



Level II Performance Review

Hennepin County Environment and Energy

Local Government Unit Review

Final Report

July 11, 2017

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

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This report has been prepared for the **Hennepin County Environment and Energy and the Hennepin Soil and Water 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.

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PRAP Level II Report Summary

Hennepin County Environment and Energy

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

Hennepin County Environment and Energy has been effective in providing conservation services to the residents of the county that are typically provided by soil and water conservation districts in Minnesota. A survey of the agency partners resulted in acceptable to strong ratings for communication, quality of work, customer relations, initiative and timelines/follow through.

New resource challenges have created the need to forge new working relationships among partners, and build stronger programs for future local water management in Hennepin County. With the upcoming opportunity to participate in development of One Watershed-One Plan, there will be an opportunity for Hennepin County to reorient its Natural Resources Strategic Plan to specific problems and priorities for the county's watersheds.

Resource Outcomes

The Natural Resources Strategic Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes.

Commendations:

Hennepin County Environment and Energy is commended for meeting 6 of 12 high performance standards for SWCDs and for meeting 6 of 13 high performance standards for counties.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Use the major or minor watershed scale for plan organization.

Recommendation 2: Consider developing a supporting water management plan that uses Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria for Goals and Objectives to support the Natural Resources Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 3: Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals.

Recommendation 4: Develop and adopt a Groundwater Plan under Minnesota Statutes 103B.255.

Recommendation 5: Improve coordination with Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations regarding watershed protection priorities and water quality data collection and trends analysis.

Recommendation 6: Provide annual report to Hennepin County Board on the Environment and Energy activities to better align upcoming needs.

Recommendation 7: Increase participation in Wetland Conservation Act Technical Evaluation Panels.

Recommendation 8: Continue to make it a priority to have staff attend BWSR Academy, WDCP, WPA and other wetland training sessions.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department does not have any action items.

Introduction

This is an information document prepared by the staff of the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for the Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department. 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. The findings and recommendations are intended to give the local government unit (LGU) constructive feedback it 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 the organization's compliance with BWSR's Level I and II performance standards, and surveyed members of the organization and 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

This section describes what BWSR learned about the performance of the Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department. The following information was taken from the Hennepin County Natural Resources Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020, adopted by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners May 24, 2016.

“Hennepin County’s natural resources strategic plan is intended to guide the county and its partners in responding to natural resource issues and developing internal and external policies, programs and partnerships that improve, protect and preserve natural resources.

As the only county in the state with the duties and authorities of a soil and water conservation district, Hennepin County takes the lead role in delivering soil and water conservation services throughout the county. Hennepin County officially assumed this role in 2014 when all duties and authorities of Hennepin Conservation District (HCD) were transferred to the county. Prior to officially assuming these responsibilities, the county was involved in the management of natural resources for decades through collaboration with internal departments on county projects, performing HCD’s conservation duties through a cooperative agreement, and by working in partnership with local watershed districts and joint-powers watershed management organizations.

The plan is intended to guide natural resources management in the county through 2020. The plan was developed to be consistent with the county’s mission “to enhance the health, safety and quality of life of our residents and communities in a respectful, efficient and fiscally responsible way.” It also aligns with the mission of the Environment and Energy Department to “protect and preserve the environment to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations,” and complements the department’s strategic plan by providing more details about the broad ecosystems and natural resources protection objectives included in that plan.

Guiding principles

The following principles encompass the concepts and values that were used in the development of the natural resources goals, objectives and strategies included in this plan. These principles also provide general guidance to support work plan activities and management decisions regarding natural resources.

To protect and preserve natural resources in Hennepin County, we:

- *Gather and analyze countywide data to identify local and regional trends from which priorities are determined.*
- *Achieve results through deliberate planning, thorough establishment and implementation of clear and measurable goals.*
- *Commit to the use of proven best practices while supporting the research and implementation of innovative practices.*
- *Build and foster partnerships to meet common natural resource management goals and to effectively leverage resources.*
- *Provide financial and technical assistance and education to motivate environmental stewardship.*
- *Promote cost-effective resource management and pursue diverse funding sources.*
- *Anticipate the environmental needs of the county and take advantage of opportunities to preserve and restore the county’s natural resources.*
- *Maintain qualified, knowledgeable, multi-disciplinary staff who act as both advocates for and stewards of the county’s natural resources.*

Gathering public and partner feedback

The county gathered feedback on the proposed natural resources strategies from 500 participants through meetings, events, and online and in-person surveys. Participants included residents and representatives from watershed management organizations, park districts, cities and state agencies. Outreach for these activities included arranging in-person meetings,

sending emails to city mayors, managers and clerks, contacting staff at partner organizations, and publishing information in newspapers, e-newsletters and social media.

Key findings

Residents:

- Are concerned about natural resources.
- Place the highest priority on protecting water resources.
- Want more education on what is needed to protect natural resources and what actions to take.
- Requested more information on the quality of our natural resources, policies and regulations, and financial incentives.

Partners:

- Support the plan's overall theme of partnership.
- See value in the county taking a more active role to facilitate collaboration on natural resources management.
- Confirmed their appreciation of the support the county currently provides through technical and financial assistance, management of the natural resources inventory and education efforts, and expressed a desire for more support in these areas.
- Expressed strongest support for strategies that protect water.
- Support new strategies to create wetlands banks, formally designate the best natural areas, establish a conservation easement program and implement strategies to enhance the tree canopy.
- Expressed a strong interest to partner with the county to jointly pursue Clean Water, Land and Legacy funding.

Natural resources in Hennepin County

Hennepin County has an abundance of natural resources, including numerous lakes, streams, wetlands and rivers and diverse landscapes and habitats ranging from gardens and urban parks to prairies and forests. Natural resources provide critical

habitat for wildlife, protect water quality, offer recreational opportunities and serve as the foundation for the region's environmental well-being, economic prosperity and collective quality of life. Protecting these important recreational, aesthetic and ecological resources is a priority for the county and its residents and partners. However, the county's natural resources are under increasing pressure from population growth, development and climate change.

Hennepin County's size and population present unique challenges and opportunities in regard to protecting natural resources. Hennepin County is the most populous county in the state with about 1.2 million residents, and the population is expected to increase steadily by 8 percent through 2030. Population density and land use vary widely throughout the county, encompassing urban, suburban (collectively referred to as urban in this plan) and rural areas.

Many entities in the county have a role in water and land conservation issues, making developing and maintaining partnerships critical to protecting natural resources. Many of the strategies included in this plan outline our intention to partner with cities, watershed organizations, nonprofit organizations, and regional and state agencies in order to meet our natural resource protection goals.

The impacts of climate change will put more stress on natural resources. Temperature and moisture patterns may change faster than plant and animal communities can adapt, resulting in changes to ecosystems, habitat loss and spread of invasive species. Additionally, an increased frequency of both flooding and droughts will put additional pressure on our stormwater management infrastructure and groundwater resources.

Land use is projected to shift in the county through 2030 with more land being developed and less land being open space or agricultural. Understanding the current and projected land use helps guide our priorities to support programs that implement best practices to protect land and water and enhance wildlife habitat in urban and rural areas throughout the county as well as preserve the county's remaining ecologically significant open space areas.

Goals, objectives and strategies

This plan outlines Hennepin County's strategies to meet the following goals:

- **Hennepin County waters are clean and healthy.**
- **Hennepin County landscapes are diverse and functional and natural areas are preserved.**
- **Hennepin County fosters effective partnerships.**
- **Hennepin County motivates environmental stewardship.**
- **Hennepin County leverages financial resources.**

The plan accounts for both new and ongoing strategies the county will pursue to meet our goals. The plan proposes an adaptive management approach in which we will continually review management strategies and outcomes in order to fulfill our mission of protecting and preserving the county's natural resources.

The strategies under each objective have been identified as a continuation of past efforts, an expansion or new approach to an existing effort, or a new program.

GOAL 1 - Hennepin County waters are clean and healthy

Hennepin County will work to protect and restore lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands to preserve the health of aquatic ecosystems, meet applicable standards for fishing and recreation, and ensure that water supplies are sustainable.

1.1 Objective: Protect and restore lakes, rivers and streams

1.2 Objective: Protect groundwater resources

1.3 Objective: Protect and restore wetlands

GOAL 2 - Hennepin County landscapes are diverse and functional and natural areas are preserved

Hennepin County will work to identify and protect natural areas and green spaces. The county will also promote, establish and restore ecologically functional landscapes and control threats to natural resources to promote diverse and sustainable ecosystems throughout the county.

2.1 Objectives: Protect and enhance natural areas, corridors and green spaces

2.2 Objective: Establish and restore landscapes that serve an ecological function

2.3 Objective: Control and prevent vegetative and biological threats to maintain healthy ecosystems

2.4 Objective: Practice and promote environmental stewardship of the county's soil resources

GOAL 3 - Hennepin County fosters effective partnerships

Hennepin County will take a leadership role in pursuing and fostering external and internal partnerships to protect, restore and enhance the county's natural resources.

3.1 Objective: Foster partnerships and strengthen collaboration with natural resource management entities

3.2 Objective: Collaborate with internal partners to incorporate sustainable natural resource management strategies

GOAL 4 - Hennepin County motivates environmental stewardship

Hennepin County will support and participate in environmental education and outreach activities that educate the community on the importance of environmental sustainability, natural resource protection and habitat enhancement.

4.1 Objective: Engage the community in taking action to protect the environment

GOAL 5 - Hennepin County leverages financial resources

Hennepin County will provide financial assistance, pursue additional funding sources and leverage resources to implement projects and programs that meet common goals of the county and partners.

5.1 Objective: Integrate the work of Hennepin County and partners to achieve the goals of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment

BWSR Findings

As part of this review, county staff prepared a table (See Appendix A) listing the accomplishments to-date for each of the action items for which they are responsible. 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 county is making good progress on their assigned action items. The county has made progress on all of their 27 action items in the Hennepin County Comprehensive Plan and Natural Resources Strategic Plan. Hennepin County Environment and Energy has completed 8 of the action items and 19 items are ongoing.

A full description of the goals, objectives, action items, accomplishments and next steps is contained in Appendix A, page 13.

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 county or SWCD 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 Hennepin County Environment and Energy are contained in Appendix B, pages 31-32.

Each year for the Level I PRAP review, BWSR tracks all of Minnesota’s water management LGUs’ compliance with a few of the basic standards. Hennepin County Environment and Energy show 100 percent compliance

with the Level I basic standards during each of the past six years.

Resource Outcomes
The Hennepin County Natural Resources Strategic Plan does not include targets or objectives for resource outcomes. Therefore, resource outcomes are not reported in this review of plan accomplishments.

For this Level II review, the county reports compliance with 9 of 9 basic county standards. The county reported compliance with 6 of 13 high performance standards. Hennepin County Environment and Energy reports compliance with 12 of 12 applicable SWCD basic standards, and 6 of 12 applicable high performance standards.

Wetland Conservation Act Implementation Review:

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 Hennepin 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.

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 33 - 37.

Internal: LGU Self-Assessment

A total of 7 staff of Hennepin County Environment and Energy were invited to take the online survey, and 6 submitted responses, an 86% response rate.

Survey participants were asked which programs or projects they consider to be particularly successful in the past few years. The county staff and board members mentioned:

- *outreach, writing, and adoption of NR Strategic Plan,*
- *continuing evolution of the Opportunity Grant program, Hennepin NR Partnership Forum,*
- *Environmental Response Fund,*
- *Environmental Ed and Outreach, especially Nature Fest,*
- *AIS prevention aid grant program.*

Other survey participants listed:

- *natural resource grants,*
- *providing technical and natural resources assistance to landowners and organizations throughout the county, and*
- *Involvement in agriculture area again by hiring a new technician.*

Also mentioned as successful programs:

- *forestry,*
- *stormwater projects with watersheds,*
- *getting a master plan going,*
- *Natural Resource Opportunity Grants and*
- *Technical Assistance.*

They cited *County Board vision and personnel and dedicated staff, staff organization and green light to be proactive in taking care of problems, cross discipline work and cooperation and funding support from Hennepin County* as reasons for success with the programs. One survey participant stated, *I see three common threads among all these programs:*

- 1.) *Strong partnerships and collaboration;*
- 2.) *Responding to a clearly identified need and*
- 3.) *Strong staff leadership.*

Several projects and programs that have been difficult to implement were mentioned by the county including:

- *Technical assistance to watershed partners,*
- *Assistance & project development with private landowners and involvement in groundwater issues.*

Other survey participants stated *wetlands could use some work, agricultural work was on hold until someone was hired, and Conservation Easement program.*

Survey participants for Hennepin County identified *staffing and funding* as reasons for the difficulties.

Another survey participant stated, *I think we allow certain programs, projects, or services to stagnate by not asking ourselves on a regular basis what we could*

be doing differently or better. In other cases, there are areas that we just haven't been able to get to yet as we grow into our role as the County's SWCD (e.g. outreach to private landowners).

The county listed good working relationships with WMOs and WDs, cities, state and federal agencies, Three Rivers Park District, DNR, ECWMC, PSCWMC, Three Rivers Park District, USFWS, MN Land Trust, Watersheds of the county.

The survey asked participants to identify organizations with whom they would like to collaborate with more often. The county mentioned cities in the county, MPCA and BWSR.

The County staff and boards also identified ways to improve the effectiveness of their organization. The county survey participants mentioned *personnel and money, equipment and funding sources and continue providing excellent resident and agency partnerships to work on conservation programs*. One person suggested *Increase interdisciplinary and staff cooperation, work a little more as a unit while still maintaining autonomy to get work done*. Another suggested *incorporate regular project and program evaluation into workflows -Use project management and teams more effectively to diversify ideas and spread workload in specific areas -Have some conversations about the future - what do we want our programs and services to look like in 5, 10, 20 years?*

Full survey responses are in Appendix C, pages 33-37.

Findings Part 4: Partners' Assessment

Hennepin County Environment and Energy Partners Survey: The Environment and Energy Department provided a list of 31 partners to take the survey, and 18 responded (58%). These partners reported interacting with the County between a few times (24%), several times a year (29%), monthly (41%) and almost every week (6%). Forty seven percent of the partners said this interaction was not enough and 53% of the survey participants said they thought that this amount of interaction was about right.

Regarding their assessment of the county in five operational areas, the partners gave strong to

Performance Area	Hennepin County Partner Ratings (percent)				
	Strong	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Don't Know
Communication	0.0%	47.0%	41.2%	11.8%	0%
Quality of Work	23.5%	47.0%	17.7%	0%	11.8%
Customer Relations	23.5%	41.2%	5.9%	0%	29.4%
Initiative	23.5%	29.4%	35.3%	5.9%	5.9%
Timelines/ Follow through	5.9%	52.9%	29.4%	0%	11.8%

acceptable marks, with most reporting good or acceptable performance for communication, and strong or good for quality of work and relationships with customers, initiative and follow-through/meeting deadlines.

Most of the participants reported the quality of their organization's working relationship with the Hennepin County Energy and Environment as strong or good.

The partners' overall rating of the quality of their working relationship with the county included 5.9% describing it as powerful, 52.9% rating it strong, 23.5% rated it as good, 11.7% acceptable and 5.8% as non-existent.

Two of the respondents provided comments on their working relationship with Hennepin County Environment and Energy:

- *I primarily interact on wetland and lake issues (water quality and monitoring) and I have an excellent relationship with staff.*
- *We work very well together. They are such a leader in the 7 County Metro world. I would like to see them partner more with us. I think there is a lot we could do together.*

Full survey responses are in Appendix C, pages 33-37.

General Conclusions

Hennepin County Environment and Energy needs to continue providing services that are typically provided by soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) in Minnesota in addition to county programs and services. A survey of the agency partners demonstrates that Hennepin County Environment and Energy generally has a good to strong working relationship with its partners. New challenges have created the need to forge new working relationships among partners, and build stronger programs for future local water management in Hennepin County.

With the upcoming revision of the Natural Resources Strategic Plan and through participation in the One Watershed, One Plan effort, there will be an opportunity for Hennepin County to reorient its local water planning to specific problems and priorities in the county's watersheds.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy generally shows good compliance with BWSR's basic and high performance standards.

Wetland Conservation Act Assessment:

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) issued an order for the discontinuance of the Hennepin Conservation District (HCD) and the transfer of all district duties and authorities to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners on December 18, 2013. BWSR issued the order following their review of a petition filed by Hennepin County pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 383B.761.

As of February 12, 2014, all duties and authorities of HCD were officially transferred to Hennepin County. Therefore, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 383B.761, Hennepin County is now acting as a soil and water conservation district (SWCD) with all duties and authorities of an SWCD. The county board delegated all administrative authorities pertaining to the assumed duties to the county administrator through the adoption of County Board Action 14-0212.

The County does not act as an LGU but does enforce the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) through participation on Technical Evaluation Panels (TEP) and

writing of restoration orders relating to WCA violations.

The County has multiple staff that are trained in environment and natural resources and the 1987 Delineation Manual to meet MN Rule 8420.0240. Based solely on the interview and previous field observations, the County meets the requirement for being trained and knowledgeable. In addition, the staff has attended trainings through BWSR and WDCP. The County 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.

The County participates in the Technical Evaluation Panel according to the procedures identified in 8420.0240. Members of the TEP include the BWSR Environment and Energy Department Wetland Specialist, with the County (SWCD function) and LGU (in Hennepin County it is either a city or watershed). Due to workload issues, the County has not attended all TEPs that have been requested by LGUs. In most Minnesota counties, SWCDs play the key local role in providing technical expertise to LGUs in resolving technical issues. Representatives from the Corp and DNR are involved when necessary. The TEP is utilized for projects that require TEP involvement as well as projects beyond what is required as necessary. This meets minimum WCA requirements, however there is potential for enhanced effectiveness. (See recommendations, page 10).

Commendations

Commendations are based on compliance with BWSR's high performance standards (see Findings, Part 2 and Appendix B, pages 31-32). These practices reflect above average operational effectiveness and level of effort.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy is commended for meeting the following high performance standards for counties:

- Certified Wetland Delineator on staff
- Communication piece sent within last 12 months
- Obtained stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs.

- Partnerships: liaison with SWCDs/WDs and cooperative projects/tasks done
- County local water plan on county website
- Water management ordinances on county website

Hennepin County Environment and Energy is commended for meeting the following high performance standards for SWCDs:

- Job approval authority reviewed and reported annually
- Certified Wetland Delineator on staff
- Website contains additional content beyond minimum required
- Obtained stakeholder input: within last 5 yrs.
- 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 31-32). LGU's are given an Action Item in this section to address lack of compliance with one or more basic standards.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy does not have any action items.

Recommendations

This section contains recommendations offered by BWSR to Hennepin County Board and staff of the Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department. The intention of these recommendations is to enhance both organizations' delivery of effective water and related land resource management and service to the residents of the Hennepin 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

Recommendation 1: Use the major or minor watershed scale for plan organization.

As Hennepin County Environment and Energy begins the process of revising the water management plan in the coming years, it should identify priority concerns by major or minor watershed, and action items should also be carefully targeted to differing watershed priorities.

Recommendation 2: Consider developing a supporting water management plan that uses Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria for Goals and Objectives to support the Natural Resources Strategic Plan.

The current plan does not identify resource outcomes and there are no measurable actions associated with the goals. Hennepin County Environment and Energy staff 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.

Recommendation 3: Structure website information to report progress and trends made in achieving resource outcome goals.

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

Recommendation 4: 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 Hennepin 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.

Recommendation 5: Improve coordination with Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations regarding watershed protection priorities and water quality data collection and trends analysis.

There is an opportunity for Hennepin County to strengthen communication and coordination with Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations regarding watershed protection priorities identified in WD and WMO plans. In addition, the County could collaborate with these organizations on water quality monitoring and trends analysis.

Recommendation 6: Provide annual report to Hennepin County Board on the Environment and Energy activities to better align upcoming needs.

Presenting an annual report to the Board could serve as a good mechanism to communicate resource needs and challenges in Hennepin County and assist in securing needed resources.

Recommendation 7: Increase participation in Wetland Conservation Act Technical Evaluation Panels. Minnesota Rules 8420.0240 clearly identifies the members of the technical evaluation panel (TEP). In most Minnesota counties, Soil and Water Conservation District staff provides the lead technical expertise to LGUs for the implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act. In addition, regular attendance by all members helps improve the effectiveness of the recommendations of the TEP. Although the workload is high in Hennepin County,

many LGUs request TEP meetings due to increasingly difficult sites. Having Hennepin County (SWCD function) staff available in a timely manner helps ensure that LGUs can meet their decision timelines. Consistency in participation by County staff also helps the BWSR Wetland Specialist manage workload that includes multiple counties and meeting requests.

Recommendation 8: Continue to make training a priority and have staff attend BWSR Academy, WDCP, WPA and other wetland training sessions.

This recommendation focuses on further development of the technical skills and knowledge required to implement the WCA and provide technical review of delineations. As in any field, it is critical for technical staff to stay up-to-date with current best practices. BWSR encourages the Environment and Energy Department to get additional staff involved in wetland training as it explores ways to manage the WCA workload.

LGU Comments and BWSR Responses

Hennepin County Environment and Energy was invited to comment on the findings, conclusions and joint recommendations in the draft version of this report. The comments have been summarized with BWSR responses in this section. The full response from Hennepin County Environment and Energy can be found in Appendix E of this report.

Hennepin County Comment #1:

(Recommendation #5) Environment and Energy concurs that improved coordination with Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations will improve our ability to add value to water resource protection and restoration in Hennepin County...We fully intend to continue to deepen and strengthen these partnerships which leads directly into recommendation 1 & 2.

BWSR Response:

We recognize the past efforts of Hennepin County to coordinate with these organizations and your commitment to strengthen partnerships with Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations.

Hennepin County Comment #2:

(Recommendation 1) Environment and Energy will consider more coordination with watershed organizations to identify specific ways our staff will support and advance watershed-scale and watershed identified goals. Practical opportunities to incorporate this level of detail...will be evaluated when the Natural Resources Strategic Plan is revised in 2020.

BWSR Response:

We agree that the 2020 plan update will be a good time to add details into your plan regarding watershed-scale approaches. In the meantime, we encourage you to participate in, and support current and future watershed initiatives.

Hennepin County Comment #3:

(Recommendation 2) As above, Environment and Energy will coordinate more closely with watersheds

to find alignment of goals and objectives, and then to be explicit about the ways we can work to support and advance common interests.

BWSR Response:

BWSR staff acknowledge Hennepin County Environment and Energy's commitment to implement this recommendation.

Hennepin County Comment #4:

(Recommendation 3) Environment and Energy will coordinate with watersheds to identify the best way to share progress made on shared resource outcome goals. It should be noted that Environment and Energy works within a series of Communications and Information Technology constraints related to our position within the overall county structure that may or may not make the Environment and Energy website the appropriate place for aggregation of progress and trends.

BWSR Response:

We encourage you to find an effective way to provide dissemination of information related to achieving resource goals of your plan and your joint initiatives with watershed organizations.

Hennepin County Comment #5:

(Recommendation 4) Environment and Energy recognizes the importance of our groundwater resource and comprehensive planning. The effort to give counties the authority to draft and adopt groundwater plans was spearheaded by Hennepin County; however an early effort to adopt a groundwater plan was not successful. Environment and Energy will evaluate our role in groundwater issues.

BWSR Response:

We encourage Environment and Energy to provide leadership in addressing the groundwater planning need for Hennepin County.

Hennepin County Comment #6:

(Recommendation 6) Environment and Energy agrees that the regular communication with our board regarding activities and upcoming needs is critical to our success. As such, we produce an annual report and communicate with our board regarding current and upcoming needs consistently through annual

budgeting processes, regular check-ins with the county administration team, on an as-needed basis with board members, and through seeking board approval of many of our activities and programs.

BWSR Response:

BWSR recognizes these ongoing communication efforts and the need to continue to raise awareness of new resource challenges.

Hennepin County Comment #7:

(Recommendation 7) Given the volume of TEP requests in the county, Environment and Energy staff have always been directed by management to identify the TEPs that are most critical to attend...As we consider our options to increase TEP participation, we will certainly be in communication with BWSR and Hennepin County's LGUs about current WCA services and activities that would be impacted by increased participation in TEPs. We look forward to working with the members of the Hennepin TEP to make improvement to wetland resources and WCA administration in our County.

BWSR Response:

Hennepin County Environment and Energy needs to continue to address how to best provide the services typically provided by Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Minnesota. In most counties, SWCD staff provide the lead technical expertise to LGUs for the implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act. We encourage the department to address this issue.

Hennepin County Comment #8:

(Recommendation 8) Hennepin County appreciates BWSR's recognition that training has been a priority for our staff, and that will certainly continue. Regarding the specific suggestion that Hennepin County involve additional staff in Wetland Conservation Act-related work, we will examine that possibility in our overall program evaluation mentioned above.

BWSR Response:

BWSR appreciates Hennepin County Environment and Energy's consideration of this recommendation and look forward to working with you.

Appendix A. Plan Accomplishments

LGU Name: Hennepin County & Hennepin Conservation District

Date of This Assessment: April, 2017

Type of Management Plan: County Comprehensive Plan and Natural Resources Strategic Plan

Date of Last Plan Revision: 2008 (Comp Plan Update in progress) and 2015 (adopted May 2016)

GOAL No. 1: Hennepin County waters are clean and healthy Page 10 of Strategic* Plan

Objective 1: Protect and restore lakes, rivers, and streams.

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. Track the quality of the county's water resources	2015-2020	2015-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Compiled lake grades annually and posted updates of graph showing lakes receiving a 'B' grade or better to Hennepin County's metrics dashboard. <input type="checkbox"/> Operate the River Watch and the Wetland Health Evaluation Program (WHEP) using volunteer citizen scientists and school-aged students to assess the health of streams and wetlands. These data are available in the interactive maps on the Riverwatch and WHEP websites. 	○	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work with Three Rivers Park District and other partners to align WHEP sites more closely with partner needs <input type="checkbox"/> Examine WHEP protocols and consider closer alignment with partner priorities <input type="checkbox"/> Consider the County's role in aggregating water quality monitoring data to paint a countywide picture.

<p>2. Work with partners to implement water quality restoration and protection projects to improve impaired water resources</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<p>During the plan period (2015-2016) projects have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horse facility manure management and drainage upgrades including: grassed waterway, holding pond, exclusion fencing, stream stable outlet, gravel substrate in a paddock, and 3 manure compost bins. • A commercial stormwater infiltration system including 4 dry wells, cistern, and rain garden • Installation of a iron-enhanced filter bench on a water quality pond • Stream restoration project including 2 water quality ponds, an iron enhanced sand filter, rock grade control structures, and bank stabilization using bioengineering techniques • Three neighborhood-based stormwater management projects including 150 raingardens and 2 permeable paver projects • Replacement of 3,000 square feet of bituminous surface with vegetation and permeable pavers 	<p>○</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Continue to operate cost share grant programs to implement projects □ Enhance outreach efforts to implement project identified in subwatershed assessments Identify opportunities on county-owned properties to implement projects
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<p>3. Provide technical assistance and education to residents, municipalities, and watersheds</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County staff reviewed more than 100 site plans as the chief technical advisors of the Elm Creek and Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commissions • Completed the Ardmore Lake Subwatershed Assessment • Developed a feature on the Natural Resources Interactive map to assist county residents request Letters of Map Amendment to the FEMA Floodplain map. This has been a significant service to residents of the county who are being required to spend thousands of dollars on flood insurance even though they should not be in the floodplain. • Served as members of the Technical Advisory Committees for county’s watersheds • Fielded resident calls and questions on sustainable landscaping, riparian erosion, stormwater, floodplain, and public and private ditch and culvert issues 	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to provide core services to watersheds and county residents <input type="checkbox"/> Complete additional subwatershed assessments
<p>4. Reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff through implementation of BMPs</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<p>See 1.1.2. Also,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The County’s Transportation Department has reduced road salt usage by from 600-800 pounds of salt per lane-mile to 	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> See 1.1.2

			around 200 - 300 pounds of salt per lane-mile.		
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Objective 2: Protect groundwater resources

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. Support planning and education efforts to protect groundwater resources	2015-2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participated in the Met Council’s Northwest Metro Water Supply Work Group meetings 	<input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the county’s role with the Hennepin Natural Resources Partnership Forum
2. Advocate for cleanup of contaminated sites with the potential to significantly impact groundwater resources	2015-2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prevented potential groundwater contamination at several sites through clean-up projects within groundwater sensitivity areas funded by the Environmental Response Fund (ERF) grant program <input type="checkbox"/> Developed the capability to assess proposed and completed ERF projects on the basis of each project’s potential groundwater protection benefits, as well to target outreach and development of new contamination cleanup projects Created a dumpsite priority list based in part on the perceived threat to groundwater 	<input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop strategies to compile and prioritize cleanup of contaminated sites that have the potential to impact wellhead protection areas and vulnerable groundwater resources

<p>3. Seal abandoned wells to reduce the potential for groundwater contamination</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Provided \$80,000 in State and county funding to sealed 82 abandoned wells.</p>	<p>○</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Use groundwater sensitivity and wellhead protection areas to analyze, target, and prioritize past and future well sealing assistance</p>
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Objective 3: Protect and restore 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
<p>1. Identify the highest-quality wetlands to ensure their protection and determine impacted wetlands suitable for restoration</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Worked with Three Rivers Park District and Wenck to identify high priority wetlands for additional investigation regarding their role in on-going TMDL Implementation projects; planning to more closely align WHEP monitoring with these sites</p>	<p>○</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Compile watershed data about wetland function from around the county</p>
<p>2. Ensure the protection and preservation of wetlands through Minnesota’s Wetland Conservation Act.</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Participated in nearly 150 TEPs, wrote 8 restoration orders, and closed 7 violation cases Resolved about 40 additional wetland issues through informal memos</p>	<p>○</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to meet WCA obligations <input type="checkbox"/> Examine delivery of WCA services in relation to unique mix of roles and obligations and</p>

					identify opportunities to improve
3. Pursue creation and restoration of wetlands to establish wetland banking credits, mitigate losses and remediate impaired waters within the county	2015-2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted a wetland bank Concept Plan for a restoration proposal at the County’s Home School site <input type="checkbox"/> In 2016, the County established an easement around a degraded wetland near Cowley Lake. This wetland will be restored with assistance from US Fish and Wildlife Service <input type="checkbox"/> Received an MDNR CPL grant for the ecological restoration of Hennepin County’s Public Works facility in Medina. This project will include improving the function of on-site wetlands, removal of invasive species, as well as prairie and forest restoration 	○	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to comments and submit Final Plan in the first part of 2017 <input type="checkbox"/> Begin water level monitoring at the Home School site <input type="checkbox"/> Identify additional potential wetland banking sites <input type="checkbox"/> Continue public works restoration project through 2020

GOAL No. 2: Hennepin County landscapes are diverse and functional and natural areas are preserved Objective 1: Protect and enhance natural areas, corridors and green spaces Page 15 of Strategic* Plan

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
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<p>1. Identify protect and restore the best remaining natural areas and corridors</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporated natural resource corridors and ecologically significant natural areas throughout the county into the Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Interactive Map Included designation as a natural resource corridor or Ecologically Significant Area in criteria that guide acquisition of future conservation easements 	<p>○</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop strategies to prioritize the best remaining areas and to pursue protection and/or restoration
<p>2. Promote the establishment of conservation easements to protect valued natural areas</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Established the Hennepin County Conservation Easement Program, which identifies criteria to guide the <input type="checkbox"/> acquisition of future conservation easements Through the review of tax forfeiture roles, the County established two new conservation easements in 2016 – one around a wetland near Cowley Lake, and another riparian buffer along the Crow River 	<p>○</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider options for pursuing external funding for easement acquisition, as well as strategies for promoting conservation easement as an option to private landowners

<p>3. Work with partners to preserve, enhance and expand urban green spaces</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Through the Environmental Response Fund and other grant programs, Hennepin County reimbursed grantees for more than \$500,000 in spending related to environmental assessment and cleanup relating to enhancing or creating urban green space. □ Held two Natural Resources Partnership Forum events about emerald ash borer, including preventative tree removal and proactive replacement programs 	<p>○</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Host a Natural Resources Partnership Forum field tour of the Hennepin gravel-bed nursery to highlight strategies for more cost effective EAB replacement and expansion of urban tree canopies (July 2017) □ Consider the county's role in promoting green space in developing and redeveloping areas □ Continue to support environmental cleanup for greenspace enhancement (the ERF is the only environmental cleanup program in Minnesota that funds greenspace
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					cleanup projects)
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Objective 2: Establish and restore landscapes that serve an ecological function

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. Develop and implement sustainable landscaping guidelines and practices for county-funded projects and properties	2015-2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Developed countywide sustainable landscaping <input type="checkbox"/> guidelines Held meetings with Facility Services, Community Works, and various divisions within Transportation to discuss how the guidelines should be used for future projects; directed consultants to use the guidelines when designed landscapes on behalf of Hennepin County 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to work across departments to shift practices on county-owned properties and county-funded projects
2. Work with partners and landowners to implement sustainable landscaping and low-impact development practices in developed and redeveloping areas	2015-2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consulted with North High School in Minneapolis and Noble Academy in Brooklyn Park on integrating garden spaces with new environmental learning curriculum <input type="checkbox"/> Consulted with the City of Edina on a landscape restoration plan for a 10 block segment of York Avenue. 	<input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Update the Hennepin County Landowner Guide and other outreach materials to more effectively engage landowners on sustainable

					<p>landscaping practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify opportunities to engage with Cities, Watersheds, and developers on low-impact development practices
<p>3. Maintain and increase a healthy tree canopy</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Established gravel-bed nurseries at the County’s Adult Correctional Facility to improve the viability of trees planted on county property, reduce the cost of trees and increase the diversity of trees available for county projects. Assisted North High School to establish a gravel-bed nursery and transplant trees around school grounds and to a tax-forfeited parcel in Minneapolis. <input type="checkbox"/> Planted 1,250 trees as part of County projects Developed the Hennepin County Emerald Ash Borer Plan to plan for the loss of an estimated 1 million ash trees that will be lost in the county <input type="checkbox"/> Developed a GIS collector app to inventory all trees on county properties and rights-of-way. 	<p>○</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue proactive replacement of ash trees on county property <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to provide technical assistance to cities that express interest in Hennepin’s mitigation efforts related to emerald ash borer <input type="checkbox"/> Work in concert with activities identified under 2.1.1 to identify protection strategies specific to forested areas

			Staff inventoried more than 2000 trees in 2016		(if any)
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Objective 3: Control and prevent vegetative and biological threats to maintain healthy 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. Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species	2015-2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Held 5 AIS early detection workshops and trained 85 volunteers. <input type="checkbox"/> Used behavior change research to design and install AIS prevention signs at 2 public accesses <input type="checkbox"/> Placed inspectors at public accesses for 3,980 hours, completing an estimated 10,300 AIS boat inspections. <input type="checkbox"/> Redesigned 2 boat launches to specifically prompt AIS prevention best practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Produced 2 informational videos with Mpls Parks & Rec which were seen by an estimated 20,000 people at boat launches, sailing schools, and movies in the parks. Installed the first changeable message board at a county access. <input type="checkbox"/> A multi-partner project displaying AIS prevention, Safe boating messages, and emergency notices when needed 	<input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to oversee the AIS Prevention Aid pass through grant program and associated AIS prevention projects <input type="checkbox"/> Target outreach in 2017 to private marinas and yacht clubs

			Proactively removed or treated ash trees on county property		
2. Control and prevent the spread of noxious weeds	2015-2020		<input type="checkbox"/> Responded to 65 new noxious weed complaints <input type="checkbox"/> Administered and enforced the state’s noxious weed laws and rules <input type="checkbox"/> Provide education, training, and outreach to professional land managers and local weed inspectors <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect county right-of-ways for noxious weeds	○	<input type="checkbox"/> Continue to administer and enforce noxious weed laws and rules

Objective 4: Practice and promote environmental stewardship of the county’s soil resources

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 partners in identifying high priority areas where soil erosion, sedimentation and related water quality degradation is occurring.	2015-2020		<input type="checkbox"/> Hired a Rural Conservationist to add outreach capacity for implementation of the Buffer Law and BMPs related to water quality degradation <input type="checkbox"/> Completed a desktop review of 16,000 parcels for buffer law compliance, and identified 162 for further field review and possible technical assistance	○	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating the feasibility of assisting landowners with windbreaks in areas prone to wind erosion <input type="checkbox"/> Identify future outreach priorities (after buffer implementation workload slows)

GOAL No. 3: Hennepin County fosters effective partnerships

Objective 1: Foster partnerships and strengthen collaboration with natural resource management entities Page 20 of Strategic* Plan

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
<p>1. Facilitate collaboration and coordination among natural resource management groups through the Hennepin Natural Resources Partnership</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Held 13 Partnership Forum gatherings about topics including emerald ash borer preparedness, contaminated soils remediation and funding, Master Water Steward program, buffers, environmental education, and stormwater management</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Continue to hold regular Forum meetings highlighting hot topics and areas that may benefit of countywide coordination</p>

<p>2. Collaborate with partners to research and promote innovative solutions to address regional issues and meet common goals</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Established a partnership with CD3 General Benefit Corporation, St. Louis County and Washington County (and leveraged nearly \$250,000 from the Initiative Foundation) to research and develop a self-serve boat cleaning station that can be installed at public boat accesses □ Partnered with the University of Minnesota and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District to research control and prevention strategies for Eurasian milfoil and zebra mussels □ Worked with Three Rivers Park District and the University of Minnesota to develop a place based environmental field trip day (NatureFest) for kids who don't otherwise have access to field trips and are under-represented at Three Rivers Park District programming □ In conversation with Mississippi Watershed Management Organization and many others about the Towerside development where the developer proposes to use energy generated on-site to treat stormwater 	<p style="text-align: center;">○</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Continue to identify and pursue opportunities to take a leadership or partnership role in novel solutions to big problems
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Objective 2: Collaborate with internal partners to incorporate sustainable natural resource management strategies

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. Engage other Hennepin County departments to incorporate the use of proven and innovative best management practices on county projects and properties.	2015-2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fielded thirteen requests from other county departments to assist with landscape planning and design review assistance – projects include Bottineau LRT, Bass Lake Road streetscape, and 4 future <input type="checkbox"/> transportation projects Assisted Transportation department with stormwater review of projects as needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide stormwater review for other county projects (e.g. light rail, Community Works). In the process of developing facility assessment plans that describe forestry and landscaping needs for all unique Hennepin County facilities See also 3.1.1 	○	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to develop and refine workflows with other county departments that allow natural resources input and improvements to project plans

GOAL No. 4: Hennepin County motivates environmental stewardship Objective 1: Engage the community in taking action to protect the environment Page 22 of Strategic* Plan

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
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<p>1. Collaborate with partners to deliver environmental education</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> In 2015, the county launched NatureFest, a place-based environmental field trip for fifth graders. Over the past two years the program has given almost 850 underserved youth an opportunity to experience nature within just a few miles of their homes and schools. <input type="checkbox"/> Participated in planning and delivery of Children’s Water Festival, Envirothon, NEMO workshops <input type="checkbox"/> Presented to several Master Naturalist, Master Water Steward, and Project WET trainings and conferences <input type="checkbox"/> More than 50 Green Partners grantees started or completed projects focused on engaging and empowering residents to take actions that protect and improve the environment 	<p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue, evaluate, and consider expansion of NatureFest program <input type="checkbox"/> Continue participation in CWF, Envirothon, NEMO workshops, Master Water Stewards Program, and other partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Continue Green Partners grant program
<p>2. Engage volunteers in environmental stewardship</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wetland Health Evaluation Program volunteers evaluated the quality of 36 wetlands by collecting invertebrate information <input type="checkbox"/> More than 1000 students collected invertebrates and habitat data at 23 stream sites <input type="checkbox"/> Served as the content lead/expert for the community engagement aspect of Master Water Steward training <input type="checkbox"/> Initiated a Tree Steward/Master Tree Pruner volunteer initiative 	<p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> See 1.1.1 <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a River Watch experience that focuses more on the education mission of the program

			in collaboration with the University of Minnesota Forestry Department.		
3. Promote natural resources programs	2015-2020		<input type="checkbox"/> Publish monthly Green Notes newsletter <input type="checkbox"/> Placed staff at nearly 200 tabling events around the county <input type="checkbox"/> Shared information about programs at semi-annual Information meetings for Green Partners grantees <input type="checkbox"/> Highlighted programs the NEMO watershed game and AIS prevention at Green Partners grantee networking events and at Master Water Stewards trainings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify opportunities to target outreach for NR grant programs to priority partners & projects

GOAL No. 5: Hennepin County leverages financial resources Objective 1: Integrate the work of Hennepin County and partners to achieve the goals of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment Page 24 of Strategic* Plan

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. Work with partners to leverage resources to implement projects and programs that meet common natural resource management goals.	2015-2020		<input type="checkbox"/> Over the past two years, \$250,000 of Opportunity grants have been awarded to partners that were then able to leverage \$1.15 million dollars in funding from the Clean Water Fund	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> See 4.1.3 <input type="checkbox"/> Develop internal priorities and potential projects about which to engage partners

Objective 2: Provide financial assistance

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
<p>1. Develop and manage grant and cost share programs that provide financial and technical assistance to partners to implement BMPs and programs that preserve, enhance, and restore our natural resources</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<p>2015-2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided \$413,500 in cost-share grant funds to partner and community organizations and individual landowners. • Managed \$308,000 in Disaster Recovery Assistance Program funds to respond to June 2014 rainfall event damage. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> See 4.1.3</p>

Appendix B. Performance Standards

COUNTY LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: Hennepin County Environment and Energy

Performance Area	Performance Standard	Level of Review	Rating	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic practice or statutory requirement ★ High Performance standard (see instructions for explanation of standards) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I Annual Compliance II BWSR Staff Review & Assessment (1/10 yrs) 	YES	NO
Admin	■ eLINK Grant Report(s): submitted on time	I	X	
	■ 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	X	
	★ Public drainage records: meet modernization guidelines	II		X
Planning	■ Local water mgmt plan: current	I	X	
	★ Metro counties: groundwater plan up-to-date	I	N/A	
	■ Biennial Budget Request submitted on-time	I	X	
	★ Prioritized, Targeted & Measureable criteria are used for Goals & Objectives in local water plan as appropriate.	II		X
	★ 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	X	
	★ Communication piece sent within last 12 months: indicate target audience below	II	X	
	Communication Target Audience: Residents			
	★ 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		X
	★ County local water plan on county website	II	X	
★ Water management ordinances on county website	II	X		

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

LGU Name: Hennepin County Environment and Energy

Performance Area	Performance Standard	Level of Review	Rating	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic practice or Statutory requirement ★ High Performance standard <p>(see instructions for explanation of standards)</p>	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	N/A	
	■ 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	
	★ Job approval authorities: reviewed and reported annually	II	X	
	★ Operational guidelines and policies exist and are current	II		N/A
	★ Board training: orientation & cont. ed. plan/record for each board member	II		N/A
	★ 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	N/A	
	■ 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 TEP reviews, findings & recommendations	II	X	
	■ WCA TEP reviews/recommendations appropriately coordinated	II		N/A
	★ 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	

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 Hennepin County Environment and Energy 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, 7 board members and staff, and 31 partner organization representatives, were invited to take the survey for Hennepin County Environment and Energy. Six staff or board members responded, an 86% response rate and 18 partners responded (58%).

The responses are summarized below. Some responses were edited for clarity or brevity.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy Staff Questions and Responses

How often does your organization use your current management plan to guide decisions about what you do? (response percent)	
Always	60.0%
Usually	40.0%
Seldom	0.0%
Never	0.0%

Additional Comments:

- *We do the best we can unless there are unforeseen needs that need to be worked on.*

List your organization’s most successful programs and projects during the past 3-5 years.
<i>Outreach, writing, and adoption of NR Strategic Plan Continuing evolution of the Opportunity Grant program Hennepin NR Partnership Forum Environmental Response Fund Environmental Ed and Outreach, especially Nature Fest, AIS prevention aid grant program</i>
<i>Natural Resource Partnership Forum is very successful at reaching our partner agencies and providing current information on all natural resource topics.</i>
<i>Natural resource grants. Providing technical and natural resources assistance to landowners and organizations throughout the county Began getting involved in Ag area again by hiring a new technician.</i>
<i>Forestry getting going, stormwater projects with watersheds, getting a master plan going.</i>
<i>Natural Resource Opportunity Grants, Technical Assistance.</i>

What helped make these projects and programs successful?
<i>I see three common threads among all these programs: 1.) strong partnerships and collaboration; 2.) responding to a clearly identified need 3.) Strong staff leadership.</i>
<i>Dedicated staff coordinating the forums is focused on education for natural resource professionals.</i>
<i>County Board vision and personnel.</i>
<i>Staff organization and green light to be proactive in taking care of problems, cross discipline work and cooperation.</i>

Staff and funding support from Hennepin County.

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

Technical assistance to watershed partners Outreach, assistance & project development with private landowners Involvement in groundwater issues Program evaluation (in general).

None.

WCA stays constant Assistance to the ECWMC and PSCWMC stays constant.

Wetlands could use some work, agricultural work was on hold until someone was hired, easements.

Conservation Easement program.

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

In most cases, we don't have difficulty exactly, but we aren't pushing ourselves. I think we allow certain programs, projects, or services to stagnate by not asking ourselves on a regular basis what we could be doing differently or better. In other cases, there are areas that we just haven't been able to get to yet as we grow into our role as the County's SWCD (e.g. outreach to private landowners).

Not an issue with difficulty, just that progress is constant.

Staffing mostly.

Funding. Adopted a conservation easement program and natural resources strategy plan last year.

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

List the ones with which you work well already

WMOs and WDs cities and state and federal agencies.

Three Rivers Park District, DNR, ECWMC, PSCWMC, various cities in the county.

Three Rivers Park District.

DNR, USFWS, MN Land Trust, Watersheds of the county, etc.

List the ones with which better collaboration would benefit your organization

Various cities in the county.

MPCA, cities.

BWSR.

If you don’t know much about your organization’s working relationships with partners, enter “I don’t know”

I don't know

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

Incorporate regular project and program evaluation into workflows -Use project management and teams more effectively to diversify ideas and spread workload in specific areas -Have some conversations about the future - what do we want our programs and services to look like in 5, 10, 20 years?

Continue providing excellent resident and agency partnerships to work on conservation programs.

Personnel and money.

Increase interdisciplinary and staff cooperation, work a little more as a unit while still maintaining autonomy to get work done.

Equipment and funding sources

How long have you been with the organization?

(response percent)

Less than 5 years	40.0%
5 to 10 years	60.0%
More than 15 years	0.0%

Hennepin County Environmental and Energy 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	23.5%
Several times a year	29.4%
Monthly	41.2%
Almost every week	5.9%
Daily	0.0%

If you chose not all, when was the last time you interacted with the organization? N/A

Is the amount of work you do in partnership with this organization...

(percent)

Not enough, there is potential for us to do more together	47.1%
About right	52.9%
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):

- *There is more we could be doing together but I am not sure as to what. One idea is for county to help create an electronic library for professionals to deposit and borrow educational information on topics such as AIS, or water resource protection. We all try to communicate similar messages so instead of always creating our own information let's develop a platform where we can share that information.*
- *Would like to see HCEE do more to coordinate communication between the 11 WMOs in the county.*

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>	0.0%	47.1%	41.2%	11.7%	0.0%
Quality of work <i>(they have good projects and programs; good service delivery)</i>	23.5%	47.1%	16.6%	0.0%	11.8%
Relationships with Customers <i>(they work well with landowners and clients)</i>	23.5%	41.2%	5.9%	0.0%	29.4%
Initiative <i>(they are willing to take on new projects, try new ideas)</i>	23.5%	29.4%	35.3%	5.9%	5.9%
Timelines/Follow-through <i>(they are reliable and meet deadlines)</i>	5.9%	52.9%	29.4%	0.0%	11.8%

How is your working relationship with this organization? (percent)	
Powerful , we are more effective working together	5.9%
Strong , we work well together most of the time	52.9%
Good , but it could be better	23.5%
Acceptable , but a struggle at times	11.8%
Poor , there are almost always difficulties	0.0%
Non-existent , we don't work with this organization	5.9%

Comments from Partners about their working relationship with the Hennepin Environment and Energy:

- *We work very well together. They are such a leader in the 7 County Metro world. I would like to see them partner more with us. I think there is a lot we could do together.*
- *I primarily interact on wetland and lake issues (water quality and monitoring) and I have an excellent relationship with staff.*

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

The County holds a unique role in providing both County environmental services as well as the traditional SWCD duties. The area in the western part of the County is in need of many of these SWCD services and the hiring of a

dedicated rural conservationist will hopefully allow them to better reach the needs of these landowners and the upper parts of several watersheds.

Get more training on water quality assessment tools to credibly estimate expected BMP performance and pollutant loading changes associated with land use changes.

Communications could be better with us and similar partners.

I think they are very effective and are leaders in initiating progressive ideas.

They need more field staff.

Be open to new partnerships that have the potential for long-term success but don't necessarily fit into one of the existing 'boxes'. Evaluate the rules, process, and funding criteria to see if you are inadvertently missing out on opportunities. - Awarding grant funding 2 times a year rather than when opportunities present themselves could mean that good projects - that share similar goals - but with more aggressive timelines are not eligible partners/funding recipients. - Allowing grant funds for easements but not fee-title acquisition is limiting. Why does this matter? If a partner organization is willing to take on fee-title responsibility (and the maintenance/natural resource protection that goes along with it), why are they prohibited from receiving grant funds? - Would like to see more cohesiveness between WMO initiatives in which staff has a role and the greater department. We've run into a few situations where there are multiple hoops/opinions to work through for one project - but working with two different staff members.

It is difficult to reach them at times, but we are all really busy.

The projects we work with Hennepin County Environmental and Energy also seem on a tight time frame. It would be nice to have a project with a longer timeline.

How long have you been with the organization?	(response percent)
Less than 5 years	23.5%
5 to 10 years	17.7%
More than 15 years	58.8%

Appendix D. Wetland Conservation Act Report

Wetland Conservation Act Administrative Review Report

Report Prepared for: Hennepin County Environment and Energy

Report Date: April 21, 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 Karen Galles, Supervising Environmentalist and Stacey Lijewski, Senior Environmentalist for Hennepin County on March 20, 2017 at the Hennepin County Office in Minneapolis. In addition to the data collection forms completed (See Appendix D), two recent WCA Restoration Orders were reviewed. The history of Hennepin Conservation District and County was discussed. No additional site visits were deemed necessary for this review.

WCA Report Summary and Recommendations

A. Administration

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) issued an order for the discontinuance of the Hennepin Conservation District (HCD) and the transfer of all district duties and authorities to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners on December 18, 2013. BWSR issued the order following their review of a petition filed by Hennepin County pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 383B.761.

As of February 12, 2014, all duties and authorities of HCD were officially transferred to Hennepin County. Therefore, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 383B.761, Hennepin County is now acting as a soil and water conservation district (SWCD) with all duties and authorities of an SWCD. The county board delegated all administrative authorities pertaining to the assumed duties to the county administrator through the adoption of County Board Action 14-0212.

The County 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 County has multiple staff that are trained in environment and natural resources and the 1987 Delineation Manual to meet MN Rule 8420.0240. Based solely on the interview and previous field observations, the County meets the requirement for being trained and knowledgeable. In addition, the staff has attended trainings through BWSR and WDCP. The County 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.**

WCA Administrative Recommendation: County staff should continue to make it a priority to have staff attend BWSR Academy, WDCP, WPA and other trainings to keep current and further develop the skills and knowledge required to implement the WCA and technical review of delineations.

B. Execution and Coordination

Violation and Complaint Resolution

The County is involved in resolving complaints and violations per MN Rule 8420.0900 Subp. 3. B. The TEP is consulted in resolving violations. County staff participated in 59 TEP meetings in 2016. County staff continues to investigate violations and complete restoration orders. There are 41 enforcement cases that are on-going since 2004. The work load is typically 15 violations per year, with up to 30 investigations of probable violations. 60% of staff time has been spent on WCA enforcement. **This is effectively implementing the program.**

TEP Incorporation/Coordination

The County participates in the Technical Evaluation Panel according to the procedures identified in 8420.0240. Members of the TEP include the BWSR Wetland Specialist, Stacey Lijewski with the County (SWCD function) and LGU (in Hennepin County it is either a city or watershed). Due to workload issues,

the County has not attended all TEPs that have been requested by LGUs. Representatives from the Corp and DNR are involved when necessary. The TEP is utilized for projects that require TEP involvement as well as projects beyond what is required as necessary. **This meets minimum WCA requirements but needs improvement.**

Execution and Coordination Recommendation: 8420.0240 clearly identifies the members of the TEP. Regular attendance by all members helps improve the effectiveness of the recommendations of the TEP. Although the workload is high in Hennepin County, many LGUs request TEP meetings due to increasingly difficult sites. Having staff available in a timely manner helps ensure that LGUs can meet their decision timelines. Consistency in participation by County staff also helps the BWSR Wetland Specialist manage workload that includes multiple counties and meeting requests.

SWCD: Hennepin County BWSR Reviewer(s): Ben Meyer, Jed Chesnut

Date: 3/20/17

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 Stacey Lijewski (Tony Brough as backup)
- 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 Stacey: Little Falls, 2004
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Delineation Certification – Professional/In-Training Tony Brough, WDC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BWSR Academy WCA Session Attendance Stacey 2008, 2010
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Soils Training/Education – BWSR Academy/WDCP/Other UofM soils class
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hydrology Training/Education – BWSR Academy/WDCP/Other UofM coursework
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vegetation Training/Education – BWSR Academy/WDCP/Other UofM coursework
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	College Degree – AA/AS/BA/BS/MS – Natural Resources/Hydrology/Soils/Vegetation/Biology/Environment/Policy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: Click here to enter text.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: Click here to enter text.

- c. Years of Experience serving on the TEP and/or in a related function? Explain.
Since July 2, 2004. Serves as the TEP representative for SWCD functions.
- d. Are there identified area in which staff requires or desires additional training or experience?
Tony is currently certified. Additional staff certification/training would be desirable.

- 2) Does the staff member attend TEP meetings regularly?
Yes. 59 TEP meetings for 2016. Tracked in daily planner and time card for WCA (but not specific to each task).
- 3) Does this same staff member prepare restoration and replacement orders associated with WCA enforcement?
If not, explain.
Yes.

- 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. What is the structural history of the Conservation District?

Question 2. Describe the workload of the county staff and how this may effect the role of the County in assisting with WCA?

Summary and Recommendations: Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) services in Hennepin County are unusual due to the exceptional workload straining WCA-responsible staff at all levels, as well as the unusual organizational structure and history in Hennepin County. **Workload** The sheer volume of WCA workload in Hennepin County at both the local and the state-level is exceptional. Development pressure in Hennepin County is intense and historical wetland coverage of the County was extensive. The result is the largest WCA workload in the state by far. This puts a strain on state agency TEP members who are often tasked with WCA involvement for not just Hennepin County but several other counties as well; LGU staff who are tasked with WCA permitting and enforcement; and county staff who often go beyond their official role as the SWCD TEP representative. The capacity strain at all levels makes WCA administration a unique challenge in Hennepin County. **Organizational Structure and History** Compounding this basic capacity issue are the unique circumstances and history of Hennepin County and Hennepin Conservation District. In 2003, Hennepin County discontinued funding to the Hennepin Conservation District and authorized many of the HCD's non-statutory programs and services under county auspices. At this time many HCD staff were hired by the County to continue providing conservation services. HCD continued to provide services related to their statutory requirements (cost-share, RIM, and WCA). From 2006 to 2012, HCD and the County operated under a cooperative agreement that provided administrative support to the HCD Board and authorized county staff (formerly HCD staff) to provide technical support to remaining HCD programs. During this time, county staff that administered HCD programs (e.g. WCA) were working for the County but reporting to the County leadership as well as the HCD Board. In 2012 administrative support for the HCD Board was discontinued, and in 2013 Board of Water and Soil Resources issued an order of discontinuance of the HCD. In early 2014, all HCD duties and authorities were transferred to the county.

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).

25 informal reviews per year for last 5 years, on-going (Akradi, Johnson, Anderson, Midwest Asphalt, etc. – see b. below), approx. 25 ROs last 5 years. 60% of WCA staff spent on these tasks. 41 enforcement cases ongoing from 2004 to date, typically 15 violations per year, up to 30 possible investigations per year.

b. Number of Enforcement Files reviewed: see attached (Little League Ball Park).

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. Yes, when practicle, otherwise replacement.

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

Yes. TEP also review RO language.

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, almost 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 examples

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, TAA and PE on staff.

- 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.

- 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.).*

Enforcement: RPN, ICR, initial contact with landowner is SWCD staff. Better coordination with WREO. BWSR Acad., Certification

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

Question 1. NRBG funding?

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

Summary and Recommendations: Of the \$63,165.50 (2016) that the County received in NRBG funding from BWSR, \$9,763.00 is used to support the SWCD functions (TEP participation, Restoration Orders, etc.) of the County Environmental Office. The remaining funds are split between Elm Creek WMO and Pioneer-Sarah WMO to provide staff to support these watershed functions for WCA. Elm Creek does act as the LGU for the Cities of Corcoran and Greenfield. Pioneer-Sarah acts as LGU in the Cities of Loretto and Maple Plain.

Appendix E. Comment Letter

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

RECEIVED

03 2017

June 29, 2017
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
520 Lafayette Road N.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Bd. of Water & Soil Resources
St. Paul

RE: 2017 Level II Performance Review
Appendix E, Comment Letter

Dear Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources,

The Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department, acting in both our function as the local water planning entity as well as the Hennepin Conservation District, thanks you for your partnership in reviewing and assessing our functions as they relate to and intersect with the Board of Water and Soil Resources. We sincerely appreciate your comments and feedback. Continuous improvement is one of Hennepin County's Core Values and we look forward to incorporating your recommendations into our on-going assessment of the Environment and Energy Department's work areas and services. They will certainly improve our Department's ability to protect and preserve our county's natural resources.

It is especially gratifying to know, just four years after assuming the roles and responsibilities of the Hennepin Conservation District, that we are meeting your expectations, and in many cases exceeding them.

In regards to the specific recommendations noted within the report, we would like to offer the following comments (please note that the order of recommendations has been rearranged somewhat to aid in the logical flow of responses):

Recommendation 5: Improve coordination with Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations regarding watershed protection priorities and water quality data collection and trends analysis. Environment and Energy concurs that improved coordination with Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations will improve our ability to add value to water resource protection and restoration in Hennepin County. This is demonstrated in Goal 3 of the Natural Resources Strategic Plan, "Hennepin County Fosters Effective Partnerships." As you noted in your report, our progress on our planned actions in this area is on-going and in one case "complete" although the work of fostering partnerships is never complete. We fully intend to continue to deepen and strengthen these partnerships, which leads directly into Recommendation 1 & 2.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy
701 Fourth Ave S., Suite 700, Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-348-3777 | hennepin.us/environment



Recommendation 1: Use the major and minor watershed scale for plan organization.

Environment and Energy will consider more coordination with watershed organizations to identify specific ways our staff will support and advance watershed-scale and watershed-identified goals. Practical opportunities to incorporate this level of detail (e.g. action items related to differing watershed priorities) will be evaluated when the Natural Resources Strategic Plan is revised in 2020.

Recommendation 2: Consider developing a supporting water management plan that uses Prioritized, Targeted and Measureable criteria for Goals and Objectives to support the Natural Resources Strategic Plan. As above, Environment and Energy will coordinate more closely with watersheds to find alignment of goals and objectives, and then to be explicit about the ways we can work to support and advance common interests. We will evaluate the appropriate level of planning tool to communicate these intentions to our partners and to the public.

Recommendation 3: Structure website information to report progress made and trends in achieving resource outcome goals. Environment and Energy will coordinate with watersheds to identify the best way to share progress made on shared resource outcome goals. It should be noted that Environment and Energy works within a series of Communications and Information Technology constraints related to our position within the overall county structure that may or may not make the Environment and Energy website the appropriate place for aggregation of progress and trends.

Recommendation 4: Develop and adopt a Groundwater Plan under Minnesota Statutes 103B.255. Environment and Energy recognizes the importance of our groundwater resource and comprehensive planning. The effort to give counties the authority to draft and adopt groundwater plans was spearheaded by Hennepin County; however, an early effort to adopt a Groundwater Plan was not successful. Environment and Energy will evaluate our role in groundwater issues.

Recommendation 6: Provide annual report to Hennepin County Board on the Environment and Energy activities to better align upcoming needs. Environment and Energy agrees that the regular communication with our board regarding activities and upcoming needs is critical to our success. As such, we produce an annual report and communicate with our board regarding current and upcoming needs consistently through annual budgeting processes, regular check-ins with the county administration team, on an as-needed basis with board members, and through seeking board approval of many of our activities and programs.

Recommendation 7: Increase participation in Wetland Conservation Act Technical Evaluation Panels (TEP). Given the volume of TEP requests in the county, Environment and Energy staff have always been directed by management to identify the TEPs that are most critical to attend. Decision criteria include the likely involvement of other TEP members and the complexity of the situation. In general, this means that we have allocated staff time and effort to WCA situations where the LGU has limited resources to dedicate to WCA, to enforcement or potential violation cases where BWSR typically opts not to get involved, and to complex situations requiring multiple professional opinions. In Environment and Energy's estimation, these are the areas where the resource need is the greatest given the resources dedicated by other

TEP members. We typically do not attend TEPs when the reason for the request is more routine, or well-supported by other wetland professionals. Like BWSR, we view this as imperfect, but we do see this as the most efficient approach to the high WCA workload and staffing limitations. In response to this recommendation, Environment and Energy will initiate an evaluation of WCA services and processes – certainly there are ways to improve given the past ten years of transitions in WCA administration in Hennepin County. Environment and Energy sincerely appreciates the feedback from our fellow TEP members that increased and more timely participation is desired in more routine matters. Environment and Energy would like to work with our fellow Hennepin TEP members to review our decision-making criteria in relation to that used by other members of the TEP, to streamline processes, identify critical WCA workflows, and to identify other ways to make Environment and Energy’s WCA work more predictable and transparent to those with whom we are working. As we consider our options to increase TEP participation, we will certainly be in communication with BWSR and with Hennepin County’s LGUs about current WCA services and activities that would be impacted by increased participation in TEPs. We look forward to working with the members of the Hennepin TEP to make improvements to wetland resources and WCA administration in our County.

Recommendation 8: Continue to make training a priority and have staff attend BWSR Academy, WDCP, WPA, and other wetland training sessions. Hennepin County appreciates BWSR’s recognition that training has been a priority for our staff, and that will certainly continue. Regarding the specific suggestion that Hennepin County involve additional staff in Wetland Conservation Act-related work, we will examine that possibility in our overall program evaluation mentioned above.

If you have questions or comments concerning the above, please feel free to contact this office. Once again, it has been a pleasure to work with BWSR in this regard. Information from the review and assessment process will be used to improve our programming and service delivery.

Sincerely,



Rosemary A. Lavin, Director
Environment and Energy Department

Appendix F. Program Data

Time required to complete this review

Hennepin Environment and Energy Staff: 45 Hours

BWSR Staff: 85 Hours

Schedule of Level II Review

BWSR PRAP Performance Review Key Dates

- March 7, 2017: Initial meeting with Hennepin Environment and Energy Staff
- March 20, 2017: Initial meeting with Hennepin County Board Committee and Hennepin County staff
- March 20, 2017: Survey of County Board, staff and partners
- June 29, 2017: Presentation of Draft Report to County Board and staff
- July 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.