

Agency Purpose

The mission of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners. The statutes which govern the agency allow for implementing conservation programs and policies via a unique statewide partnership that weds state, local and federal efforts to protect and restore the waters, wetlands, working lands, soils, woodlots, prairies and related natural habitats of Minnesota.

Agency programs, primarily delivered through local units of government, have resulted in less sediment and nutrients entering our lakes, rivers and streams; greater fish, wildlife and native plant habitat; and conservation measures being implemented on public drainage systems. These outcomes are achieved despite more intense agricultural practices, greater demands for forest products, and urbanization in many parts of the state.

Sound management of our water resources is critical to a healthy and thriving Minnesota – and that view is shared by a large and growing number of local communities and citizens. Because 78% of the state's land is held in private ownership, BWSR's focus on private lands is critical to the state attaining its goals for clean water and healthy landscapes. Managed wisely, our watersheds, our working lands, and our groundwater resources will continue to be foundational components of the state's current and future environmental and economic quality of life.

A critical element of the agency's success is the engagement and oversight provided by the 20 member board that consists of 15 members including three citizens, 11 local government entities (county commissioners, soil and water conservation district supervisors, and watershed district managers), four commissioners of state agencies, and one representative of the University of Minnesota Extension Service. The board's balanced mix of perspectives and experiences came about through a merger and contributes greatly to the public processes that lead to practical and credible conservation policy and program development. The board's membership provides a means for citizens and local governments to take direct ownership of conservation issues and assures that the balance between private and public interests needed to achieve and sustain significant conservation advances is in place.

At a Glance

Land and Water Conservation Projects

- Nearly 11,000 land and water conservation practices implemented via grants from 2005-2008
- Over 5,400 permanent conservation easements on approximately 210,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land
- Over \$20M in Clean Water Fund implementation funds provided for local implementation through a competitive grant program
- Every state dollar invested into the Reinvest in Minnesota/Wetlands Reserve Program (RIM/WRP) partnership leverages 1.5 federal dollars

Resource Planning and Delivery Effectiveness

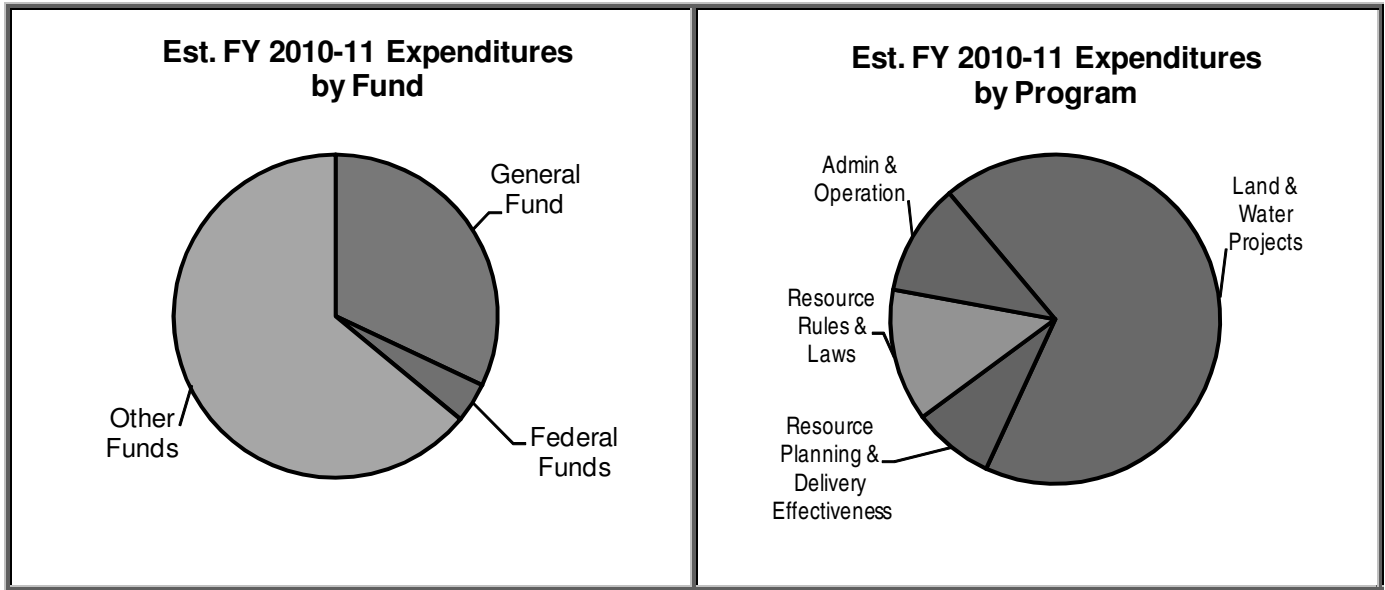
- Organizational performance reviews conducted annually for approximately 240 local governments
- Evaluation and monitoring of the ecological integrity of more than 5,400 conservation and wetland bank easements
- Technical, administrative and organizational development training provided at a rate of over 2,000 participant days per year

Resource Protection Rules and Laws

- Technical, administrative, and financial support provided to more than 400 local governments that administer Wetland Conservation Area (WCA) and other state mandated resource programs
- Manage and oversee the state wetland banking system in accordance with federal laws to ensure no-net-loss of wetlands
- Coordinate drainage stakeholders in developing consensus recommendations for drainage law updates

Board Administration and Agency Operations

- 20 member board that represents local governments (county, city, township, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), Watershed Districts (WD), four state agencies, and the University of Minnesota Extension Service
- Approximately 80 employees with slightly more than half located in St. Paul
- Implement an annual budget of about \$50 million in FY 2010 and FY 2011



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement.

Source: MAPS data

Strategies

The agency has four major strategies to accomplish its mission.

- Develop and implement targeted grant programs that encourage voluntary adoption of land management practices and projects that protect and improve Minnesota’s natural environment;
- Assist local units of government in the development of comprehensive water and resource planning and implementation programs that target investments in conservation to obtain the greatest ecological benefit;
- Administer the state’s Wetland Conservation Act with the goal of no-net-loss through coordinating the regulatory functions of federal and state agencies; and
- Provide an essential interface between the executive branch agencies and local units of governments so that water, soil and habitat conservation and protection programs are fully integrated.

Operations

Land and Water Conservation Projects: Getting land and water conservation projects on-the-ground, in the best location for the best environmental outcome, is the major focus of the agency. Conservation measures are implemented throughout the state via local governments that work with landowners who voluntarily adopt conservation practices or enroll their land in a permanent protection conservation easement. This program addresses high priority state and local resource concerns such as:

- Keeping water on the land;
- Maintaining healthy soils;
- Reducing pollutants in ground and surface water;
- Insuring biological diversity;
- Reducing flooding potential; and
- Maintaining stream integrity.

Resource Planning and Delivery Effectiveness: Providing for the most targeted resource planning and evaluating the effectiveness of both the local governments implementing conservation efforts as well as the environmental outcomes are the goals of this program. The goal is accomplished by:

- Providing technical, administrative, and financial support to a core network of conservation delivery professionals in over 240 local governments;

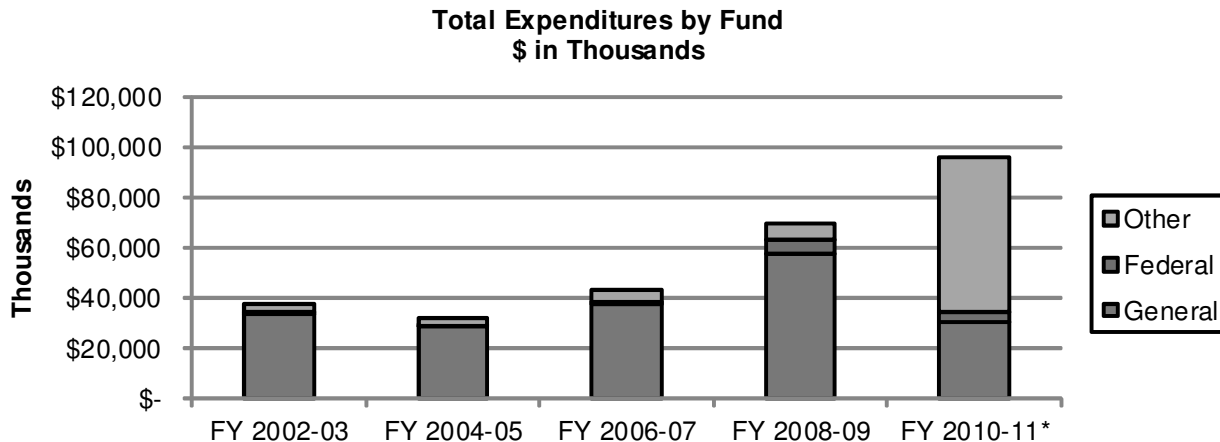
- Assisting and providing guidance to local governments in the development of comprehensive resource management plans that address critical state and local needs and priorities;
- Increasing the skill based of local governments through a comprehensive training program;
- Systematically reviewing the performance of local governments in meeting the goals of their own management plans; and
- Evaluating the ecological integrity of restoration evaluations while assuring that conservation easements are maintained in the state’s best interest.

Resource Protection Rules and Laws: Ensuring compliance with environmental laws, rules, and regulations is the goal of this program. BWSR is responsible for administering the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) and providing oversight to drainage authorities operating under the drainage law (M.S. 103E). The agency conducts this program by:

- Providing oversight of local implementation through annual reporting and adjudicating or mediating disputes elevated through an appeals process of local government decisions;
- Managing and administering the state wetland bank system;
- Coordinating inter-agency funding to local governments for implementation of the WCA, DNR Shoreland Management Program, PCA Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Program, PCA Feedlot Permit Program and BWSR Comprehensive Local Water Management Program; and
- Facilitating the Drainage Work Group in developing consensus recommendations of updates to drainage law to be adopted by the legislature without controversy.

Board Administration and Agency Operations: Board and administrative leadership, internal business systems, and operational support are provided to the agency by this program. This program includes the board and board management, financial and accounting services, legislative and public relations, as well as information technology services, communications, and human resources.

Budget Trends



* FY 2010-11 is estimated, not actual. Source data for the previous chart is the Minnesota Accounting and Procurement System (MAPS) as of 08/24/10..Please note that FY2006-07 and 2008-09 General Fund allocations included large one-time Clean Water Legacy appropriations of \$5.84 million and \$14.166 million respectively.

Recent passage of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment speaks to the value Minnesota residents have regarding natural resources and provides significant funding for conservation efforts. The passage of the amendment also has raised expectations regarding the use of and the outcomes achieved by the funds. Obtaining the best environmental outcomes requires technical capacity and excellence at the local level. The trend of reduced local government budgets presents a significant challenge regarding the level of technical expertise needed to implement conservation programs. Resource protection activities are increasing statewide as evidenced by the request of four times the amount of project grant funds available. Landowner interests in

easements that provide permanent resource protection continues to exceed funding available. Increased citizen expectations regarding transparent, readily-available information on the progress being made towards resource protection and improvement goals will require improvements to existing reporting systems.

Contact

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For information on how this agency works to fulfill its mission and documents its performance towards achieving measures, please refer to our website.