BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

Climate Resiliency: Private Lands Peatland Restoration

2023 Proposed Funding

BWSR is requesting **$15 million** from the general fund to create a program that will help restore valuable peatlands in Minnesota. The program would pursue a high-priority goal identified in the Minnesota Climate Action Framework. Peatlands (bogs and fens) hold some of Minnesota's largest carbon reserves but emit large quantities of carbon when ditched and drained. Protecting existing peatlands and other wetlands, and restoring drained, farmed or pastured peatlands and wetlands will increase carbon storage.

What are peatlands?

Peatlands are a type of wetland. These carbon-rich ecosystems store and sequester more carbon than any other type of terrestrial ecosystem. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota contains approximately 6 million acres of peatlands – more than any other U.S. state except Alaska. Peatlands in their natural state play a key role in storing carbon, preserving biodiversity, and improving water quality. However, when peatlands are drained for agricultural purposes or otherwise disturbed, they release harmful levels of greenhouse gases. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, disturbed peatlands are the state's fourth-highest source of emissions.

Peatlands, which cover approximately 10% of Minnesota, are pictured in Big Bog State Recreation Area in Beltrami County. **Photo credit:** BWSR

Program overview

The proposed Private Lands Peatland Restoration Program would take peatlands out of agricultural production and place them into permanent conservation easements via BWSR's Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program. Protecting and restoring these areas will help reduce emissions released by disturbed peatlands. This proposal will also create an interactive map application that helps identify peatlands with potential for restoration and protection. The map application utilizes peatland mapping layers developed by The Nature Conservancy. The application would be refined by state agencies (such as BWSR and DNR) and supportive non-governmental organizations (such as The Nature Conservancy) before being shared more broadly with University of Minnesota researchers, The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and other partners.

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Minnesota Climate Action Framework