



Buffer Program Update

May 2, 2017

Local Government Staff,

Here's the latest:

Enforcement Options

The [BWSR Administrative Penalty Order Plan](#) and Buffer Program [Policy #9 \(Standards of review and approval of local enforcement mechanisms\)](#) are nearing the end of the public comment period (May 8). Your review and [comments](#) are welcome.

We anticipate action on these items at the May 2017 Board meeting. After the comment period closes, we will post updated copies of the model county ordinance and watershed district rule language on the website.

Common Alternative Practices Guidance has arrived

On April 6, we released the ["Common Alternative Practices" guidance document](#). Several conference calls were hosted for SWCD staff by Board Conservationists to provide an overview of the documents. If you have questions about the Common Alternative Practices or their implementation please do not hesitate to contact us. We are continuing to explore options which may be added to the "6-pack" of alternatives and will keep you posted as that information develops.

We are also working with MN Corn Growers and the U of MN, the MN Soybean Growers as well as Land O' Lakes and Agren on additional methodologies for assessing benefits of alternative practices. While the final outcomes are not known at this time, the draft versions of these methods look promising to expand options for implementing alternative practices within the buffer law.

BuffCAT Inventory

BuffCAT should be operational through the summer unless we need to shut down for specific maintenance needs. If/when this arises we will be sure to communicate the maintenance period in advance.

A number of SWCDs are continuing to use the tool as a part of their workflow when assisting landowners and validating implementation of buffers and alternative practices. Please make an effort to monitor progress this way. The compliance rate has continued to grow over the last few months in BuffCAT because of those efforts.

If a landowner installs alternative practices, please document this in BuffCAT under “Are Alternative Practices Compliant” and add a note which identifies which Common Alternative was used or what other combination of practices have been implemented. These categories were included in the tool so that we all can more effectively communicate the use of this provision in the law.

Summer Road Tour

We are currently working with Board Conservationist to organize a number of meetings/trainings around the state this summer for Local Government staff to stay up to speed and be ready for the next phases of the buffer program. If you have specific topics you would like covered, please feel free to communicate that to your BCs so we can ensure these meetings provide meaningful program information.

Other watercourses status

SWCDs need to adopt an “other watercourses” map/inventory by July 1st, 2017. If you have not organized a meeting with your local water management authorities, I encourage you to do so and begin working through that process. The [“Other watercourses guidance”](#) on the BWSR website may be used as a guide. It includes data sets and factors to consider during inventory development.

Several SWCDs have completed this process and we can provide examples of resolutions if needed. Once your SWCD board has adopted the Other Watercourses inventory please notify your Board Conservationist.

New and Updated Guidance

There are now templates for *Validations of Compliance* and *Conditional Compliance Waivers* available [on the website](#). Please remember these forms are intended as templates so they can be adapted for local use.

We’re also working on new/better drawings and diagrams and several other minor guidance updates to help your work.

Thank you

Thank you all for your efforts and your ideas. We look forward to connecting with you over the summer and as always if you have any comments or questions please don’t hesitate to contact Tom Gile.