

Online format boosts BWSR Academy attendance



University of Minnesota Extension Educator Anne Sawyer performed a slump test during the session “Learning from Critters: Soil Biology and Interpreting Indicators: Part I,” on Oct. 27 during BWSR Academy. Slump tests compare how the same type of soil under different management conditions behaves when saturated. **Photo Credits:** BWSR



BWSR Academy saw record attendance during the annual training event’s second online run.

More than 500 people attended the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources’ BWSR Academy Oct. 26-28, an increase of nearly 100 people from the previous year. The number of sessions offered nearly doubled, increasing from 24 in 2020 to 40 this year. BWSR waived enrollment fees due to the online format.

“Online formats do reduce many of the traditional barriers to participation,” said Rice Creek Watershed District Communication and Outreach Coordinator Beth Carreno, who led a session on communications planning.

BWSR Academy aims to provide local government staff with high-quality training that maintains and

improves their delivery of conservation work and meets the shared expectations of BWSR and local resource management boards. Trainers typically include BWSR staff, local government staff and conservation professionals from private industry and nonprofits.

BWSR Academy organizers scheduled trainings only in the mornings to reduce screen fatigue and allow attendees to work in the afternoons. Training sessions covered a wide range of topics such as budgeting, grants management, soil health practices, GIS software and communication.

“I think the diversity of training on the issues and topics is important because many of our local government partners are smaller organizations who lack the ability to directly create training on their own,” said BWSR Board Conservationist

