

8420.0835 HIGH-PRIORITY REGIONS AND AREAS.

Subpart 1. **High-priority regions.** Parts of the state that are high-priority regions for preservation, enhancement, restoration, and establishment of wetlands include all major watersheds with a majority of their land area contained within counties that have lost 50 percent or more of their presettlement wetland base, which are those listed in part 8420.0117, subpart 1, item C. In all other major watersheds of the state, high-priority regions are high-priority areas approved as such by the board according to subpart 2.

Subp. 2. **High-priority areas.**

A. Water management plans prepared by water management organizations in the metropolitan area under Minnesota Statutes, section 103B.231, by counties outside the metropolitan area under Minnesota Statutes, section 103B.311, and by watershed districts outside the metropolitan area under Minnesota Statutes, sections 103D.401 and 103D.405, may identify those areas that qualify as high-priority areas for wetland preservation, enhancement, restoration, and establishment. To designate a high-priority area, the preservation, enhancement, restoration, and establishment of wetlands must have or achieve high public value based on the functions of wetlands listed in part 8420.0522, subpart 1, and the goals of the water management plan.

B. High-priority areas should be designated by minor watershed or subwatershed. Strong consideration should be given to identifying as high-priority areas minor watersheds that have less than 50 percent of their original wetland acreages and where restoration of previously impacted or degraded wetlands will contribute toward achieving watershed-based goals. Consideration should also be given to watersheds that contain high-valued wetlands that are at risk of degradation or loss, the protection of which is integral to maintaining the ecology and condition of the watershed. Identification of high-priority watersheds should be consistent with part 8420.0830, subpart 5, item A.

C. Local water plans may identify individual wetlands, or criteria to establish individual wetlands, as high-priority areas. Individual wetlands identified as high-priority areas should be of high local value, at risk of degradation or loss, and consistent with any existing wetland classification criteria established under part 8420.0830, subpart 5, items A and B. Plans may also identify individual sites as high-priority areas for wetland restoration and establishment. High-priority restoration sites should be identified according to the criteria in part 8420.0830, subpart 5, items A and C.

D. Local water plans that identify high-priority areas and intend to accept applications for wetland preservation areas under part 8420.0840 should include criteria for eligibility and prioritization of applications.

E. The board shall review the inclusion of high-priority areas in plans as part of the standard process for plan review. High-priority areas approved by the board that are not in a high-priority region under subpart 1 become high-priority regions with board approval.

Statutory Authority: *MS s 103G.2242*

History: *34 SR 145*

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