

Frequently Asked Questions

Award Program Overview

What is The Blue Star Award program?

A positive public recognition program for Minnesota communities that are taking a leadership role in protecting water quality through stormwater runoff management.

How does it work?

Communities register on the www.bluestarmn.org website and conduct their own online self-assessment. Those that score high enough automatically earn the Blue Star Award.

Can entities other than cities & townships (like counties or watershed districts) register for the Blue Star Award?

No. The Blue Star Award is available only to Cities and Townships.

What score do we need on the Blue Star Assessment?

The Blue Star Assessment is designed to be flexible, so communities that excel in stormwater management can earn the award regardless of population, MS4 permit status, development status, and natural resource condition. To earn the Blue Star Award:

- MS4 Communities must earn at least 60% of all possible assessment points
- Non-MS4 Communities must earn at least 50% of all possible assessment points

Does it cost anything to participate in the Blue Star Program?

The Blue Star Program is 100% free.

How long is our Blue Star Award valid?

Blue Star Award status lasts for 3 years from the date of recognition. After 3 years, a community will be asked to conduct the assessment again to maintain their Award certification.

What do we get for winning the award?

Winners get the Blue Star Award along with color poster and materials indicating their award status. In addition, winners have access to a host of editable community outreach and publicity material: press releases, newsletter copy, utility bill inserts, website articles and more.

Are there any penalties if my community doesn't score well? Is this a regulatory program?

No. This is a 100% voluntary program and there are no penalties or regulatory consequences if a community does not win the award. Information on communities that have not yet won the award is NEVER made available to the public.

However, Blue Star Award winning communities are listed on the Blue Star website, and award-winning communities are encouraged to share their success with their peers via the Blue Star Leaderboard.



Taking the Blue Star Assessment

How do we register to take the Blue Star Assessment?

You can register your community and take the assessment online at www.bluestarmn.org

How long does the Blue Star Assessment take?

The Blue Star Assessment takes approximately one hour to complete. However, communities can stop and save their assessment in progress, allowing you to complete the assessment at your convenience

We don't have our own stormwater standards – that stuff is administered by our local watershed district or watershed management organization. How do I score my community?

Some of the assessment questions address policies or ordinances required by a watershed district or other unit of government that overlays part or all of your community. For this assessment, your community scores points for applicable stormwater standards set forth by watersheds and other units of government in addition to codes or ordinances you have at the local level.

My community is part of several watershed districts, each with its own different set of stormwater regulations. Which set of regulations do I use?

Some communities may straddle multiple watersheds with different standards. Other communities may have special standards for certain parts of town. In this case, please use whichever set of standards you feel best reflects your community. If a single set of standards applies to more than 50% of your community, we suggest using that standard as the basis for your self-assessment.

Can I get points/credit for education programs that are administered by the County or Watershed in which my community resides?

It depends. Education efforts taken independently by other units of government don't count for your community, even if they reach your residents.

However, some communities are members of local coalitions, like the Washington Conservation District's "[East Metro Water Resource Education Program](#)" that allow communities to pool resources and send materials out to all their residents together. In this case, the communities are formal program partners, and therefore they can take credit for program's activities on their self-assessments.

We won the Blue Star Award. So where's our Award?

We'll mail you the award in about 10 days, along with personalized posters and other materials you can display in your community. If you'd prefer an in-person award ceremony with staff from the program we'll be happy to participate. If interested, please email info@bluestarmn.org with "Award Ceremony Request" in the subject line.

Guidance & Help

I'm having trouble with the assessment. Can I get some assistance?

Sure. If you have questions as you work toward certification, we are here to help you. Email info@bluestarmn.org with "help" in the subject line and we'll be happy to assist you.

How can I get a hardcopy of the Blue Star Assessment?

The program materials are predominantly web-based. However, in the coming year, Blue Star assessment materials will be made available for download on the www.bluestarmn.org website.

Who are the Blue Star Award program partners?

The Blue Star Program is brought to you by Friends of the Mississippi River in partnership with Emmons & Olivier Resource Inc. with the assistance of The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, The Minnesota Green Step Cities Program, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Project NEMO, The City of Blaine, The City of Woodbury, The City of Lino Lakes, The City of Inver Grove Heights, and The Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation

Will the Award standards become more rigorous in future years?

The Award certification being offered in 2010-2013 is the lowest level of Award certification. In future years, higher Award levels will be available to Minnesota communities. Communities wishing to renew their Award after their initial three years will have to make some additional progress.

I've got a question that isn't covered here. Who do I speak to?

If you have questions that we didn't cover here - we are available to assist you. Email info@bluestarmn.org with "help" in the subject line and we'll be happy to assist you. Or, you can contact Blue Star Program Administrator Trevor A. Russell at (651) 222-2193 ext. 18.

The GreenStep Cities Program**The website mentions the MPCA's GreenStep Cities Program. What is that?**

The MPCA's Green Step program offers cities an opportunity to conduct self-assessments on a broad range of environmental sustainability indicators. Cities that achieve a high score will be officially recognized by the State as "GreenStep" cities through the MPCA's sustainable communities program.

The GreenStep Program will incorporate the Blue Star assessment & recognition protocol as the GreenStep Program's flagship municipal stormwater management assessment methodology.

To learn more about the GreenStep Cities Program visit: <http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/>