

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

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**Authors:** Hansen

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**Analyst:** Janelle Taylor

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### Overview

**This bill makes a number of changes to the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The changes include modifications to the purpose and eligibility requirements of the program and allowing BWSR greater flexibility with new and existing agreements. The bill also removes the existing payment rate structure and rules for the program and requires BWSR to establish new rates.**

**The RIM Reserve program is a program designed to protect and improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat by protecting private lands through conservation easements.**

### Section

- 1**      **Definitions.** Amends § 84.66, subd. 2. Technical.
- 2**      **Purpose and policy.** Amends § 103F.505. Makes changes to the purpose of the RIM Reserve program including: modifying the purpose to include the restoration of marginal agricultural land, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, and the enhancement of soil and water quality; and adding to the purpose, minimizing damage to flood-prone areas, carbon sequestration, and supporting native plant habitats. Removes reference to the reestablishment of perennial vegetation.
- 3**      **Drained wetland.** Amends § 103F.511, subd. 5. Modifies the definition of “drained wetland” to include alterations made after December 23, 1985, and removes the requirement that they meet the commissioner’s definition of a legal alteration.
- 4**      **Reinvest in Minnesota reserve program.** Amends § 103F.511, subd. 8a. Defines the “Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve program” as the program under section 103F.515 to be consistent with current Minnesota Rules.

- 5        **Riparian land.** Amends § 103F.515, subd. 1. Modifies the definition of “riparian land” by removing the requirement that it be identified in a comprehensive local water plan.
- 6        **Establishment of program.** Amends § 103F.515, subd. 1. Makes technical corrections to incorporate the statutory name change and modified purpose of the program.
- 7        **Eligible land.** Amends § 103F.515, subd. 2. Expands eligibility of lands for the RIM reserve program by adding lands that, with a water quality improvement practice, would be beneficial to resource protection, and lands used for pasture that are marginal (currently only lands on hillsides used for pasture are eligible). Exempts environmentally sensitive areas and lands used for pasture from the requirement that the lands be in crop production for at least two of the last five years. Removes the priority for wetlands with a cropping history during the period from 1976 to 1985.
- 8        **Nature of property rights acquired.** Amends § 103F.515, subd. 4. Prohibits a conservation easement under the program from allowing livestock grazing unless approved by BWSR (currently BWSR must consult with the commissioner of natural resources before approval and there are exceptions for severe droughts or local emergencies). Permits conservation easements to allow spraying chemicals or mowing if approved by BWSR.
- 9        **Agreements by landowner.** Amends § 103F.515, subd. 5. Modifies a requirement of landowner agreements to not convert land to agricultural crop production if it supports native vegetation AND has not been used in crop production (currently the land must either support native vegetation OR have not been used in crop production).
- 10       **Payments for conservation easements and establishment of conservation practices.** Amends § 103F.515, subd. 6. Requires BWSR to establish rates for landowner payments for the conservation easements and related conservation practices and removes the current payment structure.
- 11       **Cooperation.** Amends § 103F.521, subd. 1. Adds soil and water conservation districts and watershed districts to the list of entities BWSR shall cooperate and share information with.
- 12       **Supplemental payments on federal and state conservation programs.** Amends § 103F.525. Removes the prohibition on using bond proceeds to supplement payments made under federal land retirement programs.
- 13       **Food plots.** Amends § 103F.526. Allows BWSR to authorize wildlife food plots on lands enrolled in the program.
- 14       **Rulemaking.** Amends § 103F.531. Allows BWSR to adopt “policy” to implement the program and removes the requirement that rules include standards for tree planting.
- 15       **Release and alteration of conservation easements.** Amends § 103F.535, subd. 5. Allows BWSR to alter, release, or terminate any conservation easements (currently only those existing as of April 30, 1992, can be altered, released, or terminated).
- 16       **Revisor’s instruction.** Instructs the Revisor to change “conservation reserve program” to “Reinvest in Minnesota reserve program” in various statutes.
- 17       **Repealer.** Repeals sections 103F.511, subdivision 4 (the definition for “conservation reserve program”); 103F.521, subdivision 2 (a requirement that BWSR and others provide

technical assistance to landowners); and the existing rules for the RIM Reserve program (Minnesota Rules, parts 8400.3000 to 8400.3930).