

## **CHAPTER 61-32 WETLANDS**

**61-32-01. Legislative policy and intent.** Repealed by S.L. 1995, ch. 599, § 3.

**61-32-02. Definitions.** Repealed by S.L. 1995, ch. 599, § 3.

**61-32-03. Permit to drain waters required - Penalty.** Any person, before draining a pond, slough, lake, or sheetwater, or any series thereof, which has a watershed area comprising eighty acres [32.37 hectares] or more, shall first secure a permit to do so. The permit application must be submitted to the state engineer. The state engineer shall refer the application to the water resource district or districts within which is found a majority of the watershed or drainage area of the pond, slough, lake, or sheetwater for consideration and approval, but the state engineer may require that applications proposing drainage of statewide or interdistrict significance be returned to the state engineer for final approval. A permit may not be granted until an investigation discloses that the quantity of water which will be drained from the pond, slough, lake, or sheetwater, or any series thereof, will not flood or adversely affect downstream lands. If the investigation shows that the proposed drainage will flood or adversely affect lands of downstream landowners, the water resource board may not issue a permit until flowage easements are obtained. The flowage easements must be filed for record in the office of the recorder of the county or counties in which the lands are situated. An owner of land proposing to drain shall undertake and agree to pay the expenses incurred in making the required investigation. This section does not apply to the construction or maintenance of any existing or prospective drain constructed under the supervision of a state or federal agency, as determined by the state engineer.

Any person draining, or causing to be drained, a pond, slough, lake, or sheetwater, or any series thereof, which has a watershed area comprising eighty acres [32.37 hectares] or more, without first securing a permit to do so, as provided by this section, is liable for all damage sustained by any person caused by the draining, and is guilty of an infraction. As used in this section, sheetwater means shallow water that floods land not normally subject to standing water. The state engineer may adopt rules for temporary permits for emergency drainage.

**61-32-04. Administration - Rulemaking authority - Guidelines.** Repealed by S.L. 1995, ch. 599, § 3.

**61-32-05. Wetlands bank.** Repealed by S.L. 1995, ch. 599, § 3.

**61-32-06. Uniform wetlands classification.** Repealed by S.L. 1995, ch. 599, § 3.

**61-32-07. Closing a noncomplying drain - Notice and hearing - Appeal - Injunction - Frivolous complaints.** Only a landowner experiencing flooding or adverse effects from an unauthorized drain constructed before January 1, 1975, may file a complaint with the water resource board. Any person may file a complaint about an unauthorized drain constructed after January 1, 1975. Upon receipt of a complaint of unauthorized drainage, the water resource board shall promptly investigate and make a determination of the facts with respect to the complaint. If the board determines that a drain, lateral drain, or ditch has been opened or established by a landowner or tenant contrary to this title or any rules adopted by the board, the board shall notify the landowner by registered mail at the landowner's post-office address of record. A copy of the notice must also be sent to the tenant, if known. The notice must specify the nature and extent of the noncompliance and must state that if the drain, lateral drain, or ditch is not closed or filled within a reasonable time as the board determines, but not less than fifteen days, the board shall procure the closing or filling of the drain, lateral drain, or ditch and assess the cost of the closing or filling, or the portion the board determines, against the property of the landowner responsible. The notice must also state that the affected landowner, within fifteen days of the date the notice is mailed, may demand, in writing, a hearing on the matter. Upon receipt of the demand, the board shall set a hearing date within fifteen days from the date the demand is received. In the event of an emergency, the board may immediately apply to the

appropriate district court for an injunction prohibiting the landowner or tenant from constructing or maintaining the drain, lateral drain, or ditch and ordering the closure of the illegal drain. Assessments levied under this section must be collected in the same manner as assessments authorized by chapter 61-16.1. If, in the opinion of the board, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in proportion to the responsibility of the landowners. A person aggrieved by action of the board under this section may appeal the decision of the board to the district court of the county in which the land is located in accordance with the procedure provided in section 28-34-01. A hearing as provided for in this section is not a prerequisite to an appeal. If, after the first complaint, in the opinion of the board, the complaint is frivolous, the board may assess the costs of the frivolous complaint against the complainant.

**61-32-08. Appeal of board decisions - State engineer review - Closing of noncomplying drains.** The board shall make the decision required by section 61-32-07 within a reasonable time, but not to exceed one hundred twenty days, after receiving the complaint. The board shall notify all parties of its decision by certified mail. The board's decision may be appealed to the state engineer by any aggrieved party. The appeal to the state engineer must be made within thirty days from the date notice of the board's decision has been received. The appeal must be made by submitting a written notice to the state engineer which must specifically set forth the reason why the board's decision is erroneous. The appealing party shall also submit copies of the written appeal notice to the board and to the nonappealing party. Upon receipt of this notice the board, if it has ordered closure of a drain, lateral drain, or ditch, is relieved of its obligation to procure the closing or filling of the drain, lateral drain, or ditch. The state engineer shall handle the appeal by conducting an independent investigation and making an independent determination of the matter. The state engineer may enter property affected by the complaint for the purpose of investigating the complaint.

If the board fails to investigate and make a determination concerning the complaint within a reasonable time, but not to exceed one hundred twenty days, the person filing the complaint may file such complaint with the state engineer. The state engineer shall, without reference to chapter 28-32, cause the investigation and determination to be made, either by action against the board, or by personally conducting the investigation and personally making the determination.

If the state engineer determines that a drain, lateral drain, or ditch has been opened or established by a landowner or tenant contrary to title 61 or any rules adopted by the board, the state engineer shall take one of three actions:

1. Notify the landowner by registered mail at the landowner's post-office address of record;
2. Return the matter to the jurisdiction of the board along with the investigation report; or
3. Forward the drainage complaint and investigation report to the state's attorney.

If the state engineer decides to notify the landowner, the notice must specify the nature and extent of the noncompliance and must state that if the drain, lateral drain, or ditch is not closed or filled within such reasonable time as the state engineer shall determine, but not less than thirty days, the state engineer shall procure the closing or filling of the drain, lateral drain, or ditch and assess the cost thereof, against the property of the landowner responsible. The notice from the state engineer must state that the affected landowner may, within fifteen days of the date the notice is mailed, demand, in writing, a hearing on the matter. Upon receipt of the demand, the state engineer shall set a hearing date within fifteen days from the date the demand is received. If, in the opinion of the state engineer, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in proportion to the responsibility of the landowners. Upon assessment of costs, the state engineer shall certify the assessment to the county auditor of the county where the noncomplying drain, lateral drain, or ditch is located. The county auditor shall extend the assessment against the property assessed. Each assessment must be collected and paid as other taxes are collected and paid. Assessments

collected must be deposited with the state treasurer and are hereby appropriated out of the state treasury and must be credited to the contract fund established by section 61-02-64.1. Any person aggrieved by action of the state engineer under the provisions of this section may appeal the decision of the state engineer to the district court in accordance with chapter 28-32. A hearing by the state engineer as provided for in this section shall be a prerequisite to such an appeal.

If the state engineer, after completing the investigation required under this section, decides to return the matter to the board, a complete copy of the investigation report shall be forwarded to the board and it shall include the nature and extent of the noncompliance. Upon having the matter returned to its jurisdiction the board shall carry out the state engineer's decision in accordance with the terms of this section.

If the state engineer, after completing the investigation required under this section, decides to forward the drainage complaint to the state's attorney, a complete copy of the investigation report must also be forwarded, which must include the nature and extent of the noncompliance. The state's attorney shall prosecute the complaint in accordance with the statutory responsibilities prescribed in chapter 11-16.

In addition to the penalty imposed by the court in the event of conviction under this statute, the court shall order the drain, lateral drain, or ditch closed or filled within such reasonable time period as the court determines, but not less than thirty days. If the drain, lateral drain, or ditch is not closed or filled within the time prescribed by the court, the court shall procure the closing or filling of the drain, lateral drain, or ditch, and assess the cost thereof against the property of the landowner responsible, in the same manner as other assessments under chapter 61-16.1 are levied. If, in the opinion of the court, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in proportion to the responsibility of the landowners.

The authority granted in this section may only be exercised for drainage constructed after January 1, 1987.

**61-32-09. Wetlands replacement fund - Continuing appropriation.** Repealed by S.L. 1995, ch. 599, § 3.

**61-32-10. Exemption.** The wetland replacement requirements of sections 61-32-01 through 61-32-11 do not apply to surface coal mining operations until reclamation of the wetland area begins pursuant to chapter 38-14.1.

**61-32-11. Application of prior law.** Repealed by S.L. 1995, ch. 599, § 3.