



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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LAKE OF THE WOODS COUNTY PROGRAM RECEIVES 2015 COUNTY CONSERVATION AWARD

(St. Paul, MN)— **Lake of the Woods County's Improved Targeting and Public Value of Wetland Mitigation** as recognized by Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) during AMC's Annual Conference December 7 in St. Cloud. The County Conservation Award recognizes leadership, innovation and excellence by counties in protecting or improving their natural resources.

Lake of the Woods County was selected for the AMC-BWSR County Conservation Award for their contributions toward improving the State wetland mitigation policy. The exceptional efforts of county staff to educate others and raise awareness of the problems associated with the current mitigation process served as the catalyst for major changes to the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act to improve the public value outcomes of wetland mitigation. Thanks in large part to county staff, these new statutes will result in a proactive, targeted wetland mitigation process with decisions based primarily on the public value benefits it will provide. The significance of this accomplishment cannot be overstated. They are undoubtedly the most significant changes to the Wetland Conservation Act since at least 1996, and the benefits will be shared by all Minnesota counties. If it wasn't for the hard work and persistence of the county to raise awareness of this important issue and push for change, the statute changes that occurred in 2015 would almost certainly not have occurred. Those changes are just the beginning of a new way of achieving wetland mitigation in Minnesota to the benefit of all of our counties, citizens, and natural resources.

AMC is a voluntary statewide organization that assists the state's 87 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Minnesota. It is the mission of the Association to assist in the provision of effective county governance for the people of Minnesota. The association works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted. In addition, the Association provides educational programs, training, research and communications for county officials.

BWSR is the state soil and water conservation agency, and it administers programs that prevent sediment and nutrients from entering our lakes, rivers, and streams; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; and protect wetlands. The 20-member board consists of representatives of local and state government agencies and citizens.

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Editors: Photo Attached

Caption: BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke and 2015 AMC President Christopher Shoff, a Freeborn County Commissioner, presented the 2015 County Conservation Award to county commissioners and staff from Lake of the Woods County.