



# Minnesota Wetland Professionals Association

PO Box 131282, Roseville, MN 55113-0011

Volume 15, Issue 1

## President's Column by Rich Davis, WPA President

As I near the end of my two-year term as a WPA Board Member and my one-year term as WPA President I would like to extend a big thank you to the rest of the Board Members I have had the pleasure of working with. The Board and all their efforts have made my job as President very enjoyable and have assisted myself and the membership greatly with their time commitments and dedication over the past year. I would also like to thank the entire WPA Membership because without your support and involvement the WPA would not exist.

With the experience of the returning Board Members and the newly elected Board Members I believe the WPA is headed in a great direction for 2010. I encourage the membership to stay involved with the many 2010 WPA activities. The 3rd Annual Wetland Conference coming up on January 20<sup>th</sup>, the

March and April WPA forums at REI, and the WPA Spring field trip should all prove to be great educational experiences.

I hope you and your families had a joyful and safe holiday season, and I wish you a happy new year as we move into 2010. Again, a very sincere thank you to my fellow Board Members, and the wonderful WPA membership.

## WPA Webmaster Needed!

The WPA is looking for a member to serve as webmaster for our website. Duties would include updating the consultant directory and new postings as directed by the WPA Board. No major design work required, just someone familiar with maintaining websites. Some limited monetary compensation may be available. Please contact a Board member if you are interested.



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Farmed Wetland in the Fall



# Another Wonderful Year of Growth for the WPA

by Barbara Walther, WPA Treasurer

2009 has been another good year financially for the WPA. Following the success of the First Annual Minnesota Wetlands Conference in 2008, for which the WPA partnered with the Wetland Delineators Certification Program sharing costs and splitting profit, the WPA and WDCP held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Minnesota Wetlands Conference on January 21, 2009. The 2009 Conference proved to be an even greater success, with the WPA share of the proceeds a whopping \$4361.31. As one of the main goals of the WPA is to promote and establish educational and training opportunities for wetland professionals, we can be proud of the Conference's success toward that end. The 2010 Conference is just around the corner. Membership assistance and input for the 2011 Conference will be needed soon after the 2010 conference.

One of our annual expenses is the May field trip, which in 2009 was held at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. This year's field trip was free for all members, with the WPA picking up the \$185 of associated expenses.

In 2009, the WPA also sponsored the Society of Wetland Scientists annual meeting at the Silver Sponsor level

(\$1000). The 2009 Annual Meeting of the SWS was held in Madison, WI in June, and the WPA received significant exposure on the Society's web site and at the Meeting. In addition to sponsorship of the Annual Meeting, the WPA sponsored one of the Workshops held at the end of the week for \$1000. The Workshop was an introduction to the North Central/Northeast Regional Supplement to the '87 Manual, for which Steve Eggers, COE, Michael Whited, NRCS and Barbara Walther, COE provided the instruction. It was a well received and attended workshop that included both classroom and field instruction, again, supporting the WPA's goal in providing training for wetland professionals.

To assist in the training efforts, the WPA purchased new recording equipment for the forums, upgrading to digital equipment for download onto DVDs to provide for members. A few smaller purchases for storage and moving of the equipment added to the total cost of just under \$800.

As reported previously, some of the typical costs that the WPA still has each year are as follows:

Web service \$20/monthly  
Web hosting \$25/year  
Domain registration \$190/5-year  
Internet fee \$50/year  
Web design \$300/year approximate  
Snacks for forum \$15/forum average  
Video supplies \$15/forum average  
Post office box rent \$40/year  
Election expenses – copying/postage \$185/year

Even with the greater expenditures that the WPA made during 2009, we ended the year with over \$4000 more than the end of 2008 (\$14489 in 2009; \$10320 in 2008). This growth, mainly through the success of the Annual Conference, presents an exciting opportunity for the membership in terms of outreach and further education efforts.

As of the end of 2009, we have a total of 185 members, most of whom are from MN and WI. New memberships keep coming in, and renewals help to maintain our success.

If you have any questions or suggestions about any of our expenditures, please contact any of the Board Members. And remember, if you haven't already please renew your membership for 2010!

## New Flashes

### **BWSR hires training coordinator.**

Angie Becker-Kudelka has joined BWSR as the Training Program Coordinator. Angie will be the agency's point person on training as it relates to wetlands and other areas of conservation. She is currently working on a training needs assessment.

**NRCS and BWSR finalize wetland coordination agreement.** The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the MN Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) finalized an agreement to improve coordination between State and Federal policies for wetland regulation on agricultural land. The agreement is intended

to lead to a coordinated approach to administering 2 separate wetland regulatory programs. The agreement can be viewed at [www.bwsr.state.mn.us/](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/).

### **BWSR and Corps work on wetland mapping conventions guidance.**

BWSR and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) - St. Paul District have begun work on a guidance document for utilizing wetland mapping conventions for wetland delineations in MN. Look for the new document in 2010.

**NE/NC Supplement to be published in 2010.** The interim NE/NC supplement to the 87 Manual is an-

anticipated to be published in March 2010. This is the last of the 87 Manual Supplements that cover portions of MN. A joint public notice from the Corps and BWSR is again anticipated to be released after publication. Past public notices for the Midwest and Great Plains supplements can be viewed on the BWSR website.



So that's where the water went?

# Delineation Reports—The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

by Ken Powell, MN Board of Water & Soil Resources

I have reviewed many wetland delineation reports and written quite a few as well. In the early 90's they were (shall we say) a work in progress. The whole process of delineating wetlands in Minnesota (thanks to the arrival of the Wetland Conservation Act) and reporting the results was new and there was a significant learning curve to overcome. Almost 20 years later, we have progressed, but not as much as one might think. I am hopeful that with the new 87 Manual supplements and the increased scrutiny of wetland delineation reports (prompted by the new WCA rules requiring noticing of wetland boundary/type applications) that the quality of reports will increase significantly. Some question the importance of report quality by saying "as long as the line is right, that's what counts". I, on the other hand, contend that the report is what separates a qualified wetland delineator from any landowner with a bunch of flags in their hand. The process of delineating wetlands in accordance with the 87 Manual is all about documentation – observing, analyzing, and recording those observations and analysis. A wetland delineator cannot be effective unless they know how to present their results in clear and concise manner.

## Common Errors

Although a significant number of delineation reports I have reviewed are of good quality, there are still many that contain fairly significant errors. The following are some common errors:

Improper application of the 50/20 rule for determining dominant plant species at field sample points. Sometimes it is a simple mathematical error, but often it appears that the delineator is really not familiar with how to apply the concept. This could become more of a problem as the supplements now require calculation of the prevalence index when the 50/20 rule is not met.

Lack of documentation of hydric soil indicators at field sample points. This ranges from not sampling deep enough to document the presence/absence of a field indicator to just assuming an indicator is met based on its name and not its distinguishing characteristics. A common example of this is the "thick dark surface" indicator (A12) which is often checked if the soil is dark even though the indicator requires observation of features below the dark surface.

Lack of labeling on report figures. I often find no labeling of property boundaries, no sample point locations shown, no legend for soils map, no north arrow, different wetland basin labels from text to figure (Wetland A in text, Wetland 2 on figure, etc.) and no labeling of potential wetland areas that were investigated but found to not be wetlands.

No description of wetland basin and transition zone characteristics. Sometimes when I point this out delineators will tell me to just look at the data forms. The sampling points are not meant to describe the boundary, but rather to confirm the boundary that the delineator has initially identified based on landscape position, vegetation, soils, etc. While the sampling points and associated data forms should be representative of the wetland and adjacent upland in the transition zone, they do not necessarily reflect all of the relevant characteristics of the wetland and upland. Delineation reports should include a description of the wetland itself in terms of vegetation communities (Eggers & Reed, Circular 39, Cowardin), vegetation, soils, landscape position, inlet/outlet characteristics, hydrology sources, disturbances, etc. In addition, upland communities should also be identified and characterized in terms of vegetation, soils, landscape position, etc. This is especially important when a field-identified upland area was identified as a potential wetland based on hydric soil mapping or NWI, etc in the off-site

review materials.

Sampling points are too far apart to adequately represent transition. I think there are some delineators that believe that all 3 wetland indicators (hydric soils, wetland hydrology, hydrophytic veg.) must clearly be upland or wetland on all data forms they submit. The wetland boundary by its very nature will often not have such a clear contrast. It is not unusual for only one of the wetland indicators to be missing just above the wetland boundary. Reviewing a delineation with a broad transition, but that has a clear wetland-upland break according to the data forms makes me question the delineator's ability to make an accurate assessment of the boundary.

## Report Stuffers and Skimmers

We have all seen the "stuffed report". That is the delineation report for a 5 acre parcel with 2 wetlands that looks like a miniature version of *War and Peace*. No need to look at the 87 Manual, it is all reproduced for you right there in the report. We have the definition of a wetland, definition of hydric soils, and sometimes even detailed explanations of FACW, FAC, etc. This is all done along with a citation of the 87 Manual (and now supplements). It really serves no useful purpose for those tasked with reviewing the report to confirm the delineation. The other extreme is the report "skimmers" who just cite the 87 Manual and explain nothing else of their methodology. Ideally, the report should hit somewhere in-between. The report should focus on specific methodologies used in the delineation that are not necessarily specific requirements of the manual. For example, describe how the transect locations were selected, what type of vegetative sampling plot was used (circular, quadrat, etc. and what size), how deep were soil pits excavated, was extra sampling done prior to selection of the sampling points that were recorded, how were potential wetland areas identified, were

# Delineation Reports—The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

Continued from page 3

there any disturbances or circumstances that prevented standard sampling (for example large rocks at the ground surface that prevent soil pit excavation in a particular area), was the entire site field investigated or only certain portions and what data sources were consulted (for example FSA slides, LIDAR, local wetland mapping, etc.). This is the type of site-specific methodology that should be in the report, not all of the filler that simply repeats the 87 Manual.

## Summary

In short, I contend that the delineation report is a critical element of the delineation on par with the actual field staking. A wetland delineation line that is not supported by a clear and concise report is useless. The science of wetland delineation has progressed considerably over the past 20 years and the quality of reports should reflect this. The delineation report is more than just a bunch of data forms. It is a document laid out in a scientific format (intro, methods, results,

discussion) that justifies the extent and location of wetlands on a property in the context of the 87 Manual. As the bar is raised for report quality, the bar is also raised for the wetland delineation profession

## New WPA Board Members

The WPA welcomes 5 new board members in 2010.

**Jed Chestnut**, WSB Associates—Jed has worked in the environmental field for the past 4 years doing wetland-related work for public and private clients.

**Kevin Clay**, Midwest Natural Resources, Inc.—Kevin works as a field ecologist focusing on rare plant surveys, natural resource assessments, and wetland delineations/surveys.

**Wade Hammer**, Natural Resource Group LLC—Wade works as a staff wetland consultant involved in linear

utility projects.

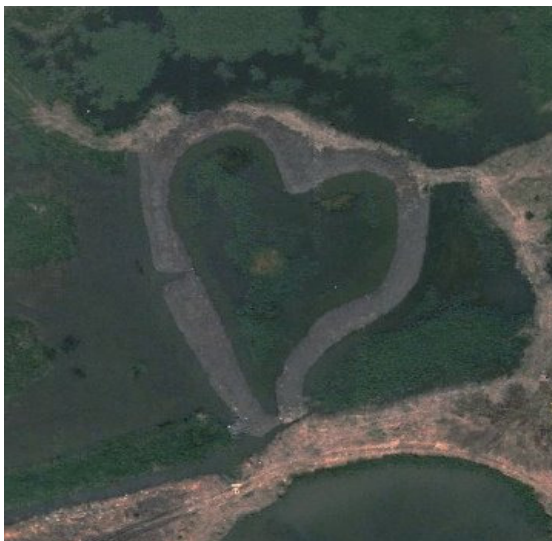
**Megan Lennon**, BWSR—Megan is a soil scientist focusing on carbon sequestration, wetland conservation, and other soils-related issues in MN.

**Carol Strojny**, BWSR—Carol has worked the past 4 years with BWSR as the State wetland monitoring coordinator responsible for monitoring related to conservation and regulatory programs.

WPA Board members serve 2-year terms and can be elected to a maximum of 2 consecutive terms. Please welcome our new board members.



Red-osier dogwood in warmer times.



Heart-shaped wetland in Guandu National Park in Taipei City, Taiwan

*Courtesy of pictovista.blogspot.com*

## Highlighted Plant Species — Dwarf Mistletoe (*Arceuthobium pusillum*)

by Scott Milburn, Midwest Natural Resources, Inc.

Dwarf mistletoe is one of the smallest members of our flora and one of the earliest to flower in the spring. This species is easily overlooked due to its size, but it plays an important role in the ecology of native plant communities where found. The Dwarf mistletoe is the lone member of the Viscaceae family (Mistletoe) in Minnesota.

As with other members belonging to the Viscaceae family, Dwarf mistletoe is parasitic or more appropriately semi-parasitic. The primary host plant is black spruce, but it is also known to parasitize white spruce as well. *Arceuthobium pusillum* will germinate on the younger branches of the host plant, eventually penetrating the bark. Once infected, the host begins to show signs of deformation or what is commonly referred to as witches's broom. Due to the economic importance of black spruce, a great deal of research has been con-

ducted on the life history of this particular parasite. Much of this research was conducted at the University of Minnesota back in the mid-1960's through the mid-1970's. One is bound to find it walking through the peatlands in the northern part of Minnesota when black spruce is a dominant component. The impacts can be seen from a distance if a stand of black spruce has been infected, but it is worth checking out up-close.



## 3rd Annual Minnesota Wetlands Conference—January 20, 2010

The 3rd Annual Minnesota Wetlands Conference will be held on January 20, 2010. This year's conference theme is "Wetlands—New Approaches and New Ideas". The conference will again be held at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center in Saint Paul.

Among the many topics there will be information presented on new GPS technologies, vernal pool restoration, wetland monitoring, trends in wetland water quality, and wetland assessment. In addition to the featured speakers, this year's conference will also include a series of short, "rapid fire" presentations by various wetland professionals on a variety of topics.

Featured speakers include Tom Biebighauser, U.S. Forest Service,

Steve Richter, Frontier Precision, Inc., Tim Smith, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Steve Kloiber & Jon Genet, Minnesota DNR, Christina Hargiss, North Dakota State University, Lian Rampi, University of Minnesota, Emily Hutchins, Minnesota DNR, and Fred Harris, County Biological Survey.

The conference is from 8 to 4:30 and it includes a trade show. Go to <http://www.mnwetlands.umn.edu/cert/Training/training-Conf.htm> for more information.





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**We are on the web**

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

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If you haven't renewed your membership, please do it now. Members enjoy free admission to monthly forums, reduced admission to the annual conference & field trip, listing on the web site for consultants (if relevant), e-mail updates/notifications of wetland news, and the WPA newsletter. Send renewal forms (available at [www.mnwetlandprofessionals.org](http://www.mnwetlandprofessionals.org)) and checks to: Wetland Professionals Association, P.O. Box 131282, Roseville, MN 55113-0011

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

**Look for 2010 board members and officers in next issue.**

## THE 2009 BOARD

### Rich Davis, President

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
4101 American Blvd. E.  
Bloomington, MN 55425-1665  
[wetlandman34@yahoo.com](mailto:wetlandman34@yahoo.com)

### Scott Milburn, Vice President

Midwest Natural Resources, Inc.  
744 James Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
[Scott.milburn@mnrinc.us](mailto:Scott.milburn@mnrinc.us)

### Barbara Walther, Treasurer

St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers  
190 East Fifth Street, OP-R  
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1638  
(651) 290-5469  
[Barbara.L.Walther@usace.army.mil](mailto:Barbara.L.Walther@usace.army.mil)

### Natasha DeVoe, Secretary

BWSR  
520 Lafayette Rd. N.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 205-4664  
[Natasha.devoe@state.mn.us](mailto:Natasha.devoe@state.mn.us)

### Ken Powell, Member-at-Large

BWSR  
520 Lafayette Rd. N.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-0874  
[ken.powell@state.mn.us](mailto:ken.powell@state.mn.us)

### Ben Hodapp, Member-at-Large

Anderson Engineering  
13605 1st Ave. N., Suite 100  
Plymouth, MN 55441  
763-412-4000  
[bhodapp@ae-mn.com](mailto:bhodapp@ae-mn.com)

### Jyneen Thatcher, Member-at-Large

Washington Conservation District  
1380 W. Frontage Rd; Hwy 36  
Stillwater, MN 55082  
651-275-1136 X 25  
[jyneen.thatcher@mnwcd.org](mailto:jyneen.thatcher@mnwcd.org)

### Ben Carlson, Member-at-Large

Arrowhead Environmental Consulting  
2909 Meadow Lane  
Mound, MN 55364  
Phone: 612-237-5996  
[benc@arrowheadec.com](mailto:benc@arrowheadec.com)

### Matt Vollbrecht, Member-at-Large

Westwood Professional Services  
3701 12th St N, Ste 206  
St. Cloud, MN 56303  
320-229-2311  
[matt.vollbrecht@westwoodps.com](mailto:matt.vollbrecht@westwoodps.com)