

Confirm the context

Agricultural Landscape

Challenged by water quality issues

Local interest / grassroots organization

Landowners willing to engage in voluntary restoration

Federal funding currently available for watershed projects - desire to move quickly

** Related question: Does this accurately capture the context?

Public comment centered on length of time and difficulty of permitting conservation practices on agricultural land

Various factors mentioned as potentially impacting the permitting process:

1. Lack of clarity on which type of permit to apply for (exemption vs. GP or IP, and which permit(s) specifically)
2. Completeness of project application, and necessary back and forth if the application is incomplete
3. Necessary communication between department programs about project details or resource impacts
4. Whether delineations or determinations are required
5. Uncertainty regarding SWDV mapping wetland layers and how they inform permit decisions
6. Staff level of experience
7. New and ongoing training
8. General staff to caseload and necessary prioritization in light of statutory time parameters for issuing decisions
9. Lack of relationship b/w permitting staff and local county conservation officer or watershed organization
10. All this adds to the costs for the project in terms of regulatory coordination. Concern for losing federal funds or grants for projects if they can't be expended in timely manner.

** Related question: Does this capture the factors discussed?

** Related question: Uncertain whether project proponents are unsatisfied with ultimate outcome (i.e., was permit process lengthy, but eventually issued? Or are these projects being denied?)

Specific project types mentioned:

Grassed waterway

Wetland restoration

Wetland scrape

Wetland creation (constructed)

Other?

Also mentioned: Drain tile repair within an identical footprint and providing there's a net environmental benefit to watershed

** Related question: Does this capture the types of projects/practices for which there is concern? Are there others?

** Related issue: DNR recently updated its webpage

(<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Wetlands/drainTile>) with drain tile project information.

Complete drain tile project submittals that qualify for existing exemptions or General Permits are processed most efficiently. Project submittals that are incomplete or that require Individual Permits may involve back-and-forth to ensure they meet standards.

Potential questions for further consideration:

1. Are there next steps the WSC would like to consider for evaluating these topics?
2. Is there overarching (non-specific) data related to these cases overall the council is interested in? ("Lay of the land")
3. Does this question grasp the heart of the issue? "What can be done to make the permitting process for conservation practices in the agricultural landscape smoother and more efficient with results that deliver watershed benefits?"