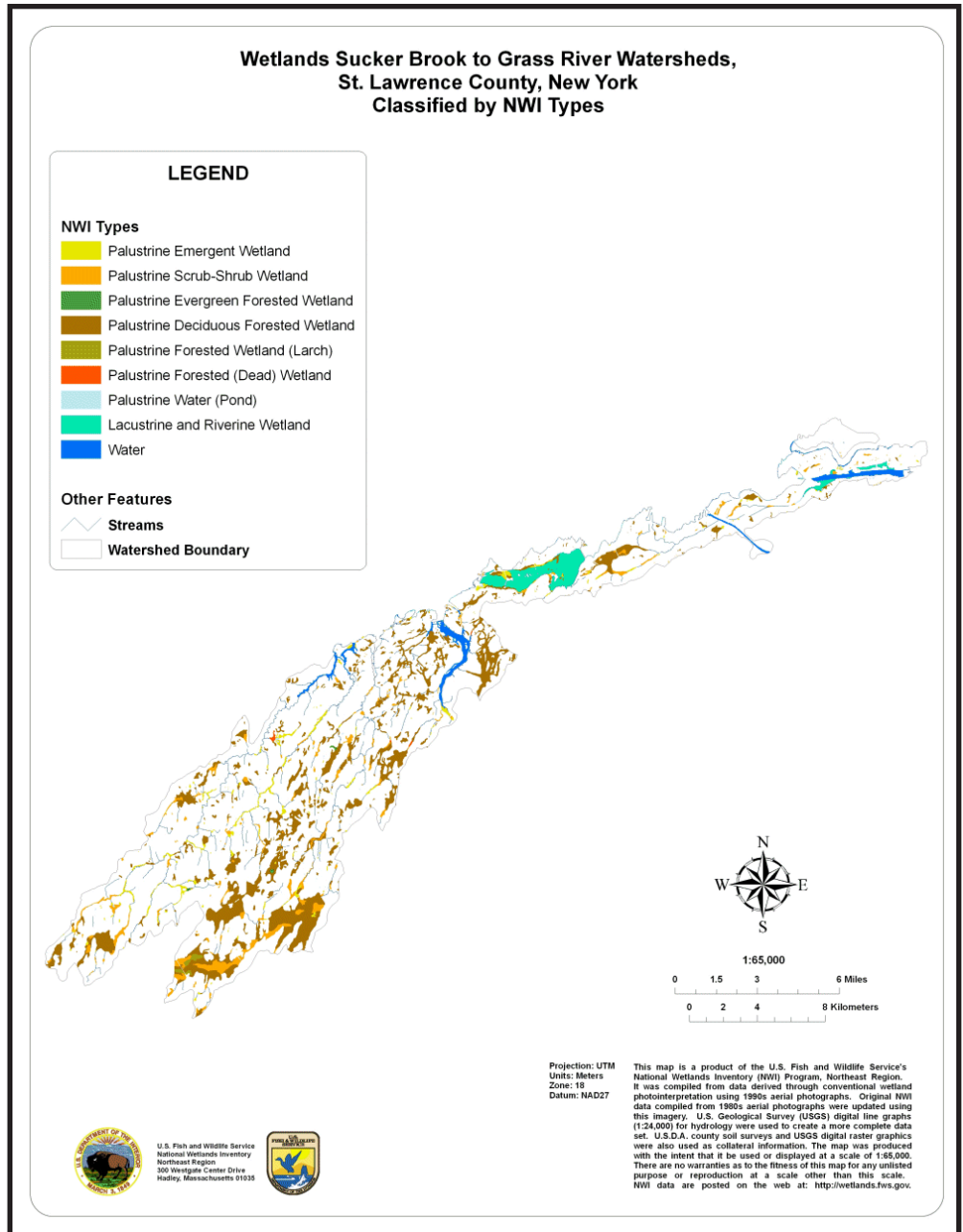


# Wetlands of the Sucker Brook to Grass River Watersheds

*St. Lawrence County, New York*

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## Introduction

Since the mid-1970s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has been mapping wetlands through its National Wetlands Inventory Program (NWI). Wetlands are identified and delineated on aerial photographs with these data transferred to base maps at a scale of 1:24,000 for the coterminous United States (1:63,360 for Alaska). To date, wetland maps have been prepared for over 95 % of the coterminous United States and about 40% of Alaska. Nationwide, the focus of the inventory has been on producing these maps and digital data which can be used by the FWS, other government agencies, organizations, private industry, and the general public to locate wetlands when considering land development and natural resource conservation initiatives. The maps have been digitized for nearly 50% of the coterminous U.S. and about 20% of Alaska.

The availability of NWI digital data makes it possible to analyze the wetland data for large geographic areas and facilitate compilation of acreage summaries for inventory reports. It also allows for data integration with other digital datasets that result in more complex analyses and interpretations. As a result of the increasing available of digital data from other sources such as U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) digital line graphs (DLGs) for hydrology data (location of streams) and digital raster graphics (DRGs) for topographic map information and U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) soil data, the FWS can improve its wetland inventory by adding presumably undrained hydric soil map units from the latter source and better represent linkages between wetlands connected by streams through use of the former.

With the explosion of digital geospatial data on natural resources and the increased knowledge of wetland characteristics related to wetland functions (e.g., Brinson 1993), the NWI developed a procedure for expanding the classification of wetlands to include variables on landscape position, landform, water flow path, and waterbody type.<sup>1</sup> Armed with this information plus the original NWI data (following the Cowardin et al. 1979 wetland classification system) permits the FWS to predict wetland functions for large geographic areas. These techniques have been developed by the Northeast Region of the FWS recognizing the need for information on wetland functions by government agencies, the private sector, and the general public. Once these other attributes are added to the NWI database, wetland functions can be predicted for watersheds and other large geographic areas through procedures called "Watershed-based Preliminary Assessment of Wetland Functions" (W-PAWF).

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) has regulatory responsibilities for managing the state's wetland resources outside of the Adirondack Park. The Landscape Conservation Section of the Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources, Bureau of Habitat, was interested in having the NWI conduct

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<sup>1</sup> These attributes have been applied to wetlands across the Northeast (e.g., Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware) and in selected areas elsewhere as part of special NWI projects. The State of Michigan is applying them to select watersheds.

pilot studies in various regions of New York State. Consequently, they secured funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to have the FWS expand the classification of existing NWI mapping and apply the W-PAWF techniques to several small watersheds.

This report describes the basic mapping, classification, and evaluation techniques used in these studies and specifically describes the findings for the Sucker Brook to Grass River watershed. Similar reports are available for the other study areas.

### **Study Area**

The study area is the Sucker Brook to Grass River watershed in St. Lawrence County, New York. It covers a land area approximately 124 square miles in size, represented by the following U.S. Geological Survey 11-digit hydrological unit code: 04150301050. The watershed contains several streams draining into Lake St. Lawrence – Sucker Brook, Squaw Creek, Little Sucker Brook, Brandy Brook, and Coles Creek. The town of Massena is located in the northeastern portion of the watershed.

## Methods

### Classification and Characterization

The first task was to enhance the existing NWI dataset by adding LLWW attributes to each mapped wetland and deepwater habitat, as appropriate. Existing NWI maps and digital data for the study area were the primary base data for this characterization. These data were based on interpretation of early 1980s 1:58,000 color infrared photographs. The minimum mapping unit was 1-3 acres in size and in general, drier-end wetlands (e.g., seasonally saturated types) and evergreen forested wetlands were conservatively mapped.<sup>2</sup>USGS digital data for streams and NWI linear data were used to determine linkages among wetlands and between wetlands and deepwater habitats. No attempt was made to improve the geospatial or classification accuracy of the original data. The existing NWI database contains geospatial information on both wetlands and deepwater habitats. Since ultimate objective of this study is to use the inventory data for wetland assessment, wetlands had to be separated from deepwater habitats. Ponds were then separated from other wetlands, so that additional descriptors could be added.

Three main descriptors (landscape position, landform, and water flow path) were applied to each wetland by interpreting map information and consulting aerial photos where necessary. "Dichotomous Keys and Mapping Codes for Wetland Landscape Position, Landform, Water Flow Path, and Waterbody Type Descriptors" (Tiner 2003a) was used to classify these features. Other modifiers were added to depict features such as headwater, drainage-divide, and human-impacted wetlands.

Landscape position defines the relationship between a wetland and an adjacent waterbody if present. For this watershed, three landscape positions were possible:

- 1) lotic (along rivers and streams and on their active floodplains),
- 2) lentic (along lakes and reservoirs), and
- 3) terrene (more or less surrounded by upland).

Lotic wetlands are divided in lotic river and lotic stream wetlands by their width on a 1:24,000-scale map. Watercourses mapped as linear (single-line) features on NWI maps and on a USGS topographic map (1:24,000) were designated as streams, whereas two-lined channels (polygonal features on the maps) were classified as rivers. Lotic wetlands were also subdivided into gradients for perennial waters: high (e.g., shallow mountain streams on steep slopes), middle (e.g., streams on moderate slopes), and low (e.g., mainstem rivers with considerable floodplain development or streams in flat sections in higher terrain), and intermittent gradient for waters not flowing year-round. Lentic wetlands were divided into two categories: natural and dammed, with the latter type separating wetlands associated with reservoirs from those along other controlled lakes, when possible.

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<sup>2</sup> Many of the maps were updated after the subject study classification and analysis were completed. In some areas more wetlands were located due to more reliance on hydric soil map units to identify drier-end wetlands.

Landform is the physical form or shape of a wetland. Six landform types were recognized in the study area: 1) basin, 2) flat, 3) slope, 4) floodplain, 5) island, and 6) fringe (Table 1). Wetlands associated with ponds were highlighted in the database; all but the ones associated with floodplains and former floodplains were assigned a "pd" (pond) modifier. Floodplain wetlands already had a sub-landform modifier (e.g., basin or flat) representing the physical form of the wetland on the floodplain.

Water flow path descriptors characterize the flow of water associated with wetlands. Seven patterns of flow are recognized for wetlands in the watershed:

- 1) throughflow,
- 2) throughflow-intermittent,
- 3) outflow,
- 4) outflow-intermittent,
- 5) inflow,
- 6) bidirectional flow, and
- 7) isolated.

Throughflow wetlands have either a perennial watercourse (e.g. stream) or another type of wetland above and below it, so water passes through them (usually by way of a river or stream, but sometimes by ditches). The water flow path of lotic wetlands associated with perennial streams is throughflow. Throughflow-intermittent was applied to identify wetlands along intermittent streams. Where a streamside wetland has intermittent inflow and perennial outflow, the water flow path was classified as throughflow and the landscape position was labeled as lotic stream intermittent gradient. Lentic wetlands crossed by streams were designated as throughflow.

Outflow wetlands have water leaving them, moving downstream via a watercourse (e.g., stream) or a slope wetland, with outflow-intermittent designating an intermittent stream as the outflow source.

Inflow wetlands are sinks where no outlet exists, yet water enters via an intermittent stream or an upslope wetland.

Bidirectional-nontidal wetlands are lentic wetlands where fluctuating lake or reservoir level appears to be the primary surface water source for raising and lowering water levels (including water tables) in them.

Isolated wetlands are essentially closed depressions (geographically isolated) where water comes from surface water runoff and/or groundwater discharge, but they also include other wetlands that are sources of streams (lacking stream inflow), or wetlands along streams that are not subject to frequent overflows (i.e., generally hydrologically decoupled from stream bank flooding). For this project, surface water connections are emphasized, since it is not possible to determine ground water linkages (especially outflow) without hydrologic investigations.



All NWI mapped wetlands in the watershed were reviewed, classified by landscape position, landform, water flow path and waterbody type (LLWW descriptors), and given an LLWW code. Table 2 provides simplified keys to the first three descriptors. Classifications were reviewed by the lead project scientist. The geographic information system (GIS) used for this project was ArcGIS 3.0 and updates.

Upon completion of the database, several analyses were performed to produce a preliminary assessment of wetland functions for the watershed. The following functions were evaluated using the database:

- 1) surface water detention,
- 2) streamflow maintenance,
- 3) nutrient transformation,
- 4) sediment retention,
- 5) shoreline stabilization,
- 6) provision of fish habitat,
- 7) provision of waterfowl and waterbird habitat, and
- 8) provision of other wildlife habitat.

A series of maps for the study area was prepared to highlight wetland types that may perform these functions at significant levels (high or moderate). Statistics and thematic maps for the study watersheds were generated by ArcGIS software.

Table 1. Definitions and examples of landform types (Tiner 2003a). Map codes in parentheses.

| <b>Landform Type</b> | <b>General Definition</b>   | <b>Examples</b>  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Basin* (BA)          | a depressional (concave) landform   | lakefill bogs; wetlands in the saddle between two hills; wetlands in closed or open depressions, including narrow stream valleys                                       |
| Slope (SL)           | a landform extending uphill (on a slope)  | seepage wetlands on hillside; wetlands along drainageways or mountain streams on slopes  |
| Flat* (FL)           | a relatively level landform, often on broad, level landscapes   | wetlands on flat areas with high seasonal ground-water levels; wetlands on terraces along rivers and streams; wetlands on hillside benches; wetlands at toes of slopes |
| Floodplain (FP)      | a broad, generally flat landform occurring on a landscape shaped by fluvial or riverine processes   | wetlands on alluvium; bottomland swamps  |
| Interfluve (IF)      | a broad, level to imperceptibly depressional poorly drained landform occurring between two drainage systems (on interstream divides)                  | flatwood wetlands on coastal or glaciolacustrine plains  |
| Fringe (FR)          | a landform occurring along a flowing or standing waterbody (lake, river, stream) and typically subject to permanent, semipermanent, or tidal flooding | buttonbush swamps; aquatic beds; semipermanently flooded marshes; wetlands in river channels; salt and brackish marshes with unrestricted tidal flow                   |
| Island (IL)          | a landform completely surrounded by water (including deltas)  | deltaic and insular wetlands; floating bog islands   |

\*May be applied as sub-landforms within the Interfluve (IFba, IFfl) and Floodplain (FPba, FPfl).

Table 2. Simplified keys for classifying wetlands by landscape position, landform, and water flow path. (Adapted from Tiner 2003a)

Landscape Position

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Wetland borders a waterbody (river, stream, lake, reservoir, estuary, or ocean)                       | 2                  |
| 1. Wetland does not border a waterbody; it is completely surrounded by upland                            | Terrene            |
| 2. Wetland lies along an ocean shore and is subject to tidal flooding                                    | Marine             |
| 2. Wetland does not lie along an ocean shore   | 3                  |
| 3. Wetland lies along an estuary (salt to brackish tidal waters) and is subject to tidal flooding        | Estuarine          |
| 3. Wetland does not lie along an estuary or if so, it is not subject to tidal flooding                   | 4                  |
| 4. Wetland lies along a lake or reservoir or within its basin  | Lentic             |
| 4. Wetland lies along a river or stream  | 5                  |
| 5. Wetland is the source of a river or stream but does not flow through the entire length of the wetland | Terrene            |
| 5. River or stream flows through the wetland   | 6                  |
| 6. Wetland is periodically flooded by river or stream overflow   | Lotic <sup>3</sup> |
| 6. Wetland is not periodically flooded by the river or stream  | Terrene            |

Landform

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Wetland occurs on a slope >2%  | Slope       |
| 1. Wetland does not occur on a slope >2%  | 2           |
| 2. Wetland forms an island completely surrounded by water   | Island      |
| 2. Wetland does not form on an island   | 3           |
| 3. Wetland occurs in the shallow water zone of a permanent nontidal waterbody, the intertidal zone of an estuary, or the regularly flooded (daily tidal inundation) zone of freshwater tidal wetlands | Fringe      |
| 3. Wetland does not occur in these waters or intertidal zones   | 4           |
| 4. Wetland forms a nonvegetated bank or is within the banks of a river or stream  | Fringe      |
| 4. Wetland is not a nonvegetated river or stream bank or within the banks   | 5           |
| 5. Wetland occurs on an active alluvial plain   | Floodplain* |
| 5. Wetland does not occur on an active floodplain   | 6           |
| 6. Wetland occurs on a broad interstream divide (including headwater positions) associated with coastal or glaciolacustrine plains or similar plains  | Interfluve* |
| 6. Wetland does not occur on such a divide  | 7           |
| 7. Wetland occurs in a distinct depression  | Basin       |
| 7. Wetland occurs on a nearly level landform  | Flat        |

\*Basin and Flat sub-landforms can be identified within these landforms when desirable.

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<sup>3</sup> Lotic wetlands are separated into river and stream sections (based on watercourse width - polygon = Lotic River vs. linear = Lotic Stream at a scale of 1:24,000) and then divided into one of five gradients: 1) high (e.g., shallow mountain streams on steep slopes), 2) middle (e.g., streams with moderate slopes), 3) low (e.g., mainstem rivers with considerable floodplain development and slow-moving streams), 4) intermittent (periodic flows), and 5) tidal (hydrology under the influence of the tides).

## Water Flow Path<sup>4</sup>

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. Wetland is typically surrounded by upland (nonhydric soil); receives precipitation and runoff from adjacent areas with no apparent outflow | Isolated**             |
| 1. Wetland is not isolated  | 2                      |
| 2. Wetland is a sink receiving water from a river, stream, or other surface water source, lacking surface water outflow                       | Inflow                 |
| 2. Wetland is not a sink; surface water flows through or out of the wetland   | 3                      |
| 3. Wetland is subjected to tidal flooding   | Bidirectional-Tidal    |
| 3. Wetland is not tidally influenced  | 4                      |
| 4. Water flows out of the wetland, but does not flow into this wetland from another source  | Outflow                |
| 4. Water flows in and out of the wetland  | 5                      |
| 5. Water flows through the wetland, often coming from upstream or uphill sources  | Throughflow            |
| 5. Wetland is along a lake or reservoir and its water levels are subjected to the rise and fall of this waterbody                             | Bidirectional-Nontidal |

\*\*Wetland is geographically isolated; hydrological relationship to other wetlands and watercourses may be more complex than can be determined by simple visual assessment of surface water conditions.

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<sup>4</sup>Surface water connections are emphasized because they are more readily identified than groundwater linkages.

## **General Scope and Limitations of Preliminary Functional Assessment**

At the outset, it is important to emphasize that the functional assessment presented in this report is a preliminary evaluation based on wetland characteristics interpreted through remote sensing and applying wetland characteristics-function correlations developed from previous work in the Northeast (Tiner 2003b). Wetlands believed to be providing potentially significant levels of performance for a particular function were highlighted. As the focus of this report is on wetlands, the assessment of waterbodies (e.g., lakes, rivers, and streams) at providing the listed functions was not done, despite their rather obvious significant performance of functions like fish habitat and surface water detention. No attempt was made to produce a more qualitative ranking for each function or for each wetland based on multiple functions since this was beyond the scope of the current study. For a technical review of wetland functions, see Mitsch and Gosselink (1993) and for a broad overview, see Tiner (2005).

Functional assessment of wetlands can involve many parameters. Typically such assessments have been done in the field on a case-by-case basis, considering observed features relative to those required to perform certain functions or by actual measurement of performance. The present study does not seek to replace the need for such assessments as they are the ultimate assessment of the functions for individual wetlands. Yet, for a watershed analysis, basinwide field-based assessments are not practical nor cost-effective or even possible given access considerations. For watershed planning purposes, a more generalized assessment is worthwhile for targeting wetlands that may provide certain functions, especially for those functions dependent on landscape position and vegetation lifeform. Subsequently, these results can be field-verified when it comes to actually evaluating particular wetlands for acquisition or other purposes. Current aerial photography may also be examined to aid in further evaluations (e.g., condition of wetland/stream buffers or adjacent land use) that can supplement the preliminary assessment.

This study employs a watershed assessment approach called "Watershed-based Preliminary Assessment of Wetland Functions" (W-PAWF). W-PAWF applies general knowledge about wetlands and their functions to develop a watershed overview that highlights possible wetlands of significance based on their predicted performance of various functions. To accomplish this objective, the relationships between wetlands and various functions must be simplified into a set of practical criteria or observable characteristics. Correlations have been developed by reviewing the scientific literature and through scientific peer review and a report on these relationships has been prepared (Tiner 2003b, see acknowledgments in this report for peer reviewers). Such assessments could also be further expanded to consider the condition of the associated waterbody and the neighboring upland or to evaluate the opportunity a wetland has to perform a particular function.

W-PAWF does not account for the opportunity that a wetland has to provide a function resulting from a certain land-use practice upstream or the presence of certain structures or land-uses downstream. For example, two wetlands of equal size and like vegetation may

be in the right landscape position to retain sediments. One, however, may be downstream of a land-clearing operation that has generated considerable suspended sediments in the water column, while the other is downstream from an undisturbed forest. The first wetland is most likely actively trapping sediment, while the second wetland is not. The W-PAWF is designed to reflect the potential for a wetland to provide a function. W-PAWF also does not consider the condition of the adjacent upland (e.g., level of outside disturbance) or the actual water quality of the associated waterbody which may be regarded as important metrics for assessing the “health” of individual wetlands (not part of this study). Collection and analysis of these data were beyond the scope of the study.

This preliminary assessment does not obviate the need for more detailed assessments of the various functions. It should be viewed as a starting point for more rigorous assessments, as it attempts to cull out wetlands that may likely provide significant levels of performance for certain functions based on generally accepted principles and the source information used for this analysis. This type of assessment is most useful for regional or watershed planning purposes.

It is also important to recognize limitations derived from source data. These limitations include conservative interpretations of forested wetlands (especially evergreen types) and drier-end wetlands (e.g., wet meadows, especially those used as pastures; see Tiner 1997b for additional information), and the omission of small or narrow wetlands. Despite these limitations, the NWI dataset represents the most extensive and current database on the distribution, extent, and type of wetlands in New York state that can be used for these types of analyses. Local governments may have more detailed inventories that can be used as supplementary information that identify smaller wetlands or expanded boundaries for further analysis.

### **Preliminary Functional Assessment Correlations**

The list of functions evaluated included eight functions: 1) surface water detention, 2) streamflow maintenance, 3) nutrient transformation, 4) sediment retention, 5) shoreline stabilization, 6) provision of fish habitat, 7) provision of waterfowl and waterbird habitat, and 8) provision of other wildlife habitat. The criteria used for identifying wetlands of significance for these functions were taken from Tiner (2003b; posted on the web at: [http://www.fws.gov/nwi/Pubs\\_Reports/HGMReportOctober2003.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/nwi/Pubs_Reports/HGMReportOctober2003.pdf)). A list of the wetland types designated as significant for each function is presented in Table 3. The listing does not include marine and estuarine wetlands since they are not present in the study watershed.

Table 3. List of wetlands of potential significance for eight functions. (Source: Adapted from Tiner 2003b).

| <b>Function/Potential Significance</b> | <b>Wetland Types</b>   |
|--|--|
| <b>Surface Water Detention</b>         |  |
| High                                   | Lentic Basin, Lentic Fringe, Lentic Island (basin and fringe), Lentic Flat associated with reservoirs and flood control dams, Lotic Basin, Lotic Floodplain, Lotic Fringe, Lotic Island associated with Floodplain area, Lotic Island basin, Ponds Throughflow (in-stream) and associated Fringe and Basin wetlands, Ponds Bidirectional and associated wetlands |
| Moderate                               | Lotic Flat, Lotic Island flat, Lentic Flat, Other Terrene Basins, Other Ponds and associated wetlands (excluding sewage treatment ponds and similar waters)  |

**Streamflow Maintenance**

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| High     | Nonditched Headwater Wetlands (Terrene, Lotic, and Lentic), Headwater Ponds and Lakes (classified as PUB...on NWI) ( <u>Note</u> : Lotic Stream Basin or Floodplain basin Wetlands along 2nd order streams should also be rated high; possibly expand to 3rd order streams in hilly or mountainous terrain.) |
| Moderate | Ditched Headwater Wetlands (Terrene, Lotic, and Lentic), Lotic (Nontidal) Floodplain, Throughflow Ponds and Lakes (classified as PUB on NWI) and their associated wetlands, Terrene Outflow wetlands (associated with streams not major rivers), Outflow Ponds and Lakes (classified as PUB... on NWI)       |

Special Note: All these wetlands should be considered to also be important for fish and shellfish as they are vital to sustaining streamflow necessary for the survival of these aquatic organisms.

**Nutrient Transformation**

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| High     | Vegetated wetlands (and mixes with nonvegetated wetlands or unconsolidated bottom; even where nonvegetated predominates) with seasonally flooded (C), seasonally flooded/saturated (E), semipermanently flooded (F), and permanently flooded (H) water regimes, vegetated wetlands with <u>permanently saturated</u> water regime (B) |
| Moderate | Vegetated wetlands with temporarily flooded (A) water regime  |

Table 3 (continued).

**Function/Potential Significance      Wetland Types**

Retention of Sediments and Other Particulates

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| High     | Lentic Basin, Lentic Fringe (vegetated only), Lentic Island (vegetated) Lotic Basin, Lotic Floodplain, Lotic Fringe (vegetated), Lotic Island (vegetated), Throughflow Ponds and Lakes (in-stream; designated as PUB... on NWI) and associated vegetated wetlands, Bidirectional Ponds and associated vegetated wetlands                 |
| Moderate | Lotic Island (nonvegetated), Lotic Flat (excluding bogs), Lentic Flat, Other Terrene Basins excluding bogs), Terrene wetlands associated with ponds (excluding excavated ponds; also excluding bogs and slope wetlands), Other Ponds and Lakes (classified as PUB... on NWI) and associated wetlands (excluding bogs and slope wetlands) |

Note: Ponds with minimal watersheds - possibly gravel pit ponds, impoundments completely surrounded by dikes, and dug-out ponds with little surface water inflow should be excluded.

Shoreline Stabilization

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| High     | Lotic wetlands (vegetated except island and isolated types), Lentic wetlands (vegetated except island types) |
| Moderate | Terrene vegetated wetlands associated with ponds (e.g., Fringe-pond, Flat-pond, and Basin-pond)              |

Provision of Fish Habitat

|      |  |
|------|--|
| High | Lacustrine Semipermanently Flooded (excluding wetlands along intermittent streams), Lacustrine Littoral Aquatic Bed, Lacustrine Littoral Unconsolidated Bottom/Vegetated Wetland, Lacustrine Littoral Vegetated Wetland with a Permanently Flooded water regime, Palustrine Semipermanently Flooded (excluding wetlands along intermittent streams; must be contiguous with a permanent waterbody such as PUBH, L1UBH, or R2/R3UBH), Palustrine Aquatic Bed, Palustrine Unconsolidated Bottom/Vegetated Wetland, Palustrine Vegetated Wetland with a Permanently Flooded water regime, Ponds (PUBH.. on NWI; not PUBF) associated with Semipermanently Flooded Vegetated Wetland |
|------|--|



Table 3 (continued).

| Function/Potential Significance | Wetland Types   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Moderate                        | Lentic wetlands that are PEM1E, Lotic River or Stream wetlands that are PEM1E (including mixtures with Scrub-Shrub or Forested wetlands), Semipermanently flooded <u>Phragmites</u> wetlands (PEM5F) where contiguous with a permanent waterbody, Other Ponds and associated Fringe wetlands (i.e., Terrene Fringe-pond) (excluding industrial, stormwater treatment/detention, similar ponds in highly disturbed landscapes, and ponds with K and F water regimes) |
| Important for Stream Shading    | Lotic Stream wetlands that are Palustrine Forested or Scrub-shrub wetlands (includes mixes where one of these types predominates; excluding those along intermittent streams; also excluding shrub bogs) (Note that although forested wetlands are designated as important for stream shading, forested upland provide similar functions)   |

Note: Many of these habitats are also important for wetland-dependent amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic invertebrates.

Provision of Waterfowl and Waterbird Habitat

|      |   |
|------|---|
| High | Lacustrine Semipermanently Flooded, Lacustrine Littoral Aquatic Bed, Lacustrine Littoral Vegetated wetlands with an H water regime, Lacustrine Unconsolidated Shores (F, E, or C water regimes; mudflats), Palustrine Semipermanently Flooded (excluding Phragmites stands, but including mixtures containing this species - EM5), Palustrine Aquatic Bed, Palustrine Vegetated wetlands with a H water regime, Palustrine Unconsolidated Shores (F, E, or C water regimes; mudflats), Seasonally Flooded/Saturated Palustrine wetlands impounded or beaver-influenced (all vegetation types [except PEM5Eh and PEM5Eb] and associated PUB waters), Lotic River or Stream wetlands that are PEM1E (including mixtures with Scrub-Shrub or Forested wetlands), Ponds associated with Semipermanently Flooded Vegetated wetlands, Ponds associated with all of the wetland types listed as high for this function |
|------|---|

Table 3 (continued).

| <b>Function/Potential Significance</b> | <b>Wetland Types</b>  |
|--|---|
| Moderate                               | Phragmites wetlands that are Seasonally Flooded/Saturated and wetter (PEM5E; PEM5F; PEM5H) and contiguous with a waterbody, Other Lacustrine Littoral Unconsolidated Bottom, Other Palustrine Unconsolidated Bottom (excluding industrial, commercial, stormwater detention, wastewater treatment, and similar ponds), Palustrine Emergent wetlands (including mixtures with Scrub-shrub) that are Seasonally Flooded and associated with permanently flooded waterbodies |
| Significant for Wood Duck              | Lotic wetlands (excluding those along intermittent streams) that are Forested or Scrub-shrub or mixtures of these types with C, E, F, or H water regime; Lotic wetlands that are mixed Forested/Emergent or Unconsolidated Bottom/Forested with a E, F, or H water regime   |
| Provision of Other Wildlife Habitat    |   |
| High                                   | Large vegetated wetlands ( $\geq 20$ acres, excluding open water and nonvegetated areas), small diverse wetlands (10-20 acres with 2 or more covertypes; excluding EM5 or open water as one of the covertypes), areas with large numbers of small isolated wetlands (within an upland forest matrix and including small ponds that may be vernal pools)   |
| Moderate                               | Other vegetated wetlands  |

Note: Although in general, ponds are not listed here as important as significant for other wildlife, it should be recognized that species of frogs, turtles, and some other wildlife depend on these habitats; by and large, these wetlands have already been designated as important for fish and waterbirds, so they are not listed here.

## Results

### Maps

A series of 12 maps was produced for the Sucker Brook to Grass River watershed. The first four maps depict wetlands by NWI types and by landscape position, landform, and water flow path. Each of the remaining maps (Maps 5 through 12) highlights wetlands that may perform each of the eight selected functions at a significant level. Electronic copies of the maps are included in the compact disk (CD) version of the report. A list of the 12 maps follows.

[Map 1 - Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats Classified by NWI Types](#)

[Map 2 - Wetlands Classified by Landscape Position](#)

[Map 3 - Wetlands Classified by Landform](#)

[Map 4 - Wetlands Classified by Water Flow Path](#)

[Map 5 – Potential Wetlands of Significance for Surface Water Detention](#)

[Map 6 - Potential Wetlands of Significance for Streamflow Maintenance](#)

[Map 7 - Potential Wetlands of Significance for Nutrient Transformation](#)

[Map 8 - Potential Wetlands of Significance for Sediment Retention](#)

[Map 9 - Potential Wetlands of Significance for Shoreline Stabilization](#)

[Map 10 - Potential Wetlands of Significance for Provision of Fish and Shellfish Habitat](#)

[Map 11 - Potential Wetlands of Significance for Provision of Waterfowl/Waterbird Habitat](#)

[Map 12 - Potential Wetlands of Significance for Provision of Other Wildlife Habitat](#)

### Acreage Summaries

#### NWI Types

The Sucker Brook to Grass River watershed contained over 14,500 acres of wetlands (Table 4) which amounts to 18% of the watershed area. Palustrine wetlands predominated, occupying nearly 12,800 acres (88% of the wetlands), with the remaining wetlands being lacustrine wetlands (1729 acres). Forested wetlands represented about two-thirds of the wetlands (9649 acres). Scrub-shrub wetlands made up almost 15% of the wetlands, while lacustrine shallow water (unconsolidated bottom) wetlands comprised 12%. Emergent wetlands accounted for only 7% of the wetlands (970 acres), Lacustrine waters dominated the deepwater habitat in the watershed (1064 acres), representing 88% of this habitat. The remaining 12% was riverine waters, mostly lower perennial deepwater habitat; the acreage of linear streams was not calculated.

#### LLWW Types

Fifty-two percent of the wetlands (excluding ponds) were lotic types with most associated with streams (6463 acres) (Table 5). Terrene wetlands were second-ranked, accounting for 45% of the wetlands and most of these were sources of streams. The remaining 3% was lentic wetlands bordering lakes. About 96% (12,205 acres) of the wetlands were

basin types (in distinct depressions). Fringe wetlands totaled 278 acres, representing only 2% of the wetlands, while flat wetlands (157 acres) accounted for about 1% of the wetlands. Only 60 acres of ponds were inventoried. Over half of them were excavated, while nearly one-quarter were dammed/impounded. Seventeen percent of the ponds were beaver-influenced, whereas only about 9% were natural.

#### Preliminary Functional Assessment<sup>5</sup>

Nearly all of the wetlands (including ponds) were predicted to be significant for four functions: surface water detention, nutrient transformation, retention of sediment and other particulates, and provision of habitat for non-aquatic species. Eighty-five percent of the wetlands were classified as important for streamflow maintenance, while 79% were deemed significant for shoreline stabilization. Forty-one percent of the wetlands were considered significant habitat for waterfowl and waterbirds, whereas only 7% were projected to provide habitat for fish and shellfish. An additional 34% of the wetlands provided shade cover for streams that likely moderates stream temperature which is important for the latter species.

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<sup>5</sup> Reference to percent of wetlands providing various functions is based on acreage, not the number of individual wetlands..

Table 4. Wetlands classified by NWI type for the Sucker Brook to Grass River watershed.

| <b>System</b>      | <b>Class, Subclass</b>                     | <b>Acreage</b>  |
|--------------------|--|-----------------|
| Lacustrine (L2)    | Emergent (EM)                              | 0.0002          |
|                    | Unconsolidated Bottom (UB)                 | 1725.05         |
|                    | Unconsolidated Shore (US)                  | 4.39            |
|                    | <b>(Subtotal Lacustrine)</b>               | <b>1729.44</b>  |
| Palustrine (P)     | Emergent (EM)                              | 939.90          |
|                    | Emergent (EM) / Unconsolidated Bottom (UB) | 30.49           |
|                    | (Subtotal)                                 | 970.40          |
|                    | Forested, Broad-leaved Decidious (FO1)     | 9466.56         |
|                    | Forested, Needle-leaved Decidious (FO2)    | 108.78          |
|                    | Forested, Needle-leaved Evergreen (FO4)    | 29.63           |
|                    | Forested, Dead (FO5)                       | 44.41           |
|                    | (Subtotal)                                 | 9649.39         |
|                    | Scrub-Shrub, Broad-leaved Decidious (SS1)  | 2112.01         |
|                    | (Subtotal)                                 | 2112.01         |
|                    | Unconsolidated Bottom (UB)                 | 59.56           |
|                    | (Subtotal)                                 | 59.56           |
|                    | <b>(Subtotal Palustrine)</b>               | <b>12791.36</b> |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>14520.80</b>                            |                 |

Table 5. Wetlands classified by LLWW type for the Sucker Brook to Grass River watershed.

| <b>Landscape Position</b> | <b>Landform</b>                | <b>Water Flow Path</b>         | <b>Acreage</b>  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Lentic (LE)               | Basin (BA)                     | Bidirectional (BI)             | 220.18          |
|                           |                                | (Subtotal)                     | 220.18          |
|                           | Fringe (FR)                    | Bidirectional (BI)             | 138.09          |
|                           |                                | Throughflow (TH)               | 1.78            |
|                           | (Subtotal)                     | 139.87                         |                 |
| Island (IL)               | Bidirectional (BI)             | 11.29                          |                 |
| (Subtotal)                | 11.29                          |                                |                 |
|                           | <b>(Subtotal Lentic)</b>       |                                | <b>371.34</b>   |
| Lotic River (LR)          | Floodplain (FP)                | Throughflow (TH)               | 95.43           |
|                           |                                | Bidirectional (BI)             | 22.31           |
|                           |                                | Isolated (IS)                  | 9.76            |
|                           | (Subtotal)                     | 127.49                         |                 |
|                           | Fringe (FR)                    | Throughflow (TH)               | 34.96           |
| Bidirectional (BI)        |                                | 52.13                          |                 |
| (Subtotal)                | 87.08                          |                                |                 |
|                           | <b>(Subtotal Lotic River)</b>  |                                | <b>214.58</b>   |
| Lotic Stream (LS)         | Basin (BA)                     | Throughflow (TH)               | 4849.32         |
|                           |                                | Throughflow- Intermittent (TI) | 1430.09         |
|                           |                                | Outflow Intermittent (OI)      | 4.71            |
|                           |                                | (subtotal)                     | 6284.12         |
|                           | Flat (FL)                      | Throughflow (TH)               | 121.41          |
|                           |                                | Throughflow- Intermittent (TI) | 6.80            |
|                           | (subtotal)                     | 128.22                         |                 |
|                           | Fringe (FR)                    | Throughflow (TH)               | 35.06           |
|                           |                                | Throughflow- Intermittent (TI) | 15.92           |
|                           | (subtotal)                     | 50.98                          |                 |
|                           | <b>(Subtotal Lotic Stream)</b> |                                | <b>6463.31</b>  |
| Terrene (TE)              | Basin (BA)                     | Isolated (IS)                  | 1178.86         |
|                           |                                | Inflow (IN)                    | 26.13           |
|                           |                                | Outflow (OU)                   | 3269.67         |
|                           |                                | Outflow Intermittent (OI)      | 810.68          |
|                           |                                | Throughflow Intermittent (TI)  | 415.84          |
|                           | (subtotal)                     | 5701.18                        |                 |
|                           | Flat (FL)                      | Isolated (IS)                  | 1.93            |
|                           |                                | Outflow (OU)                   | 26.88           |
| (subtotal)                | 28.81                          |                                |                 |
|                           | <b>(Subtotal Terrene)</b>      |                                | <b>5729.99</b>  |
|                           | <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>             |                                | <b>12779.22</b> |

Table 6. Preliminary wetland functional assessment findings for the watershed.

| <b>Function/Significance Level</b>       | <b>Acres</b>    |
|--|-----------------|
| Surface Water Detention                  |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 7353.38         |
| Moderate (M)                             | 5456.6          |
| <i>(Total SWD)</i>                       | <i>12809.98</i> |
| Streamflow Maintenance                   |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 9233.04         |
| Moderate (M)                             | 1714.22         |
| <i>(Total SM)</i>                        | <i>10947.26</i> |
| Nutrient Transformation                  |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 12714.41        |
| Moderate (M)                             | 17.37           |
| <i>(Total NT)</i>                        | <i>12731.78</i> |
| Sediment and Other Particulate Retention |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 7275.83         |
| Moderate (M)                             | 5529.75         |
| <i>(Total SR)</i>                        | <i>12805.58</i> |
| Shoreline Stabilization                  |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 6958.1          |
| Moderate (M)                             | 3233.93         |
| <i>(Total SS)</i>                        | <i>10192.03</i> |
| Fish and Shellfish Habitat               |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 155.82          |
| Moderate (M)                             | 715.84          |
| <i>(Total FISH)</i>                      | <i>871.66</i>   |
| Shade                                    |                 |
| Stream Shading (SS)                      | 4396.89         |
| <i>(Total SHADE)</i>                     | <i>4396.89</i>  |
| Waterfowl and Waterbird Habitat          |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 1037.74         |
| Moderate (M)                             | 1800.95         |
| Wood Duck (D)                            | 4123.64         |
| <i>(Total PBIRD)</i>                     | <i>6962.33</i>  |
| Other Wildlife Habitat                   |                 |
| High (H)                                 | 12389.81        |
| Moderate (M)                             | 2026.63         |
| <i>(Total PWILD)</i>                     | <i>14416.44</i> |

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