MASWCD Water Management Guiding Principles

The MASWCD Board of Directors adopted MASWCD Water Management Guiding Principles during their February 15, 2012 board of directors meeting. The Association proactively developed a set of guiding principles that provides criteria for MASWCD leadership to apply in evaluation and response to potential proposals coming forward regarding water management, operations and governance.

**Science Based** – MASWCD supports science-based resources for the implementation of water management strategies and conservation practices to benefit water, soil, air, plant and healthy ecosystems. MASWCD supports water quality assessments and water quality statistics that are based on credible water quality data. Credible water quality data shall be defined as scientifically valid chemical, physical, and biological monitoring data, collected under an accepted sampling and analysis plan, including quality control and quality assurance procedures and available historical data. This should include monitoring over modeling. Initial standards should not be set below naturally occurring conditions. A baseline assessment is needed along with monitoring to verify modeling. MASWCD supports easy and timely access to good scientific information for greater integration of technical assistance and political decision making.

**Locally Led/Locally Administered** – MASWCD supports having local people, generally with the leadership of conservation districts, assess their water quality conditions and needs; set goals; identify ways to solve resource problems; utilize a broad array of programs and strategies to implement solutions; and measure their success.

**Citizen Elected Board** – MASWCD supports the need for citizen boards and citizen input on natural resource and water management at a local level. There are professional staffs providing conservation and water management services at the federal, state and local level. Given the public nature of these services, it would be prudent to have a continued degree of public oversight provided by a group of informed citizens at the local level. Elected citizen boards provide transparency, an essential element for the prioritization, design and delivery of public services.

**Local Technical and Resource Capacity** – MASWCD supports efforts and resources to enhance SWCD capabilities to provide technical support either through an individual district or through shared resources. This includes allowing districts to access appropriate resources through local, state and federal initiatives. Funding and expertise must be directly accessible to those performing the on-the-ground work of implementation. This includes funding for implementation of practices by landowners. Funding should also be available to Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide the technical expertise necessary to implement the practices.

**Voluntary** – MASWCD supports voluntary technical and financial assistance to private landowners who implement conservation practices and management strategies that benefit water quality and improve water management.

**Sustainability** – Water management should be focused for long-term sustainability. MASWCD considers long term to mean 150 years. Sustainable management of our water resources as defined by Minnesota Law 2009, Chapter 172 “Sustainable water use does not harm ecosystems, degrade water quality, or compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

**Scale** – Water management should be implemented at the appropriate watershed scale. Smaller scale actions should feed into larger scale watershed goals. Water quality strategies should be addressed at the lowest level feasible for management. Boundaries must be clear and locally understood to be effective.