Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) Program Update

Date: 10/4/19

Re: MN Wetland Professional Certification Program, 404 Assumption

Minnesota Wetland Professional Certification Program
The BWSR Board approved the program plan for the new MN Wetland Professional Certification Program (MWPCP) at their September meeting. This program will replace the Wetland Delineator Certification Program (WDCP) as of 1/1/2020. The WDCP was formed in 2002 as a partnership between the University of Minnesota and BWSR and has trained thousands and certified hundreds of individuals in wetland delineation. The MWPCP is a step forward in the evolution of BWSR’s training of WCA LGU staff and other wetland professionals. Training related to the MWPCP will be merged with the BWSR Wetland Section’s regional training that we have been conducting over the last two years. A program goal is to make training and certification more available and cost effective for WCA LGU and SWCD staff. The new program will be co-led by Ben Meyer and David Demmer, assisted by an internal wetland training team we have established as well as our Wetland Program Assistant Amy Waters.

A new page on our website has been established for the MWPCP where information will be posted and new program materials made available as they are developed. We will be busy developing more specific program materials, forms, etc. this winter. Hopefully, the webpage and posted program plan will provide answers to some questions you might have. Otherwise, please contact me if you would like more information or clarification.

404 Assumption
In recent years the State has been intensively investigating the feasibility of assuming the Federal Clean Water Act Section 404 aquatic resource regulatory program. A state can apply to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to administer their own regulatory program(s) to meet Section 404 requirements, thereby eliminating the need for separate, federally-issued permits for projects affecting those waters (wetlands, lakes, streams) covered by state assumption. This process is known as Section 404 Program assumption.

Legislation in 2019 (signed into law on 5/24/19) directed state agencies to assemble the materials required for a State 404 assumption application and provided some funding. BWSR sought and received additional funding for this effort via a grant from EPA. As such, BWSR is in the process of hiring a temporary position that will focus on and lead the preparation of an assumption application. We intend to have this position filled in October/November. There is a legislative deadline (2/21/21) for a report on funding estimates and the EPA grant allows for completion of the application materials by August 2021 (with a possible extension). Preparation of the assumption application will be a public process with opportunities for input from LGUs and other stakeholders. We have an assumption page on our website where we will be providing information as this process proceeds. In addition, you can expect to see e-mail updates from BWSR.

I intend to send another update this fall/winter which covers other WCA program items, but I wanted to provide this information sooner. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about BWSR support and service to your area.

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