



# One Watershed, One Plan

An evolution of water planning in Minnesota

2014

## The Vision

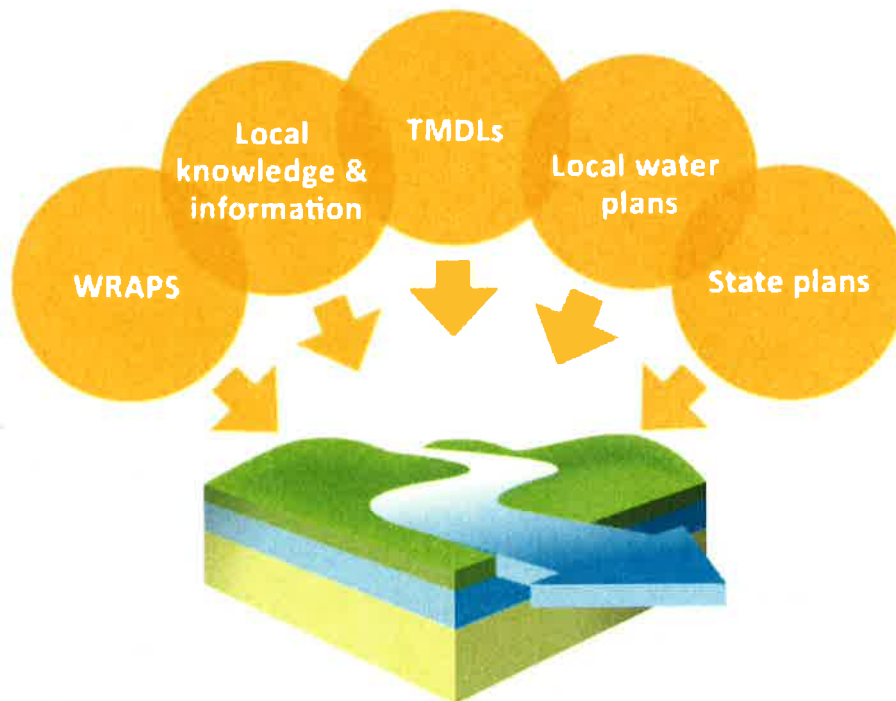
The *One Watershed, One Plan* vision is to align local water planning on major watershed boundaries with state strategies towards prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation plans – the next logical step in the evolution of water planning in Minnesota.



*Building and implementing comprehensive watershed management plans.*

## The Plan

Plans developed through *One Watershed, One Plan* will build off existing local water management plans and priorities, existing and new studies and data, Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) and other related plans from state agencies. Some examples of these plans include: MN Department of Agriculture State Nitrogen Management Plan, MN Pollution Control Agency State Nutrient Reduction Strategy, MN Department of Natural Resources Prairie Conservation Plan, MN Department of Health Wellhead Protection Plans, and the Metropolitan Council 2030 Water Resources Management Policy Plan. Development of One Watershed One Plans will be locally-led; and will be watershed-based with prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation actions.





## A History Rooted in Local Conservation Delivery

### Water Planning Timeline

1937: MN Soil Conservation Law

1938: MN's 1st Soil & Water Conservation District formed

1955: MN Watershed Act

1957: MN's 1st Watershed District

1982: MN Metro Surface Water Management Act

1985: MN Comprehensive Local Water Management Act (County Water Planning)

2012: One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) legislation passed

2013-2014: 1W1P Program Development

Goal for 2015: Completion of first plan through 1W1P



The concepts behind watershed planning and management are not new to Minnesota. Our structure sharing responsibility between the State and local government dates back to 1937 legislation allowing for the creation of our state's soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs). This tradition continued in 1955 when the State recognized the importance of watershed management and enacted legislation allowing for the creation of watershed districts (WDs).

With the 1980s and 1990s came a renewed recognition of the important role local government plays in managing the State's water resources across political boundaries, creating legislation for the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act, the Greater Minnesota Comprehensive Local Water Management Act, and the State Groundwater Protection Act.

In 2008, Minnesota citizens passed the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment dedicating a portion of the sales tax to clean water. With this new funding came new expectations for the pace of progress in assessing waters, in going about the business of cleaning up those that do not meet water quality standards, and in protecting others that are threatened from becoming impaired.

Local governments and BWSR are meeting this challenge by evolving the way in which we plan our work. In 2011, members of the Local Government Water Roundtable\* recommended that local governments charged with water management responsibility should organize and develop focused implementation plans on a watershed scale.

That recommendation was followed by legislation in 2012 which gave BWSR the authority to develop and implement a comprehensive watershed management plan approach as a means to transform the current system of water plans, largely organized on political boundaries, to one where plans are coordinated and consolidated on a watershed basis. This legislation has come to be known as *One Watershed, One Plan*.

\* Association of MN Counties, MN Association of Watershed Districts, and MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

### ***Minnesota Water Plan – 1991***

***The state must continue to work closely with local governments involved in comprehensive local water planning. This partnership holds the key to our ability to manage water in the 1990's.***

# Today

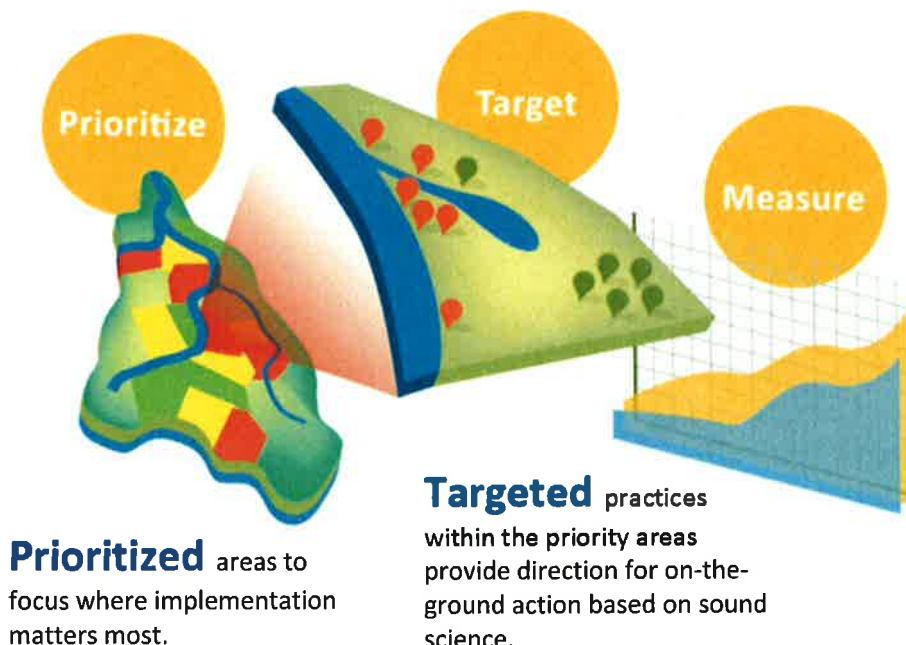
BWSR recognizes that reorganization of the state's watershed planning efforts will take time. A transition period of 10 years is anticipated for: completion of a comprehensive assessment of Minnesota watersheds and development of Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies by major watershed by the PCA. These strategies will be followed by BWSR-supported, locally-led collaborative development of watershed-based plans.

### Goals for *One Watershed, One Plan*:

- Acknowledges and builds off of existing local government structure, water plan services, and capacity;
- Incorporates and makes use of data and information including newly developed Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies;
- Clearly identifies the responsibilities and actions necessary to achieve the goals of the plan;
- Solicits input from and engages experts from agencies, citizens, and stakeholder groups;
- Consolidates the number of water plans from over 200 to less than 100 ; and
- Focuses on implementation actions that are prioritized, targeted, and measurable.

### BWSR Board Composition

- 3 county commissioners
- 3 citizens at-large
- 3 SWCD board members
- 3 Watershed District board members
- 1 township representative
- 1 Metro city representative
- 1 non-Metro city representative
- State agency representatives from MDA, MDH, DNR, PCA and UMN-Extension.







## Guiding Principles

*One Watershed, One Plan will result in plans with prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation actions that meet or exceed current water plan content standards.*

*One Watershed, One Plan* will set standards for plan content that will be consistent with or exceed the plan approval standards currently in place for local water plans. Most existing water management plans contain adequate inventories of resources and assessment of issues. *One Watershed, One Plan* will build from this point, with an expanded focus on prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation of restoration and protection activities. The intent is for these future water plans to use existing plans, local knowledge and other studies and planning documents—including Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies developed through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency—to establish plans with clear implementation timelines, milestones, and cost estimates that will address the largest threats and provide the greatest environmental benefit unique to each watershed.



*One Watershed, One Plan is not an effort to change local governance.*

Local governments have been at the forefront of water management dating back to 1937 with the formation of the State's first soil and water conservation district. *One Watershed, One Plan* is intended to utilize the existing structures of counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and Metropolitan watershed management organizations by increasing collaboration and cooperation across political boundaries.

*Setting expectations for plan development and content*

*One Watershed, One Plan will strive for a systematic, watershed-wide, science-based approach to watershed management; driven by the participating local governments.*

It is important for all communities to take part in managing their watersheds through goal setting, monitoring, restoring and protecting water resources and local habitats and ensuring a good quality of life for all who live, work, and recreate in those spaces. A decided “bottom up” approach for water management—allowing the key discussions of major water resource issues, concerns, problems, goals and objectives and potential solutions to originate and be first fully vetted at the stakeholder level—is envisioned. Expanding involvement and collaboration at the ground-level creates greater buy-in and support at all levels of government.



*One Watershed, One Plan will use the state’s delineated major watersheds (8-digit hydrologic unit codes or HUC8) as the starting point for defining the preferred scale for local watershed management planning.*

The Local Government Water Roundtable (LGWR), a collaboration between the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts, and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, determined it is in the public interest to manage ground and surface water resources from the perspective of watersheds and aquifers and to achieve protection, preservation, enhancement, and restoration of the state's valuable water resources. This determination is consistent with the state’s water management policy, furthered through legislation passed in 2012 that provided BWSR with: the authority to develop and implement a comprehensive watershed management plan approach and to establish a suggested watershed boundary framework for implementing this planning approach. *One Watershed, One Plan* will transform the current system of water plans, largely organized on political boundaries, to one where plans are coordinated and consolidated largely on a watershed basis.



## Guiding Principles continued

*One Watershed, One Plan must involve a broad range of stakeholders to ensure an integrated approach to watershed management.*

The underlying principle of watershed management is that people, land, and water are connected. People use land in a variety of ways, and affect ecosystems and ultimately their own communities for better or worse. Managing and protecting the environment while providing a high quality of life for people is a complex process that is most successful when governing bodies, community members, and experts in various fields are true partners in the planning process. *One Watershed, One Plan* envisions an approach that will pull parties together in every aspect of the water arena in a way that goes beyond the interests of any one government agency or stakeholder and in a way that has never been done before.



*Plans developed within One Watershed, One Plan should embrace the concept of multiple benefits in the development and prioritization of implementation strategies and actions.*



Prioritized, multi-benefit projects provide benefits to more than one group or interest and address more than one environmental resource within a watershed. These types of projects are necessary to build the support of citizens and agencies, achieve water quality and quantity goals, and produce the environmental goods and benefits that a healthy watershed provides. Examples of multiple benefits might include a combination of any of the following: flood control, water quality benefits, ecological benefits, administrative efficiencies, economic benefits, or others. Identification of and action on multi-benefit projects should be a priority in *One Watershed, One Plan* strategies and actions.

*One Watershed, One Plan implementation will be accomplished through formal agreements among participating local governments on how to manage and operate the watershed.*

Decision-making that spans political boundaries is essential to fully implement watershed management and achieve established goals for the watershed; therefore, formal agreements outlining the means and method for this decision-making are also essential.



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*One Watershed, One Plan planning and implementation efforts will recognize local commitment and contribution.*

History shows us that when local water management programs and projects rely almost entirely on outside funding, they are unable to sustain themselves over time. Locally supported and funded technical, administration, support, and outreach activities that leverage funding from the State will be key to ensuring sustainable local government capabilities and long-term success on both the local level and watershed scale.

*One Watershed, One Plan is not intended to be a one size fits all model.*

*One Watershed, One Plan* must recognize that our local governments charged with water management are just as diverse as the water resources and landscapes that we have in the State. As such, the *One Watershed, One Plan* policies and procedures guided by this principle will be designed to provide options for local governments to choose from that can account for these differences while at the same time move forward in achieving the transition to comprehensive watershed management plans that blanket the State.

## Outcomes

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BWSR has identified the following outcomes for the program:

- Shared understanding on the definitions of prioritized, targeted and measurable
- Informed by existing science, studies and projects
- Established water quality goals and targets by parameter of concern at the sub-watershed level
- Identified specific strategies and actions needed to achieve established restoration and protection targets
- Included short-term (10 year) and long-term (20 year) quantifiable milestones
- Identified the implementing authorities and established timelines and cost estimates based on milestones
- May serve to coordinate the collection, ranking, and submission of requests for funding to the State and other sources.



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**One Watershed  
One Plan**

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