



The EGLE/DNR Voluntary Wetland Restoration (VWR) Program: Consistency and Coordination

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Introductions



Michael Van Loan, PWS
EGLE VWR Coordinator

- Joined the EGLE WRD Resource Program in 2018 permitting wetlands, lakes, streams projects
- Joined EGLE Wetlands, Lakes, and Streams Unit (WLSU) as VWR Coordinator in June 2019
- Environmental consultant focused on wetland monitoring, delineation and restoration projects

Introductions



Randy Knapik, PhD, CWB®
DNR VWR Coordinator

- Wildlife research and management background with emphasis in human-modified landscapes
- Joined DNR Wildlife Division in December of 2019 as Wetland Habitat Biologist

What is the Michigan Voluntary Wetland Restoration (VWR) Program?

- Included in Part 303 statute 2019
- Jointly run by EGLE WRD and DNR WLD
- A dedicated team of ecologists and engineers to review and permit wetland restoration projects that meet the VWR criteria set forth in Part 303
- Intended to streamline the permitting process and provide statewide consistency
- Restoration of altered, degraded, and former wetland that results in a net benefit in wetland functions and services.
- Projects usually conducted by Federal, State, Tribal Agencies, or NGO's

VWR Has An Amazing Team!

- EGLE VWR Coordinator – *Mike Van Loan*
- DNR VWR Coordinator – *Randy Knapik*
- EGLE Floodplain Engineer – *Donna Cervelli*
- EGLE Dam Safety Engineer – *Mike Size*
- EGLE Admin Support – *Atarah Washington*

Who Can Apply Under the VWR Program?

- A state or federal agency
- A tribal agency
- A NGO whose stated primary mission, purpose, or programs include wetland conservation
- A person in partnership **through a written agreement** with any of the above

Wetland Restoration Early Coordination Meetings (Pre-app)

- **No fee**
- Outcome based assessment of a project made by evaluating overall net increases in wetland functions and services and acreage.
- Foster partnership
- May be in the field, in person, or virtual and include (but not limited to):
 - Discussion of project outcomes related to project purpose, justification, and wetland functions.
 - Suggestions that may minimize permitting delays
 - Options for maximizing net increases in wetland functions and services while minimizing impacts
 - Coordination with EPA, ACOE, USFWS

Restoration Partners/VWR Customers

- USFWS – Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
- USDA NRCS – Wetland Reserve Easement Program
- USFWS – National Wildlife Refuges
- USGS – Research for wetland management
- DNR WLD/PRD/FISH – Public lands projects
- Ducks Unlimited

VWR Criteria

- Activities voluntarily undertaken to restore, reestablish, rehabilitate, or enhance altered or degraded or former wetland AND that result in a net increase in wetland functions and services
- Activities to maintain or manage VWR sites
- **No mitigation required for permitted impacts**
 - No mitigation projects under VWR program

Wetland Functions and Services

- Functions and services defined in Part 30301(3)(f) as:
 - Wetland hydrology that approximates the pre-disturbance condition or that emulates the natural condition of the wetland
 - Fish and wildlife habitat quality or quantity
 - Plant community quality, characterized by native vegetation types and diversity
 - Water and soil related functions such as nutrient removal, sediment retention, flood control, or groundwater recharge
 - Recreational use of the wetland, including, but not limited to, fishing hunting, trapping and birdwatching

Common VWR Project Activities

- Hydrologic Restoration
 - Installation, removal, and maintenance of impounding structures such as water control structures, dikes, and berms
 - Removal or disabling of drainage structures such as subsurface drain tiles
 - Plugging artificial drainage ditches
 - Removing historic wetland fill or sedimentation
- Topographic Enhancement
 - Excavation to construct shallow water areas and/or microtopography where it has been lost to sedimentation or farming (e.g., grading or disking).

[Part 30312f. \(12\) a-l](#)

VWR Activities and GPs/MPs

- MP.54 Wetland Habitat Restoration and Enhancement
 - Developed in coordination with restoration partners to be broad and inclusive for most VWR activities
 - Available for restoration projects conducted by or **in cooperation with** local, state, or federal conservation agencies or nonprofit conservation organizations or **similar wetland professionals.**

VWR Activities and GPs/MPs

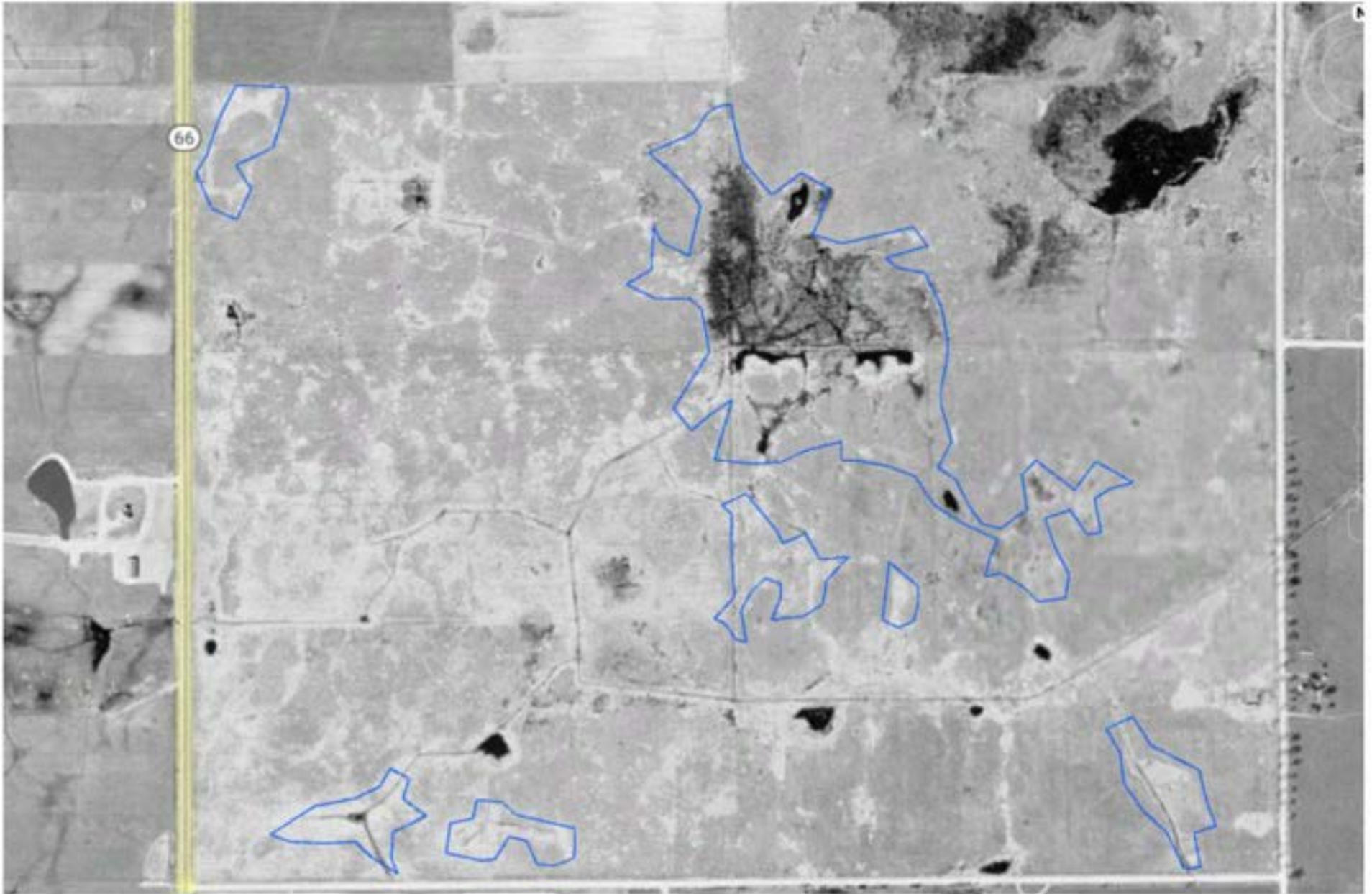
- VWR Team continues to work with restoration partners to improve other GP/MP categories that interface wetland restoration projects
 - Remove unneeded barriers for projects that increase functions and services
- [General Permit Categories](#), [Minor Project Categories](#)



•DNR-OMG-NAWCA 2023 Wetland/Grassland Project



•1998 AERIAL SHOWING DITCHING AND TILES AS WELL AS AREAS DOMINATED BY REED CANARY GRASS (LIGHT COLOR)



•Designed by: Gib King LAT/LON 44.15659, -85.13641

•OSCEOLA CO., TWP
T16N-R10W SECTION 28



•DNR-OMG-NAWCA 2023 Wetland/Grassland Project



May 2013 Imagery

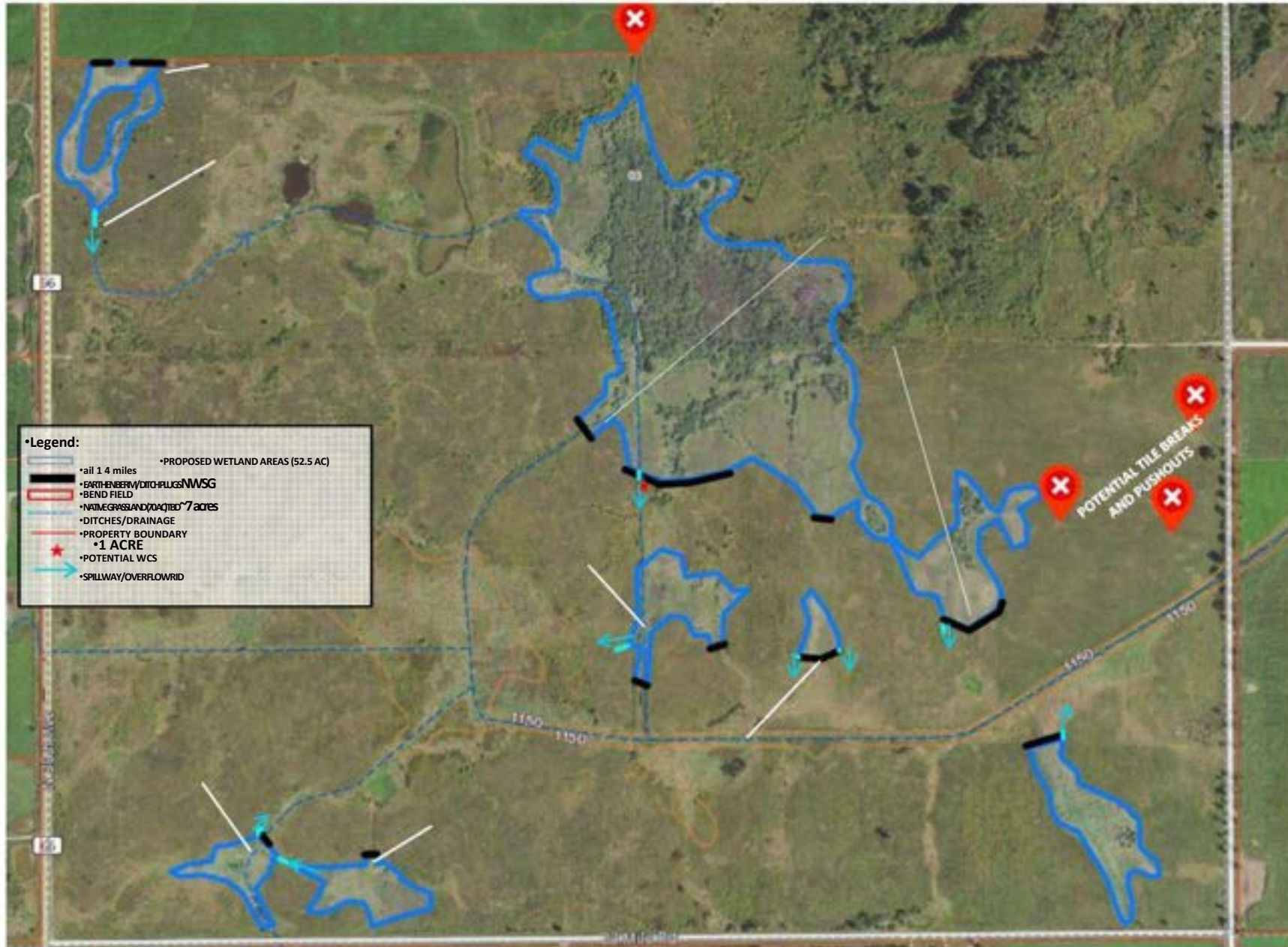
Early 2000s
wetland
mitigation
project

Seasonally
wet, but
majority of
tile and
drainage
ditches still
functional





•DNR-OMG-NAWCA 2023 Wetland/Grassland Project











VWR Program Accomplishments

- VWR Team established in 2019
- 150+ VWR permits issued
- 1,900+ acres restored/enhanced
- Created a VWR specific JPA for GPs/MPs
- Virtual/In-Person Trainings for VWR partners
- [VWR webpage](#)

Goals 2023 - Onward

- Enhanced communication/coordination
- Continue to streamline/align MP 54
- Streamline standard JPA for VWR Individual Permits
- Wetland restoration trainings
- Working EJ into wetland restoration

Optimisms

- Increased awareness/funding
- Increased cooperation with partners
- Increased scientific understanding/technology
- Natural resiliency/adaptation



Questions?

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