

Wetland Conservation Act: Stakeholder Input for Program Changes

Issue Prioritization October 2014

Below are two tables presenting the results of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) issue prioritization conducted on September 25, 2014. The results also include priorities submitted by organizations not in attendance on September 24, that were provided by October 3, 2014. Table 1 displays the seven highest priorities, based on the input provided. Table 2 includes the complete list of issues and votes by sector. These priorities will be used in bringing issues for review and discussion at future all-sector meetings.

Table 1.

<u># of Votes</u>	
20	14. Alternative Options for Compensatory Mitigation within NE Minnesota Watersheds
16	12. Wetland Mitigation Siting
15	16. In-Lieu Fee Program Option
10	13. Wetland Mitigation Search Criteria
9	5. WCA and Clean Water Act Section 404 Consistency
7	1. No Net Loss
7	9. WCA and Swampbuster Coordination

Table 2.

Issue	Agriculture Sector	Business/ Industry Sector	Environment/ Conservation Sector	Local Government Sector	Other	Total
1. No Net Loss	1		6 ^a			7
2. Agricultural Drainage	1		2			3
3. De minimis Exemption		1	1	2 ^b	1	5
4. Alignment of Presettlement Zones on Watershed Boundaries				1		1
5. WCA and Clean Water Act Section 404 Consistency		6 ^c		2	1	9
6. Clean Water Act Section 404 Assumption				1 ^d		1

7. Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification					1	1
8. WCA and the Public Water Work Permit Program Consistency				1		1
9. WCA and Swampbuster Coordination	6		1			7
10. Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program Review				1	1	2
11. Off-Site Wetland Replacement Under a Permit to Mine			3 ^e		2	5
12. Wetland Mitigation Siting	5	5	1	4 ^f	1	16
13. Wetland Mitigation Search Criteria	1	5	2 ^g	2		10
14. Alternative Options for Compensatory Mitigation within NE Minnesota Watersheds		9	4 ^h	4	2	20
15. Alternative Mechanisms for Providing Compensatory Mitigation			4 ⁱ			4
16. In-Lieu Fee Program Option	2	6	3 ^j	4		15
17. Other Recommendations for Providing Compensatory Mitigation			3 ^k	1		4

18. Local Government Implementation Funding				1		1
19. Adequacy of Wetland Bank Program Funding	5					5
20. Strategic Use of Funding Sources and Tools to Achieve Continued Restoration of Drained Wetlands	3	1			1	5
21. Local Government Implementation of WCA	1	1				2
22. Online Permitting System for WCA				1		1

- a. Comment – Improved data availability is needed for all of the other priorities too! How do you know how things are working? In-lieu fee will require good monitoring – data! All exemptions should be tracked.
- b. Comment – Expand the de minimis exemption in 80% counties.
- c. Comment – Combine 6 (Clean Water Act Section 404 Assumption), 21 (Local Government Implementation of WCA) & 22 (Online Permitting System for WCA).
- d. Comment – With 3 (De minimis Exemption) and 5 (WCA and Clean Water Act Section 404 Consistency).
- e. Comment - Should include moving mining WCA permits to BWSR; Same as previous comment & improved coordination with local governments, technical evaluation panels, federal government, and public; More transparency early on – before site is chosen; More info on particular sites and programs easily available.
- f. Comment – Focus on high priority areas. Discourage restorations in >80%.
- g. Comment – Need to move from acre for acre to assessing actual wetland functions lost in watershed.
- h. Comment – Support in-watershed mitigation within Bank Service Area 1 only. (Same!) Would prefer wetland bank system with credits purchased after mitigation is done so cost is known.
- i. Comment - For in-watershed mitigation projects. (Ditto).
- j. Comment – Based on a watershed approach & watershed planning. Ditto – explore idea of 3rd party management, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, etc.
- k. Comment – Including a database on potential mitigation options & focus on a watershed approach. Ditto.