



660 FW 1, Wetlands Policy and Action Plan

FWM#: 157 (replaces FWM 145, 6/9/94)
Date: September 1, 1994
Series: Wetlands
Part 660: Wetlands Conservation
Originating Office: Division of Habitat Conservation

1.1 Purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) wetlands policy and action plan.

1.2 Wetlands Action Plan (WAP).

A. Despite protection efforts by government agencies and private organizations, significant wetland losses are still occurring. The WAP was developed in response to the Presidential goal of No Net Loss of wetlands. The objectives of the WAP are to consolidate, better coordinate, and improve Service wetlands conservation programs to contribute to the goal of No Net Loss of wetlands. The WAP draws upon existing legislative authorities, regulations, and directives and identifies strategies the Service will pursue toward this goal. The WAP proposes solutions to many of the problems related to current Federal wetlands programs contributing to wetland losses. The WAP also outlines new opportunities to conserve wetlands.

B. The WAP is published as "Wetlands: Meeting the President's Challenge" (1990) and was issued as National Policy Issuance #91-01, effective November 28, 1990. Copies are available from the Division of Habitat Conservation.

1.3 Implementation.

A. No Net Loss of wetlands is to be achieved through a three pronged approach; each prong being equally important to achieving the goal. The WAP emphasizes achieving the No Net Loss goal through a coordinated effort with other bureaus within the Department of the Interior, and in cooperation with other agencies, States, Tribes, local governments, and private organizations and individuals. The three prongs are:

(1) Wetlands protection;

(2) Wetlands restoration, enhancement, and management; and

(3) Wetlands research, information, and education.

B. Efforts to achieve No Net Loss of wetlands are to be integrated into all existing and future Service programs at the Field Office, Regional Office, and Headquarters levels.

1.4 Authorities. The Service will use existing policies, programs, and authorities to implement the WAP.

A. Some of the existing authorities that mandate major wetlands conservation efforts to the Service include:

(1) 16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee, National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966;

(2) P.L. 99-645, 16 U.S.C. 3931 (as amended by P.L. 102-440), Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (as amended by the Wild Exotic Bird Conservation Act of 1992);

(3) 16 U.S.C. 661-666(e) as amended, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934;

(4) 16 U.S.C. 715-715d, Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929;

(5) P.L. 101-233, 16 U.S.C. 4401-4412, North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989;

(6) P.L. 101-233, North American Waterfowl Conservation Act of 1989;

(7) 16 U.S.C. 3951 et seq., Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act of 1990.

B. The Service will also use existing authorities that establish cooperative roles between the Service and other Federal agencies for wetland conservation purposes. Some of these authorities are:

(1) 33 U.S.C. 1251-1387, Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended;

(2) P.L. 101-624, 16 U.S.C. 3801-3845, Food Security Act of 1985 (as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990);

(3) 90 Stat. 2921, Water Resources Development Act of 1976.

1.5 Responsibilities.

A. Headquarters. The Assistant Director - Ecological Services is responsible for developing wetlands policy. The Division of Habitat Conservation is responsible for developing guidance to further meet the goals under No Net Loss. In addition, the Division is responsible for modifying the WAP to reflect new policy directives or programs, and for maintaining and distributing copies.

B. Regional and Field Offices. Both the Regional and Field Offices are responsible for aggressively implementing all authorities and programs, in order to maximize the wetlands protected and restored, and to contribute to the public's understanding of the importance of wetlands.

1.6 Definitions.

A. No Net Loss means that wetland losses must be offset by wetland gains in terms of actual acreage and, to the extent possible, ecosystem function.

B. Wetlands are defined by the Service according to the wetland classification system developed by Cowardin et al. (See [660 FW 2](#), Wetlands Classification for further details on Cowardin et al.). For regulatory purposes, wetlands in the WAP are delineated on non-agricultural lands according to the 1987 "Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual" which provides a technical identification for use in programs of the Service, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Wetlands on agricultural lands are delineated for regulatory purposes in accordance with the procedures in the third edition (1994) of the Soil Conservation Service's National Food Security Act Manual.

For additional information regarding this policy, contact the National Wetlands team. For more information about this Web page, contact [Krista Bibb](#), in the Division of Policy and Directives Management.

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