNR Appreciation Award

Benton SWCD
Chisago SWCD

MN Assoc. of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and MN Dept. of Transportation
Living Snow Fence Achievement Award

Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District