



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 (NWCA) is a statistical survey of the quality of our Nation's wetlands. The NWCA is designed to:

- Determine the ecological integrity of wetlands at regional and national scales.
- Build state and tribal capacity for monitoring and analyses.
- Promote collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries.
- 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 (EPA), 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 are the goals of the NWCA?

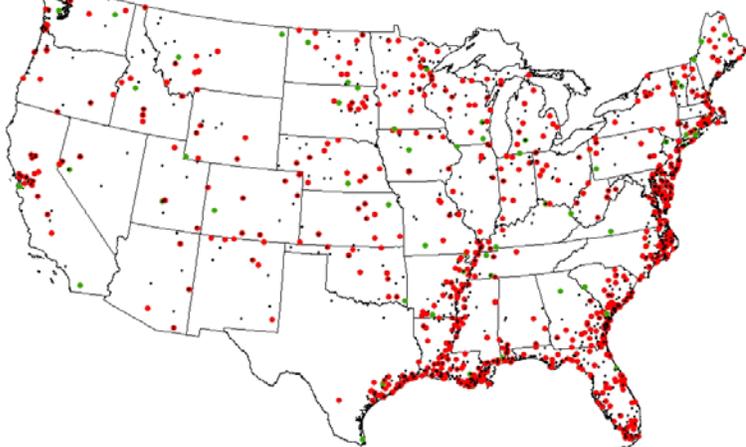
EPA will collaborate with state and tribal partners to implement the National Wetland Condition Assessment to meet three goals:

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 ecological condition for a population of wetlands with known confidence. It is designed using modern survey techniques. Sample points are selected at random to represent the condition of wetlands across the country. The survey design was developed in partnership with the US FWS Wetlands Status and Trends Program.

How will the NWCA inform wetlands management and policy?

2011 NWCA Site Locations



The 2011 NWCA will provide the baseline for wetland quality in the United States. It will build on the success of the US FWS Wetland Status and Trends (S&T) Report. Just as the S&T Report characterizes wetland acreage by category across the country, the NWCA will characterize wetland condition nationwide for many of the same wetland classes. When paired together, the two efforts will provide the public and government agencies with comparable, national information on wetland quantity and quality. The data will be an integrated evaluation of the cumulative effects of actions that either degrade wetlands or protect and restore their ecological condition.

Some of the key questions the NWCA should help inform include:

- What is the extent of wetland acreage that supports healthy ecosystems?
- How widespread are the most significant problems affecting wetland quality?
- What is the nature of gains and losses in wetlands acreage?
- What are the characteristics of wetlands soils and what services do they provide on the landscape?
- To what extent do buffers mitigate the effects of stressors on wetland condition?

When complete, the 2011 NWCA will represent a significant advancement in our understanding of wetland quality nationwide. Subsequent iterations will be used to track trends in quality by wetland class and region of the country. Over time, this information will be used by EPA and other agencies to track progress toward the national goal to increase the quantity and quality of the nation's wetlands.

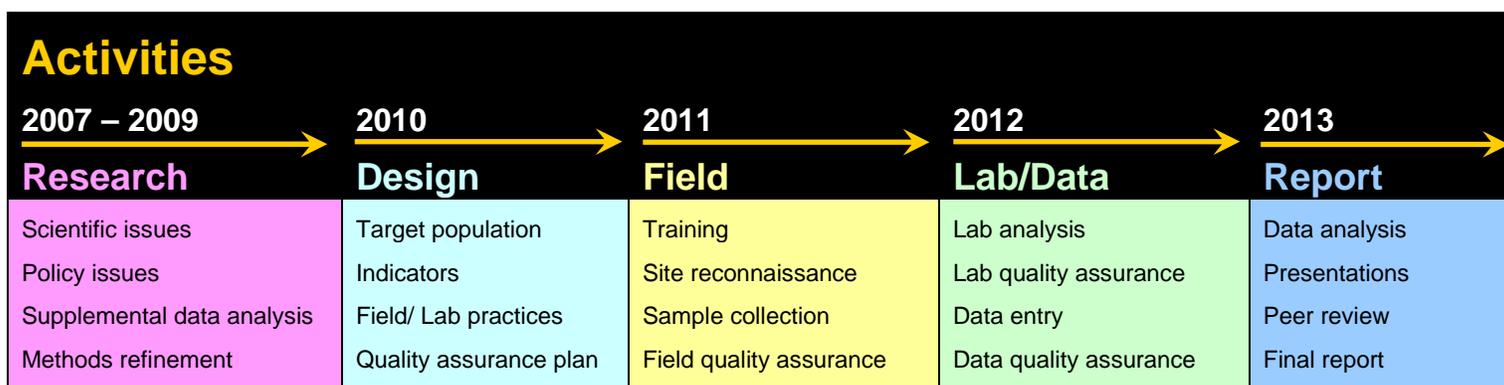
What is the current status of the NWCA?



Following a 5 year-long stakeholder planning process, NWCA field sampling started on April 4, 2011. 55 field crews will sample approximately 1,250 sites across the conterminous U.S. and Alaska by the end of September 2011. These crews were trained during the spring of 2011 on how to use the NWCA Field Operations Manual (FOM), which provides standard protocols for sampling vegetation, soils, hydrology, algae, water quality, and the wetland buffer. EPA staff and federal partners from USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service also provide technical guidance as crews encounter problems in the field.

Multiple laboratories will analyze over 33,000 samples that will be collected during the NWCA field season. This data will be evaluated and summarized as it is received from the field crews. In cooperation with state, tribal and federal partners, the analysis of the NWCA data will begin in early 2012 and continue through final reporting in 2013. The NWCA report will be peer reviewed and opened to public comment before the final report is released.

What is the schedule for the NWCA?



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