



[www.sws.org](http://www.sws.org)

# SOCIETY of WETLAND SCIENTISTS

*"an international organization dedicated to the conservation, management  
and scientific understanding of the world's wetland resources"*

11 January 2010

Senators Murray, Kohl-Welles, and Delvin  
Representatives Williams, Wood, Hunt, Morris, Nelson, and Conway  
Washington State Legislature, Olympia

Re: SSB 5698

Dear Legislators:

The Society of Wetland Scientists strongly supports the passage of Title Act legislation that defines minimum education and experience standards for professionals to be certified as wetland and soil scientists in Washington, such as those proposed in SSB 5698. We believe that this is a necessary step to improve the rigor and validity of wetland-related assessments and reduce the frequency and severity of negative ecological, economic, and legal consequences of incorrect or unethical practices (i.e., public harm). Several states have already enacted or are considering standards for certification of wetland scientists, including Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Virginia, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

The Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) is an international organization of about 3,500 members dedicated to fostering sound wetland science, policy, education, and management. Founded in the United States in 1980, SWS now has members in 15 regional and international chapters spanning 85 countries. Promoting regulation and decision making based on sound wetland science is a fundamental pillar of the Society's mission, and our members have been involved in development of science-based regulations and policies, such as the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual published by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, currently the official policy for identifying and delineating wetlands under the federal Clean Water Act.

As far back as the 1980s we recognized the need for standards in education and experience for wetland science professionals and in 1994 implemented a rigorous professional certification program for wetland scientists (the Society of Wetland Scientists Professional Wetland Certification Program, or SWSPCP) that results in certification as a Professional Wetland Scientist (P.W.S.). Currently there are more than 1,300 professionals in the USA and Canada certified as P.W.S. by this program and more than 100 as Wetland Professional In Training (WPIT). Identification, delineation, and assessment of wetlands require, at a minimum, knowledge of soil, hydrology, and vegetation characteristics of wetland ecosystems. Our certification program addresses these knowledge needs and promotes professionalism and ethics in the practice of wetland science.

In summary, the Society of Wetland Scientists supports and endorses legislation defining standards for education and experience for wetland and soil science professionals. Such standards will significantly improve the quality and uniformity of wetland services.

Sincerely,

Andrew H. Baldwin, Ph.D.  
President, Society of Wetland Scientists

Cc: Governor Chris Gregoire; Washington State Department of Licensing; Washington Society of Professional Soil Scientists; Pacific Northwest Chapter, Society of Wetland Scientists

**1313 Dolley Madison Blvd. • Suite 402 • McLean, VA • 22101 USA**  
**Ph: 703-790-1745 • Fax: 703-790-2672 • Email: SWS@BurkInc.com**