

Wetlands, Wildlife Habitat, and Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin

Promoting Collaboration to Restore Wetlands and Floodplains and Mitigate Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin

A 4-Part Webinar Series for Busy Professionals¹

Resource Brief – Using Zoning to Solve Problems, Save Wetlands, and Please the Public

Many local governing bodies spend significant time dealing with wetlands as problems (i.e., working through land use conflicts), and little to no time considering the ways that wetlands can help them solve problems. So while wetlands provide many important public services such as flood abatement, water quality improvement, fish and wildlife habitat, and more, they rarely receive prominent attention in land use planning and policy development efforts. This webinar will focus on zoning opportunities to improve wetland protection, and on the ways protecting and restoring wetlands can help local governments save time and money and enhance public access to nature and recreation. Speakers will present examples of pro-active wetland policies and planning efforts from around the state and Rock River Basin, and the potential benefits communities can derive from their implementation. Ample time will be provided to discuss barriers to wetland planning and policy development.

- ***Wetland Zoning Opportunities and Planning Tools*** - *Wisconsin Wetlands Association*

Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) is dedicated to the protection, restoration and enjoyment of wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education and advocacy. WWA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. In 2009, Wisconsin Wetlands Association launched a Local Government Outreach Program to help local governments better consider wetlands in their land and water resources policy, planning, and management efforts. The work has been multi-faceted including:

1. Development and distribution of basic wetland education information;
2. Development and distribution of resources to help local governments improve wetland policies (i.e., ordinances) and practices.
3. Training local government staff and boards on basic wetland identification and assessment.
4. Promoting examples of how Wisconsin Counties protect wetlands above and beyond what's required under minimum state shoreland wetland zoning requirements.

¹ See www.eli.org/pdf/wetlandsguidebook.pdf for more information on this webinar series.

More information on the wetland tools and resources developed by WWA and others, and select examples of wetland protection policies enacted by Wisconsin Counties can be found at http://www.eli.org/Program_Areas/natural_hazard_mitigation.cfm (Wetland Resources for Local Governments) or <http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org/>.

- ***Going Above and Beyond State Minimum Standards for Shoreland and Wetland Zoning, How and Why*** - Dane County Department of Planning and Development.

Wisconsin state law requires all counties in the state to regulate activities in wetlands near public waterways. NR 115, Wisconsin Administrative Code describes minimum standards for wetland protection in shoreland zones. But, what if minimums are not enough? What steps can counties take to better protect fragile wetland ecosystems? How do local governments build support for better wetland protection and shepherd better regulations through the county board?

The Dane County Planning and Development Department has confronted all of these questions and has gone above and beyond statewide minimums to design regulations to better protect wetlands, engage stakeholders, and provide simpler rules that promote better understanding and voluntary compliance among landowners. The county has used a wide range of tools to protect wetlands, including comprehensive planning, shoreland-wetland zoning, inland wetland protection, general zoning, land division regulations, stormwater and erosion control, and other non-regulatory measures. For example, as of September 1, 2012, a Shoreland Zoning Permit is required for any construction activities within 300 feet of a lake or stream. More information on Dane County's programs can be found on the County Planning and Development Department website at <http://www.countyofdane.com/plandev/default.aspx>.