



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Wetlands Restoration Program Started March 1**

### **Local-State-Federal Partnership Offers Competitive Rates**

St. Paul, MN, March 1, 2011- Landowners looking for competitive payment rates to restore wetlands are encouraged to sign up for the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) program.

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Offices are now accepting applications for funding to restore wetlands that have been drained and have a history of being used for agricultural production. Scoring periods will occur monthly starting at the end of April and will continue until funds are fully obligated.

"Restoring wetlands on privately owned lands provides many public benefits, such as enhancing wildlife habitat, improving water quality and reducing potential flood damage in targeted areas," said Don Baloun, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS.

RIM-WRP is a local-state-federal partnership that combines the state's Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve conservation easement program with the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program. Combining these two programs allows state funds to leverage federal funds that are available through the Federal Farm Bill. Funding for this partnership is through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

"Over the last past few years, Minnesota has been one of the top states in the nation for leveraging federal WRP program dollars, and we want that to continue," said John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director.

The state dollars for this partnership are expected to be provided from the constitutionally dedicated Outdoor Heritage Fund, based on a recommendation of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

Details of the RIM-WRP Partnership:

- To leverage federal funds that are available until the end of the federal fiscal year, the RIM-WRP signup period starts March 1, 2011 and funding decisions will occur monthly until funds are fully obligated.
- Interested landowners should contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff at their local USDA Service Center.
- Eligibility is statewide, but priority is given to areas of Minnesota that have experienced the greatest wetland losses.
- Competitive payment rates have been established for this partnership using township average land values. Contact your local SWCD or NRCS field office to determine your payment rate per acre by township.

The Mission of the Natural resources Conservation Service is to provide USDA technical leadership, working in partnership with local, state, and other federal conservation agencies and organizations, to help people conserve, improve and sustain our natural resources.

BWSR Mission: Improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners.

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