5.5.1.1

MASWCD Resolution Process

2026 RESOLUTION PACKET

proposed resolutions for action by the membership

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
www.maswcd.org

Things to consider during debate on resolutions

Relevance

- Is the proposed policy relevant to the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization?
- Does the policy address a real need?
- Is the policy consistent with the stated values of the board or program?
- Does it comply with administrative/legal requirements?

Effectiveness

- Will the proposed policy address the problem or need?
- Is this the best approach?
- Are there alternative policies?
- What are the costs/benefits of each alternative?

Capability

- Can the Association and/or members implement the activities suggested by the proposed policy?
- Will additional expertise be needed?

Costs/Resources

- How much will it cost to implement?
- Can funds be found to support it?
- Will the policy require reallocation of funds?
- What are the opportunity costs of this policy?

Ramifications

- What might be the unanticipated consequences of this policy? What might be the consequences of that choice for others? The side effects?
- How would the policy impact staff? Constituents? Funding?
- Is there community support?

Other?

- Supposing you can't have everything, what would you choose?
- Does anyone have a different view?
- What seems to be the key point here?

How would we know if we were successful in implementing it/what does success look like and is that vision of success articulated in the resolution?

INCREASE STATE FUNDING FOR SWCD TECHNICAL SERVICE AREAS **01-26**

WHEREAS, the purpose of SWCD TSAs is to provide specialized technical and engineering assistance for landowners implementing projects which improve water quality through the installation of Best Management Practices; and

WHEREAS, Non-Point Engineering Assistance Program (NPEA) was established in 1994 to provide state funding to deliver local engineering assistance through Joint Powers Boards of Minnesota's SWCDs; and

WHEREAS, there are eight SWCD TSA service areas covering the entire state of Minnesota, assisting SWCDs with conservation project needs and enhancing local technical capacity; and

WHEREAS, In Fiscal Year 2014 BWSR used Clean Water Funds through Shared Services Grants to support SWCD TSAs need for increased capacity to maintain and increase qualified SWCD TSA technical staff; and

WHEREAS, BWSR Non-Point Engineering Grants and BWSR Enhanced Shared Services Grants have increased 0.00% From FY2016 to FY2026, while inflationary costs have increased by 35.52% cumulatively over that same time period; and

WHEREAS, roughly 40% of SWCD TSAs budgets are currently being supplemented by short-term competitive local, state and federal grants.

WHEREAS, SWCD TSA Areas 1, 5, 7, and 8 had workload assessments completed over the past 5 years that document the need to double the technical staff of our workforce to accomplish BWSR-approved watershed management plan goals; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the MASWCD works with BWSR leadership to increase the annual funding for SWCD TSAs for Non-Point Engineering Assistance and Enhanced Shared Services Grants.

WORKLOAD IMPACT STATEMENT. Medium

Submitted by: Becker SWCD
Stearns CD
South St. Louis SWCD
Dakota SWCD
Cottonwood SWCD
Blue Earth SWCD
Goodhue SWCD
Crow Wing SWCD

Area Association: NW Area 1, June 16, 2026
WC Area 2, June 17, 2026
NE Area 3, June 5, 2026
Metro Area 4, June 4, 2026
SW Area 5, June 18, 2026
SC Area 6, June 25, 2026
SE Area 7, June 9, 2026
NC Area 8, June 26, 2026

R**eviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors**
Date: September 15, 2026

MASWCD Annual Convention
Date:
Action:

For further information contact one or more of the following TSA Host Managers:
Bryan Malone, Becker SWCD bryan.malone@co.becker.mn.us, John Maile, Stearns CD, John.Maile@mn.nacdnet.net, R.C. Boheim, South St. Louis SWCD rc.boheim@southstlouisswcd.org, Ashley Gallagher, Dakota SWCD ashley.gallagher@co.dakota.mn.us, Kay Gross, Cottonwood SWCD Kay.Gross@co.cottonwood.mn.us, Jared Bach, Blue Earth SWCD jerad.bach@blueearthswcd.org, Beau Kennedy, Goodhue SWCD bkennedy@goodhueswcd.org, Melissa Barrick, Crow Wing SWCD melissa@cwswcd.org

SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED STATEWIDE FUNDING FOR SOIL HEALTH TECHNICIANS IN MINNESOTA 02-26

WHEREAS, soil health is foundational to the long-term productivity, resilience, and profitability of Minnesota's agricultural systems; and

WHEREAS, improving soil health through practices such as cover crops, reduced tillage, diversified rotations, and managed grazing enhances water quality, reduces nutrient loss, improves water infiltration, and builds soil organic matter; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota continues to face significant water quality challenges, including nitrate contamination and sediment and phosphorus loading in surface waters; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, Minnesota made a strategic investment in a statewide Soil Health Technician effort to increase technical assistance capacity and support farmer adoption of soil health practices; and

WHEREAS, Soil Health Technicians are now becoming established in their roles and have only recently begun to build relationships and trust with farmers and landowners; and

WHEREAS, demand for soil health information and assistance has grown substantially, with farmers and landowners regularly seeking guidance from Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs); and

WHEREAS, conversations around soil health in SWCD boardrooms have become common and represent a significant cultural shift compared to previous years; and

WHEREAS, existing conservation staff across SWCDs, watershed districts, and partner agencies remain at or near capacity, limiting their ability to meet increasing demand without dedicated soil health staff; and

WHEREAS, continued investment in Soil Health Technicians will accelerate adoption of conservation practices, improve program effectiveness, and increase the return on public conservation investments; and

WHEREAS, sustained funding for these positions will be critical for Minnesota to achieve its Nutrient Reduction Strategy goals and improve long-term water quality outcomes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports the continuation and expansion of state funding for Soil Health Technician positions across Minnesota; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this funding should:

- Maintain and strengthen the existing statewide Soil Health Technician network established in 2024;
- Provide dedicated staff within local SWCDs;
- Prioritize farmer-centered, field-level technical assistance and relationship-building;
- Support implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management of soil health systems; and
- Ensure equitable access to soil health expertise across all regions of Minnesota;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD urges the Minnesota Legislature and relevant state agencies to provide ongoing, stable funding to sustain these positions as a cost-effective strategy to improve water quality, strengthen agricultural resilience, and support farmers and landowners.

Financial Impact Statement: $7500

Submitted by: Rice and Steele SWCDs

Area Association: SE Area 7

Date adopted: June 9, 2026

Reviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors

Date: September 15, 2026

MASWCD Annual Convention

Date:

Action:

For more information, contact: Steven Pahs, District Manager, Phone: 507-332-5408, email: steven.pahs@riceswcd.org

STOP SWCD INSPECTIONS OF GOVERNMENT OWNED RIM EASEMENTS **03-26**

WHEREAS, the Reinvest in Minnesota - Reserve (RIM – MN Statute 103F.519) program has resulted in over 7,900 easements covering more than 350,000 acres in Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, one hundred and eighteen (118) RIM easements totaling 6,833 acres have been sold or donated to the State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) or the United States Department of Interior—U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); and

WHEREAS, MNDNR and USFWS currently employ biologists and wildlife habitat professionals for the purpose of actively managing and maintaining habitat for the benefit of wildlife, natural resources, and the public; and

WHEREAS, Soil and Water Conservation District's inspect and monitor State (MNDNR) and federal (USFWS) owned RIM conservation easement lands every three (3) years (MN Statute 103F.528); and

WHEREAS, with increasing workload and limited resources, we need to focus on lands in private ownership, reducing the wasteful spending of state and local tax dollars and eliminating government inefficiencies should be a top priority of all state agencies.

THEREFORE, IT BE RESOLVED, MASWCD encourage BWSR to modify policy and guidance so SWCDs no longer need to complete inspections, monitoring, and management activities on state and federal owned RIM conservation easements.

WORKLOAD IMPACT STATEMENT. Low.

Submitted by: Kandiyohi SWCD

Area Association: WC Area 2
Date adopted: June 17, 2026

Reviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors
Date: September 15, 2026

MASWCD Annual Convention
Date:
Action:

For more information, contact:
Brandon Smith, Kandiyohi SWCD Chairperson, smittyfarm2@gmail.com, 320-905-2987
Margaret Johnson, Kandiyohi SWCD Manager, Margaret.johnson@kandiyohiswcd.org, 320-403-4350

ALIGNING PREVAILING WAGE TO MARKET REALITIES **04-26**

WHEREAS, conservation practices are now classified by the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) under their Highway and Heavy Construction category for Prevailing Wage; and

WHEREAS, the intent of Minnesota Prevailing Wage Act (Statutes 177.41–177.44) by mandating projects using state funds pay workers certified prevailing wages is to 1) protect workers from exploitation, 2) ensure that state-funded projects are not staffed by low-skill workers, and 3) ensure local contractors are not underbid by out-of-area contractors who pay low wages; and

WHEREAS, the successful application of this law hinges upon the DLI annually certifying prevailing wages that represent local market realities; and

WHEREAS, the DLI's rate setting practices result in inflated wages and extreme internal inconsistencies in certified rates that don't reflect market realities; and

WHEREAS, the DLI currently offers no transparent and publicly accessible manual detailing the rate setting procedures; and

WHEREAS, the DLI forgoes utilizing robust data sets held by the State when certifying rates (e.g. MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program, and the MN Management and Budget); and

WHEREAS, the current project thresholds of $2,500 for a single trade and $25,000 for multiple trades have remained unchanged since 1973, causing scope creep due to unanswered inflation.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the MASWCD advocate for legislative changes to Minnesota Statute 177.41-177.44, and administrative changes at the DLI to bring transparency to the process and to ensure wage certifications and project thresholds reflect market realities.

WORKLOAD IMPACT STATEMENT. High – work with DLI and the Legislature to resolve complex issues.

Submitted by: Anoka SWCD
Becker SWCD
Kandiyohi SWCD

Area Association: Metro Area 4, June 4, 2026
NW Area 1, June 16, 2026
WC Area 2, June 17, 2026

Reviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors
Date: September 15, 2026

MASWCD Annual Convention
Date:
Action:

For further information, contact: Chris Lord, District Manager, Anoka Conservation District, 763-434-2030 x130, Chris.Lord@AnokaSWCD.org, Margaret Johnson, Kandiyohi SWCD Manager, margaret.johnson@kandiyohiswcd.org, 320-403-4350, Bryan Malone, District Administrator, Becker SWCD 218-846-7360, bryan.malone@co.becker.mn.us

Background:

Problems with Current System

"Incoherence" Test: inflated and illogical certified rates (Metro Region shown below).

- Common Laborer: $70.00/hr. w/ fringe
- Skilled Laborer: $70.00/hr. w/ fringe
- Blaster (explosives handler): $29.00/hr. w/ fringe
- Helicopter Pilot: $77.00/hr. w/ fringe

Systemic Structural Issues: some statutorily mandated, defy market realities:

- Outdated Thresholds: Project size triggers ($2,500/$25,000 for single/multi trades) were set in 1973. Adjusted for inflation, these should be $18,500/$185,000.
- Data Scarcity: Wages are certified despite lack of data. Statistically, 30 data points are needed for each of 146 job classes in 10 regions (43,800). In 2025, 20,511 were recorded.
    - 1 out of 146 job classes met the 30-point threshold (Common Laborer).
    - 58% of certified wages were based on 0 data points.
    - 75% of certified wages had 5 or fewer data points.
- Survey Bias and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Self-selected respondents can cherry-pick employees and projects to report. Many reported wages were inflated to meet mandates.
- Flawed Math: The DLI uses the Mode (most frequently reported rate) rather than a mean or median; ties default to the highest rate.
- "Vacation Inflation": DLI counts paid leave as a fringe benefit even though it is already part of the basic hourly rate, artificially inflating rates.

Solutions to the Problems:

1. **Update and Index Project Thresholds**: Raise the $2,500/$25,000 thresholds and index them for inflation rounding to the nearest $1,000/$10,000 to restore the intended scale.
2. **Break the Survey Loop**: Restrict data to actual open-market wages not already adjusted by government mandates.
3. **The "30/3" Data Standard**: Prohibit certification of any rate unless based on at least 30 verified data points from at least three separate firms.
4. **The "Blank" Rate Rule**: If the state can't meet the "30/3" data standard, the rate shall be left blank, allowing local markets to determine fair wage.
5. **Modernize the Math**: Replace the “mode” calculation with a weighted average or median to provide a statistically valid reflection of what “prevails” in the broader community.
6. **Stop "Vacation Inflation"**: Paid leave is a reallocation of time, not an extra cost. Exclude paid leave as an hourly fringe benefit credit.
7. **Transition to Wage Ranges**: Certify a wage range (e.g. 25th-75th percentile) rather than a single point to acknowledge experience and seniority.
8. **Firm-Wide Crew Averages**: Allow contractors to comply by meeting the mandated average pay for their crew on a project, respecting merit-based pay.
9. **Cross-Agency Validation**: Cross-check DLI mandates against OEWS, DEED, and MMB market data. Rates exceeding the 75th percentile of the indexed data averages must be justified in writing. Or, exclude fringe from certifications, enabling DLI to rely directly on existing robust State data sets.
10. **Mandatory Transparency**: Require the DLI to publish a comprehensive Technical Manual of Procedures detailing all rating and certification protocols.

UPDATED PUBLIC SHORELINE GUIDANCE AND EDUCATION **05-26**

WHEREAS, landowners, contractors, consultants, local officials, and local government staff rely on public-facing information from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources when evaluating shoreline stabilization, restoration, and alteration options; and

WHEREAS, outdated shoreline alteration guidance can create confusion and may encourage practices that are not fully aligned with current natural shoreline science, restoration standards, state statute, or the protection of public waters; and

WHEREAS, the continued public availability of older shoreline riprap guidance may contribute to misunderstanding about when riprap is appropriate, what alternatives should be considered, and how natural shoreline functions should be protected; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota's public education materials should clearly explain the benefits of natural shorelines, including water quality protection, fish and wildlife habitat, slope stability, wave energy dissipation, climate resilience, and long-term property protection; and

WHEREAS, effective public education should help landowners understand the difference between natural shoreline restoration, bioengineered stabilization, riprap, retaining walls, beach creation, vegetation removal, grading, and other shoreline alterations; and

WHEREAS, updated public education materials should support consistent messaging by DNR, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, lake associations, contractors, consultants, and other partners.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources updating its public-facing shoreline management webpages, guidance documents, permit materials, and educational resources to reflect current natural shoreline science, state statute, and best available restoration practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports updating DNR Shoreline guidance and similar materials that more clearly prioritizes avoidance, minimization, natural shoreline restoration, bioengineering, vegetation protection, and long-term shoreline function; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that updated public education materials should clearly identify when permits or notifications are required, what activities may violate public waters rules, and what alternatives are available; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD encourages coordinated public education among DNR, BWSR, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, lake associations, and other partners to promote consistent shoreline management information statewide.

Fiscal Impact Statement: Low to Medium
Submitted by: Washington Conservation District
Stearns Conservation District

Area Association: Metro Area 4, WC Area 2
Date adopted: June 4, 2026, June 17, 2026

Reviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors
Date: September 15, 2026

MASWCD Annual Convention
Date:
Action:

For further information contact: Jay Riggs, WCD Manager, 651-796-2229, John Maile, Stearns Conservation District John.Maile@mn.nacdnet.net

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFO

NOTE: These resolutions were developed jointly by WCD and Carnelian Marine St Croix Watershed District and will be brought to the MN Watersheds board as well as MASWCD.

Landowners, contractors, consultants, local officials, and local government staff rely on public-facing information from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources when evaluating shoreline stabilization, restoration, and alteration options.

The Natural Shoreline Subcommittee identified several recurring issues with DNR guidance for riprap, sand blanket, and ice-heave "no permit required" documents. Requirements are often unmet, misunderstood or ignored; "no permit required" shoreline alterations are difficult to track and verify; criteria for determining a demonstrated need for riprap are ambiguous or inconsistently applied; The outdated or incomplete shoreline alteration guidance documents can create confusion and may encourage practices that are not aligned with current natural shoreline science, restoration standards, state statute, or the protection of public waters.

Older riprap guidance and similar materials contribute to misunderstanding about when riprap is appropriate, what alternatives should be considered, and how natural shoreline functions should be protected. Public education materials should clearly identify the limited circumstances in which riprap, sand blankets, and ice-ridge repair are appropriate, explain the benefits of natural shorelines, including water quality protection, fish and wildlife habitat, slope stability, wave energy dissipation, climate resilience, and long-term property protection.

Efforts to Solve the Problem
The Natural Shoreline Partnership developed Minnesota's Vanishing Natural Shorelines, which documented the scale of natural shoreline loss and the connection between shoreline alteration and degraded lake quality. The Shoreline Protection Subcommittee then identified the need to update public-facing shoreline materials, improve consistency in messaging, and better explain the difference between natural shoreline restoration, bioengineered stabilization, riprap, retaining walls, beach creation, vegetation removal, grading, and other shoreline alterations.
Local governments, SWCDs, watershed districts, lake associations, and state agencies already provide public education, but messaging is not always consistent and may be undermined by older or outdated state guidance still available to the public.

Is Legislative Action the Best Means of Addressing the Matter? If Yes, What Is the Purpose or Intent?
Legislative action is not necessarily required if DNR can update all public-facing guidance, webpages, fact sheets, and permit materials administratively.
However, legislative action may be appropriate if agency direction or funding is needed to ensure outdated materials are replaced and updated guidance is developed in coordination with local governments, SWCDs, watershed districts, BWSR, MPCA, lake associations, and other partners.
The purpose or intent would be to ensure that Minnesota's public shoreline guidance reflects current natural shoreline science, state statute, best available restoration practices, and clear permitting expectations.
If legislation is not pursued, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate directly with DNR and partner agencies to replace outdated shoreline alteration guidance, including older "Shoreline Alterations: Riprap" materials, and to coordinate statewide public education on natural shoreline protection and restoration.

Anticipated Support or Opposition
Support is anticipated from watershed districts, SWCDs, lake associations, local governments, habitat advocates, and organizations working to improve water quality and shoreline stewardship.
Opposition or concern may come from various divisions or regional offices within the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources that have relied on existing shoreline alteration guidance, fact sheets, and implementation practices for decades. Concerns may include staff capacity to update guidance, uncertainty about changing long-standing interpretations, the need for internal consistency across DNR programs and regions, concern that revised materials could increase review workload, and reluctance to create expectations that existing past practices were inadequate or inconsistent.

SUPPORTING STATEWIDE TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION FOR SHORELINE MANAGEMENT 06-26

WHEREAS, shoreline management decisions often require technical evaluation of erosion causes, shoreline condition, vegetation, soils, slopes, wave energy, ice action, habitat impacts, water quality impacts, and the suitability of proposed stabilization or restoration methods; and

WHEREAS, inconsistent understanding and application of shoreline standards can result in inconsistent permitting decisions, landowner confusion, unnecessary hard armoring, and continued loss of natural shoreline functions; and

WHEREAS, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, SWCDs, counties, cities, townships, and DNR staff would benefit from shared training standards, consistent terminology, and common evaluation methods; and

WHEREAS, certification-based training would help ensure that shoreline evaluations consider the cause and degree of shoreline change, the impacts of proposed alterations, and the availability of natural or bioengineering alternatives before structural hard armoring is authorized.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports development of a statewide shoreline management training and certification program for state and local staff; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the training program should include evaluation of shoreline condition, erosion drivers, natural shoreline design, bioengineering methods, public waters permitting requirements, restoration standards, vegetation protection, habitat impacts, enforcement considerations, and long-term maintenance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports development of a consistent shoreline evaluation framework that can be used by DNR staff, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, and other local partners.

WORKLOAD IMPACT STATEMENT. Medium

Submitted by: Stearns Conservation District
Washington Conservation District

Area Association: WC Area 2, Metro Area 4
Date Adopted: June 17, 2026, June 4, 2026

Reviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors
Date:

MASWCD Annual Convention
Date:
Action:

For Further Information: John Maile, Stearns Conservation District John.Maile@mn.nacdnet.net, Jay Riggs, WCD Manager, 651-796-2229

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFO

Shoreline management decisions often require technical evaluation of erosion causes, shoreline condition, vegetation, soils, slopes, wave energy, ice action, habitat impacts, water quality impacts, and the suitability of proposed stabilization or restoration methods. Inconsistent understanding and application of shoreline standards can result in inconsistent permitting decisions, landowner confusion, unnecessary hard armoring, and continued loss of natural shoreline functions.

Efforts to Solve the Problem

The Natural Shoreline Partnership's Shoreline Protection Subcommittee reviewed DNR Public Waters Rules, riprap, sand blankets, ice heaves, general permits, enforcement procedures, and local shoreline assessment work. The Subcommittee identified the need for shared training standards, consistent terminology, common evaluation methods, and improved understanding of natural shoreline restoration and bioengineering alternatives.

Local staff, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, and DNR staff currently work on shoreline issues, but training and technical capacity vary significantly across the state. This creates inconsistent outcomes for landowners and natural resource protection.

Is Legislative Action the Best Means of Addressing the Matter? If Yes, What Is the Purpose or Intent?
Legislative action may be needed if a formal statewide certification program requires statutory authority, dedicated funding, or direction to state agencies.

The purpose of legislative action would be to direct or fund the development of a statewide shoreline management training and certification program. The program should include shoreline condition evaluation, erosion drivers, natural shoreline design, bioengineering methods, public waters permitting requirements, restoration standards, vegetation protection, habitat impacts, enforcement considerations, and long-term maintenance.

If legislation is not required, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate for DNR, BWSR, MPCA, SWCDs, watershed districts, and other partners to develop and implement the training program administratively.

Anticipated Support or Opposition

Support is anticipated from watershed districts, SWCDs, local governments, state agency staff, lake associations, and professional organizations seeking more consistent shoreline evaluation and permitting.
Opposition or concern may come from those concerned about additional certification requirements, cost, or administrative burden. These concerns can be addressed by designing the program to improve consistency, provide practical field-based training, and support better landowner service rather than simply adding new requirements.

DEDICATED STATE FUNDING FOR LOCAL SHORELINE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE **07-26**

WHEREAS, Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and public waters provide substantial public benefits, including water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, flood resilience, recreation, and property value protection; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota's natural shorelines continue to be lost or degraded through cumulative shoreline alterations, vegetation removal, hard armoring, grading, and other activities that reduce habitat and water quality benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is working to improve shoreline evaluation, guidance, and implementation of public waters restoration and shoreline management requirements; and

WHEREAS, improved shoreline evaluation and implementation will likely create additional workload for local governments, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, counties, and other local partners; and

WHEREAS, local governments are often the first point of contact for landowners seeking assistance with shoreline stabilization, restoration, permitting, and natural shoreline alternatives; and

WHEREAS, many SWCDs and watershed districts do not currently have adequate dedicated funding or staff capacity to provide consistent technical assistance, site evaluations, landowner support, and project follow-through for shoreline management; and

WHEREAS, successful shoreline protection and restoration depends on timely, practical, and locally available technical assistance that helps landowners understand and implement natural shoreline practices before hard-armoring or other damaging alterations occur;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports the creation of dedicated state funding to assist Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, and other local government partners with shoreline management technical assistance, project review, landowner support, and implementation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this funding should support local staff time, technical evaluations, landowner site visits, project design assistance, permit coordination, monitoring, and follow-up needed to advance natural shoreline protection and restoration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports state funding that recognizes shoreline management as a shared state-local responsibility requiring adequate and ongoing local capacity and will work with the Clean Water Council and State agencies to fund this work.

Fiscal Impact Statement: Low to Medium

Submitted by: Washington Conservation District

Area Association: Metro Area 4
Date adopted: June 4, 2026

Reviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors
Date:

MASWCD Annual Convention
Date:
Action:

For further information contact: Jay Riggs, WCD Manager, 651-796-2229

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFO

NOTE: These resolutions were developed jointly by WCD and Carnelian Marine St Croix Watershed District and will be brought to the MN Watersheds board as well as MASWCD.

Minnesota's natural shorelines continue to be lost or degraded through cumulative shoreline alterations, vegetation removal, hard armoring, grading, sand blankets, and other activities that reduce water quality, habitat, and lake resilience. Local governments, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, counties, cities, and townships, are often the first point of contact for landowners seeking help with shoreline stabilization, restoration, permitting, and natural shoreline alternatives.

As the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and other partners improve shoreline evaluation, guidance, and implementation of public waters restoration and shoreline management requirements, additional workload will likely fall on local partners. Many SWCDs and watershed districts do not currently have dedicated funding or staff capacity to provide consistent technical assistance, site visits, project review, landowner support, monitoring, and follow-through for shoreline management. Successful shoreline protection depends on timely, locally available assistance that helps landowners understand and implement natural shoreline practices before hard armoring or other damaging alterations occur.

Efforts to Solve the Problem

The statewide Natural Shoreline Partnership has documented the continuing loss of natural shoreline and the need for stronger coordination, education, technical assistance, incentives, and restoration support. A Shoreline Protection Subcommittee later examined shoreline alteration management in more detail and identified a need to rebuild local and state technical capacity for natural shoreline restoration, bioengineering, landowner assistance, and coordinated review.

Local governments, SWCDs, watershed districts, and lake associations already provide outreach and technical support where capacity exists. However, this assistance is inconsistent statewide because it often depends on local funding, grants, or limited staff availability.

Is Legislative Action the Best Means of Addressing the Matter? If Yes, What Is the Purpose or Intent? Yes. Legislative action is likely needed to establish dedicated and ongoing state funding for local shoreline management assistance. The purpose of legislative action would be to create a stable state funding source that supports SWCDs, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, and other local partners in providing shoreline technical assistance, landowner site visits, project design support, permit coordination, monitoring, and implementation assistance. If legislative action is not immediately pursued, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate with DNR, BWSR, MPCA, and legislative committees to recognize shoreline management as a shared state-local responsibility and to include shoreline technical assistance in future state funding programs.

Anticipated Support or Opposition

Support is anticipated from watershed districts, watershed management organizations, SWCDs, lake associations, local governments, fisheries and habitat advocates, and organizations working to protect water quality and aquatic life. Opposition or concern may come from parties concerned about new state spending or increased local government involvement in shoreline projects. These concerns can be addressed by emphasizing that the funding is intended to provide practical landowner assistance, improve consistency, reduce confusion, and support voluntary natural shoreline restoration before enforcement or regulatory conflicts occur.

SUPPORTING RULE AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS FOR PUBLIC WATERS SHORELINE MANAGEMENT 08-26

WHEREAS, Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 establishes requirements for restoration and alteration of public waters, including activities that affect shorelines, beds, banks, and public water resources; and

WHEREAS, consistent implementation of Minnesota's public waters rules is necessary to protect natural shorelines, water quality, aquatic habitat, and the public interest in lakes, rivers, and streams; and

WHEREAS, inconsistent application of public waters rules can result in landowner confusion, uneven regulatory outcomes, continued shoreline degradation, and reduced confidence in state and local shoreline management programs; and

WHEREAS, shoreline alteration decisions should include a clear evaluation of the cause, severity, and extent of shoreline change, the proposed alteration, the availability of less-impactful alternatives, and the cumulative impact to public waters; and

WHEREAS, contractors who repeatedly conduct shoreline alterations without required notice, permits, or approvals can create significant damage to public waters and place landowners and local governments in difficult compliance situations; and

WHEREAS, clearer rules, procedures, and enforcement expectations would improve consistency, fairness, and environmental outcomes for landowners, contractors, local governments, and agencies.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports rule, guidance, and process improvements by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to ensure consistent implementation of Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 and related public waters shoreline alteration requirements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports development and implementation of a consistent shoreline evaluation process that considers the existing shoreline condition, the cause and degree of shoreline change, the proposed alteration, natural shoreline alternatives, and the public water impacts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports creation of a technical evaluation panel or similar interagency process for complex or potentially impactful shoreline alteration proposals, similar in concept to review processes used under the Wetland Conservation Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports improved procedures to ensure consistent DNR processes and determinations across regions and area offices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that MASWCD supports rule and process changes that make shoreline management more understandable, consistent, timely, and effective for landowners, contractors, local governments, and state agencies while better protecting Minnesota's natural shorelines.

Fiscal Impact Statement: Low to Medium

Submitted by: Washington Conservation District

Area Association: Metro Area 4
Date adopted: June 4, 2026

Reviewed by MASWCD Board of Directors
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For further information contact: Jay Riggs, WCD Manager, 651-796-2229

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFO

NOTE: These resolutions were developed jointly by WCD and Carnelian Marine St Croix Watershed District and will be brought to the MN Watersheds board as well as MASWCD.

Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 establishes requirements for restoration and alteration of public waters, including activities that affect shorelines, beds, banks, and public water resources. Consistent implementation of Minnesota's public waters rules is necessary to protect natural shorelines, water quality, aquatic habitat, and the public interest in lakes, rivers, and streams. Watershed districts and other local government partners have identified discrepancies and inconsistencies in the implementation of shoreline alteration rules, guidance, permitting, notification, and enforcement. These inconsistencies can result in landowner confusion, uneven regulatory outcomes, continued shoreline degradation, and reduced confidence in state and local shoreline management programs.

Shoreline alteration decisions should include a clear evaluation of existing shoreline condition, the cause and degree of shoreline change, the proposed alteration, less-impactful alternatives, and cumulative impacts to public waters. Contractors who repeatedly conduct shoreline alterations without required notice, permits, or approvals can create significant damage to public waters and place landowners and local governments in difficult compliance situations.

Efforts to Solve the Problem
The Natural Shoreline Partnership's Shoreline Protection Subcommittee reviewed challenges with existing state and local shoreline rules, DNR Public Waters Restoration Rules, shoreline assessments, sand blankets, ice heaves, general permits, and DNR enforcement procedures. The Subcommittee concluded that DNR Public Waters Rules are not necessarily the primary barrier to natural shoreline protection. Rather, the more significant problems are how shoreline alteration rules are expressed to the public, how those rules are administered, and how governments coordinate with each other on projects that span jurisdictional boundaries.
The Subcommittee developed recommendations to update DNR guidance, improve coordination among DNR and local governments, develop administrative procedures for "no permit required" shoreline work, create tools to determine demonstrated erosion need, strengthen training, clarify grading and filling requirements, encourage contractor training or certification, review General Permit barriers, and rebuild technical capacity for natural shoreline restoration and bioengineered shoreline design.

Is Legislative Action the Best Means of Addressing the Matter? If Yes, What Is the Purpose or Intent?
Legislative action may be needed if rule changes, agency direction, funding, or statutory clarification are necessary to ensure consistent statewide implementation of public waters shoreline alteration requirements.
The purpose or intent of legislative action would be to support clearer, more consistent, and more coordinated implementation of Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 and related public waters shoreline alteration requirements. This may include direction or support for DNR to:

1. Develop a consistent shoreline evaluation process;
2. Clarify how demonstrated erosion need is evaluated before riprap or other hard armoring is authorized;
3. Establish administrative procedures for "no permit required" shoreline work;
4. Improve coordination between DNR, local governments, SWCDs, and watershed districts;
5. Create a technical evaluation panel or similar interagency review process for complex or sensitive shoreline alteration proposals;
6. Ensure consistent DNR processes and determinations across regions and area offices;
7. Strengthen procedures for recurring contractor violations involving shoreline modifications completed without required notification, permits, or approvals; and
8. Review General Permit processes that may discourage natural or bioengineered shoreline alternatives.

If legislative action is not immediately pursued, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate directly with DNR, MPCA, BWSR, counties, SWCDs, watershed districts, and other partners to implement these process improvements administratively.

Anticipated Support or Opposition
Support is anticipated from watershed districts, watershed management organizations, SWCDs, local governments, lake associations, fisheries and habitat advocates, and organizations working to protect water quality, aquatic life, and public waters. Opposition or concern may come from shoreline contractors, some riparian landowners, and parties concerned about additional process requirements, delays, or limits on shoreline hardening. These concerns can be addressed through clear guidance, timely review procedures, contractor training, practical landowner assistance, and recognition that the resolution seeks consistency, coordination, and protection of public waters rather than unnecessary regulation.