Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP)

2013 Report to the Minnesota Legislature

Program Highlights

Board Amends PRAP Guiding Principles	Watershed-based PRAP Pilot Project in central MN	New PRAP Assistance Grants Available
(Page 1)	(Page 5)	(Page 7)

Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources

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

Since 2007, BWSR's PRAP has been methodically assessing the performance of the local units of government that constitute Minnesota's delivery system for conservation of water and related land resources. The goal is to help these local government partners to be the best they can be in their management of these critical resources.

PRAP focuses on four aspects of Local Governmental Unit (LGU) performance in the delivery of conservation services:

- Administration—financial reporting and accountability
- Planning—keeping plans current and focused
- Execution—implementing planned objectives and tracking progress
- Communication and Coordination—working with partners and stakeholders.

Levels I-IV of performance review and assistance are described on page ii.

2012 Program Accomplishments

- Tested a new approach to performance review by assessing the performance and collaboration of all LGUs with jurisdiction in the same major watershed.
- Tracked report and plan compliance (Level I) for 242 counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, and watershed management organizations.
- Conducted in-depth (Level II) performance reviews of four LGUs. BWSR has conducted 35 Level II performance reviews since 2008.
- Started a new PRAP Assistance Grants program and awarded four grants to three different LGUs for improved organizational function and effectiveness.
- BWSR Board amended the PRAP Guiding Principles.

2012 LGU Delivery System Performance

Long-range Plan Status: 68% reduction in overdue plans since 2009.

- Soil & Water Conservation Districts: All plans or resolutions are current.
- Counties: three plan revisions overdue.
- Watershed Districts: three plan revisions overdue; all are in progress.
- Watershed Management Organizations: one revision overdue, in progress.

LGUs in Full Compliance with Level I Performance Standards 72%

- Soil & Water Conservation Districts: 94% compliance (85/90).
- Watershed Management Organizations: 74% compliance (14/19).
- County Water Management: 61% compliance (53/87).
- Watershed Districts: 50% compliance (23/46).

2013 PRAP Objectives

- Conduct a second watershed-based performance review of multiple LGUs.
- Monitor and support LGUs' implementation of previous PRAP recommendations.
- Monitor LGUs for opportunities to help with operational change.

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
Performance Review and Assistance Program Overview

PRAP Program Level	Program Elements			Accomplishments
	Frequency	**Performance Review**	**Assistance**	
Level I Routine Monitoring and Tabulation	Annual	Tabulation of required reports, plans, audits, etc.	Statewide training opportunities; BWSR Academy	**242** LGUs tracked annually on selected performance standards. **1800** # of hits to BWSR website database of LGU Level I performance since 2010.
Level II Routine performance review and targeted assistance	Once every 5yrs./LGU 50 LGUs/yr	Assessment using performance standards checklist, progress on plan objectives/actions, board/staff interview.	Assess training needs; eligible for PRAP Assistance Grants; set performance goals in an PIA[1], if needed;	**35 Level II performance reviews** **13 - SWCDs** **9 - Counties** **9 - Watershed Districts** **4 - Watershed Management Orgs.**
Level III Prescriptive assistance	As needed	Monitor progress toward PIA[1] goals	BWSR self-assessment; Benchmarking; Mediation; Assistance Grants	**2 Level III assessments conducted**. **5** # of PRAP Assistance Grants issued to support LGU implementation of recommendations from PRAP assessments.
Level IV Penalties applied	As needed	Monitor progress toward PIA[1] goals	Continue Level III Assistance; Notice of Deficiencies; Restriction of funds	No Level IV actions have been required.
Watershed PRAP (pilot project)	Annual	Assess collaboration and implementation of plan objectives applicable to the watershed; survey LGUs regarding watershed focus.	Assistance Grants available to help with implementation; broker consultants for facilitation and collaboration.	**10** # of LGUs in first pilot project. 1 WD 5 counties 4 SWCDs

[1]PIA=Performance Improvement Agreement

About this Report

This report has been prepared for the Minnesota State Legislature by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B.102, subdivision 3. This statute requires BWSR to provide designated legislative committees with "an analysis of local water management entity performance" each year. This report covers the activities of the Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) during the 2012 calendar year. This is the sixth annual report prepared by BWSR for this program.

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What is PRAP?

Supporting Local Delivery of Conservation Services

PRAP focuses on the local governmental units (LGUs) that deliver BWSR's water and land conservation programs, and in particular, how well they are implementing their long-range plans. The LGUs reviewed are soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), watershed districts (WDs), water management organizations (WMOs), and the water management function of counties—a total of 242 distinct organizations. PRAP, authorized by the state legislature in 2007 (see Appendix A), is coordinated by one BWSR central office staff member. He receives assistance from BWSR's 13 Board Conservationists, who routinely work with LGUs across the state.

Amended Guiding Principles

PRAP operates on the following principles first adopted by the Board in 2007 and then amended in 2013.

- 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

Guiding Principles

At the program's start in 2007 the BWSR board adopted principles to guide the implementation of this program. In 2013 the board re-visited and refreshed the principles with two minor changes (see box). The principles still set the program's goal of providing reliable, comprehensive information in a way that encourages LGUs to act in their own best interests.

Multi-level Process

PRAP has three operational components:

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

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

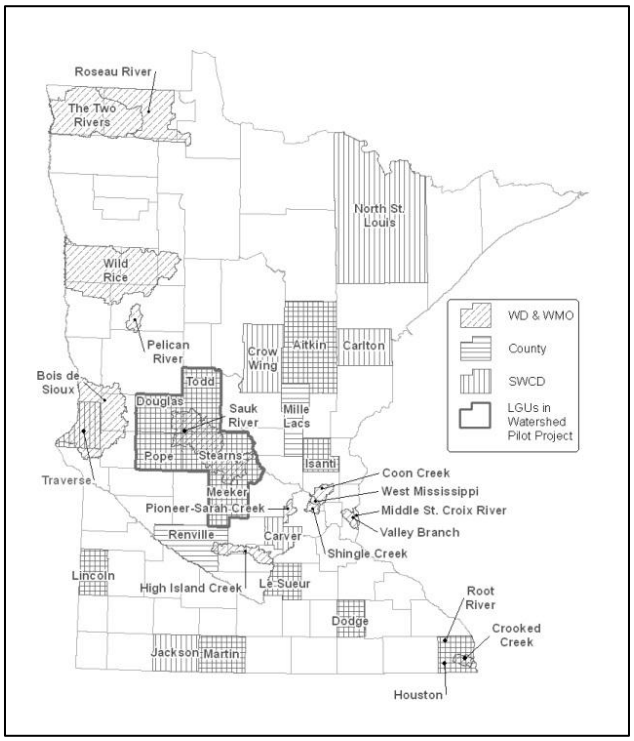
Level I is a tabulation of required LGU plans and reports with website posting of the results. Level I is accomplished with current program funding and does not require additional effort by LGUs.

Level II is a routine, interactive review originally envisioned to cover all LGUs at least once every five years to evaluate operational effectiveness and progress on plan implementation. Program funding so far has allowed an average of only 7 Level II reviews per year. (See map on page 2.) BWSR's Level I and II performance standards for each type of LGU can be viewed at www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html.

Level III is an in-depth assessment of an LGU's performance problems and issues initiated by BWSR or the LGU and usually involving targeted assistance to address specific performance needs. BWSR has conducted Level III review and assistance for several LGUs and regularly monitors all LGUs for additional opportunities.

Level IV is for those LGUs that have significant performance deficiencies, requiring extensive assessment, monitoring and possible penalties as authorized by statute. So far there have not been any Level IV cases.

Level II PRAP LGUs 2008-2012



Assistance varies with the needs of the LGU. Level I assistance is largely routine training for LGUs. BWSR presents this type of training primarily through the annual BWSR Academy and board member training sessions. At Levels II-IV assistance is targeted to the specific needs of the LGUs and can be provided by BWSR staff or consultants, depending on availability and the skills needed. In 2012 BWSR authorized PRAP Assistance Grants for LGUs to both incentivize and support specialized assistance identified by LGUs or recommended by the program.

Reporting makes information about LGU performance accessible to the LGUs' stakeholders and constituents. Reporting venues include the PRAP page on BWSR's website, this annual report, and the LGUs' own websites and annual activity reports.

Accountability: From Measuring Effort to Tracking Results

Administration of government programs demands and deserves 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 publically accessible results. The challenge in reporting results is to move from measuring effort (e.g., how much money was spent on buffers?) to detecting effects of those efforts on targeted resources (e.g., have buffers improved downstream habitat and water quality?). PRAP addresses LGUs' functions of administration, program execution, communication, and collaboration that all contribute to successful resource outcomes.

Performance Review of PRAP

BWSR's Accountability

BWSR continues to hold itself accountable for the accomplishments of the PRAP program. In consideration of that commitment, this section matches program objectives from last year's PRAP legislative report with corresponding program activities during 2012.

BWSR's PERFORMANCE REVIEW ACTIVITIES	
What We Proposed	**What We Did**
Track Level I performance of all LGUs.	BWSR tracked the required plan and report status of 242 LGUs.
Develop performance thresholds for selected Level II performance standards.	BWSR developed a set of new performance standards that address the extent of collaboration among LGUs within the same watershed.
Conduct 7-8 Level II routine performance reviews.	BWSR conducted 4 Level II performance reviews and 10 watershed-based performance reviews.

BWSR's ASSISTANCE to LGUs	
What We Proposed	**What We Did**
Continue Level III assistance.	Assisted one watershed district with process for revision of their outdated management plan. Routine field staff assistance for LGUs experiencing change.
Continue monitoring of LGUs experiencing change for assistance opportunities.	BWSR managers monitored LGUs experiencing change in staffing and board membership, finances, organization, etc.
In collaboration with the BWSR Training Team provide LGUs with guidance for basic board and staff skill sets.	Notified 2012 Level II LGUs of BWSR Academy training sessions that addressed their requested training-related assistance. In consultation with Training Coordinator, began development of training materials for board member and staff skill sets.

BWSR's PRAP REPORTING	
What We Proposed	**What We Did**
Report Level I performance of all LGUs.	BWSR website includes a searchable database of compliance with Level I performance standards for SWCDs, WDs, counties, and WMOs. Appendices C, D and E summarize the Level I results.

PRAP Advisory Team

The purpose of the Advisory Team is to advise BWSR on program implementation and help BWSR maintain a balance between the need for accountability and the need to minimize the program's administrative burden on LGUs. The Team has not met for several years. BWSR provide the members with periodic program updates. BWSR will consult with the team only in the event of substantial program modifications.

LGU Performance Review Results

2012 Objectives

The 2012 objectives for the PRAP performance review component were to continue the Level I compliance tracking for all LGUs, to start a pilot project to test a new joint performance review process for all LGUs working in the same watershed, to conduct a number of routine Level II reviews, and to monitor the activities of LGUs undergoing significant change for opportunities to initiate Level III review or assistance.

Level I Results

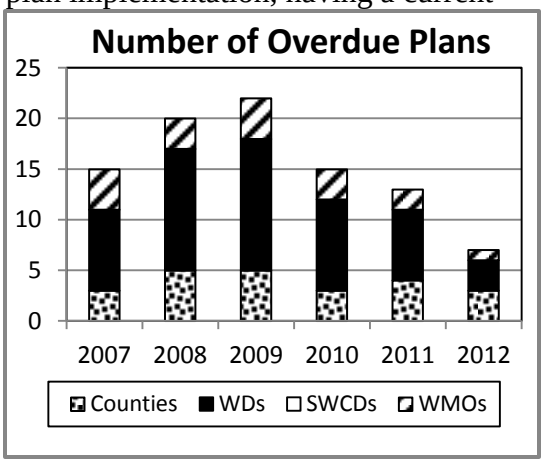
Level I performance review monitors and tabulates the LGUs' long-range plan revision due dates and the timely submittal to BWSR of annual activity, including ditch buffer strip, reports and financial reports and audits. LGU-specific results are listed in Appendices C (long-range plans), D (annual activity reports), and E (annual financial reports) and are searchable through the BWSR website (www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html).

On a statewide basis, the 2012 Level I performance review shows the SWCDs doing the best at meeting basic program accountability requirements.

LGUs Meeting All 2012 Level I Performance Standards

All LGUs	**72%**
SWCDs	94% (85/90)
WMOs	74% (14/19)
Counties	61% (53/87)
WDs	50% (23/46)

Long-range plans. The improvement in the number of overdue long-range plan revisions is continuing, meaning more plans are up-to-date and addressing current resource issues. With PRAP's emphasis on evaluating plan implementation, having a current



plan is essential. Most notable is the improvement for watershed districts, going from 13 overdue plans in 2009 to only 3 in 2012. The persistent numbers of overdue county plan revisions are the 3 metro county groundwater plans. These are expensive to update and, because they are optional to begin with and funding is tight, counties are apparently willing to let the 10-year revision deadline pass.

Annual activity reports. The Level I review tracks both missing and late reports. LGU reports are an important means of providing citizens with timely information about LGU plans and performance.

WDs in greater Minnesota continue to have difficulty complying with the annual activity report requirement. Local drainage authorities, 94 counties and watershed districts, struggle to meet the February 1 due date for their annual buffer strip reports, with 36 percent arriving late. One county was penalized by having their BWSR grant withheld until the report was submitted.

Annual financial reports and audits. Level I tracking of financial information includes both whether the report or audit was completed and whether it was submitted on time. SWCDs submit annual financial reports to BWSR, and in 2012 all of the reports were submitted on time. Most LGUs are required to prepare annual audits of their financial records. Level I tracking showed that 97 percent of LGUs met this performance standard in 2012.

Watershed-based PRAP Pilot Project

In 2012 BWSR conducted a pilot project of a new type of performance review of the 10 local water management entities operating in the Sauk River watershed in central Minnesota (see map). These LGUs are the county environmental services departments and the soil and water conservation districts of Pope, Douglas, Todd, Meeker and Stearns counties, and the Sauk River Watershed District. This pilot project had two purposes:

1) to test a methodology for assessing the extent to which LGUs are collaborating in execution of their plans and their delivery of programs and services on a watershed basis, and 2) to examine barriers to cross-jurisdictional collaboration and suggest remedies to improve collaboration.

The process included development of new performance standards focused on collaboration among LGUs, a survey of LGU lead staff and board members to assess their awareness of the issues of other LGUs in the watershed and the potential for more collaboration, and final reports that address both watershed-wide and individual LGU issues and needs. BWSR conducted three joint meetings with lead staff and a few board members from each LGU to discuss the process and methodology and the findings from the review.

Results from the review show that the LGUs collaborate well on programs that have had a stable funding source and clear guidelines, such as feedlot improvement projects. The participants identified barriers to collaboration, including the reluctance of boards to allow staff to work outside of jurisdictional boundaries, the competition for funds, and the lack of time. LGUs suggested improving awareness of watershed efforts and collaboration by means of regular information sharing meetings and by jointly determining watershed problems and priorities. Appendix G and the PRAP website contain a summary of the joint report and the individual LGU report summaries. Full reports are available from the PRAP Coordinator.

The LGUs that participated in the pilot project have completed the equivalent of a Level II performance review. BWSR is assisting the LGUs with implementation of recommendations in the joint and individual reports. BWSR plans to conduct a second pilot of this approach in 2013 in another watershed.

Level II Results

The Level II review process examines the LGU's progress in implementing their plan's goals and objectives and compliance with BWSR's operational performance standards.

BWSR conducted four Level II reviews in 2012: **Houston County** (Environmental Services), **Root River SWCD**, and the **Crooked Creek Watershed District**, all in Houston County, and the **Traverse SWCD**.

Appendix F contains summaries of the four reviews. Full reports are available from BWSR by request. In general, the reviews showed that all the LGUs are implementing their plans. However, the Crooked Creek WD is still using their original 1962 plan, which needs updating in order for the WD to be eligible for funding for new programs. The Root River and Houston County staffs work well in close partnership to deliver programs to the county's landowners. In order to address staffing or workload changes BWSR recommended a staff capacity assessment for both the Root River and Traverse SWCDs. At the request of the LGUs, BWSR staff presented the results of the performance reviews to both the Houston and Traverse county boards.

Level III Results

There were no formal Level III performance reviews in 2012. BWSR staff provided assistance to the Crooked Creek Watershed District with their watershed plan revision process after their Level II assessment. A county commissioner contacted BWSR to request a PRAP Level III review of a SWCD. BWSR is awaiting a formal request from the county board before conducting any further assessment.

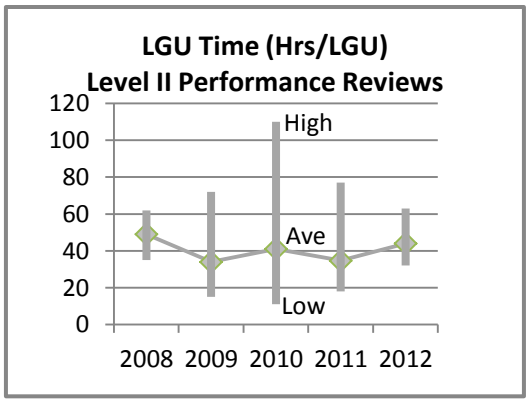
BWSR regional supervisors regularly monitor the performance of LGUs experiencing change in order to assess the need for Level III review. Also, LGUs can request these detailed performance assessments to determine the need for organizational improvements.

Level IV Results

No Level IV actions were needed in 2012.

PRAP Program Costs

BWSR tracks the time spent by LGUs in a performance review as a substitute for actual program costs. Factors affecting an LGU's time include the number of action items in their long-range plan, the number of staff persons who help with data collection, and the ready availability of performance data. In 2012 LGUs spent an average of 44 hours each on their Level II review, slightly above the 5-year average of 40 hours.



Time spent by LGUs in the Sauk River watershed pilot project averaged 35 hours per LGU, slightly less than the average for a standard Level II review.

BWSR staff spent an average of 46 hours per LGU conducting Level II reviews in 2012, compared with 47 hours in 2011 and 41 hours in 2010.

Assistance Services to Local Governments

Focus on Assistance

The term "assistance" is in the PRAP program title in part because it is listed as an activity in the authorizing legislation and also because it is a logical next step after performance review. Prior to PRAP, BWSR field staff regularly provided LGUs with assistance to support and enhance their operational effectiveness. While that essential service continues, PRAP has systematically expanded BWSR's capability to assist LGUs.

PRAP Assistance Grants

In 2012 the BWSR Board delegated authority to the Executive Director to award grants or contracts for the purpose of assisting LGUs in making organizational improvements consistent with the goals of PRAP. The reason for the delegation is the need for a timely response to the grant requests. Four of these PRAP Assistance Grants have been awarded to three different LGUs for a total possible award of $6300. The availability of the grants has been marketed to LGUs via the BWSR website and through the PRAP review process.

2012 PRAP Assistance to LGUs

- Advised Crooked Creek WD on how to revise their management plan.
- Issued four Assistance Grants to LGUs for organizational development and financial management improvements.

LGUs that undergo a formal BWSR performance review are automatically eligible for PRAP Assistance Grants to help with the implementation of organizational improvements recommended by BWSR in the Level II final report. For other LGU grant applicants, BWSR staff conduct an assessment to determine the need for the grant. The BWSR Executive Director regularly informs Board members of the status of assistance grant awards.

Assessing the Needs

PRAP provides an opportunity for LGUs to identify the types of assistance they think would be most helpful. Each Level II performance review includes an opportunity for LGU board members and staff to list assistance needs in the context of their perceived barriers to program and project implementation. In 2012 the four LGUs requested assistance with:

- training in watershed law,
- providing information to county boards regarding the result of the performance review,
- analysis of staff capacity and reallocation of staff workload, and
- finding consultants to assist with revision of a watershed management plan.

Each year LGUs request training related to various operational needs, as was the case this year. BWSR held its fifth annual Training Academy for LGU staff in October. BWSR's Training Program Coordinator identified for the 2012 Level II LGUs the Academy offerings that met the training needs they requested during their performance reviews.

Reporting

Purpose of Reporting

The purposes of reporting about LGU performance are:

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

Report Types

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

The BWSR website contains a webpage devoted to PRAP information. The site gives users access to a searchable database of basic Level I performance information that BWSR has collected for each LGU.

No. of Website Hits to PRAP Level I Performance Database
(by calendar year)

2010- 1437
2011- 695
2012- 213

www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/reporting/index.php

The number of user visits to that database has dropped significantly since 2010, the year the database came on-line. The BWSR 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 that is the subject of a Level II performance review. The LGU lead staff and board or task force members receive a draft of the report to which they are invited to submit comments or corrections. BWSR then prepares both a final report that is sent to the LGU and a one-page summary that is included in this legislative report (see Appendices F and G) and added to the PRAP webpage.

Annual Legislative Report

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

and programs. 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 the office of the legislative auditor. This document is the sixth such report that BWSR has prepared.

Rewards and Recognition

The PRAP Guiding Principles require that the program also recognize 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 H.)

In addition, for those LGUs that receive a routine Level II performance review, their report highlights compliance with each high performance standard with a "commendation" for practices over and above basic requirements. All 2012 Level II LGUs received such commendations.

Steve Hirsch (l.), MnDNR Division of Ecological and Water Resources Director, presents the 2012 Watershed District of the Year award to **Cedar River Watershed District** Administrator Bev Nordby and Manager Mike Jones

Program Conclusions and Future Direction

Conclusions

Based on five years of PRAP implementation, including Level II reviews of 35 LGUs throughout the state, BWSR finds:

- Significant improvement in the number of up-to-date long-range management plans.
- The majority of LGUs are meeting basic Level I performance standards, however there are some that persistently miss required reporting deadlines.
- SWCDs in particular have a high rate of compliance with basic operational performance standards.
- LGUs are pursuing the objectives in their long-range plans.
- LGUs are open to improvements in their operational effectiveness. The PRAP Assistance Grants provide an incentive for LGUs to address those issues.
- On average, LGUs spend approximately 40 hours of staff and board time completing the Level II performance review process.

PRAP in 2013

During 2013 BWSR will add some program elements, modify some, and continue others.

NEW PRAP Elements

- Incorporate a survey of LGU board and staff during the Level II review process to identify additional performance issues.
- Evaluate and assist LGU implementation of PRAP-recommended changes.

MODIFIED PRAP Elements

- Change the Pilot Project schedule to begin later in the calendar year.
- Redesign the PRAP webpage.

CONTINUED PRAP Elements

- Reduce the number of Level II Performance Reviews to continue Pilot Project implementation.
- Continue monitoring of LGUs experiencing change for assistance opportunities.
- Monitor and report Level I performance of all 242 LGUs.
- Notify PRAP LGUs of BWSR Academy training classes that address their expressed needs.
- Continue to promote the PRAP Assistance Grants.

Challenges Long-Term

While local governments are increasingly reporting on their standard social service and emergency service delivery to their citizens, measurement of conservation service delivery and effectiveness is still mostly not addressed. Some of the challenges the PRAP approach will seek to address include:

- How to find the best indicators and the appropriate scale for measuring the performance of the local government conservation services delivery system.
- How to find a balance between time spent in performance review and in engaging LGUs in the organizational development activities that will result in real changes in their effectiveness.
- How to promote cross-jurisdictional collaboration between LGUs, and address board members' concerns about spending money and staff time outside of their boundaries.

Appendices

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

B. PRAP Advisory Team Members

C. Level I: 2012 Long-range Plan Status

D. Level I: Status of Annual Reports for 2011

E. Level I: Status of Audits and Financial Reports for 2011

F. Level II: Summaries of 2012 LGU Performance Review Reports

G. Watershed-based PRAP Pilot Project Summaries

H. 2012 LGU Performance Awards and Recognition

Appendix A

PRAP AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

103B.102, Minnesota Statutes 2007

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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, but not less than once every five years. The board shall maintain a summary of local water management entity performance on the board's Web site. Beginning February 1, 2008, and annually thereafter, the board shall provide an analysis of local water management entity performance to the chairs of the house and senate committees having jurisdiction over environment and natural resources policy.

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

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

History: *2007 c 57 art 1 s 104*

Appendix B

PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

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

Appendix C

Level I: 2012 LGU Long-Range Plan Status
as of December 31, 2012

Soil and Water Conservation Districts
(Districts have a choice of option A or B)

A. Current Resolution Adopting County Local Water Management Plan
All resolutions are current.

B. Current District Comprehensive Plan
All comprehensive plans are current.

Counties
Local Water Management Plan Revision Overdue
All local water management plans are current.

Metro County Groundwater Plan Revision Overdue
Carver
Ramsey
Scott
(Anoka and Hennepin Counties have chosen not to participate in this optional program.)

Watershed Districts
10-Year Watershed Management Plan Revision Overdue:

Plan Revision in Progress
Coon Creek
Crooked Creek
Upper Minnesota River

Watershed Management Organizations
10-Year Management Plan Revision Overdue:

Plan Revision in Progress
Gun Club Lake

Appendix D

Level I: Status of Annual Reports for 2011
as of December 31, 2012

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

eLINK Reports of Grant Expenditures: Reports submitted late

Carlton
North St. Louis

Website Content: Missing Content Elements

Beltrami
Waseca

Counties

Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Report

36% submitted late (27 of 74)
Otter Tail (grant temporarily withheld)

eLINK Reports of Grant Expenditures: Reports submitted late

Cook
Lake

Watershed Districts

Drainage Authority Buffer Strip Report

All reports submitted. 25 % submitted late (5 of 20).

Annual Activity Reports Not Submitted

Belle Creek
Buffalo-Red River
Joe River
Sand Hill River

Annual Activity Reports Submitted Late

Bear Valley
Brown's Creek
Cormorant Lakes
Pelican River
Ramsey Washington Metro
Red Lake
Roseau River
Turtle Creek
Upper Minnesota River
Warroad

Metro Watershed Management Organizations

Annual Activity Reports Not Submitted

Mississippi River

Annual Activity Reports Submitted Late

Carver
Black Dog

Appendix E

Level I: Status of Audits and Financial Reports for 2011
as of December 31, 2012

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Annual Financial Reports (all 90 Districts)
All reports submitted on time.

Annual Audits (58 required)
Morrison (late)

Watershed Districts

Annual Audits Not Completed
Bear Valley
High Island Creek
Joe River
Stockton-Rollingstone-Minnesota City
Turtle Creek

Annual Audits Submitted Late
Brown's Creek
Capitol Region
Carnelian-Marine

Metro Watershed Management Organizations

Annual Audits Not Submitted
Mississippi River

Annual Audits Submitted Late
Black Dog
Middle St. Croix

Appendix F

LEVEL II FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP
Performance Review and Assistance Program
2012 Level II Review:
Crooked Creek Watershed District *(Houston County)*

Why BWSR did this review
BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2012 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of four different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the Crooked Creek WD because they are one of three local water management entities in Houston County, which is one area of focus for BWSR's PRAP review this year.

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

Crooked Creek Watershed District
Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found
The Crooked Creek WD board of managers has persevered in the original district purpose of constructing and maintaining water retention structures in the Crooked Creek watershed, including extensive sinkhole repair projects in 2008 and 2011. In place for 50-years, all of the district's structures have provided flood relief for downstream residents and landowners. The managers believe that there are other objectives to be achieved in the watershed, but so far, they have been unable to get those projects underway.

A key to the future of this watershed district is the completion of their watershed management plan revision. They have taken several positive steps to that end in recent years. However, the completion of the task seems just out of reach. In recent months, BWSR has invested considerable resources to encourage the district to complete the management plan rewrite, without success. An updated management plan will open some doors to potential new projects and additional funding.

The district has administrative staff support provided through a contract with the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District. It is not clear whether the SWCD has the capability to adequately serve the watershed district's needs. The upcoming review of the SWCD staffing and operational relationships with the county and watershed district will provide an opportunity for the managers to find out if the SWCD will be in a position to meet their needs for administrative support in the future.

Action Items (need immediate attention)
- Data practices policy needed
- Manager appointments: need to be reported
- Watershed management plan: out-of-date
- Website needs additional content.

Commendations (show exemplary performance)
The district meets six of BWSR's benchmark standards for watershed districts in greater Minnesota.

BWSR has offered **four recommendations** for district performance improvements.

LEVEL II FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2012 Level II Review:

Houston County Local Water Management

(Houston County)

Why BWSR did this review

BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2012 BWSR has conducted Level II performance reviews of 4 different local water management entities.

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

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

Houston County Local Water Management Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found

Houston County clearly benefits from a close working partnership with the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District. There is evidence of good coordination between the various county department staff, most notably those in the Planning and Zoning office, and the SWCD staff. The county and SWCD staff have done a good job coordinating and communicating with their local partners and members of the water plan advisory committee. This committee meets regularly, has ownership of local water management issues, and takes an active role in the development and implementation of the water plan.

Commendations (show exemplary performance)

- ★ State $ leveraged at least 1.5 times in non-state $.
- ★ Partnerships: liaison with SWCDs/WDs and cooperative projects/tasks done.
- ★ Report to water plan advisory committee on plan progress.
- ★ County local water plan on county website.
- ★ Water management ordinances on county website.

BWSR offered three recommendations to the county for possible enhancement of their operational effectiveness.

LEVEL II FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP

Performance Review and Assistance Program

2012 Level II Review:

Root River SWCD *(Houston County)*

Why BWSR did this review

BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2012 BWSR has conducted Level II performance reviews of 4 different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the Root River SWCD because they are near the midpoint in implementing their local water management plan.

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

Root River Soil and Water Conservation District Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found

The Root River SWCD has demonstrated good progress in implementing the action items laid out in the 2007 Houston County Comprehensive Water Plan. This progress has been in addition to their excellent flood recovery work during the past five years. Following the adoption of the 2007 water plan, three major floods–August 2007, June 2008 and September 2010–caused major damages to Houston County's landscape. The demand for flood damage and erosion repair projects after these events resulted in a much greater than normal workload at both the policy and technical service delivery levels. The district set ambitious goals for flood recovery efforts and has met most of them.

The district's focus on providing technical assistance to landowners has meant that other operational areas, such as organizational infrastructure and capacity, have not been emphasized. Prior to and during the flood recovery efforts, the district had begun discussions with the county regarding collaborative services. With the recent retirement of the District Manager and the board's intent to improve organizational capacity and effectiveness, there is an opportunity to revisit those discussions and reassess their operational needs, which the district is starting to address.

In all these activities the Root River SWCD shows evidence of its standing as one of the pioneering soil conservation districts in Minnesota.

Commendations (show exemplary performance)

- ★ State $ leverage at least 1.5 times in non-state $.
- ★ Website contains additional content beyond minimum required.
- ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks done with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, non-governmental organizations.
- ★ Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff.

BWSR issued four recommendations for the district's consideration to potentially enhance their organizational effectiveness.

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Appendix F

LEVEL II FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

PRAP
Performance Review and Assistance Program
2012 Level II Review:
Traverse SWCD *(Traverse County)*

Why BWSR did this review
BWSR conducts Level II performance reviews to help local government water management entities to be the best they can be in plan implementation and overall operational effectiveness. In 2012 BWSR conducted Level II performance reviews of four different local water management entities.

BWSR has conducted a routine Level II performance review of the **Traverse SWCD** because they are past the midpoint in implementing their 10-year comprehensive plan.

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

Traverse Soil and Water Conservation District Summary of Performance Review Results

What BWSR Found
One of the defining characteristics of the Traverse SWCD is the high level of trust and strong working relationship between the supervisors and staff. The supervisors and residents of the district are well-served by staff who are personable and have good technical competency.

Administratively, the staff provide strong leadership in their partnership with the Bois de Sioux Watershed District and four other districts involved with the Mustinka River Clean Water Fund projects. This working relationship is aided by consistency between the SWCD and watershed district plans. The district's assumption of responsibilities for most of the county environmental services functions also speaks well of the range of expertise of the district manager and board's willingness to take on these important programs. Finally, the district has an impressive record of CRP and CCRP enrollment in partnership with their USDA partners in Traverse County.

This performance assessment has also revealed that, in addition to the district's impressive list of accomplishments, they have likely reached the limit of their staff's capacity to accomplish work. Two recommendations are offered to address that issue.

Action Items (need immediate attention)
None

Commendations (show exemplary performance)
The Traverse SWCD is commended for meeting these benchmark performance standards.

- ★ State $ leverage at least 1.5 times in non-state $
- ★ Website contains additional content beyond minimum required
- ★ Obtained stakeholder input within last 5 yrs
- ★ Annual report communicates progress on plan goals
- ★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks done with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, non-governmental organizations
- ★ Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff.

Appendix G

WATERSHED BASED PRAP FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

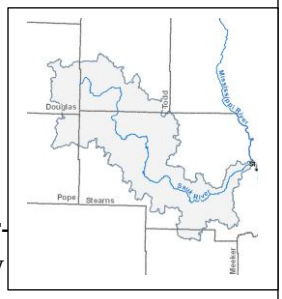
PRAP Pilot Project
Performance Review and Assistance Program
Watershed-based PRAP
Sauk River Watershed *(Pope, Douglas, Todd, Meeker and Stearns Counties & SWCDs; Sauk River Watershed District)*

Why BWSR did this review
Starting in 2008 BWSR has conducted individual Level II performance reviews of 35 different LGUs. This pilot project is designed to test a methodology that will assess the extent to which LGUs that operate within the same watershed have a watershed focus and work together to address resource needs on a watershed basis. This is the first such pilot project.

BWSR selected the LGUs working in the Sauk River watershed because this is a well-defined major watershed covered by a watershed district. The LGUs are all recognized as strong performers in delivering their projects and programs. None of them have previously been the subject of a Level II performance review.

This document includes findings and recommendations to promote collaborative local water management among the LGUs in the Sauk River watershed.

Sauk River Watershed – All LGUs Summary of Performance Review Results



What BWSR Found
This review revealed many instances where local government units (LGUs) within the same jurisdictional boundary, a county and SWCD, exhibit strong working relationships and good collaboration. Because of these cases the review suggests a more positive picture of collaboration than occurs across county boundaries. With the exception of the Sauk River Watershed District, county boundaries and the political implications of those boundaries are significant barriers to collaboration. In general, collaboration among LGUs on a watershed basis could be stronger. The majority of LGU board and staff members who responded to the PRAP survey indicated that more collaboration would be good for their organization and for the watershed's resources. They suggested ideas for making such improvements.

This review identified three specific issues for LGU action: identifying strengths (feedlot management), communication and coordination, and lack of trust/competition for funds. Practical action steps are recommended to address each of these issues and an implementation schedule is proposed.

In addition, the report includes suggestions for a BWSR role in assisting LGUs in the implementation of the recommended actions. BWSR has assistance grants to support implementation.

The next steps in this process include meetings with each contributing LGU board to present recommendations specific to that LGU to improve their potential for collaboration with each other.

PRAP Pilot Project Performance Review and Assistance Program Watershed-based PRAP Sauk River Watershed
(Pope, Douglas, Todd, Meeker and Stearns Counties & SWCDs; Sauk River Watershed District)

Why BWSR did this review
Since 2008 BWSR has conducted individual Level II performance reviews of 35 different LGUs. This pilot project is designed to test a new methodology that will assess the extent to which LGUs that operate within the same watershed have a watershed focus and work together to address resource needs on a watershed basis. This is the first such pilot project.

BWSR selected the LGUs working in the Sauk River watershed because this is a well-defined major watershed covered by a watershed district. The LGUs are all recognized as strong performers in delivering their projects and programs. None of them have previously been the subject of a Level II performance review.

Pope County & Pope Soil and Water Conservation District Summary of Performance Review Results Watershed-based PRAP

What BWSR Found
The Pope County portion of the Sauk River Watershed covers only 7 percent of the county in the northeast corner. This is a headwater area to two Sauk River tributaries. Two Pope County LGUs, the county Land and Resource Management Department (LRM) and the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), provide local resource management services throughout the county using the same comprehensive local water management plan. Both LGUs have partnered with the Sauk River Watershed District on a few programs. The Pope LGUs have not found opportunities to collaborate on program delivery with neighboring counties that share portions of the Sauk River watershed.

Regarding organizational development, the Pope SWCD has taken some positive steps toward enhanced organizational effectiveness in the past few years. Since July, however, both LGUs have faced a significant organizational challenge. The loss of key staff people in the county Land and Resource Management Department has resulted in a systematic reexamination of services by the county and, potentially, a greater role for the SWCD in program areas previously conducted by county staff.

This review identified two specific issues and associated recommendations for action by these LGUs. The first deals with the need to complete the on-going planning of organizational and service delivery realignment. The second addresses the local water management plan revision that is currently underway and the need to expand the role of the local water plan task force.

With respect to the collaboration among all 10 LGUs working in the Sauk River watershed, this review found that, while there are some areas of success, there is also potential for improvement. Four issues and recommendations are presented to address that potential. However in the case of Pope County LGUs, any discussion of collaboration with the other contributing LGUs in the Sauk River watershed should be postponed until the reorganization process is completed.

Appendix G

Summaries of PRAP Watershed-based Pilot Project Reports for the eight other LGUs--

Sauk River Watershed District
Douglas County and SWCD
Todd County
Stearns County
Stearns SWCD
Meeker County and SWCD—

were not finalized at the time this report was published. Summaries will be published on the BWSR website as they become available. (www.BWSR.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html)

Appendix H

2012 Local Government Performance Awards and Recognition

(Awarding agency listed in parentheses.)

County Conservation Award
(Association of Minnesota Counties and Board of Water and Soil Resources)
Landfill Reclamation Initiative, Olmsted County

Outstanding SWCD Employee
(Board of Water and Soil Resources)
Greg Ostrowski, Todd SWCD

Outstanding Supervisor Award
(Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts)
Roland Cleveland, Chisago SWCD

Appreciation Award
(Department of Natural Resources)
Blue Earth SWCD

Outstanding WD Employee
(Board of Water and Soil Resources)
Anna Eleria, Capitol Region WD

Watershed District of the Year
(Department of Natural Resources)
Cedar River WD

Program of the Year
(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)
East Metro Water Resource Education Program,
Brown's Creek, Carnelian Marine-St. Croix, Ramsey Washington Metro,
Rice Creek, South Washington and Valley Branch WDs

Project of the Year
(Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts)
Maplewood Mall Runoff Reduction Retrofit Project,
Ramsey Washington Metro WD