

LGU performance reviews incorporate Wetland Conservation Act

Since 2008, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) has assessed the performance of local government partners that constitute Minnesota's local delivery system for conservation of water and related land resources. The goal: Help partners do their best to manage Minnesota's land and water resources.

BWSR also uses PRAP to provide organizational improvement or assistance grants to local government units (LGUs), and prepares an annual report to the legislature outlining program work conducted.

In 2017, a review of LGUs' Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) implementation was added to PRAP Level II assessments.

Minnesota lawmakers passed the WCA in 1991 to achieve no net loss in the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of the state's wetlands. Lawmakers designated certain implementation responsibilities to LGUs and soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), with program oversight by BWSR. Administrative review of how LGUs and SWCDs carry out their responsibilities is among the tools used.

Adding WCA to the PRAP review process has proven effective for LGUs and BWSR.

"It made a lot of sense to bring the WCA program reviews into PRAP local government program analysis," said Dale Krystosek, BWSR's PRAP coordinator. "The LGU staff generally saw the efficiencies of this approach and were very cooperative. For BWSR, by joining forces with our wetland program staff we were able to improve efficiency for LGUs in the state and accomplish our statutory oversight responsibilities in a more comprehensive way."

WCA program reviews evaluate such things as how well LGUs document decisions, whether they meet deadlines and how they interpret rule requirements. BWSR also evaluates how decisions are made, and the

qualifications and training of LGU staff implementing the program.

Data for WCA program reviews is collected through staff interviews, an appropriate number and type of project files, and documentation.

In 2017, 20 WCA program reviews were completed as part of PRAP for counties and SWCDs. (See map for counties where reviews occurred.) Overall, reviews found that Minnesota LGUs are doing a satisfactory job of program implementation. Specific recommendations were made in several counties to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

In 2018, another 22 LGUs (see map) will participate in joint PRAP and WCA program reviews. They include 10 counties, 10 SWCDs, one watershed district and one watershed management organization.

