



# BWSR History

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The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources was created in 1987, when the Legislature combined the Soil and Water Conservation Board with two other organizations with local government and natural resource ties: the Water Resources Board (established in 1955) and the Southern Minnesota Rivers Basin Council (established in 1971). The Water Resources Board was composed of five members appointed by the governor, and it had jurisdiction over the establishment of watershed districts, which are special purpose local units of government that manage water within the drainage basin of lakes or river systems. The Southern Minnesota Rivers Basin Council had been established as a commission to prepare an overall conservation and development plan for the southern part of the state. The commission was changed to a board in 1975 and to a council in 1983. When it was merged into the Board of Water and Soil Resources, its membership consisted of 11 members, all residents of the basin area and appointed by the governor.

Legislation establishing the Board of Water and Soil Resources (reflected in Minnesota Statutes 103B.101) outlined its responsibilities to a variety of local governments. Its membership was changed to include 17 members: three representing soil and water conservation districts; three representing watershed management organizations or watershed districts; three representing counties; three citizen members; and five agency members representing the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Department of Health, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The board expanded in 2009 to include two representatives of cities (one in the Twin Cities Metro Area and one in Greater Minnesota) and one township representative.

The earliest incarnation of the Soil and Water Conservation Board was the 1937 establishment of the state Soil Conservation Committee, which helped organize soil and water conservation districts throughout the state, and provided them with promotional, financial, and administrative assistance.

In the 1950s, the Soil Conservation Committee became part of the University of Minnesota Soils Department, where it stayed until it was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources in 1971.

In 1967 the committee name was changed to the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and it was changed in 1975 to the Soil and Water Conservation Board. In 1982 this board was transferred to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. At that time, its membership consisted of seven members appointed by the governor and five agency personnel representing the University of Minnesota Institute of Agriculture, the Agricultural Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.