



# One Watershed, One Plan

Evolution of water planning in Minnesota

November 2013

## Water Planning Timeline

1937: MN Soil Conservation Law

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

1955: MN Watershed Act

1957: MN's 1st Watershed District

1982: MN Metro Surface Water Management Act

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

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

2013-2014: 1W1P Program Development

Goal for 2015: Completion of first plan through 1W1P

## What is One Watershed, One Plan?

Minnesota has a long history of water management by local government (see sidebar). One Watershed, One Plan is rooted in this history and in work initiated by the Local Government Water Roundtable (Association of Minnesota Counties, Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts, and Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts) in 2011. Roundtable members recommended that the local governments charged with water management responsibility should organize and develop focused implementation plans on a watershed scale.

The recommendation was followed by legislation that permits the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to adopt methods to allow comprehensive plans, local water management plans, or watershed management plans to serve as substitutes for one another; or to be replaced with one comprehensive watershed management plan. The legislation also requires BWSR to establish a suggested watershed boundary framework for these plans. This legislation is referred to as **One Watershed, One Plan**.

One Watershed, One Plan is the next logical step in the evolution of water planning in Minnesota. The One Watershed, One Plan vision is to align local planning and implementation with state strategies over a ten year transition period into plans built largely around the state's major watersheds.



## What's next?

Over the next year, BWSR will develop the program framework, policies, criteria, and guidance. Completion will yield:

- A shared understanding on the definitions of prioritized, targeted, and measured;
- Agreement on the expectations, benefits, and outcome measures for implementing One Watershed, One Plan in specific watersheds;
- A selection of initial pilot areas for implementation;
- An understanding of next steps for funding and implementation; and
- A suggested watershed plan boundary framework (map).

## Early concepts

The following information outlines some of the early concepts under consideration for One Watershed, One Plan with details to be developed and finalized over the next year. Additionally, implementation through pilot watersheds will be evaluated and may inform future modifications to the program. Participation in One Watershed, One Plan is voluntary.

Early concepts for suggested planning boundaries build a suggested map largely around the major watersheds, with flexibility to adjust boundaries within certain criteria. The organizational requirements within the boundary are also anticipated to be flexible, but will likely require formal agreements between participating local governments.

A framework of approvable plan types is proposed, including a new comprehensive watershed management plan. Plans developed within this program will prioritize and target, by sub-watershed, where implementation activities will address the largest threats and provide the greatest measurable environmental benefit. Plans developed within the framework will:

- Substitute or replace all or portions of existing water plans as outlined within the legislation;
- Streamline more than 200 local water plans built around political boundaries, to fewer watershed-based plans;
- Be informed by existing science, studies and projects;
- Identify specific strategies and actions needed to achieve established restoration and/or protection strategies and targets;

- Establish water quality goals and targets by parameter of concern and sub-watersheds;
- Include short-term (10 year) and long-term (20 year) quantifiable milestones;
- Identify the implementing authority and establish timelines and cost estimates based on these milestones;
- Coordinate the collection, ranking and submission of requests for funding to the State and other sources.

Still under consideration is the extent to which plans will be required to link surface water and groundwater into a systems approach.

## How do I stay informed?

A One Watershed, One Plan page will be included on the BWSR website as materials are developed. Questions and comments can be directed to Doug Thomas, BWSR Senior Policy and Program Advisor at 651-215-6338 or [doug.thomas@state.mn.us](mailto:doug.thomas@state.mn.us).



# One Watershed, One Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions

December 2013



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

## General

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

We are still at the front end of 1W1P program development. The first step was to establish sideboards and set direction through the adoption of 1W1P Guiding Principles by the BWSR Board on December 18, 2013. Operating procedures will be developed through the first half of 2014 and tested by pilot watershed through 2015. More detailed policies and guidance will be developed as needs are identified and finalized at the conclusion of the pilots. If you are interested in participating as a pilot watershed, and willing to proceed without knowing all the details, nominations for the pilots will be open in early 2014. If you would rather not participate until the details are known, wait until the final program is adopted, anticipated in late 2015.

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

No. One of the guiding principles is that 1W1P is not an effort to change local governance. Implementation of *One Watershed, One Plan* is intended to use the existing structure of counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and joint powers water management organizations.

Another guiding principle to consider is that 1W1P implementation will be accomplished through formal agreements on how to manage and operate during plan development and implementation. One purpose of these agreements is for participants to have a candid and straightforward conversation with each other of intent. One result of establishing these agreements should be a clear understanding of what you and your peers are willing and able to do.

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

No. One of the guiding principles is that 1W1P is not an effort to change local governance. Implementation of *One Watershed, One Plan* is intended to use the existing structure of counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts and joint powers water management organizations. The watershed boundary framework is intended for development of plans that will be implemented through existing local government structures. Any decision to create a watershed district, as a result of participating in the 1W1P program or for any other reason, would be initiated locally just as it is now.

### Q4. Where and how are the other agencies going to be involved?

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

## Plans and Timing

### Q5. Why the option of three plan types? I just need a template to follow.

To achieve the guiding principle that 1W1P “is not intended to be a one size fits all model,” and in recognition of the need for options through the ten year transition, the current concept is to have three plan types of increasing levels of details and requirements. These three plan types are sometimes referred to as “silver, gold, and platinum.” The concept of the three types will be tested through the pilot watersheds and may change prior to full program rollout.

### Q6. We just completed our county water plan last year; do we now have to start planning all over again?

The vision of 1W1P recognizes a ten year transition period; therefore, if your water plan was just completed recently, now may not be the time to start. Or, if your county is asked by neighboring partners to participate in a plan for a portion of your county, you may want to take a secondary or smaller role in the planning process, while leveraging the data and information from your recently completed plan.

### Q7. I see the pilot watersheds are scheduled to complete plans in 2015. If I am not a pilot watershed, can I start planning under 1W1P before the pilots are finished?

The participating pilot watersheds will help determine the outline of an eventual statewide program. The intent is learn from the experiences of the pilot watersheds in order to adjust and streamline the program before making it available statewide, tentatively in late 2015. Until the pilot watersheds have completed their work and the 1W1P framework is solidified, you should continue to emphasize watershed management under your existing local water management plan.

## Boundary Map and Framework

### Q8. I don't agree with the boundary that is proposed for my area, what do I do?

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

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

### Q9. I have heard 1W1P doesn't apply in the 7-county metro, then I heard it does – which is it?

The Local Government Water Roundtable recognized the increased requirements associated with MSWMA and largely focused its analysis outside of—and remained silent on—specific recommendations for this area. BWSR's preliminary considerations for 1W1P policy development were to continue to exclude the metro from initial program development. However, feedback and interest from local governments in this area has altered this initial thought.

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

## Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

### Q10. How do non-governmental organizations interact with 1W1P?

NGOs have always had a role in water planning as a stakeholder at the table through the planning and implementation process. This role continues through 1W1P. However, the statutory language and intent is for the plan to be developed, approved, and funded through existing water planning authorities of local governments.



# One Watershed, One Plan

## Suggested Boundary Map

### Request for Comments

December 2013



**Purpose:** This document outlines the procedures to provide public comments to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) on the draft suggested boundary map. The deadline for comments is February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and a final suggested boundary map is intended to be adopted by the BWSR Board in April 2014.

### Suggested Boundary Map

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) requests comments on the One Watershed, One Plan Boundary Map which outlines future planning areas for initiating and developing plans through the One Watershed, One Plan program. This initial boundary map was modified from the 81 major watershed map or 8-digit hydrologic unit codes for Minnesota by informally applying the criteria below. This map will likely affect the local governments participating in planning through Minnesota Statutes, chapters 103B, 103C, and 103D by setting the borders for plans developed through One Watershed, One Plan.

The BWSR Board will adopt a final map in April 2014. Boundaries within this map are suggested only, even after final adoption by the Board. Future individual boundaries will be established and confirmed through the One Watershed, One Plan planning process and incorporated in the statewide Suggested Boundary Map as outlined in the Draft Boundary Procedures below.

### Statutory Authority

Minnesota Statutes, section 103B.101, subdivision 14, authorizes the Board to establish a suggested boundary framework for development, approval, adoption, and coordination of plans developed or amended, approved and adopted, according to chapter 103B, 103C, or 103D.

### Public Comment

Interested persons or groups may submit comments or information on the Suggested Boundary Map in writing from January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 at 8:00 a.m. through February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at 4:30 p.m. CDT to:

Doug Thomas  
Senior Policy & Program Advisor  
Board of Water and Soil Resources  
520 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Phone: 651-297-3432  
Fax: 651-297-5615  
E-mail: [doug.thomas@state.mn.us](mailto:doug.thomas@state.mn.us)

**Alternative Format.** Upon request, this Request for Comments can be made available in an alternative format, such as large print, Braille, or cassette tape. To make such a request, please contact the agency contact person at the address or telephone number listed above.

The boundary procedures and criteria below are draft and provided for context only. BWSR is not looking for comments on these procedures and criteria at this time. Future opportunities will be provided for comment on both prior to adoption by the BWSR Board.

## DRAFT Boundary Procedures

The following procedures support how boundaries may be established, changed, or appealed.

- **Planning Boundary Establishment.** BWSR Board adopted the One Watershed, One Plan Boundary Map on <insert date>. This map establishes the suggested planning boundaries for plans developed through One Watershed, One Plan.
  1. Before commencing planning under Minnesota Statutes §103B.101 Subd. 14, local governments participating in the plan (participants) shall either submit a letter concurring with the planning boundary established in the BWSR Board adopted map, or submit a new map delineating the intended planning boundary to BWSR staff for review and comment. If submitting a new map, participants must provide written documentation of the rationale and justification for deviation from the BWSR Board adopted map. BWSR staff may request additional information needed to make a plan boundary determination.
  2. BWSR staff shall have 60 days to comment on the conformance of the plan boundary with the requirements of Minnesota Statutes §103B.101 Subd. 14.
  3. The final planning boundary will be approved by the BWSR Board concurrent with plan approval and incorporated into the BWSR Board adopted map.
- **Planning Boundary Amendment or Adjustment.** After a planning boundary has been established, participants may find adjustments or amendments to the boundary are necessary. Procedures for changing a boundary will follow the establishment procedure above. The final adjusted boundary will be approved by the BWSR Board concurrent with a plan amendment or next plan approval. BWSR comments on the boundary may include findings that an amendment to the plan is necessary to address the newly included or excluded area(s).
- **Appeals.** Participants may appeal a board decision to deny approval of a plan or the establishment of a plan boundary. An appeal of a board decision may be taken to the state Court of Appeals and must be considered an appeal from a contested case decision for purposes of judicial review under Minnesota Statutes §14.63 to 14.69. Participants may request the board's dispute resolution committee or executive director to hear and make recommendations to resolve boundary and plan implementation disputes.

## DRAFT Boundary Criteria

The following criteria were considered in developing the map and are recommended to be considered for future boundary decisions or changes.

- Smaller than/partial HUC8:
  - Smaller area does not conflict with the purposes/intent of 1W1P
  - Significant dissimilarities or complexities in resource issues and solutions within the HUC8 to justify the smaller area
  - HUC8 crosses a major river, e.g. HUC8 is on both sides of the Minnesota River
  - Existing watershed district in the area
  - HUC8 crosses Metro Water Planning area
  - Boundary for the smaller area closely follows a minor watershed, e.g. a 10 or 12 digit hydrologic unit code or watersheds defined by drainage systems managed pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §103E.
- Larger than HUC8, e.g. one HUC8 plus additional minor or major watershed(s)
  - Inclusion of a partial watershed on a state line
  - Confluence of major basins
  - Efficiencies due to similarity of issues and solutions

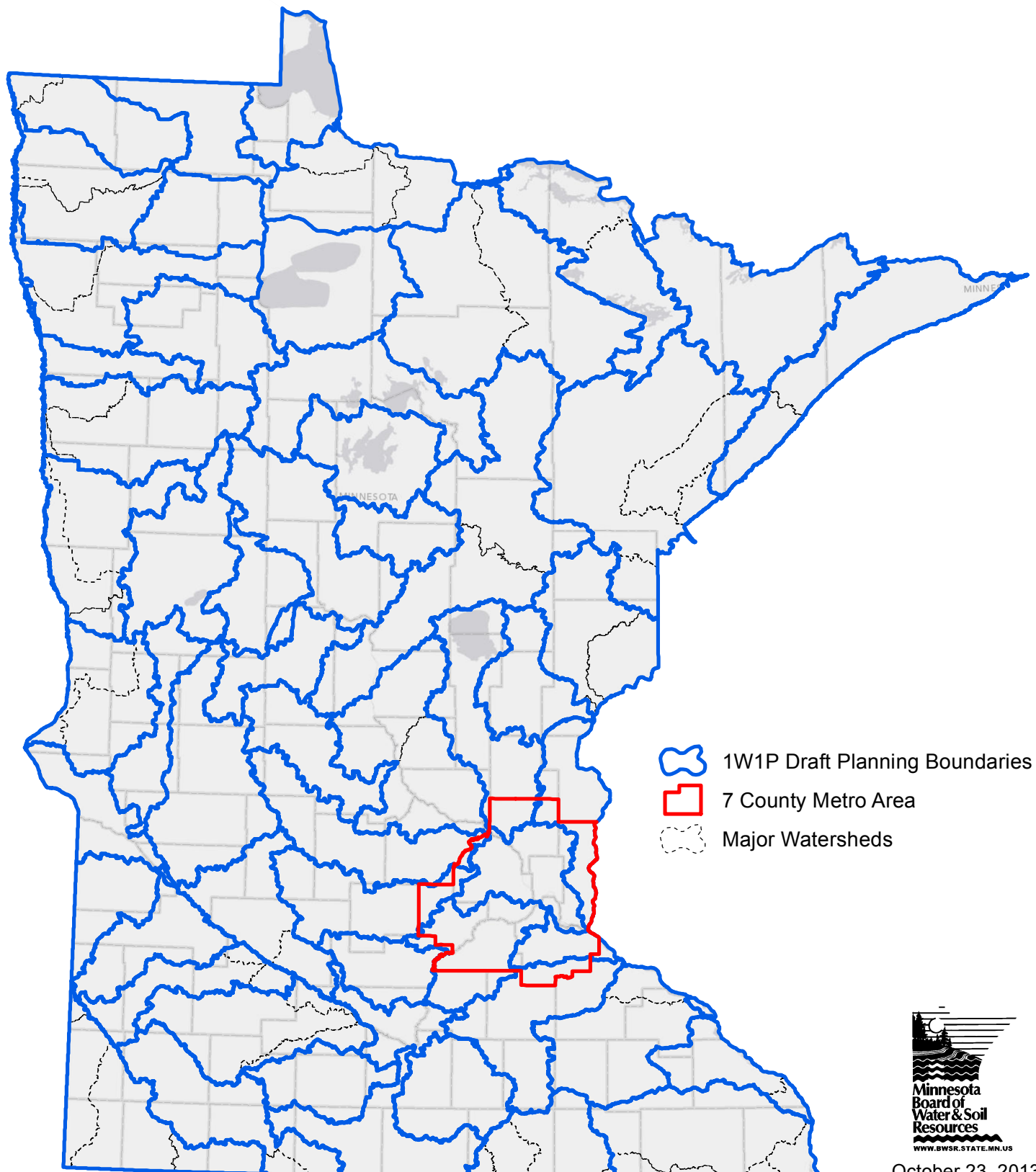
- Existing watershed district that includes larger area
- HUCs already lumped for PCA 10-year watershed approach/WRAPS
- Boundary for the larger area closely follows a minor watershed, e.g. a 10 or 12 digit hydrologic unit code.
- When a HUC8 crosses into the seven-county metro:
  - The area within the seven-county metro may or may not be considered for inclusion in the boundary. If included, the area within the seven-county metro is not excluded from Metro Surface Water Management Act.



# One Watershed, One Plan

## *Suggested Boundary Map*

**DRAFT**



October 23, 2013

\*Not legal boundaries; intended for planning purposes through One Watershed, One Plan only.