



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Coastal Wetlands

Ecological Services

Status and Trends of Wetlands In the Coastal Watersheds of the Conterminous United States 2004 to 2009

A new publication from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries Habitat Program coming in the fall of 2013.

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Abstract:

Working in conjunction with principal Federal agencies the USFWS and NOAA have produced updated data on more recent trends of wetlands in the coastal watersheds to help prioritize conservation planning efforts and contribute additional information on coastal wetland trends. This report updates and expands previous information on coastal wetland loss by incorporating new data for the coastal watersheds of the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Great Lakes and in addition, providing information for the Pacific coast along the States of Washington, Oregon and California. It presents the latest status information on coastal wetland resources and provides estimates of losses or gains that occurred in the coastal watersheds in the conterminous U.S. between 2004 and 2009. The information presented provides data on the areal extent of wetlands but does not assess wetland condition or other qualitative changes to coastal wetlands.



Major Findings:

- Wetlands in the coastal watersheds make up about 38 percent of total wetland area in the conterminous U.S.
- Between 2004 and 2009, the average annual rate of wetland loss in the coastal watersheds was 80,160 acres, a 25 percent increase in the rate of wetland loss from the previous reporting period.
- Both saltwater and freshwater wetlands sustained net losses between 2004 and 2009. There were an estimated 95,000 acres of saltwater wetland losses and 265,720 acres of freshwater wetland losses.
- In the upper portions of the coastal watersheds, stressors associated with residential and infrastructure development or silvicultures were key factors in wetland loss.
- The average annual rate of wetland loss in the coastal watersheds was 80,000 acres between 2004 and 2009. This rate of loss increased by 20,000 acres from the previous reporting period (1998 – 2004).
- Principal causes for wetland losses included coastal storms, urbanization and sicultural operations.

Key Implications/Messages

- Wetlands in the coastal watersheds make up an increasingly fragile network of lands that continue to shrink in area.
- In some parts of coastal watersheds, wetlands are vulnerable to both development on the landward side and coastal ocean processes from the sea.
- Continuing losses of coastal wetlands have direct costs for people and longer-term resource implications for fish, wildlife and other natural resources.
- The data in this report provide new and comprehensive information about coastal wetland trends and may be instrumental in formulation of recommendations to improve the management of coastal wetlands, reduce losses, and ensure that coastal infrastructure and resources are protected.

Information:

- The report has undergone interagency expert peer review.
- The report is available at the FWS web address below.



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