



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, October 10, 2007

CONTACT: Margaret Hart, Communications Coordinator, 651-201-6131
Jon Fure, BWSR Communications Director, 651-296-0884

Clean Water Legacy Builds Technical Capacity for Clean-Up Efforts

ST. PAUL, Minn. - Efforts to restore impaired waters throughout the state are receiving a boost from Minnesota's Clean Water Legacy Act. A series of conservation technical training events resumes this November, through an initiative launched earlier this year by the University of Minnesota Water Resources Center and UMN Extension, in partnership with state and federal agencies and other involved organizations. The initiative aims to expand the pool of private, nonprofit and public sector professionals available to help landowners install conservation measures on privately owned lands, with initial emphasis on working lands management practices to restore impaired waters.

Information on classes offered through the initiative this November and beyond is available online at <http://tsp.umn.edu>.

The technical training initiative is part of a state water quality restoration strategy to supplement federal conservation efforts and address technical assistance backlogs that delay conservation projects and impact future federal allocations. Funding for the initiative comes from state Clean Water Legacy appropriations to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

MDA Commissioner Gene Hugoson said Minnesota is one of the top three or four states in implementing conservation measures on farmlands. Regarding the technical training initiative, he said "we look forward to helping crop consultants and conservation technicians in turn help their clients do more, especially projects related to water quality."

BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke said "technical assistance is a key component of conservation practice implementation, and training is key to building and maintaining technical assistance expertise."

Federal regulations require reductions in the amount of sediment, nutrients, bacteria and other pollutants detected in many Minnesota rivers, streams and lakes. The federal farm bill offers financial and technical assistance to farmers and other landowners who install conservation practices that reduce pollutants. Nationwide, however, the demand for assistance outstrips the available funds.

Minnesota's needs are especially high because it has more surface water than any of the other 48 contiguous states. The impaired waters program developed by the state to meet federally required pollutant reductions is now in full swing, with the state's Clean Water Legacy Act providing \$78.9 million so far to ratchet up the process of assessing impairments, analyzing pollutant loads, and implementing solutions – including agricultural best management practices.

The technical training initiative will coordinate and fill gaps in existing training for technical assistance professionals. It will also help those in the private sector access emerging business opportunities related to impaired waters restoration. Private sector technical service providers include mainly crop consultants, agricultural cooperatives and agricultural engineering firms. Public sector providers include staff from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), Watershed Districts and other agencies that help implement conservation projects. Some nonprofit organizations also have technical service providers on their staff.

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This release is available on the MDA website at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us>

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