The new Buffer Initiative enhances protection of Minnesota waters by building upon existing requirements in the following ways:

1. Expanding the Scope of Waters Covered:
   Current regulations require 50 foot buffers on public waters and 16.5 foot buffers on only about 20% of public ditches.

   The new law enhances the public waters requirement by putting it into state statute, versus a state rule implemented via county ordinance. It also extends the 16.5 foot requirement to ditches within a benefitted area of public drainage system. Finally, it also provides a process by which SWCDs must set local standards on other waters via local water plan amendments approved by BWSR.

2. Setting Timelines for Implementation
   Current requirements do not have specific timelines for establishment of buffers.

   The new law establishes the following timelines
   - Public waters - buffers established by November 1, 2017
   - Public drainage systems - buffers established by November 1, 2018
   - Local requirements - standards developed by July 1, 2017

3. Providing for Enforcement:
   Currently, state and local enforcement mechanisms are inadequate and inefficient.

   The new law creates an administrative fine that can be used by counties, watershed districts, or BWSR.

4. Strengthening soil erosion statutes:
   Current law prohibits excessive soil loss but only if a county has adopted a local ordinance.

   The new law strengthens this area of statute by removing the requirement for a local ordinance and allowing the county, watershed district, or BWSR to enforce through an administrative fine process.

5. Appropriating Funding:
   The Clean Water Fund in the Legacy Bill (pending) appropriates $5.65 million for program implementation and $22 million for SWCD capacity.