



LGU Staff Migrate to Brainerd for the 2013 BWSR Academy

December 2013 Snapshots

Over 350 of Minnesota's natural resource professionals converged on Brainerd, Minnesota during the last week in October with a shared goal: improving their ability to deliver conservation to the citizens of Minnesota. The BWSR Academy, which has been offered as a training event for local government (LGU) staff for the past 6 years, was the draw.

The attendance numbers at the Academy have increased every year, and 2013 was no exception. In fact, according to Jason Weinerman, BWSR Board Conservationist, *"This was the first year we actually had to turn people away because the sessions, and facility, were full to capacity"*.



Participants engage in small group discussion during one of the Academy sessions.

BWSR staff have adjusted the Academy scope and approach each year to keep up with the growing demands. For example, in the past we offered five concurrent tracks, each filled with 90 minute sessions. This year, we added a "repeat" track, where select sessions were offered a second time. In total, we had 42 different sessions during the 3-day Academy, providing over 60 hours of training opportunities.

One of the more unique aspects of the Academy is the emphasis we place on peer to peer learning. Several sessions are planned or led by LGU staff. Informal time to share experiences is among the most appreciated

aspects of the Academy for participants. As one participant put it, *"I think the Academy is a great place to network with other organizations and bounce ideas off of each other. We don't get to see most of these people on a regular basis so getting to talk with them is beneficial."*



Presenters talk with Local Partners during a program session.

sessions were well attended, the speakers were great, and the behind the scenes help made everything run smoothly." It showed in feedback as well. Over 81% of attendees said the BWSR Academy met their personal goals for learning and 98% said they'd recommend the Academy to others.

The planning effort spans all departments at BWSR. Jenny Gieseke, BWSR Training Coordinator noted; *"The hard work of the Academy planning teams was apparent in how well things went this year. The*

Academy Purpose:

To provide high quality training for local government staff that maintains and improves the delivery of conservation work and meets the shared expectations of BWSR and local resource management boards