

New wetland professional certification program slated for 2020



Left: John Overland, BWSR wetland banking specialist (center), discusses a plot sampling technique along a wetland boundary during a September training at Northland Arboretum in Brainerd. **Photo Credit:** Ben Meyer, BWSR

Below: A trainer describes a soil profile during a wetland delineation training exercise in June 2018 in Arden Hills. **Photo Credit:** BWSR

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) will lead a new wetland certification program that will offer more flexibility in training options for wetland professionals across the state starting in 2020.

BWSR's board approved the Minnesota Wetland Professional Certification Program (MWPCP) in September. It will replace the Wetland Delineator Certification Program (WDCP), which formed in 2002. Functioning as a partnership between the University of Minnesota and BWSR, the WDCP has trained thousands and certified hundreds of professionals in wetland delineation. The University of Minnesota and BWSR decided to transfer the work fully to BWSR in 2020, because the agency has ample resources for wetland training and education.

The MWPCP is a step forward in the evolution of BWSR's



training of local government staff and other wetland professionals who implement the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). Training related to the MWPCP will merge with the BWSR wetland regional training conducted over the past two years. Les Lemm, BWSR's WCA coordinator, said he anticipated a seamless transition from the University of Minnesota to BWSR while broadening the scope of available training.

“One primary goal of the new MWPCP program is to make training and certification more available and cost-effective for WCA local government and soil and water conservation districts’ staff,” Lemm said.

BWSR wetland specialists Ben Meyer and David Demmer will lead the new program, with assistance from BWSR’s wetland training team and wetland program assistant Amy Waters.

The MWPCP will strive to maintain the level of knowledge and expertise of those who conduct and review professional work associated with wetland regulatory compliance. This includes identifying and delineating wetlands, and reviewing and assisting applicants and landowners in complying with state wetland regulations. The MWPCP will provide the following:

- More stability for implementing the WCA through standardized training, experience and educational requirements
- Increased efficiency of the regulatory process



Carol Strojny, BWSR monitoring coordinator, uses species collected from a local field site to assist a class in vegetation identification during a September 2018 training at Crane Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Morrison County. **Photo Credit:** Ben Meyer, BWSR

by standardizing wetland regulatory expectations and products

- Greater protection for landowners and other consumers by providing a base level of required knowledge and ongoing training for certified wetland professionals who conduct and review regulatory work on private and public land
- An incentive for wetland professionals to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills.

“This certification program enables wetland professionals in Minnesota to assure service excellence via field training and continued learning to benefit the people and natural resources of the state,” BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke said.

Like the WDCP its replacing, the new program is voluntary. The new program

sets a goal in the industry to establish a standard for individuals working on wetland regulatory compliance in Minnesota.

The scope of the MWPCP provides wetland professionals with a broad framework. MWPCP certification will indicate that an individual has the fundamental understanding of the basic technical tools, rules, policies and guidance associated with wetland regulations and delineation in Minnesota.

To gain certification, wetland professionals must understand wetland identification and delineation, wetland restoration, state and federal wetland regulations, wetland functional assessment and wetland monitoring.

Those who acquire certification must earn 18 continuing education hours over a three-year period to

remain certified. A variety of activities are accepted for continuing education credits, including training courses, webinars, online training, field trips, conferences and seminars.

The transition between the WDCP and MWPCP includes an opt-in period for current certified professionals in good standing to have their certification carry forward. These professionals will still need to complete continuing education credits to maintain their certification.

Given the amount of interest and level of participation, Lemm said BWSR wetlands staff is optimistic that by collaborating with its partners, the new program will continue to meet the demand for relevant and accessible technical wetland training.

See the [MWPCP webpage](#) for details.