



Wetlands Update on Best Available Science Projects

As part of the Department of Ecology's ongoing efforts to improve wetlands protection in Washington, we are developing several new guidance documents and management tools that incorporate current scientific information. These documents/tools are intended to assist those who manage wetlands or have an interest in protecting wetlands by synthesizing the science and providing guidance. One of the primary audiences is local governments that are required by the Growth Management Act to include the best available science in revisions to plans, policies and regulations that protect wetlands and other critical areas. This guidance will also be useful to anyone who has an interest in wetlands.

These guidance documents/tools include:

- "Freshwater Wetlands in Washington: Volume 1 - A Synthesis of the Science"
(www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/bas_wetlands)
- "Wetlands in Washington State: Volume 2 - Managing and Protecting Wetlands"
(www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/bas_wetlands)
- "Washington State Wetland Rating System - Eastern and Western Washington versions"
(www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0206019a.html & www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0406014.html)
- "Guidance on Wetland Mitigation in Washington State" (Corps/EPA/Ecology document)
(www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wet-updatedocs.htm)
- "Exploring Wetlands Stewardship: a Reference Guide for Assisting Washington Landowners and Local Communities"
(<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/96120.html>)

This update focuses on the first two documents by Ecology and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to synthesize the scientific literature on freshwater wetlands and develop management options and recommendations for wetlands in Washington.

Two separate mailings recently provided information on:

- the revised draft rating system for western Washington wetlands; and
- draft guidelines for mitigation plans and proposals jointly developed by Ecology, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Update on Freshwater Wetlands in Washington: Volume 1 - A Synthesis of the Science

In September 2003, Ecology and Fish & Wildlife distributed more than 150 copies and CDs of a draft of *Freshwater Wetlands in Washington State: Volume 1 - A Synthesis of the Science* for peer and public review. Reviewers also accessed the document on the project Web page.



Volume 1 contains a synthesis of the literature pertaining to:

- Freshwater wetlands in Washington and how they function.
- The effects of human activities on freshwater wetlands and their functions.
- The tools used to protect and manage freshwater wetlands and their functions.

The tools include the science regarding buffers, rating, compensatory mitigation, and non-regulatory options. Volume 1 also explains the methods used to obtain and synthesize the literature.

During the month-long review period, Ecology received comments from 31 individuals and organizations regarding Volume 1. Some of the comments were brief, while others provided lengthy suggestions. Many reviewers identified ways to clarify the technical content and

recommended additional literature sources for inclusion in the synthesis.

The project team is working to respond to the comments, incorporate the reviewers' suggestions, where appropriate, and obtain additional literature sources. A final version of Volume 1 will be completed in the fall of 2004, after we have drafted the second volume, described below. Meanwhile, we will be posting on the project's Web page:

- All the comments received, in their original form.
- A summary of responses to a questionnaire that accompanied the draft.
- A summary of the substantive comments along with our response to each comment.

At a later date, we plan to post responses to every comment we received.

Update on Wetlands in Washington State: Volume 2 - Managing and Protecting Wetlands

Volume 2 will contain options and recommendations for managing and protecting wetlands based on the synthesis of the science presented in Volume 1. The document will be geared primarily toward local governments for use in revising local critical-area ordinances (CAOs).



We have formed a Local Government Wetlands Advisory Team to provide feedback while we develop Volume 2. We are also meeting with other key interests.

We are targeting July 2004 to complete a draft of Volume 2 for public review.

Many local jurisdictions, however, have a deadline of December 2004 for revising their critical-area ordinances and need to move forward. We suggest these jurisdictions use the guidance provided in the Critical Areas Assistance Handbook (published by the Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development in November 2003) until the draft of Volume 2 is available in July. A copy of the handbook can be downloaded at www.cted.wa.gov/DesktopModules/Documents/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=1034

We also plan to post on the project web page some additional guidance materials on buffers and mitigation ratios that local jurisdictions can use to augment the CTED document. We hope that local jurisdictions will then incorporate recommendations from Volume 2 into subsequent revisions they make to their ordinances after the draft document is available in July.

Key Themes in Volume 2

The following key themes or messages will be highlighted in Volume 2.

- By relying on a site-by-site approach to managing wetlands, we are failing to effectively protect wetlands.
- To effectively protect wetlands and their functions, we also must understand and manage the connections between environmental processes in the larger landscape and how wetlands function.
- To better protect and manage wetlands, an approach that incorporates landscape analysis at different geographic scales of application is needed. The geographic scales include cross-jurisdiction, within the area being managed and at the site itself.
- The approach can be implemented using available tools combined with the landscape analysis. The existing tools include:
 - ✓ Local plans and codes, such as comprehensive planning, sub-area planning, zoning codes, etc.
 - ✓ Local regulations, such as critical-area ordinances, stormwater manuals, clearing and grading, etc.
 - ✓ Restoration and preservation on a programmatic and individual, voluntary basis.
 - ✓ Incentives through tools such as a public-benefit rating system to encourage voluntary conservation.

The recommendations and options presented in Volume 2 will be advisory only.

Volume 2 will refer to methods for landscape analysis and will contain specific guidance on subjects such as buffer widths, wetland rating, ratios for compensatory mitigation, suggested regulated activities and exemptions, tools for wetland stewardship, etc. For example, three

different alternatives for buffer widths will be recommended. One alternative provides a matrix using factors such as wetland rating, intensity of effects, wetland functions and other characteristics. A simple range of widths, such as 150 to 200 feet for a category 2 wetland, will no longer be recommended. Whenever possible, Volume 2 will provide examples or sample code language.

Local governments will be encouraged to implement the approach, including completing landscape analysis to inform their planning processes, programs, codes and regulations. Such an approach will allow more flexibility. For both urban and rural areas, a landscape approach will help prioritize areas and functions for protection. If jurisdictions choose to rely solely on a permit-by-permit approach, Volume 2 will recommend the use of high regulatory standards to protect wetland functions and values.

Both before and after the management recommendations are released, Ecology staff are available to work with local jurisdictions to develop effective wetland protection programs that include the best available science. Visit this Web site to get contact information:

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wetlandcontacts.htm

Reviewing the Draft of Volume 2

We encourage you to comment on the draft of Volume 2 when it is ready for distribution. You can obtain a draft of Volume 2 for review in one of three ways:

- 1) Downloading it from our Web site after it is posted at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/bas_wetlands.
- 2) Receiving a CD.
- 3) Receiving a hard copy.

We encourage you to download the document from our Web page when it is posted to save on postage and other resources.

When Volume 2 is posted on the Web site, we will e-mail an announcement to those on our e-mail list. Please send your e-mail address on the form provided in this Update to Dana Mock (see box at right for contact information) if it is not in our system. If you received this Update via the postal system, that means we do not have your e-mail address, even if you have sent it to us in the past.

If you want to receive a CD or hard copy of the draft of Volume 2, please send in the form in this

Exploring Wetlands Stewardship

WA Department of Ecology announces the new release of the publication *Exploring Wetlands Stewardship: a Reference Guide for Assisting Washington Landowners and Local Communities* (Publication #96-120). This version is the second revision to a document that provides details on voluntary wetland acquisition and restoration approaches and opportunities. The guidebook contains chapters on stewardship strategies, partnership assistance, and funding programs. The updated edition contains all the new wetland funding and technical assistance programs available at the federal, state, and local level for implementing wetland preservation and restoration projects. This guide is recommended by the Pacific Coast Joint Venture as a key reference for wetland stewardship work in Washington. To get a copy contact Ecology's Publication Office at (360) 407-7472 or visit Ecology's Web site at: www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/96120.html

Update, or e-mail Dana Mock to notify us which you need. The CD will contain a PDF file.

We will not send an announcement via the postal system. When the draft document is ready for review, we will automatically mail a CD or hard copy to those who request them now.

You will have a month to review the draft of Volume 2 and provide comments. We will provide instructions. We will revise the document after reviewing your comments. We expect that the final version of Volume 2 will be available in the fall.

For more information, go to our Website at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/bas_wetlands

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**Complete These Forms Per Your Interest, then Mail Or E-mail to Dana L. Mock
at the Dept. of Ecology (see box on previous page). To fill out online,
visit www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/bas_wetlands/interestform.html**

DRAFT Wetlands in Washington State: Volume 2 - Managing and Protecting Wetlands

- ☐ I want to receive an email notice that the DRAFT of Wetlands in Washington: Volume 2 - Managing and Protecting Wetlands is posted on the web and is ready for review but you don't have my email address (provide your email address on the form below).
- ☐ Please send me a CD of the DRAFT Wetlands in Washington: Volume 2 - Managing and Protecting Wetlands via the postal system when it is available in July (provide your address below).
- ☐ Please send me a hard copy of the DRAFT Wetlands in Washington: Volume 2 - Managing and Protecting Wetlands via the postal system when it is available in July (provide your address below). (To conserve resources, please consider either of the above options before ordering a paper copy).

Revising the Mailing List

- ☐ Someone passed this on to me and I am not on your mailing list. Please add me using the information below.
- ☐ You must not have my email address. Please send me these Wetland Updates and other communiqués via email.
- ☐ Please take me off the mailing list, I no longer want to receive the Wetland Updates

Name: _____ Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ *E-mail: _____

* To reduce costs and resources

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