THE MID-ATLANTIC STATES REGIONAL WETLANDS ASSESSMENT

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The Pennsylvania State University's Cooperative Wetlands Center (Penn State-CWC) and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science Center for Coastal Resources Management (VIMS-CCRM) are collaborating to develop and implement a wetlands assessment protocol for the Mid-Atlantic region. The protocol will synthesize methods currently developed for Pennsylvania, Virginia, Delaware, and the upcoming National Assessment to generate a protocol that can be used for probabilistic sampling and characterization of wetlands in each of the major eco-regions of the Mid-Atlantic.

The work undertaken in this project will constitute the first steps in an effort to establish a continuing monitoring and assessment program for wetland condition throughout the region. The intent is to develop a multilevel assessment protocol that can provide periodic characterizations of wetland condition at multiple geopolitical units (states, regions, and at the national level), as well as the basis for restoration and protection goals. The project will be developed in close collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Wetlands Working Group (MAWWG), which exists to provide communication and coordination among state wetlands management programs throughout the region. Ensuring that the assessment protocol developed in this project is responsive to the information needs and management objectives of each of the MAWWG partners is a specific objective of the work plan. This project will result in the development and implementation of a wetlands assessment protocol that can:

1. Provide a periodic characterization of regional wetland condition based on probabilistic sampling that is also suitable for individual state, regional, and national assessments
2. Generate a comprehensive Landscape Assessment (Level 1) of wetland water quality and habitat ecosystem services suitable to inform regulatory decisions and support non-regulatory wetland protection programs
3. Diagnose the dominant stressors affecting wetland condition that can inform managers about how to proceed with remediation and restoration
4. Inform the setting of restoration and creation goals

The scope of existing monitoring efforts of the Mid-Atlantic states will be presented, as well as the protocol and sampling design of the regional assessment. The added-value of the regional assessment to the member states, as well as their concerns, will also be discussed.

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