



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

NEWS RELEASE

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DNR updates Minnesota buffer map; implementation continues

The Department of Natural Resources has released the first of two planned updates to Minnesota's buffer map that was first released in July. The map shows public waters and public ditches requiring permanent vegetative buffers or alternative water quality practices to help reduce nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment.

The update is based on comments and change requests from landowners and drainage authorities to ensure the map accurately shows where buffers are needed. The update includes 645 changes. Not all comments resulted in changes. The DNR found some of the change requests lacked foundation, while some comments were duplicates and others still require review or action.

- Nearly 1,000 comments involve discrepancies in watercourse alignments or lake and wetland boundaries.
- 500 comments involve additions to or deletions from the public ditch inventory, as directed by drainage authorities.
- 275 comments relate to public waters inventory status. Using statutory public waters inventory criteria, the DNR has removed 120 water features from the buffer map and added 40.
- More than 600 locations require field review. 133 field reviews have been completed, with the balance expected to be completed before the end of the year.

Since the preliminary buffer map was released in March, the DNR has received more than 3,400 comments or change requests and has made nearly 2,100 map updates.

DNR Buffer Mapping Project Manager Bill Huber explained why some change requests are approved and others are not. Each change request is evaluated for consistency with the statutory requirement and DNR criteria for map development, he said. Other comments that do not meet the criteria for the buffer map, such as adding wetlands without a shoreland classification, were not changed on the buffer map.

"It's important to note that these types of changes were expected, and they represent a very small fraction of the total waters depicted on the map," Huber said. Map criteria and the updated buffer map are available at www.mndnr.gov/buffers.

The DNR has also updated the buffer map application. The application is a web-based mapping tool for soil and water conservation districts, drainage authorities and local governments to review the buffer map, suggest corrections and see DNR review decisions. The updated application provides soil and water conservation districts and drainage authorities with an easy way to submit map change requests and other comments.

The final update of the buffer map is scheduled for early 2017. Meanwhile, buffer implementation is moving forward with these deadlines:

- Nov 1, 2017: 50-foot average width, 30-foot minimum width, buffers must be in place on lands adjacent to public waters and identified and mapped on the buffer map.
- Nov. 1, 2018: 16.5-foot minimum width buffers must be in place on lands adjacent to public ditches as identified and mapped on the buffer map.

The buffer initiative is a multi-agency effort involving the DNR, Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The DNR is responsible for maintaining a map of the public waters and public ditches that require permanent vegetation buffers or alternative water quality practices.

More information and answers to specific questions about Minnesota's buffer mapping project are available at www.mndnr.gov/buffers.