BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

FY 2027

Buffer Implementation Grants

GRANT REQUEST FOR INTEREST (RFI)

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

www.bwsr.state.mn.us

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

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Grant Overview

Purpose

These grants provide funding and assistance for buffer law implementation. Eligible activities include assistance to support drainage system mapping and map review, landowner outreach, landowner technical and financial assistance, equipment purchases, and other buffer law implementation activities. The funding is outlined in The Laws of Minnesota 2025, Regular Session, Chapter 36, Article 2, Section 6(e)

Timeline

Late or incomplete responses to this RFI will not be considered for funding. The RFI response must be submitted by 4:30 PM CT/CST on the RFI deadline date. The grant recipient is responsible for proving timely submittal.

Grant Cycle	**Grant Cycle Dates**
RFI period open	September 28, 2026
RFI period close	November 19, 2026
Anticipated awards	December 2026
Anticipated grant agreements sent to recipients	December 2026
Work plan submittal deadline	January 31, 2026
Grant execution deadline	February 28, 2026
Grant agreement end date	December 31, 2029

Grant Eligibility and Program Requirements

Eligible Recipients

Eligible recipients for these grants include:

- Political subdivisions/Local governments
    - Soil and water conservation districts
    - Counties

- Funding is available statewide based on the existing distribution formula.
- Total amount of grant funds available is $1,805,000 for FY 27
    - A cap on individual maximum grant awards is provided in the Allocation Table below.
    - There is no required match for these grants.
    - Applicants are able to request any amount of funding up to their allocated award amount but may not exceed the allocation max.

ORGANIZATION	MAX CAP AMOUNT
Cook SWCD	$2,500
Lake SWCD	$2,500
Ramsey County	$2,500
St Louis, North SWCD	$2,500
St Louis, South SWCD	$2,500
Carlton SWCD	$2,500
Itasca SWCD	$2,500
Koochiching SWCD	$2,500
Aitkin SWCD	$10,000
Cass SWCD	$10,000
Crow Wing SWCD	$10,000
Isanti SWCD	$10,000
Mille Lacs SWCD	$10,000
Wadena SWCD	$10,000
Hubbard SWCD	$10,000
Kanabec SWCD	$10,000
Pine SWCD	$10,000
Anoka CD	$10,000
Scott SWCD	$10,000
Sherburne SWCD	$10,000
Hennepin County	$10,000
Washington Conservation District	$10,000
Chisago SWCD	$10,000
Lake of the Woods SWCD	$10,000
Clearwater SWCD	$20,000
Root River SWCD	$20,000
Wabasha SWCD	$20,000
Winona SWCD	$20,000
Dakota SWCD	$20,000
Benton SWCD	$20,000
Todd SWCD	$20,000
Mahnomen SWCD	$20,000
Rice SWCD	$20,000
Carver SWCD	$20,000
Nicollet SWCD	$20,000
Beltrami SWCD	$20,000
Red Lake SWCD	$20,000
Wright SWCD	$20,000
Waseca SWCD	$20,000
McLeod SWCD	$20,000

ORGANIZATION	MAX CAP AMOUNT
Douglas SWCD	$20,000
Dodge SWCD	$20,000
Olmsted SWCD	$20,000
Morrison SWCD	$20,000
Goodhue SWCD	$20,000
Steele County SWCD	$20,000
Pope SWCD	$20,000
Lincoln SWCD	$20,000
Meeker SWCD	$20,000
Pipestone SWCD	$20,000
Rock SWCD	$20,000
Sibley SWCD	$20,000
Otter Tail, East SWCD	$20,000
Otter Tail, West SWCD	$20,000
Becker SWCD	$20,000
Le Sueur County SWCD	$20,000
Big Stone SWCD	$20,000
Watonwan SWCD	$20,000
Grant SWCD	$20,000
Pennington SWCD	$20,000
Polk, East SWCD	$20,000
Fillmore SWCD	$25,000
Swift SWCD	$25,000
Faribault County SWCD	$25,000
Jackson SWCD	$25,000
Mower SWCD	$25,000
Murray SWCD	$25,000
Brown SWCD	$25,000
Lac qui Parle SWCD	$25,000
Freeborn SWCD	$25,000
Chippewa SWCD	$25,000
Cottonwood SWCD	$25,000
Blue Earth County SWCD	$25,000
Stevens SWCD	$25,000
Traverse SWCD	$25,000
Lyon SWCD	$25,000
Kandiyohi SWCD	$25,000
Martin SWCD	$35,000
Stearns SWCD	$35,000
Nobles SWCD	$35,000

ORGANIZATION	MAX CAP AMOUNT
Roseau SWCD	$35,000
Kittson SWCD	$35,000
Wilkin SWCD	$35,000
Yellow Medicine SWCD	$35,000
Clay SWCD	$35,000
Norman SWCD	$35,000
Redwood SWCD	$35,000
Renville SWCD	$45,000
Polk, West SWCD	$45,000
Marshall SWCD	$45,000

Recipients must operate in Minnesota and conduct grant activities that benefit the resources of Minnesota. Recipients must have state or federal recognition as a formal organization or entity, such as a Minnesota Tax ID or Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. Organizations or groups that do not have state or federal recognition must apply with a fiscal agent. Recipients that are debarred or suspended by the State of Minnesota or the Federal Government are not eligible. Recipients must be in compliance with all applicable federal, State, and local laws, policies, ordinances, rules, and regulations.

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities include assistance to support mapping and map review, landowner outreach, landowner technical and financial assistance, equipment purchases, and other buffer law implementation activities. Grantee will provide technical assistance, planning assistance and implementation assistance to landowners as well as track progress towards compliance in accordance with Minn. Stat. § 103F.48.

Financial assistance is limited to activities which can or otherwise will bring landowners into compliance with the law.

Non-structural Activities

Any projects proposing to provide financial assistance for installing or adopting non-structural land management practices for a duration longer than three years must be reviewed by BWSR staff and approved by the Assistant Director of Regional Operations prior to workplan approval.

Allowable and Unallowable costs

Allowable costs are those costs solely incurred through project activities that are directly related to and necessary for producing the project outcomes described in the proposal. Grant recipients are required to account for the staff time charged to BWSR grants in order to track the expenditure of grant funds and match to ensure the use of the funds is consistent with applicable State and BWSR requirements. Unallowable costs to be charged to BWSR grants include but are not limited to:

- Bad debts, monetary settlements and judgements, late payment fees, and investment management fees
- Donations, fundraising, sponsorships, and acknowledgements
- Entertainment, gifts, prizes, and decorations
- Alcohol

- Interest on loans not authorized under state statute
- Loans of BWSR grant funds
- Lobbying, lobbyists, and political contributions
- Merit awards and bonuses

Grant Management and Reporting

Eligible activities include local grant administration, management, and reporting that are directly related to and necessary for implementing the project or activity associated with the grant. Grantee is required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments. Recipients who have previously received a grant from BWSR must be in compliance with BWSR requirements for grantee website and eLINK reporting before grant execution and payment.

Requesting Funds

How To Submit A Question

For questions regarding this Grant Program and RFI, contact your Board Conservationist.

For questions regarding the eLINK grants management system, email elinksupport@state.mn.us. Please review the eLINK-related topics below and on BWSR's eLINK webpage before contacting eLINK support.

How to Apply Using eLINK

1. Set up your eLINK user account
   Proposals need to be submitted via BWSR's grants and conservation tracking system, eLINK. Eligible recipients without a current eLINK user account must register for an account in eLINK no later than seven days prior to the RFI deadline. For eLINK related questions, first visit the eLINK section of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page. If your question is not addressed here, please contact elinksupport@state.mn.us.

2. Complete your RFI response
   See the eLINK Guidance: RFI Response Process in eLINK for assistance in responding to this RFI through the eLINK system.

Grant Recipient Information

Grant Agreement and Project Period

Notification of grant award will be in the form of an automated notification from the BWSR eLINK system or an email from BWSR Grants staff to the grantee. Notifications are sent to the Day-to-Day Contact(s) identified by the organization within the eLINK system. This notification includes instructions for further processing of the grant agreement and may also contain grant-specific information such as requirements for completing work plans, disbursement terms, or additional required documentation for processing the grant. Read these instructions carefully as requirements can vary by grant and fiscal year.

BWSR will use grant agreements, and an associated work plan, as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules, and established policies. BWSR has the right to require a work plan revision or grant agreement amendment for changes in scope (visit the BWSR Grant Agreement Amendments and Work Plan Revisions webpage for more information). Willful or negligent disregard of relevant statutes, rules and policies may lead to imposition

of financial penalties on the grant recipient. Upon receiving the notification of grant award, which indicates approval of a request, and prior to beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving grant funds, the recipient is required to do the following:

1. Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, and submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
2. Sign a grant contract agreement indicating their intention to complete the project(s). The agreement also authorizes BWSR to monitor progress of the grant. The grant contract agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

The project period starts when the grant agreement is executed, meaning all required signatures have been obtained. Work that occurs before this date is not eligible for reimbursement with grant funds and cannot be used as match.

Grant contract agreement templates can be reviewed on the Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs webpage.

The grant agreement will expire on December 31, 2029.

Payment Schedule

Grant funds will be distributed in one installment promptly after the execution of the Grant Agreement.

Reporting and Administration Requirements

- Outputs will serve as surrogates for outcomes and will be reported as estimated pollutant reductions and progress towards goals based on the best available information.
- When practicable, grant recipients shall prominently display the legacy logo on their website. Grant recipients must display on their website either a link to their project from the Legislative Coordinating Commission Legacy webpage or a clean water project summary that includes a description of the grant activities, including expenditure of grant funds and measurable outcomes.
- When practicable, grant recipients must display a sign with the Legacy Logo at the project site or other public location identifying the project was built with assistance from Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. When practicable, grant recipients must display the Legacy Logo on printed and other media funded with money from the Clean Water Fund. The logo and specifications can be found at the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment's Legacy Logo webpage.
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's Providing Financial Assistance chapter.
- BWSR recommends all contracts be reviewed by the grant recipient's legal counsel.
- All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of the grant.
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's Grant Monitoring and Financial Reconciliation Procedure chapter.
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's Grant Noncompliance Policy chapter.
- In the event there is a violation of the terms of the grant agreement, BWSR will enforce the grant agreement and evaluate appropriate actions, up to and including repayment of grant funds at a rate up to 100% of the grant agreement.
- Grant reporting, fiscal management, and administration requirements are the responsibility of the grant recipient.
- Additional information regarding BWSR grant reporting and administration can be found in the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

Prevailing Wage

It is the responsibility of the grant recipient or contractor to pay prevailing wages on construction projects to which state prevailing wage laws apply (Minn. Stat. 177.42 – 177.44). All laborers and mechanics employed by grant recipients and subcontractors funded in whole or in part with state funds included in this RFI shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on projects of a character similar in the locality. Additional information on prevailing wage requirements is available on the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) website. Questions about the application of prevailing wage rates should be directed to DOLI at 651-284-5091.

Native Vegetation

Projects that involve vegetation restoration or establishment must use native vegetation and seed and plant sources consistent with BWSR's Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, with the exceptions listed below. Use of plant species on the Minnesota Noxious Weed List is prohibited for all projects. Non-native species used for projects must not pose a risk to native plant communities. The maximum distance for sources of herbaceous species seed and plants is 200 miles; and for tree and shrubs seed and plants the distance is 300 miles.

Exceptions

- Non-native, non-invasive perennial crops, hay crops or forage crops may be used:
    - As part of a drinking water protection strategy in a vulnerable or highly vulnerable DWSMA as designated by the Department of Health or in a Township Well Testing high-priority area as determined by the Department of Agriculture;
    - In buffers, borders, grass waterways or other areas likely to be exposed to pesticides or part of agricultural production;
    - For soil stabilization, erosion prevention and carbon sequestration in an agricultural production setting;
    - On fields that will be hayed, grazed or harvested.
- For the exceptions above, if the project area is under 20 acres in size, the exception may be approved by local conservation staff. If the project area is 20 acres or larger, or for any exceptions not listed here, grantees must request approval from the BWSR Grant Manager.
- Cover crops used to improve soil health and/or water quality are allowed without a maximum acreage limit.
- Temporary cover is allowed without a maximum acreage limit when needed to stabilize project sites prior to the construction of structural conservation practices.
- Cultivars of native species may be used in urban stormwater plantings if they accomplish similar or greater ecological functions, help achieve aesthetic goals and do not pose an invasive or other environmental risk

Permitting

The recipient is responsible for obtaining and complying with all permits necessary to execute the project. Recipients are strongly encouraged to contact the appropriate regulatory agencies early in the grant project development process to ensure potential projects can meet all applicable regulatory requirements.

Subagreements

Funds may be distributed to partner(s) through the use of sub-agreements. Activities identified in the sub-agreement must fit within the scope of the agreement between BWSR and the recipient and include requirements for fund distribution, implementation, and reporting.

Technical Quality Assurance

Practices and projects must meet the following requirements to ensure long-term public benefit:

1. **Technical Assistance Provider**
   The recipient must designate technical assistance provider(s) that have appropriate credentials for investigation, design, and construction.

2. **Practice Standards**
   Practices and projects must use appropriate standards for design, construction, effective life, operation, and maintenance.

3. **Practice Certification**
   Technical assistance provider(s) must certify that the practice or project was installed or constructed in accordance with the applicable plans and specifications, including approved modifications, prior to authorization for payment.

4. **Operation and Maintenance**
   Technical Assistance Provider(s) must prepare an operation and maintenance (O&M) plan specific to the site and practice(s) implemented.

5. **Periodic Practice/Project Inspection**
   Inspections shall confirm that the operation and maintenance plan is being followed and the project has not been altered or removed.

Practice or Project Construction and Sign-off

Grant recipients shall verify that the practice or project was properly installed and completed according to the plans and specifications, including technically approved modifications, prior to authorization for payment.

Project and Practice Assurances

A written agreement is required to ensure program requirements are met when installing projects and practices or providing financial assistance to a landowner or authorized agent. Project and Practice Assurances must include technical and financial obligations and requirements for the installation, operation, and maintenance of the practice or project, including a plan for failures or noncompliance.

Providing Financial Assistance

All BWSR funds used by a recipient to provide financial assistance to a landowner or authorized agent requires adequate project assurances.

Project Application and Agreements

Work completed prior to the signing of the agreement is not eligible.

Conservation Practice Contract Noncompliance

Failure to complete, maintain, or repair a conservation practice or unauthorized alteration is considered non-compliance with an executed conservation practice agreement. If the organization discovers noncompliance, they must take action to resolve and notify BWSR.