



Buffer Program Update

August 31, 2016

Buffer Tracking Tool

We are on track to start registering SWCD users in mid-September for the Buffer Compliance and Tracking Tool. **PLEASE REMEMBER:** use of this tool is voluntary. If you plan to use the tool, you must email carla.swanson-cullen@state.mn.us AND tom.gile@state.mn.us and include the following;

- **SWCD Name**
- **Confirmation** that you will be using the tool
- **User Name(s)** *Limit 3 per SWCD*
- **User email addresses**

Additional user guidance is being developed and will be released as we start setting up user accounts.

Don't forget, if your SWCD chooses to use the tool for tracking progress towards compliance there will be no additional reporting requirements.

We will be working this fall with Drainage Authorities to reduce redundancy in reporting between the Drainage Law (103E) and the Buffer Law (103F.48), which both call for reporting of buffer compliance on Public Drainage Ditches. Watch for details in future Buffer Program Updates.

Implementation Policies and Supporting Guidance

The 30-day comment period on the Draft Buffer Program Policies closed on July 27, 2016. We worked diligently to use those comments to improve the seven Buffer Implementation program policies approved by the BWSR Board on August 25, 2016. The final documents can be found on the [BWSR Buffer Page](#).

Supporting guidance is currently undergoing final review, and many of these documents should be publicly available by the end of September, 2016. A number of local government staff from around the state have taken their time to review and provide insight into these guidance documents, and thanks to their contributions every one of these documents has benefited from some level of LGU staff input. As many great questions and scenarios continue to come in from all over the state, its likely additional guidance will be developed in the coming months. We are already working on guidance for Alternative Practices, as well as a series of model ordinance/rule templates related to enforcement of the law at the local level for those local governments that elect local jurisdiction.

When the guidance documents are available they will posted on the BWSR website at: <http://bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers/>.

DNR Buffer Protection Maps

The DNR is working through the locations on the Buffer Protection Map are currently identified as "needing review". Updates to the map are expected to occur in October and late December/early

January. While these locations are still under review, the Map is ready to use as a tool to support implementation of the Buffer Law. The Map will help landowners and their local SWCD, County or Watershed District professionals identify where buffers are required and what buffer width is required.

If you have additional comments or questions on the DNR Buffer Protection Map please contact the DNR at buffermapping.dnr@state.mn.us.

Outreach and Communication

Since June 1 BWSR Buffer staff have presented to both landowners and local government staff at more than 30 meetings around the state, typically organized by local governments. These do not include landowner meetings hosted by SWCDs and other entities or additional meetings where BWSR Field Staff have provided program information. Your efforts to organize these meetings and get landowners and staff together to communicate about the program and its implementation are exceptionally valuable. We can't thank you enough for your efforts to organize these meetings. The insights have been critical and the continued communication will help make this program a success.

Looking Ahead

September and October look to be very busy months for implementation and development of the buffer program. Please continue to visit the [BWSR Buffer webpage](#) for new and updated guidance and information.

As the program moves forward we will continue to provide consistent public messaging. As new information becomes available we will work hard to provide our local government partners with the resources and training to be effective. We continue to encourage your feedback on guidance and training you need to successfully implement this program across Minnesota's highly diverse landscape.

This fall, BWSR will develop program pieces specifically focused on enforcement, including the development of a plan to enact the administrative penalty order (APO) provisions. We know there are many questions out there, and we will share materials as they are developed - well before the enforcement period begins.

Check out the Buffer Toolbox

[This Toolbox](#) was developed as a resource to guide the efforts of local projects and partnerships. It presents a process for the planning, installation, and maintenance of riparian buffers in Minnesota with an emphasis on maximizing landscape benefits. New tools are presented for planning buffers, as well as information about strategies for implementing buffers that have proven successful over many years of conservation work.

Thank you ALL!

There is a lot of work ahead at both the state and local level to get this program up and running, and buffers and alternative practices in place. As always, we welcome your input and are committed to partnering with you to make this work. More to come but in the meantime, if you have specific questions, please direct them to your Board Conservationist or Buffer and Soil Erosion Program Coordinator Tom Gile.