

# Wetland training program sees early success

In its first two years, the Minnesota Wetland Professional Certification Program (MWPCP) certified more than 150 wetland professionals.

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) administers the MWPCP, which aims to provide relevant, accessible and affordable training to professionals from the public and private sectors. Participants range from recent college graduates to those with decades of experience.

“It’s common to have private environmental consultants, soil and water conservation district (SWCD) staff, local government unit (LGU) staff, state, tribal and federal agency staff in a single MWPCP class,” said BWSR Wetland Specialist David Demmer, who coordinates the program with Wetland Specialist Ben Meyer. “The goal is for wetland professionals across Minnesota to share a fundamental working knowledge of how wetlands are delineated and regulated.”

The MWPCP replaced the Wetland Delineator Certification Program (WDCP), which formed in 2002. Functioning as a partnership between the University of Minnesota and BWSR, the WDCP trained thousands and certified hundreds in wetland delineation. The University of Minnesota transferred



Participants described a soil profile during a group delineation exercise as part of an MWPCP basics class held in September at Northland Arboretum in Baxter. **Photo Credits:** BWSR

the program to BWSR in 2020 because the agency had the capacity and the interest in providing regulatory and technical wetland training across the state.

Becoming a certified wetland professional through the MWPCP indicates that an individual has a fundamental understanding of the basic technical methods, rules, policies and guidance

associated with wetland regulations and delineation in Minnesota. Gaining certification requires understanding wetland delineation using a three-parameter approach (soils, hydrology and vegetation), wetland restoration, wetland functional assessments, wetland monitoring and state and federal wetland regulations — with an emphasis on administering Minnesota’s Wetland Conservation Act



(WCA). Those who acquire certification are initially certified for three years, and must earn 18 continuing education hours during the initial certification period to remain certified beyond those first three years. Continuing education credits may be earned through training courses, webinars, other online training, field trips, conferences and seminars.

The COVID-19 pandemic halted all MWPCP trainings in 2020. In 2021 and 2022, the program offered nearly 20 training events throughout the state, drawing more than 400 people each year. Trainings include virtual courses, regional courses, advanced technical courses and weeklong basic wetland delineation and regulation courses. The program also produced nine online video training modules on subjects ranging from wetland classification systems to WCA application procedures. The [MWPCP Online Training webpage](#) features select recordings from virtual presentations and topics presented in cooperation with the [Technical Training and](#)





BWSR Wetland Specialist Ben Meyer, who helps coordinate the MWPCP, led a June wetland delineation refresher course for Army Corps of Engineers regulatory staff at Lake Elmo Regional Park.

#### [Certification Program.](#)

Demmer said the MWPCP plans to continue broadening video offerings in attempt to give professionals access to quality training content from their offices, which saves time and money due to reduced travel.

The program has seen a steady increase in LGU and SWCD staff attending courses and passing certification exams. Typically, at least half of attendees at MWPCP courses are either LGU or SWCD staff. Almost 70% of those who have passed certification exams in the past two years are LGU,

**“ The goal is for wetland professionals across Minnesota to share a fundamental working knowledge of how wetlands are delineated and regulated. ”**

— David Demmer, BWSR wetland specialist

SWCD, or state agency employees. Approximately 30% of LGUs that implement the WCA across the state now have staff certified with the MWPCP; that compares with less than 20% three years ago. The program is on target to see staff at 50% of WCA LGUs certified within the next five years.

The program has consistently received positive course evaluations.

“I see my share of these, and I will say that this was probably the best overall presentation of regulatory material I have seen in my 28 years,” wrote one participant who attended a WCA virtual course this year.

The 2022 MWPCP training season wrapped up in October. Demmer said he anticipates continued growth in the upcoming years. Organizers plan to offer a full suite of in-person courses in 2023 as well as virtual training opportunities during the winter. BWSR staff members are also exploring new ways to make formal, quality, basic WCA administrative training affordable and accessible to every LGU in the state.

Find details about the MWPCP, including future training opportunities, [here on BWSR's website.](#)