



Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act

Stakeholder Input for Program Changes

Agriculture Sector Meeting

12:30 p.m.
July 24, 2014

Minnesota Farm Bureau
3080 Eagandale Place
Eagan, Minnesota

Meeting Notes

Participants: Bruce Peterson, Mn Corn Growers Association; Doug Busselman, Mn Farm Bureau; Amy Zipko, Mn House of Representatives; Gary Wentish, Mn Farmers Union; Warren Formo, Mn Agriculture Waters Resources Center; Anna Boroff, Mn Corn Growers Association; Amber Hanson, Mn Farm Bureau; Colleen Allen, DNR; Bruce Kleven, Ag Groups; Tamara Cameron, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Jennifer Engstrom, DNR, John Jaschke, BWSR, Les Lemm, BWSR; Dave Weirens, BWSR.

1. Background and purpose of this process and today's meeting.

Dave Weirens and Les Lemm provided an overview of the purpose of today's meeting and reviewed the following reports, with a focus on recommendations:

- Executive Order 12-04, Supporting and Strengthening the Implementation of the State's Wetland Policy; and
- Siting of Wetland Mitigation in Northeast Minnesota.

2. Discussion/Comments/Questions.

- Where does ag drainage fit into this discussion? There is a need to address how all of this fits into no net loss. Look at the extent to which ag drainage is already regulated.
- WCA has been changed frequently by the legislature, how do we know what no net loss means anymore?
- Presettlement zones are irrelevant – there are 5.3 million people now, there are no buffalo anymore, we've lost 100% of our glaciers - why do we use it?
- WCA program funding – use Outdoor Heritage Fund or Clean Water Fund dollars. WCA's purpose is to protect, enhance, and restore wetlands - this fits the Constitutional language (especially for monitoring, management of easements, etc.).
- Promoting private banking should be a priority – ag banking is off to a pretty good start, but there is concern over competition with banking from conservation programs, etc. We only need a few thousand acres for mitigation, not a few million.
- Banking demand is variable and hard to predict – that's a challenge for potential bankers.
- An in-lieu-fee program could complement banking if done right - address activities that banking does not do or do well.
- Who runs the in lieu fee program?

WCA Stakeholder-Agriculture Sector Meeting, July 24, 2014

- De minimis is the lowest priority – address it last and don't jeopardize other worthwhile initiatives.
- Presettlement zones are linked with de minimis, so set that aside too.
- USDA 1026 form – this form is used for most activities. Privacy prevents sharing between agencies, but allow use of this form for non-USDA purposes (WCA approval). Also evaluate signing an agreement with NRCS.
- We do not need a bill on ag drainage in 2015, business as usual.
- What will we know about the Waters of the US rule and how could that affect our work? It will be years following court action.
- Kittson County issues – we should look at 404 assumption as there are issues with local implementation.
- Competition issues with land should be addressed, farmers are interested, must address in context with other NRCS programs, be more prominent than other programs, landowner payments must be adequate.
- How will it work with restrictions along the beach ridge? Smaller projects should be pursued. 5, 10, 20 acres; odd shaped areas are good fit for conservation/mitigation.
- Look at the “early-middle-late” maps from the Red River valley.
- Refer to the “ag region” and the “forested/lakes region” instead of greater than 80% and less than 50% areas.
- There will be less CRP, but it will be more targeted with better results.
- Stabilization of hydrology is relevant statewide so it makes sense to allow for crediting statewide.
- Stream restoration may also be relevant statewide. The definition of stream restoration should be borrowed from other agencies (DNR).
- The ag community will have less interest in in-lieu as time goes on if ag banks get established.
- Look at ways to allow credit for wetland restorations associated with flood retention projects. This could be done with or without an ILF program.
- Look for ways to streamline current processes.
- We should have a discussion about ILF programs – how they work, the benefits and challenges, etc. For example, how can an ILF get away from issue of ratios/bank service areas? Can regular banking provide the same benefits as an ILF?