

# Starting a Wetland Mitigation Bank: What You Need to Know



A restored wet prairie at a mitigation site near Ettrick, Trempealeau County, WI.

**W**etland mitigation banks are restored, enhanced, or created wetlands whose purpose is to provide credits to offset unavoidable impacts to existing wetlands. A bank can be located on land that historically supported wetlands or currently holds degraded wetlands. Landowners typically work with consultants under guidance from an Interagency Review Team (IRT) to establish and maintain a wetland mitigation bank. This document contains general information about wetland mitigation banks and answers some frequently asked questions. For further information, please read the *“Guidelines for*

*Wetland Compensatory Mitigation in Wisconsin”*\* document found at the DNR wetland mitigation website.

## General Information

A wetland mitigation bank is a system of establishing wetland compensatory mitigation “credits” at a wetland bank site. Credits can be sold to permittees whose obligation to provide compensatory mitigation is then transferred to the mitigation bank sponsor. A wetland mitigation bank is owned/operated as a private business by the bank sponsor and regulated by an Interagency Review Team (IRT) made up of the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Wisconsin DNR (WDNR), Environmental Protection Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

## Release of Credits

Once the Mitigation Bank Instrument (MBI) is approved by the USACE and WDNR, the bank will receive credits over time as performance standards are met. The final standards must be met to warrant the final credit release.

## Required Documents – submitted to the IRT

**1. Prospectus document** - will allow the IRT to review the proposed wetland mitigation bank site and general wetland restoration plan.

**2. Mitigation Bank Instrument (MBI), including a Compensation Site Plan (CSP)** - which must include a detailed description of:

- ownership of the mitigation bank site
- proposed operation of the bank
- baseline conditions of the site
- proposed construction, restoration, monitoring, management, and long-term management plans
- quantifiable performance standards related to vegetation, hydrology, and other factors
- draft financial assurance document and draft conservation easement

**3. Annual monitoring reports** - submitted for 5 to 10 years after construction.



\*Please read the *“Guidelines for Wetland Compensatory Mitigation in Wisconsin”* document before committing to the process of establishing a wetland mitigation bank. This fact sheet summarizes but does not include all required information necessary for establishing a mitigation bank.



Wetlands support a variety of plant species including (from left to right): Marsh Marigold, Tussock Sedge, and Boneset. A healthy wetland provides many ecosystem services including habitat, soil and shoreline stabilization, groundwater discharge, and flood control.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Wetland Mitigation Banks

### ***I have a wetland on my property. Can I start a wetland bank?***

- Intact and functional wetlands are typically not eligible for banking sites, unless they are of exceptional watershed value.
- A degraded wetland can be a wetland bank if sufficient enhancement is planned.

### ***What is a good/bad mitigation bank site?***

Go to the DNR website and search for “Surface Water Data Viewer”, a mapping program that helps to identify potentially restorable wetlands.

- Good: historic wetlands that are drained, isolated from disturbances, and hydrologically isolated.
- Bad: stormwater features, Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) sites, and land purchased with state or federal money. These are not eligible for mitigation banks.

### ***How long does it take to start a mitigation bank?***

- The process length varies by project.
- The timeline from submitting a prospectus to having an approved MBI often takes 1 to 2 years.

### ***Who can help me manage and restore my land?***

- Landowners typically work with a qualified consultant knowledgeable in wetland ecology and restoration to plan and implement restoration activities.

### ***What are the long-term plans for a bank?***

- A banking site must be forever protected as a conservation site, usually through a conservation easement.

### ***What is the price of a bank credit?***

- The cost of a credit is independently determined by the mitigation bank sponsor.

### ***Who can buy the wetland mitigation credits?***

- A bank may only sell to a USACE and/or WDNR permittees at the regulatory agencies’ approval.
- Banks sell credits to permittees within a watershed-based Bank Service Area (BSA).
- Bank sponsors may not be able to sell credits throughout the State.

### ***How many credits can a wetland mitigation bank generate for sale?***

The number of credits depends on many factors, including:

- Size of the bank site - a larger site generally generates more credits.
- How the wetland site is restored/enhanced from existing conditions.
  - Restoring a site that was a historic wetland but is not currently a functioning wetland will generate the most credits.
  - Enhancing an existing wetland typically receives less credits.
  - Wetlands that are preserved or created where no wetland was historically found *may* receive some credits but are not preferred.
  - Some credits may also be generated by restoring or enhancing a buffer around the site.
  - No credit will be given to open water/ponds.

### ***Where can I find more information?***

- Additional information about wetland mitigation program is available on the DNR’s website. Go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search for Wetland Mitigation. This webpage also contains a link to the “*Guidelines for Wetland Compensatory Mitigation in Wisconsin*”\* where you can read a full description of the process of establishing a bank.
- Contact the WDNR Wetland Mitigation Coordinator, Pam Schense, at 608-266-9266 or at [Pamela.Schense@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Pamela.Schense@Wisconsin.gov) OR contact your regional [USACE Project Manager](#).