

Clean Water Council
Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) Meeting Agenda
Friday, April 10, 2026, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Hybrid – Webex and Online

2026 BOC Members: Steve Besser, Dick Brainerd, Steve Christensen (BOC Chair), Warren Formo, Brad Gausman (BOC Vice-Chair), Holly Hatlewick, Annie Knight, Fran Miron

9:00 Regular Business

- Introductions
- Approve agenda and February and March meeting minutes
- Chair and Staff update

9:30 Public Comment

Any member of the public wishing to address the Council regarding something not on the agenda is invited to do so as a part of this agenda item.

9:45 (DISCUSSION ITEM) 2026 BOC Goals

Chair Christensen and Vice Chair Gausman have drafted 2026 Goals and Actions to help ground our work together. Discussion will be brief but feedback is welcome in the meeting or via email afterwards. The hope is this is something that can be finalized in the May meeting.

9:55 (ACTION ITEM) Proposal Review

At the end of this meeting, the BOC will be asked to submit initial considerations for funding directions and priority for each of the programs that were presented at the March Council meeting. These will be discussed at the April Council meeting for initial feedback from other Council members. Proposals will be heard in the following order:

- One Watershed, One Plan (BWSR)
- Watershed Based Implementation Funding (BWSR)

10:30 Break

10:45 Proposal review

- Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance (BWSR)
- Technical Evaluations (BWSR)
- Nonpoint Source Restoration and Protection Strategies (DNR)
- Technical Assistance (MDA)
- Native Mussel Restoration (DNR)
- Great Lakes Restoration Projects (BWSR)
- Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (BWSR)

12:00 Lunch

(agenda continues on next page)

12:30 Continued proposal review

- Irrigation Water Quality Protection (MDA)
- Nitrate in Groundwater (MDA)
- Water Sustainability Support (Metropolitan Council)
- Enhanced SSTS Program Support (MPCA)
- National Park Water Quality Protection Program (Voyageurs National Park Clean Water JPB)
- Private Well Initiative (MDH)

1:40 Finalize initial considerations for funding direction and priority

2:00 Adjourn

Budget and Outcomes Committee Meeting Summary
Clean Water Council (Council)
February 6, 2026, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Committee Members present: Steve Besser (Committee Chair), Steve Christenson, Warren Formo, Brad Gausman, Holly Hatlewick, Fran Miron, and Annie Knight.

Members absent: Dick Brainerd (Committee Vice Chair).

To watch the Webex video recording of this meeting, please go to <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/clean-water-council/policy-ad-hoc-committee>, or contact [Brianna Frisch](#).

Regular Business

- Introductions:
 - Steve Christenson: Attended training on open meeting laws, and finds the Council follows them consistently, especially with virtual/hybrid meetings.
 - Margaret Wagner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA): The MDA has a comment period looking at the adequacy of their [Groundwater Protection Rule](#).
- Motion to approve the February 6th meeting agenda and January 9th meeting minutes by Fran Miron, seconded by Warren Formo. Motion carries unanimously.
- Chair and Staff update
 - Three proposal review rubrics have already been submitted. The process is working well so far. The questions are being collected to pass along to the state agencies. For some questions, Jen Kader may connect Council members to folks to help get a better understanding. If there is something speakers want to bring forward in the application or presentation, they can bring it forward at the end of the presentation.
 - Jen presented with the Watershed Management Interagency Team (a subteam of the interagency coordination team) – folks who do a lot with implementation and strategy in the watershed management framework. Jen provided an update on what the Council is up to, like the public participation plan, the KPI dashboard, the rubric and recommendations process. This helps to build understanding of the process. It was interesting to see how they are carrying that forward with their work.
 - Glenn Skuta, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA): There is a team assembled across agencies to make sure the connection from the programmatic outputs to the environmental outcomes. There are several efforts underway that we hope to bring the connection between the money and the work. It is complicated work, and we hope we can bring this connection back to the Council.
 - Jen presented with Julie Westerlund regarding how much the CWFs have changed how water management happens in the states. The sudden influx of funding led to many individual efforts in different state agencies. How different and how valuable it has become to draw from this information and see how they fit together. How the CWFs impact that water management framework across the cycle. The exciting milestones are happening, and the work is moving forward.
 - Jen has one upcoming presentation (with Holly Hatlewick), which was rescheduled.
 - The next few weeks for the Council:
 - Monday, close of business, is when the voting Council members should submit their initial review of the programs. Tuesday the proposers will receive their initial scores.
 - Jen will provide any questions to the speakers of the proposals. These will be included in the full Council meeting packet as well.
 - Speakers will incorporate the answers to those questions during their presentation.
 - Council members will have until the following Wednesday to alter their scores of the proposals and get those back to Jen Kader. Final scores will be sent to the applicants of the proposals. Please submit any final questions for the presenter/speaker. These will be provided at the BOC meeting.
 - The BOC, following the full Council, will provide discussion on the proposals and set an initial priority level for each of them, as the Council moves through this process. This meeting will also include responses in writing to the final questions.

- The next round of applications for the March 23rd full Council meeting will need the application scores from the Council by March 9th. The process starts again with this March collection of proposals for review.
- Annie Knight: Will you share the scores with Council members? *Answer:* They will be included in the BOC meeting packet following the full Council meeting. That was when it would be first included in a document. We talked about not sharing the scores publicly at the full Council meetings – so if there is a misunderstanding or a change in scores, it can be remedied before the BOC meeting. As I am talking about it, I think it should remain the same, that they are viewed for the first time for everyone. Box-and-whisker plots will be used again like during our pilot run. It was emailed to the proposal applicants, but I want to say again, we will make it clear that a low score is not indicative of a program’s value or likelihood of funding. It is a question of how things interrelate with each other, or how it meshes with other programs. The Council will ultimately decide the funding recommendations.

Public Comment (*Webex 00:35:00*)

Trevor Russel, Friends of the Mississippi River (public member): Thank you for all the work of the Council.

Supplemental Budget Discussion (*Webex 00:36:30*)

Following the discussion at our last BOC meeting, the Interagency Coordinating Team (ICT) met and drafted a memo to share with this Committee today. That memo is attached as part of the meeting packet and will be included in the BOC’s discussion of how to approach a decision on a supplemental budget. ICT’s preference would be for the BOC to hold onto the funds and include them in the FY28-29 budget. If the BOC recommends moving forward with a supplemental budget, programs to receive funding should be identified during this meeting. The Council will still send a letter to the Legislature providing a recommendation for the funds, whether it be held for the future or allocated. The Legislature would still be deciding, but the Council’s opinion would be provided.

Discussion:

- Dick Brainerd Response Email (unable to attend meeting today): Talking about the loss of revenue in January across the state, impacted by Operation Metro Surge. As we are thinking about the uncertainty of spending beyond basic needs, as lower revenue means lower sales tax, it would ultimately be impacting CWFs. Since Minnesota Management of Business (MMB) does not factor this into the forecast, he thought we should hold onto the funds for FY28-29. *Response from Steve Besser:* That is a valid point we should consider.
- Brad Gausman: I understand the idea of rolling it over. If the funding rolls over it is lumped into the next large appropriation, if we have this, wouldn’t it be a good idea to do something unusual or support something outside of the normal process? Perhaps, we could separate this funding as a line item as we roll it over. We may want to commit to expansion of the Clean Water Legacy Partners Grant program, specifically the community partners and grants noncompetitive grants. Could we increase it to meet the greater need? *Response from Jen Kader:* The number that we have is an estimate. We do not know the number until after it comes out. Anything that we spend right now, the supplemental amount of \$7.1 million, is already included in the next forecast. If we spend it now, the FY28-29 amount would go down.
- Steve Christenson: I would like to see more funding for these three: the Clean Water Legacy Partners Grant program, Critical Shoreland, and Forever Green Initiative program. If we have more than \$10 million, we should invest it. However, it seems unlikely we will receive more than \$10 million. Additionally, the federal government has frozen funds to Minnesota. It will reduce sales tax revenues as well. I think we should recommend to the full Council that the funds be carried over in the FY28-29 budget. I do not think we will get more than \$10 million.
- Holly Hatlewick: I also believe nothing less than \$10 million we should hold. Looking at what we may invest in if it is over \$10 million, I think we should track these as separate line items. We are only starting with our proposals and recommendations. We should track programs, looking at what previous cuts are, to consider filling back up. All programs should be considered.
- Steve Christenson: *Motion for the additional funds should be carried over for consideration and investment for the FY28-29 biennial budget process if the forecast is below \$10M, seconded by Fran Miron.*

Discussion:

- The February forecast does not come out until March; this conversation is happening due to the memo from the ICT (increased cost) along with the economy of the state of Minnesota. You can still make this decision today or wait until next month when you have that forecast number.
- Amendment by Steve Besser, to include “extraordinary circumstances if over \$10 million”.
- Steve Christenson: I agree to the amendment.
- Fran Miron: I agree to the amendment.
- Brad Gausman: I would like to make sure we also plan to track this supplemental spending.
- *Motion carries unanimously.* A statement will be provided at the next full Council meeting.
- If extraordinary circumstances occur, what would be a priority to BOC members at this time? Brad Gausman and Steve Christenson have provided their recommendations.
 - Annie Knight: I also support the Clean Water Legacy Partners Grant program.
 - Holly Hatlewick: I would like to go back to the list of the prior budget, I think we should consider those that had cuts, to have those first cuts restored.
 - Jen Kader: We have the list and can go through it if the BOC would like to make decisions today.
 - Annie Knight: How much time would the BOC have to look at the February forecast that comes out in March? *Response:* We will be able to have it included as part of the meeting packet (about three days before the meeting).
 - Annie Knight: I would rather wait to go through the exercise. The new BOC process will allow us to be able to channel our priorities. It will make these decisions easier. I would rather wait and use extra time on scoring proposals today.
 - Holly Hatlewick: I will agree with Annie, it may be a valuable exercise. It makes sense to wait until we have more information.
 - Jen Kader: If the funding is over \$10 million, the prior budget cuts will be included in the upcoming meeting packet.
- *Motion to adjourn by Brad Gausman, seconded by Annie Knight. Motion carries unanimously.*

Adjournment (*Webex 01:03:37*)

Budget and Outcomes Committee Meeting Summary
Clean Water Council (Council)
March 13, 2025, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Committee Members present: Steve Besser (Committee Chair), Dick Brainerd (Committee Vice Chair), Steve Christenson, Warren Formo, Brad Gausman, Holly Hatlewick, Fran Miron, and Annie Knight.

No members were absent.

To watch the Webex video recording of this meeting, please go to <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/clean-water-council/policy-ad-hoc-committee>, or contact [Brianna Frisch](#).

Regular Business

- Introductions
- Motion to approve the March 13th meeting agenda motion by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Fran Miron. Motion carries unanimously.
- Staff update
 - Jen Kader received a note that the Governor's Office will appoint the watershed representative. It will be announced later today.
 - Currently, Jen is watching around 26 bills coming through the Legislature. These will continue to grow over the Legislative session. Jen has attended a few committee hearings and has been connecting with folks involved with the Legacy committee.
 - Jen is connecting with the executive directors of the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and LCCMR folks. It is a busy time but is good to be connected.
 - The Clean Water Council Newsletter is now close to 2,000 subscribers for the Legislative update newsletter (with a twenty percent open rate) and over 9,000 subscribers for the Council's general newsletter (with a twenty-seven percent open rate). These are effective tools for communication.
 - Jen will be presenting at a Fresh Water and Climate conference at Winona State University later in March.

No Public Comment

Chair and Vice Chair Election (*Webex 00:22:30*)

With the Committee rosters affirmed at the February Council meeting, a Chair and Vice Chair needs to be elected.

- Open for nominations for Chair: Steve Christenson is interested in either Chair or Vice Chair. No further nominations.
- *Motion by Dick Brainerd to appoint Steve Christenson to the BOC Chair. Seconded by Annie Knight. Motion carries unanimously.*
- Open for nomination of Vice Chair:
 - Warren Formo nominates Holly Hatlewick. Holly does not want to serve this term.
 - Steve Besser nominates Annie Knight. Annie Knight does not want to serve this term.
 - Annie Knight nominates Brad Gausman.
 - Holly Hatlewick nominates Fran Miron. Fran Miron does not want to serve this term.
 - No further nominations.
- *Motion to by Steve Besser to appoint Brad Gausman to BOC Vice Chair. Seconded by Annie Knight. Motion carries unanimously.*
- Thank you to the leadership given by Steve Besser and Dick Brainerd.

Supplemental Budget Discussion (*Webex 00:32:00*)

Following the discussion at our last BOC meeting, the Interagency Coordinating Team met and drafted a memo to share with this Committee today. That memo is attached as part of the meeting packet and will be included in the BOC's discussion of how to approach a decision on a supplemental budget. If the BOC recommends moving forward with a supplemental budget, programs to receive funding should be identified during this meeting. Note, there will likely be impacts from the war with Iran, along with the impacts from Operation Metro Surge. These

were not factored in by the budget forecast and the Council should expect some impacts. Numbers are uncertain. The preference from the Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) is to hold onto the funding due to rising costs and uncertainty. The previous decision of the BOC was to make a decision if the forecast was greater than \$10 million, and to hold the funding (roll into the next biennium) if it was less than \$10 million. Additionally, Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) did share that the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has a remaining balance of \$2 million from the current biennium, which will be returned for the FY28-29, it is additional funds for it.

Discussion:

- *Holly Hatlewick motions to carry the funds forward to the next biennium, seconded by Fran Miron.*
Further Discussion:
- Brad Gausman: As we think about rolling the supplemental funds, would it be wise to consider communicating to the Legislature, to be clear on our plan? So, they know the Council's intent with the funds. There were good conversations recently about the Council's priorities. They will be well spent, even though the Council is not asking for an appropriation for them right now.
- John Barten: Assuming the full Council agrees with the BOC. We usually send a letter to share with them. That is part of the Council's responsibilities.
- Warren Formo: I agree with John. I would suggest we bring to the full Council a letter with a recommendation that the funds are held over. That is without getting specific without projects.
- *Holly Hatlewick: Motion to amend that the BOC will include a letter of the recommendations to the full Council for the Legislature. Seconded by Warren Formo. Motion carries unanimously.*
- *Original motion: Recommend the full Council hold over the funds to include in the FY28-29 budget. Draft a letter for the Legislature. Motion carries unanimously.*

Anticipated Clean Water Fund (CWF) Budget Funding:

- Jen Kader: Would the Council like to suggest a target for budget discussion? We have time before the Council needs to set the amount. You could use the \$331 million, or something lower to be cautious. MMB releases more regular updates that track revenue against the budget forecast. I could meet with them later this spring to see if there is updated information to help inform a target that is comfortable for the Council.
- Steve Christenson: When do we need to begin populating numbers for the recommendations? *Answer:* The final version of the table of the proposals will be after the July meeting (all proposals side by side, and public input collected at the June full Council meeting). At the July meeting, there would be revised targets of the increase, decrease, steady funding, and priorities. It will be sent to the proposers to prepare numbers. Then, it goes to the BOC to work on it.
- Holly Hatlewick: For the May update on the budget, is that before the BOC meeting? *Answer:* We can aim for that.
- Dick Brainerd: *Answer:* The \$331 million assumes that the \$9 million is not being spent? *Answer:* If you put forward a supplemental, it would drop from \$331.
- Steve Christenson: We could assume a flat budget of \$303 million.
- Steve Christenson: We can be in consensus to follow Holly's suggestion to follow the May budget forecast update? All committee members are in consensus.

Budget Process Overview – Flow Chart, Jen Kader (Webex 01:13:30):

- *See flow chart in meeting packet.*
- Dick Brainerd: I think this is a great graphic. It should be brought to the full Council as well.
- Holly Hatlewick: I agree, this is helpful. Please add the months in for a timeline too.
- Annie Knight: As we are going through this process of increase, decrease, steady, perhaps we should shift our evaluation today to include the priority level as well (high, moderate, low priority)? Then, when we get the numbers from the ICT, we can review our prioritization list for further discussions. We do not know the numbers, and this would be a good part of the evaluation process.
 - Jen Kader: Yes, we are trying out this process for the first time. I have added a column to the spreadsheet for it.

- Steve Christenson: Now, there will be two areas to review, the funding amount and the prioritization of the program.

Review of Programs - Workbook (Webex 01:22:30)

- Surface and Drinking Water Protection Restoration (Projects and Practices) (BWSR):
 - Rubric score overall was high.
 - BOC members view this as increase funding, with a high priority.

Questions:

 - Brad Gausman: There was quite a decrease previously, will you look to increase this back to where it was? *Answer:* There is plenty of demand for this program. The RFP is open now, so we will see how many apply, and there will be better numbers at the end of March. As part of the budgeting process, we cannot provide a number yet.
 - Steve Christenson: Where do we see the report on past outcomes from these investments? *Answer:* Looking at the Legislative reports and performance report, as well as several individual stories that would be using these funds. There are different ways to demonstrate the outcomes and share that story. We are tracking progress all the time. It also depends on who is asking and what scale, because folks can look at the Legacy website to see what is happening in their area. Data seeking folks can also request it, and the BWSR folks can assist with that as well. BWSR wants their stakeholders to hear about this data on multiple scales, to multiple audiences.
 - Steve Besser: This has a direct impact on drinking water, so I think it should be rated as a high priority.
 - Warren Formo: This is still early in the process. We will have multiple opportunities to adjust scores.
- Accelerated Implementations (BWSR):
 - Rubric scores overall were positive about this program, and consistent.
 - Majority of BOC members view this as a high priority and to increase funding.

Questions:

 - Annie Knight: Can WBIF be used to support capacity of the LGUs? The work in accelerated implementation, like training, be used?
 - *Answer:* Yes, it is. The difference with this program is that it is a systematic training approach. It is technical training, it is the infrastructure in the system for how BWSR gets all the folks statewide trained, with the credentials and capacity to implement the projects. There are some opportunities for on-the-job training as well. This also leverages federal funding too. It is a systematic approach.
 - Comment from Holly Hatlewick: Often, this is before watershed implementation as well. It make sense that it is separate because without it we could not be implementing other pots of money. This is a gamechanger, SWCDs in Minnesota have this credentialling because of this program. Without this pot of money and BWSR supporting staff to get this funding, other states are further behind. Other states, it can take five to seven years, and in our state, it can be two! BWSR can help navigate the federal system, and it assists the boots on the ground. They help pivot when things happen as well, working to complete these trainings.
- Conservation Drainage (Multipurpose Drainage Management) (BWSR):
 - Rubric scores overall were high, and consistently high. It suggests support from the full Council.
 - All BOC members want a high priority level, and to increase funding.

Questions/Comments:

 - Steve Besser: Drainage is a gorilla in the room problem. It is critical for Minnesota.
- Legacy Partners (BWSR):
 - Rubric scores overall were scored high.
 - Majority of BOC members want high priority, and to increase funding.
- Measures, Results, and Accountability (BWSR):
 - Rubric scores overall were
 - Majority of BOC members are high priority and hold steady funding.

Questions/Comments:

 - Steve Christeson: Why is this a separate program? *Answer:* This program is different from the other BWSR CWF programs in that it provides a centralized program for results and accountability that allows for standardization, efficiency, transparency and stewardship of clean water funds. Giving the MRA Program

structure communicates that it's a priority. If it lives everywhere, it is owned nowhere. As a standalone program, it ensures that changes to measures, results, and accountability are deliberate and visible, instead of reactive and vulnerable to mission drift.

- Holly Hatlewick: Prior to this program, there was a lot of jumping around. This has allowed us to lump and streamline that accountability.
- Steve Besser: Are we funding Elink? *Answer:* No. We run reports from it, pulling data.
- Dick Brainerd: Could it be funded by general fund? *Answer:* None of these programs would be present without CWFs. General fund would be great, but there would likely be debate on whether it is appropriate in general fund.
- Fran Miron: Looking at the renewal of the CWFs for 2034, I think this is critical for it.
- Annie Knight: I would like to see what the costs are for reporting from the different programs, if there is any duplicate work going on. I want to see if the state agencies could put together a tracking document of these costs.
- Enhancing Landowner Adoption of Soil Health Practices for DW and GW Protection (BWSR):
 - Rubric scores overall were good.
 - BOC members majority for high priority and to increase funding.
 - Note, there was a lot of discussion on this program and the next program (Southeast Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative from the Olmstead County).

Questions/Comments:

- Steve Christenson: After the presentation, we hope that Olmstead County and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) have been able to follow up and collaborate their efforts? What is the latest thinking?
 - Tom Gile: We have not had outside conversations since the last meeting. We did talk at the meeting. Both parties are open to making this work as a combined effort. BWSR is supportive of the work Olmstead County has done. They have been learning and trying to expand on some of the programmatic things they are doing from a performance-based standard. That is a fundamental difference between our work. If the desire of the Council is to have some specific funding towards Olmstead County, we can do that. If it is to make an amount available to the Southwest part of the state, we can do that. We are amenable to it. We can find ways. A complexity is that Olmstead has an innovative sign-up model. It would be challenging to replicate it if we did not work directly with Olmstead County. However, we are supportive of their work, and on board to make this work. Whatever the Council would like to see, we can try to make it work.
 - Skip Langer (Olmstead County): We have talked about working with the state agencies. One, SWCDs are used to working with BWSR. We have a longstanding relationship and know the processes to report. Second, it shares some of the work and responsibilities of certain things, such as accountability. So, we are open to working with BWSR for these funds.
 - Holly Hatlewick: I applaud Olmstead County and their innovation. They are doing great things, but they are not the only ones. So, I do not think they should have separate funds. There are several counties that have a program around 2015 or earlier, doing similar things. The karst issues are a major issue. This encourages other counties to make the same request in the future. Then, we would be diluting that pot of funding. What technical standard is being followed on these BMPs?
 - *Answer from Skip Langer:* There is some flexibility with the program. Producers can use other professionally accepted standards for rates and timing. We are tying the payments to the outcomes (because the outcome is more important to us than the standard). They are not the main guiding factor in implementing and planting cover crops.
 - *Response from Martin Larsen:* The farmer takes on their own risk of planting cover crops, where the chances of success decrease the later you go into winter. When they hit the minimum standard, they are eligible for certification and payment – it is a shift, which is farmers appreciate. We are getting warmer Novembers now, so it helps provide that flexibility. Additionally, cost share for small grains (reducing risk) while farmers are learning about the markets. It reduces the risk of adoption in the first few years.
- Steve Besser: We have a system. If we let the counties request, that encourages more requests in the future. I support the work but would like to see if funded in other ways. We must balance it.

- Steve Christenson: If it were folded into BWSR, what would you think? *Answer from Steve Besser:* I would support it, but the ask is significant. Many other counties have issues too.
- Dick Brainerd: I have the same concerns. I do not want to see it housed in BWSR.
- Steve Christenson: Olmstead County is not willing to administer this program across all 87 counties, correct? *Answer:* We have never offered that, but we can expand the program as a model into Southeast Minnesota, to prove that this can happen, that we can get buy-in from our producers to expand soil health adoption across a region that needs to see changes to curb the trending data of increase nitrates in groundwater. We saw that with the EPA petition, where the EPA sided with the petitioners. We are trying to take steps to be proactive to implement those changes more broadly and make them more permanent.
- Steve Christenson: I like the fact that you have estimated the cost for all ten counties to do this work. I think it is good. I do not like it to be administered by a single county, I would rather see BWSR do this work. It could be a pilot and then could be scaled up.
- Holly Hatlewick: The entrepreneurship is amazing. However, I feel like this falls under the advanced soil health category, or under the 1W1P priorities in that region. Those plans are driven by local input and local buy-in. I still struggle with not having a standard guideline, because we need to be responsibility to the CWFs and the data to support making those decisions. I understand growers need flexibility, perhaps that is a piece we are just providing technical advice on and not financial advice on. If we increase BWSRs funds to support this Southeast effort, I feel it should be competitive and open to the whole state.
- Southeast Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative (Olmstead County):
 - It is a new program. Should it be funded: yes/no?
 - BOC members were asked if they agree to merge with BWSR: yes/no
 - BOC members agreed there should be a merger of funds with BWSR, to have competitive funding, and to increase funding for the BWSR program. There should be continued conversations between Olmstead County and BWSR, regarding a merger. The BOC members will have more questions in the future on this topic.
- Water Efficiency Grant (Met Council):
 - The box and whisker chart reveals more variety in the scores.
 - Majority of BOC members are medium priority, hold steady funding.
- Culvert Replacement Incentive Program (DNR):
 - Rubric scores overall were high.
 - Majority of BOC members are high priority and hold steady funding.
- Questions/Comments:*
 - Warren Formo: These are long, slow projects. They take a while.
 - Steve Christenson: There could be an increase in funding if the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has an appetite to do the work.
- Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification (MAWQC) (MDA):
 - A majority of BOC members have high priority, but there was a split on hold steady or increase funding.
- Question/Comments:*
 - Regarding opportunities for drinking water protection, a question was provided by a Council member: We understand checking the farms SSTS or septic systems and confirming that they are in compliance with the county and state regulations is part of the assessment of the farm, is there a parallel process to the STSS process, to ensure that all wells on the farm are compliant with the Minnesota well code? *Answer by Brad Jordahl-Redlin, MDA:* They do not walk through the landscape to check for wells. If people wanted them to, they could work with those in the regulatory authority to work together – always up for evolving our efforts.
 - Warren Formo: Regarding septic systems, do you do compliance with that? *Answer:* We work with the farm (as if they have been determined to be a public health threat) to make sure their septic system is legal. They must verify they have not been cited as a public threat. They will not certify a farm if it has a public health threat.
 - Holly Hatlewick: They can use your incentive money if they do find any wells. If identified, there are tools in place. *Answer:* Yes. It is not something we are trying to avoid.
 - Dick Brainerd: You want to add additional staff. Do you have a wait list? *Answer:* There are 240 waiting for assessment and inspection, and we are working on it. I'm sure some of them are already starting the

process. We could get further if there is more staff capacity, but it is a process, some are bringing in contracts with others as well. We are moving forward well, excited to see more farms signing up.

- John Barten: I would like to see monitoring MAWQC farms compared to those farms that are not. It would be good to have that to reveal the results. The cumulative impacts are greater than the sum of the parts. It would be good to show the Legislature the results of findings. I think it would be a powerful message. A side-by-side comparison would show the benefit of multiple management practices on an individual farm. I will propose to the Council to save some funding to start a project. *Answer:* We had this conversation with the Legislative auditor's office as well. Running the numbers, and it would be too expensive to do. Instead, we are looking at doing something different. We can bring the scientific rigor to reveal (Discovery Farm folks) the benefits. Let's build something with what we have.
- Holly Hatlewick: Is there data we already have to reveal it? What is that measurement tool? There is value in that comparison. What measurement tool are you proposing, John?
 - *Answer:* Physical hardware on the runoff. *Response with Margaret Wagner (MDA):* We can coordinate at the MDA. I am hearing the request. Another opportunity is the before and after monitoring, after the practices, we can do additional monitoring. It would be important to think it through. Perhaps, comparisons to neighboring farms too.
 - Fran Miron: It is a voluntary program. We operate a certified farm. The person who came from the application worked with us for months, before we were certified. The request seems reasonable with the number of farms waiting. I would also suggest farmers utilize other programs and CWFs to support the best management practices (BMPs). I support this and recognize the need for increase.
- Conservation Equipment Assistance (MDA):
 - Rubric scores had high variability.
 - Majority of BOC members agree with high priority and hold the funding steady.

Questions/Comments:

- Warren Formo: Can you remind us, you have increased on the Ag BMP program loan program, but hold steady on this program, why?
 - *Answer from Margaret Wagner:* To not have all our programs have an increase, we used some discretion. The demand is high and outweighs the current available funding. It is a unique program, and we do not really see funding available for equipment from other programs. It is valuable, and we have been able to match the general dollars as well. We are looking to continue with it at that level.
 - *Answer from Brad Jordahl-Redlin:* We chose not to infringe on other CWF demands with our MDA programs.
 - AgBMP Loan Program (MDA):
 - Rubric scores were generally high
 - Majority of BOC members agree with high priority and increase funding.
- Questions/Comments:*
- Dick Brainerd: How do the banks and lenders work? *Answer:* It depends on the county. Either the local bank or the county (the MDA reimburses the funds).
- Critical Shoreland Easements (BWSR):
 - Majority of BOC members agree with high priority and increase funding.
 - Holly Hatlewick: Each easement has its lane. Each can be built into the 1W1P plans. How is it different? *Answer:* Every one of the easement programs has scoring built into the score sheet, to elevate any one easement where the landowner and SWCD can point to anything that is a priority in the plan (page number and goal) can help get them there. All of those easements come out on top regardless of the program. They recognize the easement is pushing towards implementation of that local plan. It is not the only scoring criteria. Folks who do not have their plans done yet can still score high enough to get funded. The scoring builds into local priorities.
 - Annie Knight: Talking with SWCDs in my region, in the 1W1Ps, it is typically land protection and restoration. Easements and restorations are expensive, and it is nice to have a set aside easement program, so the watershed-based implementation funding to implement the other portions of their program. *Response:* For the critical shoreland easements, we did suggest an increase (over last biennium amount only) because they have taken a reduction in the past. There were cuts in the past, and this would help return them to their historical averages.

- Wetland Restoration Easements (BWSR):
 - Majority of BOC members view it as a high priority and increase funding.

Questions/Comments:

 - Steve Christenson: Can you comment about the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund (LSOHF) versus CWFs? *Answer:* With this program, the same rules can fund those easements. Historically from LSOHF, the funding has been variable. It is on an annual basis. It can range from \$3 million to \$10 million from them.
 - Holly Hatlewick: To clarify, this is for only new acquisitions and not long-term management on existing, correct? *Answer:* Yes.
- Working Lands and Floodplain Easements (BWSR):
 - Box and whisker plots reveal these scores were the highest of the four easement programs from BWSR.
 - Majority of BOC members are high priority and increase funding.

Questions/Comments:

 - Steve Christenson: Does LSOHF also fund this? *Answer:* It is a similar program, the main difference on the CWF side, they created an out-of-the-box thinking for working land options (less than permanent). The criteria required and scoring is the same. It is about landowner's desire for terms that make us determine which funding path right now.
- Targeted/Wellhead Drinking Water Protection (BWSR):
 - Majority of BOC members are high priority and hold steady funding.

Further Discussion of Process (*Webex 03:40:00*)

- Note, *almost* all the programs reveal a high priority for the BOC. So, there may need to be great discussion moving forward.
- BOC members are okay to move forward with this workbook document to the full Council for their reaction.
 - Annie Knight would like the notes to be included, so it reveals some of the conversations and how they came to the conclusions. There is value in its inclusion.
 - John Barten plans to attend the BOC meetings during this process, to help make sure the budget process runs smoothly between the BOC and full Council.
- Next steps: include inclusion of the notes with the workbook, working with Steve Christenson and John Barten to draft a letter (recommendation of the supplemental budget), and track down a list of programs that did not come back for renewal. The next full Council meeting will be a quick check/flag (not to solve) to make sure there is time allotted for discussion of certain programs in the future. This will help move items along. Also, to include the flow chart (with a few months added) as part of the staff update.

Adjournment (*Webex 03:57:13*)

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Josh Heintzeman
Co-Chair, House Environment & Natural Resources
Finance and Policy Committee

The Honorable Peter Fischer
Co-Chair, House Environment & Natural Resources
Finance and Policy Committee

The Honorable Joe McDonald
Co-Chair, House Legacy Finance Committee

The Honorable Samantha Vang
Co-Chair, House Legacy Finance Committee

The Honorable Nick A. Frenz
Chair, Senate Energy, Utilities, Environment, and
Climate Committee

The Honorable Andrew Mathews
Ranking Minority Member, Senate Energy, Utilities,
Environment, and Climate Committee

The Honorable Foug Hawj
Chair, Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy
Finance Committee

The Honorable Steve Green
Ranking Minority Member, Senate Environment,
Climate, and Legacy Finance Committee

RE: Feedback in response to the February budget forecast from MMB

Thank you for the opportunity to share our feedback regarding the February budget forecast shared by MMB on Friday, February 27.

The Clean Water Council was encouraged by the slight uptick in funding forecasted for the Clean Water Fund for both the FY26-27 and FY28-29 biennia. In our statutory role as advisors to the Legislature and the Governor on implementation of the Clean Water Legacy Act and use of Clean Water Funds (Minn. Stat. 114D), the Council recommends carrying over any supplemental amounts for inclusion in the FY28-29 budget. Given current economic uncertainties and continued increases in costs, the Council feels this is the prudent course of action, and one that will allow the Council to recommend stronger financial support for priorities in FY28-29 that protect, enhance, and restore Minnesota's surface waters, groundwater, and drinking water.

We acknowledge that neither the House nor Senate Legacy Finance Committees are seeking to pass a supplemental funding bill, and wanted to commend you for this decision and express our support.

The Council is currently reviewing proposals for the FY28-29 biennium and preparing policy statements regarding priority concerns for Minnesota's residents and waters. We look forward to sharing those with you in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact Administrator Jen Kader at jen.kader@state.mn.us. Thank you for your service and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Barten
Chair, Clean Water Council

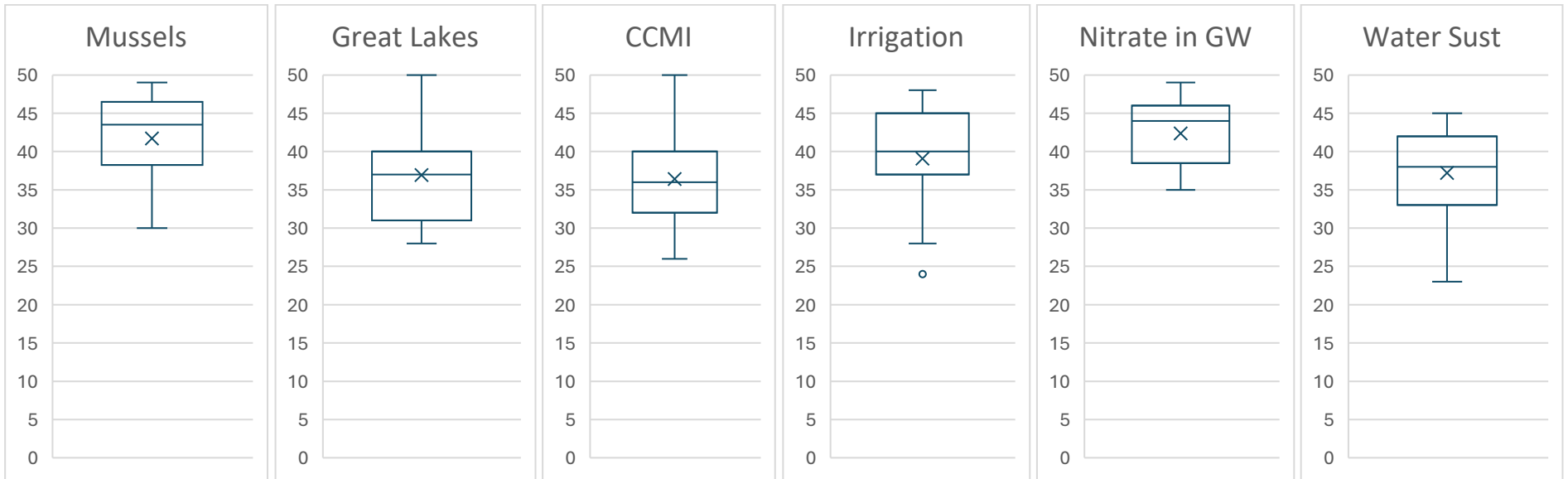
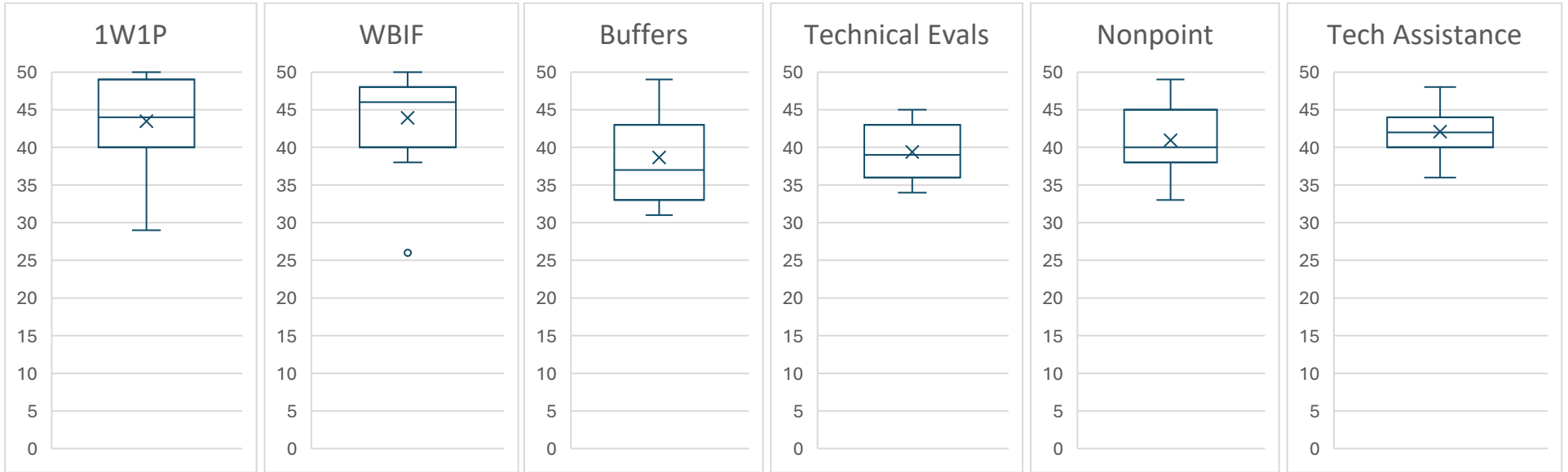
Steve Christenson
Chair, CWC Budget & Outcomes Cmte

Jen Kader
Administrator, Clean Water Council

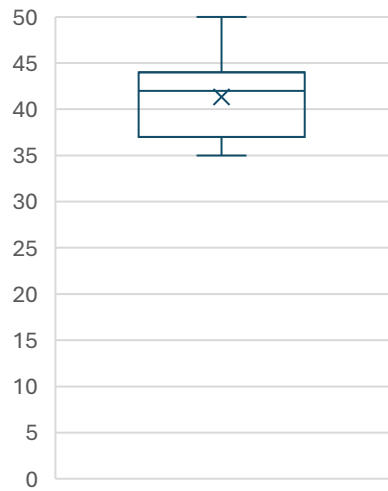
DRAFT CWC BOC Goals - 2026

Theme	Goal	Actions (calendar year quarters)
Budget	Deliver budget recommendation for FY28-29 to meet MMB forecasts and legislative deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize new program scoring rubric & process to inform budget recommendations favoring clean water outcomes (1Q-2Q) Review accumulated proposal scores and input, and develop initial recommendation by mid-year (2Q-3Q) Capture lessons learned from initial season of using scoring rubric for future improvements (4Q) Adapt to MMB forecasts and develop final recommendation by December (4Q)
Outcomes	Monitor overarching outcomes to track water quality improvements and ensure CWF dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the biennial Performance Report measurement of outcomes (2Q) Receive routine updates on outcomes via KPI dashboard (2Q-3Q) Review Outcome updates embedded in proposal form for program-based outcome tracking (2Q-3Q)
Communication	Enhance communications about CWC budget processes & CWF outcomes to inform, consult, and involve the public and stakeholders per Minn. Stat. 114D.35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support timely issuance of Performance Report for legislative audience (2Q) Communicate BOC goals for 2026 and develop initial KPI Dashboard for CWC audience (2Q) Leverage communications capabilities of CWC fund recipients for external stakeholder audiences (continuous-4Q) Engage stakeholders in line with CWC Public Participation Plan (continuous-4Q)

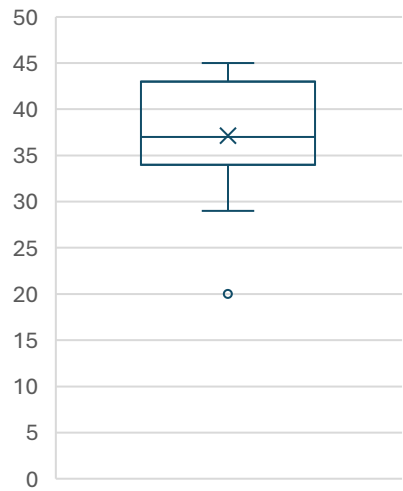
Box and whisker charts for program proposals reviewed at the March 23, 2026 Council meeting



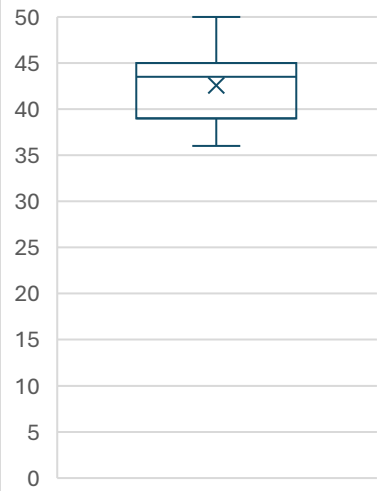
SSTS Program



Voyagers Nat'l Park



Private Well Initiative



ID	Program	Proposer	Brief Description	26-27 Amount	Proposed Change	Range (Mean)	BOC priority	BOC direction	CWC response
17	One Watershed, One Plan	BWSR	The program funds evaluations and amendments of comprehensive watershed management plans developed through the One Watershed, One Plan program. The program supports voluntary, multi-jurisdictional partnerships among local and tribal governments to develop and implement prioritized, targeted, and measurable actions that protect and restore quality surface and groundwater. Plans guide use of state funds to high priority areas based on available data. By FY28-29, all initial 10-year plans will be complete. Maintaining plans through evaluation and amendments ensures plans stay relevant and useful, reflect new data, and engage local partners who were not part of the original planning process.	\$ 1,000,000	Hold Steady	29-50 (43.1)			
18	Watershed Based Implementation Funds	BWSR	WBIF accelerates progress toward Minnesota's clean water goals by funding actions prioritized through local watershed and groundwater plans. This approach provides a dependable, equitable funding source that enables local and Tribal governments to target measurable outcomes and implement high-impact projects efficiently. By integrating local expertise with statewide data, WBIF increases consistency, reduces administrative burden, and ensures resources are used where they achieve the most benefit. Funded activities protect and restore surface waters, safeguard groundwater and drinking water sources, and improve water quality outcomes across diverse Minnesota watersheds.	\$ 88,100,000	Increase	26-50 (43.6)			
19	Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance	BWSR	This program supports soil and water conservation districts in providing technical assistance to landowners, conducting ongoing monitoring and compliance tracking, and assisting with local enforcement of the Minnesota buffer law. This work is the foundation of ongoing compliance with the buffer law and needed to fund the SWCD efforts prior to any handoff for potential enforcement by a county or watershed district (enforcement entities receive Riparian Aid not CWF dollars).	\$ 4,000,000	Hold Steady	31-49 (38.4)			
20	Technical Evaluations	BWSR	State law requires evaluations be conducted on restoration projects completed with funds from the Clean Water Fund (M.S. 114D.50). As provided by law, BWSR is the responsible agency for Clean Water Fund restoration evaluations. This proposal is a continuation of the required restoration evaluations that were initiated in 2012. These evaluations assess project performance to ensure and improve conservation outcomes across the state. DNR and BWSR elected to combine administration and reporting for three statutory requirements in a single Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation program.	\$ 200,000	Hold Steady	35-45 (39.2)			
21	Nonpoint Restoration and Protection	DNR	This program supports the protection and restoration of water quality in streams and lakes through direct technical assistance, training, and tools to help local water managers prioritize, target, scope, design, construct or adopt recommended approaches, and quantify the anticipated and actual outcomes - from sediment and nutrient load reductions to multiple co-benefits. In partnership with other agencies and organizations, DNR Nonpoint staff work directly with local governments, local conservation groups, and landowners to help them compare implementation options and better understand approaches that address the root causes of water quality problems and improve watershed health.	\$ 4,350,000	Hold Steady	33-47 (40.4)			
22	Technical Assistance	MDA	The program helps to ensure accurate, scientific information is available to address water quality concerns in agricultural areas. Funding is used to evaluate conservation practices, demonstrate practices that protect water, share information about research and new technologies, and enhance outreach and education to the agricultural community and local partners. Technical assistance activities fill an important need for field demonstration and validation of practices to protect water quality. The MDA uses on-farm, edge-of-field monitoring to assess sediment and nutrient loss at the field scale and evaluate the effectiveness of conservation practices. These activities generate high-quality data and practical insights that inform WRAPS, 1W1P, as well as statewide models and decision-support tools.	\$ 3,200,000	Increase	36-47 (41.7)			

23	Native Mussel Restoration	DNR	Native freshwater mussels play a key role in contributing to clean waters in Minnesota. However, many mussel species are no longer present in sufficient numbers to repopulate rivers and streams. The DNR will use its expertise to propagate (grow) mussels and restore populations in Minnesota rivers. We propose to improve techniques and scale up production of mussel species and place them into their natural habitats. Funding will support collection, rearing, distribution, monitoring costs, and identification of new species and locations for restoration. These efforts will benefit Minnesotans by contributing to fishable and swimmable waters across the state.	\$ 700,000	Hold Steady	30-49 (41.7)			
24	Great Lakes Restoration	BWSR	This grant funding provides support to SWCDs in the Lake Superior Basin to leverage Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) or other federal Great Lakes funding to implement prioritized projects consistent with the GLRI's Action Plan, already identified through WRAPS, and Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans developed through 1W1P.	\$ 1,000,000	Hold Steady	28-50 (36.7)			
25	Conservation Corps of MN and IA	BWSR	Since 2012, BWSR has contracted with CCMI for delivery of services (restoration, maintenance, training, and other activities) to provide additional capacity to Minnesota's local governments. This funding request also includes delivery of service to provide additional capacity to Tribal nations. Prior to FY26-27, the funding was legislatively directed in appropriation language and previously used Surface and Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants or Accelerated Implementation funding sources.	\$ 1,500,000	Hold Steady	26-50 (36.1)			
26	Irrigation Water Quality Protection	MDA	Funding supports an irrigation water quality specialist through a contract with the University of Minnesota Extension to address water quantity and water quality issues in Minnesota's irrigated regions. The specialist conducts applied research, develops technical guidance and publications, provides education and outreach on irrigation and nitrogen BMPs, and contributes to the development of irrigation scheduling tools for Minnesota irrigators. Farmers, crop advisers, and SWCD staff benefit from expanded education, training, and direct technical support, and the practices help reduce nitrate leaching losses from irrigated crop production to groundwater.	\$ 310,000	Hold Steady	24-48 (38.6)			
27	Nitrate in Groundwater	MDA	The MDA leads nitrate monitoring and reduction activities across Minnesota, with emphasis on areas with vulnerable groundwater. This work is done in partnership with the agricultural community and local governments. Funding supports activities that identify sources of nitrate contamination and evaluate and implement practices at the local level to reduce nitrate in groundwater. In addition to promoting, demonstrating, and encouraging adoption of fertilizer BMPs, the program engages in strategic efforts to increase vegetative cover in vulnerable areas; works with farmers and crop advisors in local advisory teams; conducts computer modeling to evaluate practices; monitors groundwater, provides technical support, and supports on-farm demonstration projects.	\$ 6,200,000	Increase	35-48 (41.9)			
28	Water Sustainability Support Program	Met Council	The Twin Cities metro region's steady population growth, increased groundwater pumping, changing land use, and variable climate is challenging our ability to meet demands for current and future water supply. This program supports efforts and programs to: ensure supplies of potable water are adequate for the region's current and future population, protect and enhance surface water quality, ensure uninterrupted economic growth and prosperity, avoid conflict over water sustainability, foster collaboration to address regional water challenges and limitations, conduct investigations into groundwater and surface water interaction, looks at ways to minimize impacts from this on both our drinking water and surface waters, and support the residents of the metropolitan area.	\$ 2,750,000	Hold Steady	23-45 (36.7)			
29	Enhanced SSTS Program Support	MPCA	This is critical funding that supports SSTS programs at the state and county levels. State staff provide technical assistance to counties and support compliance for some of the most difficult enforcement cases that counties ask the MPCA to take over. Base funding is provided to support County implementation of their local SSTS program requirements (M.S. 115.55) including issuing permits, conducting inspections, identifying, and resolving non-compliant SSTS, and revising and maintaining SSTS ordinances. Additional funding is made available to counties for grants to homeowners to repair or replace noncompliant SSTS (septic systems).	\$ 6,881,000	Increase	35-50 (41.2)			

30	Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project - National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Voyageurs National Park Clean Water JPB	These projects protect and restore water quality at the primary public access points to Minnesota's only national park and the nation's only water-based national park. FY28-29 funding of \$7,400,000 will support implementation of sanitary sewer system expansions, system upgrades and planning efforts, and related water quality protection infrastructure in remaining high-risk areas adjacent to Voyageurs National Park and downstream waters connected to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The proposed projects reduce nutrient loading, pathogen contamination, and groundwater degradation while protecting drinking water, recreational waters, and nationally significant aquatic resources.	\$ 1,500,000	Increase (S7,400,000)	20-45 (36.6)			
31	Private Well Initiative	MDH	The Private Well Initiative proposes a comprehensive approach to ensuring safe drinking water for the more than 1.1M Minnesotans who rely on private wells. Building on the work of existing state and local programs, the initiative improves understanding of contaminant occurrence in private wells; expands education, outreach, and technical assistance for well users; and strengthens partnerships with partners. The program increases public access to private well water quality data, develops model policies to better protect well users, is establishing a statewide well testing program, and supports targeted efforts to address nitrate contamination in southeast Minnesota.	\$ 6,000,000	Increase	36-50 (42.6)			

FY28-29 Clean Water Fund Proposal | Response to Questions

PROGRAM TITLE: Watershed Based Implementation Funding

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION NAME: Board of Water & Soil Resources

PROGRAM CONTACT: Julie Westerlund | julie.westerlund@state.mn.us

Q1: How would you summarize the state-wide water quality outcomes of the \$88M investment in the WBIF program in this biennium? (As context, please think about how we will be expected to summarize this large investment to audiences at the Legislature.)

We understand the importance of delivering outcomes for Clean Water Funds, especially this large investment. See our response to question 2 for ideas about talking with the legislature. And...

- **We are only six months** into a three-year grant period.
 - The first grant agreements were signed in October 2025 with an annual reporting requirement (January).
 - We don't yet have reported water quality outcomes to summarize for the current biennium, but we can anticipate that water quality outcomes will be similar to the estimates we provided for FY28-29 in our WBIF proposal.
 - More than 50% of the \$88M appropriation will be disbursed to BWSR on July 1, 2026 and then be made available to grantees.
- **We are playing the long game.** WBIF provides critical stable, long-term funding to implement watershed plans; while each biennium of funding is important, restoring and protecting water quality is a long-term proposition (and see our response to Q2).
 - Water quality responds to pollution reduction or prevention actions that are supported by this funding. Those actions and associated results take time.
 - BWSR measures practice installation and associated estimates of pollution load reductions. We don't measure water quality outcomes directly, but we do share data with MPCA, who tracks water quality trends.
- For the first time, grants will be distributed to **all sixty 1W1P watersheds** across Minnesota. This is exciting because with the anticipated completion of the final comprehensive watershed management plans, the program's equitable funding approach will support Clean Water Funded projects in every watershed statewide.

Q2: How would you summarize the state-wide water quality outcomes from the \$247M+ investment in the WBIF program over the FY2018-present time frame? (It would be helpful if you could provide a one-paragraph written summary or a one-page written summary that would be suitable for use with audiences at the Legislature.)

We have drafted a one – page (front and back) program fact sheet, attached.

The fact sheet contains the reported water quality outcomes from closed WBIF grants (as of January 2026). **This only represents a portion of the outcomes achieved** because most of the \$247M+ are either in open grants or have not been awarded (see Q1, second bullet). And...

- **This program’s outcomes go far beyond water quality.** WBIF provides less measurable but critically important benefits:
 - This program makes Minnesota’s water management systems world-class: science-based watershed planning, enhanced capacity in watershed partnerships, and accelerated implementation for watershed priorities.
 - WBIF supports partnerships that create durable implementation frameworks. These partnerships leverage significant funding, grow relationships among partners, share skills and expertise, and can do more together than they can working individually.
- **WBIF funds watershed management**, which is a process that involves more than projects that yield pollution reduction or protection. WBIF supports the foundational activities needed to implement the most effective water quality efforts, such as:
 - Inventories, feasibility studies, and subwatershed assessments;
 - Outreach, education, marketing, and one-on-one work with private landowners;
 - Technical engineering, project design, and maintenance.
- **Water quality is not a one-time purchase. It is an on-going investment.**
 - Implementers are responding not only to a century and a half of land use changes; ongoing challenges in every watershed will mean a continued need for restoration and protection actions.
 - WBIF funds are a key part of a bigger picture, together with other funding sources, that work together towards Minnesota’s long-term goals of clean water and healthy ecosystems. Any one success story is almost always the result of many incremental efforts, supported in multiple ways, rather than one individual project or grant.

Q3: Are there any very notable success stories (e.g., protecting a crown jewel waterbody, delisting a notable impaired water, etc.) that have resulted from investing \$247M+ in the WBIF program during FY2018-present? (As context, think about the elevator speeches that we must be able to deliver to Legislative audiences to support this large investment.)

YES! See below for links to several BWSR stories outlining WBIF-supported protection and restoration efforts. And...

- WBIF supports **incremental efforts that lead to lasting change over time**. It's rare that a single project or grant results in a detectable shift in water quality; indeed, in their September 2025 report *Flowing forward: Trends in Minnesota's lakes and rivers*, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency attributed the removal of 95 lakes and river segments from the impaired water list to long-term, sustained restoration work.
- The MPCA's 2026 Impaired Waters list has not been released yet (stay tuned; there may be more good stories we can tell you.)
- Reversing a negative water quality trend is a success, even if a water body does not get delisted.

We'd like to offer some perspective on this topic in Friday's BOC meeting by walking through a couple case studies of efforts to delist waterbodies.

BWSR stories outlining WBIF-supported protection and restoration efforts:

- Conservation Story 4/2024: [Nine delistings tied to work backed by Clean Water Funds](#)
- BWSR Snapshots 3/2026: [Rum River Watershed Partnership advances clean water protections](#) (Rum)
- BWSR Snapshots 3/2026: [Partners amp up source water protection for Thief River Falls](#)
- BWSR Snapshots 11/2025: [Le Sueur County well-sealing efforts protect drinking water sources](#)
- BWSR Snapshots 8/2025: [Leech Lake River plan protects waters by cutting the \(road\) salt](#)
- BWSR Snapshots 6/2023: [Root River SWCD project targets trout habitat, aims to curb flood damage and sedimentation](#)

You can find more in BWSR's story library, and we are working to compile more outcomes online and in story form as results come in.

Q4: Needs to include consistent results reporting across the state.

For the purposes of BWSR grant management and accountability, reporting requirements apply consistently across the state via eLINK, BWSR's grant management and reporting system. The reported results are summarized in the attached fact sheet.

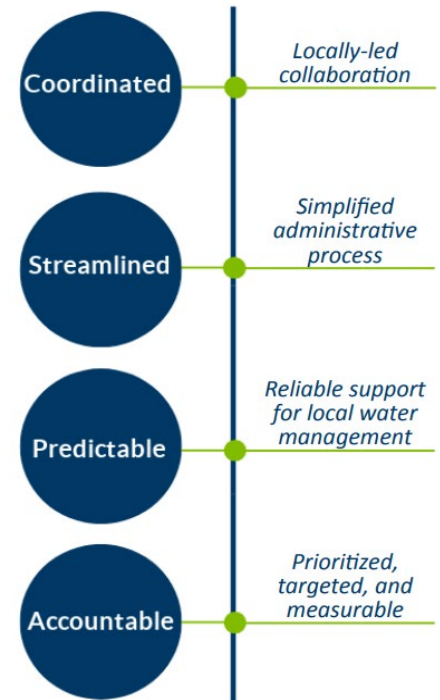
As discussed in the Council meeting, we cannot consistently report outcomes as a proportion of plan goals because each local plan is uniquely structured to meet the needs of the local resources and management approaches. While there are commonalities across some plans, these local plans do not have consistent issues, goals, metrics, priority area scales, or estimation approaches because they are tailored to the needs of each partnership and the resources they are working to protect and restore.

What is WBIF?

Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) **accelerates on the ground implementation** through activities that protect and restore lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater as well as programs that engage Minnesotans in understanding and taking actions for clean water. WBIF is a systems change for Minnesota’s investment in clean water:

- **Locally led, coordinated partnerships** use science to target actions where they will most effectively achieve water quality results.
- **Predictable, equitable statewide funding** and a simplified process enables partners to move quickly on priorities. It also builds long-term capacity for technical staff, program delivery, and joint governance.

Beyond biophysical benefits, the program strengthens collaboration among counties, watershed districts, SWCDs, cities, and Tribal governments, creating durable implementation frameworks that can **leverage significant federal, state, and local funds**.



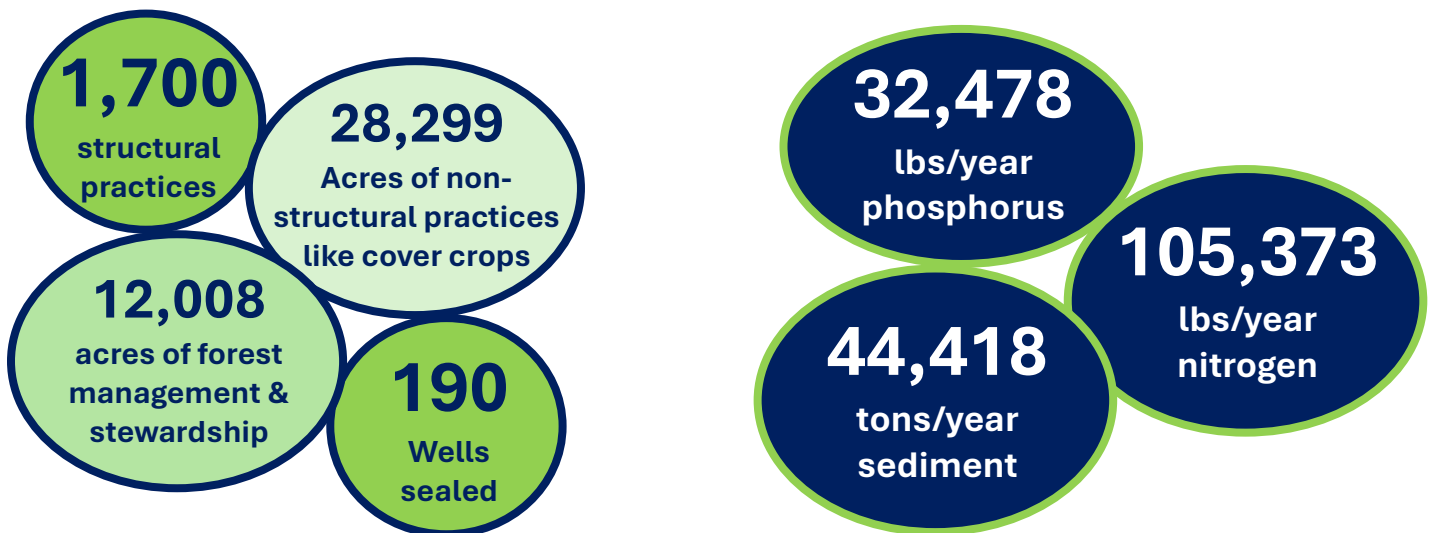
WBIF Accomplishments

Since 2018, BWSR has awarded 280 WBIF grants. Fifty-four of 60 (non-metro) partnerships and dozens of local governments (metro) across Minnesota have received at least one WBIF grant. While many grants were still open by the end of 2025, the reported outcomes for closed grants include the following:

PROJECTS



RESULTS: Pollution Reductions





Is WBIF Making a Difference?

WBIF is a commitment to support **incremental efforts that lead to lasting change over time.**

It's rare that a single project or grant results in a detectable shift in water quality; indeed, in their September 2025 report *Flowing forward: Trends in Minnesota's lakes and rivers*, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency attributed the removal of 95 lakes and river segments from the impaired water list to **long-term, sustained restoration work.**

Read what local leaders are saying about how WBIF is transforming watershed management below:

mi BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES 2025 March Snapshots
Subscribe to Snapshots

Rum River Watershed Partnership advances clean water protections



With increased Clean Water Funds, focused attention, and trust among its 37 members, the Rum River Watershed Partnership has been successful several of the goals set out in its 20-year conservation plan.

As diverse as it is wide, the 937,000-acre watershed encompasses forests, wetlands, farm fields and urban developments, stretching from rural Ancker County to suburban Ancker County. The Rum River flows about 120 miles from Mille Lacs Lake to the Mississippi River, a source of drinking water for St. Paul. It's also a state

“To have a real lasting, sustainable impact, we need to do this bigger, harder work... I think we're laying the foundation for a new approach to conservation.”

— Jake Janski, Chairman, Rum River Watershed Partnership

The Rum River Watershed Partnership (RWBP) was formed in 2002. The Rum River Watershed Partnership has been successful in several of the goals set out in its 20-year conservation plan.

Water-based implementation funding by the Clean Water Fund, WBIF grants support watershed partnerships throughout Minnesota.

Photo Credit: Mille Lacs SWCD

www.bwsr.state.mn.us

“It’s really allowed us to look at the common good of the community at large, beyond the cities, towns and townships that we’re all from... [WBIF] makes the work we’re doing feel like part of the bigger picture.

To have a real lasting, sustainable impact, we need to do this bigger, harder work... I think we’re laying the foundation for a new approach to conservation.”

— *Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD Board Chairman and Rum River Watershed Partnership Chair*



“Our number one focus is protection...Before WBIF, we were focused more on waters that weren’t meeting state requirements. By protecting the land around these lakes and rivers, we are helping to maintain clean, swimmable, and drinkable water for future Minnesotans. These water bodies are also very significant to the local economy and the local tax base.”

— *Melissa Barrick, Crow Wing SWCD District Manager*



mi BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES 2025 August Snapshots
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With Watershed-Based Implementation Funding, partnerships focus on priorities



Partnerships across Minnesota are using Watershed Board Implementation Funding (WBIF) from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to address the most pressing conservation needs in watershed planning areas.

WBIF is a state funding model that funds projects in the highest priority areas in Minnesota's watersheds as identified in local comprehensive watershed management plans (CWMPs).

Local governments form planning partnerships to collaborate with BWSR through the Watershed Board Implementation Funding (WBIF) Program. These plans identify and prioritize resource concerns and locations in a watershed. Prioritization is based on water quality monitoring data and other features of the watershed such as soil types, slopes, and land cover that do or could contribute to pollution risk. These data inform partnerships' decisions about where they will focus efforts to improve or protect water quality.

Once BWSR approves a plan, the partnership becomes eligible for WBIF. Partnerships can then use WBIF for water quality activities outlined in their plans.

BWSR awards WBIF every two years to eligible planning partnerships. Since WBIF was first awarded in 2016, BWSR has distributed more than \$2.6 million to planning partnerships for plan implementation. To date, 54 partnerships with completed CWMPs have received funding. In addition, local governments in the Twin Cities metro area have used WBIF to implement priority projects in local watersheds under the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Program. BWSR has supported 100+ projects by the state's Clean Water Fund.

WBIF offers a consistent, reliable funding source to meet local conservation needs.

“Local governments need funding from outside,” said BWSR Deputy Coordinator Julie Wronlund. “WBIF provides funding on the basis of local implementation plans that have a unique understanding of their community needs, giving them autonomy to pursue the most urgent projects within their watershed or planning area.”

Once a plan is completed, BWSR uses a set of metrics called assurance measures to evaluate how WBIF dollars were spent. For example, one metric examines the extent to which WBIF was spent in priority areas as designated in the plan. Wronlund

Photo Credit: Crow Wing SWCD

Photo Credit: Crow Wing SWCD

Photo Credit: Crow Wing SWCD

Photo Credit: Crow Wing SWCD

www.bwsr.state.mn.us

FY28-29 Clean Water Fund Proposal | Response to Questions

PROGRAM TITLE: Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance Program

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION NAME: Board of Water & Soil Resources

PROGRAM CONTACT: Tom Gile | tom.gile@state.mn.us

Is this program now analogous to Wetland Conservation Act support?

In the sense that this is not a state-wide regulatory program, it is similar to the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA).

It is different in general from WCA in the sense that WCA is a reactive program designed to have a process to address proposed activities, while the Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance Program (“Buffer Program”) is designed to be more proactive and includes active monitoring of all parcels and is not dependent on a trigger/action to prompt review.

The CWF support goes towards ongoing implementation of the program and the associated monitoring, similar to how some general fund dollars go to support the ongoing efforts of the Wetland Conservation Act.

Would it be possible to add qualitative requirements or guidance/encouragement/incentive to enhance buffer quality, rather than just evaluate buffers for whether they are compliant or not? *That could help to maximize the impact of the buffers to water, habitat, and other benefits.*

There are a couple potential answers to your question.

Is it possible to add required (required being the key word) qualitative components. Yes, but only through statute change which is not something we are pursuing.

Our current statutory responsibilities are what they are in the context of tracking compliance as, essentially, a yes/no question.

While that core function may be simple, we have also regularly advocated for, and prepared guidance to support, more qualitative opportunities for landowners on a voluntary basis. (See several links below)

These efforts include discussion on improving buffers for a number of factors including habitat, enhanced water quality and more.

That said, in an effort to keep the burden on the implementing partners to a minimum, BWSR has not required tracking on the level of qualitative factors because they go beyond what the statute calls for and currently BWSR does not believe we have a basis to require it as the law is currently structured.

Hopefully, the resources below provide some useful context on the balance BWSR has regularly tried to walk between the basics of what the law calls for and the opportunities that can come from it.

- [Building Better Buffers | MN Board of Water, Soil Resources](#)
- [Buffer Establishment & Management Toolbox | MN Board of Water, Soil Resources](#)
- [Haying and Grazing of Buffers | MN Board of Water, Soil Resources](#)
- [Vegetation Establishment Goals | MN Board of Water, Soil Resources](#)

There are anecdotal stories of producers who originally just did what they had to in order for their parcels to be compliant. Only to come back months or years later and ask about how to make it more useful to them (I.E. improving diversity or improving for hunting etc.).

So while that isn't a focus of "what the law is", some of that has happened.

Good, bad or otherwise, BWSR's general obligation is to focus on the basics of what the law is in most forums. This program still gets push from multiple directions fairly regularly and while there is value in working with folks when these opportunities come up, we have a responsibility to speak to the core of what the programing is and requires.

FY28-29 Clean Water Fund Proposal | Response to Questions

PROGRAM TITLE: Technical Evaluations Program

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION NAME: Board of Water & Soil Resources

PROGRAM CONTACT: Maggie Karschnia | maggie.karschnia@state.mn.us

How do you determine which projects to choose for evaluation?

The Technical Evaluation Program is coordinated through the DNR's Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation Program by the DNR which employs a multi-step project selection process that ensures fair, consistent, and representative evaluation of habitat restoration projects across Minnesota. The process includes three main steps:

STEP ONE: Developing the Project Pool

DNR program staff, in collaboration with BWSR, annually compile and update a list of eligible projects from the Clean Water Fund. Projects must be complete and include habitat restoration or enhancement.

STEP TWO: Setting Evaluation Priorities

Each year, staff work with the Restoration Evaluation Panel, funders, and partners to establish priorities that guide project selection. Priorities help focus limited resources and ensure a diverse range of projects are evaluated. Factors may include habitat type, geographic region, restoration activity, project timing, funding source, and project proposer. Some examples of selected projects in previous years include, but are not limited to, stream restorations, carp management to restore lake conditions, goat grazing for habitat restoration, etc.)

STEP THREE: Project Identification and Sampling

Ten projects are selected in proportion to each fund's investment in restoration and staff capacity. For grants covering multiple sites, a representative subset is evaluated. Projects are grouped into sampling categories based on priorities and selected to reflect:

- Geographic distribution across the state
- Variety of habitat types
- Range of project complexity
- Mix of project locations and focal areas
- Diversity of project proposers (governmental and non-governmental)
- Distribution across project managers

Projects are generally evaluated once, with exceptions for follow-up or periodic re-evaluation to support learning and improvement.

This process ensures evaluations are transparent, unbiased, and representative of the full range of Legacy-funded habitat restoration efforts.

FY28-29 Clean Water Fund Proposal | Response to Questions

PROGRAM TITLE: Great Lakes Restoration

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION NAME: Board of Water & Soil Resources

PROGRAM CONTACT: Melanie Bomier | melanie.bomier@state.mn.us

Can you provide more details on the communication plan?

BWSR will implement a targeted communications strategy to highlight outcomes from Clean Water Fund (CWF) investments within the Lake Superior Implementation Program. Our communications will combine statewide messaging with locally relevant storytelling to showcase water quality improvements across the Lake Superior Basin.

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) uses press releases, website features, and social media to share project results, while working with local partners like SWCDs and Tribal governments to develop place-based stories, visuals, and landowner examples. These are often shared through regional media to reach specific communities like northeast Minnesota.

All grant-supported materials are required to display the Clean Water Fund logo and credit the fund, ensuring consistent recognition of funding sources. Together, these efforts provide transparent, locally relevant communication about how CWF investments are protecting and restoring water quality in the Lake Superior watershed.



DATE: April 2, 2026
TO: Clean Water Council Budget and Outcomes Committee
FROM: Judy Sventek, ES Water Resources Manager
SUBJECT: Water Sustainability Support Program – Answers to Clean Water Council Questions

Water Sustainability Support Program - Answers to Questions from Clean Water Council Members

1a. Any estimate of volumetric water benefits or gallons conserved as a result of the program?

Overall, the metro region is becoming more efficient with our water usage. We have reduced our residential per capita water usage by 15%, when comparing from our 2005-2014 average to 2015-2024 average water use of 78 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) to 66 gpcd. Our sustainability program contributes to this savings. Projects that track the amount of water saved include:

- **Water demand reduction/efficiency grant program** - We estimate that this program has saved 260 million gallons annually.
- **Stormwater Reuse Grant Program** - The stormwater reuse grant program is a new program being funded with our most recent round of funding and is still under development, so we do not have estimated water benefits yet for this program.
- **MnTAP Industrial Water Conservation project** - Since the project began in 2014, 53 interns have been hired to work with metro area business to identify opportunities and make recommendations for water efficiency and conservation projects. These projects, if implemented, would save a projected 1,434,075,600 gallons of water (based on estimates of savings if all the proposed changes were made based on the recommendations of the interns to businesses from 2013-2024). This is an average annual savings of 119,506,300 gallons. We have awarded \$1,300,000 so far to MnTAP.
- **University of Minnesota Extension Turfgrass project for Reducing Water Use on Twin Cities Lawns** - Research done since 2016 indicates that tall and fine fescue turf grasses require only about 1/4 inch of irrigation water per week in comparison to 1 inch per week for Kentucky Blue Grass. There is potentially up to 75% water savings for any property owners that end up installing tall and fine fescue turf grasses in the future. \$1,400,000 has been awarded so far to University of Minnesota for this program.

Examples of projects that do not track the amount of water saved but that help to assess the impacts of reduced water demand on the region's groundwater system and water supply infrastructure planning include:

- **Metro Model** - The Twin Cities' regional groundwater flow model was designed to evaluate groundwater conditions under different water demand scenarios, to

understand the benefits of different water supply policy approaches (such as promoting water efficiency and conservation) and to help target incentive programs.

- **Water Supply Planning Atlas** - The atlas compiles water supply data and information for the region, including information about indoor versus outdoor water use, trends in total regional water use over time and the number of gallons used per person over time. This helps to illustrate changes in water efficiency over time and to help target conservation programs.
- **Water Values Study** - This research looked at how people across the region value water in order to help us direct resources and guidance better.
- **Large Volume Water Use Guidance** - We are currently finalizing this report which provides guidance for communities on questions they should ask or consider as they get in requests for large volume water users that want to locate in their community.

Finally, we have other projects and studies that we do which include updating regional water use datasets, understanding how much conservation is occurring, looking into sustainable water supply options, all of which help us understand if we are meeting our goals of sustainable water resources for the region, and if not, what do we need to change.

1b. Can the presenter share quantifiable results on reduced groundwater use, quality improvements, or estimates based on specific projects? What tools if any are used to measure these benefits?

We use a combination of project-level tracking and regional-scale tools to measure outcomes:

- Project level estimates like the MnTAP projects help us quantify potential gallons saved.
- Our Metro Model groundwater model help estimate how reduced demand affects groundwater levels and aquifer sustainability.
- Our trend analysis of water use data helps track long-term regional trends in total and per person water use.

The other work and projects we do support water supply and water sustainability planning investigations. A tool that we recently built in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health was a multi-community wellhead plan. This plan was developed in Western Hennepin County and is being used as an example of how to consolidate the development of wellhead projection plans in multiple communities at one time where there is often overlap in drawdown areas and other key elements of the wellhead plans.

We are starting new projects this year to update the Metro Model groundwater model, to complete a regional assessment of aging infrastructure, to coordinate with the Department of Natural Resources to create a Groundwater Elevations Database, to further investigate groundwater- surface water interaction impacts and effects, and to update the historical water use database.

1c. Do you have examples of groundwater use reductions based on stormwater reuse?

We have not yet implemented the stormwater reuse grant program, which will provide estimates for this. This program is under development and will be implemented this year. As part of the application process, we will be asking applicants to document the expected or actual reductions in water use based on their proposed stormwater reuse project. We can report back on this once the grant program is implemented.

1d. Can you describe the water quality outcomes from the LGU-led projects?

With the funding we receive from Clean Water Funds, projects and studies are completed by the Met Council with input from local governments on the need for these projects. Through our subregional planning teams and Metropolitan Area Water Supply Committee (MAWSAC) and MAWSAC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), local governments are also key to informing the projects and studies, supplying critical information needed for the studies, and sitting on advisory committees to guide the study and study results.

The Multi-Community Wellhead Plan is a project that was suggested by our local governmental units in Western Hennepin County that we funded. This multi-community plan resulted in better identification of drinking water vulnerability and potential contaminants in the DWSMAs in the west metro. This helped local planners better understand and direct their own water programs and utilities to reduce drinking water quality risk for residents.

1e. Please describe past projects benefits and outcomes.

Our targeted grant programs reduce local water use. Our metro model and the development of supporting data layers allows us to model growth scenarios and plan for areas of future concern around aquifer limitations. The multi-community wellhead protection plan allowed communities with overlying DWSMAs and well head protection areas for work together on one plan that would protect all the wells in those communities. The data analysis we have done as part of the Water Atlas allows communities to use this information in their planning efforts, not having to create on their own. It also helps us with providing better guidance and direction to our partners on how and where we need to focus work and projects in order to have sustainable water resources in the region now and in the future.

All of these efforts result in increased collaboration between the local water sector, land use, and climate planners to best understand and plan for sustainable waters into the future.

2. Can the presenter share about advance billing and its benefits?

When I put in the application the concept of advance billing and its benefits, I was referring to the following practices and actions that were occurring. Communities in the metro area have been updating their water supply rate structures and billing practices to promote water conservation. Other community actions include installing or updating water meters, changing to more frequent billing, using summer usage charges to encourage conservation like less watering, and more. Updating water meters reduces unaccounted water use, more frequent billing allows communities to see red flag areas where there may be a leak. Charging more for summer water use, can make people use less water in the summer.

Related to these actions, our last study on water rates that we completed to document the different rate structures across the region was in 2016; we will be updating this study in 2026.

3a. What are some of the in-kind or financial contributions of participants?

Currently, the only program where we require financial contribution from our partners is the Water Reduction/Efficiency Grant program that we discussed at the February meeting. The new grant program to fund stormwater reuse will also require a financial match. As I mentioned previously, this program is currently under development.

Our other programs and projects funded by our water supply/water sustainability funds, are developed with input from our regional partners through our MAWSAC and MAWSAC TAC as well as input from the subregional workgroups. We use all of these groups to inform and guide our water supply and water sustainability work. Committee and work groups members do contribute informal in-kind contributions as they spend time reviewing these projects, providing input at time, and working with us. For projects specific to one area of the region, a community or others may contribute additional informal in-kind contributions by spending time consulting with us and providing additional guidance. We generally use the Clean Water Funds to support projects designed to support these groups with the end goal of creating sustainable water resources in the region.

There is not a required financial contribution for projects, studies and programs, other than the grant programs at this time.

3b. What has historic leverage looked like for this program?

Historically we have leveraged 20 – 25% match for the Water Efficiency Grant Program.