MINNESOTA IT SERVICES

Hunter Walk-In Access Enrollment Information System (W I A E I S) User Guide

3/07/2023

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
LLC	Limited Liability Company
MN	Minnesota
PF	Pheasants Forever
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District
TRS	Township, Range, Section
WIA	Walk In Access
WIAEIS	Walk-In Access Enrollment Information System
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WPA	Waterfowl Production Area

Accessing the application

The following requirements are necessary for accessing the application:

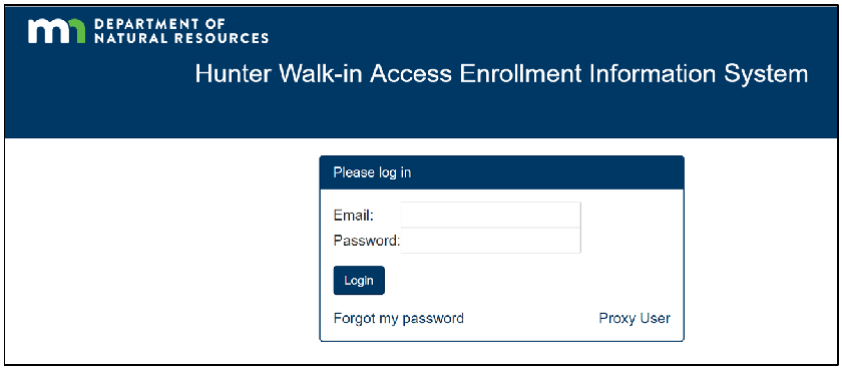
Internet connection
Approved access to the application via the DNR's Extranet.

Web app URL:

WIAEIS web app (https://webapps15.dnr.state.mn.us/walk_in_access_enrollment)

Login:

DNR Staff will use their DNR credentials to log into the application.
External users, SWCD and PF staff, will log in with their DNR Extranet account credentials. New users should contact the DNR WIA Coordinator to be added as user of the system.

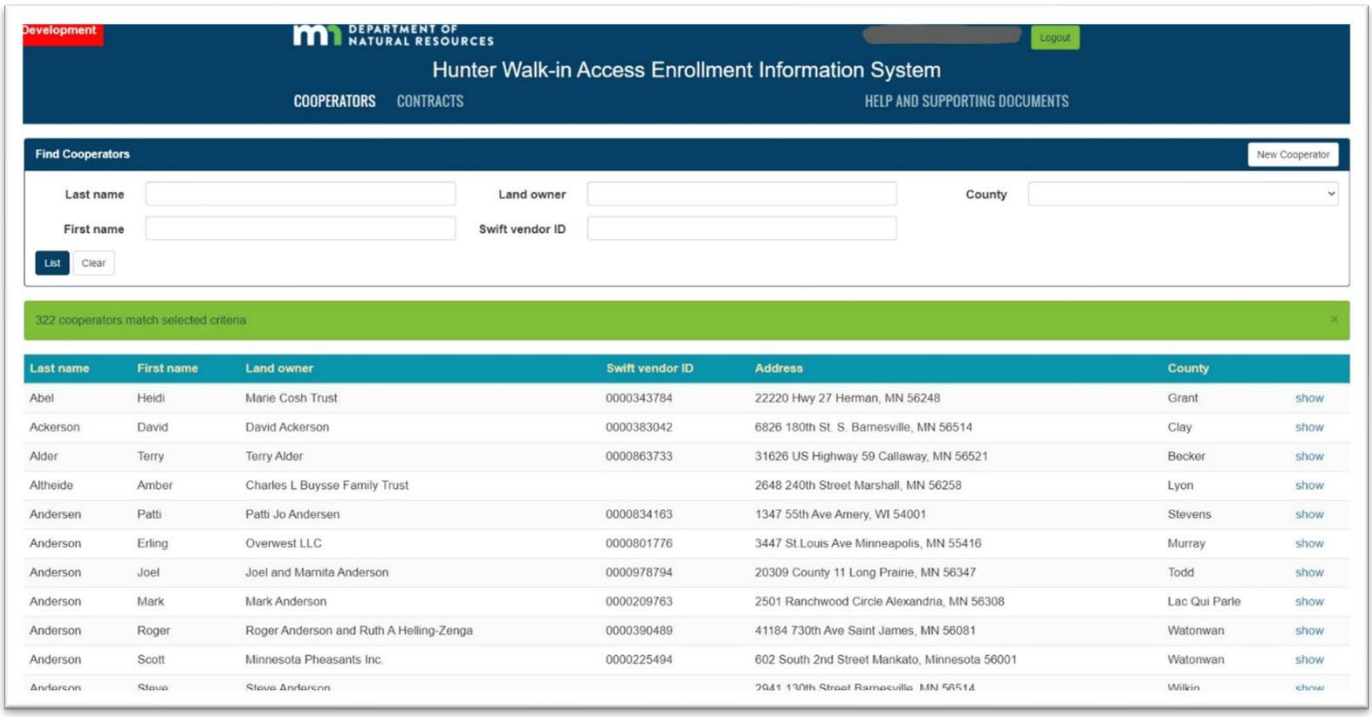


Using the application

Each agreement consists of three components:

- Cooperator
- Site
- Contract

All new or renewal agreements will start with the Cooperator information. After logging in, the application will open to a Cooperator listing.



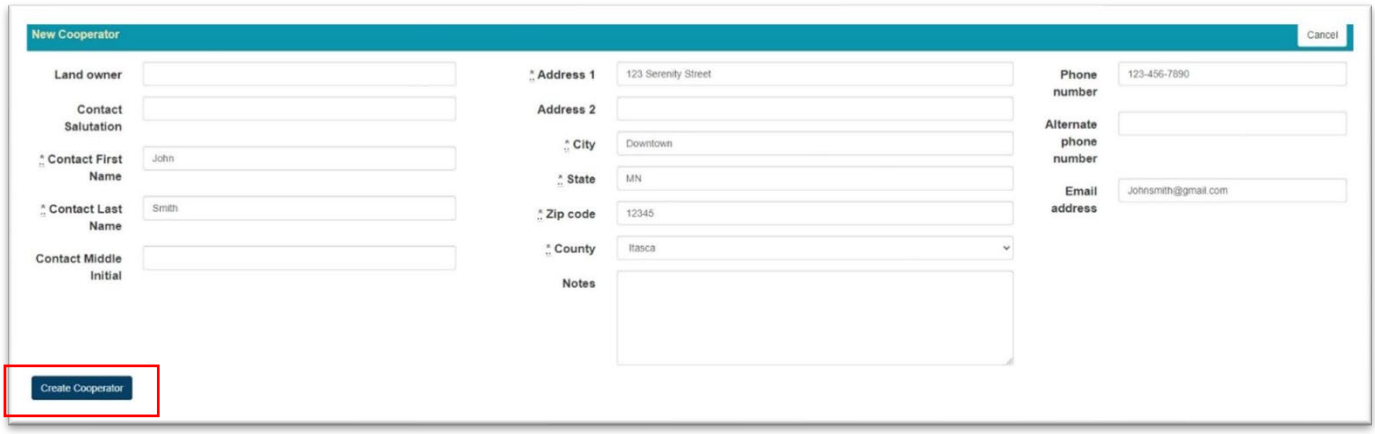
Cooperators List

- Use the filter boxes to search for a cooperator. If you find a match, see the Existing Cooperators and Renewals section
- If you cannot find a match in the list, see the New Cooperator section

New Cooperator

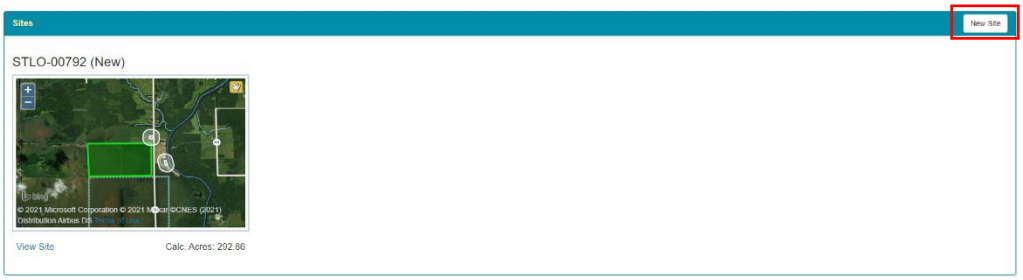
Use this workflow for creating a new agreement with a cooperator that is not in the WIAEIS.

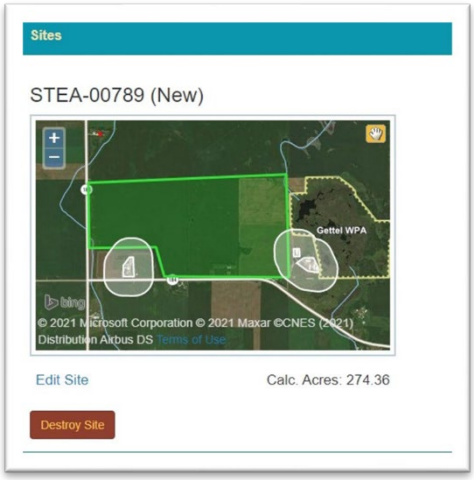
1. Click the “New Cooperator” button in the upper right corner of the Cooperators List screen.
2. Fill in the boxes for your new cooperator. Note: data entry boxes with an asterisk are required. If the owner of the land is an entity (Trust/Corporation/LLC/Partnership) enter the name of the entity in the Landowner box. An entity still needs a First and Last name entered, which should be the main representative or contact of the entity you are working with to create the agreement.
3. After all data is filled in, click the “Create Cooperator” button.



Create a WIA Site

Once a Cooperator is created the web page will refresh and display the Cooperator Information page. This page has three sections: Cooperator, Sites, and Contracts. Click the “New Site” button to launch the Site Mapper window. See Appendix A for detailed instructions to create the site.





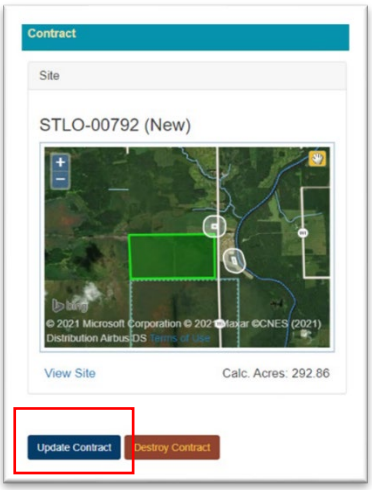
After a site has been created it will show up under the Sites section, users can edit and Destroy (delete) the site at this point. (Note: Once you create a contract you will not be able to edit the site)

Create a Contract

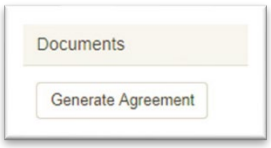
1. Click the “New Contract” button.

2. Select the site to use for the contract and click on the “Initialize Contract”.

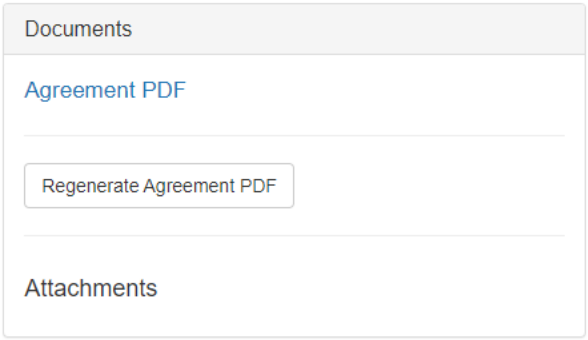
3. Enter the Base Data.
4. Once all the data is entered and you have proofed the information, click the “Update Contract” button.



5. After the contract is created, the Generate Agreement button, in the Documents box, will become active. *NOTE: the contract information should be reviewed again before generating the agreement for signatures.*



6. Once the Agreement has been generated, an Agreement PDF link will appear. Click this link to open the Agreement PDF for printing. Once an Agreement is generated you will not be able to edit the contract.



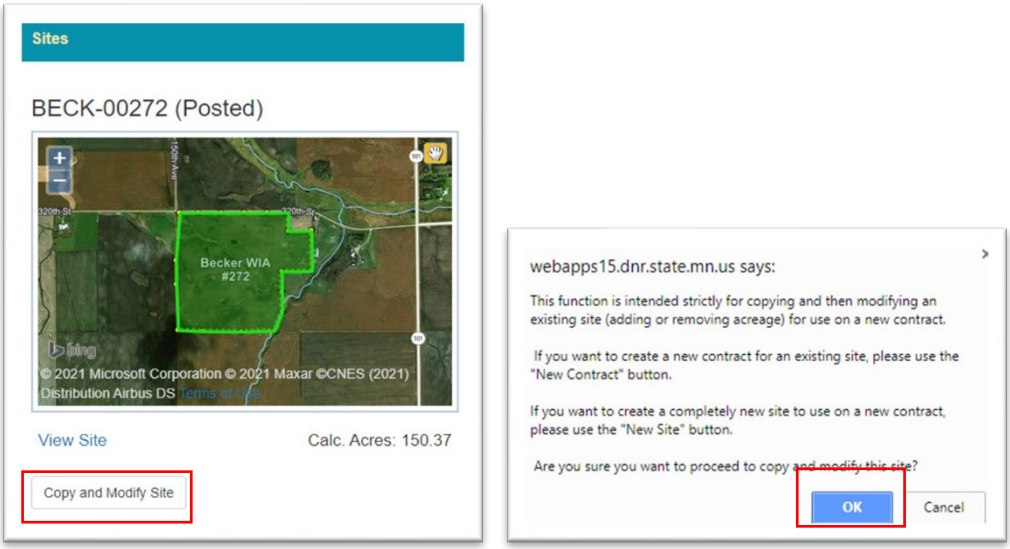
7. Attachments – after an agreement is generated, users can upload supporting documents related to the contract by clicking the "+" button in the Documents box.

Existing Cooperators and Renewals

Sites for renewals

1. Click the "show" button next to the cooperator for which you are creating a renewal or new contract.
2. Verify that the Cooperator data is still correct, if not you can click the "Edit" button to update the data.
3. In the Sites section, verify that the site in the system is what will be used for the contract. You have 3 options for Site representations in the system.
    a. **Reuse an existing site** – uses the posted boundary polygons – use this option when there have been no acres added or removed from the agreement. Example (no boundary change to the site).
        i. Go to the Contracts section and click "New Contract".
        ii. On the next screen, select the existing site that will be used for the new contract and click "Initialize Contract".
        iii. Complete the Contract info as described in the Create a Contract section above.
    b. **Copy and modify** – uses an existing posted boundary polygon in the system BUT allows modifications – use this option when an existing site in the system has acres added or removed to its boundary from a previous year's contract.

i. Click the “Copy and Modify” button in the Sites section of the page.



Clicking “OK” on the pop-up screen will launch the Site Mapper. See Appendix A for how to modify a site.

c. **New Site** – creates a new polygon in the system – use this option when the site needed for the contract has no representation in the WIAEIS.
   i. Follow the instructions in Appendix A for creating a new site.

Note: Preliminary Sites and Posted Sites – when a site is created in the system it will have (Preliminary) next to its unique identifier. This indicates that this is a new site that has not been posted as a WIA on the ground and an existing site would be posted. Existing sites in the system from previous years are labeled as (Posted). All renewals will utilize the Posted GIS boundary of a site for consistency and ease of data management.

Additional Help

For technical assistance or to report an issue with the application, contact Julie Hines(218) 328-8936

Appendix A: WIAEIS Site Mapper Instructions

Search:

1. Type descriptive text to return a list of matching places.
2. Click on the name of a place, in the search box results, to zoom to that location on the map.

Search Tips:

- Search on County name to get you close.
- Search on TRS, example T120 R42 S21
- Search on known adjacent features: WMAs, WPAs, towns, water bodies.

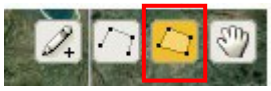
Navigation:

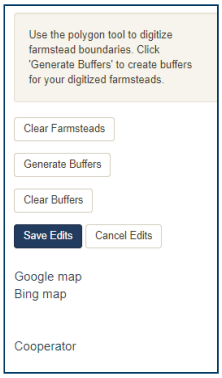
- Zoom in/out – use the "+" to zoom in and the "- "to zoom out. In addition, you can use the scroll wheel on your mouse.
- Draw rectangle zoom – hold shift key down while holding the left mouse button and drag a rectangle around the point of interest.
- Pan using the "hand" button.

Digitizing: Refer to Appendix B for details on Digitizing WIA Features

Note – your edits are not saved until you click the "Save Edits" button. This applies to all editing tasks. Example, the "Cancel Editing" button DOES NOT save your edits.

Creating a site:

1. Create farmstead buffer(s) first if they are within 500 ft of the proposed WIA boundary. Click the "Buffer Farmsteads" button to get to the Farmstead Buffer Edit Screen.
    a. Search around the perimeter of the proposed WIA boundary, including across roads and water features to make sure there are no farmsteads within 500 ft (See Appendix B for details)
        i. Select the draw Farmstead Polygons tool 
        ii. Left click to start drawing a polygon around the building footprints and livestock corrals. One polygon per farmstead should work in most cases. For each corner of buildings or



livestock corrals continue to left click until you get to the final corner, then double left click to complete the Farmstead Polygon.

iii. Click "Save Edits" button after completing the first Farmstead polygon. This will add two additional options to the interface allowing you to view the area in Google Maps or Bing Maps, which have more detailed imagery to confirm buildings and livestock corrals.

iv. Go back into the Buffer Farmsteads Edit Screen and draw additional Farmstead Polygons as needed.

v. Once finished creating Farmstead Polygons, click the "Generate Buffers" button to create 500 ft buffers around each Farmstead polygon.

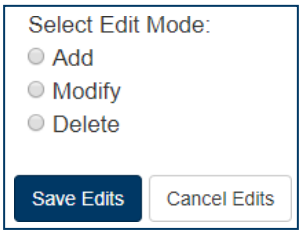
vi. When finished creating buffers, click "Save Edits" button.

2. Click "Edit Features"

a. Select the Edit Mode Option depending on the editing needs. The appropriate tools will become active on the map interface for each mode.

i. Add Mode

1. Choose the Snap Layer as Posted WIA Parcels if the new site is adjacent to an existing posted WIA site. Select the "Draw Site Polygon Tool" to digitize the WIA boundary.



2. Digitize site snapping to adjacent features as appropriate. Note that the "circle" with the bullseye dot to the left of the arrow cursor is the source from which the actual point of each vertex will be placed. *Tip: if you make a mistake while digitizing the site. Press Ctrl+Z on your keyboard to undo the last edit, Ctrl+Y to redo, and ESC (Escape) to delete the current feature.*

3. Double click to close (end) the site polygon.

4. You may create more than one polygon for the site, however if the sites are not adjacent to each other, it may be more appropriate to create a separate contract for it. See Appendix B for details.

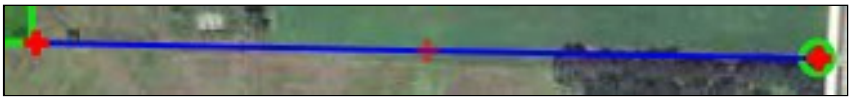
5. For each site polygon, ensure that access is available from a public road either directly to the WIA or via other public hunting lands. Use the "Draw Access Points Tool" to identify a location along a public road from which WIA users may access the WIA. Note it is possible to identify more than one access point to a site, but not necessary unless the site contains multiple polygons that are not coincident. See Appendix B for details.

6. If the site polygon needs to have an access trail for users to gain access to the site, Use the “Draw Access Trails Tool” to locate the trail from the Access Point to the WIA site. Note it is possible to identify more than one access trail to a site, but not necessary unless the site contains multiple polygons which are not coincident. See Appendix B for details.

7. Click “Save Edits” when finished.

ii. Modify Mode

1. Click the WIA site polygon, access point, or access trail you want to edit. The WI A feature will highlight in blue and red crosses will show up at each vertex and center point for line and polygon features.



2. Click and drag a vertex to modify the shape. Clicking and moving a center point will turn it into a vertex and add additional center points on each side of the new vertex for further detail.

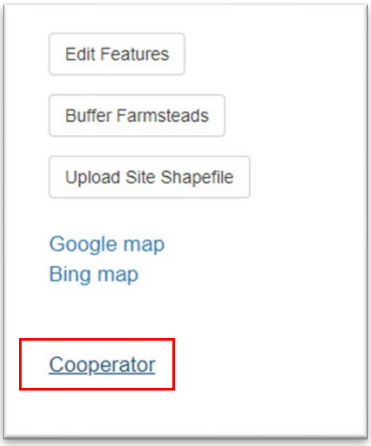
3. Hover over a vertex and press the Delete button on your keyboard to delete a vertex in the feature.

4. Click “Save Edits” when finished modifying shapes.

iii. Delete Mode

1. Click the feature that you want to delete. A popup window will appear to confirm your edit. Click “OK” to delete the feature.

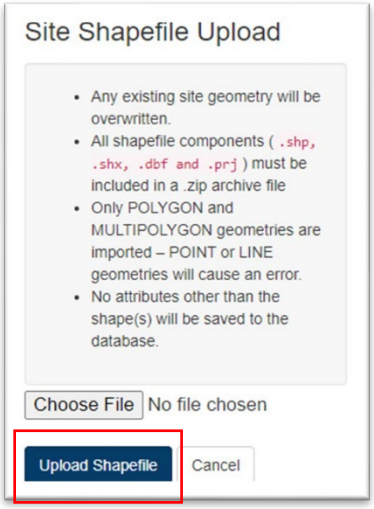
2. Click “Save Edits” when finished deleting features.



3. Exit the Site Mapper – Click the Cooperator link.

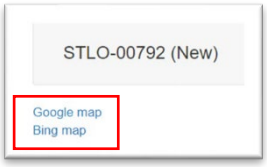
Upload an Existing shapefile:

a. Click the Upload Site Shapefile button.
b. Follow the on-screen instructions for uploading an existing shapefile. Note: uploading a shapefile is like creating a new one, even though the polygon is on the map, it is not saved until you save your edits.



Reviewing the WIA boundary area for occupied buildings or cattle yards in Google and Bing Maps

a. Once the first farmstead or WIA polygon is created, the Google maps and Bing maps links will become active on the WIAEIS Site Mapper Page.



b. Open each link to review the area around the WIA boundary to identify any potential occupied buildings or cattle yards that may not be showing up in the WIAEIS, paying close attention to wooded areas, which may be shading or covering up roof outlines.

c. Create additional buffers, if necessary, in WIAEIS Site Mapper and edit the WIA boundary.
d. If a building is determined as not occupied/abandoned, please include a comment in the contract section. If the cooperator wants to reduce the 500 ft boundary around a building or cattle yard on their parcel, they will have to fill out a Landowner Boundary Waiver.

Appendix B: Delineating WIA Site Boundaries and Access Features

Habitat Requirements, Size and Locations Restricting Firearm Discharge or Hunting

The first steps in working with the cooperator is to determine if their property fits into the WIA program. Although part of the benefits to the program are to protect habitat through additional monetary incentives to the landowner, the bottom line is the property needs to be suitable for hunting and reasonable for ease in sign posting.

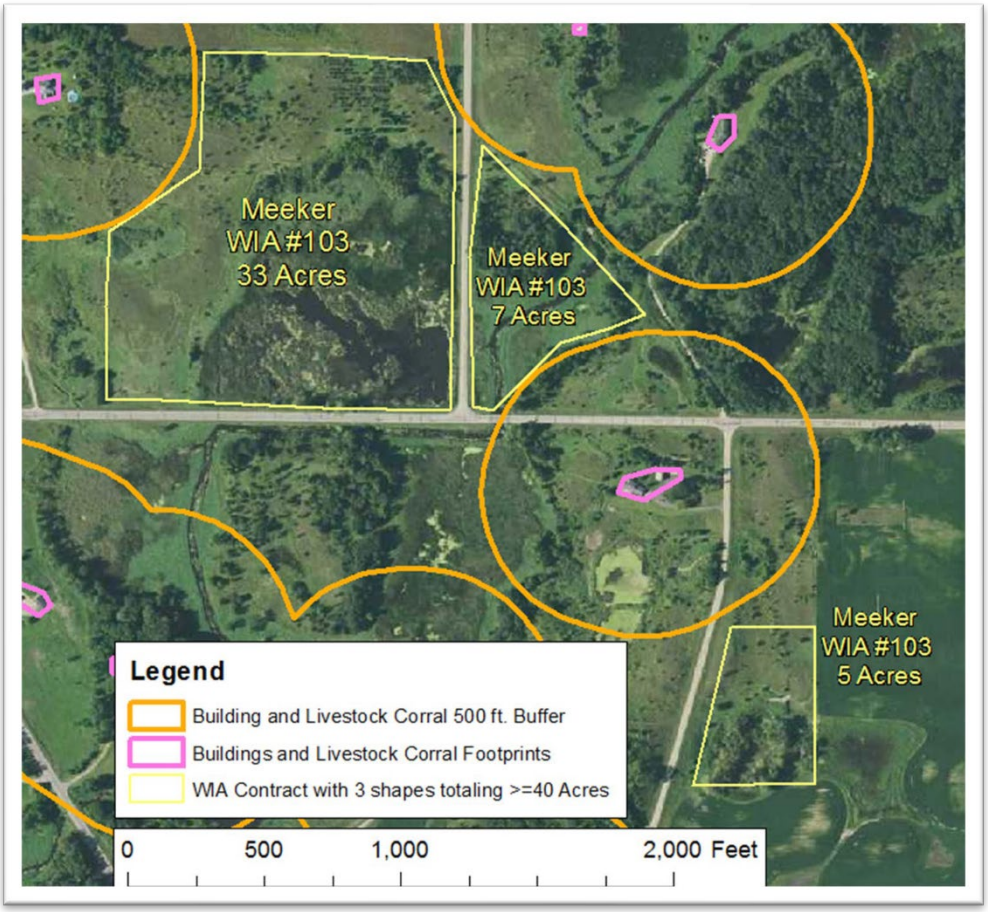
***Habitat Requirements**:* The main emphasis of the program has been to provide quality grassland and wetland habitats for places to hunt, however as the program has expanded, more wooded properties especially along riparian corridors have been enrolled in the program. Parcels that are entirely composed of plantation forest, such as hybrid poplar or coniferous forest, will most likely be rejected from the program. Other naturally forested parcels should be considered if they have some defined edges for the sign crews to post and for hunters to follow. Other habitat types that have been rejected in the past are parcels that are entirely made up of public water wetlands that already have public access via road right-of-way or where access to a public water wetland is currently controlled by multiple private parties.

Please inform the cooperator that they need to inform the DNR of habitat maintenance or upgrade activities that will alter the cover. DNR uses this information to post on the WIA Status website that the cover has been compromised, informing hunters there may be limited to no habitat to hunt for that year.

***WIA Parcel Size**:* Only parcels meeting the following description for size will be accepted in the program.

1. Eligible sites must include a minimum of 40 acres. Acreage below this threshold will be considered for enrollment only if:

    a. It is contiguous with a WMA/WPA, another WIA, or public water meeting the criteria in #5, resulting in at least 40 contiguous acres open to public hunting.



b. If two or more smaller parcels within close proximity of each other (1/2 mile or less), add up to 40 acres they may also be considered, even if not contiguous with a WMA/WPA or another WIA.

c. Parcels smaller than 40 acres but immediately adjacent to other public hunting lands including WMAs, WPAs and other currently enrolled WIAs.

d. Areas within 500' of an occupied building or active livestock stockade or corral will not be enrolled unless a Landowner Boundary Waiver is signed by the occupant.

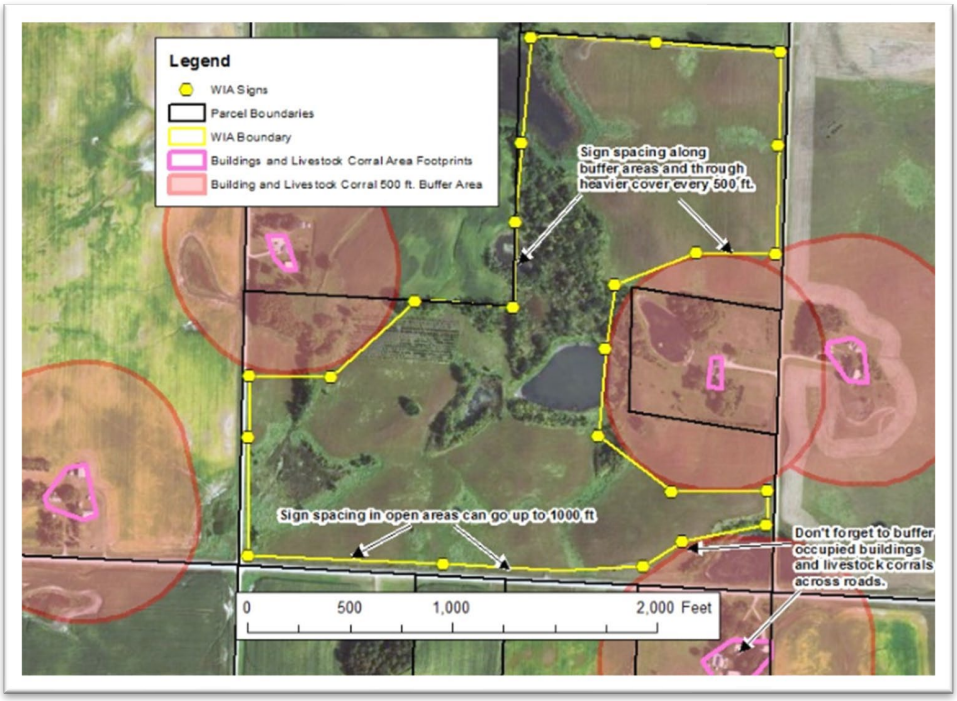
e. *New for 2021: DNR sign crews will be installing "No Shooting Zone" signs in buffered areas as needed (if buffer is continuation of habitat), although these areas will not be included under the landowner agreement. Please make landowners aware of this signage need to reduce potential shooting zone violations. Contact Amber Knutson with questions.

f. Land currently enrolled in a conservation program is a priority of WIA. Outreach and enrollment should be targeted to these lands. The WIAEIS now includes a dropdown box for indicating participation in a conservation program, please use this feature so we can track the type of lands being enrolled. Other land with high quality natural vegetation may be eligible if SWCD staff certifies it via a field visit and documents the condition of the cover at the time of the visit. Small inclusions of cropland or hay land may be enrolled only to square off boundaries.

Guidance for creating no firearm discharge zones around buildings and cattle yard

When delineating WIA boundaries, make sure to identify all potential occupied buildings and livestock corrals within 500 feet of the cooperator parcel, including those across the road from the cooperator's property. DNR staff will look for additional occupied buildings and livestock corrals when reviewing and posting WIA boundaries, but to reduce revisions to contracts, it's best to give the proposed WIA boundary a good review for these no firearm discharge zones while working with the cooperator. After the first WIA polygon or farmstead polygon is delineated in the WIAEIS Site Mapper page, a Google Map and Bing Map link will become active. Please use these links with the more recent and detailed imagery to review locations of potential occupied buildings and livestock corrals within 500 ft of the WIA boundary before generating the contract.

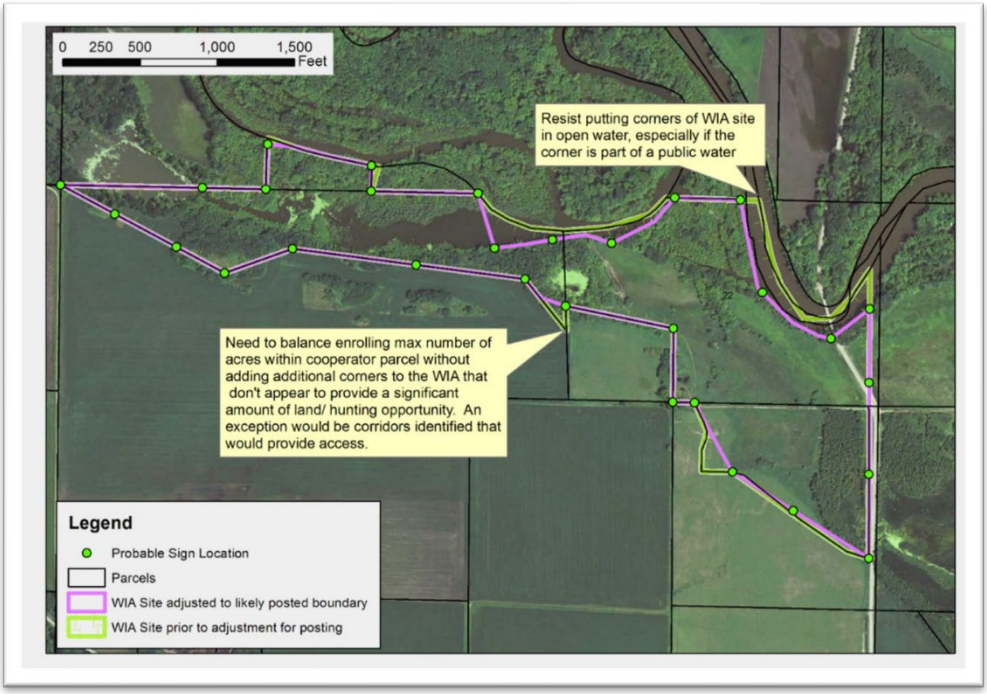
The example below identifies how a WIA boundary would be posted to ensure that the 500 ft zone requirement and sign posting guidelines are met. WIA sign posting crews follow the posting requirements identified by state law. "Post along boundaries every 1000 ft or less, or in wooded areas where boundaries are less clear, at intervals of 500 feet or less. At the primary corners of each parcel of land and at access roads and trails at points of entrance to each parcel." Using the 500 ft and 1000 ft requirements for legally posting property can help guide where to identify boundary corners around the 500 ft no firearm discharge zone. Imagine that you are posting around the no firearm discharge area yourself and identify where you'd have to post the next sign based on cover and existing edges to follow.



Guidance for Maximizing Enrolled Acres without Adding Lands that Provide Little to No Hunting Opportunity

Many parcel boundaries in the farmland zone are rectangular in nature, making them easy to follow and add as part of a WIA boundary given that habitat and no firearm discharge zone requirements are met. As WIAs are enrolled more around public waters and more in the transition zone of the state, parcel boundaries tend to be irregular in nature presenting challenges for DNR Sign Crews to post without resulting in "Sign Pollution". It can also make it a challenge for hunters to follow the posted boundary with irregular boundaries.

Again, using the posting requirements mentioned in the no firearm discharge zone guidance section, imagine you are posting the WIA. Utilize parcel boundaries but identify where sign placement would be much less than 500 ft while reviewing habitat and access to determine if certain portions of the cooperators parcel should be left out of the WIA posted boundary. Remember that WIA signs will only be placed where they are not difficult to get to (example, not placed in open water). Since these are contracts currently limited to three years and may be canceled or allowed to lapse, neither the DNR Sign Crew nor the cooperator should have to go through great effort in posting and retrieving the signs. Nor should we expect that the users of the WIA should need GPS or detailed photo maps to follow the WIA boundary.



Abandoned farmsteads and other areas where there may be increased risk to WIA users:

Some abandoned farmstead areas can provide great hunting opportunities especially when mixed with woody cover for pheasant and deer cover, however, left over farm equipment, abandoned wells, dilapidated buildings and old dump areas can pose as hazards to WIA users and their dogs, especially when these features are covered up by overgrown vegetation. Although the cooperator is afforded liability protection, it's also

important that potential hazard areas are considered to help ensure WIA users have a safe and enjoyable experience. Discuss these areas with the cooperator when enrolling to determine if these areas pose enough risk and limited hunting opportunity where they should be delineated out of the WIA boundary.

Public Roads: Although many ditches along public roads provide hunting opportunities, the WIA boundary itself should not go across public roads (note: does not include cooperator driveways). WIA boundary signs will be placed along both sides of a public road when splitting an enrolled parcel so it's best to identify that boundary along with other posted boundaries along non-cooperator parcels.

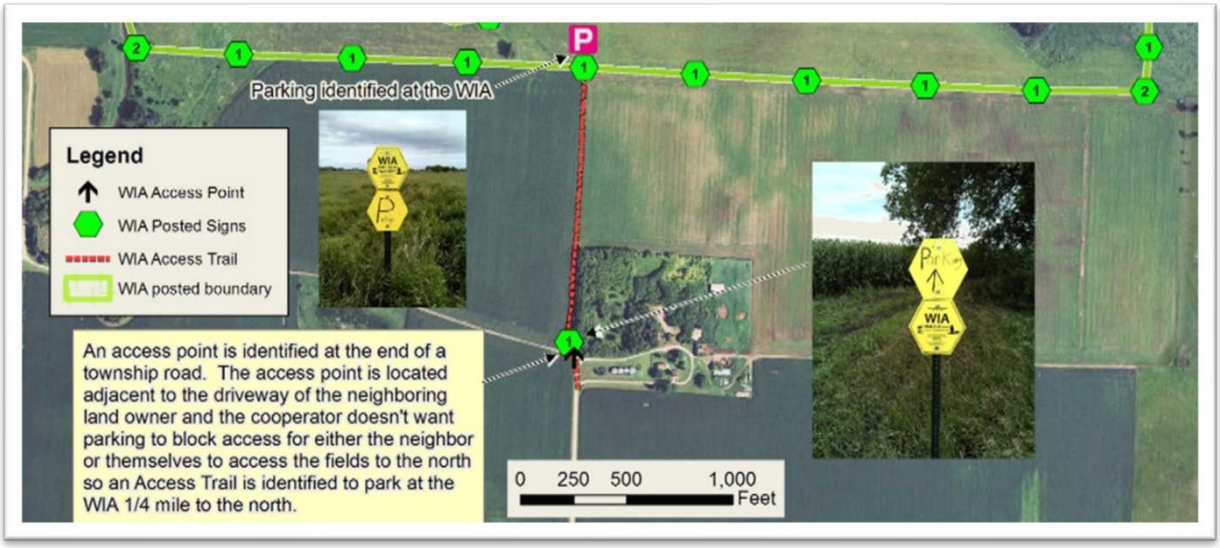
Guidance for Properly Identifying Access Needs for WIAs

Many current WIAs have public roads along their boundaries making them easily accessible to users and posting crews, however, as this program has grown, we've found certain situations where WIA parcels don't have clear public access corridors leading to them. This is the main objective for identifying access points, access trails and WIA boundary extensions to identify connections from the WIA to a public road. In many cases, access points may present locations for parking opportunities for WIA users along public roads, however they are not necessarily meant to identify parking sites and sometimes may not be preferred parking sites from the cooperator's standpoint (example: don't want to block a field approach which leads to the WIA for the farmer

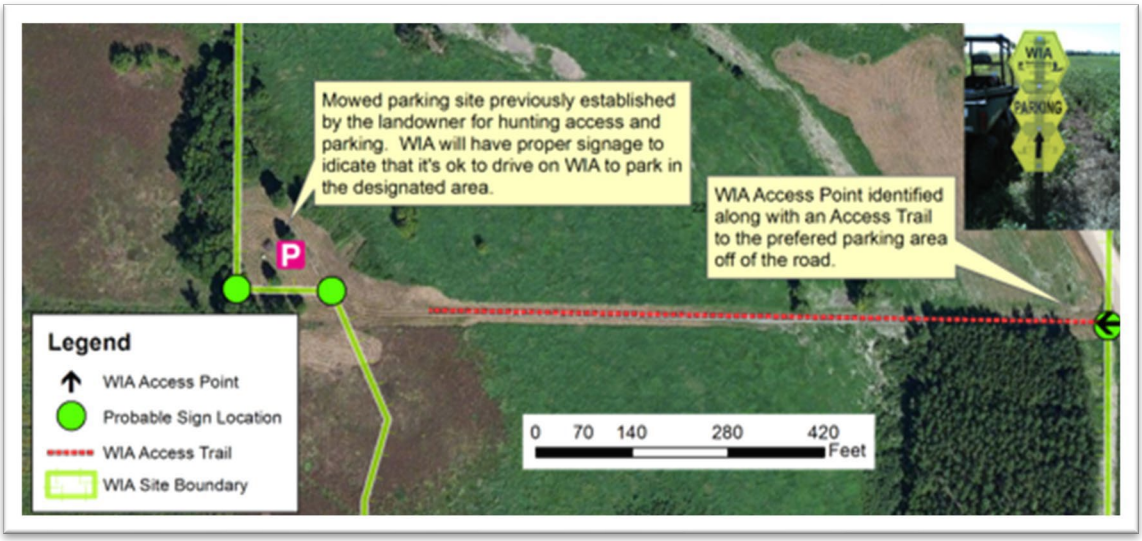
to get equipment into their field adjacent to the road). Below are some examples of how access points, access trails and WIA boundary extensions are used.

Walk-in Access Boundary Extension example to a public road. Property is owned by the cooperator and provides some hunting opportunity along a ditch, fence line or tree line.

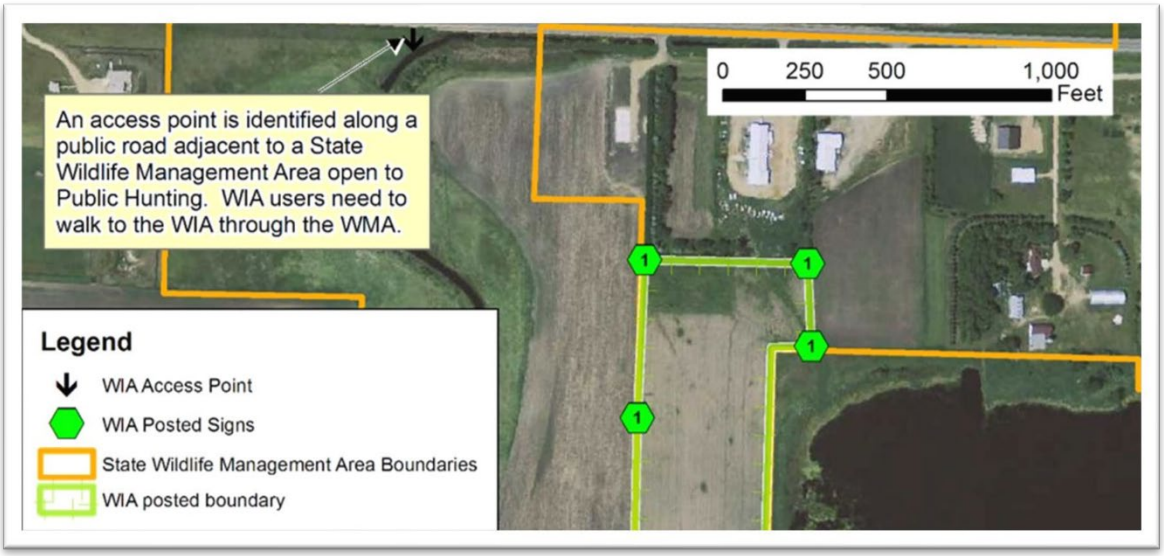
Drive-in Access along a Cooperators field access, WIA Access identified.



Drive-in Access along a Cooperators field access within the WIA boundary (Limit parking along a busy road)



Walk-In Access to a WIA through adjacent public lands open to hunting.



In summary, below is a description and the intended purpose for identifying access features to WIAs.

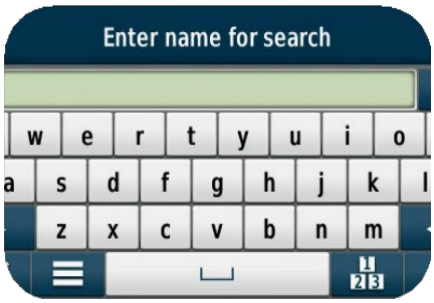
WIA Access Point - A point identified along a public road from which access to a WIA is permissible. No more than 1 access point is needed for a WIA unless it's represented with multiple parts. In most cases, WIA signs are immediately next to or are in site from a WIA access point. WIA access points may be but are not necessarily good parking sites.

WIA Access Trail - A trail identified along the cooperator's private property or along an unmapped public road (example: minimum maintenance road). Depending on ownership and trail conditions, may be drive in or walk in.

WIA Boundary Extension - A narrow extension (~10 ft wide) across the cooperator's property which allows access to the WIA.

Example of how WIA Access Points are utilized for Point of Interests for GPS Navigation

User selects Access Points from POI list in Extras Link



User enters name of W I A

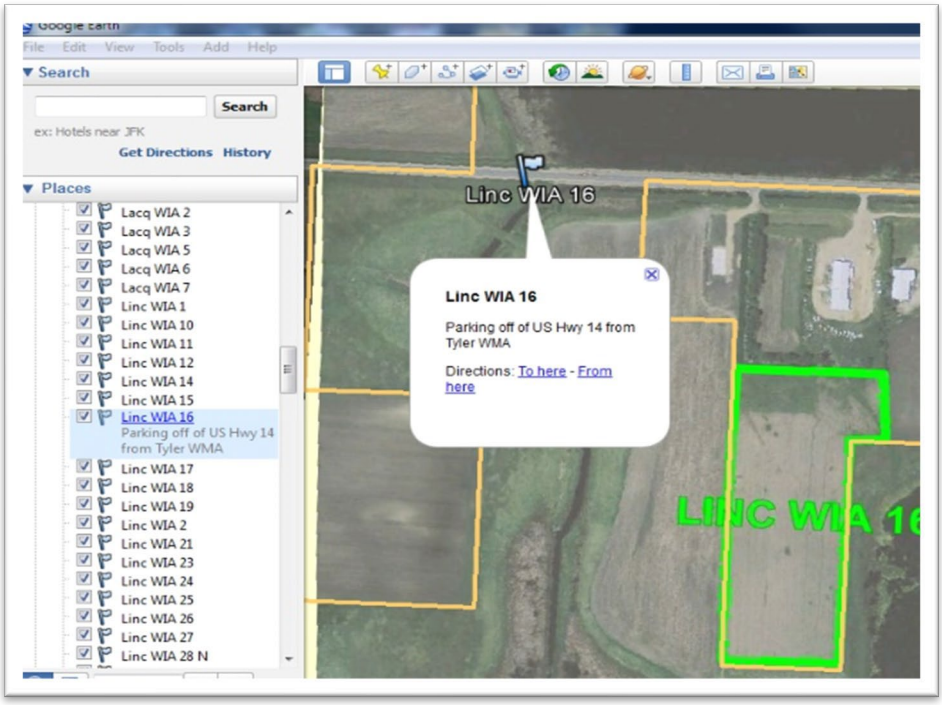
User selects desired W I A

GPS computes driving directions to the W I A

Example of using WIA access points in Google Earth to get driving directions

It's best to identify an access point directly adjacent to a public road to ensure that the mapping program or GPS device will calculate accurate directions to that point of entry.

If a cooperators WIA parcels are more than 1/2 mile away from each other, please consider splitting them up into separate contracts so the WIA is easier to map and provide driving directions for users.



Contacts

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