

It is important to remember that the characterization was designed as a planning tool to help focus wetlands planning and conservation actions within a watershed. Recognition of the shortcomings inherent in the data and in the process is imperative when applying the results of the characterization. Additionally, inclusion of supplementary data can enhance and direct the characterization even further.

The base information for wetlands used in this work is the National Wetlands Inventory. This is the only consistent wetlands inventory across the state. The NWI maps are made from photo interpretation of high level aerial photography. As such, they represent a reflection of what is found on the ground based on the limitation of the photography and the abilities of the photo interpreter. In Maine, it is clear from studies that these maps have a high degree of accuracy in locating wetlands. It is also clear that on the ground the wetlands will probably be larger and more complex than what has been reflected on the maps. Perhaps the weakest area of the NWI maps is in their representation of the smaller isolated forested wetlands. In using the characterization, it is important to recognize that the mapped representations of wetlands is conservative. The flood plain mapping is also done from aerial photography and therefore has similar limitations to the NWI maps.

The metadata found in Appendix QQ describes each of data layers and gives information on how, when, and by whom it was developed. Familiarity with this information is crucial to further understand the data layers and the characterization. At this time, there is no replacement for data that has been gathered from on the ground surveys. However, it would be cost and time prohibitive to gather that level of field data for the entire state. Using the characterization as envisioned, to broadly categorize and screen wetlands resources does make it possible to use the results to target intensive field work as a next step in the identification of priority wetlands and affiliated uplands.

FUNCTIONS

The characterization uses a subset of the many functions currently ascribed to wetlands. The functions chosen were done so to represent a cross section of the major categories of wetlands functions in the context of a screening process. It is important to remember that there are many

other important wetlands functions and values that are not currently included in the characterization.

While most of the functions used in the characterization are fairly straightforward, the habitat functions bare some additional discussion. The goal of the characterization in regard to wildlife habitat was to identify those wetlands that provide habitat for the general suite of wetland affiliated species.(NEED SOME CITATION HERE) The characterization was not developed for use in the identification of species-specific habitat although observational and mapped data for species and communities of special management concern were included where available. However, if it was possible to transpose the habitat requirements for specific species into queries of the data, more specific habitats could be identified through this process. There are other programs at both the state and federal levels that are working on identification of habitats for species in decline, threatened and endangered species, and species and communities of management concern. Appendix QQQ lists these agencies and their contact information.

Functions and Queries used in the Characterization

FLOODFLOW ALTERATION: The process through which peak flows are stored and delayed in their downstream journey. This also includes the gradual release of flood waters from wetlands after a storm event

Wetlands with the following characteristics were included in this category:

- within or adjacent to a surface water course or waterbody;
- with <3% slope;
- mapped in a FEMA flood zone;
- With emergent or forested vegetation to slow the velocity of the flood waters.

SEDIMENT RETENTION: THE POTENTIAL OF A WETLAND TO TRAP SEDIMENT IN RUNOFF FROM SURROUNDING UPLANDS. THIS CAN HELP PREVENT WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS DOWNSTREAM. WETLANDS WITH THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS WERE INCLUDED IN THIS CATEGORY: WETLANDS WITH <3% SLOPE, CLOSE TO A SURFACE WATER COURSE OR WATERBODY AND INCLUDING FORESTED, SCRUB-SHRUB, OR EMERGENT VEGETATION.

WETLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT: THE POTENTIAL FOR A WETLAND TO PROVIDE HABITAT FOR THOSE ANIMALS THAT TYPICALLY USE WETLANDS DURING SOME PART OF THEIR LIFE CYCLE AND WETLANDS IN PROXIMITY TO OCCURRENCE DATA INDICATING LOCATIONS OF RARE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES. WETLANDS WITH THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS WERE INCLUDED IN THIS CATEGORY: WETLANDS WITH EMERGENT OR OPEN WATER, 3 OR MORE VEGETATION CLASSES, ASSOCIATED WITH RIVER, STREAM, OR BROOK OR WERE WITHIN ¼ MILE OF HABITAT SUPPORTING RARE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED PLANTS, ANIMALS, AND COMMUNITIES.

FINFISH HABITAT: THE POTENTIAL FOR A WETLAND TO PROVIDE HABITAT FOR COLD WATER FISH BASED ON THEIR LIFE CYCLE NEEDS. SPECIFIC WETLAND TYPES WERE CHOSEN BASED UPON THE BEST PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT OF FISHERIES BIOLOGISTS.

SHELLFISH HABITAT: THE POTENTIAL FOR WETLANDS TO CONTRIBUTE SHELLFISH HABITAT. WETLANDS WITHIN ½ MILE OF MAPPED SHELLFISH HARVEST OR CLOSURE AREAS OR MAPPED EELGRASS BEDS WERE INCLUDED IN THIS CATEGORY.

CULTURAL/EDUCATION: THE POTENTIAL FOR WETLANDS TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL, RECREATIONAL, OR RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES. WETLANDS THAT WERE WITHIN ¼ MILE OF A SCHOOL OR BOAT LAUNCH WERE INCLUDED IN THIS CATEGORY.

Appendix qqq

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