



PRAP assistance grants moves organizational work forward

November 2013 Snapshots



When the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) faced an impending retirement from a long-tenured district manager in 2011, it left the district board and staff looking for direction.

Ron Meiners, district technician, said the board and staff met regularly to discuss programs, workloads, goals, along with strengths and weaknesses within the operations and employee base. "It became apparent that input and recommendations from an independent professional with conservation management experience was critical," Meiners said.

Following a similar recommendation from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) evaluation, the Root River SWCD applied for and received an assistance grant to hire an organizational effectiveness consultant.

Don Buckhout, BWSR PRAP coordinator, said assistance grants provide funding to local units of government (LGUs) that want to improve their performance by addressing personnel issues like revising position descriptions, refining work load and identifying training needs.

"Often times, a PRAP LGU review will yield recommendations on effectiveness issues," Buckhout said. "This grant allows the LGU to receive some help to move their organization in the right direction."

The Root River SWCD was the first PRAP grant ever given by BWSR. "Without that financial assistance, the costs of such a service was more than the district's current operating budget could handle," Meiners said.

Meiners said the consultant took an in depth look at the district's operations, skills, workload and opportunities. "He provided recommendations for staffing plans, job descriptions, wage scales, work plans, training and much more," Meiners said. "The current staff was very comfortable with the direction given and it also helped relieve a lot of the stress that our board faced when considering changes within our office."

The assistance grant was so successful that Meiners said he'd recommend the program to other districts.

"To have someone from the outside that has professional knowledge of Soil and Water Conservation District operations look in and make unbiased recommendations is invaluable," Meiners said. "The results included a sense of confidence, improved staff relations, and it set clear direction and optimism for our district."

BWSR is now accepting applications for the PRAP Assistance Grants. Information can be found on the BWSR website at: <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/index.html>.
