

Iowa State Wetland Program Summary



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Iowa's Information about wetland:*

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Section A. Quick View

Description of State's Wetlands

Several types of wetlands are present throughout Iowa. Prairie-pothole marshes (emergent wetlands), swamps (forested wetlands), sloughs, bogs (emergent wetlands), wet meadows (emergent wetlands), fens (emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands), and small ponds are examples of palustrine wetlands. The Lacustrine System includes large oxbows, natural lakes, and reservoirs. The Riverine System includes streams and rivers.

State Definition of Wetlands

Iowa's regulatory definition for "wetlands" is "an area of two or more acres in a natural condition that is mostly under water or waterlogged during the spring growing season and is characterized by vegetation of hydric soils."

Historic Wetland Loss/Gain

May want to revise this layout to reflect how historic estimates have been updated/need to be updated and percent lost has changed as a result:

Original Wetland Acreage	Remaining Wetland Acreage	Acreage Lost	% Lost
4,000,000	421,900	3,578,100	89%

Source: USFWS – Dahl Study (1989)

Primary State Wetlands Webpagees:

Regulatory: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/InsideDNR/RegulatoryWater/WetlandsPermitting.aspx>

Wetland Monitoring:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WaterMonitoring/MonitoringPrograms/Wetlands.aspx>

State Wetland Program Plan

Iowa does not have a state wetland program plan at this time.

State Permitting Fees

State Permitting Fee	State Name
Yes/No	NO
Amount (range)	N/A
Agency	N/A

State Resources for Wetland Work

State Name	Core element #1: Regulation	Core Element #2: Monitoring and Assessment	Core Element #3: Wetland Water Quality Standards	Core Element #4: Voluntary Wetland Restoration
Agency	DNR	DNR	None	State wildlife biologists, some voluntary work with public + on own land
Amount	Unknown	Unknown		
Source(s)	EPA Grant (604b); General Fund	Unknown		
Staffing	1 FTE	<2 FTE		Some (# FTEs unknown)

Innovative Features

None.

Models and Templates

None.

Section B. Regulation

How are Wetlands Regulated in the State?

State law requires IDNR to inventory the wetlands and marshes of each county and designate those wetlands that constitute "protected wetlands." Draining of a protected wetland is prohibited without a §401 water quality certification, and a permit may not be issued unless: (a) the protected wetland is

replaced by the applicant with a wetland of equal or greater value as determined by the department; or (b) the protected wetland does not meet the criteria for continued designation as a protected wetland.

While this rule is still on the books, the rule no longer results in a state regulatory program. §404 dredge and fill permits trigger state §401 certification role.

Wetland Delineation

Delineation Guidance	Yes	No	Detail
Use State's own Method		X	
Use Corps' 87 Manual and Regional Supplement	X		The Corps requires applications to provide this information
Other (Please describe)		X	

Evaluation Methodology

The state uses the Corps' methodology. NRCS has models, but they were never formalized at the state level.

Exempted Activities

Use of the Corps of Engineers' methodology determines what is regulated or exempt for Section 404.

Special Provisions for Agriculture and Forestry

Unknown.

Penalties and Enforcement

Although the state has the authority to operate a compliance and enforcement program specifically for wetlands, it does not and generally defers to the Corps for violations under §404 of the Clean Water Act.

Permit Tracking

The IDNR Water Resources Section uses an in-house Access database to track projects and determine the number of §401 permits that have been issued or denied.

State General Permit (statewide vs. regional coverage)

Permit Coverage	Yes	No	Detail (Type of Permit)
Regional General Permit	X		4-5 Regional permits, including one for linear transportation projects that is similar to Nationwide 14
Statewide General Permit		X	

Assumption of 404 Powers

Assumption Status	Yes	No	Detail
Assumed		X	
Applying for Assumption		X	
Explored Assumption		X	State is not interested in assumption at this time, due to a lack of resources

Joint permitting

Iowa DNR has a joint application form with the Corps for obtaining permits. When an application is sent to the Corps, the process triggers sending the application to the state as well. Applicants do not have to submit a state permit.

Special Area Management Plans and Advanced Identification Plans

None.

Mitigation Policy

Under state regulations, IDNR may not issue a certification for a protected wetland unless “the protected wetland is replaced by the applicant with a wetland of equal or greater value as determined by the department.” The regulations do not specify exactly how mitigation should be achieved, and so the method, type, and location of mitigation vary from project to project. IDNR permitting staff typically requires mitigation sites to be located on-site or as close as possible to the impact site. Off-site mitigation is allowed, but usually requires a higher mitigation ratio. IDNR’s preferred form of mitigation is wetland restoration, but the agency will accept creation, enhancement, and preservation projects as long as “no net loss” is achieved. Mitigation ratios vary according to the type and quality of the wetlands involved; IDNR considers whether the mitigation site is on-site or off-site and if it is in-kind or out-of-kind. The Corps and DNR conduct side-by-side analysis. Since 2008, there has been a bigger emphasis on mitigation banking options.

Mitigation Database

The Water Resources Section comprehensively tracks all mitigation sites.

Section C. Monitoring and Assessment

Agency Responsible for Wetland Monitoring and Assessment

Iowa is in the process of developing a statewide wetland monitoring program.

In 2005, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' (IDNR) Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Section began its wetland monitoring program in north-central Iowa, through grant funds provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. A statewide monitoring program was developed to assess these valuable areas, and results from this monitoring will enable the IDNR to determine the ecological condition of wetlands while documenting the leading contaminants and stressors found in these systems. This information will help make informed decisions affecting the future of Iowa's wetlands.

The overall Iowa DNR strategy is to develop a comprehensive statewide wetland monitoring program that can address all of the inherent variables associated with different types of wetlands, an extremely altered landscape, and cyclic patterns of wet/dry conditions in order to guide management decisions regarding Iowa's wetland resources. This strategy will provide a framework for an ongoing assessment of Iowa's wetland resources and the level of success achieved by our management programs.

Iowa DNR wetland monitoring protocols include:

- [Standard Protocol for Pothole Wetlands v2](#)
- [Iowa Fen Rapid Assessment Method for Wetlands v1](#)
- [PPJV Flex Fund Proposal \(2012\)](#)

Mapping/Inventory

Contact Chris Ensinger at: _____

State Wetland Mapping Public Portal

None. State sends people to the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) website.

Wetland Classification and Assessment

The Corps makes all assessments. Informally, the state uses the Cowardin Classification system.

Statewide Monitoring Plan

Unknown.

Overall Wetland Gain and Loss Tracking System

None.

Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Characteristics

Level	None	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<i>Iowa</i>		Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Type	None	IBI	Conditional	Functional
<i>Iowa</i>		YES	Unknown	Unknown

Frequency	None	Project Specific	Ongoing
<i>Iowa</i>		X	X (through EPA Grants)

Participation in National Wetland Condition Assessment

NWCA Study Type	Yes	No
National Study	X	
State Intensification Study		X

Section D. Water Quality Standards

Wetland and Water Quality Standards

Type	None	Use Existing WQ Standards	In Process	Adopted	Future Direction
Wetland-specific Designated Uses		X			
Narrative criteria in the standards to protect designated wetland uses		X			
Numeric criteria in the standards based on wetland type and location to protect the designated uses		X			
Anti-degradation policy includes wetlands		X			

Description: Iowa’s surface water quality standards apply to wetlands, as they do to all waters of the state that are classified for protection of beneficial uses. Under the Iowa Administrative Code, wetlands fall under the “designated use” category of “Class B(LW) – Lakes and Wetlands.” These standards were developed primarily to protect lakes, but are also used for evaluating wetlands. IDNR wildlife biologists generally rely on best professional judgment to assess wetland water quality. Wetlands are designated as general use waterbodies and are covered under the antidegradation policy described in Chapter 61.

Section E. Voluntary Wetland Restoration

Iowa does not have one, coordinated statewide voluntary wetland restoration program. However, IDNR has two regional restoration programs: 1) *Identification of Potential Wetland Complex Restoration in the Prairie-Pothole Region of Iowa* and 2) the *Upper Mississippi River & Great Lakes Region Joint Venture*. These are both funded by the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA). Additional federal funds come from the Federal Migratory Bird Fund. State money is provided by state waterfowl stamp sales; state habitat stamp sales; hunting and fishing license fees; and the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program, a general fund for natural resources.

Types of Wetland Restoration Work Funded by the State:

Type of Work	YES	NO	Description
Public Wetland Restoration	X		IDNR
Private Wetland Restoration	X		IDNR, IDALS
Technical Assistance	X		IDNR
Tax Incentives	X		Through wildlife group (no additional information available)

Voluntary Wetland Restoration Program Components

Wetland Restoration Efforts	Nothing in the Works	Planning	In Progress	Complete
Program has a set of restoration goals	N/A			
Coordinate with relevant agencies that outline restoration/protection goals and strategies and timeframes	N/A			
Developed multi-agency body to coordinate restoration/ protection efforts	N/A			
Set restoration goals based on agency objectives and available information	N/A			

Goals for Restoration Program Projects

NWCA Study Type	Yes	No	Description
No Net Loss	N/A		
Reverse Loss/Net Gain	N/A		
NPS	N/A		
TMDLs	N/A		
Habitat	N/A		
Costal Protection	N/A		

Floodwater Protection	N/A		
Groundwater	N/A		
Other (please describe)	N/A		

Landowner Guides and Handbooks to Assist with Voluntary Wetland Restoration Efforts

Unknown.

Section F. Innovative and/or Highly Effective Education and Outreach

None by the state. However, Iowa State University has an innovative “Water Rocks” project that has produced DVDs, music videos and teacher information about wetlands.

Section G. Climate Change and Wetlands

Iowa’s weather is volatile. People are talking about climate change; however there is not a formal effort in the wetlands program to address climate change. However, when evaluation of mitigation sites takes place, extremes in drought and flooding are assessed and taken into consideration when making decisions on mitigation banking sites.

In the past it was reported that the Iowa Department of Natural Resources conducted a climate change vulnerability assessment of Iowa’s fish and wildlife, including the evaluation of suites of species from particular habitat types. Both herbaceous and wet forest/shrub lands are part of that assessment, which will likely be available early in 2012. A planned revision to the Wildlife Action Plan scheduled for 2015 will also include more specific information about what steps could be taken to promote resilience of Iowa’s ecosystems to potential climate change impacts.

Section H. Integration

Entity/Program Area	Yes/No	Description of the Connection
NPDES/Stormwater	Informally	Approach stormwater staff occasionally, especially related to the wording of 401 certification conditions
303(d)	YES	Look at list based on project impacts to impaired streams
305(b)	NO	Reporting only on stream segment
TMDL	Unknown	
Climate Change/ Resiliency	Informally	With mitigation bank site assessment
Land Use /Watershed planning	No	
Flood/Hazard Mitigation	Minimally	Check to see if the condition is the same (can look at pollution prevention and sovereign lands if likely to permit); however the structures are very disconnected.
Coastal Work	N/A	
Wildlife Action Plan	YES	State has a plan and wetlands are included in it
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)	YES	Includes protection of wetlands
Other – DOT	YES	DNR and DOY do lots of work together on stream mitigation, ILF program projects, etc.

Other – NRCS	YES	DNR and NRCS work regularly together.
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Continuum Stage		Core Element 1: Regulation	Core Element 2: Monitoring & Assessment	Core Element 3: Wetland Water Quality Standards	Core Element 4: Voluntary Restoration
Mature Stage	High	401 Certification Program Only	X	X (were being developed, but not now)	X (No state, but some regional efforts)
Initial Implementation Stage	↑				
Development Stage					
Early Stage	Low				

Section I. Contact Information

- Christine Schwake

Section J. Useful State Websites

- Add List Here