

# News Release



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## Federal Wetlands Mapping Standard Approved

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today the adoption of a Wetlands Mapping Standard that provides minimum requirements and guidelines for wetlands mapping efforts. The new standard is designed to guide current and future wetlands digital mapping projects and enhance the overall quality and consistency of wetlands data. Quality data on wetlands are considered critical for planning effective conservation strategies to benefit fish and wildlife resources now and in the future.

Wetlands are among the Nation's most biologically productive and economically important habitat types. Major emerging conservation issues, such as changing temperatures, sea-level rise, increasing storm severity, drought, energy development, and species declines are making the need for contemporary geospatial resource information even more important. Wetlands cover approximately five percent of the surface of the conterminous United States and are abundant in certain states and rare in others.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the federal agency responsible for developing and overseeing the digital mapping of wetlands nationwide and providing that information to the public and other agencies. Wetland map products are currently maintained and served by the National Wetlands Inventory. The Service uses this wetlands information in its habitat restoration and remediation activities, as well as efforts to formulate policy and conservation planning.

“There is no doubt the negative impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife will be significant. A major conservation challenge is predicting the level of those impacts and determining what management actions can be taken to help species adapt. And open access to accurate, up-to-date geospatial wetlands information is critical to meeting this challenge,” said Salazar. “We need to know what kinds of wetlands are out there, where they are, and where they might be in the future. The adoption of a new standard with mapping guidelines will enable partners from all levels of government, academia and the private sector to work together to produce a wealth of updated and accurate wetlands information.”

The Wetlands Mapping Standard was developed and formally endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) in response to the need for a higher degree of wetlands data. The FGDC is an interagency committee that promotes the coordinated development, use, sharing, and dissemination of geospatial data on a national basis. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) established the FGDC in 1990 and re-chartered the committee in August 2002. The Secretary of the Interior chairs the FGDC Steering Committee, and numerous stakeholder organizations representing the interests of state and local government, industry, and professional organizations participate in FGDC activities.

The Wetlands Mapping Standard was developed by a working group under the FGDC Wetlands Subcommittee ([www.fws.gov/wetlands/wetlandslayer/wetlandssubcommittee.html](http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/wetlandslayer/wetlandssubcommittee.html)), which includes representatives of federal agencies, states, tribes, environmental organizations, management associations, as well as local government associations. The working group encouraged the participation of professionals from the wetlands and geospatial communities.

Use of the standard will help to paint a more complete and accurate picture of wetland resources in the United States. Wetlands are inextricably tied to water levels and changes in climatic conditions affecting water availability will greatly influence the nature and function of specific wetlands, including the type of plant and animal species within them. In developing this mapping standard, an effort was made to identify and accommodate technology and map-scale enhancements that will ensure its long-term usability and minimize the need for revisions and updates.

The mapping standard applies to all wetlands mapping activities funded or conducted by the federal government. Federally funded projects that began prior to the mapping standard's effective date will be exempt. Also exempt are federally funded projects for which contracts have been finalized prior to the effective date; even if the actual work has not begun.

In summary, the mapping standard will enable federal, state, tribal, and local agencies to:

- Map and efficiently input data into the Service's National Wetlands Inventory geodatabase;
- Facilitate mapping layers that can be used across geopolitical and watershed boundaries;
- Provide updated information to the wetlands layer of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure;
- and
- Support future national wetlands assessment efforts.

The following list contains a few practical examples of efforts and activities that stand to significantly benefit from the adoption of a standard. A completed wetlands map will assist:

- State wildlife agencies to integrate improved wetlands mapping for conservation and restoration efforts in their respective states and include in State Wildlife Action Plans.
- Businesses and private landowners in implementing development planning and conservation actions.

- Universities and non-governmental organizations in conducting wetlands research and conservation.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency in providing for floodplain assessment and management.
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in managing coastal zone conservation.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in planning and facilitating regulatory reviews in wetlands conservation.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in performing quality assessment and monitoring for clean water.

Nothing in the standard precludes the use of ancillary or collateral data, such as soil data, radar or topographic maps, to enhance wetlands mapping. For activities which include wetlands mapping as a subset, any new, updated, or revised wetlands mapping shall conform to this standard. For a list of complete guidelines, refer to the FGDC Wetlands Mapping Standard document online at: [www.fws.gov/wetlands/documents/gNSDI/FGDCWetlandsMappingStandard.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/documents/gNSDI/FGDCWetlandsMappingStandard.pdf)

You can learn more about the National Wetlands Inventory at [www.fws.gov/wetlands](http://www.fws.gov/wetlands) and current digital maps and data are available for downloading at [www.fws.gov/wetlands/data](http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data).

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).