

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

By Kristeena Patsche

Spraying and scouting season has arrived. But this time of year is no different when it comes to farming apps that can be used on your smartphone or tablet to track progress, determine problems and keep track of data at the palm of your hand.

Here are a few apps that could be helpful throughout this season.

eCropScout

Price: Free

Operating System: Android, iOS

The app allows all disease and insect scouting, chemical and fertilizer applications, as well as planting and harvest information to be in one place.

This app has many different functions, including the ability to track weed, insect and disease scouting. Users can add weeds, insects or diseases to the scouting sheet, all from a pull down bar for quick data entry. The field maps can be drawn on, and also record where certain issues were spotted. These maps and scouting reports can be saved, emailed and printed.

eCropScout also acts as a way to record fertilizer/manure or chemical applications. The ability to draw on the map allows users to record the area spread or sprayed. It also records the amount applied for future reference.

Lastly, this app keeps track of all the varieties and areas planted, gives users the number of bags needed for the area, and can record insecticide, fertilizer and seed treatments. In the fall, eCropScout will allow users to pull up a map and track weed problems for the following year. It will also track varieties, row width, yield and quality of the plant.

eCropScout is a great app if you want an easy-to-use tool that keeps your data all in one place.

Pocket Rain Gauge

Price: Free; upgrades available

Operating System: iOS

If you are one to have fields spreading across the county or multiple counties where rainfalls may vary, this may be an app for you. Pocket Rain Gauge uses your geolocation to deliver accurate rainfall measurements right to your phone.

By opening the app and touching the “get rainfall” button, a rain gauge will appear on the screen and fill up to represent the amount of rain that fell over the last 24 hours at that location. By signing up for the weather account, users can also save specific locations for easier tracking.

It really is a rain gauge in your pocket.

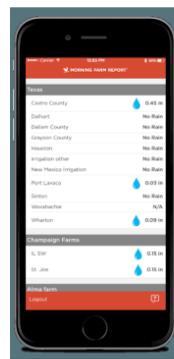
Ag PhD Crop Nutrient Deficiencies

Price: Free

Operating System: Android, iOS

The Ag PhD Crop Nutrient Deficiencies app can help farmers determine fertility issues in a field. The app allows users to search deficiencies by photos and descriptions in order to find the image that most closely matches the fertility issue in that field.

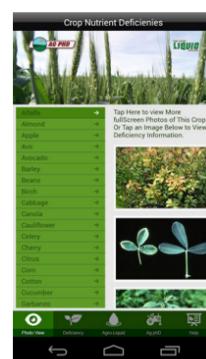
This app can be used for a wide variety of crops, including garden plants, and boasts additional features to help make decisions on how to correct the issue.



Pocket Rain Gauge



eCropScout



Ag PhD Crop Nutrient Deficiencies

Buffer law waivers are not automatic

By: Jeff C. Braegelmann

News reports of the 2017 Legislative Session may lead you to believe Minnesota’s Buffer Law gives you an automatic extension of the deadline to establish a buffer. Don’t be lulled into doing nothing. Let’s recap some requirements and deadlines under the law so you are not surprised later.

A Requirement, an Alternative, and Some Exemptions

The law begins with a requirement. If you have land adjacent to a body of water that is identified on the buffer protection map, you must establish and maintain a buffer 50 feet wide if your land is adjacent to public waters or 16½ feet wide if adjacent to a public drainage system.

But, the statute provides an alternative to the buffer requirement, referred to as an alternative riparian water quality practice, which should provide a level of water quality protection comparable to a buffer. The statute restricts alternative practices to landowners whose adjacent property is used for cultivation farming.



If you do something other than cultivation farming, don’t expect to use an alternative practice instead of a buffer.

Next, after laying down a requirement and providing a potential alternative, the law provides some exemptions. If you fit within an exemption, then as long as you comply with any state shoreland rules affecting your property, you do not have to establish a buffer or an alternative riparian water quality practice. One exemption is enrollment in the federal Conservation Reserve Program.

Dates and Deadlines, But No “Automatic” Waiver

The deadlines for establishing buffers remain unchanged: November 1, 2017, for public waters, and November 1, 2018, for public drainage systems. The statute allows Soil and Water Conservation Districts (“SWCD”) to issue a “validation of compliance” to demonstrate your compliance with the law. The law also provides for a

“conditional compliance waiver,” which you may qualify for if you apply for and maintain eligibility for financial or technical assistance to install a buffer or alternative practice and that assistance is not yet available. This conditional compliance waiver is valid until the financial or technical assistance becomes available but not later than November 1, 2018. Because the waiver must be applied for, it is not automatic.

The 2017 legislation provides another conditional compliance waiver that will be valid until July 1, 2018. The SWCD must grant these waivers to landowners who have filed “a parcel-specific riparian protection compliance plan” by November 1, 2017. Therefore, you still face a November 1, 2017, deadline to file a parcel-specific plan with your SWCD.

Do not expect to simply call or stop by your SWCD office and pick up your “automatic” waiver. Contact your SWCD office now. If the buffer law applies to your land and you do not have a conditional compliance waiver in hand by the appropriate deadline, you will be in violation of the statute and could face enforcement actions.

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