**John Bilotta, Senior Research and Extension Coordinator**

**Water Resources Center, University of Minnesota**

**John Bilotta** is the Senior Research and Extension Coordinator with the University of Minnesota’s Water Resources Center where he leads the [Minnesota Stormwater Research and Technology Transfer Program](https://www.wrc.umn.edu/projects/stormwater) including leading the [Minnesota Stormwater Research Council](https://www.wrc.umn.edu/msrc). His efforts focus on directing and coordinating a comprehensive research portfolio of projects that seek answers to questions around urban stormwater management practices and policies. John is also affiliated with the [Minnesota Sea Grant Program](http://www.seagrant.umn.edu/about/john). Prior to joining the Center, John worked for more than 21 years as an Extension Educator in Water Resource Management and Policy through a joint Extension Educator appointment with Minnesota Extension and Sea Grant. John also worked more than six years in other public and private capacities in soil and water resource management. John has a BA in Environmental Studies and Natural Resources with an emphasis in Soil Resources and M.S. in Soil Science with a focus on Fertility and Nutrient Management.

***About the Water Resources Center***

The Water Resources Center ([wrc.umn.edu](http://wrc.umn.edu/)) is an interdepartmental unit of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences and University of Minnesota Extension. It is also Minnesota’s member of the National Institutes for Water Resources, giving it a Congressional mandate to conduct and organize research relevant to water resource concerns in the state. The center is the administrative home of the interdisciplinary Water Resources Science graduate program, involving over 100 faculty members spanning over 20 departments at the Twin Cities and Duluth Campuses. The center also provides professional training programs and hosts numerous events including the annual Minnesota Water Resources Conference.

***About the Freshwater Society***

Freshwater is a 50-year-old non-profit (501c3) working for clean and reliable water in Minnesota. Freshwater specializes in making Minnesota’s groundwater supplies sustainable and preventing polluted runoff from contaminating lakes and streams. Freshwater uses education and policy to help citizens and organizations take the next step for water. The latest [impact report](https://freshwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ImpactReport_2017_FINAL.pdf)  expands on the work in FY2017

*Freshwater’s Stakeholder Engagement and Facilitation Approach*

A critical component to ensuring success is gaining input from a broad range of stakeholders from the very beginning. Stakeholder input for planning and decision-making provides three key benefits:
 •Improving the quality of information generated through collaborative input
 •Enhancing the legitimacy of decisions made by increasing local buy-in
 •Increasing the capacity of those involved to understand issues and move to solutions

With the urban and rural landscapes, competing uses and drivers, and varied levels of understanding of groundwater, we can expect what may be stark differences in opinions and priorities. By providing for meaningful engagement, we can surface and work through these differences to highlight many shared goals and strategies. Our team refines and finalizes the stakeholder engagement process to create genuine opportunities for input and involvement that, through transparent analysis, lead to reports that apply directly to the development of goals, objectives, and strategies for managing groundwater.