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## **MOU signed to improve state-federal wetland protection program coordination**

An agreement to improve coordination of state and federal policies for wetland protection on agricultural land has been finalized by state and federal conservation officials.

The agreement will lead to a more simplified, coordinated approach to administering two separate programs for protecting wetlands. The Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), the primary state law protecting wetlands in Minnesota, is administered by local governments with oversight from the State Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The wetland protection provisions of the federal farm bill, commonly known as "Swampbuster," are administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

BWSR and NRCS officials signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to improve consistency in administering these programs. The MOU establishes agreement by both agencies on topics such as information sharing, delineating wetland boundaries, procedures to resolve violations, and setting standards for replacement wetlands that are needed for mitigation purposes.

"State and federal wetland protection programs have similar – but not the same – objectives and administrative procedures. This MOU will result in increased consistency and make it easier for landowners to understand their responsibilities under each program," said John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director.

According to William Hunt, USDA NRCS State Conservationist, "Staff in both agencies already are working together to help landowners better understand how they can comply with wetland protection programs and regulations, and I'm confident that this MOU will build on that cooperation and coordination."

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