



Level II Performance Review

Ramsey Conservation District

and

Ramsey County

Local Government Unit Review

Draft Report

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Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

520 Lafayette Road North

St. Paul, MN 55155

651-296-0768

www.bwsr.state.mn.us

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This report has been prepared for the **Ramsey County and the Ramsey Conservation District** by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 103B.102, Subd.3.

Prepared by Dale Krystosek (dale.krystosek@state.mn.us; 218-820-9381).

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PRAP Level II Report Summary

Ramsey Conservation District and Ramsey County

What is a PRAP

Performance Review?

The Board of Water and Soil Resources supports Minnesota's counties, watershed districts and soil and water conservation districts that deliver water and related land resource management projects and programs. In 2007 the Board set up a program (PRAP) to systematically review the performance of these local units of government to ensure their effective operation. Each year BWSR staff conduct routine reviews of several of these local conservation delivery entities. This document reports the results of one of those reviews.

Key Findings and Conclusions

The Ramsey Conservation District and Ramsey County have fostered a good working relationship that serves both agencies well. For the most part, the Conservation District partners believe they are doing good work and are good to work with. Recent board member changes at the Conservation District has created some challenges and new opportunities for future local water management in Ramsey County.

With the recent revision of the Ramsey Conservation District comprehensive plan, there will be an opportunity for Ramsey Conservation District and Ramsey County to prioritize implementation activities to address specific problems and priorities for the county's water resources.

The partners who responded to the PRAP survey provided strong to good marks in their judgement of the performance of the Conservation District and Ramsey County.

Commendations:

The Ramsey Conservation District is commended for meeting 9 of 14 high performance standards for SWCDs.

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendations:

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendation 1: Improve communication and interaction among Board members by working with a conflict management or mediation specialist and conduct a strategic assessment of the District to determine whether the existing mission, goals, bylaws and board member responsibilities are understood and remain relevant.

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendation 2: Organize Annual Work Plan to address high priority items with specific, measurable action items and monitor staff and Board delivery of programs and projects.

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendation 3: Develop a fiscal management agreement between Ramsey Conservation District and Ramsey County.

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendation 4: Develop orientation and continued education plan for the board and staff to provide for continued growth of the District and Board members through education, succession of positions and outreach to partners.

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendation 5: Continue to build on the use of major or minor watershed scale in the comprehensive plan by the use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria in implementation of action items of the plan.

Ramsey County Commendations:

Ramsey County is commended for meeting 6 of 9 of the relevant high performance standards for counties.

Ramsey County Recommendations:

Ramsey County Recommendation 1: Develop and adopt a Groundwater Plan under Minnesota Statutes 103B.255.

Ramsey County Recommendation 2: Develop a fiscal management agreement between Ramsey County and Ramsey Conservation District.

Ramsey County Recommendation 3: Review and update delegation agreements for natural resource management programs, as needed, with LGUs within the county.

Ramsey County Recommendation 4: Ramsey County should provide clarity on the website regarding the structure and cooperative agreements for water resource management within the county.

Introduction

This is an information document prepared by the staff of the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for both the Ramsey Conservation District and Ramsey County. It reports the results of a routine performance review of these organizations' water management plan implementation and overall organizational effectiveness in delivery of land and water conservation projects and programs. BWSR has conducted and reported a joint review of both entities because they both use the same local water management plan to guide their respective activities. The findings and recommendations are intended to give both local government units (LGUs) constructive feedback they can use to enhance their joint and individual delivery of conservation services.

For this review, BWSR has analyzed the LGUs' reported accomplishments of their management plan action items, determined each organizations' compliance with BWSR's Level I and II performance standards, and surveyed members of the organizations and their partner organizations.

This review is neither a financial audit nor investigation and it does not replace or supersede other types of governmental review of local government unit operations.

While the performance review reported herein has been conducted under the authority granted to BWSR by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B.102, this is a staff report and has not been reviewed or approved by the BWSR board members.

What is PRAP?

PRAP is an acronym for BWSR's Performance Review and Assistance Program. Authorized by the 2007 Minnesota legislature, the PRAP purpose is to support local delivery of land conservation and water management by periodically reviewing and assessing the performance of local units of government that deliver those services. These include soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, and the local water management functions of counties.

BWSR has developed four levels of review, from routine to specialized, depending on the program mandates and the needs of the local governmental unit. A Level I review annually tabulates all local governmental units' compliance with basic planning and reporting requirements. In Level II, conducted by BWSR once every ten years for each local government unit, the focus is on the degree to which the organization is accomplishing its water management plan. A Level II review includes determination of compliance with BWSR's Level I and II statewide performance standards, a tabulation of progress on planned goals and objectives, a survey of board or water plan task force members and staff of the factors affecting plan implementation, a survey of LGU partners about their impressions of working with the LGU, and a BWSR staff report to the organization with findings, conclusions and recommendations. BWSR's actions in Levels III and IV include elements of Levels I and II and then emphasize assistance to address the local governmental unit's specific needs.

Findings

Findings Part 1: Planning

The findings in this section describe the Ramsey Conservation District Comprehensive Plan and the accomplishments in implementing the plan. (*The 2017-2025 plan was approved on December 30, 2016, however the previous plan was used to evaluate the District's performance in implementing the plan over an extended period of time.*)

Ramsey Conservation District

(*The following information was taken from the Ramsey Conservation District Comprehensive Plan, 2012-2016*)

INTRODUCTION

"The Ramsey Conservation District (RCD) has developed this Comprehensive Plan in accordance with requirements of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). This planning tool will guide natural resource management and environmental protection programs and activities over the next five years. The plan identifies accomplishments of past efforts and lists strategies and objectives of the RCD through the year 2016. Future annual work plans will be developed with specific tasks to address the priorities and goals within this plan. The plan's foundation is based upon the identification and study of natural resource problems specific to Ramsey County. Our intent is to solve those problems and incorporate the RCD Board's vision regarding natural resource protection and management.

The RCD, a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), is a local, special-purpose unit of government responsible for natural resource protection and management within the geographic boundaries of Ramsey County. The RCD is governed by five nonpartisan elected officials called Supervisors. They meet monthly and more as needed and serve on Board Committees. Supervisors serve staggered four-year terms and are elected by the county at-large. SWCDs receive their authority from Chapter 103C of Minnesota Statutes. In addition to their individual resources, SWCDs use the expertise of the other state and federal organizations, including BWSR and the

federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). BWSR is the administrative agency of Minnesota's 90 SWCDs.

II. THE DISTRICT MISSION

"The Ramsey Conservation District is the bridge between Ramsey County citizens, conservation agencies and government to sustain our natural resources through partnerships, technical services and education."

Ramsey County's natural resources provide the industrial base, living space, drinking water, and recreational opportunities for more than a half million people on a daily basis. The major environmental problems we face can be traced to the effects urban land use has on our natural resources and the environment. The continued destruction and deterioration of these natural resources threaten the high quality of life in Ramsey County and require expensive restoration and remediation practices to sustain our quality of life. The RCD is an experienced, efficient, and inexpensive choice for natural resource protection and restoration. The RCD also serves as a consultant for local government, business, and citizens.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RAMSEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The actions that must be taken to achieve the RCD's goals and address its natural resource protection and management problems fall into the following categories. An annual evaluation of these activities shapes each year's district plan of operation (annual work plan).

A. Promote environmental protection and stewardship

1. Continue the current RCD organizational culture that holds environmental stewardship and eco-sustainability as the foundation for all district programs and public policy recommendations
2. Promote awareness and respect for the natural environment, its ecosystems, and humanity's long-term dependence on a healthy environment
3. Promote and participate in partnerships for environmental protection

B. Protect and improve groundwater quality

1. Seek funding for and promote cost-share programs and administrative programs to seal abandoned wells
2. Review surrounding agencies Well Head Protection Plans (WHPPs) and survey for highest priority groundwater protection activity and coordinate implementation as appropriate for Ramsey County
3. Work with Ramsey County as approved to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Ramsey County Groundwater Protection Plan
4. Promote public education and outreach on topics related to Ramsey County groundwater

C. Protect and improve surface water quality

1. Encourage the prevention of nonpoint source pollution and its damaging effects on surface waters
2. Facilitate the acquisition of funding for local governmental surface water quality management activities
3. Encourage the creation and utilization of uniform minimum management and protection standards for surface water resources in Ramsey County
4. Encourage diagnostic study, ongoing monitoring, and establishment of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) of all major streams, lakes, and select wetlands in Ramsey County
5. Promote the use of native vegetation for surface water protection, erosion control, urban wildlife habitat management and urban beautification
6. Promote the use of low-impact development technologies to protect water quality and conserve natural resources

D. Preserve wetlands

1. Fulfill statutory obligations pursuant to the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991 (WCA), as amended, including reporting violations of the law to the appropriate authorities.
2. Promote biodiversity among wetlands in Ramsey County and improve and protect wildlife habitat, especially where endangered or threatened species exist.

3. Monitor local governments' implementation of and compliance with the WCA and seek the appropriate action when noncompliance is established.
4. Seek the preservation and/or wise management of all wetlands within Ramsey County.
5. Facilitate state funding for the continued implementation of WCA.
6. As necessary, seek amendments to WCA for the continued preservation of wetlands.
7. Pursue a net gain in diversified wetland acreage in Ramsey County.
8. Assist local governmental units to develop wetland banks.

E. Minimize flooding

1. Assist municipal storm-water runoff management activities.
2. Promote flood plain protection policies among local units of government.
3. Encourage the use of storm-water infiltration technologies to prevent flooding.

F. Discourage inappropriate land use

1. Recommend against land use change that is not compatible with the inherent limitations of the soils resource as described in the Ramsey County Soil Survey and/or changes that will have a significant negative effect on the environment.
2. Encourage and facilitate the assessment (by municipalities and WMOs) of land use changes and the effects they will have on natural resources and the environment.

G. Preserve unique landforms and ecosystems

1. Promote and facilitate the identification of unique landforms and ecosystems within Ramsey County.
2. Encourage public acquisition and/or the protection of unique landforms and ecosystems both on a local and national level.
3. Encourage land use regulations that include recognition and protection of unique landforms, ecosystems, and historical and cultural resources.

4. Encourage the maintenance and restoration of green space within the urban core.

H. Protect and improve wildlife habitat

1. Where appropriate, promote and aid land management activities on public lands that protect, improve, and diversify wildlife habitat.
2. Promote and assist land management activities on private lands that increase and improve wildlife habitat.
3. Encourage public and private funding of wildlife management activities in urban areas.
4. Promote shoreline restoration, raingardens, and the use of native vegetation for landscaping.

I. Facilitate intergovernmental cooperation for cost-effective natural resource management and environmental protection

1. Facilitate Ramsey County interagency environmental protection and natural resource management consortium(s).
2. Continue to support environmental education efforts such as Blue Thumb.
3. Advocate efficient and effective environmental protection.
4. Maintain natural resource Geographic Information System (GIS) information that can be accessed by all agencies, local governmental units, and citizens in Ramsey County.
5. Showcase our partnerships to promote efficiencies and intergovernmental cooperation.
6. Provide technical and project management assistance to local units of government on a fee-for-services basis to maximize operating revenues."

Summary - Findings Part 1: Planning

As part of this review, the Conservation District staff prepared a table (See Appendix A) listing the accomplishments to-date for each of the action items in the Ramsey Conservation District Comprehensive Plan. The table contains a progress rating applied by BWSR to each item indicating whether it has been completed or its target was met, whether progress has

been made and work is continuing, or whether it was dropped or not started yet.

According to these ratings, the Conservation District is making good progress on their action items. The Conservation District has made progress on 36 of their 41 action items (88 Percent) and have completed 5 of their action items in the plan.

Resource Outcomes
The Ramsey Conservation District Comprehensive Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes. Therefore, resource outcomes are not reported in this review of plan accomplishments.

A full description of the goals, objectives, action items, accomplishments and next steps is contained in Appendix A, pages [16-27](#).

Findings Part 2: Performance Standards

BWSR has developed a set of performance standards that describe both basic and high performance best management practices related to the overall operation of the organization. These standards are different depending on the type of LGU. Nevertheless, each set of standards addresses four areas of operation: administration, planning, execution, and communication/coordination. The basic standards describe practices that are either legally required or fundamental to the operations. The high performance standards describe practices that reflect a level of performance that exceeds the required practices. While all local government water management entities should be meeting the basic standards, only the more ambitious ones will meet many high performance standards. Compliance with performance standards for the Ramsey County and Ramsey Conservation District are contained in Appendix B, [pages 28-29](#).

For this Level II review, The Ramsey Conservation District reports compliance with 18 of 18 basic standards, and 9 of 14 high performance standards.

Findings Part 3: Internal and External Surveys

Parts 3 and 4 of this performance assessment are based on responses to an on-line survey of both LGUs' staff and board or water plan implementation committee members and of their partner organizations. The board and staff answered different survey questions than the partners. The survey questions are designed to elicit information about LGU successes and difficulties in implementing plan goals and objectives and assessing the extent and quality of partnerships with other related organizations. A compilation of all survey results is in Appendix C, [pages 30-37](#).

Internal: LGU Self-Assessment

A total of 11 board members and staff of the Ramsey Conservation District were invited to take the online survey, and 10 submitted responses, a 91% response rate.

Survey participants were asked which programs or projects they consider to be particularly successful in the past few years. The Conservation District staff and board members mentioned *design of stormwater treatment systems, working with neighboring watershed districts and cities to design and implement numerous rain gardens, well sealing cost-share program to help protect groundwater and completing Subwatershed Retrofit Assessments over the years.*

Others mentioned *BMP Cost-Share programs utilizing Clean Water Funds and with the local Watershed District and Water Management Organization cost-share programs and providing landscape plans that improve and protect water quality and the aquatic invasive species program greatly in the last year.*

Also mentioned was *stormwater BMP design working with Watershed District's, Community Partners Grant Funding for Stormwater BMP's, Conservation Forums, septic inventory, AIS education and monitoring, lake mapping and monitoring, site inspections, larger scale campus projects (ranging from schools to breweries to churches to specific lakes), MAWQCP, education and outreach, State of the Water gatherings, tours, and monthly forums), and cooperative weed management*

and Our NATURE Program which provides site visits and landscape designs to landowners for rain gardens, shoreline restorations, and other BMPs and GIS.

Reason for success included *qualified staff members, BWSR grant funds, Legacy funding, partnerships and financial support with local water management organizations, good partnerships with institutions like churches and collaboration with watershed districts.*

One survey respondent offered the following assessment of reasons for success of programs - *The two most important things making these programs successful are having great staff members to run the day to day operations of the programs, and our great relationships with our partner organizations. The staff here at the RCD does a great job managing these programs and working to get projects in the ground and real progress on conservation issues. Also, without our partner organizations such as Watershed Districts, we would not be able to implement as many of the stormwater BMP projects that we do through their cost-share programs.*

Another survey participant commented - *A talented and unified staff, as well as a supportive board has led to the success of our projects and programs. In 2017 the staff has not felt supported by the full board. Earlier in the year, a few board members requested to put the staff reports on the consent agenda and now they do not hear the staff report on their projects. There is still a written staff report provided, but it is not the same as hearing from the staff. There was a workshop planned for April to discuss the Annual Plan and the Budget and the board was unable to approve the agenda and the workshop didn't happen, so I don't know how familiar some board members may be with our successful projects and programs.*

For the Conservation District, respondents indicated several programs that were difficult to implement including *the groundwater management plan is on hold, invasive species, implementing a pollinator cost-share program and projects that are supported by grants, such as the well sealing cost share program, have periodically been put on hold for lack of funding and groundwater protection. One survey participant stated one of the services we provide is Subwatershed Analysis Studies (SWAs) for the Water Management*

Organizations within Ramsey County. We used to have a waiting list for this service, but currently do not have anyone interested in having us complete another SWA.

Reasons given for difficulties included the following comments:

- *Previously (more than 3-5 years ago), there were coordination problems with involved parties, and the draft plan was not put before the county Board. There is now hesitation to invest the time into it without the assurance that it would be reviewed by the Board.*
- *We didn't have the funds at the time. Now we do and there is a dedicated staffer.*
- *We have so many other projects and programs running simultaneously, we haven't had a lot of staff time to dedicate to the pollinator cost-share program.*
- *As mentioned above, the RCD has more project demand than staff time and funding to complete activities fully, such as well-sealing. Also, in the early part of 2017, two supervisors who would not approve board agendas kept the board from signing off on projects in a timely manner.*
- *Not having a reliable funding mechanism has been one of the biggest challenges with projects and programs. Even though we prioritize based on the resource need, we also have to take funding into consideration, so that if we cannot find a way to fund the project, then it might not be our first priority. As for some of the reasons that SWAs are no longer in demand, one reason is that we have completed SWAs for one WMO, so that there aren't any catchments left. Another reason for the decrease is that we are also competing with consultants in completing these studies and it is up to the WMO who they prefer to use.*
- *Lack of County support.*

The Conservation District indicated strong relationships with *Capital Region WD, Ramsey-Washington Metro WD, Rice Creek WD, VLAWMO,*

BWSR, Ramsey County, City of Shoreview, City of Arden Hills, City of St. Paul, White Bear Township, MASWCD, environmentally oriented nonprofits; community organizations such as churches, the Minnesota Legislature; Minnesota state agencies (Pollution Control, Natural Resources, Agriculture, Health); Ramsey County cities; and lake associations.

The survey asked participants to identify organizations with whom they would like to collaborate with more often. The Conservation District listed *MN Dept. of Health, MPCA, MNDNR, Met Council, MWMO, LWRWMO and VLAWMO.*

Several survey participants made comments on the Conservation District's working relationships with partners:

- *These are already strong partnerships with mutual respect. We would always like more fee-for-service projects with other organizations, but again, the RCD needs more funding to hire more staff to be able to take on additional work. A bill was introduced in the last session of the Minnesota Legislature to help fund reconstruction and stabilization of dangerous, eroded areas at Lilydale Regional Park, so support of senators and representatives would be appreciated in the upcoming session.*
- *Have a great relationship with partners due to the tremendous efforts of our staff.*

The Conservation District staff and board also identified ways to improve the effectiveness of the District:

- *Greater transparency and involvement of staff in strategic planning, Increased outreach, Staff position dedicated to filling in gaps of what is not being advanced in the Plan (if economically feasible, which may be the current restriction).*
- *Get rid of the board and have the RCD's activities be done under Ramsey County.*
- *We have talked about developing an online BMP database to manage all of the BMP's we assist with across the county. We are looking at partnering with the Watershed Districts and*

Watershed Management Organizations throughout the county to develop this so to not duplicate work.

- *We could have a board that's able to hold a civil conversation with each other without taking things personally and then reacting with a personal attack on other board members and staff.*
- *The past year we have struggled to move some things along with the current dysfunction in our board of supervisors. We have had a board member come in new this year with some sort of agenda, and has not allowed the board to function smoothly, causing projects needing board approval to be put on hold. Improving the relationship and function of our board would really get some of our projects back on track by getting approvals.*
- *It is extremely important that the two non-cooperative supervisors work productively for RCD's success.*
- *To have a supportive board, motivated by all of the great work that our organization can do to help our citizens and natural resources within the county. To have a board that trusts staff to manage direction of day to day operations.*
- *Currently our governance structure isn't working. At our June 2017 board meeting we had a board member react in a very hostile manner when her policy wasn't immediately approved, without review. We have had people express concern for safety for future board meetings. We need respectful board meetings!*
- *Having disruptive board members has very much hurt us as an organization.*

Full survey responses are in Appendix C, [pages 30-37](#).

Findings Part 4: Partners' Assessment

Ramsey Conservation District Partners Survey

For the CD, 27 partners were invited and 20 (74%) responded. These partners reported a wide range of interaction with the Conservation District over the past 3 years: No one reported not at all, 20% reported a few times, 30% reported several times a year, 15% said monthly, 35% said they interacted with the Conservation District almost every week. Ten percent of these participants indicated that the amount of interaction they had with the Conservation District was not enough, and 90% indicated the amount of interaction was about right.

These partners also assessed their interactions with the Conservation District in five operational areas. The partners' rating of the district's work in the operational areas was strong to good. Seventy five percent of the partners rated the district's communications as good or strong, 15% said it was acceptable, 10% (2 people) rated it poor. Eighty five percent of the partners thought the district's quality of work was strong or good, 10% thought it acceptable, no one rated it poor, and 5% didn't know.

Relationships with customers were judged to be generally good or strong by 75%, and 5% rated it acceptable and 20% didn't know. Eighty five percent rated the Conservation District's initiative as strong or good, with 10% calling it acceptable and 5% poor. For timelines and meeting deadlines, the partners thought the district performance was strong (50%), good (30%), acceptable (15%) and poor (5%).

The partners' overall rating of the quality of their working relationship with the district was powerful (30%), strong (55%) and 15% rated it as good, but could be better. No one rated their working relationship poor.

Some of the partners provided comments:

- *The staff are very professional and do great work for our organization.*
- *Service model aligns more strongly with watershed district than municipal government.*

- Overall our working relationship is very good. The staff leadership has moved the RCD into increasing effectiveness. The occasional hiccup usually depended on the person we are working with. RCD staff are excellent team players.
- RSWCD is a good organization to work with; we just don't overlap area much, so have infrequent work opportunities.
- The RCD is a great organization.

Performance Area	Conservation District Partner Ratings (percent)				
	Strong	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Don't Know
Communication	55%	20%	15%	10%	0%
Quality of Work	55%	30%	10%	0%	5%
Relations with Customers	50%	25%	5%	0%	20%
Initiative	65%	20%	10%	5%	0%
Timelines/ Follow through	50%	30%	15%	5%	0%

When asked for additional thoughts about how the Ramsey Conservation District could be more effective, partners provided the following comments:

- We are aware of discord on the Board of Supervisors. We are very concerned this fracture could impact the work we do through the RCD. If the RCD loses credibility through a fractured leadership group, we too lose credibility and could the gains we have made through our longstanding partnership.
- The RCD provides a needed service and is an essential partner. We appreciate both the technical expertise and the program and grant support they provide. We hope the current dysfunction within the Board and between Board and staff can be resolved. I know there

have been efforts by the organization this year to resolve issues and move forward. Perhaps BWSR could provide resources to assist.

- The technical staff are qualified resource professionals who having been getting conservation on the ground in spite of the current issues among the board of supervisors that has been affecting the management of district operations. The board coming together to agree to a Plan for working through these current issues while in the interim continuing to conduct district business according to their comprehensive plan and work plans would help make this District more effective. Having an official shared services agreement between the Ramsey County and Ramsey CD entities would help the CD Board of Supervisors and Management Staff understand roles and responsibilities of this partnership. This would help the Board and Staff work more effectively together on day-to-day operations and policy decisions. A noble comprehensive assessment of current District operational procedures/by-laws, policy and any working agreements with other partners would help this organization as a whole determine directional changes and modifications needed to be more effective and efficient in meeting their mission in the coming years.
- Increased budget to keep skilled staff. The RCD board is the least effective part of the organization currently.

Full survey responses are in Appendix C, [pages 30-37](#).

General Conclusions for Ramsey Conservation District

The Ramsey Conservation District provides important services to the citizens of Ramsey County and this performance assessment has confirmed the Conservation District's effective administration of local conservation programs and projects. For the most part, the Ramsey Conservation District's partners believe the District is doing good work and is good to work with.

Recent board conflict at the Ramsey Conservation District has created the necessity to reassess the Conservation District's mission, conduct at board meetings and procedures for oversight and management of the District operations. The strong working relationships of the Conservation District staff with partners provides a strong base to build upon for future local resource management in Ramsey County.

The Conservation District has demonstrated good compliance with BWSR's basic and high performance standards.

The partners who responded to the PRAP survey provided strong to good marks in their judgement of the performance of the Conservation District.

Based on comments from Ramsey Conservation District Board and staff and external partners, there appears to be serious dysfunction on the current board. *(See page 8, for comments on ways to improve the effectiveness of the District).*

Commendations

Commendations are based on compliance with BWSR's high performance standards (see Findings, Part 2 and Appendix B, pages 28-29). These practices reflect above average operational effectiveness and level of effort.

Ramsey Conservation District is commended for:

- Job approval authorities: reviewed and reported annually
- Staff training: orientation and cont. ed. plan/record for each staff member
- Annual Plan of Work: based on comp plan, strategic priorities

- Certified wetland delineator: on staff or retainer
- Outcome trends monitored and reported for key resources
- Obtained stakeholder input: within last 5 years.
- Annual report communicates progress on plan goals
- Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, non-governmental organizations
- Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff

Action Items

Action items are based on the LGU's compliance with BWSR's basic practice performance standards (see Findings, Part 2 and Appendix B pages 28-29). LGU's are given an Action Item in this section to address lack of compliance with one or more basic standards.

Ramsey Conservation District has no action items based on the past performance of the District.

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendations

This section contains recommendations offered by BWSR to the supervisors and staff of the Ramsey Conservation District. The intention of these recommendations is to enhance the delivery of effective water and related land resource management and service to the residents of the Ramsey County. **BWSR financial assistance may be available to support the implementation of some of these recommendations. See BWSR website for more information:**

http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/How_to_apply.pdf

Ramsey Conservation District Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Improve communication and interaction among Board members by working with a conflict management or mediation specialist and conduct a strategic assessment of the District to determine whether the existing mission, goals, bylaws and board member responsibilities are understood and remain relevant.

The goal will be to develop a format for building consensus, improving communication and decision making among the Board, build trust in the Board's processes, and develop protocols for Board discussions.

The assessment should address current board dysfunction and protocols for conducting a local government meeting. The assessment should also evaluate current staffing levels to ensure staffing is sufficient to meet the needs and demands for landowner services in the district.

Recommendation 2: Organize Annual Work Plan to address high priority items with specific, measurable action items and monitor staff and Board delivery of programs and projects.

Select action items from the CD Comprehensive Plan and import them directly into your annual work plan with specific, measurable outcomes and which staff is responsible. Based on the Annual Work Plan that is developed, assign action items to the objectives in the annual work plan, then, allocate your available staff hours and budget among the action items, clearly showing who is responsible for each. Establish a regular quarterly Board agenda item during which staff

report their time spent and results achieved on the action items assigned to them from the plan.

Recommendation 3: Develop a fiscal management agreement between Ramsey Conservation District and Ramsey County.

Ramsey County is currently providing operational services to the Ramsey Conservation District, but has no formal agreement such as a memorandum of agreement (MOU) spelling out the details of these shared services. This MOU should be developed in the near future to ensure both parties understand their responsibilities and liabilities. *(See also Ramsey County Recommendation 2, page 14).*

Recommendation 4: Develop orientation and continued education plan for the board and staff to provide for operational effectiveness of the District and Board members through education, succession of positions and outreach to partners. The Conservation District should develop professional development plans for staff members and keep records of trainings attended. At least once a year, during staff performance reviews have the board or personnel committee review the skills and abilities of each staff member to ensure they are up-to-date.

There are many training opportunities available for board members as well. The RCD board members should develop individual training/development plans to ensure supervisors enhance their knowledge and continue to build the skills necessary to carry out their duties. The RCD should keep a written record of trainings attended by both staff and Board members.

Recommendation 5: Continue to build on the use of major or minor watershed scale in comprehensive plan by the use of Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria in implementation of action items of the plan.

As the Conservation District implements and revises the District Comprehensive Plan in the coming years, they should implement projects to address priority concerns by major or minor watershed, and action items should also be carefully targeted to differing watershed priorities. The Conservation District should consider expanding on the idea of resource outcomes in their next plan and structure their goals and objectives to explicitly acknowledge prioritized, targeted and measurable goals. Efforts should be

made to share water resource progress and trend information in easy to understand and easy to access formats on the website. Significant water quality monitoring efforts have taken place in Ramsey County, and the results should be made accessible to the public.

Ramsey County Assessment

Findings: Performance Standards

BWSR has developed a set of performance standards that describe both basic and high performance best management practices related to the overall operation of the organization. These standards are different depending on the type of LGU. Nevertheless, each set of standards addresses four areas of operation: administration, planning, execution, and communication/coordination. The basic standards describe practices that are either legally required or fundamental to the operations. The high performance standards describe practices that reflect a level of performance that exceeds the required practices. While all local government water management entities should be meeting the basic standards, only the more ambitious ones will meet many high performance standards. Compliance with performance standards for Ramsey County are contained in Appendix B, [page 29](#).

Ramsey County reports compliance with 4 of 4 (relevant) basic standards. The county reported compliance with 6 of 9 high performance standards.

Wetland Conservation Act Compliance:

Beginning in 2017, local government unit (LGU) compliance with the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) was added to the PRAP Level II assessments. In 1991, the Legislature passed the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) in order to achieve a no-net loss in the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of Minnesota's wetlands. In doing so, they designated certain implementation responsibilities to local government units (LGUs) and soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to provide oversight. One oversight mechanism is an administrative review of how LGUs and SWCDs are carrying out their responsibilities.

BWSR uses the administrative review process to evaluate LGU and SWCD performance related to their responsibilities under the WCA. The review is intended to determine if an LGU or SWCD is fulfilling their responsibilities under WCA and to provide recommendations for improvement as applicable.

The BWSR Wetland Specialist assigned to assist Ramsey County conducted an evaluation of LGU performance in carrying out the responsibilities as described in Minnesota Rules 8420.

Data for WCA program review was collected via direct interview(s) with staff, a review of an appropriate number and type of project files, a review of existing documentation on file (i.e. annual reporting and resolutions), and through prior BWSR staff experience and interaction with the LGU or SWCD. In some cases, a project site review may be necessary. Generally, interviews, project file reviews were done with two BWSR staff on agreed upon dates. A copy of the questions and form(s) used during the data collection phase are located in Appendix D.

Groundwater Planning

The first Ramsey Conservation District groundwater management plan was prepared by the Ramsey Conservation District, which has coordinated groundwater planning on behalf of the County since 1992. That plan received BWSR approval in September 1995. It focused on developing programs that cities and other local units of government could use to protect groundwater within their jurisdictions and on creating a framework for coordinating groundwater protection activities among local governments. The Ramsey Conservation District prepared a plan update in 2009 but the county board declined to submit the draft for BWSR approval. In 2016 the district and county staffs have been exploring the possibility of updating the 1995 plan to address recent developments and opportunities in groundwater management.

Ramsey County Partners Survey: The County provided a list of 18 partners to take the survey, and only 3 responded (17%). Due to the low participation in this survey, data was too limited to provide meaningful information.

Full survey responses are in Appendix C, pages 30 - 37.

Commendations

Commendations are based on compliance with BWSR's high performance standards (see Findings, Part 2 and Appendix B, pages 28-29). These practices reflect above average operational effectiveness and level of effort.

Ramsey County is commended for:

- Water quality trend data used for short and long range plan priorities
- Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer.
- Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies (in cooperation with WDs)
- Communication piece sent within last 12 months
- Obtained stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs.
- Partnerships: liaison with CDs/WDs and cooperative projects/tasks done

Action Items

Action items are based on the LGU's compliance with BWSR's basic practice performance standards (see Findings, Part 2 and Appendix B pages 28-29). LGU's are given an Action Item in this section to address lack of compliance with one or more basic standards.

Ramsey County does not have any action items.

Ramsey County Recommendations

This section contains recommendations offered by BWSR to Ramsey County. The intention of these recommendations is to enhance both the County and Conservation District's delivery of effective water and related land resource management and service to the residents of the Ramsey County. **BWSR financial assistance may be available to support the implementation of some of these recommendations. See BWSR website for more information:**

http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/PRAP/How_to_apply.pdf

Ramsey County Recommendations:

Ramsey County Recommendation 1: Develop and adopt a Groundwater Plan under Minnesota Statutes 103B.255.

Groundwater issues were mentioned in the survey as an area that has shown little progress over the last 3-5 years in Ramsey County. The 103B.255 statute gives metropolitan counties the authority to prepare and adopt groundwater plans. With groundwater protection considered an important issue within the county and metropolitan area, a groundwater plan could be an effective tool in setting goals, objectives and priorities for groundwater protection in the county.

Ramsey County Recommendation 2: Develop a fiscal management agreement between Ramsey County and Ramsey Conservation District.

The County is currently providing operational services to the Ramsey Conservation District, but has no formal agreement such as a memorandum of agreement (MOU) spelling out the details of these shared services. This MOU should be developed in the near future to ensure both parties understand their responsibilities and liabilities.

Ramsey County Recommendation 3: Review and update delegation agreements for natural resource management programs, as needed, with LGUs within the county.

These delegation agreements should cover all programs delegated to other local units of government including, but not limited to, Wetland Conservation Act, drainage law, shoreland programs, water quality

monitoring, and other natural resource management programs and projects.

Ramsey County Recommendation 4: Ramsey County should provide clarity on the website regarding the structure and cooperative agreements for water resource management within the county.

The county has working relationships with a number of partners for water resource management within the county. This includes the Conservation District, Watershed Districts and Water Management Organizations and other groups. The County should consider providing more clarity on roles and responsibilities on the Ramsey County website to allow the public and other agencies better ways to obtain contact information and improve collaboration.

LGU Comments and BWSR Responses

The Ramsey Conservation District and Ramsey County were invited to comment on the findings, conclusions and joint recommendations in the draft version of this report.

Ramsey Conservation District Comments:

BWSR Response:

Appendix A. Plan Accomplishments

LGU Name: Ramsey Conservation District

Date of This Assessment: 8/14/17

Type of Management Plan: 2012-2016 Comprehensive Plan


Date of Last Plan Revision: 2017

IV. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RAMSEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT: Page 5 of Comprehensive Plan

Objective A: Promote environmental protection and stewardship:



Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped ☐ =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met



Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Continue the current RCD organizational culture that holds environmental stewardship and eco-sustainability as the foundation for all district programs and public policy recommendations.	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	RCD staff and board supported environmental stewardship and eco-sustainability as the foundation in all programs during the Comp Plan timeframe. The RCD also submitted a resolution to the MASWCD in 2013 to encourage Funding for Groundwater Management Workshops, which would encourage the wise use and management of groundwater resources throughout MN.	<input type="radio"/>	The RCD will continue to hold environmental stewardship and eco-sustainability as our foundational message.
2. Promote awareness and respect for the natural environment, its ecosystems, and humanity's long-term dependence on a healthy environment	2012-2016	2015 - 2016	One of the accomplishments in promoting awareness was the annual State of the Waters event held in the fall of every year since the initial event began in 2013. Also the Conservation Forums were established to promote awareness and respect for the natural environment and these began in 2016. Annual tours began in 2015. The events were attended by County Commissioners, State Legislators, Agency staff, and partner LGU staff and board members.	<input type="radio"/>	Continued engagement in education and outreach opportunities, such as the forums, tours and other events.

3. Promote and participate in partnerships for environmental protection	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	Partnerships with other local water management organizations have been a critical component to accomplishing our work plan. During this timeframe, the RCD staff has doubled and revenue has also nearly doubled and it is because of the partnerships that have grown during this timeframe. The RCD is also a JPA partner with the Metro Conservation Districts, which is made up of the 10 metro SWCDs and Hennepin County to promote coordination and cooperation for environmental protection activities.		A new service the RCD is providing, in partnership with Ramsey County, is coordination of the Aquatic Invasive Species Program.
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Objective B: Protect and improve groundwater quality


Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped  =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met




Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Seek funding for and promote cost-share programs and administrate programs to seal abandoned wells	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	The RCD has received two Clean Water Fund grants for sealing wells that were used within the timeframe (2011 and 2014 grants). Within the timeframe 251 landowners have received cost share for sealing their wells within Ramsey County. This funding was matched at a minimum of 50% from landowners.		In 2017 the RCD received two additional Clean Water Fund grants for sealing abandoned wells and sealing wells is continuing.
2. Review surrounding agencies Well Head Protection Plans (WHPPs) and survey for highest priority groundwater protection activity and coordinate implementation as appropriate for Ramsey County	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	RCD staff has prioritized wells in Wellhead Protection areas, Drinking Water Supply Management Areas, and floodplain areas for sealing.		The RCD will continue to prioritize areas for cost share funding with the 2017 CWF grants.



3. Work with Ramsey County as approved to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Ramsey County Groundwater Protection Plan	2012-2016	2012 - Ongoing	The 2010 update of the Ramsey County GPP was completed, but was not submitted to Ramsey County for approval. The RCD has been working to implement the initiatives identified in the plan, such as completing an electronic septic inventory and worked with Ramsey County to accomplish this.		The RCD will continue to accomplish the Actions identified in our most recent Comp Plan 2017 and the Groundwater protection strategies, including updating the well inventory for the county.
4. Promote public education and outreach on topics related to Ramsey County groundwater	2012-2016	2012-2016	In 2015 our State of the Waters event was aimed at education and outreach for groundwater, with speakers discussing drinking water supply in areas using groundwater for their source and a presentation on contaminants in groundwater as presented by MDH.		RCD is continuing to education the public on the need to seal abandoned/unused wells and continuing to work with MCD on a regional groundwater grant focused on auditing groundwater usage on large campuses and working with them to reduce the usage.

Objective C: Protect and improve surface water quality

Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped  =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met



Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Encourage the prevention of nonpoint source pollution and its damaging effects on surface waters	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	During this timeframe, RCD staff has accomplished approximately 2,000 site visits and clean water designs for water quality protection and erosion control practices, which will encourage the prevention of nonpoint source pollution from reaching local water bodies		This is an ongoing program for the RCD with three fulltime staff working on this program.





2. Facilitate the acquisition of funding for local government surface water quality management activities	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	The WMOs in Ramsey County have been funding our NATURE Program (site visits and clean water designs) completely, so that this program is sustainable. Also the RCD has received eight Clean Water Fund grants for the implementation of surface water quality improvement projects. The total State grant funding provided to landowners through the RCD for conservation practices has been well over a million dollars during the Comp Plan timeframe and those dollars have been matched by landowners and WMOs at over the required 25% match. The RCD has received approximately 20 other conservation grants, including an Urban Ag grant from the NACD and we have been delegated from Ramsey County the administration of the NRBG grant during this timeframe.		The WMOs have signed annual Professional Service Agreements for this work.
3. Encourage the creation and utilization of uniform minimum management and protection standards for surface water resources in Ramsey County	2012-2016	2012-2016	MPCA has established uniform minimum management and protection standards for surface water, using Phosphorus, Chlorophyll-A and Secchi Disk Depth as indicators and established standards for both shallow and deep lakes.		RCD is aware of the standards and the impairments within Ramsey County
4. Encourage diagnostic study, ongoing monitoring, and establishment of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) of all major streams, lakes, and select wetlands in Ramsey County	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	Water quality testing is completed on approximately 30 of the 130 lakes in Ramsey County by Public Works Environmental staff, as well as WMO staff. There are currently approximately 12 approved TMDLs for water bodies in Ramsey County.		The RCD is aware of the trends in water quality but we don't complete the monitoring.

5. Promote the use of native vegetation for surface water protection, erosion control, urban wildlife habitat management and urban beautification	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	RCD staff use native vegetation plants for all of their clean water designs, not only for clean water, but also to promote pollinator habitat.		RCD staff will continue to use native plants in clean water designs.
6. Promote the use of low-impact development technologies to protect water quality and conserve natural resources.	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	Raingardens and other low-impact development BMPs are promoted by RCD staff.		Raingardens will continue to be promoted for clean water

Objective D: Preserve wetlands

Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped  =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met

Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Fulfill statutory obligations pursuant to the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991 (WCA).	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	RCD staff is diligent in assisting LGUs to effectively implement WCA, fulfills TEP responsibilities, promptly enforces regulations as it pertains to WCA violations within the county, and maintains a permanent retention of WCA records. RCD staff provided on average 50 WCA protection activities a year during the timeframe.		RCD staff will continue to fulfill statutory obligations pursuant to WCA, and as directed by the state.
2. Promote biodiversity among wetlands in Ramsey County and improve and protect wildlife habitat, especially where endangered or threatened species exist.	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	RCD has provided technical assistance to public and private landowners for restoration projects, assist in on-going wetland monitoring programs, and utilized state funding to leverage local incentives for restoration and establishment projects.		RCD staff will continue to encourage the establishment of a wider range of wetland types, relative to the types of wetlands lost throughout the county.



3. Monitor local governments' implementation of and compliance with the WCA and seek the appropriate action when noncompliance is established.	2012 - 2016	2012 - 2016	RCD staff is attentive to all LGU and landowner requests. Furthermore, staff monitors and reviews all notices and applications for compliance and provides comments to LGU on any discrepancies as it pertains to: proper noticing, qualification of claims, issuing of comment periods or appropriate timelines, approvals, determinations or unique conditions		RCD staff will continue to assist and oversee the implementation of all WCA related items, providing service to both landowners and LGUs
4. Seek the preservation and/or wise management of all wetlands within Ramsey County.	2012-2016	2016 - 2016	RCD has collaborated with local partners on the identification of high priority sites for wetland restoration and protection, and provided such information to encourage the inclusion in local water management plans.		The RCD will continue to prioritize and remain involved with the management of wetlands within Ramsey County.
5. Facilitate State funding for the continued implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991	2012-2016	2012-2016	Administered BWSR funded WCA administration cost-share program. Ramsey County delegated the administration of the NRBG grant to the RCD for every year of the timeframe.		The RCD will continue to administer BWSR funded WCA administration cost-share program
6. As necessary, seek amendments to WCA for the continued preservation of wetlands	2012-2016	2012-2016	During this time RCD has provided review and comments to respective agencies, in effort to develop improved standards and guidelines for wetland preservation and quality goals.		The RCD will continue to remain active in enhancing how state and local policies, are being implemented.

7. Pursue a net gain in diversified wetland acreage in Ramsey County	2012-2016	2012-2016	RCD promotes the avoidance of wetland impacts to the extent possible, and encourages greater use of restoration for project-specific mitigation, taking into account the functions and values lost. RCD directs priority for implementation of wetland replacement/mitigation to be onsite, or within immediate watershed. Staff works with partners and LGUs to monitor potential projects and land use impacts to resources, reviews and develops wetland replacement/mitigation plans, and evaluates length and quality of monitoring for replacement sites.	○	The RCD will encourage the continued restoration, mitigation and prevention of impacts, for a no net loss/net gain in the quantity and biological diversity of the county's wetlands
8. Assist local governmental units develop wetland banks	2012-2016	2012-2016	RCD staff has assisted in the review and evaluation of potential banking sites and banking site development plans.	○	RCD will assist LGUs with development of wetland banks as appropriate or requested

Objective E: Minimize flooding


Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped ☐ =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met

Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Assist in WMO and municipal storm-water runoff management activities	2012 - 2016	2012 - 2016	RCD staff completed 2,639 construction site erosion permit inspections for the cities of Arden Hills and Shoreview, and also for the Rice Creek Watershed District.	○	The RCD is expanding the inspections to include several other cities in 2017.

2. Promote flood plain protection policies among local units of government	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	The RCD continues to work closely with partners as they work to prevent flooding caused by increased storm events. At the 2016 State of the Waters event, the RCD highlighted water planning steps for local officials and climate adaptation strategies and their threats to water resources. This event promoted ideas for local officials to use in developing flood plain protection policies.		In the 2017 Comp Plan the RCD identified Climate Change and Adapt to Climate Variabilities and Minimize Flooding as one of our main objectives.
3. Encourage the use of storm water infiltration technologies to prevent flooding	2012-2016	2012 - 2016	Raingardens and other bio-infiltration technologies are used regularly by RCD staff to prevent flooding. Partner LGUs are using new technologies to prevent flooding, such as the forecast-based control system installed by CRWD and Falcon Heights at Curtis Field Pond, which will activate water management structures, based on automated weather forecasting.		Staff is looking for reuse opportunities to assist with flood prevention.

Objective F: Discourage inappropriate land use

Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped  =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met


Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Recommend against land use change that is not compatible with the inherent limitations of the soils resource as described in the Ramsey County Soil Survey and/or changes that will have significant negative effect on the environment	2012-2016	2012-2016	Much of Ramsey County's natural soil has been significantly modified by human actions creating what is known as "urbanized soil classes". The raingardens installed with native plants help restore soil and reverse the negative effects of urbanization.		Continue to encourage soil testing before installing BMPs, so that contaminated soils can be remediated before installing BMPs

2. Encourage and facilitate the assessment (by municipalities and WMOs) of land use changes and the effects they will have on natural resources and the environment	2012-2016	2012-2016	RCD staff completed 11 Subwatershed Analysis Studies within the Comp Plan timeframe, which assessed and encouraged land use changes that would have positive effects on the natural resources and the environment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Continue to complete SWAs whenever possible.
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Objective G: Preserve unique landforms and ecosystems



Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped ☐ =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met



Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Promote and facilitate the identification of unique landforms and ecosystems within Ramsey County	2012-2016	2012-2016	Wetland plant communities contain rare plants and animals, though more comprehensive plant surveys need to be completed. RCD staff has completed a plant survey for VLAWMO on Black Lake.	<input type="radio"/>	RCD staff is currently conducting a plant survey for VLAWMO on Wilkinson Lake.
2. Encourage public acquisition and/or the protection of unique landforms and ecosystems both on a local and national level	2012-2016	2012-2016	We did not acquire land during this timeframe, but the RCD Board did encourage Ramsey County to promote green space for the recently purchased TCAAP land, now known as Rice Creek Commons.	<input type="radio"/>	RCD will continue to encourage green space for vacant properties within Ramsey County.
3. Encourage land use regulations that include recognition and protection of unique landforms, ecosystems, and historical and cultural resources	2012-2016	2012-2016	Habitat loss and degradation are the most significant challenges facing biodiversity today in the county. The RCD attended the meetings for the DNR's North & East Groundwater Management Area Plan, which included all of Ramsey County. This plan included identifying unique landforms and ecosystems. The RCD supported this effort.	<input type="radio"/>	Continue to support efforts of implementation for the North & East GWMA.

4. Encourage the maintenance and restoration of green space within the urban core	2012-2016	2012-2016	The RCD received an Urban Ag grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts in 2016 and has used this grant to promote green space within the urban core. The grant funded an agricultural demonstration project in Rivoli Bluffs, as well as assisted six community gardens within the county.		We are having a tour of the demonstration project on August 16th and we are also in discussion with the County on increasing green space in vacant properties.
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Objective H: Protect and improve wildlife habitat



Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped  =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met





Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Where appropriate, promote and aid land management activities that protect, improve, and diversify wildlife habitat on public lands	2012-2016	2012-2016	The Ramsey County Cooperative Weed Management Area is a group of over ten partner organizations working to manage invasive plants that negatively impact natural lands, parks and open space. Areas of infestations have been targeted by the group and local efforts have been developed to treat those areas.		In 2017 a contractor was hired to treat 10 locations of invasive species and RCD staff will seed those areas in the fall with a native vegetation seed mix.
2. Promote and assist land management activities on private lands that increase and improve wildlife habitat.	2012-2016	2012-2016	With the Local Capacity Grant in 2016, the RCD Board approved the use of \$15,000 of those funds for pollinator habitat and two locations have been identified for pollinator plantings. The projects should be installed by the end of the grant agreement.		The RCD board will need to approve the pollinator plantings before the projects can move forward.

3. Encourage public and private funding of wildlife management activities in urban areas	2012-2016	2012-2016	The RCD is bringing awareness of the need for increased habitat and supporting efforts that increase biodiversity, such as shoreline restorations, raingardens, and pollinator plantings. The RCD received 3 Community Partner grants, which assist greatly in installing BMPs on larger campuses, which will assist with increasing habitat.		Ongoing work to continue to look for targeted areas for the Community Partners grant to be utilized.
4. Promote lakescaping, rainwater gardens, and native vegetation landscapes	2012-2016	2012-2016	The RCD completes nearly 400 site visits and clean water design plans per year, incorporating native vegetation in the plans.		RCD staff will continue to promote raingardens and other clean water BMPs

Objective I: Facilitate intergovernmental cooperation for cost-effective natural resource management and environmental protection.

Progress Rating: ☐ =not started/dropped  =on-going progress ☒ =completed/target met

Planned Actions or Activities	Proposed Timeframe	Actual Timeframe	Accomplishments to Date	Progress Rating	Next Steps
1. Maintain interagency liaison	2012-2016	2012-2016	The RCD board members regularly serve as liaisons on the WMO CACs, providing RCD updates.		Continue to participate in WMO CACs.
2. Facilitate Ramsey County interagency environmental protection and natural resource management consortium(s)	2012-2016	2016	The RCD Conservation Forums began officially in 2016.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The next forum will focus on soil health and will include an urban ag tour.
3. Continue to support Environmental Education efforts	2012-2016	2012-2016	RCD staff assists with a number of environmental education efforts that include the Envirothon, Children's, Water Festival, and the Phalen Waterfest.		The Children's Water Festival is the next education event and RCD staff is on the steering committee, in charge of the lunches for the event.

4. Advocate efficient and effective environmental protection	2012-2016	2012-2016	During the timeframe, the RCD created a Facebook and Twitter account to increase education and outreach efforts.		Continue social media exposure with weekly updates.
5. Maintain a comprehensive natural resource database in a GIS format that can be accessed by all agencies, local governmental units, and citizens in Ramsey County	2012-2016	2016 - ongoing	RCD GIS staff is working on a natural resource database that can be accessible to other LGUs and the public, but it isn't ready for release yet.		RCD expects to complete this project over the winter of 2017/18 for spring release.
6. Showcase our partnerships to promote efficiencies and intergovernmental cooperation	2012-2016	2012-2016	The RCD had distributed a newsletter, at least once a year to promote our partnerships and projects.		Continue to publish our newsletters.
7. Provide technical and project management assistance to local units of government on a fee-for-service basis to maximize operating revenues	2012-2016	2012-2016	Over 55% of the RCD budget is funded on a fee-for-service basis, with most of the work from WMOs. This partnership maximizes the RCD revenue and also offers a cost effective solution for the WMOs.		Continue to provide a talented workforce to provide assistance to LGUs.

Appendix B. Performance Standards

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS										
LGU Name: Ramsey Conservation District										
Performance Area	Performance Standard						Level of Review		Rating	
	■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement ★ High Performance standard (see instructions for explanation of standards)						I Annual Compliance II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs)	Yes, No, or Value		
								YES	NO	
Administration	■ Financial statement: annual, on-time and complete						I	X		
	■ Financial audit: completed as required by statute (see guidance) or as per BWSR correspondence						I	X		
	■ eLINK Grant Report(s) submitted on-time						I	X		
	■ Data practices policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs						II	X		
	■ Personnel policy: exists and reviewed/updated within last 5 yrs						II	X		
	■ Technical professional appointed and serving on WCA TEP						II	X		
	■ SWCD has an adopting resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and appropriate decision delegation resolutions as warranted (If WCA LGU)						II	X		
	★ Job approval authorities: reviewed and reported annually						II	X		
	★ Operational guidelines and policies exist and are current						II		X	
	★ Board training: orientation & cont. ed. plan and record for each board member						II		X	
	★ Staff training: orientation and cont. ed. plan/record for each staff member						II	X		
Planning	■ Comprehensive Plan: updated within 5 yrs or current resolution adopting unexpired county LWM plan						I	X		
	■ Biennial Budget Request submitted on time						I	X		
	★ Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria are used for Goals and Objectives in the local water management plan as appropriate.						II		X	
	★ Annual Plan of Work: based on comp plan, strategic priorities						II	X		
Execution	■ Are state grant funds spent in high priority problem areas						II	X		
	■ Total expenditures per year (over past 10 yrs)						II	see below		
	■ Months of operating funds in reserve						II	X		
	■ Replacement and restoration orders are prepared in conformance with WCA rules and requirements.						II	X		
	■ WCA TEP member is knowledgeable/trained in WCA technical aspects						II	X		
	■ WCA TEP member contributes to reviews, findings, recommendations						II	X		
	■ WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with all WCA requirements (If WCA LGU)						II	X		
	■ WCA TEP reviews/recommendations appropriately coordinated(if LGU)						II	X		
	★ Certified wetland delineator: on staff or retainer						II	X		
	★ Outcome trends monitored and reported for key resources						II	X		
Communication & Coordination	■ Website contains all required content elements						I	X		
	★ Website contains additional content beyond minimum required						II		X	
	★ Track progress on I & E objectives in Plan						II		X	
	★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs						II	X		
	★ Annual report communicates progress on plan goals						II	X		
	★ Partnerships: cooperative projects/tasks with neighboring districts, counties, watershed districts, non-governmental organizations						II	X		
	★ Coordination with County Board by supervisors or staff						II	X		
2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
\$354,829	\$445,290	\$524,403	\$566,292	\$466,271	\$509,113	\$519,353	\$483,723	\$558,714	\$781,862	
TOTAL=								\$5,209,850		

COUNTY LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: Ramsey County

Performance Area	Performance Standard	Level of Review	Rating	
			Yes, No, or Value	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic practice or statutory requirement ★ High Performance standard (see instructions for explanation of standards)	I Annual Compliance II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs)	YES	NO
Admin	■ eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I	N/A	
	■ County has resolution assuming WCA responsibilities and delegation resolutions (if needed).	II	X	
	■ County has knowledgeable and trained staff to manage WCA program or secured a qualified delegate.	II	X	
	■ Drainage authority buffer strip report submitted on time	I	N/A	
	★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II	N/A	
Planning	■ Local water mgmt plan: current	I	N/A	
	★ Metro counties: groundwater plan up-to-date	I		X
	■ Biennial Budget Request submitted on-time	I	N/A	
	★ Prioritized, Targeted & Measureable criteria are used for Goals & Objectives in local water management plan as appropriate.	II	N/A	
	★ Water quality trend data used for short- and long-range plan priorities	II	X	
Execution	■ WCA decisions and determinations are made in conformance with WCA requirements.	II	X	
	■ WCA TEP reviews and recommendations are appropriately coordinated.	II	X	
	★ Certified wetland delineator on staff or retainer	II	X	
	★ Water quality data collected to track outcomes for each priority concern	II		X
	★ Water quality trends tracked for priority water bodies	II	X	
Communication & Coordination	■ BWSR grant report(s) posted on website	I	N/A	
	★ Communication piece sent within last 12 months: indicate target audience below	II	X	
	Communication Target Audience: General Public			
	★ Obtain stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs	II	X	
	★ Partnerships: liaison with SWCDs/WDs and cooperative projects/tasks done	II	X	
	★ Annual report to water plan advisory committee on plan progress	II		X
	★ Track progress for I & E objectives in Plan	II	N/A	
	★ County local water plan on county website	II	N/A	
	★ Water management ordinances on county website	II	N/A	

Appendix C. Summary of Survey Results

Survey Overview:

The survey was developed by BWSR staff for the purpose of identifying information about the local government units' performance from both board members and staff and from the units' partner organizations. The Ramsey Conservation District and County staff identified, at BWSR's request, their current board members, staff and the partner organizations with whom they have an on-going working relationship. BWSR staff invited those people to take the on-line survey and their responses were received and analyzed by BWSR staff. Board members and staff answered a different set of survey questions than the partners. The identity of the survey respondents is unknown to both BWSR and the LGUs.

In this case 11 Conservation District supervisors and staff that were invited to take the survey, 10 responded, a 91% response rate. Twenty seven Conservation District partners were invited and 20 (74%) responded.

For the 18 partner organization representatives who were invited to take the survey for Ramsey County 3 partners responded (17%). The internal survey was not done for Ramsey County based on a recommendation by the Ramsey County Environmental Health Director.

Both sets of responses are summarized below. Some responses were edited for clarity or brevity.

Ramsey Conservation District Supervisor and Staff Questions and Responses

How often does your organization use your current management plan to guide decisions about what you do? (response percent)	
Always	55.6%
Usually	44.4%
Seldom	0.0%
Never	0.0%

Additional Comments:

- *In order to stay afloat financially, many decisions on how to spend staff time are based on which fee-for-service opportunities are available rather than which would best fit our objectives as laid out in the plan, but we strive to meet both goals - work on fee-for-service projects (and apply for grants) that are in line with those objectives.*
- *We use our comprehensive plan and the identified priorities to determine what projects and programs should take precedence.*
- *Ours is well-written and helpful.*

List your organization's most successful programs and projects during the past 3-5 years.

Our strongest program (with the most dedicated staff members) is design of stormwater treatment systems. Our staff have worked with neighboring watershed districts and cities to design and implement numerous rain gardens and other BMPs throughout Ramsey County. The RCD also has a long-standing and popular well sealing cost-share program to help protect groundwater. We have also conducted numerous Subwatershed Retrofit Assessments over the years.

Community Partners Well sealing Technical assistance to property owners on BMPs

BMP Cost-Share programs. Both our internal Cost-Share Programs utilizing Clean Water Funds as well as our work with the local Watershed District and Water Management Organization cost-share programs. Our Well Sealing program is also highly popular and continues to utilize all of the funds from BWSR.

We have a fantastic group of designers who work closely with our partners to provide landscape plans that improve and protect water quality. The RCD is also working to protect groundwater quality and quantity and has grown the aquatic invasive species program greatly in the last year.

Stormwater BMP design working with Watershed District's and their cost-share programs. -Community Partners Grant Funding for Stormwater BMP's -Well Sealing Program and Cost-share -Aquatic Invasive Species Program - Conservation Forums

There are many. The RCD provides assistance in design, cost share, implementation, and follow-up maintenance for numerous rain gardens. Among additional programs are well-sealing and septic inventory, AIS education and monitoring, lake mapping and monitoring, site inspections, larger scale campus projects (ranging from schools to breweries to churches to specific lakes), MAWQCP, education and outreach (including participation in community events, annual State of the Water gatherings, tours, and monthly forums), and cooperative weed management.

BMP Design/Cost Share Programs > Community Partners Lambert Creek Stabilization projects Various HOA/School/Church stormwater BMPs.

Our NATURE Program, which provides site visits and landscape designs to landowners for rain gardens, shoreline restorations, and other BMPs, has been our most demanded program, with three full-time designers on staff supporting the program. Most successful projects would include our Well Sealing cost share, which is part of our Groundwater Protection Program. We have citizens calling nearly daily asking about it. The restoration work for multiple portions of Lambert Creek has also been significant for stabilizing the shoreline, as well as protecting the water supply.

Cost-share programs, GIS.

What helped make these projects and programs successful?

Qualified staff members, BWSR grant funds, partnerships and financial support with local water management organization.

Good staff Good partnerships with institutions like churches Collaboration with watershed districts Additional funding from BWSR, Legacy funding, etc.

Attentive staff and strong relationships with our partnering organizations.

The close working relationships that we have with local watershed management organizations, watershed districts, cities and the County, as well as the respect that they have for our work.

The two most important things making these programs successful are having great staff members to run the day to day operations of the programs, and our great relationships with our partner organizations. The staff here at the RCD does a great job managing these programs and working to get projects in the ground and real progress on conservation issues. Also, without our partner organizations such as Watershed Districts, we would not be able to implement at many of the stormwater BMP projects that we do through their cost-share programs.

The RCD Board of Supervisors, staff members, partners, residents, and funds such as Clean Water.

Competent staff, great partners and a supportive board.

A talented and unified staff, as well as a supportive board has led to the success of our projects and programs. In 2017 the staff has not felt supported by the full board. Earlier in the year, a few board members requested to put the staff reports on the consent agenda and now they do not hear the staff report on their projects. There is still a written staff report provided, but it is not the same as hearing from the staff. There was a workshop planned for April to discuss the Annual Plan and the Budget and the board was unable to approve the agenda and the workshop didn't happen, so I don't know how familiar some board members may be with our successful projects and programs.

Partnerships with watershed districts and others.

During the past 3-5 years, which of your organization's programs or projects have shown little progress or been on hold?

The groundwater management plan is on hold - in the past we have worked with Ramsey County on this project, but is overdue on a new, updated plan.

Invasive species

We have been working towards implementing a pollinator cost-share program. We are still working out policy and guidelines for the program and hope to implement as soon as the Fall of 2017.

None come to mind. The RCD has more demand than staff time and funding to complete, such as well-sealings.

I don't know

The projects that are supported by grants, such as the well sealing cost share program, have periodically been put on hold for lack of funding. One of the services we provide is Subwatershed Analysis Studies (SWAs) for the Water Management Organizations within Ramsey County. We used to have a waiting list for this service, but currently do not have anyone interested in having us complete another SWA. Thankfully SWCDs have staff that are adaptable and flexible to assist with other programs and services. There is always plenty of work to do!

Groundwater protection.

List the reasons why the organization has had difficulty with these projects and programs.

Previously (more than 3-5 years ago), there were coordination problems with involved parties, and the draft plan was not put before the county Board. There is now hesitation to invest the time into it without the assurance that it would be reviewed by the Board.

We didn't have the funds at the time. Now we do and there is a dedicated staffer.

We have so many other projects and programs running simultaneously, we haven't had a lot of staff time to dedicate to the pollinator cost-share program.

As mentioned above, the RCD has more project demand than staff time and funding to complete activities fully, such as well-sealing. Also, in the early part of 2017, two supervisors who would not approve board agendas kept the board from signing off on projects in a timely manner.

I don't know.

Not having a reliable funding mechanism has been one of the biggest challenges with projects and programs. Even though we prioritize based on the resource need, we also have to take funding into consideration, so that if we cannot find a way to fund the project, then it might not be our first priority. As for some of the reasons that SWAs are no longer in demand, one reason is that we have completed SWAs for one WMO, so that there aren't any catchments left. Another reason for the decrease is that we are also competing with consultants in completing these studies and it is up to the WMO who they prefer to use.

Lack of County support.

Regarding the various organizations and agencies with which you could cooperate on projects or programs...

List the ones with which you work well already

Watershed Districts and Cities, BWSR, County

Capital Region WD; Ramsey-Washington Metro WD; Rice Creek WD; cities of Shoreview, Arden Hills; VLAWMO BWSR, CRWD, RWMWD, RCWD, VLAWMO, Ramsey County, City of Shoreview, City of Arden Hills, City of St. Paul, White Bear Township

RCWD, RWMWD, CRWD, cities, Ramsey County

Ramsey County; other watershed districts in Ramsey County, including the Capitol Region Watershed District, Ramsey Washington Watershed District, and Rice Creek Watershed District; BWSR; MASWCD; Metro Conservation District; a number of environmentally oriented nonprofits; community organizations such as churches; BWSR; the Minnesota Legislature; Minnesota state agencies (Pollution Control, Natural Resources, Agriculture, Health); Ramsey County cities; and lake associations.

VLAWMO, RWMWD, CRWD, RCWD, Maplewood, St Paul, Ramsey County, BWSR, DNR, North St Paul, Roseville, Shoreview.
CRWD, RWMWD, RCWD, VLAWMO, VBWD, cities of Shoreview and Arden Hills, MPCA, DNR, Ramsey County.
Watershed districts, County, cities.
List the ones with which better collaboration would benefit your organization
MN Dept. of Health, MPCA, MNDNR
Met Council
MWMO, LWRWMO
VLAWMO, LMRWMO
<i>These are already strong partnerships with mutual respect. We would always like more fee-for-service projects with other organizations, but again, the RCD needs more funding to hire more staff to be able to take on additional work. A bill was introduced in the last session of the Minnesota Legislature to help fund reconstruction and stabilization of dangerous, eroded areas at Lilydale Regional Park, so support of senators and representatives would be appreciated in the upcoming session.</i>
LMRWMO
None
<i>Have a great relationship with partners due to the tremendous efforts of our staff.</i>
If you don't know much about your organization's working relationships with partners, enter "I don't know"
No responses.

What steps could your organization take to increase your effectiveness in accomplishing your plan goals and objectives?

<i>Greater transparency and involvement of staff in strategic planning, Increased outreach, Staff position dedicated to filling in gaps of what is not being advanced in the Plan (if economically feasible, which may be the current restriction).</i>
<i>Get rid of the board and have the RCD's activities be done under Ramsey County.</i>
<i>We have talked about developing an online BMP database to manage all of the BMP's we assist with across the county. We are looking at partnering with the Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations throughout the county to develop this so to not duplicate work.</i>
<i>We could have a board that's able to hold a civil conversation with each other without taking things personally and then reacting with a personal attack on other board members and staff. The fact that certain board members clearly articulate that they feel they are better than, more important than and above staff is demoralizing and insulting. Staff are here to support the board in any way that we can - and we WANT to do that more than anything. But being talked down to and told to stay out of the way by people who show no respect for the organization or for the knowledge and experience that staff have is unacceptable and will do nothing to help grow this District.</i>
<i>The past year we have struggled to move some things along with the current dysfunction in our board of supervisors. We have had a board member come in new this year with some sort of agenda, and has not allowed the board to function smoothly, causing projects needing board approval to be put on hold. Improving the relationship and function of our board would really get some of our projects back on track by getting approvals.</i>
<i>It is extremely important that the two non-cooperative supervisors work productively for RCD's success.</i>
<i>To have a supportive board, motivated by all of the great work that our organization can do to help our citizens and natural resources within the county. To have a board that trusts staff to manage direction of day to day operations.</i>
<i>Currently our governance structure isn't working. At our June 2017 board meeting we had a board member react in a very hostile manner when her policy wasn't immediately approved, without review. We have had people express concern for safety for future board meetings. We need respectful board meetings!</i>
<i>Having disruptive board members has very much hurt us as an organization.</i>

How long have you been with the organization?	(response percent)
Less than 5 years	62.5% (5)
5 to 15 years	37.5% (3)
More than 15 years	0%

Ramsey CD Partner Organization Questions and Responses

Question: How often have you interacted with this organization during the past two to three years? Select the response closest to your experience.		(response percent)
Not at all		0%
A few times		20.0%
Several times a year		30.0%
Monthly		15.0%
Almost every week		35.0%
Daily		0%

Comments:

- None

Is the amount of work you do in partnership with this organization...	(percent)
Not enough, there is potential for us to do more together	10.0% (2)
About right	90.0% (18)
Too much, they depend on us for work they should be doing for themselves	0.0%
Too much, we depend on them for work we should be doing ourselves or with others	0.0%

Comments:

- RCD does a lot of good work. I don't have enough time available to do as much as I'd like with them.

Based on your experience working with them, please rate the organization in the following areas:					
Performance Characteristic	Rating (percent of responses)				
	Strong	Good	Acceptable	Poor	I don't know
Communication (they keep us informed; we know their activities; they seek our input)	55.0%	20.0%	15.0%	10.0%	0%
Quality of work (they have good projects and programs; good service delivery)	55.0%	30.0%	10.0%	0%	5.0%
Relationships with Customers (they work well with landowners and clients)	50.0%	25.0%	5.0%	0%	20.0%
Initiative (they are willing to take on new projects, try new ideas)	65.0%	20.0%	10.0%	5.0%	0%
Timelines/Follow-through (they are reliable and meet deadlines)	50.0%	30.0%	15.0%	5.0%	0%

How is your working relationship with this organization? (percent)	
Powerful, we are more effective working together	30.0% (6)
Strong, we work well together most of the time	55.0% (11)
Good, but it could be better	15.0% (3)

Acceptable , but a struggle at times	0%
Poor , there are almost always difficulties	0%
Non-existent , we don't work with this organization	0%

Comments from Partners about their working relationship with the Ramsey CD.

- *The staff are very professional and do great work for our organization.*
- *Service model aligns more strongly with watershed district than municipal government.*
- *Overall our working relationship is very good. The staff leadership has moved the RCD into increasing effectiveness. The occasional hiccup usually depended on the person we are working with. RCD staff are excellent team players.*
- *RSWCD is a good organization to work with; we just don't overlap area much, so have infrequent work opportunities.*
- *The RCD is a great organization.*

Do you have additional thought about how the "subject" organization could be more effective?

Not terribly clear what their core mission is.

We are aware of discord on the Board of Supervisors. We are very concerned this fracture could impact the work we do through the RCD. If the RCD loses credibility through a fractured leadership group, we too lose credibility and could the gains we have made through our longstanding partnership.

The RCD provides a needed service and is an essential partner. We appreciate both the technical expertise and the program and grant support they provide. We hope the current dysfunction within the Board and between Board and staff can be resolved. I know there have been efforts by the organization this year to resolve issues and move forward. Perhaps BWSR could provide resources to assist.

The technical staff are qualified resource professionals who having been getting conservation on the ground in spite of the current issues among the board of supervisors that has been affecting the management of district operations. The board coming together to agree to a Plan for working through these current issues while in the interim continuing to conduct district business according to their comprehensive plan and work plans would help make this District more effective. Having an official shared services agreement between the Ramsey County and Ramsey CD entities would help the CD Board of Supervisors and Management Staff understand roles and responsibilities of this partnership. This would help the Board and Staff work more effectively together on day-to-day operations and policy decisions. A noble comprehensive assessment of current District operational procedures/by-laws, policy and any working agreements with other partners would help this organization as a whole determine directional changes and modifications needed to be more effective and efficient in meeting their mission in the coming years.

Increased budget to keep skilled staff. The RCD board is the least effective part of the organization currently.

More adaptive to the often changing technical services needs of the WD's/WMO's.

How long have you been with your current organization?	(response percent)
Less than 5 years	25.0% (5)
5 to 15 years	55.0% (11)
More than 15 years	21.1% (4)

Ramsey County Partner Organization Questions and Responses

Question: How often have you interacted with this organization during the past two to three years? Select the response closest to your experience.

	(response percent)
Not at all	0.0%
A few times	0.0%
Several times a year	33.3%
Monthly	0.0%
Almost every week	33.3%
Daily	33.3%

If you chose not all, when was the last time you interacted with the organization? No comments

Is the amount of work you do in partnership with this organization...	(percent)
Not enough, there is potential for us to do more together	66.7%
About right	33.3%
Too much, they depend on us for work they should be doing themselves	0.0%
Too much, we depend on them for work we should be doing ourselves or with others	0.0%

Other (Please explain): No comments

Based on your experience, please rate the efforts of the subject organization in the following areas:

Performance Characteristic	Rating (percent of responses)				
	Strong	Good	Acceptable	Poor	I don't know
Communication (<i>they keep us informed; we know their activities; they seek our input</i>)	33.3%	0%	0%	67.7%	0%
Quality of work (<i>they have good projects and programs; good service delivery</i>)	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	0%	0%
Relationships with Customers (<i>they work well with landowners and clients</i>)	33.3%	0%	67.7%	0%	0%
Initiative (<i>they are willing to take on new projects, try new ideas</i>)	33.3%	0%	0%	67.7%	0%
Timelines/Follow-through (<i>they are reliable and meet deadlines</i>)	33.3%	33.3%	0%	33.3%	0%

How is your working relationship with this organization? (percent)

Powerful, we are more effective working together	33%
Strong, we work well together most of the time	0%
Good, but it could be better	33%
Acceptable, but a struggle at times	0%
Poor, there are almost always difficulties	33%

Non-existent, we don't work with this organization

0%

Comments from Partners about their working relationship with the Ramsey County: *None*

Do you have additional thought about how the "subject" organization could be more effective?

Ramsey County is a big organization. We work with Public Works and Parks. The staff at both places have always been very helpful and effective. That being said sometimes the management is hard to work with. Recently, Ramsey County PW decided to stop their work with monitoring lake levels and managing outlets. While it is "easy" for us to take on that work, it always left us feeling like they were out of the water business and not willing to be a partner with us. We've collaborated with Ramsey County parks on a number of projects. For the most part they are good to work with.

How long have you been with the organization?	(response percent)
Less than 5 years	33.3%
5 to 10 years	33.3%
More than 15 years	33.3%

Appendix D. Wetland Conservation Act



Wetland Conservation Act Administrative Review Report

Report Prepared for: Ramsey Conservation District

Report Date: July 28, 2017

Prepared by: Ben Meyer, BWSR Wetland Specialist
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155
612-201-9806

Introduction

In 1991, the Legislature passed the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) in order to achieve a no-net loss in the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of Minnesota's wetlands. In doing so, they designated certain implementation responsibilities to local government units (LGUs) and soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to provide oversight. One oversight mechanism is an administrative review of how LGUs and SWCDs are carrying out their responsibilities.

BWSR uses the administrative review process to evaluate LGU and SWCD performance related to their responsibilities under the WCA. The review is intended to determine if an LGU or SWCD is fulfilling their responsibilities under WCA and to provide recommendations for improvement as applicable.

This review has been conducted in conjunction with the PRAP process, a summary of which is provided in the overall PRAP report.

Methods

Data for this report was collected via direct interview(s) with staff, a review of an appropriate number and type of project files, a review of existing documentation on file (i.e. annual reporting/resolutions), and through prior BWSR staff experience/interaction with the LGU or SWCD. In some cases, a project site review may be necessary. Generally, interviews, project file reviews and site visits were done with two BWSR staff on agreed upon dates.

A copy of the questions and form(s) used during the data collection phase are located in *Appendix D*.

Specific Methods

BWSR staff interviewed Michael Schumann, Natural Resources Specialist on July 12, 2017 at the Conservation District Office in Arden Hills. In addition to the data collection forms completed (See Appendix D), one enforcement file was reviewed. No additional site visits or interviews were deemed necessary for this review.

WCA Report Summary and Recommendations

A. Administration

The Ramsey Conservation District (RCD) does not act as an LGU but does enforce the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) through the participation on Technical Evaluation Panels (TEP) and writing of restoration orders relating to WCA violations.

Trained and Knowledgeable Staff

The RCD provides staff that are trained in environmental and natural resources and the 1987 Delineation Manual to meet MN Rule 8420.0240. Based solely on the interview and previous TEP interaction, the RCD meets the requirement for being trained and knowledgeable. In addition, the staff has attended trainings through BWSR and WDCP. The RCD staff does a good job coordinating with other agencies (local, state, and federal). Additionally it appears the staff has a good rapport with landowners and effectively communicates WCA requirements to landowners. **This is effectively implementing the program.**

B. Execution and Coordination

Violation and Complaint Resolution

The RCD is involved in resolving complaints and violations per MN Rule 8420.0900 Subp. 3. B. The TEP is consulted in resolving violations. RCD staff continues to investigate violations and complete restoration orders. There were 3 enforcement cases since 2014. Two cases were resolved in cooperation with the LGU. The other case was reviewed and the Restoration Order and process were found to be handled in a timely fashion and thoroughly documented and communicated. **This is effectively implementing the program.**

TEP Incorporation/Coordination

The RCD participates in the Technical Evaluation Panel according to the procedures identified in MN Rule 8420.0240. Members of the TEP include the BWSR Wetland Specialist, LGU (in Ramsey County this is usually the Watershed District or municipality) and Michael Schumann for the RCD. The RCD attends almost all requested TEP meetings. Representatives from the Corp and DNR are always invited and involved when necessary. The TEP is utilized for projects that require TEP involvement as well as projects beyond what is required as necessary. **This is effectively implementing the program.**

SWCD: Ramsey CountyBWSR Reviewer(s): Ben MeyerDate: 7/12/2017**WCA Performance Standards Review Questions for SWCD**

**In cases where the SWCD also functions as the LGU, the reviewer may not have to answer all questions on this form.*

**Administration**

- 1) Does the SWCD provide/designate a technical professional with expertise in water resource management to serve on the TEP? *Evaluate the primary staff person. Secondary staff should be included as determined by the reviewer.*

- a. Staff Member Name Michael Schumann, Natural Resources Specialist
- b. What background, training, and/or experience does this person have?

Check All That Apply with Approximate Dates if known	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5 Day WDCP Basic Delineation Training Class Attendance 2014 in Farmington
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Delineation Certification – Professional/In-Training <u>In training, 2018 profess. exam</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BWSR Academy WCA Session Attendance 2015, 2016
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Soils Training/Education – BWSR Academy/WDCP/Other NRCS soils (2015), BWSR Acad., WPA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hydrology Training/Education – BWSR Academy/WDCP/Other WDCP, WPA conf.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vegetation Training/Education – BWSR Academy/WDCP/Other WDCP, WPA conf.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	College Degree – AA/AS/BA/BS/MS – Natural Resources/Hydrology/Soils/Vegetation/Biology/Environment/Policy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: BS and MS in LA, emphasis in restoration ecology, stream resto., limnology
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: Click here to enter text.

- c. Years of Experience serving on the TEP and/or in a related function? Explain.
6+, previous in R-Wash. Metro, 3 yrs with Washington CD. With Ramsey CD since 2014
- d. Are there identified area in which staff requires or desires additional training or experience?
Staff has pursued training as much as offered. Staff is interested in assisting with and/or hosting an LGU/SWCD training. Staff is looking to become a Certified Wetland Delineator in 2018.
- 2) Does the staff member attend TEP meetings regularly?
Is invited by LGUs and attends approx. 99 percent of time when invited. Always conduct site visit for violations.
- 3) Does this same staff member prepare restoration and replacement orders associated with WCA enforcement?
If not, explain.
Yes. 3 violations since 2014. 1 RO to Cert. of Sat., other 2, worked with LGU to remedy.

- 4) Other questions specific to Region or SWCD as determined by the reviewer. Consider questions on administration of local enforcement processes and SWCD involvement (if applicable), typical processes followed, etc.

Question 1. SWCD follows data practices to keep files: paper and electronic.

Question 2. [Click here to enter text.](#)

Summary and Recommendations: *Ramsey Conservation District staff seeks out training and is well trained in wetland delineation and Wetland Conservation Act duties. There is a high level of participation in the TEP process and assisting LGUs. The Conservation District processes violations and works with LGUs to achieve compliance.*

Execution & Coordination

- 1) Does the SWCD prepare replacement and restoration orders in conformance with WCA rules and requirements? *This question will be answered via the questions below in conjunction with an appropriate amount of enforcement file reviews (See WCA Enforcement File Review and Summary Sheet) as determined by the reviewer.*

- a. General Workload summary (i.e. number of informal and/or formal Orders drafted/issued in the last 3-5 years, ID significant workload areas/cases, estimated percent of staff time spent annually or FTE).

3 violation in past 3 years, one resulted in and RO. 1/3 FTE is spent on WCA. NRBG funding is passed from county directly to SWCD.

- b. Number of Enforcement Files reviewed: One: 1101 Meadowland Drive, White Bear Twp (VLAMO)

- c. Does the SWCD staff member conduct a site inspection prior to preparing a restoration plan? Is the 'pre-altered condition' the primary goal of the restoration?

Yes and Yes. On site first.

- d. In instances where a replacement order is issued, did the SWCD seek/receive TEP concurrence that restoration was not possible or prudent?

Yes, Dennis reviewed, must meet conditions stated by TEP.

- e. Does the SWCD request assistance or consult with the LGU, TEP, and/or DNR Enforcement Authority as needed? *Involving others during the RO process promotes consistency and insures a higher quality product (team approach).*

Yes, always.

- f. Summary of Enforcement Project Reviews (See Enforcement Project Review Sheet(s)): *Note specific examples of the time period required to draft the RO, follow up and communication, tracking progress/Cert of Satisfaction, clear errors, etc. Summary should also note high quality work, methods, and/or illustrations. Reviewer should summarize RO clarity, legibility, enforceability/compliance with applicable rules, and adequacy of findings/technical support.*

SEE ABOVE for Meadowlands.

- 2) Is the TEP member knowledgeable and trained in the technical aspects of WCA implementation? *This question can largely be answered via the data collected in the Administration section above. Also consider staff involvement in Wildlife Habitat Certifications, Mitigation Site monitoring, certification of Soil and Water Conservation project per exemption, and other items specific to SWCD.*

Yes. See page 1.

- 3) Is the SWCD staff member actively involved with and contribute to the TEP discussion and findings? *One of the strengths in the WCA is TEP involvement. This question is intended to capture the level of input the SWCD*

member provides to the panel. Staff interview(s), BWSR staff knowledge and history of the TEP, and project file review(s) will assist in this evaluation.

Yes. Almost all TEPs.

- 4) Are there area of concern identified by the SWCD? Are there opportunities to promote competency or efficiencies? *This question is intended to capture items which the SWCD staff has identified as a problem with the goal of coming up with options to address the problem (i.e. specific training needs, process changes, rule clarity feedback, contact with other staff, etc.).*

Continue support from BWSR wetland specialist and has ample training opportunities. Board affords annual training funding.

- 5) Other questions specific to Region or LGU as determined by the reviewer:

Question 1. [Click here to enter text.](#)

Question 2. [Click here to enter text.](#)

Summary and Recommendations: Continue to do good work!

Appendix E. Comment Letter

Appendix F. Program Data

Time required to complete this review

Ramsey Conservation District Staff: ?? Hours

Ramsey County Staff: ?? Hours

BWSR Staff: ?? Hours

Schedule of Level II Review

BWSR PRAP Performance Review Key Dates

- June 12, 2017: Initial meeting with Ramsey Conservation District staff and Ramsey County staff
- July 6, 2017: Initial meeting with Ramsey Conservation District Board
- July 27, 2017: Survey of Conservation District Supervisors, staff and partners
- July 27, 2017: Survey of County staff, board and partners
- October 5, 2017: Presentation of Draft Report to Conservation District Board and staff
- October, 2017: Date Transmittal of Final Report to LGU

NOTE: BWSR uses review time as a surrogate for tracking total program costs. Time required for PRAP performance reviews is aggregated and included in BWSR's annual PRAP report to the Minnesota Legislature.