

Wetland training program offers professional certification options



BWSR wetland specialists Ben Meyer (facing the camera at back left, standing behind an auger) and Cade Steffenson (at back right) led a discussion during an "Intro to Wetland Delineation and Regulations" training at the Northland Arboretum in Brainerd in September 2022. The course was offered as part of the Minnesota Wetland Professional Certification Program, which has certified 600 professionals since 2020. **Photo Credits:** BWSR

Participation in the Minnesota Wetland Professional Certification Program (MWPCP) continues to increase as the program enters its fourth year.

More than 550 wetland professionals attended MWPCP training courses last year, compared with 500 in 2022 and 400 in 2021. The MWPCP has certified 600 wetland professionals since BWSR assumed responsibility of a retooled version of the program from the University of Minnesota in 2020.

The program aims to provide relevant, accessible and affordable training to public- and private-sector wetland professionals.

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— Les Lemm, BWSR wetlands section manager

“Well-trained staff are essential both, for the proper implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) and for providing quality, consistent service to landowners,” said Les Lemm, BWSR wetlands section manager.

To become a Certified Minnesota Wetland Professional (CMWP) through the MWPCP, individuals attend training courses to prepare for a certification exam. Exams are offered several times a year. Certification 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, with an emphasis on administering the WCA. Initial certification is valid for three years and can be retained via continuing education courses.

The MWPCP offered 11 training courses over 33 days last year. Participants learned from 17 instructors from BWSR, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and watershed districts. Training topics included wetland restoration, wetland functional assessments, wetland monitoring, and state and federal regulations. Courses are offered online and in person. Last year, 360 people participated in person, 190 participated virtually.

"I'm new to the field of wetland science with very limited experience



Soil profiles demonstrated the differences in soil composition from the top of a slope (upland) to the bottom of the same slope (wetland) during a September 2023 MWPCP training in Brainerd.

with delineations, and this helped me a lot," a trainee commented in an anonymous survey following a September 2023 training event in Brainerd.

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 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.

Lemm said the training holds value for both new and experienced wetland professionals.

"Wetland science and conservation can be complicated and is very specialized," Lemm said. "Training new staff provides them with a solid base of specialized knowledge that is necessary to help landowners achieve goals for their property in a way that conserves wetlands

Upcoming trainings

Courses scheduled for 2024 cover topics such as WCA 101, parameter wetland delineation, hydric soils and wetland restoration. Details about the MWPCP, including future training opportunities, can be found on [BWSR's website](#).

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Courses are designed to be versatile, so they apply to professionals in different roles within government and private industry.

"I liked that the course had both LGUs (local government units) and consultants because it gave both perspectives, versus having separate trainings for each," commented a trainee who attended an October 2023 session in Arden Hills.