



The Massachusetts Wetland Program Plan

2013 – 2017

2nd Edition

**Prepared by the
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) pursuant to
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Enhancing State and Tribal Programs (ESTP) Initiative for Wetland Programs**

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Core Element: Monitoring and Assessment

Goal: To protect and improve wetland condition in order to preserve the important functions that wetlands provide including the protection of ground and surface water quality, the prevention of flooding and storm damage, the prevention of pollution, and the protection of aquatic, shellfish and wildlife habitat.

Objective: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts will continue to monitor and assess wetlands consistent with *Elements of a State Water Monitoring and Assessment Program for Wetlands* (EPA 2006) by using a 3-level approach. Level 1 - the landscape level approach – will involve assessment of wetland loss (and gain if feasible) using aerial photogrammetric mapping and assessment of wetland condition using the Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS). Level 2 – the rapid assessment approach - will include the development of Rapid Assessment Methods (RAM's) based on Level 3 Site Level Assessment Methods (SLAMs) if feasible. Level 3 – the Intensive Site assessment – will involve use of SLAMs and Indices of Biological Integrity (IBI's) under development. This work will establish baseline wetland extent and condition, determination of loss and gain, and development of wetland protection tools. This work will also inform development of wetland specific water quality standards as needed.

Action (a): Incorporate wetlands monitoring and assessment tools into program to accomplish a long-term environmental improvement.

Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Improve protection of important wildlife habitat by regulatory revisions and posting important wildlife habitat maps to the web	X	X			
Improve wetland condition and strengthen buffer zone protection using CAPS/SLAM tools			X		
Reduce wetland loss and degradation of wetland condition through successful replacement, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands	X	X	X		
Develop strategy for using CAPS and SLAM/IBI's		X	X	X	X

to improve permit decisions and replication/restoration success									
Ongoing testing of SLAM/IBI Condition in major project permits to assess success of wetland mitigation;	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Conduct pilot watershed wetland monitoring and assessment for Integrated Waters Report	X								
Develop predictive modeling tools for coastal (and/or inland) wetland resources for mapping adaptation to climate change and to support better protection and regulatory revisions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop Data Management System for Monitoring Data (e.g. UMass Hosted Website)	X								
Continue to participate in the New England Biological Assessment Wetland Workgroup	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Action (b): Develop Level 1 Landscape Level Assessment, Level 2 Rapid Assessment and Level 3 Site Level Assessment Method (SLAM) and Indices of Biological Integrity (IBI) Method for Statewide Use									
CAPS QAPP	X								
Continue to improve CAPS metrics, including development of climate change metrics (i.e. Thermal Stress etc) for CAPS model	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Calibrate CAPS model using Forested Wetland and Salt Marsh data collected through SLAM Monitoring	X								
Final Salt Marsh IBIs	X								
Develop QAPP, SLAM and IBI's for shrub swamps								X	
Sample, ID Specimens and Assess historical salt	X							X	

marsh restoration projects						
Develop SLAMs and IBIs for emergent marshes and/or other coastal wetlands.	X	X	X	X		
Develop Salt Marsh, Forested Wetland and Shrub Swamp RAMS if feasible.	X	X	X	X		

CORE ELEMENT: REGULATION

Goal: To avoid and minimize wetland loss, preserve wetland function, and replace unavoidable or illegal losses with healthy wetlands that are equivalent or greater in size and that function similar to or better than lost wetlands.

Objective: Continue development of a strong regulatory program by strengthening regulations, policies and guidance documents; developing mapping tools; improving data management to maximize efficiency; creating strategies to improve mitigation success; execute strong compliance and enforcement actions; and implement innovative outreach initiatives.

Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Action (a): Improve Wetland Regulations, (310 CMR 10.00), policies and guidance					
Finalize revised wetland regulations (310 CMR 10.00) and publish	X	X			
Publish Coastal Resource Delineation Manual		X			
Update Stormwater Handbook			X	X	
Post statewide CAPS wildlife maps to web and update regulations and/or policy			X		
Develop Buffer Zone policy based on CAPS assessment of ecological integrity			X		
Action (b) Climate Change and Adaptation					
Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Complete adaptation study on bridge and culvert sizing criteria based on increasing precipitation		X			

intensity								
Complete climate change study and incorporate revisions to policies, guidance and regulations to adapt to climate change if needed. Determine next steps and studies and implement as needed.	X							X
Action (c) Develop Wetland Mapping and Data Management Tools								
Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017			
Update wetland mapping	X							
Update Wetland Loss Mapping	X			X				
Update Eelgrass Mapping	X	X	X					
Develop Maps depicting Vulnerable Wetlands	X							
Pilot CAPS scenario analysis software and determine best use	X	X						
Implement IBI Software		X						
Implement needed IT changes such as regulatory reform revisions, or EIPAS revisions.		X	X					X
Action (d): Projects and Policy Initiatives								
Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017			
Major Wetland Replacement Study	X	X						
Stream continuity assessments and report	X	X						
Nitrogen Attenuation Policy		X	X					
Action (e): Perform public education and outreach about wetland protection and the regulatory process								
Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017			
Strong outreach program with focus on restoration, mitigation, reg reform, stream continuity, vulnerable wetlands and other topics	X	X	X					
Outreach on stormwater in the Neponset River watershed towns of Sharon, Canton.	X							

CORE ELEMENT: Voluntary Wetland Restoration and Protection

Goal: Protect wetlands from degradation or destruction and restore degraded wetlands to healthy condition to improve the important functions that wetlands provide including the protection of ground and surface water quality, the prevention of flooding and storm damage, the prevention of pollution, and the protection of aquatic, shellfish and wildlife habitat.

Objective: Define restoration goals, provide technical expertise and streamline permitting throughout Massachusetts.

Action: Work with Other Agencies to Define Restoration Goals and to Streamline Permitting Processes					
Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Work with Division of Ecological Restoration and other agencies to establish common goals for wetland protection and restoration	X	X	X		
Use Point of Contact for Streamlining of Wetland Protection and Restoration Projects	X	X	X		
Develop streamlined permit for restoration projects and revise regulations; major statewide training to fulfill EPA grant deliverable	X	X	X		

CORE ELEMENT: Water Quality Standards for Wetlands

Goal: Improve the quality of Massachusetts wetlands in accordance with the Clean Water Act as well as the goals of the Massachusetts Water Quality Certification regulations at 314 CMR 9.00.

Objective: Ensure that wetlands are treated as waters within the state water quality program by monitoring and assessing wetland condition and developing criteria to achieve improvement.

Action: Work to Develop Tiered Aquatic Life Use Standards for Wetlands

Activity	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Report in Massachusetts Integrated Waters Report (305(b))		X	X		
Consider revisions to existing surface water quality regulations			X	X	X