

# Background Information

## 2025 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution

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Item 5D.  
BCWMC 5-15-25

Proposing Watershed: Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

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Resolution Title: Seeking Revision to MN Statute 275.066 to Include Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations as Special Taxing Districts

### **Background that led to the submission of this resolution:**

*Describe the problem you wish to solve, provide background information to understand the factors that led to the issue, and explain why the issue is important now. If relevant, attach statutory or regulatory documents.*

[MN Statute 275.066 Special Taxing Districts](#) includes “watershed districts under chapter 103D” but does not include joint powers watershed management organizations (WMOs) formed under chapter 103B.211. Joint powers WMOs are entities that jointly or cooperatively manage or plan for the management of surface water in a delineated watershed. These entities do the same work as watershed districts but with a slightly different structure and typically with significantly lower budgets. There are sixteen joint powers WMOs in Minnesota.

About twenty-five years ago, the Mississippi WMO (formerly Middle Mississippi River WMO) successfully lobbied the legislature to be added as a special taxing district under MN Statute 275.066. The Mississippi WMO maintains its joint powers status but now operates as a robust organization very similar to a watershed district with well-funded projects and programs that benefit water resources and the community, capable staff that span a wide range of expertise, and a state-of-the-art office facility that showcases water management best practices and is considered a community amenity.

Most other watershed management organizations without taxing authority have limited budgets and therefore limited capacity to hire staff and implement programs that offer significant improvements to water resources and communities. While WMOs can levy taxes through their respective counties for the construction of capital projects, this funding cannot be used for the multitude of other watershed activities such as monitoring, modeling, flood risk assessment, engineering, administration, education, etc.

Individual watershed management organizations may lobby the legislature one by one to gain taxing authority. However, a more streamlined approach would be to revise MN Statute 275.066 to include “watershed management organizations formed pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103B.211.”

This action would help to diversify and improve potential funding sources for WMOs, particularly in this time of funding uncertainty. Not all joint powers WMOs may want utilize tax levies – that decision would be made at the local level. But for those entities who do wish for an alternate way to raise funds, the result is likely to be accelerated implementation of projects and programs that improve water resources.

A high priority goal of the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (a joint powers WMO) is to improve organization capacity and expand funding options after a comprehensive assessment of options,

benefits, and challenges to different organization structures and funding mechanisms. There is a possibility that the BCWMC would seek taxing authority as a result of the assessment. It would be beneficial to all WMO-served areas to have the option to utilize levy authority for their work.

**Efforts to solve the problem:**

*Document the efforts you have taken to try to solve the issue. For example: have you spoken to state agency staff, legislators, county commissioners, etc.? If so, what was their response?*

No actions have been taken on this issue to date.

**Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?**

*Describe potential solutions for the problem. Provide references to statutes or rules if applicable.*

A change to the statute would require legislative action. BCWMC advocates for a change to the Minnesota Statute 275.066 to explicitly include joint powers watershed management organizations formed pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103B.211 in the list special taxing districts.

**Anticipated support or opposition:**

*Who would be willing to partner with your watershed or Minnesota Watersheds on the issue? Who may be opposed to our efforts? (Ex. other local units of government, special interest groups, political parties, etc.)?*

Municipal members of joint powers WMOs and environmental advocacy groups may be supportive of this effort. Conversely, some municipal members of joint powers WMOs may be opposed to more robust watershed management in their jurisdiction. Tax payers or taxpayer advocacy groups may also be opposed.

**This issue: (check all that apply)**

☐ Applies only to our district  
☒ Applies only to 1 or 2 regions  
☐ Applies to the entire state

☒ Requires legislative action  
☐ Requires state agency advocacy  
☐ Impacts Minnesota Watersheds bylaws or MOPP  
(MOPP = Manual of Policies and Procedures)

**MINNESOTA WATERSHEDS RESOLUTION XX**  
**Resolution Seeking Revision to MN Statute 275.066 Include Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations**

**WHEREAS**, MN Statute 275.066 Special Taxing Districts includes “watershed districts under chapter 103D” but does not include joint powers watershed management organizations (WMOs) formed under chapter 103B.211; and

**WHEREAS**, joint powers watershed management organizations without taxing authority have limited budgets and therefore limited capacity to hire staff and implement programs that offer significant improvements to water resources and communities; and

**WHEREAS**, there is precedent for a joint powers watershed management organization to gain taxing authority as a special taxing district under MN Statute 275.066; and

**WHEREAS**, individual watershed management organizations may lobby the legislature one by one to gain taxing authority but a more streamlined approach would be to revise MN Statute 275.066 to include watershed management organizations; and

**WHEREAS**, revising the statute would help to diversify and improve potential funding sources for WMOs, and result in accelerated implementation of projects and programs that improve water resources.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Minnesota Watersheds seeks a revision to Minnesota Statute 275.066 to explicitly include joint powers watershed management organizations formed pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103B.211 in the list special taxing districts.