



Wetland trainings offer a chance to sharpen skills

October 2013 Snapshots

Because implementing the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) at the local level can sometimes be a challenge, Justin Hanson appreciates having a little refresher now and then.

Hanson, a nine-year veteran at the Mower Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), recently attended the Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) WCA trainings in southern Minnesota.

"I like that there's specific trainings about administration of program, as well as technical training to ensure we understand the science behind wetland work – that information is always good to be refreshed on. If you don't practice, you can't keep up," Hanson said.

Every year, BWSR provides wetland training sessions on soils, hydrology and vegetation/plant identification across southern Minnesota. In 2013, hydrology training was conducted in Olmsted County in May; vegetation/plant identification was held in St. Peter in August and soils training completed the series in Lamberton in September.

In his role as a Resource Specialist, Hanson said his WCA activities run the gamut – he does everything from reviewing no-loss applications, to writing delineation reports, talking with landowners about compliance and working with producers on agricultural development projects.

"The WCA trainings are really essential for me to stay on top of the latest wetland information available," Hanson said. "They allow me to sharpen my skills and gain a different perspective on the ways other local units of government handle WCA situations."

Jeremy Maul, BWSR senior wetland specialist, said because staff members at the local level implement WCA, it's critical to have knowledgeable and trained people in those roles. "Budget pressures have led more local government units to shy away from sending staff to training events that have a significant cost – either for travel or registration," Maul said. "So at BWSR, we try to provide regional, cost-effective trainings that work well for our local partners."

More than 50 people attended the WCA trainings in 2013, with each session having 12-19 attendees, including local WCA staff, Technical Evaluation Panel members, BWSR and Natural Resource Conservation Service staff.

"The networking at the trainings is great – districts talk amongst each other and discuss how to handle different issues," Hanson said. "Staff members should take advantage of these trainings – I always go away with a new perspective."



Pictures 1 and 2: Local government staff attends vegetation/plant ID class in St. Peter, Minn., Aug. 2013; Picture 3: Staff get down and dirty at soils training in Lamberton, Minn., Sept. 2013.