



Buffer Program Update

July 18, 2016

With the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) roll-out of the field-ready buffer protection maps on July 12, there will be a shift to program implementation by local government partners. Below is an update on the status of buffer program development and what can be expected over the next few months as BWSR prepares the program implementation components.

Buffer Mapping

With your help, the DNR has produced a Buffer Protection Map that will help guide implementation of Minnesota's buffer law. The DNR produced the Map on schedule, using state of the art mapping technologies and the hard work of a wide range of professionals both inside and outside their agency.

The Map is ready to use as a tool to support implementation of the buffer law, with some scattered locations that still need field review. 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 Dave Leuthe at buffermapping.dnr@state.mn.us.

Review of Draft Policy

Seven draft Buffer program policies are now available for public comment on the BWSR website (based on the June 22, 2016 Board action). The comment period is open through July 27. While not required, BWSR wants to ensure that partners, stakeholders, and the public have the opportunity to provide input into program development. After the comment period has closed, responses analyzed, and adjustments made to the draft policies, they are expected to be presented to the Board at its August 25 meeting for adoption.

Guidance Documents Development

While the buffer program policy documents articulate *what* is required, supplemental guidance documents are being drafted to describe *how* specific components of the program will be implemented. When the guidance documents are available they will be posted on the BWSR website at: <http://bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers/>.

Other Watercourses

The law includes local SWCD responsibility for developing "other watercourses" lists or maps that will be incorporated into Local Water Management Authorities water plans. BWSR staff are developing guidance, including assimilation of some base data sets, to support this work. The decision-making process for these lists will be based significantly on local discretion, so we encourage as much cross-

boundary collaboration as possible. There is no public notification requirement in statute for this process, but we suggest some mechanism for including public input.

Compliance Tracking

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are required under the law to track progress towards compliance. Working in partnership with several SWCDs, BWSR is developing a tool, which can be used for that purpose. Collecting consistent data from SWCDs about progress toward compliance is needed to measure and communicate the program's status to local and state decision-makers. Our goal is to have this tool ready for use by September 2016.

Looking Ahead

In August, the Local Government Water Roundtable is holding a series of meetings for elected and appointed officials to help them understand the Buffer Law and the connections to related laws and local government authorities. The goal is to provide a consistent message to leaders around the state about what's in the law, what's happened so far, and what can be expected in the months and years to come as the program rolls out.

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

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 in the process and are committed to partnering with you to make this work. More updates will be forthcoming, but in the meantime, if you have specific questions please direct them to your Board Conservationist or Program Coordinator Tom Gile.