

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill provides a number of policy changes related to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the local water management entities it oversees, including modifications to tax levy authorities.

Section

- 1 Water quality practices; standardized specifications.** Adds § 103B.101, subd. 16. Requires BWSR to work with state and federal agencies, academic institutions, local government, and other stakeholders to provide recommendations for standardized water quality and soil conservation protection and improvement projects. Allows the board to develop a work group to develop related information, education, and recommendations.
- 2 Evaluation and report.** Amends § 103B.102, subd. 2. Extends the maximum amount of time BWSR has to evaluate a local water management entity's progress in accomplishing its plan to ten years (from five years) and allows the board to determine the frequency based on the budget and operations of the entity.
- 3 Tax levy authority.** Amends § 103B.335. Broadens tax levy authority by allowing a county, municipality, or township to levy for implementation funds for a comprehensive watershed management plan. Also clarifies that counties may levy for the reasonable costs to soil and water conservation districts for administering and implementing programs identified in the plans.

Comprehensive watershed management plans may consist of county water plans, watershed management plans, and/or county groundwater plans, or a new option (created last session) that allows a more comprehensive plan to be approved as a replacement to such plans.

Section

- 4** **Financial assistance.** Amends § 103B.3369, subd. 5. Requires a county that implements a water implementation tax to raise matching funds for base grants awarded by BWSR to levy at a rate that is sufficient to generate a minimum amount (to be determined by BWSR). Authorizes the use of funds raised by metropolitan county conservation fees (a \$5 fee on mortgage and deed recordings/registrations) to be used as matching funds for the base grants and to address high-priority needs in local water management plans or comprehensive watershed management plans.
- 5** **Cost-sharing funds.** Amends § 103C.501, subd. 4. Eliminates cost-share fund allocation requirements that required 70 percent of cost-share funds to be allocated to certain areas and no more than 20 percent to be allocated for technical and administrative assistances. Requires funds for technical assistance to be used to leverage federal or other nonstate funds or address high-priority needs in local water management plans or comprehensive watershed management plans.
- 6** **Authority.** Amends § 103F.405, subd. 1. Allows soil loss ordinances adopted by counties, cities, and towns to use the soil loss tolerance for each soil type developed by BWSR, in addition to those in the United States National Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide which is the only currently approved source. (Soil loss tolerance is the maximum annual rate of soil loss by erosion that will permit crop productivity to be sustained.) Requires soil loss ordinances to be consistent with a comprehensive plan, local water management plan, or watershed management plan.