



National Wetland Condition Assessment

Fact Sheet



Purpose

Report on the condition of the Nation's wetlands.

Help States and Tribes implement wetland monitoring and assessment programs.

Advance the science of wetlands monitoring and assessment.

What is the National Wetland Condition Assessment?

The National Wetland Condition Assessment is a statistical survey of the quality of our Nation's wetlands. The Wetlands Assessment is designed to:

- Determine regional and national ecological integrity of wetlands.
- Promote collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Build state and tribal capacity for monitoring and analyses.
- Achieve a robust, statistically-valid set of wetland data.
- Develop baseline information to evaluate progress.

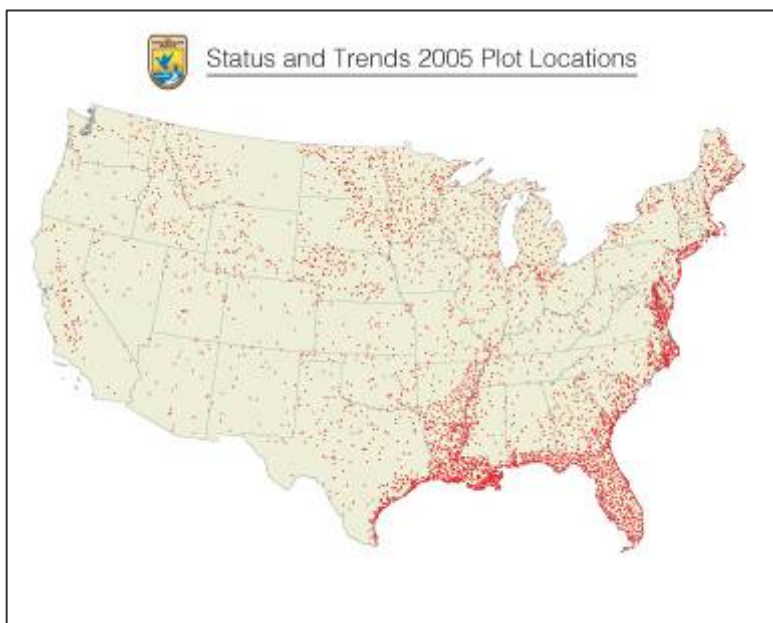
This is one of a series of water surveys being conducted by, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, states, tribes, and other partners. In addition to wetlands, partners will also study coastal waters, wadeable streams, rivers, and lakes in a revolving sequence. The purpose of these surveys is to generate statistically-valid and environmentally relevant reports on the condition of the Nation's water resources.

What is the goal of the Wetlands Assessment?

EPA will collaborate with State and Tribal partners to refine the three objectives of the National Wetlands Condition Assessment:

1. Produce a national report that describes the quality of the nation's wetlands,
2. Help States and Tribes implement wetland monitoring and assessment programs to guide policy development and project decision-making,
3. Advance the science of wetlands monitoring and assessment.

The sampling design for this survey is a probability-based network that will provide statistically-valid estimates of condition for a population of wetlands with a known confidence. It is designed using modern survey techniques. Sample sites are selected at random to represent the condition of wetlands across the country.



How does EPA's Wetland Assessment compliment the US FWS Status and Trends Report?

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service publishes a Status and Trends Report that documents trends in the acreage of the nation's wetlands. EPA's survey will establish a baseline assessment of condition for some wetland types. Taken together, these two efforts will provide decision makers with scientifically-defensible information documenting the current status of both wetland quantity and quality in the United States.

EPA will work in partnership with FWS throughout the design and implementation of the national assessment. Through preliminary design discussions, it has become clear that the Service's

Wetlands Status and Trends plots offer one of the best starting points for a probabilistic national condition assessment. Compared to other options, the plots provide more contemporary spatial wetlands data and the highest probability of a given point actually being a wetland. EPA and FWS are discussing logistics for potentially supplementing the Status and Trends plots in parts of the country with sparse coverage to produce a more equitable distribution of sites.

What is the status of planning and design for the Wetlands Assessment?

EPA is currently in the research phase of the National Wetland Condition Assessment, and has identified several significant challenges to designing and implementing a wetland assessment on a national scale. These include:

designing the best sample frame and methods to support a National Report; selecting efficient, scientifically valid indicators; ensuring adequate resources are available to conduct the Wetlands Assessment; maintaining the resultant data; and building partnerships to most effectively use the information gleaned from the Wetlands Assessment. To encourage the development of more robust surface water monitoring strategies, EPA has released basic guidance in the last several years. The 2011 wetland survey will be an opportunity for EPA to apply those basic principles to the National Wetland Condition Assessment.

To help inform decision-making related to the challenges outlined above, EPA has initiated a number of different planning activities. These include:

- Re-invigorating the National Wetlands Monitoring and Assessment Work Group (NWMWAG), a collection of state, tribal, and federal partners. EPA expects this work group will help inform decision making related to design of the national assessment.
- Tracking and supporting Regional Pilot Projects including a Gulf of Mexico coastal wetlands survey and a Mid-Atlantic inland wetland survey
- Continuing to work with partners to build state and tribal wetland monitoring capabilities.



What is the schedule for the Wetlands Assessment?

The time line below lists the major phases of the Wetlands Assessment and the year(s) they will be accomplished.

| Activities | 2007 – 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Research | Design | Field | Lab/Data | Report |
| Scientific issues | Target population | Training | Lab analysis | Data analysis | |
| Policy issues | Indicators | Site reconnaissance | Lab quality assurance | Presentations | |
| Supplemental data analysis | Field/ Lab practices | Sample collection | Data entry | Peer review | |
| Methods refinement | Quality assurance plan | Field quality assurance | Data quality assurance | Final report | |

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