

Overview/Summary of WV's Wetland Monitoring Efforts

The State of West Virginia takes great interest in the management of its wetlands both large and small. The current total acreage of wetlands within the state is 102,000 & comprises less than 1 percent of the State's total acreage {wetland acreage determined by National Wetlands Inventory: [WV 1980-86](#)}. As of this report, instituted management efforts are currently geared toward protection of wetlands by regulatory proceedings or acquisition. Permitting authority for activities impacting wetlands (Section 404) lies with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. West Virginia insures protection through an active Section 401 certification program.

Since the submission of the last 305(b) report; changes in the status of West Virginia's wetlands monitoring are more numerous and more spread across a variety of state agencies. These changes are intended to be the start of a larger statewide monitoring and assessment program. Watershed Assessment personnel have been researching and developing assessment and monitoring strategies in conjunction with EPA and other states. The Wildlife Resources Section of the Division of Natural Resources, in cooperation with West Virginia University, is also currently evaluating aerial photography from 2003 at a 1:4800 scale to supplement the data from the original National Wetlands Inventory. Information from this project will give us improved detail due to the original 1986 NWI's 1:48,000 scale imagery as well as errors in the original polygon transfer process. The updated wetland polygons will show any creations/natural changes/human modifications or eliminations since the 1986 NWI as well as proper Cowardin classification. A set completion date is not available, but numerous counties have been checked by DNR personnel. For more information you may contact [Keith Krantz](#) (304) 637-0245 of the WV DNR.

The WV DNR and WV DEP via a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) have begun a wetlands monitoring and assessment program. Due to the number of employees and specialized skills of the WV DNR, the responsibilities of a majority of field work will fall with the DNR. WV DEP will combine efforts and personnel where applicable in the field as well as remain the primary reporting entity for the state. The WV DNR has recently completed the [West Virginia Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure](#) (WV WRAP) for wetlands which can be used statewide. Calibration with intensive assessments and GIS remote assessments on same wetland sites gives us high confidence in data to be generated in future rapid assessments. The WV DNR started collecting data for database use in the field season of 2010.

The West Virginia field portion of the (NWCA) National Wetlands Condition Assessment (USEPA) was just recently completed in September of 2011. This project became a joint effort involving staff from DEP, DNR, and a variety of NRCS field offices. Besides funding provided to DEP and DNR for program development; DEP Watershed Assessment Branch staff received excellent field experience working in wetlands. The assessment and collection of data from numerous parameters (vegetation, soil, land uses, water quality, etc...) could provide an excellent frame work to build a future WV assessment method. Below you will find an overview of the survey taken from one of the USEPA survey documents:

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1.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF NWCA

This manual describes field protocols and daily operations for the [National Wetland Condition Assessment](#) (NWCA). The NWCA is one in a series of statistically-valid National Aquatic Resource Surveys (NARS) conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to provide the public with a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the Nation's waters. In addition to wetlands, the NARS surveys coastal waters, lakes, and flowing waters in a revolving sequence.

USEPA will collaborate with state, tribal, federal, and other partners to implement the NWCA to meet three goals:

1. Produce a report that describes the ecological condition of the Nation's wetlands.
2. Assist states and tribes in the implementation of wetland monitoring and assessment programs that will guide policy development and aid project decision-making.
3. Advance the science of wetlands monitoring and assessment to support management needs.

The NWCA responds to the long-term goals outlined in USEPA's current strategic plan (USEPA 2006a) to improve the Nation's water quality (Goal 2.3) and to protect, sustain, and restore the health of critical natural habitats and ecosystems, including wetlands (Goal 4.3). Development of the NWCA builds on the accomplishments of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and their production of national reports on status and trends in wetland acreage. When taken together, the results from the NWCA and the USFWS Wetland Status and Trends (S&T) will over time be used to measure progress toward attainment of the national goal to increase the quantity and quality of the Nation's wetlands. These complementary studies can influence how wetlands are managed at local, state, and national scales (Scozzafava et al. 2007).

Current wetland information can be found in a booklet entitled West Virginia's Wetlands... Uncommon, Valuable Wildlands (Tiner, 1996). Future valuable information on the number and condition of West Virginia's wetlands will be available from the USEPA, WV DEP, and WV DNR.

Literature Cited

Tiner, R. W. 1996. West Virginia's Wetlands, Uncommon, Valuable Wildlands. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Northeast Region, Hadley, MA. 20 pp.

Scozzafava, M.E., T.E. Dahl, C. Faulkner, and M. Price. 2007. Assessing status, trends, and condition of wetlands in the United States. National Wetlands Newsletter 29:24-28.