



Watershed Management

Update to 2007 Evaluation Report

Problems Identified

- **Mixed Performance.** Some local watershed management entities performed well by improving water quality and reducing flooding. Others, however, struggled to meet their management plans and move beyond general administration and planning tasks.
- **Insufficient Oversight.** The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) had not established standards for local entities to follow, systematically monitored their activities, or adequately held them accountable for their performance. BWSR lacked some of the authority it needed to penalize local water management entities with records of poor performance and reward those with good performance.
- **Ineffective Governing Structure.** Weak oversight was related to BWSR's governing structure, in which a majority of its board members represent local interests. We recommended that BWSR be administered by a director appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Legislature did not adopt this recommendation.

Changes Implemented

- **BWSR's Authority Increased.** Finding that "a process is needed to monitor the performance and activities of local water management entities," the 2007 Legislature strengthened BWSR's oversight functions and authorized it to penalize underperforming local entities. The agency must evaluate performance, financial, and activity information for each local entity at least once every five years and publicly report its findings.
- **Standards Developed.** In consultation with local water management officials, BWSR has developed a set of standards to evaluate the performance of local entities. In a February 2008 report to the Legislature, the agency proposed developing four levels of performance review, with the most basic review applied annually to all entities and the most comprehensive review reserved for chronically underperforming entities.

Action Needed

- **Monitor BWSR's New Oversight Program.** The Legislature should examine BWSR's proposed new oversight initiative and seek appraisals from stakeholders at the state and local levels. Are the new standards meaningful? Is BWSR's approach likely to influence low-performing entities to meet the standards?
- **Ensure BWSR Has Sufficient Resources.** BWSR has stated that it cannot conduct in-depth reviews of local entity activities without increased funding. The Legislature should either provide more funding, request that BWSR reallocate resources from other program areas, or accept that oversight will be less than optimal due to lack of funds.