



# One Watershed, One Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions



June 2014

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to highlight some of the questions frequently heard regarding *One Watershed, One Plan* (1W1P). Check back frequently; this document will be updated as questions arise. If you have additional questions you would like to see covered in this document, please submit them to: [doug.thomas@state.mn.us](mailto:doug.thomas@state.mn.us) or [melissa.k.lewis@state.mn.us](mailto:melissa.k.lewis@state.mn.us)

## General

### Q1. Why can't you just give me the details now so I know what to do (2013)?

We are still at the front end of *One Watershed, One Plan* program development. The first step was to establish sideboards and set direction through the adoption of *One Watershed, One Plan* Guiding Principles by the BWSR Board on December 18, 2013.

**June 2014 Update.** [Operating procedures for the pilot watersheds](#) have been developed and will be tested through 2015, when the pilots are anticipated to be completed developing plans through the *One Watershed, One Plan* program. These procedures will be modified and more detailed policies and guidance will be developed as needs are identified and finalized at the conclusion of the pilots. In the meantime, BWSR encourages local governments to start a dialogue about *One Watershed, One Plan* and how it will fit into the existing local water planning now taking place. Additionally, drafts of the final operating procedures, policies, and guidance for the program and plan development after the pilots are anticipated to be available for comment in the fall of 2015.

### Q2. Is this just a way to "weed out" the less productive local government units (2013)?

No. One of the guiding principles is that *One Watershed, One Plan* is not an effort to change local governance. Development and implementation of *One Watershed, One Plan* is intended to guide the efforts of our existing structure of counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and joint powers water management organizations.

Another guiding principle to consider is that *One Watershed, One Plan* implementation will be accomplished through formal agreements on how to manage and operate during plan development and implementation. One purpose of these agreements is for participants to have a candid and straightforward conversation with each other about intent and purpose. One result of establishing these agreements should be a clear understanding of what you and your peers are willing and able to do.

### Q3. Is this just a way to create more watershed districts in the state (2013)?

No. One of the guiding principles is that *One Watershed, One Plan* is not an effort to change local governance. *One Watershed, One Plan* is intended to use the existing structure of counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and joint powers water management organizations. The watershed boundary framework is intended for development of watershed-based plans that will be implemented through existing local government structures and authorities. Any decision to create a watershed district, as a result of participating in the *One Watershed, One Plan* program or for any other reason, would be initiated locally just as it is now.

**Q4. Where and how are the other agencies going to be involved (2013)?**

State agencies with a stake in water management—Board of Water and Soil Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, and the Pollution Control Agency—have all committed to a high-level water quality framework for the state of Minnesota that includes agency participation in development of water plans. This framework was developed by the agencies to enhance collaboration and clarify roles so it's easier and more efficient for state and local partners to work together.

**Q5. Isn't this just creating another layer of government? (added 2/24/14)**

No. One of the guiding principles of *One Watershed, One Plan* is that "implementation will be accomplished through formal agreements among participating local governments on how to manage and operate on a watershed." The purpose of this principle is to provide assurances to the participants that decision-making that spans political boundaries, which is essential to establish and achieve goals for the watershed, is supported by an in-writing commitment from the participants as to the means and method to fully implement watershed management. Formal agreement does not inherently require establishment of another layer of government. Local participants are encouraged to analyze their own situation, with assistance from legal counsel and/or the Minnesota Counties Insurance Trust, to determine if the creation of a joint powers entity or board is necessary.

**Q6. Are there any specific state funds tied to being a pilot? (added 3/31/14)**

The only funds currently tied to being a pilot are those funds available to selected pilots for writing the plan. In the future, local governments with completed *One Watershed, One Plan* should be able to use it to thoroughly and competitively answer application questions regarding prioritization, targeting, and measurability of proposed projects on future applications for competitive Clean Water Fund grants. However, no specific tie or extra points are proposed at this time. In the not-too-distant future, funding may become more closely tied to *One Watershed, One Plan* in order to: leverage the intended efficiencies of watershed-based planning, further the recommendations of the Local Government Water Roundtable, and incentivize watershed-based planning.

## Plans and Timing

**Q7. Why the option of three plan types? I just need a template to follow (2013).**

To achieve the guiding principle that *One Watershed, One Plan* "is not intended to be a one size fits all model," and in recognition of the need for options through the ten year transition, the current concept is to have three plan types of increasing levels of details and requirements. These three plan types are sometimes referred to as "silver, gold, and platinum." The concept of the three types will be tested through the pilot watersheds and may change prior to full program rollout.

**Q8. We completed our county water plan recently; do we now have to start planning all over again (2013)?**

The vision of *One Watershed, One Plan* recognizes a ten year transition period; therefore, if your water plan was just completed recently, now may not be the time to start. Or, if your county is asked by neighboring partners to participate in a plan for a portion of your county, you may want to take a secondary or smaller role in the planning process, while leveraging the data and information from your recently completed plan.

**Q9. We just completed our county water plan last year and the WRAPS will be completed next year; do we now have to start planning all over again? (added 2/24/14)**

No, see also the question and answer above. You may want to consider an amendment to your water plan if the completed WRAPS provide new information or data that would benefit the plan, its implementation, and or the competitiveness of grant applications. If not then you may want to wait until other entities are ready to undertake a One Watershed, One Plan or until your next scheduled update.

**Q10. I see the pilot watersheds are scheduled to complete plans in 2015. If I am not a pilot watershed, can I start planning within One Watershed, One Plan before the pilots are finished (2013)?**

The participating pilot watersheds will help determine the outline of an eventual statewide program. The intent is learn from the experiences of the pilot watersheds in order to adjust and streamline the program before making it available statewide, tentatively in late 2015. Until the pilot watersheds have completed their work and the *One Watershed, One Plan* framework is solidified, you should continue to emphasize watershed management under your existing local water management plan.

**Q11. My county has more than one major watershed; what happens to the portion that is not included in the plan being developed through One Watershed, One Plan? (added 2/24/14)**

The answer to this question may vary by situation and more concrete details will be provided after the pilot watersheds have started. Current thinking is that if the existing county plan has not expired, the area can continue to be 'covered' by this plan, or an extension of this plan if requested, until *One Watershed, One Plan* is completed for the area. Or, if the current plan has expired or if planning through *One Watershed, One Plan* is not anticipated to start for a significant amount of time, the county may be asked to update the county plan for this area. The degree of update and process for ensuring all areas of a given jurisdiction are represented by a plan will be determined through the pilots.

**June 2014 Update.** The BWSR Board adopted a policy regarding extensions of existing plans for participation in *One Watershed, One Plan* and/or WRAPS on June 25, 2014. The purpose of this policy is to facilitate the transition to One Watershed, One Plan through providing direction on local water plan extensions by: ensuring active participation by counties, soil and water conservation districts, and watershed districts in One Watershed, One Plan development; allowing for effective participation and use of Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies; and maintaining eligibility of participating local government units in applying for and receiving grants under the Board's current and future Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants Policies.

**Q12. We have a number of issues specific to our county in our existing plan, aren't we going to lose this valuable information in a larger, watershed-based plan? (added 3/31/14)**

Writing a plan on a watershed basis does not mean deleting what has already been developed or starting from scratch, but rather working together to organize existing plans on a watershed scale and determine the most effective and efficient means for implementation of those programs and projects that are capable of achieving measureable results.

**Q13. Will this proposal change the way planning and zoning is done by cities and counties? (added 3/31/14)**

*One Watershed, One Plan* is not intended to alter who is responsible for planning and zoning (P&Z) and who is authorized to do it. The watershed-based plan should recognize existing P&Z and may recommend changes. Some examples might include: a plan goal to work with P&Z authorities towards larger, more uniform setbacks on sensitive lakes in the watershed; or tailoring of implementation actions in recognition of underlying zoning. The watershed-based plan will not mandate the city or county to alter their zoning if the local authority chooses not to.

## Boundary Map and Boundary Framework

**Q14. I don't agree with the boundary that is proposed for my area, what do I do (2013)?**

The boundary map reflects suggested planning boundaries and is still in draft form. A formal comment period on the map will be open in early 2014 and a final suggested boundary map is anticipated to be adopted by the BWSR Board in April 2014. The boundaries within the final adopted map will continue to reflect suggested planning boundaries (not jurisdictional boundaries) and the boundary framework will include criteria and procedures for making adjustments. Be sure to discuss any proposed revisions to the suggested boundary for your area with BWSR prior to initiating planning.

**June 2014 Update.** The [suggested boundary map](#) was adopted by the BWSR Board in April 2014, and the procedures for making revisions to the map are outlined in the [Operating Procedures for Pilots](#), adopted by the BWSR Board on June 25, 2014.

**Q15. Why don't the boundaries align with the 81-majors used for the PCA's 10-year approach and development of Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS)? (added 2/24/14)**

The 81-major watershed units (8-digit HUCs) were used as the basis for the Suggested Boundary Map. The boundaries were adjusted to reflect boundaries of existing organizations already operating on a watershed basis, plus some lumping and splitting of major watersheds. An example of lumping includes grouping adjacent major watersheds on the state borders. An example of splitting includes the Minnesota River – Granite Falls major watershed, which is bisected by the Minnesota River. This major watershed has active, separate organizations on both sides of the river. Even with these adjustments, WRAPS are still intended to inform the resulting plan.

## **Interaction with Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act (MSWMA)**

**Q16. I have heard One Watershed, One Plan doesn't apply in the 7-county metro, then I heard it does – which is it (2013)?**

The Local Government Water Roundtable recognized the increased requirements associated with MSWMA and largely focused its analysis outside of—and remained silent on—specific recommendations for this area. BWSR's preliminary considerations for *One Watershed, One Plan* policy development were to continue to exclude the metro from initial program development. However, feedback and interest from local governments in this area has altered this initial thought.

Current thinking is that local governments within the 7-county metro area will not be a *required* partner in plans and associated formal agreements developed for watersheds that straddle the metro area. However, these local governments are encouraged to participate. Further policies and guidance for the 7-county metro will likely be discussed and developed through the pilot watershed process.

## **Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

**Q17. How do non-governmental organizations interact with One Watershed, One Plan?**

NGOs have always had a role in water planning as a stakeholder at the table through the planning and implementation process. This role continues through One Watershed, One Plan. However, the statutory language and intent is for the plan to be developed, approved, and funded through existing water planning authorities of local governments.