

An Overview of Wetland Conservation Act Local Government Units in Minnesota

The Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) is implemented at the local level by Local Government Units or "LGUs". Each LGU makes decisions on applications and performs other duties within their jurisdiction per WCA rules. There are specific provisions in rule for determining which entity is an LGU for WCA implementation purposes. An LGU can be a County, City/Town, Township (in certain 7-county metro areas only), watershed district (WD), watershed management organization (WMO), watershed commission (WC) or in some cases a state agency (state owned or administered lands). The most prominent state agency LGUs for WCA implementation on state-owned or administered/managed lands are the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT). For projects that require a Permit to Mine under state law, DNR's Division of Lands and Minerals administers the provisions of the WCA under their Permit to Mine authority regardless of the project's location.

Each LGU can delegate some or all WCA responsibilities to another entity with their consent. They can also split administrative responsibilities between two different delegates or representatives based on land use or geography. Many Counties delegate WCA implementation to their County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Some LGUs designate a private consultant to serve as their WCA LGU contact for implementation. LGUs can also delegate some or all decision-making authority to designated staff positions (administrator, technician, wetland specialist, etc.) or to a specific committee or group. Unless otherwise specified, decisions are made by the LGUs governing board (i.e. County Board, City Council, etc.)

Considering various delegations and splitting of WCA LGU responsibilities across the state, the following is a breakdown of LGUs and LGU representatives:

- There are 263 individual WCA LGUs.
- There are 224 individual LGU contacts.
- 17 LGU contacts represent more than one LGU.
- The highest number of LGUs per County is 32 (Hennepin County).
- There are 52 counties that have one LGU for the entire county.
- 3 Townships are LGUs.
- 19 Watershed Districts, Management Organizations, Management Commissions are LGUs.
- 35 County entities (excluding SWCDs) are LGUs.
- 51 SWCDs are LGUs.
- 155 Cities are LGUs.
- 23 LGU representatives are consultants representing a total of 62 LGUs.