



Providing Wetlands Information to the Nation

National Wetlands Inventory



Idaho wetland and riparian habitat

Wetlands are the cornerstone of many important and complex ecosystems. They provide countless benefits for fish, wildlife, and people. The Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 directs the Fish and Wildlife Service to map our Nation's wetlands and deepwater habitats and produce information on their characteristics, extent, and status.

Past and Future Actions

For 25 years, the Service has provided Federal and State agencies, the private sector, and citizens with scientific data on wetland location, extent, status, and trends. As the Service's National Wetlands Inventory program works to complete baseline wetland mapping in the lower 48 States and Alaska, it will continue to build a digital wetland database, strategically update maps, and conduct focused status and trend assessments in priority areas to guide resource management and decision-making.

How data are used

Improved management of natural resources requires up-to-date knowledge of the extent, nature, and distribution of wetlands and other

habitats on which fish and wildlife depend. NWI products support Service and non-profit wetland acquisition programs beneficial to migratory birds. They are also used for fishery restoration, flood plain and watershed planning, endangered species recovery efforts, and to plan for energy resource and infrastructure development. NWI wetland maps and wetland information are important tools that help government and citizens develop areas responsibly while conserving our Nation's wetlands.

Paper Map Availability

Users can order NWI wetland maps through cooperator-run distribution centers, listed online at http://wetlands.fws.gov/maps/distribution_ctrs.htm. Maps are also available through 590 Depository Libraries and over the Internet at wetlands.fws.gov.

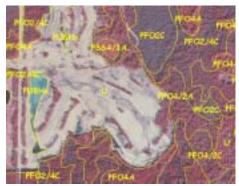
Digital Data

NWI maps are converted to digital data for geographic information system applications. Although only



about 40 percent of the Nation is available in digital format from the Service, there is increasing demand from users in all 50 States and the trust territories to provide wetland maps data over the Internet. Nearly 70 percent of digital wetland map users are private citizens and businesses.

An award winning Wetlands Interactive Mapper enables Internet users to access and produce customized maps without specialized software.



Updated NWI data on a CIR orthophoto base map

Strategic Wetlands Mapping

In 2000, the Service began to strategically update existing maps and digital data, and develop new digital wetland map data in key areas of the Nation experiencing substantial change and wetlands loss from development pressures and expanding populations. The Service began updating maps to aid resource managers and the public in watershed planning, habitat conservation, and landscape management efforts.



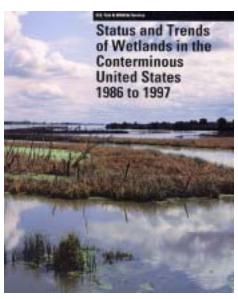
Riparian Mapping

Because of the crucial nature of riparian habitat to wildlife in the arid and semiarid west, the Service has begun mapping these water-dependent habitats, along with wetlands, using Service developed riparian mapping standards. Riparian buffer areas are being mapped in the east. A few hundred maps have been produced and more are in production.



Enhanced Mapping

On a pilot basis, especially in the northeast, the Service is producing enhanced wetland maps using hydrogeomorphic-type descriptors for landscape position (see image above) using the heads-up technique. In enhanced mapping, wetlands information overlaid on digital raster graphics and other data (e.g., hydric soils and hydrology). Data can be used for performing preliminary assessments of wetland functions for large geographic areas.



National Wetland Status and Trends Reports

The Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 requires the Service to submit national wetlands status and trend reports to Congress each decade. The 2000 Report submitted to Congress identified an estimated wetland loss rate of about 59,000 acres annually from 1986 to 1997, down substantially from the average annual loss of 290,000 acres in the previous decade. These status and trends reports are used by Federal and State agencies, the scientific community, and conservation groups to plan, formulate, and assess wetland policy.

Regional, State and Local Analyses

The Service has completed regional wetland status and trends analyses for Alaska, the Texas Coast, the Mid-Atlantic states, and the Chesapeake Watershed, and many analyses of more localized areas. The assessments identify and address landscape problems in specific areas. They are useful to local development and planning.

Partnerships

The Service promotes the development, sharing, and distribution of maps and complex digital wetlands data through cooperation with a wide array of Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, private sector organizations and universities.

Contacts:

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For wetland maps and more information, visit the National Wetlands Inventory homepage at http://wetlands.fws.gov.

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