

Fact Sheet – Minnesota’s Buffer Protection Map

The Buffer Protection Map is Ready for Use

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ buffer protection map is fully ready for use in buffer implementation. The map identifies public waters and public ditch systems that require permanent vegetation buffers. The buffer protection map is based on public drainage system maps and the Public Waters Inventory (PWI). The original purpose of the PWI was to indicate the lakes, wetlands and watercourses over which the DNR has regulatory jurisdiction. Many public drainage systems had never been mapped in digital format.

Comments from landowners and local governments have improved the map, and made it ready for use. The DNR will maintain an accurate map by continuing to accept comments, and will release periodic map maintenance updates as appropriate.

Landowner Concerns and Comments Have Resulted in Changes to the Map

Since releasing a preliminary buffer map in March 2016, the DNR has received approximately 4,200 geographic-specific comments and has made nearly 2,800 changes to the map. Only 47 comments are still considered “open,” and are being reviewed by DNR staff. Changes to the map include correcting alignments of public waters and ditches to better reflect actual locations, and removal of public waters that are farmed-through and have no defined bed and bank or flow. Highlights of the comment process include:

- 4,193 comments were received
- 2,762 necessary changes were made
- 683 comments required field reviews to make a determination

The most common comments related to alignments of watercourses and corrections to the public ditch maps

The chart on the reverse page shows the numbers and types of comments the DNR received and how the comments were resolved.

Numbers of Comments by Category

The following table outlines the number of comments received from landowners and local governments, by the category the comment fell into. The comments led to the results noted in the final column of the table, except where otherwise noted.

Comment Category	Number of Comments Received*	Comment Results
Field Reviews	683	7 reviews pending; review not completed and recorded before the cutoff date for inclusion in the Feb 28 release.
Relocated public watercourses	338	
Tiled or buried public watercourses	185	
Farmed public watercourse	160	
Watercourse Realignments	894	603 realigned 291 minor items not realigned
Boundary change for lake/wetland	108	Change not needed in most cases due to boundaries being approximations
DNR shoreland classification corrections for main stem rivers that are also public ditches.	20	Results in a change of the buffer width requirement from 50 to 16.5 feet.
Public Water Wetlands not appearing on map	102	No change - DNR only mapped wetlands with a shoreland classification.
Public Ditch Add/Delete	~700	Changed made/confirmed by ditch authority
Public Waters	~350	
PWI challenges	76	Deferred to a separate PWI process
PWI not on historic PWI map	~125	Deleted from buffer map
PWI on historic PWI map but not on buffer map	~45	Added to buffer map
PWI watercourses considered private ditch by landowner	80	No change

*Due to overlapping categories, duplicate comments, and unique circumstances that don't easily fall into a typical category, some numbers are approximate.