

WETLANDS MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT IN NEW ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

In the mid 1990's, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds, identified monitoring as one of the national priorities of the wetlands program. It was recognized that more comprehensive information was needed to measure the success of our wetlands regulatory program and integrate wetlands protection into the nation's watershed management programs.

The Clean Water Act requires that states and tribes report on the condition of waters of the US, which includes wetlands. Previously, reporting on wetland condition has been hampered by the lack of monitoring tools. In an effort to develop these tools, the New England Biological Assessment of Wetlands Workgroup (NEBAWWG) was formed. This group, acting in conjunction with the National Wetlands Monitoring and Assessment Workgroup (NWMAWG), has been testing wetland assessment techniques in the Northeast. Members of the workgroup include primary federal agencies, environmental agencies of the six New England states and New York, state fish and wildlife agencies, universities and non-profit agencies. The NEBAWWG charter is three-fold: first, to develop and institutionalize a region-wide biomonitoring and assessment network for wetlands; second, to oversee regional efforts, and address logistical and technical issues; third, to coordinate with and complement the efforts of other related groups and interested parties. This group has been developing, testing and applying wetland assessment and monitoring techniques in the Northeast for the past 10 years. Monitoring efforts have been supported and coordinated by the New England Interstate Water Control Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) since the inception of NEBAWWG.

This presentation will illustrate how the 3 – Tiered Approach to wetlands monitoring and assessment (Landscape, Rapid Assessment and Site-Specific Tiers) are being developed and applied by five New England states; Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Vermont. Challenges and innovative approaches to wetlands monitoring in these five states will be described. Further discussion on how wetlands monitoring and assessment efforts can be integrated and coordinated with surface water quality programs will be incorporated into the discussion.

KEYWORDS

Wetlands monitoring and assessment, NEBAWWG