



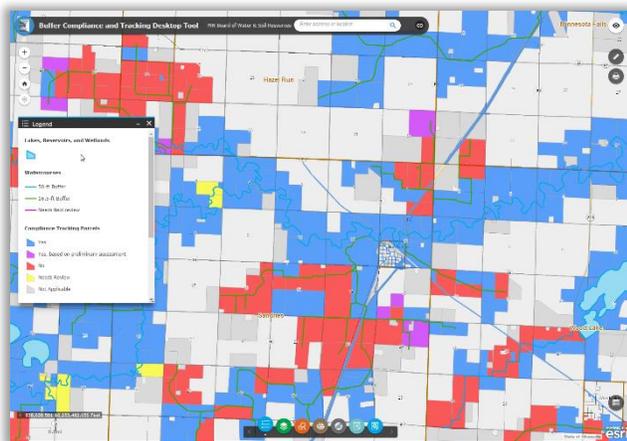
Tools for Success: BuffCAT

November 2016 Snapshots

Minnesota's Buffer Initiative was signed into law in June, 2015. The law established new perennial vegetation buffers of up to 50 feet along rivers, streams, and ditches that work to filter out phosphorous, nitrogen, and sediment as part of efforts to improve water quality around the state.

In order to make sure the Buffer Initiative is implemented on a statewide level, Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are responsible for tracking progress towards compliance with the Buffer Law. To support those efforts, BWSR has developed a tool that helps both the districts and the agency more efficiently track progress.

Meet BuffCAT, the BWSR Buffer Compliance and Tracking Tool. This is a web based tracking system that uses a statewide map to monitor parcels of land around the state for compliance. SWCDs must submit buffer compliance datasets to assist BWSR in the monitoring process. To date, approximately 90,000 parcels of land have been reviewed by districts in the tool.



Desktop BuffCAT tool showing parcel compliance

This tool also includes a mobile collector application for offline use in the field, guidance and templates to help clarify data standards, and methods for maintaining data. BWSR has also created user guidance such as documents and videos to help users learn the tool, and a long term support plan of the system to help administer and manage data along with fixing any bugs.

The purpose of BuffCAT is to provide a tool that allows for a systematic and consistent approach to collecting data related to SWCD requirements. Districts are not required to use the tool, but those who do will not have any additional annual program reporting requirements.

BuffCAT was initially released on September 15th of this year. BWSR is working closely with SWCDs to support those districts that intend to use it. As of October there have been a number of SWCD-submitted compliance datasets and in one day more than 6,000 parcels were reviewed and edited by SWCD staff around the state.

There are more than 500,000 parcels which need review statewide and several counties still need to be added to the tool. The Buffer Law is a way to help improve water quality in Minnesota and it is the work of SWCDs to make sure this compliance happens. Through tools like BuffCAT, BWSR can help support SWCDs and monitor the progress of the Buffer Law over time while working to reduce additional administrative time and costs.