

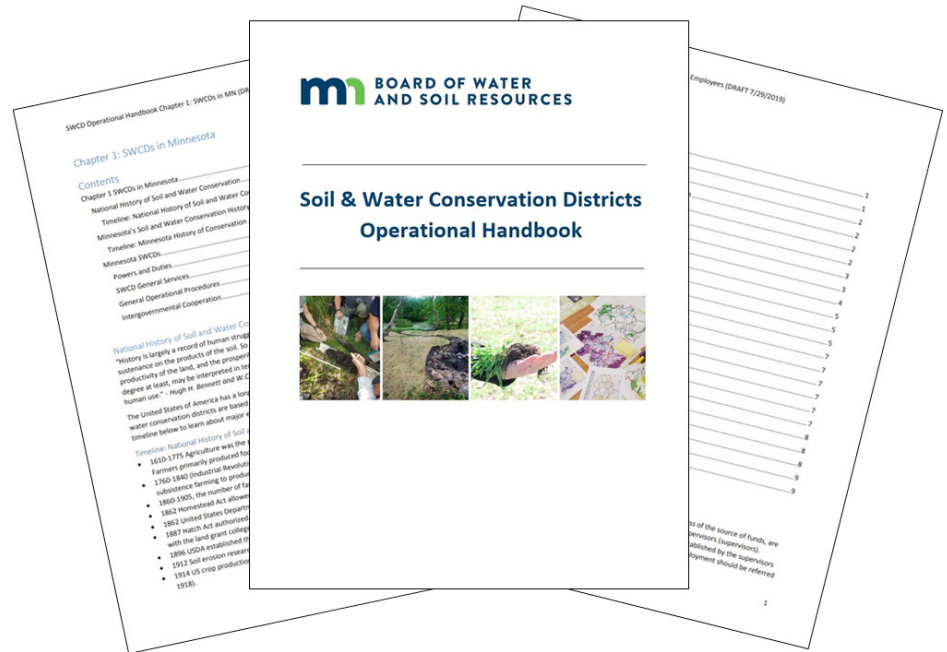
SWCD handbook updates slated for January

Since it was founded in 1987, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has played a key role in improving and protecting the state's abundant water and soil resources.

Working with private landowners and local government partners, over the past three decades BWSR has helped to implement about 17,500 conservation practices. Eighty-five percent of its budget is spent directly on conservation projects, via local partners.

Not all of BWSR's work can be measured in acres and practices. Besides awarding grants, BWSR acts as a resource for the local government staff who consult with landowners and implement conservation practices. BWSR trains conservation workers through BWSR Academy (an annual training retreat for local government staff), offers a Technical Training and Certification program (a collaborative effort among the Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and BWSR designed to develop and maintain a highly trained, technically skilled workforce of natural resource professionals), provides online planning tools such as BuffCat (a buffer compliance tracking tool) and makes available guidance on best practices.

Key resources include the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Operational Handbook and the SWCD Supervisors Handbook. BWSR staff is updating and combining the handbooks. The revised version is



slated for a January release.

“This handbook has been a trusted resource for SWCD staff and supervisors for decades,” said BWSR Water Programs Coordinator Annie Felix-Gerth, who is overseeing the revision. “Resource management has changed significantly over the years — especially since the passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment — and this updated guide will address the changing landscape of resource management in a practical, user-friendly way.”

Work on the handbook revision started in spring 2018. First, BWSR staff combined the information found in both handbooks. Next, work began drafting additional chapters to expand its scope. Several members of MACDE provided feedback. The revised version will include new chapters on financial management and technical service areas.

The following draft chapters are available now:

- SWCDs in Minnesota
- Board of Supervisors
- Employees
- Meetings and Committees

These chapters are expected to be available on BWSR's website by January 2020:

- Resource Planning and Evaluation
- Financing SWCD Operations
- Financial Management
- District Liability
- Records Management
- Technical Service Areas

The remaining draft chapters will be posted to BWSR's website by January. Drafts will be reviewed internally and by SWCD staff before the handbook is finalized. Take a sneak peek at the first four draft chapters [here](#).