



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Corps of Engineers Finalizes New Permitting Process for WI Cranberry Marshes**

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### **Growers and Consultants Trained on New Process, Moving Forward to Grow Industry While Upholding Tough Regulatory Standards**

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#### **2008 Wisconsin Crop Larger Than Expected, Demand Strong**

WISCONSIN RAPIDS, Wis. - The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA) today announced that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has issued its General Permit 014 (GP014) for activity on cranberry marshes that would impact wetlands. This was the final administrative step needed to streamline regulatory review of cranberry marsh expansions in Wisconsin and allow for more industry growth, economic benefits and jobs in the state.

“With this federal permit now issued, and thanks to a great deal of hard work and collaboration by both state and federal agencies, Wisconsin is poised to allow state growers to take advantage of market opportunities if it fits with plans for their farms,” said Tom Lochner, executive director for WSCGA. “With the new permitting review process, our growers have an efficient process to expand while maintaining the same regulatory standards required under the previous, lengthier process. This is great example of federal, state and private collaboration to bring about economic growth for Wisconsin.”

According to Lochner, the 2008 Wisconsin cranberry crop will be above earlier forecasts, and worldwide demand for the fruit remains strong. Because of that demand, in July 2008, WSCGA and industry leaders like Ocean Spray, Cliffstar and others announced an effort to grow the industry in Wisconsin and with it the economic benefits and manufacturing jobs that would follow. Key to that expansion effort was the new streamlined permitting review process, now set in place with GP014.

“Foresight earlier this year by the Governor, WDNR and others to make this effort a priority has put our state in a good position to bring new investments and economic activity into the state when we need it most,” said Ed Sabey, president of WSCGA.

With a Memo of Understanding reached in October on the new permitting review process, the industry and state and federal regulators held educational sessions for Wisconsin growers and wetland consultants and engineers to educate them on the new regulatory process while they awaited GP014. Two grower trainings were held and approximately 100 growers attended. A separate training was held for industry consultants who work on designing projects regulated under GP014. GP014 is the permitting process for a number of activities on Wisconsin cranberry marshes that have minor impacts on wetlands, including the expansion of an existing marsh, the squaring off of an existing cranberry bed, rehabilitation of abandoned cranberry beds, dike construction or extensions and more.

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According to Lochner, federal regulations requiring compensatory mitigation for all wetland impacts are the same under both processes and if a project would have a significant impact on wetlands it is not approved under either process.

By spring 2009, WSCGA expects a number of new acres to be planted in Wisconsin while having very little impact on state wetlands. Those initial expansion projects were proposed under the old regulatory process, and with the new streamlined review process in place, those plans are expected to be approved sooner and construction to begin when winter breaks.

“With GP014 issued, I expect growers to apply for new permits in the spring when consultants and regulators can get back out in the field and evaluate areas being considered for projects,” said Lochner.

The new permitting review process allows for one common permit application to be submitted to both the Corps and the WDNR, rather than two separate applications. The process includes a pre-application meeting between the grower and regulators to discuss the project and gain feedback before the costly and time-consuming permit application is finalized. That early dialogue and feedback will result in more complete and realistic permit applications being submitted, making the process more efficient for both growers and federal and state regulators.

“These times are challenging for capital investments like a marsh expansion, yet world demand for cranberries is strong and the time is now to seize the opportunity before other growing regions like Canada do so,” said Lochner. “Wisconsin has the growing expertise, weather conditions, abundance of water, and research and manufacturing facilities to make it the best place for the cranberry industry to grow. And, with this new permitting review process, we can make strides in upholding all regulations while expanding the economy and creating jobs in Wisconsin.”

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***Editor's Notes:***

In 2007, Wisconsin's cranberry industry accounted for more than 80 percent of all fruit grown in Wisconsin in terms of revenue. Cranberries are Wisconsin's largest fruit crop in terms of acreage with approximately 18,000 acres of cranberries across 19 Wisconsin counties, and Wisconsin provides nearly 60 percent of the nation's cranberry supply.

Wisconsin's 2008 cranberry crop was projected by the USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service to be approximately 3.85 million barrels, which is 4 percent larger than the state's 2007 crop. Final statistics on the size of the 2008 harvest will be available in February 2009, though Wisconsin growers have reported larger 2008 crops than expected.

A 2008 economic study conducted by Steve Deller and Ed Jesse, both of UW Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, found that with a 5,000 acre expansion, the state would realize 1,115 new jobs and an increased economic impact of \$75 million annually. That is a conservative estimate as those figures do not even include the added anticipated growth of processing and manufacturing jobs and other positive impacts for the state's economy.

For more background information on this effort and the industry click [here](#).