



# 2020 Performance Review and Assistance Program

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Report to the Minnesota Legislature

February 1, 2021

**Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources**

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This report has been prepared for the Minnesota State Legislature by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in partial fulfillment of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B.102, subdivision 3.

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The estimated cost of preparing this report (as required by Minn. Stat. 3.197) was:

Total staff time: \$3,500

Production/duplication: \$300

Total: \$3,800

BWSR is reducing printing and mailing costs by distributing reports and information to wider audiences in digital, online formats. This report is available at [www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP.index](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP.index) and can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

## MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP)

### Executive Summary

Since 2008, BWSR's Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) has assessed the performance of local units of government constituting Minnesota's local delivery system for conservation of water and related land resources. These local units of government include 88 soil and water conservation districts, 87 counties, 45 watershed districts and 18 watershed management organizations. The program goal is to assist these local government partners to be the best they can be in their management of Minnesota's land and water resources.

#### **PRAP focuses on three aspects of Local Governmental Unit (LGU) performance:**

- 1) Plan implementation: how well an LGU's accomplishments meet planned objectives.
- 2) Compliance with performance standards: meeting administrative mandates and following best practices.
- 3) Collaboration and communication: the quality of partner and stakeholder relationships.

PRAP uses four levels of review to assess performance ranging from statewide oversight in Level I, to a focus on individual LGU performance in Levels II and III, and to remediation in Level IV.

#### **2020 Program Summary\***

- Completed 17 Level II performance reviews, falling short of the target of 24 set for 2020. This shortfall was due to the retirement of the PRAP Coordinator in July and the subsequent hiring freeze which has prevented the position from being filled.
- Updated Performance Standards and guidance for soil and water conservation districts, counties, watershed districts and watershed management organizations. BWSR staff began using these performance standards for 2020 Level II PRAP Reviews.
- Tracked 238 LGUs' Level I performance.
- Provided PRAP Assistance Grants for three local government units in 2020 to implement recommendations from past Level II performance reviews.
- Continued review of Wetland Conservation Act program implementation as part of Level II assessments to measure local government unit compliance with this program.
- Continued evaluation of potential key performance measures for PRAP Level II reviews within the framework of the watershed-based One Watershed, One Plan approach to LGU water plan implementation.
- Stressed the importance of measuring outcomes in all 17 Level II performance reviews conducted in 2020. Discussed ways of demonstrating resource outcomes resulting from plan implementation, and specific expectations for reporting resource outcomes by LGUs.

***\*The PRAP Coordinator retired July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and the subsequent Covid-19 hiring freeze prevented filling the position. This vacancy for the last 6 months of the year contributed to the shortfall in completing some of the PRAP goals set for 2020.***

## 2020 Results of Annual Tracking of 238 LGUs' Plans and Reports (PRAP Level I)

Overall compliance with LGU plan revision and reporting requirements dropped to 93% in 2020. All drainage buffer reports were submitted on time, and WMO compliance dropped to 72%, compared to 94% in 2019, 89% in 2018 and 89% in 2017. Staff efforts will continue in 2021 to improve compliance.

- **Long-range plan status:** the number of overdue plans is 2 in 2020 (*unchanged from 2 in 2019*).
  - Counties: No local water management plans are overdue.
  - Soil and Water Conservation Districts: One SWCD comprehensive plan is overdue.
  - Watershed Districts: One watershed management plan is overdue. (Down from 2 overdue plans in 2019).
  - Watershed Management Organizations: No watershed management plans are overdue.
  
- **LGUs in full compliance with Level I Performance Standards: 93%.**
  - Soil & water conservation districts: 95% compliance (84/88).
  - County water management: 95% compliance (83/87).
  - Watershed districts: 84% compliance (38/45).
  - Watershed management organizations: 72% compliance (13/18).

## Selected PRAP Program Objectives for 2021

- Track 238 LGUs' Level I performance.
- Continue efforts to improve Level I performance review reporting of all LGUs through LGU cooperation and persistent follow-up by BWSR staff.
- Set target of 17 Level II performance reviews for 2021.
- Provide leadership in enunciating the importance of measuring outcomes in Level II performance reviews, ways of demonstrating resource outcomes resulting from plan implementation, and set specific expectations for reporting resource outcomes by LGUs.
- Survey LGUs from 2018 Level II PRAP reviews to track LGU implementation of PRAP recommendations.
- Continue monitoring and reviewing compliance with action items identified during a Level II review. This will allow us to determine if we are meeting the goal of 100% compliance within 18 months for required action items.
- Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.
- Continue updating protocols for PRAP Level I and Level II reviews for performance-based funding for implementation of comprehensive watershed management plans developed through the One Watershed, One Plan program (One Watershed, One Plans).
- Work with BWSR water planning team to develop protocol for tracking, assessment, evaluation and reporting for One Watershed, One Plans.

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# What is the Performance Review & Assistance Program?

## Supporting Local Delivery of Conservation Services

PRAP is primarily a performance assessment activity conducted by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The subjects of the assessments are the local government units (LGUs) that deliver BWSR's water and land conservation programs. The process is designed to evaluate how well LGUs are implementing their long-range plans. The LGUs reviewed include soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), watershed districts (WDs), watershed management organizations (WMOs), and the water management function of counties—a total of 238 distinct organizations. PRAP, authorized in 2007 (see Appendix A), is coordinated by one BWSR central office staff member, with assistance from BWSR's 18 Board Conservationists and three regional managers, who routinely work with these LGUs.

## Guiding Principles

PRAP is based on and uses the following principles adopted by the BWSR Board:

- Pre-emptive
- Systematic
- Constructive
- Includes consequences
- Provides recognition for high performance
- Transparent
- Retains local ownership and autonomy
- Maintains proportionate expectations
- Preserves the state/local partnership
- Results in effective on-the-ground conservation

The principles set parameters for the program's purpose of helping LGUs be the best they can be in their operational effectiveness. Of note is the principle of proportionate expectations. This means that LGUs are rated on the accomplishment of their own plan's objectives. Moreover, BWSR rates operational performance using both basic and high-performance standards specific to each type of LGU. (For more detail see <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html>.)

## Multi-Level Process

PRAP has three operational components:

- performance review
- assistance
- reporting

The **performance review** component is applied at four levels (see pages 8-11).

**Level I** review is an annual tabulation of required plans and reports for all 238 LGUs. Level I review is conducted entirely by BWSR staff and does not require additional input from LGUs.

**Level II** is a routine, interactive review intended to cover all LGUs at least once every 10 years. A Level II review evaluates progress on plan implementation, operational effectiveness, and partner relationships. This review includes assessing compliance with Level II performance standards. The maps on pages 3-4 show which LGUs have gone through a Level II review since the program started in 2008.

**Level III** is an in-depth assessment of an LGU's performance problems and issues. A Level III review is initiated by BWSR or the LGU and usually involves targeted assistance to address specific performance needs. Since 2008, BWSR has conducted Level III reviews for three LGUs at their request and in 2017 we completed two more. BWSR regularly monitors all LGUs for challenges that would necessitate a Level III review.

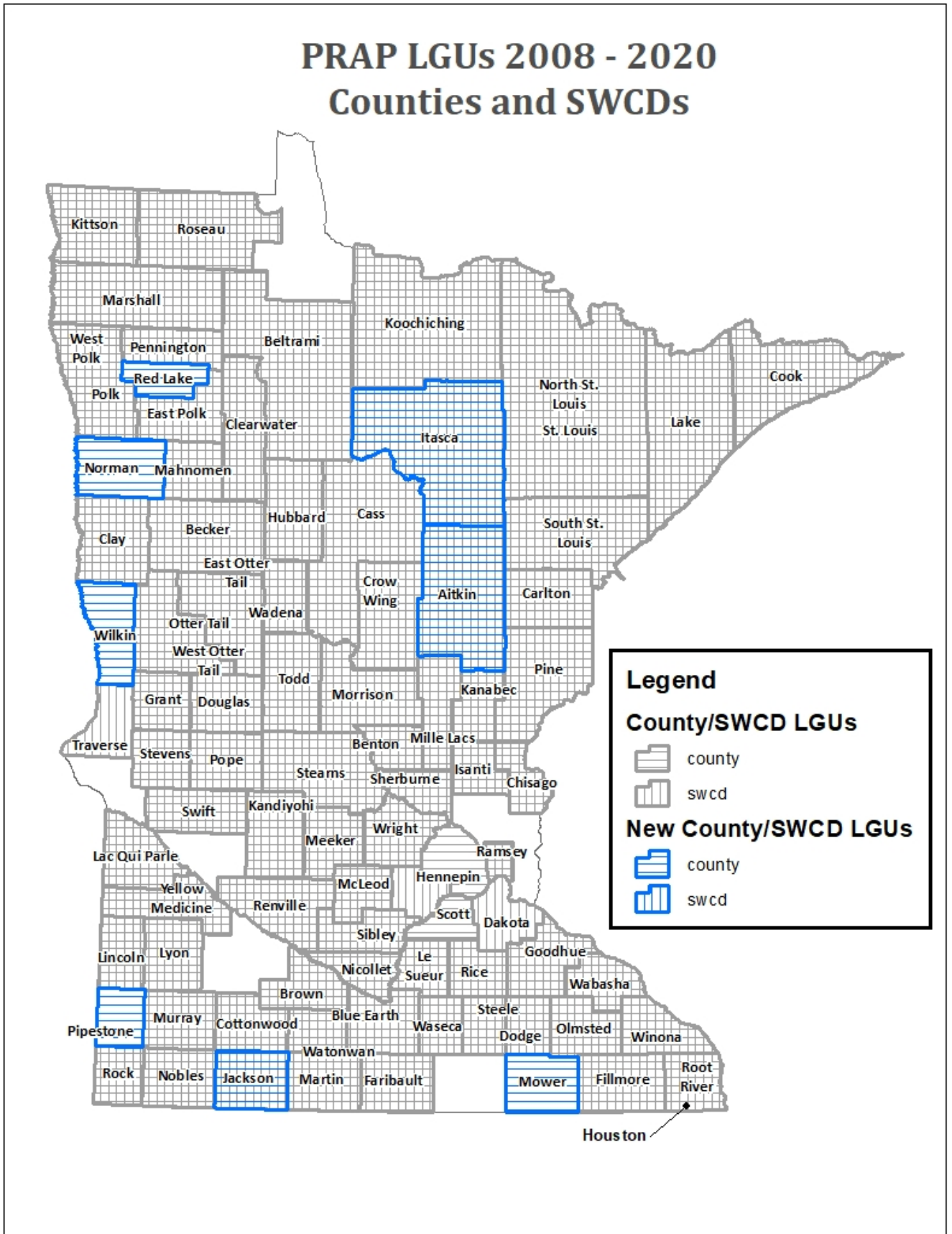
**Level IV** is for LGUs with significant performance deficiencies and includes BWSR Board action to assign penalties as authorized by statute. Levels I-III are designed to avoid the need for Level IV. To date, there have not been any Level IV reviews.

**Assistance** (pages 14-15). In 2012, BWSR began awarding PRAP assistance grants to assist LGUs in obtaining practical and financial assistance for organizational improvements or to address performance issues. The grants are typically used for consultant services for activities identified by the LGU or recommended by BWSR in a performance review.

**Reporting** (pages 16-17) makes information about LGU performance accessible to the LGUs' stakeholders and constituents. Reporting methods specific to PRAP include links to performance review summaries and this annual report to the Legislature, which can be accessed via the PRAP page on BWSR's website <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html>. In addition, the PRAP Coordinator presents results from Level II performance reviews to LGU boards at the completion of the review, and to additional boards/committees upon request.

### **Accountability: From Measuring Effort to Tracking Results**

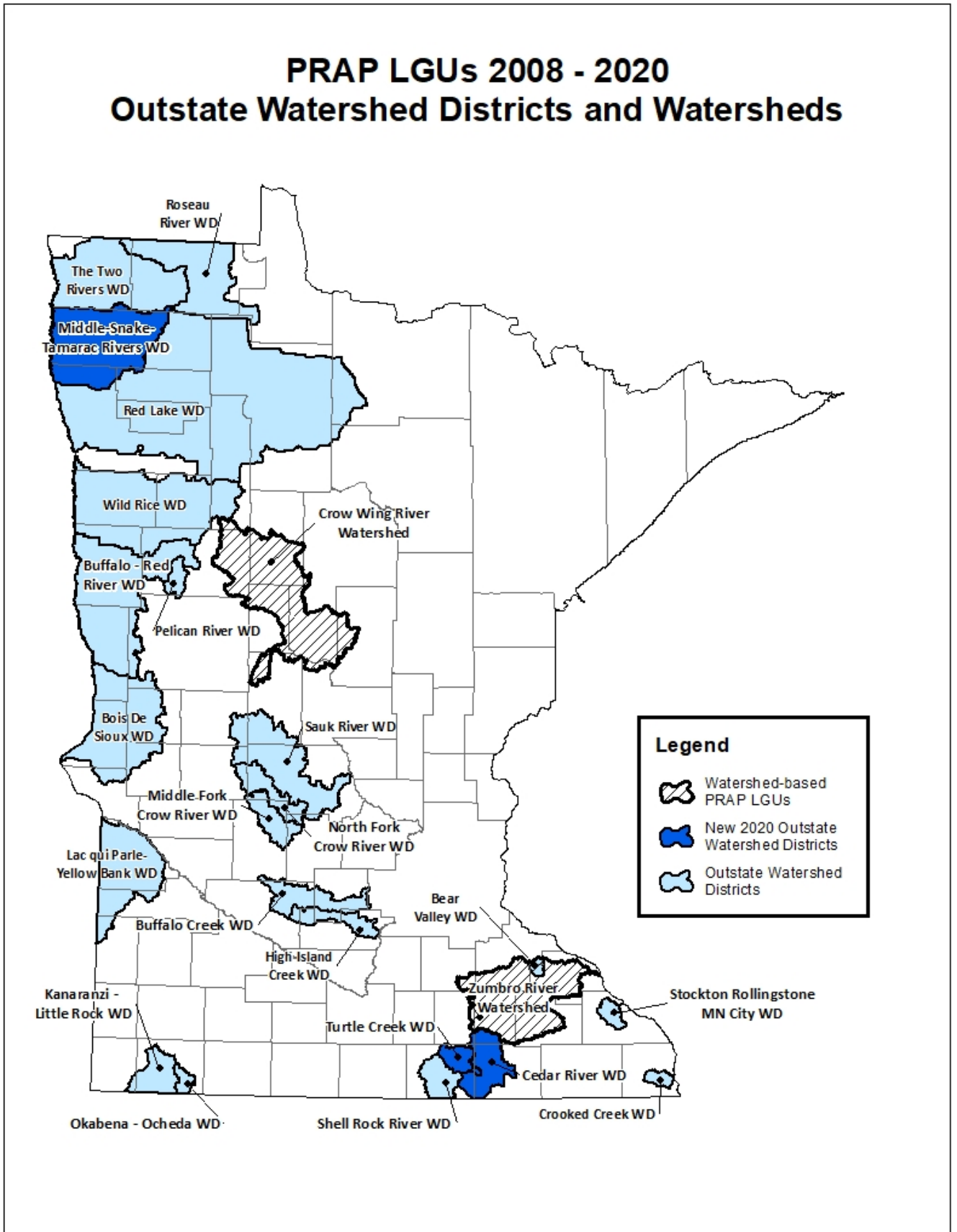
The administration of government programs necessitates a high degree of accountability. PRAP was developed, in part, to deliver on that demand by providing systematic local government performance review and then reporting results. In 2017, BWSR added review of local government unit's implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act program. In 2018, BWSR expanded the scope of PRAP to lay the groundwork for future evaluation of SWCD Technical Service Areas (TSA) and in 2018, for the first time, evaluated progress of implementation of one of the first One Watershed, One Plans that has begun implementation, the Lake Superior North plan.





# PRAP LGUs 2008 - 2020

## Outstate Watershed Districts and Watersheds



# Report on PRAP Performance

## BWSR's Accountability

BWSR continues to hold itself accountable for the objectives of the PRAP program. In consideration of that commitment, this section lists 2020 program activities with the corresponding objectives from the 2018 PRAP legislative report.

### PERFORMANCE REVIEW OBJECTIVES

What We Proposed	What We Did
Track 238 LGUs' Level I performance.	All LGUs were tracked for basic plan and reporting compliance. Level I Compliance is documented in the PRAP Legislative report. Overall, Level I performance dropped in 2020 to 93% overall compliance. Overdue long-range water management plans totaled 2 in 2020.
Take measures to improve WMO and WD reporting.	WD compliance was slightly lower in 2020 at 84% compared to 87% in 2019. In 2020, 72% of watershed management organizations did not meet reporting or auditing requirements compared to 94% compliance in 2019.
Maintain the target of 24 Level II performance reviews per year.	In 2020, 17 Level II performance reviews were completed. The shortfall in this goal was due to the retirement of the PRAP Coordinator in early July and the inability to refill the position due to a hiring freeze.
Complete up to 2 Level III performance reviews, if needed, in 2020.	Discussed need for Level III performance reviews with BWSR Regional Managers and Organizational Effectiveness Manager and concluded that no Level III reviews were needed in 2020.
Survey LGUs from 2018 Level II PRAP reviews to track LGU implementation of PRAP recommendations.	This goal was not achieved due to the vacancy in the PRAP Coordinator position for the last half of 2020.
Continue monitoring and reviewing compliance with action items identified during a Level II review. This will allow us to determine if we are meeting the goal of 100% compliance within 18 months established for required Action Items.	All Action Items identified during 2020 PRAP Level II reviews were assigned an 18-month timeline for completion.
Continue evaluating and updating protocol for PRAP Level I and Level II reviews for performance-based funding for implementation of watershed based One Watershed-One Plans.	Continued evaluation and refinement of key performance measures for PRAP Level II reviews within framework of watershed-based One Watershed, One Plan approach to LGU water plan implementation. Participated in BWSR Clean Water

	Team, BWSR Assessment Team and BWSR Water Planning Team.
Continue development of protocol for evaluating Technical Service Area (TSA) performance and evaluate one TSA if time permits.	Assisted BWSR Water Planning Team with continued development of guidance and expectations for Technical Service Areas. Team decided that it was pre-mature to conduct a TSA review at this time.
Review and update Performance Standards checklists for counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and watershed management organizations.	Worked with a team of Board Conservationists to update performance standards and guidance counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and watershed management organizations. The new standards incorporate concepts for watershed planning and increased expectations for use of advisory committees. The standards added high performance standards for LGU coordination with state initiatives, using water quality data to track resource outcomes and for LGUs who conduct a self-assessment to improve performance. These performance standards were used for all 17 Level II reviews completed in 2020.

### ASSISTANCE OBJECTIVES

What We Proposed	What We Did
Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.	Board Conservationists were encouraged to work with LGUs who could benefit from PRAP Assistance grants. LGUs undergoing a Level II PRAP review were also notified of PRAP assistance funding when recommendations were made for activities that would be eligible for PRAP funds. In fiscal year 2020, PRAP Assistance Grants were provided for Warroad River Watershed District, Stockton-Rollingstone-Minnesota City Watershed District and Comfort Lake – Forest Lake Watershed District for a total of \$13,116.

### REPORTING OBJECTIVES

What We Proposed	What We Did
Increase the focus on developing and reporting resource outcomes by LGUs in Level II reviews.	While all 17 Level II performance reviews included a review of the LGUs water plans for targets or objectives for resource outcomes and if outcomes are being reported, only four of 17 LGUs covered by Level II reviews in 2020 have targets. Reported progress on resource outcomes is less frequent.

## 2020 LGU Performance Review Results

### Level I Results

The Level I Performance Review monitors and tabulates all 238 LGUs' long-range plan updates and their annual reporting of activities, ditch buffer reports, grants, and finances. BWSR tracks these performance measures each year to provide oversight of legal and policy mandates, but also to screen LGUs for indications of potential problems. Chronic lateness in financial or grant reporting, for example, may be a symptom of operational issues that require BWSR assistance.

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
<b>238 LGUs</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>87%</b>
SWCDs (88)	95%	96%	96%	93%	93%
Counties (87)	95%	100%	98%	94%	91%
WMOs (18)	72%	94%	89%	89%	78%
WDs (45)	84%	87%	87%	80%	73%

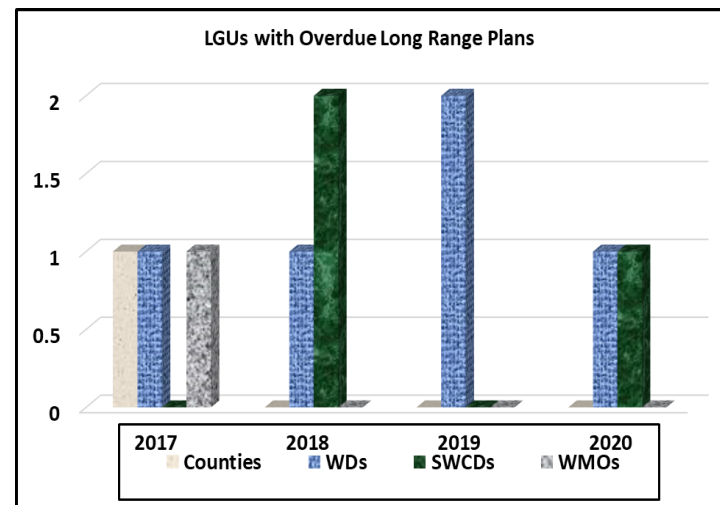
Overall, LGU compliance with Level I standards dropped to 93% in 2020, primarily due to the retirement of the PRAP Coordinator and inability to fill the position due to the hiring freeze. BWSR began tightening Level I compliance tracking in 2013, and as can be seen in the table above, improvement in overall compliance occurred from 2016 through 2019. The drop in compliance in 2020 is due to the vacancy in the PRAP Coordinator position for 6 months after his retirement in early July and the inability to fill the position due to the Covid-19 hiring freeze.

**Long-range plans:** BWSR's legislative mandate for PRAP includes a specific emphasis on evaluating progress in LGU plan implementation. Therefore, helping LGUs keep their plans current is basic to that review. Level I PRAP tracks whether LGUs are meeting their plan revision due dates. For the purposes of Level I reviews, LGUs that have been granted an extension for

their plan revision are not considered to have an overdue plan. Many Local Water Management plans were operating under extensions granted by the BWSR as LGUs continue transitioning to development of One Watershed, One Plans. The number of overdue plans is 2 in 2020, unchanged from 2019. One Watershed District water management plan is overdue at the end of 2020 and one SWCD comprehensive plan had expired as of December 31, 2020. All other counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and watershed management organizations are operating under an approved or extended plan. Local government units without an approved water management plan are not eligible for Clean Water grant funds awarded by BWSR.

The Carver County Groundwater management plan was approved by the BWSR Board in January 2016. Ramsey County and Scott County metro area county groundwater plans need updating but are not considered overdue because the plans are optional, and these counties are still eligible for Clean Water Fund grants.

Appendix D (page 24) lists the LGUs whose plans are overdue for a plan revision.



**Annual activity and grant reports:** LGU annual reports are an important means of providing citizens and BWSR with information about LGU activities and grants expenditures. The Level I review tracks both missing and late reports.

In 2020, there was complete on-time submittal of drainage system buffer strip reports by both county and watershed district drainage authorities. Of the 96 LGUs that must submit annual buffer reports, 100% met the February 1, 2020 deadline, maintaining the 100% compliance achieved from 2015 through 2019. This continued compliance is attributed to persistent efforts by BWSR staff to contact LGUs with missing reports before the due date.

SWCDs and counties maintained a high level of compliance for on-time submittal of grant status reports via BWSR's online eLINK system, with 98% of LGUs meeting the deadline in 2020 compared with 98% in 2019, 97% in 2018, 97% in 2017, and 96% in 2016.

Watershed district compliance with the annual activity report requirement was slightly better in 2020 at 89% compliance compared with 87% in 2019, and 89% in 2018. Continued improvement in reporting will continue to be an objective for BWSR staff in 2021, with a goal of reaching 100% compliance.

Appendix E (page 25) contains more details about reporting.

**Annual financial reports and audits:** All SWCDs submit annual financial reports to BWSR, and most are required to prepare annual audits of their financial records. SWCDs whose annual expenditures fall below a certain threshold do not have to prepare audits. In 2020, SWCD financial reports are no longer due for all those SWCD's that elect to complete an audit in 2020 (for the year ended 2019.) While the underlying determination of which SWCDs are required to do an audit hasn't changed, it now falls under the umbrella of any SWCDs that waived the submission of the SWCD financial report and stated that they would undergo an audit. At the

end of December 2020, 95% of SWCDs met the audit performance standard.

Watershed districts and watershed management organizations are also required to prepare annual audits. In 2020, 93% of WDs met the audit performance standard compared to 89% in 2019, 91% in 2018 and 80% in 2017. In 2020, 72% (13/18) of WMOs met this standard, compared to 94% in 2019, 2018 and 2017. See Appendix F (page 32) for financial report and audit details.

BWSR does not track county audits because counties are accountable to the Office of the State Auditor.

## Level II Performance Review Results

The Level II performance review process is designed to give both BWSR and the individual LGUs an overall assessment of the LGU's effectiveness in both the delivery and the effects of their efforts in conservation. The review looks at the LGU's implementation of their plan's action items and their compliance with BWSR's operational performance standards. Level II reviews also include surveys of board members, staff and partners to assess the LGU's effectiveness and existing relationships with other organizations.

BWSR conducted standard Level II reviews of 17 LGUs in 2020: **Aitkin County, Aitkin SWCD, Cedar River Watershed District, Jackson County, Jackson SWCD, Mower County, Mower SWCD, Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District, Norman County, Norman SWCD, Pipestone County, Pipestone SWCD, Red Lake County, Red Lake SWCD, Turtle Creek Watershed District, Wilkin County and Wilkin SWCD.** (Itasca SWCD Level II Review was completed in 2020 but will be presented to SWCD Board in 2021).

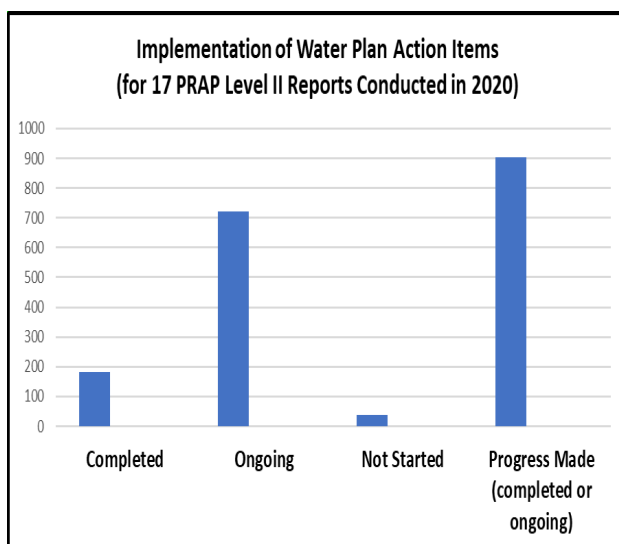
In the instances where the county and the SWCD share the same local water plan (*Aitkin, Jackson, Mower, Norman Pipestone,*

*Red Lake and Wilkin*) the reviews were conducted jointly. The remaining LGUs received individual reviews. Appendix G (pages 27-36) contains summaries of the performance review reports. Full reports are available from BWSR by request.

### Implementation of Water Plan Action Items

Each year, BWSR regional and program staff meet to discuss which LGUs should be selected for PRAP reviews. Some of the factors considered include the expiration date of water plans, whether the LGU has had a review in the past and other factors such as recent LGU staff turnover.

For the 17 local government water plans reviewed in 2020, those plans identified a combined 941 action items. Of those 941 action items in the 17 LGU water plans, 181 actions were completed, 722 were started and are ongoing and 38 action items were not started. Ninety six percent of those actions were implemented to some extent (either completed or ongoing). That is a high rate of implementation considering that most of the 10-year plans reviewed still had several years remaining to initiate additional projects.



### Common Recommendations in 2020

While none of the findings or conclusions from these reviews apply to all LGUs, there were general observations and commonly used recommendations to improve LGU performance worth noting.

**1. Resource Outcomes:** Most county water plans developed prior to 2015 did not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes. These County Local Water Management Plans were developed prior to the statewide focus on resource outcomes, so most plans did not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes. All the newer One Watershed, One Plans and LGU water plans developed in past few years do include targets and objectives for resource outcomes.

**2. Citizen Participation:** Several local governments reviewed in 2020 were advised to improve participation in their Water Plan Advisory Task Force to ensure that agency and citizen representation is adequate and schedule enough meetings to efficiently develop comprehensive local water management plans through the One Watershed, One Plan Program.

This recommendation recognizes the importance of keeping the water plan advisory task force engaged in both the watershed planning and implementation phases. The LGUs were encouraged to ensure that all local, state and federal agencies and citizens involved in water management can participate in these advisory groups. Some counties call task force meetings quarterly, however, at a minimum, the recommendation was made to have an annual meeting that would allow staff to communicate accomplishments in implementation of the plan for the past year and help prioritize projects for the coming year.

**3. Add Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable (PTM) specifics into water plan.** All of the non-watershed-based Level II PRAP reviews conducted in 2020 resulted in a recommendation that organizations include, or expand on existing use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable as criteria in their next water planning efforts. The PTM criteria are the new standard for One Watershed, One Plan efforts currently underway and beyond those projects, the degree to which these criteria are currently being used varies.

**4. Use the major or minor watershed scale for plan organization.**

BWSR has been recommending for both county water plan updates and new One Watershed, One Plan efforts currently underway that priority concerns be identified by major or minor watershed and action items also be carefully targeted to differing watershed priorities. While some recent water plans had begun to organize plans by watershed, this approach has been a standard recommendation for most PRAP Level II reports.

**5. Encourage strong participation and leadership in development and implementation of One Watershed, One Plans (1W1P).** This recommendation focused on leadership in implementation of 1W1Ps where they have already been developed. For the rest of the SWCDs and counties that were reviewed in 2020, recommendations focused on strong participation and leadership in development of the 1W1P within their counties.

**6. Recommendation to conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD (or county department) to determine whether the existing mission, goals and staff capacity are enough to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.**

This commonly used recommendation (used for 11 of 17 LGUs reviewed in 2020) focused on the increasing expectations and SWCD responsibilities in recent years. To meet new

conservation challenges, the SWCDs were encouraged to consider conducting a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether the existing mission, goals and staff capacity are enough to meet the conservation needs in the county. This recommendation recognizes that even the most competent organizations will lose effectiveness when workload exceeds staffing resources over an extended period.

**7. Evaluate, maintain or improve implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.**

2020 was the fourth year that Level II reviews included an evaluation of the LGUs performance in implementing the Wetland Conservation Act. In general, most local government units were doing a good job implementing the program. However, the Level II reviews did identify several weaknesses in LGU implementation of the program. Examples of Wetland Conservation Act recommendations provided to LGUs in 2020 included update flawed LGU resolutions adopting the program, to clarify wetland appeal processes and to improve coordination with DNR Enforcement. The addition of the Wetland Conservation Act to PRAP resulted in better coordination among LGU and state agency staff for surface water management.

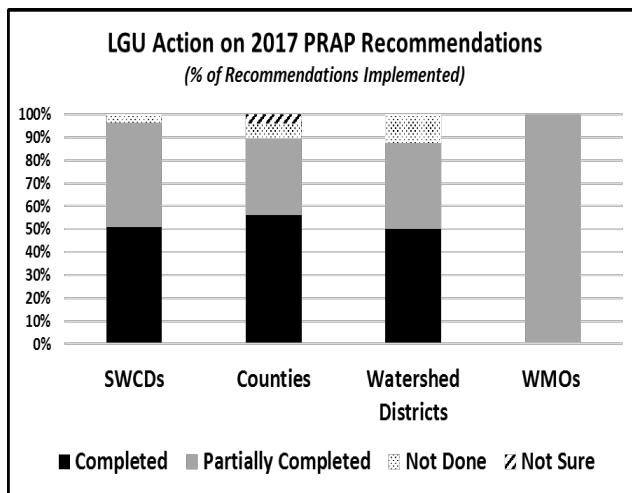
**8. Website reporting of resource trends could be improved.**

This recommendation was made to most of the LGUs reviewed in 2020. Many of these LGUs participate in or lead water quality monitoring programs, yet the use of websites to report trends and results is limited. Additional efforts to make these results easily accessible to the public would be beneficial.

### Survey of LGU Implementation of PRAP Recommendations

A PRAP program goal for 2020 was to find out to what extent LGUs are following through on the recommendations BWSR offers as part of each performance review. This survey was not done in 2020 due to the retirement of the PRAP Coordinator and the hiring freeze that prevented filling the position.

The results of the last survey of this type, completed in 2019 for LGUs who had Level II reviews completed in 2017, is shown below.



In 2019, BWSR surveyed 24 LGUs that had a Level II performance review in 2017. Lead staff were asked to indicate the level of completion for each recommendation included in their PRAP reports. All the 24 LGUs contacted for the survey responded. Survey results showed that LGUs self-reported fully completing 53% of the recommendations and partially completing another 41%, meaning that 94% of BWSR’s recommendations for these LGUs were addressed to some degree.

These survey results indicate that LGUs find most of the recommendations contained in the PRAP reports to be useful for their organizations.

#### Action Items

During a Level II or Level III review, the LGU’s compliance with performance standards is reviewed. Action items are based on the LGU’s lack of compliance with BWSR’s basic practice

performance standards. LGUs are given an Action Item in the PRAP Report to address lack of compliance with one or more basic standards.

All Action Items identified during 2018 PRAP Level II reviews were assigned an 18-month timeline for completion. BWSR followed up with LGUs to verify completion within 18 months. The PRAP follow-up survey demonstrated that all the action items included for 2017 LGUs were implemented within 18 months (*sixteen total action items*).

#### Level III Implementation Results

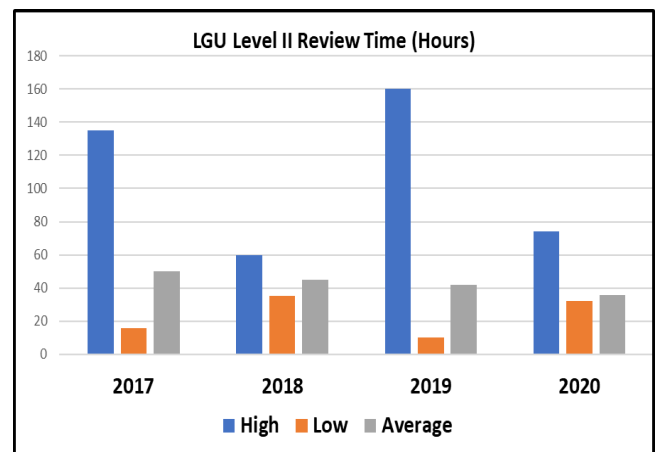
No Level III reviews were completed in 2020 due to the retirement of the PRAP Coordinator and the inability to fill the position due to the hiring freeze.

#### Level IV Results

No Level IV actions were conducted in 2020.

#### Performance Review Time

BWSR tracks the time spent by LGUs in a performance review as a substitute for accounting their financial costs. Factors affecting an LGU’s time include the number of action items in their long-range plan, the number of staff who help with data collection, and the ready availability of performance data.



In 2020, LGU staff spent an average of 36 hours on their Level II review, lower than the previous year. Not including overall



performance review administration and process development, BWSR staff spent an average of 82 hours for each Level II performance review, about the same as in 2019.

BWSR seeks to maintain a balance between getting good information and minimizing the LGU time required to provide it. Our goal is to gather as much pertinent information as needed to assess the performance of the LGU and offer realistic and useful recommendations for improving performance.



the grants. The guidance and application information maintain the streamlined process used previously but asks applicants to describe how their Board will be involved in the project, to outline a scope of work, and to provide more detailed budget information as part of the application. The application information can be found in Appendix C.

Potential applicants can find information on the BWSR's [website](#).

# Reporting

## Purpose of Reporting

BWSR reports on LGU performance to:

- meet the legislative mandate to provide the public with information about the performance of their local water management entities, and
- provide information 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 listed above.

### LGU-Generated

These include information posted on the LGU websites 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 evaluations of LGU performance. PRAP tracks submittal of required, self-generated LGU reports in the Level I review process.

### BWSR Website

BWSR's website contains a webpage devoted to PRAP information. This page provides background information on the program including:

- Guiding principles for the program
- a description of the 4 Levels of PRAP
- Application information for PRAP grants
- Background on the PRAP Legislative Report
- Description of Level I Reporting

For more information see:

<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/prap>

BWSR's website also includes regularly updated maps of long-range plan status by LGU type. Visitors to the PRAP webpage can find general program information, tables of current performance standards by LGU type, summaries of Level II performance review reports, and copies of annual legislative reports.

### Performance Review Reports

BWSR prepares a report containing findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each LGU subject of a Level II or Level III performance review. The LGU lead staff and board or water plan task force members receive a draft of the report to which they are invited to submit comments. BWSR then sends a final report to the LGU. A one-page summary from each review is included in the annual legislative report (see Appendices G and H). In 2014 BWSR added a resource outcome feature to all Level II reports, highlighting those changes in resource conditions related to LGU projects and program. This feature was continued in 2020.

### 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 LGUs providing land and water conservation services and programs. These reports are reviewed and approved by the BWSR board and then sent to the chairpersons of the senate and house environmental policy committees, to statewide LGU associations and to the office of the legislative auditor.

## Recognition for Exemplary Performance

The PRAP Guiding Principles include a provision for recognizing exemplary LGU performance. Each year this legislative report highlights those LGUs that are recognized by their peers or other organizations for their contribution to Minnesota's resource management and protection, as well as service to their local clientele. (See Appendix I, page 52). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water

Conservation District suspended the 2020 awards program.

For those LGUs that undergo a Level II performance review, their report lists "commendations" for compliance with each high-performance standard, demonstrating practices over and above basic requirements. All 2020 standard Level II LGUs received such commendations.

# Program Conclusions and Future Direction

## Conclusions from 2020 Reviews

- All Action Items identified during 2020 PRAP Level II reviews were assigned an 18-month timeline for completion.** BWSR was not able to follow up with the LGUs who participated in 2018 Level II reviews to verify completion of action items due to the vacancy in the PRAP Coordinator Position. The last PRAP local government unit follow-up survey conducted in 2019 demonstrated that all the action items included for 2017 LGUs were implemented within 18 months (16 total action items assigned in 2017).
- A common recommendation for several local government units in 2020 was to conduct a strategic assessment** of the LGU to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands and need for conservation services in the district. This recommendation was used where there appeared to be underperformance of the LGU due to shortage of staff or lack of focus on targeted land treatment and resource improvement.
- Website reporting of resource trends could be improved.** Level II reviews completed in 2020 stressed the importance of improving dissemination of this information to the public. Many LGUs participate in or lead water quality monitoring programs, yet the use of websites to report trends and results is limited. Additional efforts to make these results easily accessible to the public would be beneficial. BWSR made this a recommendation to most LGUs in 2020.
- Evaluate, maintain or improve implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.** 2020 was the third year that Level II reviews included an evaluation of the LGU's performance in implementing the Wetland Conservation Act. In general, most local government units were doing a good job implementing the program. However, the Level II reviews did identify several weaknesses in LGU implementation of the program. Examples of Wetland Conservation Act recommendations provided to LGUs in 2020, included

- To pass a new clarifying resolution for delegation of responsibilities for the Wetland Conservation Act,
- To develop policies for documenting “informal” exemption determinations that include noticing technical evaluation panel members.
- To review and ensure that county policies and ordinances are consistent with WCA by updating ordinances and office procedures.
- **The watershed-based PRAP level II process is most useful if there is an existing watershed-based plan in place.** BWSR PRAP staff continued working on an internal staff team evaluating key performance measures that may be used in the future to measure LGU progress in implementing One Watershed, One Plans. Implementation of several of these plans has begun and progress is being made in the Lake Superior North and several other recently approved plans, but several additional years will be needed to evaluate implementation progress for most plans.
- **Reminders and incentives contribute significantly to on-time reporting by LGUs.** Overall reporting performance and plan status dropped in 2020 due to the vacancy in the PRAP Coordinator position the last 6 months of 2020. Buffer strip reporting was maintained at full LGU compliance after reaching 100% compliance in 2015 through 2019 which can be attributed to close attention from BWSR staff. In the last year, watershed management organization overall compliance dropped to 72% in 2020 compared to 94% in 2019, 89% in 2018 and 2017 and 78% in 2016. Watershed district overall compliance fell slightly to 84% in 2020 compared to 87% in 2019, and 89% compliance in 2018.

### **Selected PRAP Program Objectives for 2021**

- Track 238 LGUs’ Level I performance.
- Continue efforts to improve Level I performance review reporting of all LGUs through LGU cooperation and persistent follow-up by BWSR staff.
- Set target of 17 Level II performance reviews for 2021.
- Provide leadership in enunciating the importance of measuring outcomes in Level II performance reviews, ways of demonstrating resource outcomes resulting from plan implementation, and set specific expectations for reporting resource outcomes by LGUs.
- Survey LGUs from 2018 Level II PRAP reviews to track LGU implementation of PRAP recommendations.
- Continue monitoring and reviewing compliance with Action Items identified during a Level II review. This will allow us to determine if we are meeting the goal of 100% compliance within 18 months for required Action Items.
- Continue the promotion and use of PRAP Assistance Grants to enhance LGU organizational effectiveness.
- Continue updating protocols for PRAP Level I and Level II reviews for performance-based funding for implementation of watershed-based One Watershed, One Plans.
- Work with BWSR Water Planning Team to develop protocol for tracking, assessment, evaluation and reporting for One Watershed, One Plans.

## Appendix A

### PRAP Authorizing Legislation 103B.102, Minnesota Statutes 2013

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#### 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 as determined by the board based on budget and operations of the local water management entity, but not less than once every ten 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 of representatives 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](#); [2013 c 143 art 4 s 1](#)*

## Appendix B

### Board Authorization of Delegation for PRAP Assistance Grants

BOARD DECISION # 18-71



#### BOARD ORDER

#### Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) Assistance Service

##### PURPOSE

Authorize PRAP Assistance services and delegate approval of payment to the Executive Director.

##### FINDINGS OF FACT / RECITALS

1. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (Board) regularly monitors and evaluates the performance and activities of local water management entities and provides assistance in improving performance under the authorities and requirements of Minnesota Statutes §103B.102.
2. In June 2018, the Board through Resolution #18-41 which "reconfirmed the delegation of authority to the Executive Director to approve individual PRAP Assistance grants up to \$10,000, and requires that program awards are reported to the Board at least once per year."
3. The Board continues to receive requests for PRAP assistance services to address operational or service delivery needs identified through a PRAP assessment or specialized assistance request.
4. The Board has authorities under Minnesota Statutes §103B.3369 and 103B.101 to award grants and contracts to accomplish water and related land resources management.
5. The Grants Program and Policy Committee, at their November 26, 2018 meeting, reviewed this request and recommended the Board approve this order.

##### ORDER

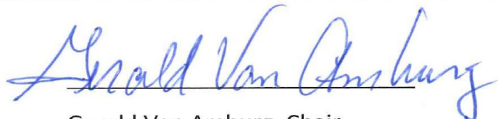
The Board hereby:

1. Approves the allocation of designated or available funds, consistent with the appropriation of the designated or available funds, to eligible local government water management entities for fulfilling the provisions of Minnesota Statutes §103B.102.
2. Reconfirms the delegation of authority to the Executive Director to approve PRAP Assistance grants or contracts up to \$10,000 per contract with a maximum of \$50,000 per year and requires that program awards are reported to the Board at least once per year.
3. Establishes that all PRAP Assistance awards be cost shared by the grantee at a percentage determined by the Executive Director.
4. Authorizes staff to enter into grant agreements or contracts for these purposes.
5. Establishes that this order replaces previous Board resolution #18-41.



Dated at St. Paul, Minnesota, this December 19, 2018.

**MINNESOTA BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES**



Gerald Van Amburg, Chair  
Board of Water and Soil Resources

Date: 12-19-2018

## Appendix C

### PRAP Assistance Grant Application Information

The PRAP Assistance program provides financial assistance to LGUs to improve operating performance and execution of planned goals and objectives. Funding priority is given to activities recommended as part of a Level II, III or IV PRAP review.

**Examples of eligible activities:** facilitation, mediation or consulting services related to organizational improvement such as reorganizations/mergers, strategic planning, organizational development, assessments for shared services, benchmarking, non-routine audits, and staff and board capacity assessments.

**Activities that are not eligible for grant funds, or to be used as LGU match:** Technology upgrades (computer equipment, software, smartphones, etc.), infrastructure improvements (vehicles, office remodel, furniture), staff performance incentives (bonuses, rewards program), basic staff training (BWSR Academy fees and expenses; Wetland Delineator Certification, subjects offered at BWSR Academy, training for promotion, basic computer training), water planning, conservation practices design or installation, publication or publicity materials, food & refreshments, (other than costs associated with meetings and conferences where the primary purpose is an approved, eligible grant activity) lodging, staff salaries, and regular board member per diems.

**Note:** Board member per diems and associated expenses outside of regular meetings, and associated with an approved, eligible activity are eligible for grant funds or can be used as match.

**Grant Limit:** \$10,000. In most cases a 50 percent cash match will be required.

**Who May Apply:** County water management/environmental services; SWCDs; watershed districts; watershed management organizations. In some cases, LGU joint powers associations or boards, or other types of LGU water management partnerships will be eligible for grants. Priority is given to applicants submitting projects related to eligible PRAP Level II, III, or IV recommendations.

**Terms:** BWSR pays its share of the LGU's eligible expenditures as reimbursement for expenses incurred by the LGU after the execution date of the grant agreement. Reporting and reimbursement requirements are also described in the agreement. Grant agreements are processed through BWSR's eLINK system.

**How to Apply:** Submit an email request to Dale Krystosek, PRAP Coordinator ([dale.krystosek@state.mn.us](mailto:dale.krystosek@state.mn.us)) with the following information:

- 1) Description, purpose and scope of work for the proposed activity (If the activity or services will be contracted, do you have a contracting procedure in by-laws or operating guidelines?)
- 2) Expected products or deliverables
- 3) Desired outcome or result
- 4) Does this activity address any recommendations associated with a recent Level II, III or IV PRAP Assessment? If so, describe how.
- 5) How has your Board indicated support for this project? How will they be kept involved?
- 6) Duration of activity: proposed start and end dates
- 7) Itemized Project Budget including

- a. Amount of request
  - b. Source of funds to be used for match (cannot be state money nor in-kind)
  - c. Total project budget
- 8) Have you submitted other funding requests for this activity? If yes, to whom and when?
- 9) Provide name and contact information for the person who will be managing the grant agreement and providing evidence of expenditures for reimbursement.

## Appendix D

### Level I: 2020 LGU Long-Range Plan Status as of December 31, 2020

#### Soil and Water Conservation Districts

(Districts have a choice of option A or B)

**A. Current Resolution Adopting County Local Water Management Plan**

Pine SWCD resolution was not current on December 31, 2020.

**B. Current District Comprehensive Plan**

All comprehensive plans are current.

#### Counties

**Local Water Management Plan Revision Overdue: Plan Revision in Progress**

- All Plans are current

**Metro County Groundwater Plan Revision Not Updated (*These Plans are Optional*)**

- Ramsey
- Scott

The Carver County Groundwater Plan update was approved by BWSR in 2016. Dakota County groundwater plan was approved in 2020. Ramsey County is currently in discussion regarding updating their plan. Anoka and Hennepin Counties have chosen not to participate in this optional program authorized under 103B.255. Scott County has decided to not update their groundwater plan. Development of these groundwater plans is optional and so they are not considered overdue.

#### Watershed Districts

**10-Year Watershed Management Plan Revision Overdue: Plan Revision in Progress**

- High Island Creek Watershed District is overdue

#### Watershed Management Organizations

- All Plans are current

## Appendix E

### Level I: Status of Annual Reports for 2018 as of December 31, 2020

#### **Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

##### **eLINK Status Reports of Grant Expenditures**

###### **Late Reports:**

- East Polk SWCD

#### **Counties**

##### **Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Reports**

All reports submitted on time.

##### **eLINK Status Reports of Grant Expenditures**

One county submitted a late report.

###### **Late Reports:**

- Redwood County
- McLeod County
- Renville County
- Black Dog WMO

#### **Watershed Districts**

##### **Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Reports**

All reports submitted on time.

##### **Annual Activity Reports Not Submitted (or submitted late):**

- Coon Creek WD
- Joe River WD
- Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix WD
- Ramsey Washington WD
- Lower Minnesota WD

#### **Metro Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations**

##### **Annual Activity Reports not submitted (or submitted late):**

- Black Dog WMO

## Appendix F

### Level I: Status of Financial Reports and Audits for 2019 as of December 31, 2020

#### Soil and Water Conservation Districts

##### Annual Audits

##### Annual Audits Not Submitted (or submitted late)

- Pipestone SWCD
- Pine SWCD
- Cottonwood SWCD

#### Watershed Districts

##### Annual Audits Not Completed (or submitted late):

- Yellow Medicine WD
- Coon Creek WD
- Joe River WD

#### Metro Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations

##### Annual Audits Not Submitted (or submitted late):

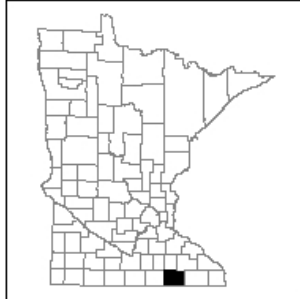
- Black Dog WMO
- Lower Mississippi River WMO
- Vermillion River Watershed JPO
- North Cannon WMO
- Eagan-Inver Grove Heights WMO

# Appendix G

## Standard Level II Performance Review

### Final Report Summaries

#### Mower County and Mower Soil and Water Conservation District



#### Key Findings and Conclusions

The Mower County (County) and the Mower Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) need to continue to build a strong working relationship to meet the water management and conservation challenges in the county. For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Ongoing water management challenges in southern Minnesota have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Mower County. Continued strong participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provide an opportunity for Mower County and the SWCD to focus on specific problems and priorities for the county's waterbodies. The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the County, and strong to good for the performance of the SWCD. The county and SWCD have made progress implementing 97% of their 68 action items in their local water plan. The County and SWCD have completed 25 of their action items, 41 items are ongoing, and 2 action items have not been started.

#### Resource Outcomes

The current Mower County Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes, however the newly developed One Watershed One Plans do include targets and objectives for resource outcomes.

#### Commendations:

The Mower Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 20 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and the Mower County is commended for meeting 14 of 15 high performance standards.

#### Recommendations:

**Joint Recommendation 1:** Meet annually and expand role of Water Resource Advisory Committee to review annual accomplishments and set priorities for the next year.

**Joint Recommendation 2:** The County and SWCD should continue to identify priority watersheds as part of participation in 1W1P development.

**Joint Recommendation 3:** Continue identification of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in One Watershed One Plan development.

Joint Recommendation 4: Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals and implementation of County Water Plan.

**Mower SWCD Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.

**Mower SWCD Recommendation 2:** The SWCD should take steps to ensure that their relationship with NRCS is as strong as possible.

**Mower County Recommendation 1:** Improve Grant Reporting

#### Action Items:

Mower County has no action items. Mower SWCD has one action item:

- Develop a data practices policy

## Red Lake County and Red Lake Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Red Lake County (County) and the Red Lake Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) need to continue to build a strong working relationship to meet the water management and conservation challenges in the county. For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Ongoing water management challenges in northwestern Minnesota have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Red Lake County and the watersheds within and surrounding the county. Strong participation in the implementation and development of new One Watershed, One Plans provide an opportunity for Red Lake County and the SWCD to reorient the water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the county's waterbodies. The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the County, and for the performance of the SWCD.

### Resource Outcomes

The Red Lake Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes, however the newly developed One Watershed One Plans do include targets and objectives for resource outcomes.

### Commendations:

The Red Lake Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 16 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and the Red Lake County is commended for meeting 11 of 15 high performance standards.

### Recommendations:

**Joint Recommendation 1:** Meet annually and expand role of Water Resource Advisory Committee to review annual accomplishments and set priorities for the next year.

**Joint Recommendation 2:** The County and SWCD should continue to identify priority watersheds as part of participation in 1W1P development.

**Joint Recommendation 3:** Continue identification of Prioritized, Targeted and measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in One Watershed One Plan development.

**Joint Recommendation 4:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals and implementation of County Water Plan.

**Red Lake SWCD Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.

### Action Items:

Red Lake County and Red Lake SWCD have no action items.



## Aitkin County and Aitkin Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

The Aitkin County (County) and the Aitkin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) need to continue to build a strong working relationship to meet the water management and conservation challenges in the county.

For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Ongoing water management challenges in northern Minnesota have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Aitkin County. Strong participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provide an opportunity for Aitkin County and the SWCD to reorient the water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the county's waterbodies. The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the County, and for performance of the SWCD.

### Resource Outcomes

The current Aitkin Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes.

### Commendations:

The Aitkin Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 13 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and Aitkin County is commended for meeting 11 of 15 high performance standards.

### Recommendations:

**Joint Recommendation 1:** The County and SWCD should continue to identify priority watersheds as part of participation in 1W1P development.

**Joint Recommendation 2:** Continue identification of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in One Watershed One Plan development.

**Joint Recommendation 3:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals and implementation of County Water Plan.

**Aitkin SWCD Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are enough to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.

**Aitkin County Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the County Environmental Services to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are enough to meet the demands for services in the county.

### Action Items:

Aitkin County has no action items. Aitkin SWCD has one action item:

- Website does not have all required content.

## Turtle Creek Watershed District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Turtle Creek Watershed District is doing a good job of implementing its watershed management plan and conducting water monitoring programs and projects. The organization is getting important work done in the areas of drainage maintenance.

With the current participation in One Watershed, One Plan implementation, there is an opportunity for the Turtle Creek Watershed District to focus its implementation activities to focus on problems and priorities specific to the watershed's major waterbodies, and to provide resource specific outcomes.

The Turtle Creek Watershed District is in compliance with 11 of 13 of BWSR's basic performance standards and 11 of 14 high-performance standards.

### Resource Outcomes

The Turtle Creek Watershed District Plan does contain some resource outcome goals and objectives. However, progress toward those goals is not routinely reported.

### Commendations

The Turtle Creek Watershed District is commended for meeting 11 out of 14 High Performance Standards

### Action Items

Action Items are based on those Part 2 Basic Practice performance standards for which the district is out of compliance. The Turtle Creek Watershed District has two action items:

- Develop a data practices policy
- Develop a functioning advisory committee

### Recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Continue and expand the use of Prioritized, Targeted and measurable as criteria for Goals and Objectives in implementing the 1W1P.

**Recommendation 2:** Develop orientation and continued education plan for both board and staff and keep records of trainings attended.

**Recommendation 3:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals.

## Cedar River Watershed District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Cedar River Watershed District is doing a very good job of implementing its watershed management plan and conducting water monitoring programs and projects. The organization is getting important work done within the watershed district.

With the current participation in One Watershed, One Plan implementation, there is an opportunity for the Cedar River Watershed District to focus its implementation activities to focus on problems and priorities specific to the watershed's major waterbodies, and to provide resource specific outcomes.

The Cedar River Watershed District shows excellent compliance with BWSR's basic and high-performance standards.

The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the Watershed District.

### Resource Outcomes

The Cedar River Watershed District Plan does contain some resource outcome goals and objectives. However, progress toward those goals is not routinely reported.

### Commendations

The Cedar River Watershed District is commended for meeting 14 out of 15 High Performance Standards

**Action Item** – The Cedar River Watershed District has no action items.

### Recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Continue and expand the use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable as criteria for Goals and Objectives in implementing the Cedar River 1W1P.

**Recommendation 2:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the WD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are enough to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.

## Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District is doing a good job of implementing its watershed management plan and conducting water monitoring programs and projects. The organization is getting important work done in the areas of drainage maintenance.

With the upcoming opportunity for participation in One Watershed, One Plan implementation, there is an opportunity for the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District to focus its implementation activities to focus on problems and priorities specific to the watershed's major waterbodies, and to provide resource specific outcomes.

The Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District shows good compliance with BWSR's basic and high-performance standards.

### Resource Outcomes

The Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District Plan does contain some resource outcome goals and objectives. However, progress toward those goals is not routinely reported.

### Commendations

The Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District is commended for meeting 9 out of 15 High Performance Standards

**Action Items** – The Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District has no action items.

### Recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Expand the use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable as criteria for Goals and Objectives in developing and implementing the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers 1W1P.

**Recommendation 2:** Develop orientation and continued education plan for both board and staff and keep records of trainings attended.

**Recommendation 3:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals.

**Recommendation 4:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the Watershed District to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for water management in the district.

## Wilkin County and Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

The Wilkin County (County) and the Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) need to continue to build a strong working relationship to meet the water management and conservation challenges in the county.

For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Ongoing water management challenges in west central Minnesota have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Wilkin County. Strong participation in the development and implementation of One Watershed, One Plans provide an opportunity for Wilkin County and the SWCD to reorient the water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the county's waterbodies. The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the County, and strong to good ratings for the performance of the SWCD.

### Resource Outcomes

The current Wilkin Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes, but the Comprehensive Water Management plans (pending approval) do contain resource outcomes.

### Commendations:

The Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 20 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and the Wilkin County is commended for meeting 13 of 15 high performance standards.

### Recommendations:

**Joint Recommendation 1:** The County and SWCD should continue to identify priority watersheds and use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable (PTM) criteria for Goals and Objectives as part of participation in Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan development and implementation.

**Joint Recommendation 2:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals and, after approval, implementation of Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans.

**Wilkin SWCD Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for conservation services in the district. This could be done with partners participating in the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans.

**Wilkin SWCD Recommendation 2:** Develop and implement training plan for each SWCD Board member.

**Wilkin County Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the Wilkin County Environmental Services Department to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for conservation services in the county.

**Action Items:** Wilkin County and Wilkin SWCD have no action items.

## Norman County and Norman Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

The Norman County (County) and the Norman Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) need to continue to build a strong working relationship to meet the water management and conservation challenges in the county.

For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Ongoing water management challenges in northern Minnesota have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Norman County. Strong participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provide an opportunity for Norman County and the SWCD to reorient the water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the county's waterbodies. The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the County, and for performance of the SWCD.

### Resource Outcomes

The current Norman Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes.

### Commendations:

The Norman Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 12 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and the Norman County is commended for meeting 7 of 15 high performance standards.

### Recommendations:

**Joint Recommendation 1:** Meet annually and expand role of Water Resource Advisory Committee to review accomplishments and set priorities.

**Joint Recommendation 2:** The County and SWCD should continue to identify priority watersheds as part of participation in 1W1P development.

**Joint Recommendation 3:** Continue identification of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in 1W1P development.

**Joint Recommendation 4:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals and implementation of County Water Plan.

**Norman SWCD Recommendation 1:** SWCD board and staff should work on establishing a plan for the eventual transition of duties upon retirement of technical staff.

**Norman SWCD Recommendation 2:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.

**WCA Recommendation #1:** Revise WCA Appeal Process. (see pages 16-17)

**WCA Recommendation #2:** Work with cities to improve WCA Administration.

**WCA Recommendation #3:** "WCA Recommendation #3: Appoint a SWCD technical professional to serve on the Technical Evaluation Panel.

**Action Items:** Norman County and Norman SWCD have no Action Items.

## Pipestone County and Pipestone Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

The Pipestone County (County) and the Pipestone Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) need to continue to build a strong working relationship to meet the water management and conservation challenges in the county. For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Ongoing water management challenges in southern Minnesota have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Pipestone County. Strong participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provide an opportunity for Pipestone County and the SWCD to reorient the water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the county's waterbodies. The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the SWCD.

### Resource Outcomes

The current Pipestone Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes.

### Commendations:

The Pipestone Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 12 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and the Pipestone County is commended for meeting 8 of 15 high performance standards.

### Recommendations:

**Joint Recommendation 1:** The County and SWCD should continue to identify priority watersheds as part of participation in Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan development and implementation.

**Joint Recommendation 2:** Continue identification of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in One Watershed One Plan development.

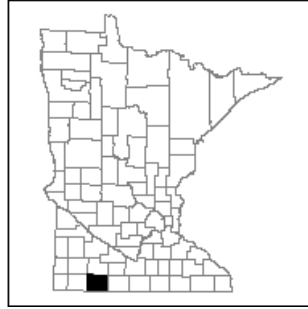
**Joint Recommendation 3:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals and implementation of Comprehensive Water Plan.

Pipestone SWCD Recommendation 1: Conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.

### Action Items:

Pipestone County and Pipestone SWCD have no action items.

## Jackson County and Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District



### Key Findings and Conclusions

Jackson County (County) and the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) need to continue to build a strong working relationship to meet the water management and conservation challenges in the county.

For the most part, their partners believe both entities are doing good work and are good to work with. Ongoing water management challenges in southern Minnesota have created the necessity to forge new working relationships among partners to improve local water management in Jackson County. Strong participation in the development of One Watershed, One Plans provide an opportunity for Jackson County and the SWCD to reorient the water planning efforts to focus on specific problems and priorities for the county's waterbodies. The partners who responded to the PRAP survey generally provided strong to acceptable ratings in their judgement of the performance of the County, and for the performance of the SWCD.

### Resource Outcomes

The current Jackson Local Water Management Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes.

### Commendations:

The Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District is commended for meeting 12 of 22 high performance standards for SWCDs and the Jackson County is commended for meeting 9 of 15 high performance standards.

### Recommendations:

**Joint Recommendation 1:** The County and SWCD should continue to identify priority watersheds as part of participation in 1W1P development and implementation.

**Joint Recommendation 2:** Continue identification of Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria for Goals and Objectives in One Watershed One Plan development and implementation.

**Joint Recommendation 3:** Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals and implementation of Water Plans.

**Jackson SWCD Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of the SWCD to determine whether existing mission, goals and staff capacity are sufficient to meet the demands for conservation services in the district.

### Action Items:

Jackson County and Jackson SWCD have no action items.



## Appendix H

### Performance Standards Checklists used in Level II Reviews

#### COUNTY LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Area	Performance Standard		Level of Review	Rating	
	■	★		YES	NO
	■	Basic practice or statutory requirement	I Annual Compliance	Yes, No, or Value	
	★	High Performance standard (see instructions for explanation of standards)	II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)		
Administration	■	eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I		
	■	County has resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and delegation resolutions (if needed).	II		
	■	County has knowledgeable and trained staff to manage WCA program or secured a qualified delegate.	II		
	■	Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time	I		
	★	Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II		
Planning	■	Local water mgmt. plan: current	I		
	★	Metro counties: groundwater plan up-to-date	I		
	★	Prioritized, Targeted & Measurable criteria are used for Goals, Objectives and Actions in local water management plan	II		
	★	Water quality trend data used for short- and long-range plan priorities	II		
Execution	■	WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with WCA requirements.	II		
	■	WCA TEP reviews and recommendations are appropriately coordinated.	II		
	★	Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer	II		
	★	WCA Communication and Coordination	II		
	★	Water quality data collected to track outcomes for each priority concern	II		

<b>Communication &amp; Coordination</b>	★	Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies and/or groundwater	II		
	■	BWSR grant report(s) posted on county website	I		
	★	Communication piece sent within last 12 months: indicate target audience below	II		
	<b>Communication Target Audience:</b>				
	★	Obtain stakeholder input: within last 12 months	II		
	★	Partnerships: liaison with SWCDs/WDs and cooperative projects/tasks done ( <i>in addition to 1W1P</i> )	II		
	★	Annual report to water plan advisory committee on plan progress	II		
	★	Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan	II		
	★	Coordination with state watershed-based initiatives	II		
	★	County local water plan on county website	II		
★	Water management ordinances on county website	II			

## SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Area	Performance Standard		Level of Review	Rating	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement</li> <li>★ High Performance standard (see instructions for explanation of standards)</li> </ul>		I Annual II Compliance BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)	Yes, No, or Value	
				YES	NO
Administration	■	Financial statement: annual, on-time and complete	I		
	■	Financial audit: completed as required by statute (see guidance) or as per BWSR correspondence	I		
	■	eLINK Grant Report(s) submitted on-time	I		
	■	Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs.	II		
	■	Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs.	II		
	■	<b>Technical professional appointed and serving on WCA TEP</b>	II		
	■	<b>SWCD has an adopting resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and appropriate decision delegation resolutions as warranted (if WCA LGU)</b>	II		
	★	Job approval authorities: reviewed and reported annually	II		
	★	Operational guidelines and policies exist and are current	II		
	★	Board training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each board member	II		
Planning	■	Comprehensive Plan: updated within 5 yrs. or current resolution adopting unexpired county LWM plan	I		
	★	Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria are used for Goals and Objectives in the local water management plan as appropriate.	II		
	★	Annual Plan of Work: based on comp plan, strategic plan priorities	II		
	★	<b>SWCD is currently actively involved in at least one 1W1P</b>	II		
	★	<b>SWCD has received a competitive CWF grant in past 2 years</b>	II		
	★	<b>Strategic Plan or Self-Assessment completed within last 5 years</b>	II		
Execution	■	Are state grant funds spent in high priority problem areas	II		
	■	Total expenditures per year (over past 10 yrs.)	II	see below	
	■	Months of operating funds in reserve	II		
	■	<b>Replacement and restoration orders are prepared in conformance with WCA rules and requirements.</b>	II		

	■	WCA TEP member knowledgeable/trained in WCA technical aspects	II			
	■	WCA TEP member contributes to reviews, findings & recommendations	II			
	■	WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with all WCA requirements (if WCA LGU)	II			
	■	WCA TEP reviews/recommendations appropriately coordinated (if LGU)	II			
	★	Certified wetland delineator: on staff or retainer	II			
	★	WCA Coordination and Communication	II			
	★	Water quality data collected to track outcomes for each pr. concern	II			
	★	Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies	II			
Communication & Coordination	■	Website contains all required content elements	I			
	★	Website contains additional content beyond minimum required	II			
	★	Coordination with state watershed-based initiatives	II			
	★	Communication piece sent within last 12 months, indicate target	II			
	<b>Communication Target Audience:</b>					
	★	Outcome trends monitored and reported for key resources	II			
	★	Track progress on I & E objectives in Plan	II			
	★	Obtain stakeholder input: within last 12 months	II			
	★	Annual report communicates progress on water plan goals	II			
	★	Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, NGOs or private businesses	II			
★	Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff	II				

2009      2010      2011      2012      2013      2014      2015      2016      2017      2018

# METRO WATERSHED DISTRICT and WMO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Area	Performance Standard		Level of Review	Rating	
	★	High Performance standard	I Annual Compliance	Yes, No, or Value	
	■	Basic practice or statutory requirement (see instructions for explanation of standards)	II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)	YES	NO
Administration	■	Activity report: annual, on-time	I		
	■	Financial report & audit completed on time	I		
	■	Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time	I		
	■	eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I		
	■	Rules: date of last revision or review	II	mo./yr.	
	■	Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II		
	■	Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II		
	■	Manager appointments: current and reported	II		
	■	Consultant RFP: within 2 yrs. for professional services	II		
	■	WD/WMO has resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and appropriate delegation resolutions as warranted (N/A if not LGU)	II		
	■	WD/WMO has knowledgeable & trained staff that manages WCA program or has secured qualified delegate. (N/A if not LGU)	II		
	★	Administrator on staff	II		
	★	Board training: orientation and continuing education plan, record for each board member	II		
	★	Staff training: orientation and continuing education plan and record for each staff	II		
	★	Operational guidelines for fiscal procedures and conflicts of interest exist and current	II		
★	Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II			
Planning	■	Watershed management plan: up-to-date	I		
	■	City/twp. local water plans not yet approved	II		
	■	Capital Improvement Program: reviewed every 2 years	II		

	★	Strategic plan or self-assessment completed in last 5 years	II			
	★	Strategic plan identifies short-term priorities	II			
Execution	■	Engineer Reports: submitted for DNR & BWSR review	II			
	■	WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with all WCA requirements. (if delegated WCA LGU)	II			
	■	WCA TEP reviews & recommendations appropriately coordinated. (if delegated WCA LGU)	II			
	★	Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer	II			
	■	Total expenditures per year (past 10 yrs.)	II	see below		
	★	Water quality trends tracked for key water bodies	II			
	★	Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / reported	II			
Communication & Coordination	■	Website: contains information as required by MR 8410.0150 Subpart 3a, i.e. as board meeting, contact information, water plan, etc.	II			
	■	Functioning advisory committee(s): recommendations on projects, reports, 2-way communication with Board	II			
	■	Communication piece: sent within last 12 months	II			
		<b>Communication Target Audience:</b>				
	★	Track progress for Information and Education objectives in Plan	II			
	★	Coordination with County Board, SWCD Board, City/Township officials	II			
	★	Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring organizations, such as counties, SWCDs, WDs, Non-Government Organizations	II			

## GREATER MN WATERSHED DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Area	Performance Standard		Level of Review	Rating		
	★	■		Yes, No, or Value		
	<i>(see instructions for explanation of standards)</i>		I Annual Compliance	II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs.)	YES	NO
<b>Administration</b>	■	Annual report: submitted on time	I			
	■	Financial audit: completed on time	I			
	■	Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time	I			
	■	eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I			
	■	Rules: date of last revision or review	II		Mo./yr.	
	■	Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II			
	■	Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 years	II			
	■	Manager appointments: current and reported	II			
	■	<b>WD has resolution assuming WCA responsibilities &amp; appropriate delegation resolutions as warranted. (N/A if not LGU)</b>	II			
	■	<b>WD has knowledgeable &amp; trained staff that manages WCA program or has secured a qualified delegate. (N/A if not WCA LGU)</b>	II			
	★	Administrator on staff	II			
	★	Board training: orientation and continuing education plan and record for board members	II			
	★	Staff training: orientation and continuing education plan/record for each staff	II			
	★	Operational guidelines exist and current	II			
★	Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II				
<b>Planning</b>	■	Watershed management plan: up-to-date	I			
	★	<b>Prioritized, Targeted, Measurable criteria used in WD Plan</b>	II			
	★	Strategic plan identifies short-term activities & budgets based on state and local watershed priorities	II			

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Execution	★ Member of County Water Plan Advisory Committee(s)								II			
	■ Engineer Reports: submitted for DNR & BWSR review								II			
	■ <b>WCA decisions and determinations made in conformance with all WCA requirements. (N/A if not LGU)</b>								II			
	■ <b>WCA TEP reviews/recommendations coordinated (N/A if not LGU)</b>								II			
	★ Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer								II			
	■ Total expenditures per year for past 10 years								II			attach
	★ Water quality trends tracked for key water bodies								II			
	★ Watershed hydrologic trends monitored / reported								II			
Communication & Coordination	■ Functioning advisory committee: recommendations on projects, reports, maintains 2-way communication with Board								II			
	■ Communication piece sent within last 12 months								II			
	■ Website: contains annual report, financial statement, board members, contact info, grant report(s), watershed management plan, meeting notices, agendas & minutes, updated after each board meeting								II			
	★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 12 months								II			
	★ <b>Coordination with watershed-based initiatives</b>								II			
	★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan								II			
	★ Coordination with County Board, SWCD Board, City/Township officials								II			
	★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, soil and water districts, non-governmental organizations								II			

TOTAL= \$



# Appendix I

## 2020 Local Government Performance Awards and Recognition\*

(Awarding agency listed in parentheses.)

### **Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Employee**

(Board of Water and Soil Resources)

**Peter Nelson, Water Plan Coordinator, Pennington Soil and Water Conservation District**

### **Outstanding Watershed District Employee**

(Minnesota Association of Watershed District Administrators)

**Jan Voit, Heron Lake Watershed District Administrator**

### **Outstanding Watershed District Employee**

(Board of Water and Soil Resources)

**Maggie Karschnia, Water Resources Project Manager Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District**

### **Program of the Year Award**

(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)

**Prior Lake Spring Lake Watershed District – Carp Management Program**

### **WD Project of the Year**

(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)

**Pelican River Watershed District - Flowering Rush -Coordinated Research & Adaptive Management Project**

\*The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts suspended the 2020 awards program due to the Covid 19 pandemic.