

Drainage Work Group

Fact Sheet

Drainage Work Group Purpose

The stakeholder Drainage Work Group has been meeting since 2006 for the following purposes:

- Foster science-based mutual understandings regarding drainage topics and issues;
- Develop consensus recommendations for drainage system management and related water management, including recommendations for updating Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103E drainage law and other provisions.

Drainage Work Group Membership

Drainage Authorities	AMC – Association of Minnesota Counties
	MAWD – Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts
Farm Groups	MFB – Minnesota Farm Bureau
	MFU – Minnesota Farmers Union
	Lobbyist for several other Agriculture and Producer Groups
Environmental Groups	MCEA – Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
	FWLA – Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance
	MCF – Minnesota Conservation Federation
Other Associations	MASWCD – MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
	MVA – Minnesota Viewers Association
	MACO – Minnesota Association of County Officers
	MADI – Minnesota Association of Drainage Inspectors
	RRWMB – Red River Watershed Management Board
	MAT – Minnesota Association of Townships
	MAWRC – Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Coalition
	ADMC – Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition
State Agencies	BWSR, DNR, MDA, MPCA
Legislature	Legislators and/or House and Senate staff

Why Drainage is an Important Topic

- Water quality and quantity management are increasingly important as the Impaired Waters List for Minnesota continues to grow, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies and plans are developed and implemented, and the Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment is implemented.
- Because drainage is critical for agriculture, roads and urban areas, drainage management is likewise critical. Drainage involves numerous stakeholders.
- Drainage infrastructure provides substantial opportunity for multipurpose water management practices and projects.

Drainage Work Group Activities and Accomplishments to Date

Through stakeholder coordination facilitated by the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Drainage Work Group (DWG) has developed a number of consensus recommendations to update Chapter 103E drainage law and to otherwise enhance drainage management. Following is a summary.

In 2006, the DWG developed consensus recommendations to:

- clarify and enhance Chapter 103E drainage law regarding buffer strips and side inlet controls along public drainage ditches (Section 103E.021);
- clarify protection of conservation practices along drainage ditches;
- clarify ditch inspection frequency;
- develop drainage records modernization and preservation guidelines and promote state cost-share for drainage records modernization;
- support updating of the Minnesota Public Drainage Manual; and
- support establishment of an interagency drainage management team to provide coordination and assistance to promote multipurpose drainage management.

These consensus recommendations were substantially adopted by the Legislature in 2007, without controversy.

In 2007, 2008 and 2009, the DWG developed additional consensus recommendations to further update Chapter 103E drainage law and to enhance drainage management, including:

- clarify the scope and process of Section 103E.227 to better enable wetland restorations and other impoundments on drainage systems, and associated funding partnerships between drainage systems and conservation programs;
- clarify the language and process of Section 103E.805 to better enable partial abandonment of drainage systems for wetland restorations and other impoundments;
- require all Chapter 103E drainage authorities (counties and watershed districts) to appoint a drainage inspector;
- update various dollar limits and thresholds in drainage law, primarily for inflation;
- support additional state cost-share for drainage records modernization; and
- provide authority in statute to BWSR for drainage stakeholder coordination.

These consensus recommendations were substantially adopted by the Legislature in 2010, with minimal tweaks. However, additional drainage records modernization cost-share was not addressed (2010 was not a biennial appropriation year).

Other Topics of Discussion to Date

- Review of drainage law and experience regarding transfer of drainage system authority, particularly where urban areas have expanded over agricultural drainage systems.
- Water quality use classifications and public drainage systems.
- Drainage ditch assessments on state Consolidated Conservation lands.
- Sources of sediment in the Minnesota River Basin.
- Current conservation drainage practices – research and experience.
- Methods and process for redetermination of benefits of drainage systems, including adjusting drainage assessments for land use change.
- Lateral effects of drainage on conservation lands and conservation lands on farmland.
- LCCMR projects regarding drainage law evaluation and intensified tile drainage effects.
- Section 103E.015 Considerations before drainage work is done.
- Other current drainage related research, information, legislation, programs and topics.