



Grass Pink Orchid  
Photo by Scott Milburn



## Wetland Professionals Association

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### Annual WPA Field Trip Highlights Rare Species in the Southwest

by Jed Chesnut, WPA Vice President, WSB Associates

The annual WPA field trip took place in June, and was once again an outstanding education opportunity for our membership. In an effort to expand our reach to all areas of the state, this year's trip focused on the often overlooked southwestern region. Fifteen members made the road trip to southwest Minnesota to join Fred Harris, botanist with the DNR, in the quest to find some of the rarest plants in the state. Our first stop was Blue Mounds State Park where we met Fred. He led the group across the prairie to several Sioux quartzite bedrock outcrops.

He was able to show us many specimens of rare plants including prairie quillwort (*Isoetes melanopoda*), pygmyweed (*Crassula aquatica*), mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*), three-stamened waterwort (*Elatine triandra*) and the outstanding plains prickly pear (*Opuntia macrorhiza*). Although the prairie was impacted by past grazing practices, it was still amazing to see the abundance of native prairie plants in a more natural landscape than we normally see in the Twin Cities region.

The second stop was the nearby Touch the Sky National Wildlife Refuge. This prairie was also historically impacted by grazing, but it still affords an opportunity to observe many native prairie plants and listen to the various song birds flying overhead.

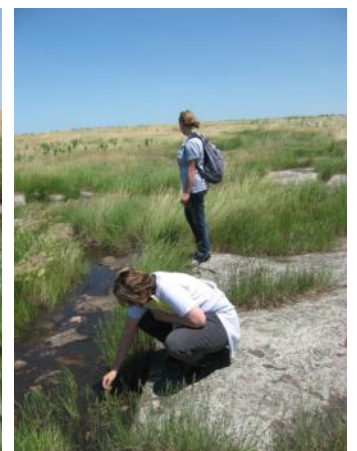
At Blue Mounds State Park we visited multiple bedrock outcrop ephemeral pools and observed several rare plants including larger water-starwort (*Callitriche heterophylla*) and hairy water clover (*Marsilea vestita*).

On the way back, we made a stop at Expansdere Wildlife Management Area. The WMA is home to a nice mosaic of wet meadow, wet prairie, and mesic prairie with little to no exotic species. We observed an abundance of native plants and found a large population of the small white lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium candidum*), although it had already flowered.

The WPA would like to extend a gracious "thank you" to Fred Harris for showing us these unique and beautiful habitats.

### Association News

- WPA has new logo—Dan Shaw worked with the WPA Board to produce the new logo seen above.
- The WPA is preparing for educational forums to again be held the first Wed. of Oct., Nov., March, and April. Look for topics and speakers soon.
- Planning for the WPA-sponsored 3rd Annual MN Wetlands Conference has been underway for some time. Look for more information this fall.



Bedrock outcrop ephemeral pools at Blue Mounds State Park (l) & Touch the Sky NWR (r)  
Photos by Jed Chesnut (left) and Jyneen Thatcher (right)

## Hydric Soil Indicators Updated

by Megan Lennon, WPA Treasurer, MN Board of Water & Soil Resources

Version 7.0 of the Hydric Soil Field Indicators was recently published in 2010. This update is now effective for use in delineating wetlands in Minnesota under the 87 Manual Supplements. This version replaces the indicators as described in the supplements themselves. The following is a summary of the changes compared to the previous version (i.e. Version 6.0):

### Changes to Field Indicators

The changes to indicators listed below are primarily wording/phrasing changes clarifying soil descriptions or methods used in evaluating morphological characteristics. These changes do not effect the ultimate hydric/nonhydric outcome compared to version 6, rather they provide clarification and additional guidance.

A1 A5 A12 S5 S6 S7 S9

### Changes to Test Indicators

S3: new test indicator in Region K

S7: new test indicator for regions K and M

F12: new test indicator in region K

TF12: Very Shallow Dark Surface: new test indicator for all LRRs

## In Memoriam—Mark Wilson

The WPA mourns the recent passing of a long-time member and trusted colleague, Mark Wilson. Mark was a well-known environmental consultant for Barr Engineering in the Twin Cities. He was known for his dedication, hard work, and expertise. His professional colleagues remember him as always being prepared for every meeting and every field visit. He earned the respect of our community of wetland professionals, and he will be missed.



Mark Wilson hard at work in the field (left) and at a WPA field trip (right).

Photos by Jyneen Thatcher

# Wetland Delineator Certification—What Good is it?

by Ken Powell, MN Board of Water & Soil Resources

The Wetland Delineation Certification Program (WDCP) is in its 5th year of certifying wetland delineators and providing wetland delineation training. The program has certified in excess of 200 individuals between the certified delineator and in-training delineator levels. Certification is still voluntary with no overarching State mandate to become certified in order to conduct wetland delineations professionally. So, why do it?

If you are a certified delineator, does it mean that you are a competent wetland delineator? No. Unless and until the program incorporates field-based testing into the certification process, the competency of the wetland delineator cannot be accurately assessed. Such a step is beyond the current means and scope of the program. However, what certification does tell us is that an individual is familiar with the basic concepts and resources for conducting wetland delineations in Minnesota. In short, certification indicates that the individual has the knowledge and background to conduct wetland delineations, but not necessarily the skills to apply that knowledge and background.

Certification also helps employers in that it indicates that an individual not only had training, but actually learned something from that training. The continuing education credits associated with keeping certification current tells employers that certified individuals have kept current with the concepts and techniques associated with wetland delineation.

For individuals working for local government units (LGUs) implementing

the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), certification provides some evidence that they meet the “trained and knowledgeable staff” requirement for implementing WCA.

From the perspective of the individual, certification provides a potential “selling point” when seeking employment where delineating wetlands and/or evaluating wetland delineations is a basic job duty. With the recent economic slowdown, jobs have once again become competitive, particularly for those new to the profession. All things being equal, a certified delineator may have a leg up on another applicant without certification. I have seen several job announcements over the last few years where “certified delineator preferred” is listed. In fact, most of the wetland-related positions at the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (including my own) require delineation certification as a condition of employment. It does not necessarily mean that a certified individual is more qualified than non-certified individual, but when sorting through a large number of applicants it can be a way for a potential employer to narrow down the list.

Finally, certification prepares us for what may lay ahead in the future of the profession. There are and have been serious discussions at the state level to require certification for those conducting and reviewing wetland delineations in Minnesota. While such decisions are made by policy-makers and not necessarily by working professionals, there is nevertheless a push from a segment of the wetland professional community to require certification. It has become increasingly obvious that er-

rors and incompetency in the practice of wetland delineation can and sometimes do result in negative environmental as well as economic consequences for landowners, government entities, and others. Providing some “minimum standards” for those conducting this type of work could be part of the equation to increase the level of technical competency.

Personally, I view certification as an evolving process that will improve and become more useful over time. With no national certification program in place and limited state certification programs around the country, Minnesota’s program is at the forefront. Because certification has the potential to effect the livelihoods of practicing professionals, changes to the process and requirements will have to come slowly. As certification becomes more and more accepted and expected, meaningful changes can be more easily discussed and implemented in the future.



WDCP hydric soil class in Owatonna this summer. Photo by Ken Powell

## News Flashes

**WI Wetlands Association Announces 2011 Conference**—The WWA has announced that they will be holding their 2011 conference on Feb. 16-17 in Baraboo, WI. The conference “Wetlands in the Landscape” will feature a national Symposium, “Wetland Buffers: Theory, Science, Policy and Implementation.” The Symposium will present the state of knowledge on the design, function, and effectiveness of buffers, how their use can be integrated into policy, and how implementation can be effectively accomplished.

**New Wetland Guidance Released**—The MN Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) has issued 3 new guidance documents related to implementation of the MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). Two of the 3 documents relate to utilizing actions eligible for wetland replacement credit (wetland preservation and exceptional natural resource value projects) and one document provides guidance for utilizing remote imagery to assess wetland hydrology for wetland delineation purposes. Go to the Wetlands page of the BWSR website (<http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/wetlands/index.html>) and click on “WCA Forms & Regulatory Guidance for the first 2 and “Wetland Delineation Guidance & Resources” for the 3rd one.

**BWSR and Corps Cooperative Training**—BWSR and the St. Paul District Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) have initiated a series of cooperative training sessions in MN. This marks a new spirit of cooperation between the 2 major wetland regulatory agencies in the state. The first cooperative session was held in April in the Twin Cities and a series of 4 workshops is currently being conducted in the northern portion of the state in August. Go to <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/wetlands/index.html> for details. More cooperative training efforts are being discussed for later this year and 2011.

**BWSR Academy Dates Announced**—BWSR has set October 26-28 for its annual training academy. This year’s session will be held at Breezy Point Resort in the Brainerd Lakes area. The 3-day event will include wetland-related training including a wetland delineator refresher session, various WCA administration sessions, and sessions on wetland restoration and aerial imagery interpretation. Go to <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/academy/> for more information.

**Publications of Interest**—The March 2010 issue of *Wetland Science and Practice* (Vol. 27, No. 1, an SWS publication) contains an interesting policy debate on wetland functions and values assessment (see pages 6 thru 9). Regarding the topic of wetland mitigation there are 2 recent publications of interest: The Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and The Nature Conservancy issued a joint paper in August 2009 entitled “The Next Generation of Mitigation: Linking Current and Future Mitigation Programs with State Wildlife Action Plans and Other State and Regional Plans”. In December 2009, ELI issued a paper entitled “In-Lieu Fee Mitigation: Model Instrument Language and Resources”. “Managing the Water’s Edge: Making Natural Connections” by The Southeastern Regional Planning Commission was published in April 2010, and it provides information on buffer widths and other aspects of applying buffers.



More photos from the 2010 WPA Field Trip (in case you didn't get enough on page 1). Photos by Jyneen Thatcher (left) and Jed Chesnut (right)



# We're Not in Minnesota Anymore

by Wade Hammer, Natural Resource Group, LLC

Wetland work has taken me across the country over the past three years since I changed positions to a company that does work nationwide, and sometimes beyond our borders. Each place I visited brought with it a new experience, and often one that reminded me how fortunate many of us are to work as field staff in the upper Midwest. Following are three states where I worked that bring back memories of fieldwork in relatively unique circumstances as compared to Minnesota.

Alaska, one of the first distant destinations I visited for work required field staff on the project I was working on to be accompanied by an armed bear guard. While many of the field staff felt this was overkill, corporate policy required the guards to be present with each crew. The guards were very capable and qualified, but the thought of a person standing over my shoulder as soil pits were dug and vegetation sampled was somewhat unnerving, keeping the thought of a top predator rushing us from a blind-side ever present while in the field.

Idaho during elk season was not necessarily the ideal place to be. While we have hunting seasons of our own, the

fall firearm big game seasons typically occur after most of our fieldwork has been done. Big game seasons in the west can take place slightly earlier in the fall and so fieldwork either ceases, or goes on very carefully during this time. In this particular case I was only in the field for a day and we were working very close to a significant county road, so the dangers were not great. However, it was a reminder of being aware of when hunting seasons are likely to occur during fieldwork.

Louisiana, the "Wetland State", for a kid from Minnesota is a very foreign environment. With brush so thick that it's impassable without a brush ax or machete, and camouflaged "fangy" creatures lurking in this thick and very thorny brush, Louisiana fieldwork is in a league of its own. During one of my first visits with civil survey crews one gentleman pulled out his phone to show me a picture of a cottonmouth snake that he and two other survey crew members had seen that was at least four feet long and as big around as a large grapefruit, if not a cantaloupe. On and off for the period of a couple of months, that picture flashed in and out of my mind many times each day while slogging through the Louisiana backwoods. Fortunately

for me, it was spring and cool enough to keep the cold-blooded critters at bay, and our crew only saw three less threatening snakes.

While in Minnesota we may not have similar predators to worry about, however we have our own safety considerations when working in the field and perhaps this is a good time to remind everyone to take the time to be safe when working in the field. As we all know, it is not the high-profile fauna such as snakes and bears that are the greatest threats to field staff. A bad fall over a log, or slip down a waterbody bank, or stumbling onto a nest of yellow-jackets, or simply an auto accident to or from the work site are greater safety concerns than the predators that inhabit the landscapes within which we work. So as you lace up your boots to head into the wetlands, woods, prairies, or wherever your fieldwork takes you in Minnesota or our neighboring states, please know how pleasant it can be to take a walk through a generally benign landscapes, and more importantly remember to take the extra time consider your daily safety concerns, drive carefully, and move cautiously when working in the field.



*Angelica* in Scott County.  
Photo by Ken Powell



Wetland  
Professionals  
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**We are on the web**

**[www.mnwetlandprofessionals.org](http://www.mnwetlandprofessionals.org)**

Submission of wetland-related articles, opinions, pictures and news items are welcome. Please forward all submissions to the newsletter editor Ken Powell at [ken.powell@state.mn.us](mailto:ken.powell@state.mn.us).

#### CODE of ETHICS

Each member, in striving to meet the objectives of the WPA, pledges to:

- 1) subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct;
- 2) recognize research and scientific methodology of wetland science;
- 3) disseminate information to promote the understanding of and appreciation for wetland science;
- 4) strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance the practice of wetland science;
- 5) promote confidence in the field of wetland science by supporting high standards of education, employment, and performance;
- 6) encourage the use of scientific information in regulatory decisions; and
- 7) support fair and uniform standards of employment and treatment of those professionally engaged in the practice of wetland science

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