

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES  
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH  
LOWER-LEVEL BOARD ROOM  
ST. PAUL, MN 55155  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Eunice Biel, Jayne Hager Dee, Jill Crafton, Joe Collins, Kevin Wilson, LeRoy Ose, Mark Zabel, Mike Runk, Neil Peterson, Rich Sve, Ron Staples, Ted Winter, Todd Holman, Tom Schulz, Sarah Strommen, DNR; Joel Larson, University of Minnesota Extension; Melissa Lewis, MPCA; Steve Robertson, MDH; Brad Jordahl Redlin, MDA

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Lori Cox

**STAFF PRESENT:**

John Jaschke, Rachel Mueller, Marcey Westrick, Jill Sackett Eberhart, Erin Loeffler, Dan Shaw, Megan Reich, Suzanne Rhees, Craig Enwall, Ed Lenz, John Shea, Dave Weirens; Denise Lauerman, Suzanne Rhees, Sharon Doucette, Dusty VanThuyne, Jeremy Maul, Julie Westerlund

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Megan Reich, Metro Blooms; Faith Krogstad, MPCA; Dave Jones, NRCS; Jesse Walters, Martin SWCD; Ashley Brenke, Martin SWCD; Kevin Paap, Blue Earth County; Laura Jester, BCWMC; Nathan Carr, Faribault County; Kerry Netzke, RCRCA

Chair Todd Holman called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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26-11 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA - Moved by Jill Crafton, seconded by Ron Staples, to adopt the agenda as presented. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

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26-12 **MINUTES OF JANUARY 28, 2026 BOARD MEETING – Moved by Rich Sve, seconded by Mike Runk, to approve the minutes of January 28, 2026, as amended. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

#### PUBLIC ACCESS FORUM

No members of the public provided comments to the board.

#### REPORTS

**Chair & Administrative Advisory Committee** – Chair Todd Holman reported they will be conducting the Executive Director’s annual review. Stated he attended the Environmental Review Implementation Subcommittee for EQB.

**Executive Director’s Report** – John Jaschke reported on the legislative session and gave an update. There were several Days at the Capitol, SWCD had theirs last week, and MN Watersheds had theirs the first week in March. Minnesota Chippewa Tribes also held a legislative event that John attended. There is a Conservation Day for States to meet with their representatives in Washington DC. NRCS will be having their State Technical Advisory Committee meeting next week. John attended the National Association Conservation Districts event in February that took place in San Antonio, Texas and gave a presentation on SWCD roles in the 1W1P program with Julie Westerlund, BWSR, Nicole Bernd, West Polk SWCD and Ashley Gallagher, Dakota SWCD.

John reviewed the Day of Packet that included Snapshot articles.

Jill Crafton asked if we’re a little more unique with money coming in from the Clean Water Legacy amendment and money out of our general fund that supports our SWCDs. John stated Minnesota has SWCDs, Watershed Districts, and Counties that have more capacity and responsibility than most states.

**Audit and Oversight Committee** – Joe Collins reported they have not met.

**Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report** – Rich Sve reported on March 17<sup>th</sup> DRC members attended a training session in preparation for the upcoming hearings. There are two hearings scheduled, one for April 23<sup>rd</sup> and one on May 8<sup>th</sup>. There are four new appeals since the last time we met and have a total of 12 appeals.

John Jaschke stated now that updates to the buffer procedures are complete, updates to the model ordinance and rules used by counties and watershed districts are close to being ready for external review.

**Grants Program & Policy Committee** – Mark Zabel reported they met in March but didn’t have someone attend the meeting in-person so will repeat the meeting in April and have an item on the next agenda.

**RIM Reserve Committee** – Jayne Hager Dee reported they met and have an item on the agenda for today.

**Water Management & Strategic Planning Committee** – Joe Collins reported they have not met.

**Wetland Conservation Committee** – Jill Crafton reported they will be meeting on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Buffers, Soils & Drainage Committee** – LeRoy Ose reported they have not met.

**Drainage Work Group (DWG)** – Neil Peterson reported they have not met.

## **AGENCY REPORTS**

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture** – Brad Jordahl Redlin reported the comment period for the Groundwater Protection Rules closed last week. The Soil Health Financial Assistance Program is in the middle of the grant awarding period. They are currently taking applications for a discount program for agriculture retailers that sell nitrate inhibitors with their nitrogen fertilizer.

LeRoy Ose asked what nitrogen fertilizer inhibitors are. Brad stated it's a product that inhibits nitrogen from reaching and moving to nitrate forms. Mark Zabel stated it encapsulates the molecule, so it releases later more slowly.

**Minnesota Department of Health** – Steve Robertson reported the Groundwater Restoration Protection Strategy Accelerated Implementation Grants are open and available to local governmental units, the application period is open until April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Source Water Protection Grants open the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in April. Stated the Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water Snapshot article is a great example of a project with multiple benefits.

John Jaschke stated the national Pheasant Fest event was held in Minneapolis last month.

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources** – Sarah Strommen reported DNR is engaged in the rulemaking related to gas production along with EQB. DNR will focus on the regulatory framework and draft rules, it will be out for public comment later this spring. DNR is also working on a continuous improvement project related to some of their water permitting. There were some concerns about the length of the permitting process for some of the complex projects. DNR recently released their moose survey results and are seeing some declines in the moose population. Stated it's the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their wildlife management area systems and it will be featured on their spring Wednesday noon webinars that start today.

**Minnesota Extension** – Joel Larson reported the Well Aware Program featured in Snapshots had a clinic for sample pickup and drop off in late February and a workshop in early March where they reviewed the results. Joel stated they have a new program, the Minnesota Drainage Program, that is holding workshops with local governments, landowners, and drainage managers. The MOSH Forum is on April 8<sup>th</sup> at the St. Paul Campus Student Center. Their Annual Cover Crop Academy is a yearlong event led by Dr. Anna Cates and is a hybrid/in-person cohort to learn more about cover crop management .

Jayne Hager Dee stated when reading through the comprehensive watershed management plans in the southern region she didn't realize there were so many private wells still open with potential problems.

**Minnesota Pollution Control Agency** – Melissa Lewis reported on the legislative session and gave an update. They released the Climate Adaptation Cost Study last week, which clarifies the significant cost of climate change.

## **ADVISORY COMMENTS**

**Association of Minnesota Counties** – No report was provided.

**Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees** – No report was provided.

**Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts** – No report was provided.

**Minnesota Association of Townships** – Eunice Biel reported March 10<sup>th</sup> was the annual meeting of townships. They have been holding short courses throughout the state. March 2<sup>nd</sup> was township days at the Capitol.

**Minnesota Watersheds** – John Jaschke reported Jan Voit was unable to attend the meeting today and provided a report on her behalf. Jan thanked BWSR for their Day at the Capitol. She also thanked AMC, RRWMB, LOTW County, and Minnesota Watersheds for their partnerships in developing language to address ag exemptions in WCA and for the weekly legislative meetings. The Summer Tour Planning Group met on March 24<sup>th</sup> and are looking forward to this event, which will be held August 24 – 27 in Detroit Lakes.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service** – No report was provided.

## **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **RIM Reserve Committee**

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) – Shift Clean Water Fund (CWF) Wellhead Funds to Allow Expanded Conservation Practice Acquisition** – Sharon Doucette presented the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) – Shift Clean Water Fund (CWF) Wellhead Funds to Allow Expanded Conservation Practice Acquisition

ML 2021 First Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 6(g) appropriated funds for permanent conservation easements on wellhead protection areas or for grants to local units of government for fee title acquisition to permanently protect groundwater supply sources. Section 6(k) of the same chapter and article appropriated funds to purchase and restore permanent conservation easements under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Appropriation law also allows for the shift of easement funds to leverage federal funds and address high-priority needs.

CREP includes four conservation practices: CP2 – Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses (inside and outside Wellhead Protection Areas), CP21 – Filter Strips, CP23 – Wetland Restoration, Floodplain, and CP23A – Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain.

Shifting of the funds from wellhead easements to CREP easements will allow for leveraging of federal funds as well as meeting high-priority needs and will still allow the funds to be used for wellhead protection under CREP as well as the other approved practices and is consistent with authority in appropriation law.

Jill Crafton asked if a permanent easement is tied to a record of deed. Sharon stated it's recorded at the County Recorder's Office.

Mark Zabel asked if the funding under the \$5 million satisfies all the wellhead protection applications. Sharon stated there is newer funding that they have been using with more flexible appropriations.

Moved by Jayne Hager Dee, seconded by Joe Collins, to approve the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) – Shift Clean Water Fund (CWF) Wellhead Funds to Allow Expanded Conservation Practice Acquisition. **Motion passed on a roll call vote.**

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26-13

### **Central Region Committee**

**Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission Watershed Management Plan** – Marcey Westrick presented the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission Watershed Management Plan.

#### *Background*

The Bassett Creek Flood Control Commission was formed in 1968 primarily to study flooding issues in the watershed and adopted a watershed management plan in 1972. In 1984, the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) was created after revising the Flood Control Commission’s Joint Powers Agreement. The Commission prepared its first-generation watershed management plan that the Board approved in July 1989. The BCWMC is located in Hennepin County in the northwest portion of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. It is bound by the Elm Creek and Shingle Creek Watershed Management Commissions to the north, on the south and west by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and on the east by the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization. The watershed covers approximately 40 square miles and all or part of nine communities: Crystal, Golden Valley, Medicine Lake, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, New Hope, Plymouth, Robbinsdale, and St. Louis Park. There are 10 priority lakes and four priority streams in the Bassett Creek watershed. The watershed drains to Bassett Creek and ultimately enters the Mississippi River through the Bassett Creek tunnel that runs under downtown Minneapolis. The watershed is influenced by urban and suburban land uses, and the population is anticipated to continue increasing.

#### *Plan Process and Highlights*

On April 14, 2022, the BCWMC sent notification of initiation of the planning process for the 2026-2035 Watershed Management Plan (Plan) to the plan review agencies and other parties as required by MR 8410, and solicited each agency’s priority issues, summaries of relevant water management goals, and water resource information. An initial planning meeting was hosted by the Board of Commissioners on February 28, 2023. Regular meetings were held with the Plan Steering Committee between May 2024 and November 2025. The BCWMC also conducted Commission workshops and periodically invited additional participants to the plan steering committee meetings, as needed. The BCWMC also created a press kit for stakeholder engagement which included a watershed equity workshop, online survey, and meetings with underrepresented community groups, among other engagement actions.

The BCWMC grouped issues into four categories: waterbody and watershed quality, flooding and climate resilience, education and engagement, and organizational effectiveness. The Plan sets six high priority issues with associated goals to help reach Plan objectives. There are additional medium and low priority issues also with associated goals. The updated Plan will build on previous success through the continuation of many current programs and activities and introduction of new activities such requiring winter maintenance plans, targeting future work through surveys and assessments, and using indigenous land and water care practices where appropriate. Other programs include building connections with diverse communities, training for commissioners and local officials, and potential public-private partnerships.

Jill Crafton stated it was great to see a definition from DNR and that it provides more clarity. She was also excited about the tribal relations relationship developing.

Laura Jester from BCWMC appreciates the comments.

Jayne Hager Dee stated flood control is one of the big issues and thought historically they were dealing with some of the same issues.

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26-14

Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

### **Southern Region Committee**

**Blue Earth River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan** – Ted Winter and Jill Sackett Eberhart presented the Blue Earth River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

The Minnesota portion of the Blue Earth River watershed encompasses a total of 777,243 acres in portions of Blue Earth, Cottonwood, Faribault, Freeborn, Jackson, Martin, and Watonwan counties. The Blue Earth River itself begins in Iowa and flows approximately 146 miles north with both the Watonwan and Le Sueur Rivers flowing into it before it outlets to the Minnesota River in Mankato. The predominant land use is agriculture (~86%). There is a total of 21 municipalities within the watershed; two of which pull drinking water from surface sources (Fairmont and Mankato).

The Blue Earth River Planning Partnership (Partnership) was established on September 26, 2023, through adoption of a Memorandum of Agreement for the purposes of developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. The membership of the Partnership includes Blue Earth County, Blue Earth County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Faribault County, Faribault County SWCD, Freeborn County, Freeborn SWCD, Jackson County, Jackson SWCD, Martin County, Martin SWCD, and the City of Fairmont. Per the BWSR Operating Procedures, if less than 10% of the jurisdictional land area of the local government is within the watershed planning boundary, participation by that local government is optional. Cottonwood County, Cottonwood SWCD, Watonwan County, and Watonwan SWCD opted out of the planning process.

On December 23, 2025, the Board received the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments and responses pertaining to the Plan for final State review pursuant to Board #23 50. Letters were received from MDA, MDH, DNR, and MPCA. The State agencies each recommended Plan approval.

BWSR staff completed their review and subsequently found the Plan meets the requirements of Minnesota Statutes and BWSR Policy. BWSR staff recommended Plan approval.

On February 19, 2026, the Southern Regional Committee (Committee) met to review and discuss the Plan. The Committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Blue Earth River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan to the full Board per the attached draft Order.

Jill Crafton stated she was excited to see soil health in the plan and asked if the recharge helps with the health of the lakes. Jill Sackett Eberhart stated perennial cover helps keep nitrogen in place instead of allowing it to move with the water and cover crops are similar. Jill Crafton asked about contamination and pollution coming up the river and if it causes any problems. Jill Sackett Eberhart stated we don't know for sure what is coming from the south from Iowa.

Joe Collins stated that improving Blue Earth River has an impact on the Minnesota River and the Mississippi River and are important things that happen.

Steve Robertson appreciates the emphasis in this plan on drinking water resources. Stated this plan is a good example of how plans are increasingly working to identify and engage drinking water protection activities.

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26-15 Moved by Ted Winter, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Blue Earth River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Chair Holman called a recess at 10:30 a.m. and called the meeting back to order at 10:38 a.m.

**Redwood River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan** – Ted Winter and John Shea presented the Redwood River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

The Redwood River Watershed (RRW) begins near the town of Ruthton across six counties in southwestern Minnesota and covers 563,471 acres of land that drains into the Minnesota River. For planning purposes, the RRW planning area in this CWMP includes additional areas on the eastern side that have not yet been covered in other watershed planning efforts. This includes all or part of small subwatersheds from the Yellow Medicine Watershed (Echo Creek—Minnesota River, Rice Creek, Middle Creek—Minnesota River, and Smith Creek—Minnesota River) and from the Minnesota-River—Mankato Watershed (Crow Creek, Wabasha Creek, County Ditch Number 64, County Ditch Number 109, and City of Morton—Minnesota River) that drain directly into the Minnesota River.

The partnership was established in 2024 through adoption of a Memorandum of Agreement for the purposes of developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. The membership of the partnership includes: The Counties of Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone and Redwood and The Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone and Redwood Soil and Water Conservation Districts, The Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects and Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area Joint Powers Organizations, and the City of Ghent, Marshall, and Redwood Falls.

On December 18, 2025, the Board received the Plan, a record of the public hearing, and copies of all written comments pertaining to the Plan for final State review. Letters were received from MDH, DNR, and MPCA. The State agencies recommended plan approval.

On February 19, 2026, the Southern Regional Committee (Committee) met to review and discuss the Plan. The Committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Redwood River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan to the full Board.

Joe Collins stated he appreciates the plan and seeing the goals and what the focus was.

Jill Crafton asked about the farm practices that are on the ground right now and if the farmers or people had input in the plan. John stated farmers along the Minnesota River in Redwood County have done a good job of getting those practices on the ground and have been a huge part of the input for what has been working and what may continue to work.

Kerry Netzke thanked John and Mark Hiles for their leadership.

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26-16 Moved by Ted Winter, seconded by Mike Runk, to approve the Redwood River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Sarah Strommen left the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**BWSR Pollinator and Biodiversity Support** – Dan Shaw, Erin Loeffler, Jason Beckler, and Megan Reich presented the BWSR Pollinator and Biodiversity Support.

The decline of pollinator populations has led to a movement for action across Minnesota. Local partners, legislators and the public have looked to BWSR to provide guidance and resources to address pollinator declines and executive orders from Governor's Dayton and Walz directed BWSR to incorporate pollinator habitat across programs. Due to the importance of healthy biological systems in supporting water and soil resources, and rapid declines in plant and wildlife populations BWSR's efforts have expanded to a "Living Landscape Initiative." This initiative is focused on pollinator conservation, but also supporting overall biodiversity and building the resiliency of landscapes. Several BWSR programs are used to address needs across a wide range of landscape types in collaboration with local partners. This presentation focuses on five priorities identified in BWSR's updated Pollinator Plan, and discuss next steps for supporting pollinators, biodiversity, and landscape resiliency.

Kevin Wilson left the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Brad Jordahl Redline left the meeting at 11:22 a.m.

Mike Runk asked how big the projects are. Dan stated it's a variety with the majority being smaller.

Melissa Lewis asked about deer management. Megan stated they educate and have conversations with people on how they can protect their native planting with physical barriers and some plants that are a natural repellent.

Mark Zabel asked about pesticides. Dan stated they do quite a bit of communication about that with the program. Making sure there won't be any chemicals used near these plantings and that neonicotinoids are not in any of the plants that are being planted. Mark asked about bees and colony collapse mostly due to mites and asked if there is a crossover between domestic colonies and the wild populations. Dan stated there is concern of disease transmission from honeybees to native bees and there's research being done on it. They're trying to get as much habitat out there and then that disperses the bees as well.

Jill Crafton asked about maintenance. Megan stated that individual support grant program participants agree to maintain their project for at least three years and it's part of the education they provide.

Leroy Ose asked if they encouraged people not to spray dandelions in their yard. Dan stated dandelions can provide some important pollinator benefits.

**Climate Action Framework 2.0 Overview** – Suzanne Rhees and Faith Krogstad presented BWSR Pollinator and Biodiversity Support.

Minnesota's Climate Action Framework is the state's plan to reduce climate pollution, also known as greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and prepare communities for climate change in ways that benefit all Minnesotans. The framework builds on Minnesota's longstanding leadership in addressing climate change and aligns the state around the path forward. This framework comes out of the contributions of hundreds of Minnesotans. It invites all of us to contribute to creating the climate future in which everyone is healthy and safe in the face of climate change. The urgency of climate action is underscored by Minnesota's 2025 GHG inventory. Minnesota's emissions decreased 18% from 2005 to 2022, but

emissions increased 5.1% between 2020 and 2022, as activity rebounded following the COVID-19 pandemic. While the overall emissions trend is downward, Minnesotans are also feeling the impacts of climate change more acutely, with more unhealthy air quality, more extreme rains, and more costs associated with these events. The Climate Change Subcabinet has released the 2026 Climate Action Framework to reflect new opportunities, the progress Minnesota has made, and the need for accelerated action. The updated framework includes new GHG forecasting, a stronger focus on collaboration with local governments, and health and economic benefits for our communities.

Ted Winter asked about emerald ash borer and how to deal with the dead trees. Suzanne stated there are some efforts underway to try to increase the use of biochar through this pyrolysis process. Dan Shaw stated they are holding some biochar and conservation meetings. There have been efforts to try to do more logging and use that lumber if possible.

Ron Staples asked what climate pollution is. Faith stated its another way of saying greenhouse gases.

Tom Holman appreciates the work they've done.

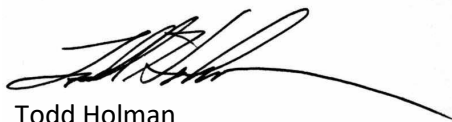
Mark Zabel stated in 2024 MASWCD membership approved a resolution to direct the board to develop principles around climate change. There is currently a draft set of guidance principles for climate change that will be before the MASWCD Board in the next couple of months for their adoption.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- Wetland Conservation Committee meeting is scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. in St. Paul and by MS Teams.
- Southern Region Committee is scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 p.m. in Windom and by MS Teams
- BWSR Board meeting is scheduled for April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 9:00 a.m. in St. Paul and by MS Teams.
- Dispute Resolution Committee Hearing is scheduled for April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in St. Paul.
- Dispute Resolution Committee Hearing is scheduled for May 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in St. Paul.

Chair Holman adjourned the meeting at 12:17 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Todd Holman  
Chair