

SPECIAL PUBLIC NOTICE

Date: November 19, 2024

ANNOUNCEMENT OF RELEASE OF MINNESOTA AND WISCONSIN STREAM QUANTIFICATION TOOL (MNWI SQT) VERSION 1.0

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Paul District Regulatory Division (Corps) is announcing the release of version 1.0 of the Minnesota and Wisconsin (MNWI) Stream Quantification Tool (SQT) and Debit Calculator. The MNWI SQT replaces, updates, and merges the Minnesota SQT (MNSQT) version 2.0 and the beta version of Wisconsin SQT (WISQT) to create a single tool for quantifying functional change on streams throughout the two states.

The SQT is a function-based assessment method that provides a science-based, efficient, and repeatable approach to assess stream condition decline (debits incurred) at impact sites and stream condition improvement (credits generated) at restoration sites. The tool consolidates established stream assessment monitoring protocols covering hydrology, hydraulic, geomorphology, physicochemical and biological components in an Excel workbook to characterize stream ecosystem conditions at a specific project reach. The Debit Calculator is a companion tool to the SQT and provides a rapid and streamlined evaluation of stream impacts to determine the loss to stream condition at an impact site (debits incurred), and credit needs (mitigation).

The MNWI SQT, Debit Calculator, and supporting materials have been adapted from the MNSQT, the beta version of the WISQT, and earlier SQTs, including North Carolina, Tennessee, Wyoming, Georgia, Colorado, Michigan, South Carolina, and the Alaskan interior. The merging of the MNSQT v2.0 and beta version of the WISQT to create the MNWI SQT is the collaborative result of agency representatives, including staff from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Corps, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), United States Geological Survey (USGS), Dane County, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Funding to merge the MNSQT and regionalize the WISQT beta version was provided through the EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) through a contract with Ecosystem Planning and Restoration, LLC. Stream Mechanics and McCarthy Ecology were sub-consultants. Allocation of GLRI funding towards this effort was endorsed and supported by Wisconsin DNR Office of Great Waters.

The Corps released the St. Paul District Stream Mitigation Procedures (Stream Procedures) in April 2023. The Stream Procedures describe how permit applicants or third-party compensatory mitigation providers (e.g., mitigation bankers or in lieu fee program providers) should use the SQT and Debit Calculator to quantify stream condition loss at impacts sites and gain at mitigation sites. We have posted the Stream Procedures and the MNWI SQT resources on the RIBITS website (<u>https://ribits.ops.usace.army.mil/ords/f?p=107:2</u>:::::) Click on "Assessment Tools" in the Menu option to access the documents.

The Corps will host an online outreach event on January 15, 2025, to review the MNWI SQT and updates made from version 2.0 of the MNSQT and the beta version of the WISQT. The event will also provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions about implementation of the MNWI SQT. The target audience is stakeholders, consultants, potential stream bankers, and other agencies. If you are interested in participating in this outreach event, please reach out to stpaulsqt@usace.army.mil to receive a calendar invitation.

The Corps welcomes any public, tribal and agency comments, or questions about the MNWI SQT, Debit Calculator, User Manual, Scientific Support document, and field forms. You may submit written comments to <u>stpaulsqt@usace.army.mil</u>. You may also mail comments to: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District Regulatory Division, c/o April Marcangeli, 250 N. Sunnyslope Road, Suite 296, Brookfield, WI 53005. The Corps will consider all comments and provide updates, as needed, to subsequent versions of the MNWI SQT.