



# Developing “knowledgeable and trained” staff for Minnesota’s wetlands

## December 2013 Snapshots

Minnesota is known for being ahead of the curve when it comes to protecting wetlands. So it only makes sense that the program we use to keep wetland professionals up to speed, the Wetland Delineator Certification Program, is also widely esteemed. In 2013, the program’s strong reputation for excellence drew participants from neighboring states. For the first time, participants from Iowa and North Dakota were among the 60 individuals completing two intensive five-day training courses.



Participants learn about soil textures.

The Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) requires that wetland delineations be performed in accordance with the U.S Army Corp of engineers Wetland Delineation Manual and its regional supplements.

The Wetland Delineators Certification Program (WDCP) is a training and certification program developed to increase the quality and consistency of wetland delineation work in Minnesota, ensuring that the professionals performing wetland delineations are “knowledgeable and trained.” The training program is facilitated by the University of Minnesota with coordination between the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

The WDCP instructors are a major strength of the program. The instructors come from the agencies that review and approve delineations and all have extensive experience performing delineations on their own, often in both private and public work sectors. So, the instructors are the most experienced wetland delineators in the state – who better to train; than the people that review and approve the delineation work?!

The five day courses offered in 2013 covered topics related to wetland delineations using a mix of lecture, hands-on exercises, and field work. Small exercises are also incorporated into lectures, which helped to keep participants engaged while reinforcing important points of the lecture.

While the field exercise portion of the training was probably the most enjoyable part of the program for the 2013 participants, it is also one of the most essential features of the course. The field exercises provided the participants with an opportunity to work in a “real life” setting, and incorporate what they have learned

*“The value of this course is that the trainers are also the ones that review and approve the delineations. So you’re getting it right from the horse’s mouth.”*

Dennis Rodacker,  
BWSR Senior  
Wetland Specialist

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during the training. It was common for participants to experience “Aha!” moments, when the information covered during a lecture finally clicked!

At the end of the training session, participants can elect to take one of the two certification exams: “*In Training*” or “*Professional*.” In 2013, eighteen participants elected to take the professional exam and 56% passed. Twenty-three participants elected to take the in-training exam with and 57 passed. These numbers are typical of the participant profile at a WDCP training course, which lately has included more students directly out of college, with little applied experience. A passing score means the participant is certified to the level of exam taken.

Throughout the course, instructors stress that the WDCP exam is not the end of their education in the world of wetland delineation, rather it is the beginning; this class gives students the basic tools to perform delineations, but good delineation work takes time and experience.



**2013 WDCP training participants wrap up a day of field work.**