



# Minnesota governance for water management and drainage

September 2013

| Water management plans and implementation  |  |  |
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| <p><b>Counties – 87 in Minnesota</b></p> <p>Boundary – political lines</p> <p>Governance – elected County Boards</p> <p><b>1985</b></p>  | <p><b>Soil and Water Conservation Districts – 90 in Minnesota</b></p> <p>Boundary – on county lines</p> <p>Governance – elected SWCD Supervisors</p> <p><b>1937</b></p>  | <p><b>Watershed Districts – 46 in Minnesota</b></p> <p>Boundary – hydrologic</p> <p>Governance – county commissioners appoint WD Managers</p> <p><b>1955</b></p>   |
| <p><a href="#">MN Statute 103 B</a></p>  | <p><a href="#">MN Statute 103 C</a></p>  | <p><a href="#">MN Statute 103 D</a></p>  |
| <p><b>County water plan developed by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Zoning Dept. or Environmental Services Dept.</li> <li>• Counties may delegate plan development to the SWCD (County adopts it, but both implement the plan).</li> </ul> <p><b>County plans include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments of the resources.</li> <li>• Priority concerns</li> <li>• Goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Implementation actions.</li> <li>• Measureable outcomes.</li> <li>• Lots of public input and task force participation.</li> <li>• Local adaption by the county commissioners (local government unit driven).</li> <li>• State approved plan.</li> </ul> | <p><b>SWCD develop annual and comprehensive plans:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many SWCDs adopt county water plans as their overall plan (by resolution).</li> <li>• Counties may delegate the writing of their plan to the SWCD (County adopts it, but both implement the plan).</li> <li>• SWCDs work mainly to install Best Management Practices (BMPs) on private lands.</li> </ul> | <p><b>WD formed by petition for various reasons:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake water quality management.</li> <li>• Drainage management.</li> <li>• Flood control.</li> <li>• Storm water quality management.</li> </ul> <p><b>WD overall plans include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of the WD.</li> <li>• Hydrologic data.</li> <li>• Problems requiring action.</li> <li>• Specific projects planned.</li> <li>• Effectiveness of WD rules and permits.</li> </ul> <p><b>WD plans developed by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource staff of WD.</li> <li>• Consulting firms (environmental or engineering).</li> </ul> |

| <b>Drainage</b>  |  |   |
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| <b>Counties</b>  | <b>Soil and Water Conservation Districts</b>   | <b>Watershed Districts</b>  |
| <a href="#">MN Statute 103 E</a>   |  | <a href="#">MN Statute 103 D</a><br><a href="#">MN Statute 103 E</a>  |
| <p><b>County serves as the drainage authority (administers Chapter 103E).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowners petition to county under Chapter 103E.</li> <li>• County reviews the petition and appoints an engineer and viewers, as appropriate.</li> <li>• Engineers are typically private consultants.</li> <li>• Viewers determine benefits and who pays how much.</li> <li>• County serves as the fiscal manager for establishment, improvement, and maintenance.</li> <li>• Each ditch / tile system has its own funds paid by the landowners.</li> <li>• Drainage systems can accept external funds for wetland restoration, water quality or flood control.</li> <li>• County rules may govern the capacity of private lines and overall quantity management.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Often help through design and installation of best management practices (BMPs).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side inlets.</li> <li>• Buffers along ditches.</li> <li>• Wetland restorations or ponds.</li> <li>• Conservation drainage practices.</li> <li>• Other on-field and on-farm BMPs that help manage drainage</li> <li>• May help implement drainage law through county or WD authority.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Watershed Districts can also serve as the drainage authority.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment and improvement of Chapter 103E systems (and subsequent repair) are under WD administration where a WD exists.</li> <li>• Counties may transfer their Chapter 103E drainage systems to the applicable WD for administration.</li> <li>• WD rules may govern capacity of private and public drainage systems and overall water management.</li> </ul> |

**Resources available on Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources website:**

1. SWCD Operational Handbook
2. WD Managers Handbook
3. Minnesota Public Drainage Manual
4. County Comprehensive local water management plan guidance

**Note:** The Twin Cities Metro area also has Watershed Management Organizations (WMOs) of LGUs, where watershed districts do not exist.