

Wetland Conservation Act Statutes – 2004

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{Note: This document is an unofficial compilation of Minnesota Statutes that were either created or amended by the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act of 1991 (Laws of Minnesota 1991, Chapter 354) and subsequent legislation through 2004. For an official version of the statutes, consult the web site of the State of Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes at: <http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/> }

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103A.201 Regulatory policy.

Subdivision 1. **Policy.** To conserve and use water resources of the state in the best interests of its people, and to promote the public health, safety, and welfare, it is the policy of the state that:

- (1) subject to existing rights, public waters are subject to the control of the state;
- (2) the state, to the extent provided by law, shall control the appropriation and use of waters of the state; and
- (3) the state shall control and supervise activity that changes or will change the course, current, or cross section of public waters, including the construction, reconstruction, repair, removal, abandonment, alteration, or the transfer of ownership of dams, reservoirs, control structures, and waterway obstructions in public waters.

Subd. 2. **Wetlands findings; public interest.** (a) Wetlands identified in the state under section [103G.005](#), subdivision 19, do not:

- (1) grant the public additional or greater right of access to the wetlands;
- (2) diminish the right of ownership or usage of the beds underlying the wetlands, except as otherwise provided by law;
- (3) affect state law forbidding trespass on private lands; and
- (4) require the commissioner to acquire access to the wetlands.

(b) The legislature finds that the wetlands of Minnesota provide public value by conserving surface waters, maintaining and improving water quality, preserving wildlife habitat, providing recreational opportunities, reducing runoff, providing for floodwater retention, reducing stream sedimentation, contributing to improved subsurface moisture, helping moderate climatic change, and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape, and are important to comprehensive water management, and that it is in the public interest to:

- (1) achieve no net loss in the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of Minnesota's existing wetlands;
- (2) increase the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of Minnesota's wetlands by restoring or enhancing diminished or drained wetlands;
- (3) avoid direct or indirect impacts from activities that destroy or diminish the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of wetlands; and
- (4) replace wetland values where avoidance of activity is not feasible and prudent.

HIST: 1990 c 391 art 1 s 2; 1991 c 354 art 1 s 2

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103A.202 Wetland policy.

The legislature finds that it is in the public interest to preserve the wetlands of the state to conserve surface waters, maintain and improve water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, reduce runoff, provide for floodwater retention, reduce stream sedimentation, contribute to improved subsurface moisture, enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, and promote comprehensive and total water management planning.

HIST: 1990 c 391 art 1 s 3

103B.3355 Wetland functions for determining public values.

(a) The public values of wetlands must be determined based upon the functions of wetlands for:

(1) water quality, including filtering of pollutants to surface and groundwater, utilization of nutrients that would otherwise pollute public waters, trapping of sediments, shoreline protection, and utilization of the wetland as a recharge area for groundwater;

(2) floodwater and stormwater retention, including the potential for flooding in the watershed, the value of property subject to flooding, and the reduction in potential flooding by the wetland;

(3) public recreation and education, including hunting and fishing areas, wildlife viewing areas, and nature areas;

(4) commercial uses, including wild rice and cranberry growing and harvesting and aquaculture;

(5) fish, wildlife, native plant habitats;

(6) low-flow augmentation; and

(7) other public uses.

(b) The board of water and soil resources, in consultation with the commissioners of natural resources and agriculture and local government units, shall adopt rules establishing:

(1) scientific methodologies for determining the functions of wetlands; and

(2) criteria for determining the resulting public values of wetlands.

(c) The methodologies and criteria established under this section or other methodologies and criteria that include the functions in paragraph (a) and are approved by the board, in consultation with the commissioners of natural resources and agriculture and local government units, must be used to determine the functions and resulting public values of wetlands in the state. The functions listed in paragraph (a) are not listed in order of priority.

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(d) Public value criteria established or approved by the board under this section do not apply in areas subject to local comprehensive wetland protection and management plans established under section [103G.2243](#).

(e) The board of water and soil resources, in consultation with the commissioners of natural resources and agriculture and local government units, may identify regions of the state where preservation, enhancement, restoration, and establishment of wetlands would have high public value. The board, in consultation with the commissioners, may identify high priority wetland regions using available information relating to the factors listed in paragraph (a). The board shall notify local units of government with water planning authority of these high priority regions.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 2 s 4; 1996 c 462 s 3

103F.612 Wetland preservation areas.

Subdivision 1. **Definition.** For purposes of sections 103F.612 to [103F.616](#), "wetland" has the meaning given in section [103G.005](#), subdivision 19.

Subd. 2. **Application.** (a) A wetland owner may apply to the county where a wetland is located for designation of a wetland preservation area in a high priority wetland area identified in a comprehensive local water plan, as defined in section [103B.3363](#), subdivision 3, and located within a high priority wetland region designated by the board of water and soil resources, if the county chooses to accept wetland preservation area applications. The application must be made on forms provided by the board. If a wetland is located in more than one county, the application must be submitted to the county where the majority of the wetland is located.

(b) The application shall be executed and acknowledged in the manner required by law to execute and acknowledge a deed and must contain at least the following information and other information the board of water and soil resources requires:

- (1) legal description of the area to be approved, which must include an upland strip at least 16-1/2 feet in width around the perimeter of wetlands within the area and may include total upland area of up to four acres for each acre of wetland;
- (2) parcel identification numbers where designated by the county auditor;
- (3) name and address of the owner;
- (4) a statement by the owner covenanting that the land will be preserved as a wetland and will only be used in accordance with conditions prescribed by the board of water and soil resources and providing that the restrictive covenant will be binding on the owner and the owner's successors or assigns, and will run with the land.

(c) The upland strip required in paragraph (b), clause (1), must be planted with permanent vegetation other than a noxious weed.

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Subd. 3. **Review and notice.** Upon receipt of an application, the county shall determine if all material required by subdivision 2 has been submitted and, if so, shall determine that the application is complete. The term "date of application" means the date the application is determined to be complete by the county. The county shall send a copy of the application to the county assessor, the board of water and soil resources, and the soil and water conservation district where the land is located. The soil and water conservation district shall prepare an advisory statement of existing and potential preservation problems or conflicts and send the statement to the owner of record and to the county. The county shall notify the landowner of the acceptance or denial of the application within 60 days from the date of the application.

Subd. 4. **Recording.** Within five days of the date of application, the county shall forward the application to the county recorder for recording or to the registrar of titles for filing if the land is registered. The county recorder shall record the application containing the restrictive covenant and return it to the applicant. If the land is registered, the registrar of titles shall memorialize the application containing the restrictive covenant upon the certificate of title. The recorder or registrar of titles shall notify the county that the application has been recorded or memorialized.

Subd. 5. **Commencement of wetland preservation area.** The wetland is a wetland preservation area commencing 30 days from the date the county notifies the landowner of acceptance of the application under subdivision 3.

Subd. 6. **Fee.** The county may require an application fee to defray administrative costs of the program.

Subd. 7. **Maps.** The county shall maintain wetland preservation area maps illustrating land covenanted as wetland preservation areas.

Subd. 8. **Authority of watershed management organization.** A watershed management organization with an approved watershed management plan under section [103B.231](#) has the same authority as a county to receive and act on applications under sections 103F.612 to [103F.616](#).

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 4 s 1; 1996 c 462 s 5-9; 1999 c 11 art 1 s 4,5; 2001 c 146 s 4

103F.613 Duration of wetland preservation area.

Subdivision 1. **General.** A wetland preservation area continues in existence until the owner initiates expiration as provided in this section. The date of expiration must be at least eight years from the date of notice under this section.

Subd. 2. **Termination by owner.** The owner may initiate expiration of a wetland preservation area by notifying the county on a form prepared by the board of water and soil resources and made available in each county. The notice must describe the property involved and must state the date of expiration. The notice may be rescinded by the owner during the first two years following notice.

Subd. 3. **Notice and recording; termination.** When the county receives notice under subdivision 2, the county shall forward the original notice to the county recorder for recording or to the registrar of titles for filing if the land is registered and shall notify the regional development commission, where applicable, the board of water and soil resources, and the county soil and water conservation district of

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the date of expiration. The benefits and limitations of the wetland preservation area and the restrictive covenant filed with the application cease on the date of expiration. If the land is registered, the registrar of titles shall cancel the memorial of the application containing the restrictive covenant upon the certificate of title on the effective date of the expiration.

Subd. 4. **Early expiration.** A wetland preservation area may be terminated earlier than as provided in this section only in the event of a public emergency upon petition from the owner or county to the governor. The determination of a public emergency must be made by the governor through executive order under section [4.035](#) and chapter 12. The executive order must identify the wetland preservation area, the reasons requiring the action, and the date of expiration.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 4 s 2; 1999 c 11 art 1 s 6

103F.614 Eminent domain actions.

Subdivision 1. **Applicability.** An agency of the state, a public benefit corporation, a local government, or any other entity with the power of eminent domain under chapter 117, except a public utility as defined in section [216B.02](#), a municipal electric or gas utility, a municipal power agency, a cooperative electric association organized under chapter 308A, or a pipeline operating under the authority of the Natural Gas Act, United States Code, title 15, sections 717 to 717z, shall follow the procedures in this section before:

(1) acquiring land or an easement in land with a total area over ten acres within a wetland preservation area; or

(2) advancing a grant, loan, interest subsidy, or other funds for the construction of dwellings, commercial or industrial facilities, or water or sewer facilities that could be used to serve structures in areas that are not for agricultural use, that require an acquisition of land or an easement in a wetland preservation area.

Subd. 2. **Notice of intent.** At least 60 days before an action described in subdivision 1, notice of intent must be filed with the environmental quality board containing information and in the manner and form required by the environmental quality board. The notice of intent must contain a report justifying the proposed action, including an evaluation of alternatives that would not affect land within a wetland preservation area.

Subd. 3. **Review and order.** The environmental quality board, in consultation with affected local governments, shall review the proposed action to determine its effect on the preservation and enhancement of wetlands and the relationship to local and regional comprehensive plans. If the environmental quality board finds that the proposed action might have an unreasonable effect on a wetland preservation area, the environmental quality board shall issue an order within the 60-day period under subdivision 2 for the party to refrain from the proposed action for an additional 60 days.

Subd. 4. **Public hearing.** During the additional 60 days, the environmental quality board shall hold a public hearing concerning the proposed action at a place within the affected wetland preservation area or easily accessible to the wetland preservation area. Notice of the hearing must be published in a newspaper having a general circulation within the area. Individual written notice must be given to the local governments with jurisdiction over the wetland preservation area, the agency, corporation or

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government proposing to take the action, the owner of land in the wetland preservation area, and any public agency having the power of review or approval of the action.

Subd. 5. **Joint review.** The review process required in this section may be conducted jointly with any other environmental impact review by the environmental quality board.

Subd. 6. **Suspension of action.** The environmental quality board may suspend an eminent domain action for up to one year if it determines that the action is contrary to wetland preservation and that there are feasible and prudent alternatives that may have a less negative impact on the wetland preservation area.

Subd. 7. **Termination of wetland preservation area.** The benefits and limitations of a wetland preservation area, including the restrictive covenant for the portion of the wetland preservation area taken, end on the date title and possession of the property is obtained.

Subd. 8. **Action by attorney general.** The environmental quality board may request the attorney general to bring an action to enjoin an agency, corporation, or government from violating this section.

Subd. 9. **Exception.** This section does not apply to an emergency project that is immediately necessary for the protection of life and property.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 4 s 3

103F.615 Limitation on certain public projects.

Subdivision 1. **Projects and assessments prohibited; exception.** Notwithstanding any other law, construction projects for public sanitary sewer systems, public water systems, and new public drainage systems are prohibited in wetland preservation areas. New connections between land or buildings in a wetland preservation area and public projects are prohibited. Land in a wetland preservation area may not be assessed for public projects built in the vicinity of the wetland preservation area.

Subd. 2. **Exception; owner option.** Subdivision 1 does not apply to public projects if the owner of the wetland preservation area elects to use and benefit from a public project.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 4 s 4

103F.616 Soil conservation practices.

An owner of a wetland preservation area shall manage the area and surrounding upland areas with sound soil conservation practices that prevent excessive soil loss according to the model ordinance adopted by the board of water and soil resources. The model ordinance and soil loss provisions under sections [103F.401](#) to [103F.455](#) relating to soil loss apply to all upland areas within a wetland preservation area and to surrounding upland areas. A sound soil conservation practice prevents excessive soil loss or reduces soil loss to the most practicable extent.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 4 s 5

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103G.005 Definitions.

Subdivision 1. **Applicability.** The definitions in this section apply to this chapter.

Subd. 2. **Abandon.** "Abandon" means to give up the use and maintenance of structures or improvements to realty and to surrender them to deterioration. Abandon does not refer to intent to surrender or relinquish title to or a possessory interest in the real property where the structures or improvements are located.

Subd. 2a. **Agricultural land.** "Agricultural land" means: land used for horticultural, row, close grown, pasture, and hayland crops; growing nursery stocks; animal feedlots; farm yards; associated building sites; and public and private drainage systems and field roads located on any of the foregoing.

Subd. 3. **Altered natural watercourse.** "Altered natural watercourse" means a former natural watercourse that has been affected by artificial changes to straighten, deepen, narrow, or widen the original channel.

Subd. 4. **Appropriating.** "Appropriating" means withdrawal, removal, or transfer of water from its source regardless of how the water is used.

Subd. 5. **Artificial watercourse.** "Artificial watercourse" means a watercourse artificially constructed by human beings where a natural watercourse was not previously located.

Subd. 6. **Basin of origin.** "Basin of origin" means the drainage basin of the Great Lakes, the Red River of the North, the Mississippi River, or the Missouri River.

Subd. 6a. **Board.** "Board" means the board of water and soil resources.

Subd. 7. **Commissioner.** "Commissioner" means the commissioner of natural resources.

Subd. 8. **Consumptive use.** "Consumptive use" means water that is withdrawn from its source for immediate further use in the area of the source and is not directly returned to the source.

Subd. 9. **Director.** "Director" means the director of the division of waters of the department of natural resources.

Subd. 10. **Division.** "Division" means the division of waters of the department of natural resources.

Subd. 10a. MS 1994 Renumbered subd 10e

Subd. 10a. **50 to 80 percent area.** "50 to 80 percent area" means a county or watershed with at least 50 but less than 80 percent of the presettlement wetland acreage intact.

Subd. 10b. **Greater than 80 percent area.** "Greater than 80 percent area" means a county or watershed where 80 percent or more of the presettlement wetland acreage is intact and:

(1) ten percent or more of the current total land area is wetland; or

(2) 50 percent or more of the current total land area is state or federal land.

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Subd. 10c. **Hayland.** "Hayland" means an area that was mechanically harvested or that was planted with annually seeded crops in a crop rotation seeding of grasses or legumes in six of the last ten years prior to January 1, 1991.

Subd. 10d. **Less than 50 percent area.** "Less than 50 percent area" means a county or watershed with less than 50 percent of the presettlement wetland acreage intact or any county or watershed not defined as a "greater than 80 percent area" or "50 to 80 percent area."

Subd. 10e. **Local government unit.** "Local government unit" means:

(1) outside of the seven-county metropolitan area, a city council, county board of commissioners, or a soil and water conservation district or their delegate;

(2) in the seven-county metropolitan area, a city council, a town board under section [368.01](#), a watershed management organization under section [103B.211](#), or a soil and water conservation district or their delegate; and

(3) on state land, the agency with administrative responsibility for the land.

Subd. 11. **Meandered lake.** "Meandered lake" means a body of water except streams located within the meander lines shown on plats made by the United States General Land Office.

Subd. 12. **Municipality.** "Municipality" means a home rule charter or statutory city.

Subd. 13. **Natural watercourse.** "Natural watercourse" means a natural channel that has definable beds and banks capable of conducting confined runoff from adjacent land.

Subd. 13a. **Once-through system.** "Once-through system" means a space heating, ventilating, air conditioning (HVAC), or refrigeration system used for any type of temperature or humidity control application, utilizing groundwater, that circulates through the system and is then discharged without reusing it for a higher priority purpose.

Subd. 14. **Ordinary high water level.** "Ordinary high water level" means the boundary of waterbasins, watercourses, public waters, and public waters wetlands, and:

(1) the ordinary high water level is an elevation delineating the highest water level that has been maintained for a sufficient period of time to leave evidence upon the landscape, commonly the point where the natural vegetation changes from predominantly aquatic to predominantly terrestrial;

(2) for watercourses, the ordinary high water level is the elevation of the top of the bank of the channel; and

(3) for reservoirs and flowages, the ordinary high water level is the operating elevation of the normal summer pool.

Subd. 14a. MS 1994 Renumbered subd 14b

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Subd. 14a. **Pasture.** "Pasture" means an area that was grazed by domesticated livestock or that was planted with annually seeded crops in a crop rotation seeding of grasses or legumes in six of the last ten years prior to January 1, 1991.

Subd. 14b. **Political subdivision.** "Political subdivision" means a county, city, town, school district, or other local government jurisdiction to which the state provides state aids or on which the state imposes state mandates.

Subd. 14c. **Presettlement wetland.** "Presettlement wetland" means a wetland or public waters wetland that existed in this state at the time of statehood in 1858.

Subd. 14d. **Project.** "Project" means a specific plan, contiguous activity, proposal, or design necessary to accomplish a goal as defined by the local government unit. As used in this chapter, a project may not be split into components or phases for the sole purpose of gaining additional exemptions.

Subd. 15. **Public waters.** (a) "Public waters" means:

(1) waterbasins assigned a shoreland management classification by the commissioner under sections [103F.201](#) to [103F.221](#);

(2) waters of the state that have been finally determined to be public waters or navigable waters by a court of competent jurisdiction;

(3) meandered lakes, excluding lakes that have been legally drained;

(4) waterbasins previously designated by the commissioner for management for a specific purpose such as trout lakes and game lakes pursuant to applicable laws;

(5) waterbasins designated as scientific and natural areas under section [84.033](#);

(6) waterbasins located within and totally surrounded by publicly owned lands;

(7) waterbasins where the state of Minnesota or the federal government holds title to any of the beds or shores, unless the owner declares that the water is not necessary for the purposes of the public ownership;

(8) waterbasins where there is a publicly owned and controlled access that is intended to provide for public access to the waterbasin;

(9) natural and altered watercourses with a total drainage area greater than two square miles;

(10) natural and altered watercourses designated by the commissioner as trout streams; and

(11) public waters wetlands, unless the statute expressly states otherwise.

(b) Public waters are not determined exclusively by the proprietorship of the underlying, overlying, or surrounding land or by whether it is a body or stream of water that was navigable in fact or susceptible of being used as a highway for commerce at the time this state was admitted to the union.

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Subd. 15a. **Public waters wetlands.** "Public waters wetlands" means all types 3, 4, and 5 wetlands, as defined in United States Fish and Wildlife Service Circular No. 39 (1971 edition), not included within the definition of public waters, that are ten or more acres in size in unincorporated areas or 2-1/2 or more acres in incorporated areas.

Subd. 15b. **Shoreland wetland protection zone.** "Shoreland wetland protection zone" means: (1) for local government units that have a shoreland management ordinance approved under sections [103F.201](#) to [103F.221](#), the shoreland wetland protection zone is:

(i) 1,000 feet from the ordinary high water level of a waterbasin that is a public water identified in the shoreland management ordinance or the shoreland area approved by the commissioner as provided in the shoreland management rules adopted under section [103F.211](#), whichever is less; or

(ii) 300 feet from the ordinary high water level of a watercourse identified in the shoreland management ordinance or the shoreland area approved by the commissioner as provided in the shoreland management rules adopted under section [103F.211](#), whichever is less; and

(2) for local government units that do not have a shoreland management ordinance approved under sections [103F.201](#) to [103F.221](#), the shoreland wetland protection zone is:

(i) 1,000 feet from the ordinary high water level of a waterbasin that is a public water that is at least ten acres in size within municipalities and at least 25 acres in size in unincorporated areas; or

(ii) 300 feet from the ordinary high water level of a watercourse identified by the public waters inventory under section [103G.201](#).

Subd. 15c. **Silviculture.** "Silviculture" means the management of forest trees.

Subd. 15d. **Utility.** "Utility" means a sanitary sewer, storm sewer, potable water distribution, and transmission, distribution, or furnishing, at wholesale or retail, of natural or manufactured gas, electricity, telephone, or radio service or communications.

Subd. 16. **Waterbasin.** "Waterbasin" means an enclosed natural depression with definable banks, capable of containing water, that may be partly filled with waters of the state and is discernible on aerial photographs.

Subd. 17. **Waters of the state.** "Waters of the state" means surface or underground waters, except surface waters that are not confined but are spread and diffused over the land. Waters of the state includes boundary and inland waters.

Subd. 17a. **Watershed.** "Watershed" means the 81 major watershed units delineated by the map, "State of Minnesota Watershed Boundaries - 1979."

Subd. 17b. **Wetland type.** "Wetland type" means a wetland type classified according to Wetlands of the United States, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Circular 39 (1971 edition), as summarized in this subdivision.

(1) "Type 1 wetlands" are seasonally flooded basins or flats in which soil is covered with water or is waterlogged during variable seasonal periods but usually is well-drained during much of the growing

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season. Type 1 wetlands are located in depressions and in overflow bottomlands along watercourses, and in which vegetation varies greatly according to season and duration of flooding and includes bottomland hardwoods as well as herbaceous growths.

(2) "Type 2 wetlands" are inland fresh meadows in which soil is usually without standing water during most of the growing season but is waterlogged within at least a few inches of surface. Vegetation includes grasses, sedges, rushes, and various broad-leafed plants. Meadows may fill shallow basins, sloughs, or farmland sags, or these meadows may border shallow marshes on the landward side.

(3) "Type 3 wetlands" are inland shallow fresh marshes in which soil is usually waterlogged early during a growing season and often covered with as much as six inches or more of water. Vegetation includes grasses, bulrushes, spikerushes, and various other marsh plants such as cattails, arrowheads, pickerelweed, and smartweeds. These marshes may nearly fill shallow lake basins or sloughs, or may border deep marshes on the landward side and are also common as seep areas on irrigated lands.

(4) "Type 4 wetlands" are inland deep fresh marshes in which soil is usually covered with six inches to three feet or more of water during the growing season. Vegetation includes cattails, reeds, bulrushes, spikerushes, and wild rice. In open areas, pondweeds, naiads, coontail, water milfoils, waterweeds, duckweeds, waterlilies, or spatterdocks may occur. These deep marshes may completely fill shallow lake basins, potholes, limestone sinks, and sloughs, or they may border open water in such depressions.

(5) "Type 5 wetlands" are inland open fresh water, shallow ponds, and reservoirs in which water is usually less than ten feet deep and is fringed by a border of emergent vegetation similar to open areas of type 4 wetland.

(6) "Type 6 wetlands" are shrub swamps in which soil is usually waterlogged during growing season and is often covered with as much as six inches of water. Vegetation includes alders, willows, buttonbush, dogwoods, and swamp-privet. This type occurs mostly along sluggish streams and occasionally on floodplains.

(7) "Type 7 wetlands" are wooded swamps in which soil is waterlogged at least to within a few inches of the surface during growing season and is often covered with as much as one foot of water. This type occurs mostly along sluggish streams, on floodplains, on flat uplands, and in shallow basins. Trees include tamarack, arborvitae, black spruce, balsam, red maple, and black ash. Northern evergreen swamps usually have a thick ground cover of mosses. Deciduous swamps frequently support beds of duckweeds and smartweeds.

(8) "Type 8 wetlands" are bogs in which soil is usually waterlogged and supports a spongy covering of mosses. This type occurs mostly in shallow basins, on flat uplands, and along sluggish streams. Vegetation is woody or herbaceous or both. Typical plants are heath shrubs, sphagnum moss, and sedges. In the north, leatherleaf, Labrador-tea, cranberries, carex, and cottongrass are often present. Scattered, often stunted, black spruce and tamarack may occur.

Subd. 18. Renumbered subd 15a

Subd. 19. **Wetlands.** (a) "Wetlands" means lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. For purposes of this definition, wetlands must have the following three attributes:

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(1) have a predominance of hydric soils;

(2) are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and

(3) under normal circumstances support a prevalence of such vegetation.

(b) For the purposes of regulation under this chapter, the term wetlands does not include public waters wetlands as defined in subdivision 15a.

HIST: 1990 c 391 art 7 s 2; 1990 c 597 s 62; 1991 c 354 art 6 s 1-6; art 10 s 4; 1994 c 643 s 49; 1995 c 218 s 3; 1996 c 462 s 10-22,43; 1997 c 2 s 8; 2000 c 382 s 1,2; 2003 c 128 s 111

103G.127 Permit program under section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act.

Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, the commissioner, with the concurrence of the board of water and soil resources and the commissioner of agriculture, may adopt rules establishing a permit program for regulating the discharge of dredged and fill material into the waters of the state as necessary to obtain approval from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to administer the permit program under section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act, United States Code, title 33, section 1344. The rules may not be more restrictive than the program under section 404, or state law, if it is more restrictive than the federal program.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 9 s 1; 1996 c 462 s 23

103G.2212 Contractor's responsibility when work drains or fills wetlands.

Subdivision 1. **Conditions for employees and agents to drain or fill wetlands.** An agent or employee of another may not drain or fill a wetland, wholly or partially, unless the agent or employee has:

(1) obtained a signed statement from the property owner stating that the wetland replacement plan required for the work has been obtained or that a replacement plan is not required; and

(2) mailed a copy of the statement to the local government unit with jurisdiction over the wetland.

Subd. 2. **Violation is separate offense.** Violation of this section is a separate and independent offense from other violations of sections 103G.2212 to [103G.237](#).

Subd. 3. **Form for compliance with this section.** The board shall develop a form to be distributed to contractors' associations, local government units, and soil and water conservation districts to comply with this section. The form must include:

(1) a listing of the activities for which a replacement plan is required;

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- (2) a description of the penalties for violating sections 103G.2212 to [103G.237](#);
- (3) the telephone number to call for information on the responsible local government unit;
- (4) a statement that national wetland inventory maps are on file with the soil and water conservation district office; and
- (5) spaces for a description of the work and the names, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers of the person authorizing the work and the agent or employee proposing to undertake it.

HIST: 2000 c 382 s 4

103G.222 Replacement of wetlands.

Subdivision 1. **Requirements.** (a) Wetlands must not be drained or filled, wholly or partially, unless replaced by restoring or creating wetland areas of at least equal public value under a replacement plan approved as provided in section [103G.2242](#), a replacement plan under a local governmental unit's comprehensive wetland protection and management plan approved by the board under section [103G.2243](#), or, if a permit to mine is required under section [93.481](#), under a mining reclamation plan approved by the commissioner under the permit to mine. Mining reclamation plans shall apply the same principles and standards for replacing wetlands by restoration or creation of wetland areas that are applicable to mitigation plans approved as provided in section [103G.2242](#). Public value must be determined in accordance with section [103B.3355](#) or a comprehensive wetland protection and management plan established under section [103G.2243](#). Sections [103G.221](#) to [103G.2372](#) also apply to excavation in permanently and semipermanently flooded areas of types 3, 4, and 5 wetlands.

(b) Replacement must be guided by the following principles in descending order of priority:

- (1) avoiding the direct or indirect impact of the activity that may destroy or diminish the wetland;
- (2) minimizing the impact by limiting the degree or magnitude of the wetland activity and its implementation;
- (3) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected wetland environment;
- (4) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the activity;
- (5) compensating for the impact by restoring a wetland; and
- (6) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute wetland resources or environments.

For a project involving the draining or filling of wetlands in an amount not exceeding 10,000 square feet more than the applicable amount in section [103G.2241](#), subdivision 9, paragraph (a), the local government unit may make an on-site sequencing determination without a written alternatives analysis from the applicant.

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(c) If a wetland is located in a cultivated field, then replacement must be accomplished through restoration only without regard to the priority order in paragraph (b), provided that a deed restriction is placed on the altered wetland prohibiting nonagricultural use for at least ten years.

(d) Restoration and replacement of wetlands must be accomplished in accordance with the ecology of the landscape area affected.

(e) Except as provided in paragraph (f), for a wetland or public waters wetland located on nonagricultural land, replacement must be in the ratio of two acres of replaced wetland for each acre of drained or filled wetland.

(f) For a wetland or public waters wetland located on agricultural land or in a greater than 80 percent area, replacement must be in the ratio of one acre of replaced wetland for each acre of drained or filled wetland.

(g) Wetlands that are restored or created as a result of an approved replacement plan are subject to the provisions of this section for any subsequent drainage or filling.

(h) Except in a greater than 80 percent area, only wetlands that have been restored from previously drained or filled wetlands, wetlands created by excavation in nonwetlands, wetlands created by dikes or dams along public or private drainage ditches, or wetlands created by dikes or dams associated with the restoration of previously drained or filled wetlands may be used in a statewide banking program established in rules adopted under section [103G.2242](#), subdivision 1. Modification or conversion of nondegraded naturally occurring wetlands from one type to another are not eligible for enrollment in a statewide wetlands bank.

(i) The technical evaluation panel established under section [103G.2242](#), subdivision 2, shall ensure that sufficient time has occurred for the wetland to develop wetland characteristics of soils, vegetation, and hydrology before recommending that the wetland be deposited in the statewide wetland bank. If the technical evaluation panel has reason to believe that the wetland characteristics may change substantially, the panel shall postpone its recommendation until the wetland has stabilized.

(j) This section and sections [103G.223](#) to [103G.2242](#), [103G.2364](#), and [103G.2365](#) apply to the state and its departments and agencies.

(k) For projects involving draining or filling of wetlands associated with a new public transportation project and for projects expanded solely for additional traffic capacity, public transportation authorities may purchase credits from the board at the cost to the board to establish credits. Proceeds from the sale of credits provided under this paragraph are appropriated to the board for the purposes of this paragraph.

(l) A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for individual projects that result in the filling or draining of wetlands for the repair, rehabilitation, reconstruction, or replacement of a currently serviceable existing state, city, county, or town public road necessary, as determined by the public transportation authority, to meet state or federal design or safety standards or requirements, excluding new roads or roads expanded solely for additional traffic capacity lanes. This paragraph only applies to authorities for public transportation projects that:

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(1) minimize the amount of wetland filling or draining associated with the project and consider mitigating important site-specific wetland functions on-site;

(2) except as provided in clause (3), submit project-specific reports to the board, the technical evaluation panel, the commissioner of natural resources, and members of the public requesting a copy at least 30 days prior to construction that indicate the location, amount, and type of wetlands to be filled or drained by the project or, alternatively, convene an annual meeting of the parties required to receive notice to review projects to be commenced during the upcoming year; and

(3) for minor and emergency maintenance work impacting less than 10,000 square feet, submit project-specific reports, within 30 days of commencing the activity, to the board that indicate the location, amount, and type of wetlands that have been filled or drained.

Those required to receive notice of public transportation projects may appeal minimization, delineation, and on-site mitigation decisions made by the public transportation authority to the board according to the provisions of section [103G.2242](#), subdivision 9. The technical evaluation panel shall review minimization and delineation decisions made by the public transportation authority and provide recommendations regarding on-site mitigation if requested to do so by the local government unit, a contiguous landowner, or a member of the technical evaluation panel.

Except for state public transportation projects, for which the state department of transportation is responsible, the board must replace the wetlands, and wetland areas of public waters if authorized by the commissioner or a delegated authority, drained or filled by public transportation projects on existing roads.

Public transportation authorities at their discretion may deviate from federal and state design standards on existing road projects when practical and reasonable to avoid wetland filling or draining, provided that public safety is not unreasonably compromised. The local road authority and its officers and employees are exempt from liability for any tort claim for injury to persons or property arising from travel on the highway and related to the deviation from the design standards for onstruction or reconstruction under this paragraph. This paragraph does not preclude an action for damages arising from negligence in construction or maintenance on a highway.

(m) If a landowner seeks approval of a replacement plan after the proposed project has already affected the wetland, the local government unit may require the landowner to replace the affected wetland at a ratio not to exceed twice the replacement ratio otherwise required.

(n) A local government unit may request the board to reclassify a county or watershed on the basis of its percentage of presettlement wetlands remaining. After receipt of satisfactory documentation from the local government, the board shall change the classification of a county or watershed. If requested by the local government unit, the board must assist in developing the documentation. Within 30 days of its action to approve a change of wetland classifications, the board shall publish a notice of the change in the Environmental Quality Board Monitor.

(o) One hundred citizens who reside within the jurisdiction of the local government unit may request the local government unit to reclassify a county or watershed on the basis of its percentage of presettlement wetlands remaining. In support of their petition, the citizens shall provide satisfactory documentation to the local government unit. The local government unit shall consider the petition and forward the request to the board under paragraph (n) or provide a reason why the petition is denied.

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Subd. 2. **Road credit funding.** The board shall give priority to restoration projects that:

- (1) will encourage land use that leads to more compact development or redevelopment;
- (2) will encourage public or private infrastructure investments which connect ecosystems and communities, attract private sector investment in commercial or residential properties adjacent to the public improvement; or
- (3) are located in critical rural and urban watersheds.

Subd. 3. **Wetland replacement siting.** (a) Siting wetland replacement must follow this priority order:

- (1) on site or in the same minor watershed as the affected wetland;
- (2) in the same watershed as the affected wetland;
- (3) in the same county as the affected wetland;
- (4) in an adjacent watershed or county to the affected wetland; and

(5) statewide, only for wetlands affected in greater than 80 percent areas and for public transportation projects, except that wetlands affected in less than 50 percent areas must be replaced in less than 50 percent areas, and wetlands affected in the seven-county metropolitan area must be replaced at a ratio of two to one in: (i) the affected county or, (ii) in another of the seven metropolitan counties, or (iii) in one of the major watersheds that are wholly or partially within the seven-county metropolitan area, but at least one to one must be replaced within the seven-county metropolitan area.

(b) The exception in paragraph (a), clause (5), does not apply to replacement completed using wetland banking credits established by a person who submitted a complete wetland banking application to a local government unit by April 1, 1996.

(c) When reasonable, practicable, and environmentally beneficial replacement opportunities are not available in siting priorities listed in paragraph (a), the applicant may seek opportunities at the next level.

(d) For the purposes of this section, "reasonable, practicable, and environmentally beneficial replacement opportunities" are defined as opportunities that:

- (1) take advantage of naturally occurring hydrogeomorphological conditions and require minimal landscape alteration;
- (2) have a high likelihood of becoming a functional wetland that will continue in perpetuity;
- (3) do not adversely affect other habitat types or ecological communities that are important in maintaining the overall biological diversity of the area; and

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(4) are available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics consistent with overall project purposes.

(e) Regulatory agencies, local government units, and other entities involved in wetland restoration shall collaborate to identify potential replacement opportunities within their jurisdictional areas.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 6 s 8; 1993 c 175 s 2; 1994 c 627 s 3; 1996 c 462 s 24; 2000 c 382 s 5; 2003 c 128 s 112, 113

103G.223 Calcareous fens.

Calcareous fens, as identified by the commissioner by written order published in the State Register, may not be filled, drained, or otherwise degraded, wholly or partially, by any activity, unless the commissioner, under an approved management plan, decides some alteration is necessary. Identifications made by the commissioner are not subject to the rulemaking provisions of chapter 14 and section 14.386 does not apply.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 6 s 9; 2004 c 221 s 43

103G.2241 Exemptions.

Subdivision 1. **Agricultural activities.** (a) A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for:

(1) activities in a wetland that was planted with annually seeded crops, was in a crop rotation seeding of pasture grass or legumes, or was required to be set aside to receive price support or other payments under United States Code, title 7, sections 1421 to 1469, in six of the last ten years prior to January 1, 1991;

(2) activities in a wetland that is or has been enrolled in the federal conservation reserve program under United States Code, title 16, section 3831, that:

(i) was planted with annually seeded crops, was in a crop rotation seeding, or was required to be set aside to receive price support or payment under United States Code, title 7, sections 1421 to 1469, in six of the last ten years prior to being enrolled in the program; and

(ii) has not been restored with assistance from a public or private wetland restoration program;

(3) activities in a wetland that has received a commenced drainage determination provided for by the federal Food Security Act of 1985, that was made to the county agricultural stabilization and conservation service office prior to September 19, 1988, and a ruling and any subsequent appeals or reviews have determined that drainage of the wetland had been commenced prior to December 23, 1985;

(4) activities in a type 1 wetland on agricultural land, except for bottomland hardwood type 1 wetlands, and activities in a type 2 or type 6 wetland that is less than two acres in size and located on agricultural land;

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(5) aquaculture activities including pond excavation and construction and maintenance of associated access roads and dikes authorized under, and conducted in accordance with, a permit issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers under section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act, United States Code, title 33, section 1344, but not including construction or expansion of buildings;

(6) wild rice production activities, including necessary diking and other activities authorized under a permit issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers under section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act, United States Code, title 33, section 1344;

(7) normal agricultural practices to control noxious or secondary weeds as defined by rule of the commissioner of agriculture, in accordance with applicable requirements under state and federal law, including established best management practices; and

(8) agricultural activities in a wetland that is on agricultural land:

(i) annually enrolled in the federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 and is subject to United States Code, title 16, sections 3821 to 3823, in effect on January 1, 2000; or

(ii) subject to subsequent federal farm program restrictions that meet minimum state standards under this chapter and sections [103A.202](#) and [103B.3355](#) and that have been approved by the board of water and soil resources, the commissioners of natural resources and agriculture, and the pollution control agency.

(b) Land enrolled in a federal farm program under paragraph (a), clause (8), is eligible for easement participation for those acres not already compensated under a federal program.

(c) The exemption under paragraph (a), clause (4), may be expanded to additional acreage, including types 1, 2, and 6 wetlands that are part of a larger wetland system, when the additional acreage is part of a conservation plan approved by the local soil and water conservation district, the additional draining or filling is necessary for efficient operation of the farm, the hydrology of the larger wetland system is not adversely affected, and wetlands other than types 1, 2, and 6 are not drained or filled.

Subd. 2. **Drainage.** (a) For the purposes of this subdivision, "public drainage system" means a drainage system as defined in section [103E.005](#), subdivision 12, and any ditch or tile lawfully connected to the drainage system.

(b) A replacement plan is not required for draining of type 1 wetlands, or up to five acres of type 2 or 6 wetlands, in an unincorporated area on land that has been assessed drainage benefits for a public drainage system, provided that:

(1) during the 20-year period that ended January 1, 1992:

(i) there was an expenditure made from the drainage system account for the public drainage system;

(ii) the public drainage system was repaired or maintained as approved by the drainage authority; or

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(iii) no repair or maintenance of the public drainage system was required under section [103E.705](#), subdivision 1, as determined by the public drainage authority; and

(2) the wetlands are not drained for conversion to:

(i) platted lots;

(ii) planned unit, commercial, or industrial developments; or

(iii) any development with more than one residential unit per 40 acres.

If wetlands drained under this paragraph are converted to uses prohibited under clause (2) during the ten-year period following drainage, the wetlands must be replaced under section [103G.222](#).

(c) A replacement plan is not required for draining or filling of wetlands, except for draining types 3, 4, and 5 wetlands that have been in existence for more than 25 years, resulting from maintenance and repair of existing public drainage systems.

(d) A replacement plan is not required for draining or filling of wetlands, except for draining wetlands that have been in existence for more than 25 years, resulting from maintenance and repair of existing drainage systems other than public drainage systems.

(e) A replacement plan is not required for draining or filling of wetlands resulting from activities conducted as part of a public drainage system improvement project that received final approval from the drainage authority before July 1, 1991, and after July 1, 1986, if:

(1) the approval remains valid;

(2) the project remains active; and

(3) no additional drainage will occur beyond that originally approved.

(f) The public drainage authority may, as part of the repair, install control structures, realign the ditch, construct dikes along the ditch, or make other modifications as necessary to prevent drainage of the wetland.

(g) Wetlands of all types that would be drained as a part of a public drainage repair project are eligible for the permanent wetlands preserve under section [103F.516](#). The board shall give priority to acquisition of easements on types 3, 4, and 5 wetlands that have been in existence for more than 25 years on public drainage systems and other wetlands that have the greatest risk of drainage from a public drainage repair project.

Subd. 3. **Federal approvals.** A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for:

(1) activities exempted from federal regulation under United States Code, title 33, section 1344(f), as in effect on January 1, 1991;

(2) activities authorized under, and conducted in accordance with, an applicable general permit issued by the United States Army Corps of Engineers under section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act,

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United States Code, title 33, section 1344, except the nationwide permit in Code of Federal Regulations, title 33, section 330.5, paragraph (a), clauses (14), limited to when a new road crosses a wetland, and (26), as in effect on January 1, 1991; or

(3) activities authorized under the federal Clean Water Act, section 404, or the Rivers and Harbors Act, section 10, regulations that meet minimum state standards under this chapter and sections [103A.202](#) and [103B.3355](#) and that have been approved by the board of water and soil resources, the commissioners of natural resources and agriculture, and the pollution control agency.

Subd. 4. **Wetland restoration.** A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for activities in a wetland restored for conservation purposes under a contract or easement providing the landowner with the right to drain the restored wetland.

Subd. 5. **Incidental wetlands.** A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for activities in a wetland created solely as a result of:

- (1) beaver dam construction;
 - (2) blockage of culverts through roadways maintained by a public or private entity;
 - (3) actions by public or private entities that were taken for a purpose other than creating the wetland;
- or

(4) any combination of clauses (1) to (3).

Subd. 6. **Utilities; public works.** A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for:

- (1) placement, maintenance, repair, enhancement, or replacement of utility or utility-type service if:
 - (i) the impacts of the proposed project on the hydrologic and biological characteristics of the wetland have been avoided and minimized to the extent possible; and
 - (ii) the proposed project significantly modifies or alters less than one-half acre of wetlands;
- (2) activities associated with routine maintenance of utility and pipeline rights-of-way, provided the activities do not result in additional intrusion into the wetland;
- (3) alteration of a wetland associated with the operation, maintenance, or repair of an interstate pipeline within all existing or acquired interstate pipeline rights-of-way;
- (4) emergency repair and normal maintenance and repair of existing public works, provided the activity does not result in additional intrusion of the public works into the wetland and does not result in the draining or filling, wholly or partially, of a wetland;
- (5) normal maintenance and minor repair of structures causing no additional intrusion of an existing structure into the wetland, and maintenance and repair of private crossings that do not result in the draining or filling, wholly or partially, of a wetland; or

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(6) repair and updating of existing individual sewage treatment systems as necessary to comply with local, state, and federal regulations.

Subd. 7. **Forestry.** A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for:

(1) temporarily crossing or entering a wetland to perform silvicultural activities, including timber harvest as part of a forest management activity, so long as the activity limits the impact on the hydrologic and biologic characteristics of the wetland; the activities do not result in the construction of dikes, drainage ditches, tile lines, or buildings; and the timber harvesting and other silvicultural practices do not result in the drainage of the wetland or public waters; or

(2) permanent access for forest roads across wetlands so long as the activity limits the impact on the hydrologic and biologic characteristics of the wetland; the construction activities do not result in the access becoming a dike, drainage ditch, or tile line; filling is avoided wherever possible; and there is no drainage of the wetland or public waters.

Subd. 8. **Approved development.** A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for development projects and ditch improvement projects in the state that have received preliminary or final plat approval or have infrastructure that has been installed or has local site plan approval, conditional use permits, or similar official approval by a governing body or government agency, within five years before July 1, 1991. As used in this subdivision, "infrastructure" means public water facilities, storm water and sanitary sewer piping, outfalls, inlets, culverts, bridges, and any other work defined specifically by a local government unit as constituting a capital improvement to a parcel within the context of an approved development plan.

Subd. 9. **De minimis.** (a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), a replacement plan for wetlands is not required for draining or filling the following amounts of wetlands as part of a project:

(1) 10,000 square feet of type 1, 2, 6, or 7 wetland, excluding white cedar and tamarack wetlands, outside of the shoreland wetland protection zone in a greater than 80 percent area;

(2) 5,000 square feet of type 1, 2, 6, or 7 wetland, excluding white cedar and tamarack wetlands, outside of the shoreland wetland protection zone in a 50 to 80 percent area;

(3) 2,000 square feet of type 1, 2, or 6 wetland, outside of the shoreland wetland protection zone in a less than 50 percent area;

(4) 400 square feet of wetland types not listed in clauses (1) to (3) outside of shoreland wetland protection zones in all counties; or

(5) 400 square feet of type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 wetland, in the shoreland wetland protection zone, except that in a greater than 80 percent area, the local government unit may increase the de minimis amount up to 1,000 square feet in the shoreland protection zone in areas beyond the building setback if the wetland is isolated and is determined to have no direct surficial connection to the public water. To the extent that a local shoreland management ordinance is more restrictive than this provision, the local shoreland ordinance applies.

(b) The amounts listed in paragraph (a), clauses (1) to (5), may not be combined on a project.

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(c) This exemption no longer applies to a landowner's portion of a wetland when the cumulative area drained or filled of the landowner's portion since January 1, 1992, is the greatest of:

- (1) the applicable area listed in paragraph (a), if the landowner owns the entire wetland;
- (2) five percent of the landowner's portion of the wetland; or
- (3) 400 square feet.

(d) This exemption may not be combined with another exemption in this section on a project.

Subd. 10. **Wildlife habitat.** A replacement plan for wetlands is not required for:

(1) deposition of spoil resulting from excavation within a wetland for a wildlife habitat improvement project, if:

(i) the area of deposition does not exceed five percent of the wetland area or one-half acre, whichever is less, and the spoil is stabilized and permanently seeded to prevent erosion;

(ii) the project does not have an adverse impact on any species designated as endangered or threatened under state or federal law; and

(iii) the project will provide wildlife habitat improvement as certified by the soil and water conservation district; or

(2) duck blinds.

Subd. 11. **Exemption conditions.** (a) A person conducting an activity in a wetland under an exemption in subdivisions 1 to 10 shall ensure that:

(1) appropriate erosion control measures are taken to prevent sedimentation of the water;

(2) the activity does not block fish passage in a watercourse; and

(3) the activity is conducted in compliance with all other applicable federal, state, and local requirements, including best management practices and water resource protection requirements established under chapter 103H.

(b) An activity is exempt if it qualifies for any one of the exemptions, even though it may be indicated as not exempt under another exemption.

(c) Persons proposing to conduct an exempt activity are encouraged to contact the local government unit or the local government unit's designee for advice on minimizing wetland impacts.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 6 s 10; 1993 c 175 s 3; 1993 c 226 s 20; 1994 c 627 s 4; 1996 c 462 s 25; 2000 c 382 s 6-8

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103G.2242 Wetland value replacement plans.

Subdivision 1. **Rules.** (a) The board, in consultation with the commissioner, shall adopt rules governing the approval of wetland value replacement plans under this section and public waters work permits affecting public waters wetlands under section [103G.245](#). These rules must address the criteria, procedure, timing, and location of acceptable replacement of wetland values; may address the state establishment and administration of a wetland banking program for public and private projects, which may include provisions allowing monetary payment to the wetland banking program for alteration of wetlands on agricultural land; the administrative, monitoring, and enforcement procedures to be used; and a procedure for the review and appeal of decisions under this section. In the case of peatlands, the replacement plan rules must consider the impact on carbon balance described in the report required by Laws 1990, chapter 587, and include the planting of trees or shrubs.

(b) After the adoption of the rules, a replacement plan must be approved by a resolution of the governing body of the local government unit, consistent with the provisions of the rules or a comprehensive wetland protection and management plan approved under section [103G.2243](#).

(c) If the local government unit fails to apply the rules, or fails to implement a local comprehensive wetland protection and management plan established under section [103G.2243](#), the government unit is subject to penalty as determined by the board.

Subd. 2. **Evaluation.** (a) Questions concerning the public value, location, size, or type of a wetland shall be submitted to and determined by a technical evaluation panel after an on-site inspection. The technical evaluation panel shall be composed of a technical professional employee of the board, a technical professional employee of the local soil and water conservation district or districts, a technical professional with expertise in water resources management appointed by the local government unit, and a technical professional employee of the department of natural resources for projects affecting public waters or wetlands adjacent to public waters. The panel shall use the "United States Army Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual" (January 1987), including updates, supplementary guidance, and replacements, if any, "Wetlands of the United States" (United States Fish and Wildlife Service Circular 39, 1971 edition), and "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States" (1979 edition). The panel shall provide the wetland determination and recommendations on other technical matters to the local government unit that must approve a replacement plan, wetland banking plan, exemption determination, no-loss determination, or wetland boundary or type determination and may recommend approval or denial of the plan. The authority must consider and include the decision of the technical evaluation panel in their approval or denial of a plan or determination.

(b) Persons conducting wetland or public waters boundary delineations or type determinations are exempt from the requirements of chapter 326. By January 15, 2001, the board, in consultation with the Minnesota Association of Professional Soil Scientists, the University of Minnesota, and the Wetland Delineators' Association, shall submit a plan for a professional wetland delineator certification program to the legislature.

Subd. 2a. **Wetland boundary or type determination.** (a) A landowner may apply for a wetland boundary or type determination from the local government unit. The landowner applying for the determination is responsible for submitting proof necessary to make the determination, including, but not limited to, wetland delineation field data, observation well data, topographic mapping, survey

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mapping, and information regarding soils, vegetation, hydrology, and groundwater both within and outside of the proposed wetland boundary.

(b) A local government unit that receives an application under paragraph (a) may seek the advice of the technical evaluation panel as described in subdivision 2, and, if necessary, expand the technical evaluation panel. The local government unit may delegate the decision authority for wetland boundary or type determinations with the zoning administrator, or establish other procedures it considers appropriate.

(c) The local government unit decision must be made in compliance with section [15.99](#). Within ten calendar days of the decision, the local government unit decision must be mailed to the landowner, members of the technical evaluation panel, the watershed district or watershed management organization, if one exists, and individual members of the public who request a copy.

(d) The local government unit decision is valid for three years unless the technical evaluation panel determines that natural or artificial changes to the hydrology, vegetation, or soils of the area have been sufficient to alter the wetland boundary or type.

Subd. 3. **Replacement completion.** Replacement of wetland values must be completed prior to or concurrent with the actual draining or filling of a wetland, or an irrevocable bank letter of credit or other security acceptable to the local government unit must be given to the local government unit to guarantee the successful completion of the replacement.

Subd. 4. **Decision.** Upon receiving and considering all required data, the local government unit reviewing replacement plan applications, banking plan applications, and exemption or no-loss determination requests must act on all replacement plan applications, banking plan applications, and exemption or no-loss determination requests in compliance with section [15.99](#).

Subd. 5. **Processing fee.** The local government unit and soil and water conservation district may charge processing fees in amounts not greater than are necessary to cover the reasonable costs of implementing the rules adopted under subdivision 1 and for technical and administrative assistance to landowners in processing other applications for projects affecting wetlands.

Subd. 6. **Notice of application.** (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), within ten days of receiving an application for approval of a replacement plan under this section, copies of the complete application must be mailed to the members of the technical evaluation panel, the managers of the watershed district if one exists, and the commissioner of natural resources. Individual members of the public who request a copy shall be provided information to identify the applicant and the location and scope of the project.

(b) Within ten days of receiving an application for approval of a replacement plan under this section for an activity affecting less than 10,000 square feet of wetland, a summary of the application must be mailed to the members of the technical evaluation panel, individual members of the public who request a copy, and the commissioner of natural resources.

(c) For the purpose of this subdivision, "application" includes a revised application for replacement plan approval and an application for a revision to an approved replacement plan if:

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(1) the wetland area to be drained or filled under the revised replacement plan is at least ten percent larger than the area to be drained or filled under the original replacement plan; or

(2) the wetland area to be drained or filled under the revised replacement is located more than 500 feet from the area to be drained or filled under the original replacement plan.

Subd. 7. **Notice of decision.** Within ten days of the approval or denial of a replacement plan under this section, a summary of the approval or denial must be mailed to members of the technical evaluation panel, the applicant, individual members of the public who request a copy, the managers of the watershed district, if one exists, and the commissioner of natural resources.

Subd. 8. **Public comment period.** Except for activities impacting less than 10,000 square feet of wetland, before approval or denial of a replacement plan under this section, comments may be made by the public to the local government unit for a period of 15 days or more, as determined by the local government unit.

Subd. 9. **Appeal.** (a) Appeal of a replacement plan, exemption, wetland banking, wetland boundary or type determination, or no-loss decision may be obtained by mailing a petition and payment of a filing fee of \$200, which shall be retained by the board to defray administrative costs, to the board within 30 days after the postmarked date of the mailing specified in subdivision 7. If appeal is not sought within 30 days, the decision becomes final. The local government unit may require the petitioner to post a letter of credit, cashier's check, or cash in an amount not to exceed \$500. If the petition for hearing is accepted, the amount posted must be returned to the petitioner. Appeal may be made by:

(1) the wetland owner;

(2) any of those to whom notice is required to be mailed under subdivision 7; or

(3) 100 residents of the county in which a majority of the wetland is located.

(b) Within 30 days after receiving a petition, the board shall decide whether to grant the petition and hear the appeal. The board shall grant the petition unless the board finds that:

(1) the appeal is meritless, trivial, or brought solely for the purposes of delay;

(2) the petitioner has not exhausted all local administrative remedies;

(3) expanded technical review is needed;

(4) the local government unit's record is not adequate; or

(5) the petitioner has not posted a letter of credit, cashier's check, or cash if required by the local government unit.

(c) In determining whether to grant the appeal, the board shall also consider the size of the wetland, other factors in controversy, any patterns of similar acts by the local government unit or petitioner, and the consequences of the delay resulting from the appeal.

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(d) All appeals must be heard by the committee for dispute resolution of the board, and a decision made within 60 days of filing the local government unit's record and the written briefs submitted for the appeal. The decision must be served by mail on the parties to the appeal, and is not subject to the provisions of chapter 14. A decision whether to grant a petition for appeal and a decision on the merits of an appeal must be considered the decision of an agency in a contested case for purposes of judicial review under sections [14.63](#) to [14.69](#).

Subd. 10. **Local requirements.** The rules adopted under subdivision 1 shall allow for local government units to use their own notice and public comment procedures so long as the requirements of this section are satisfied.

Subd. 11. Expired.

Subd. 12. **Replacement credits.** (a) No public or private wetland restoration, enhancement, or construction may be allowed for replacement unless specifically designated for replacement and paid for by the individual or organization performing the wetland restoration, enhancement, or construction, and is completed prior to any draining or filling of the wetland.

(b) Paragraph (a) does not apply to a wetland whose owner has paid back with interest the individual or organization restoring, enhancing, or constructing the wetland.

(c) Notwithstanding section [103G.222](#), subdivision 1, paragraph (h), the following actions, and others established in rule, that are consistent with criteria in rules adopted by the board in conjunction with the commissioners of natural resources and agriculture, are eligible for replacement credit as determined by the local government unit, including enrollment in a statewide wetlands bank:

(1) reestablishment of permanent native, noninvasive vegetative cover on a wetland on agricultural land that was planted with annually seeded crops, was in a crop rotation seeding of pasture grasses or legumes, or was in a land retirement program during the past ten years;

(2) buffer areas of permanent native, noninvasive vegetative cover established or preserved on upland adjacent to replacement wetlands;

(3) wetlands restored for conservation purposes under terminated easements or contracts; and

(4) water quality treatment ponds constructed to pretreat storm water runoff prior to discharge to wetlands, public waters, or other water bodies, provided that the water quality treatment ponds must be associated with an ongoing or proposed project that will impact a wetland and replacement credit for the treatment ponds is based on the replacement of wetland functions and on an approved stormwater management plan for the local government.

(d) Notwithstanding section [103G.222](#), subdivision 1, paragraphs (e) and (f), the board may establish by rule different replacement ratios for restoration projects with exceptional natural resource value.

Subd. 13. Repealed, 1996 c 462 s 44

Subd. 14. **Fees Established.** Fees must be assessed for managing wetland bank accounts and transactions as follows:

(1) account maintenance annual fee: one percent of the value of credits not to exceed \$500;

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(2) account establishment, deposit, or transfer: 6.5 percent of the value of credits not to exceed \$1,000 per establishment, deposit, or transfer; and

(3) withdrawal fee: 6.5 percent of the value of credits withdrawn.

Subd. 15. **Fees Paid To Board.** All fees established in subdivision 14 must be paid to the board of water and soil resources and credited to the general fund to be used for the purpose of administration of the wetland bank.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 6 s 11; 1993 c 175 s 4,5; 1994 c 627 s 5-9; 1996 c 462 s 26-32; 1998 c 312 s 4; 2000 c 382 s 9-14; 2001 c 7 s 25; 2001 c 146 s 6,7; 2003 c 128 s 114-115

103G.2243 Local comprehensive wetland protection and management plans.

Subdivision 1. **General requirements; notice and participation.** (a) As an alternative to the rules adopted under section [103G.2242](#), subdivision 1, and the public value criteria established or approved under section [103B.3355](#), a comprehensive wetland protection and management plan may be developed by a local government unit, or one or more local government units operating under a joint powers agreement, provided that:

(1) a notice is made at the beginning of the planning process to the board, the commissioner of natural resources, the pollution control agency, the commissioner of agriculture, local government units, and local citizens to actively participate in the development of the plan; and

(2) the plan is implemented by ordinance as part of the local government's official controls under chapter 394, for a county; chapter 462, for a city; chapter 366, for a town; and by rules adopted under chapter 103D, for a watershed district; and chapter 103B, for a watershed management organization.

(b) An organization that is invited to participate in the development of the local plan, but declines to do so and fails to participate or to provide written comments during the local review process, waives the right during board review to submit comments, except comments concerning consistency of the plan with laws and rules administered by that agency. In determining the merit of an agency comment, the board shall consider the involvement of the agency in the development of the local plan.

Subd. 2. **Plan contents.** A comprehensive wetland protection and management plan may:

(1) provide for classification of wetlands in the plan area based on:

(i) an inventory of wetlands in the plan area;

(ii) an assessment of the wetland functions listed in section [103B.3355](#), using a methodology chosen by the technical evaluation panel from one of the methodologies established or approved by the board under that section; and

(iii) the resulting public values;

(2) vary application of the sequencing standards in section [103G.222](#), subdivision 1, paragraph (b), for projects based on the classification and criteria set forth in the plan;

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(3) vary the replacement standards of section [103G.222](#), subdivision 1, paragraphs (e) and (f), based on the classification and criteria set forth in the plan, for specific wetland impacts provided there is no net loss of public values within the area subject to the plan, and so long as:

(i) in a 50 to 80 percent area, a minimum acreage requirement of one acre of replaced wetland for each acre of drained or filled wetland requiring replacement is met within the area subject to the plan; and

(ii) in a less than 50 percent area, a minimum acreage requirement of two acres of replaced wetland for each acre of drained or filled wetland requiring replacement is met within the area subject to the plan, except that replacement for the amount above a 1:1 ratio can be accomplished as described in section [103G.2242](#), subdivision 12;

(4) in a greater than 80 percent area, allow replacement credit, based on the classification and criteria set forth in the plan, for any project that increases the public value of wetlands, including activities on adjacent upland acres; and

(5) in a greater than 80 percent area, based on the classification and criteria set forth in the plan, expand the application of the exemptions in section [103G.2241](#), subdivision 1, paragraph (a), clause (4), to also include nonagricultural land, provided there is no net loss of wetland values.

Subd. 3. **Board review and approval; mediation; judicial review.** (a) The plan is deemed approved 60 days after the local government submits the final plan to the board, unless the board disagrees with the plan as provided in paragraph (d).

(b) The board may not disapprove a plan if the board determines the plan meets the requirements of this section.

(c) In its review of a plan, the board shall advise the local government unit of those elements of the plan that are more restrictive than state law and rules for purposes of section [103G.237](#), subdivision 5.

(d) If the board disagrees with the plan or any elements of the plan, the board shall, in writing, notify the local government of the plan deficiencies and suggested changes. The board shall include in the response to the local government the scientific justification, if applicable, for the board's concerns with the plan. Upon receipt of the board's concerns with the plan, the local government has 60 days to revise the plan and resubmit the plan to the board for reconsideration, or the local government may request a hearing before the board. The board shall hold a hearing within the boundaries of the jurisdiction of the local government within 60 days of the request for hearing. After the hearing, the board shall, within 60 days, prepare a report of its decision and inform the local government.

(e) If, after the hearing, the board and local government disagree on the plan, the board shall, within 60 days, initiate mediation through a neutral party. If the board and local government unit agree in writing not to use mediation or the mediation does not result in a resolution of the differences between the parties, then the board may commence a declaratory judgment action in the district court of the county where the local government unit is located. If the board does not commence a declaratory judgment action within the applicable 60-day period, the plan is deemed approved.

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(f) The declaratory judgment action must be commenced within 60 days after the date of the written agreement not to use mediation or 60 days after conclusion of the mediation. If the board commences a declaratory judgment action, the district court shall review the board's record of decision and the record of decision of the local government unit. The district court shall affirm the plan if it meets the requirements of this section.

Subd. 4. **Effective date; replacement decisions.** (a) The plan becomes effective as provided in subdivision 3, paragraphs (d) to (f), and after adoption of the plan into the official controls of the local government.

(b) After the effective date of a plan, a local government unit shall make replacement decisions consistent with the plan.

Subd. 5. **Plan amendments.** Amendments to the plan become effective upon completion of the same process required for the original plan.

Subd. 6. **Water planning processes apply.** Except as otherwise provided for in this section, all other requirements relating to development of the plan must be consistent with the water plan processes under sections [103B.231](#) and [103B.311](#).

HIST: 1996 c 462 s 33; 1997 c 2 s 9; 1998 c 312 s 5; 2001 c 7 s 26

103G.2244 Wetland creation or restoration within pipeline easement.

A person proposing to create or restore a wetland within the easement of a pipeline as defined in section [299J.02](#), subdivision 11, shall first notify the easement holder and the director of the office of pipeline safety in writing. The person may not create or restore the wetland if, within 90 days after receiving the required notice, the easement holder or the director of the office of pipeline safety provides to the person a written notice of objection that includes the reasons for the objection.

HIST: 1996 c 462 s 34

103G.237 Compensation for loss of private use.

Subdivision 1. **General.** A person whose replacement plan is not approved must be compensated as provided in this section. The person may drain or fill the wetland without an approved replacement plan if the person:

(1) is eligible for compensation under subdivision 2;

(2) applies for compensation in accordance with subdivision 3; and

(3) does not receive the compensation required in subdivision 4 within 90 days after the application for compensation is received by the board.

Subd. 2. **Eligibility.** A person is eligible for compensation if:

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- (1) the person applies for replacement plan approval under section [103G.2242](#);
- (2) the replacement plan is not approved or the plan conditions make the proposed use unworkable or not feasible;
- (3) the person appeals the disapproval of the plan;
- (4) the proposed use would otherwise be allowed under federal, state, and local laws, rules, ordinances, and other legal requirements;
- (5) the person has suffered or will suffer damages;
- (6) disallowing the proposed use will enhance the public value of the wetland; and
- (7) the person applies to the board for compensation.

Subd. 3. **Application.** An application for compensation must be made on forms prescribed by the board and include:

- (1) the location and public value of the wetland where the use was proposed;
- (2) a description and reason for the proposed wetland use; and
- (3) the objection to the replacement plan, if any.

Subd. 4. **Compensation.** (a) The board shall award compensation in an amount equal to the greater of:

(1) 50 percent of the value of the wetland, calculated by multiplying the acreage of the wetland by the greater of:

(i) the average equalized estimated market value of agricultural property in the township as established by the commissioner of revenue at the time application for compensation is made; or

(ii) the assessed value per acre of the parcel containing the wetland, based on the assessed value of the parcel as stated on the most recent tax statement; or

(2) \$200 per acre of wetland subject to the replacement plan, increased or decreased by the percentage change of the assessed valuation of land in the township where the wetland is located from the 1995 valuation.

(b) A person who receives compensation under paragraph (a) shall convey to the board a permanent conservation easement as described in section [103F.515](#), subdivision 4. An easement conveyed under this paragraph is subject to correction and enforcement under section [103F.515](#), subdivisions 8 and 9.

Subd. 5. **Compensation claims against local government units.** (a) At the request of a local government unit against which a compensation action is brought based at least in part on the local government unit's application of this section or section [103G.222](#), [103G.2241](#), [103G.2242](#), [103G.2243](#), or [103G.2372](#), or rules adopted by the board to implement these sections, the state, through the attorney

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general, shall intervene in the action on behalf of the local government unit and shall thereafter be considered a defendant in the action. A local government unit making a request under this paragraph shall provide the attorney general with a copy of the complaint as soon as possible after being served. If requested by the attorney general, the court shall grant additional time to file an answer equal to the time between service of the complaint on the local government unit and receipt of the complaint by the attorney general.

(b) The state is liable for costs, damages, fees, and compensation awarded in the action based on the local government unit's adoption or implementation of standards that are required by state law, as determined by the court. The local government unit is liable for costs, damages, fees, and compensation awarded in the action based on local standards that are more restrictive than state law and rules.

(c) For the purposes of this subdivision, "compensation action" means an action in which the plaintiff seeks compensation for a taking of private property under the state or federal constitution.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 6 s 17; 1994 c 627 s 10; 1996 c 462 s 35,36

103G.2372 Enforcement.

Subdivision 1. **Commissioner of natural resources.** The commissioner of natural resources, conservation officers, and peace officers shall enforce laws preserving and protecting wetlands and public waters. The commissioner of natural resources, a conservation officer, or a peace officer may issue a cease and desist order to stop any illegal activity adversely affecting a wetland or public waters. In the order, or by separate order, the commissioner, conservation officer, or peace officer may require restoration or replacement of the wetland or public waters, as determined by the local soil and water conservation district for wetlands and the commissioner of natural resources for public waters. Restoration or replacement orders may be recorded or filed in the office of the county recorder or registrar of titles, as appropriate, in the county where the real property is located by the commissioner of natural resources, conservation officers, or peace officers as a deed restriction on the property that runs with the land and is binding on the owners, successors, and assigns until the conditions of the order are met or the order is rescinded. Notwithstanding section [386.77](#), the agency shall pay the applicable filing fee for any document filed under this section.

Subd. 2. **Misdemeanor.** A violation of an order issued under subdivision 1 is a misdemeanor and must be prosecuted by the county attorney where the wetland or public waters are located or the illegal activity occurred.

Subd. 3. **Restitution.** The court may, as part of sentencing, require a person convicted under subdivision 2 to restore or replace the wetland or public waters, as determined by the local soil and water conservation district for wetlands and the commissioner of natural resources for public waters.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 6 s 18; 2000 c 382 s 15; 2001 c 146 s 8

272.02 Exempt property.

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Subdivision 1. **Exempt property described.** All property described in this section to the extent limited in this section shall be exempt from taxation.

Subd. 11. **Wetlands.** Wetlands are exempt. For purposes of this subdivision, "wetlands" means: (i) land described in section [103G.005](#), subdivision 15a; (ii) land which is mostly under water, produces little if any income, and has no use except for wildlife or water conservation purposes, provided it is preserved in its natural condition and drainage of it would be legal, feasible, and economically practical for the production of livestock, dairy animals, poultry, fruit, vegetables, forage and grains, except wild rice; or (iii) land in a wetland preservation area under sections [103F.612](#) to [103F.616](#). "Wetlands" under clauses (i) and (ii) include adjacent land which is not suitable for agricultural purposes due to the presence of the wetlands, but do not include woody swamps containing shrubs or trees, wet meadows, meandered water, streams, rivers, and floodplains or river bottoms. Exemption of wetlands from taxation pursuant to this section shall not grant the public any additional or greater right of access to the wetlands or diminish any right of ownership to the wetlands.

273.11 Valuation of property.

Subd. 11. **Valuation of restored or preserved wetland.** Wetlands restored by the federal, state, or local government, or by a nonprofit organization, or preserved under the terms of a temporary or perpetual easement by the federal or state government, must be valued by assessors at their wetland value. "Wetland value" in this subdivision means the market value of wetlands in any potential use in which the wetland character is not permanently altered. Wetland value shall not reflect potential uses of the wetland that would violate the terms of any existing conservation easement, or any one-time payment received by the wetland owner under the terms of a state or federal conservation easement. Wetland value shall reflect any potential income consistent with a property's wetland character, including but not limited to lease payments for hunting or other recreational uses. The commissioner of revenue shall issue a bulletin advising assessors of the provisions of this section by October 1, 1991. For purposes of this subdivision, "wetlands" means lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. For purposes of this definition, wetlands must have the following three attributes:

- (1) have a predominance of hydric soils;
- (2) are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and
- (3) under normal circumstances support a prevalence of such vegetation.

275.295 Wetlands exemption; replacement of revenue.

Subdivision 1. **Certification.** The total amount of revenue lost as a result of the exemption provided in section [272.02](#), subdivision 11, clause (iii), must be certified by the county auditor to the commissioner of revenue and submitted to the commissioner as part of the abstract of tax lists to be filed with the commissioner under the provisions of section [275.29](#). The amount of revenue lost as a result of the exemption must be computed each year by applying the current local tax rates of the taxing jurisdictions in which the wetlands are located to the net tax capacity of the wetlands. Payment to the

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county for lost revenue must not be less than the revenue that would have been received in taxes if the wetlands had a net tax capacity of 50 cents per acre. The commissioner of revenue shall review the certification for accuracy and may make necessary changes or return the certification to the county auditor for corrections.

Subd. 2. **Payment.** Based on current year tax data reported in the abstracts of tax lists, the commissioner of revenue shall annually determine the taxing district distribution of the amounts certified under subdivision 1. The commissioner shall pay to each taxing district, other than school districts, its total payment for the year at the time distributions are made under section [473H.10](#).

Subd. 3. **Appropriation.** There is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner of revenue the amount necessary to make the payments required in subdivision 2. There is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner of children, families, and learning the amount necessary to make the payments determined under subdivisions 1 and 2 for school districts.

HIST: 1991 c 354 art 4 s 7; 1993 c 375 art 3 s 27; 1997 c 31 art 3 s 10

(The following statute is not part of the Wetland Conservation Act but is included for reference.)

15.99 Time deadline for agency action. (2005)

Subdivision 1. Definitions. (a) For purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the meanings given.

(b) "Agency" means a department, agency, board, commission, or other group in the executive branch of state government; a statutory or home rule charter city, county, or school district; any metropolitan agency or regional entity; and any other political subdivision of the state.

(c) "Request" means a written application related to zoning, septic systems, or the expansion of the metropolitan urban service area, for a permit, license, or other governmental approval of an action. A request must be submitted in writing to the agency on an application form provided by the agency, if one exists. The agency may reject as incomplete a request not on a form of the agency if the request does not include information required by the agency. A request not on a form of the agency must clearly identify on the first page the specific permit, license, or other governmental approval being sought. No request shall be deemed made if not in compliance with this paragraph.

(d) "Applicant" means a person submitting a request under this section. An applicant may designate a person to act on the applicant's behalf regarding a request under this section and any action taken by or notice given to the applicant's designee related to the request shall be deemed taken by or given to the applicant.

Subd. 2. Deadline for response. (a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, section 462.358, subdivision 3b, or chapter 505, and notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, an agency must approve or deny within 60 days a written request relating to zoning, septic systems, or expansion of the metropolitan urban service area for a permit, license, or other governmental approval of an action. Failure of an agency to deny a request within 60 days is approval of the request. If an agency denies the request, it must state in writing the reasons for the denial at the time that it denies the request.

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(b) When a vote on a resolution or properly made motion to approve a request fails for any reason, the failure shall constitute a denial of the request provided that those voting against the motion state on the record the reasons why they oppose the request. A denial of a request because of a failure to approve a resolution or motion does not preclude an immediate submission of a same or similar request.

(c) Except as provided in paragraph (b), if an agency, other than a multimember governing body, denies the request, it must state in writing the reasons for the denial at the time that it denies the request. If a multimember governing body denies a request, it must state the reasons for denial on the record and provide the applicant in writing a statement of the reasons for the denial. If the written statement is not adopted at the same time as the denial, it must be adopted at the next meeting following the denial of the request but before the expiration of the time allowed for making a decision under this section. The written statement must be consistent with the reasons stated in the record at the time of the denial. The written statement must be provided to the applicant upon adoption.

Subd. 3. Application; extensions. (a) The time limit in subdivision 2 begins upon the agency's receipt of a written request containing all information required by law or by a previously adopted rule, ordinance, or policy of the agency, including the applicable application fee. If an agency receives a written request that does not contain all required information, the 60-day limit starts over only if the agency sends written notice within 15 business days of receipt of the request telling the requester what information is missing.

(b) If a request relating to zoning, septic systems, or expansion of the metropolitan urban service area requires the approval of more than one state agency in the executive branch, the 60-day period in subdivision 2 begins to run for all executive branch agencies on the day a request containing all required information is received by one state agency. The agency receiving the request must forward copies to other state agencies whose approval is required.

(c) An agency response meets the 60-day time limit if the agency can document that the response was sent within 60 days of receipt of the written request.

(d) The time limit in subdivision 2 is extended if a state statute, federal law, or court order requires a process to occur before the agency acts on the request, and the time periods prescribed in the state statute, federal law, or court order make it impossible to act on the request within 60 days. In cases described in this paragraph, the deadline is extended to 60 days after completion of the last process required in the applicable statute, law, or order. Final approval of an agency receiving a request is not considered a process for purposes of this paragraph.

(e) The time limit in subdivision 2 is extended if: (1) a request submitted to a state agency requires prior approval of a federal agency; or (2) an application submitted to a city, county, town, school district, metropolitan or regional entity, or other political subdivision requires prior approval of a state or federal agency. In cases described in this paragraph, the deadline for agency action is extended to 60 days after the required prior approval is granted.

(f) An agency may extend the time limit in subdivision 2 before the end of the initial 60-day period by providing written notice of the extension to the applicant. The notification must state the reasons for the extension and its anticipated length, which may not exceed 60 days unless approved by the applicant.

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(g) An applicant may by written notice to the agency request an extension of the time limit under this section.

HIST: 1995 c 248 art 18 s 1; 1996 c 283 s 1; 2003 c 41 s 1