

The 2026 National Wetland Condition Assessment



Field crew sampling a site during the 2021 NWCA

Introduction

A field crew from the Department of Ecology is participating in the 2026 [National Wetland Condition Assessment \(NWCA\)](#)¹ to sample 27 wetlands throughout Washington. The NWCA is a nationwide study on wetlands done by a partnership of state, federal, Tribal, academic, and non-profit groups with the help of public and private landowners.

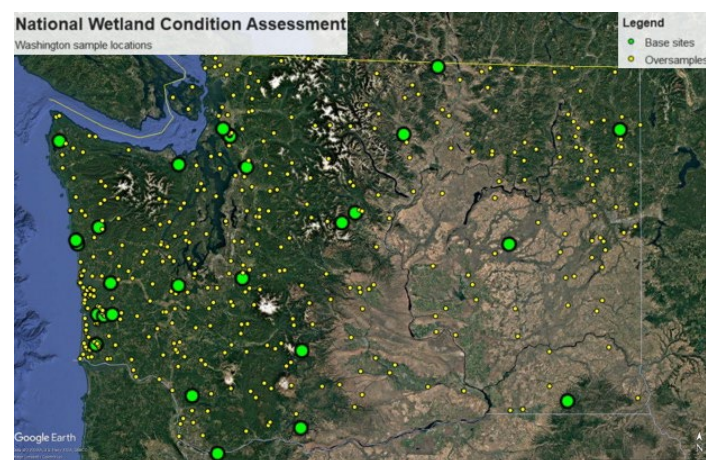
The field crew samples wetlands from a list of random locations statewide. They spend a day at each location gathering data about plants, water, soils, and the condition of the landscape around the wetland. This study is conducted every 5 years to report on wetland condition and change. This will be the fourth wetland condition assessment, following the last one in 2021.

Project goals

- What percentage of wetlands support healthy ecosystems and recreation?
- What are the most common problems?
- Are conditions improving or getting worse?
- Are investments in wetland management and restoration focused appropriately?

Why this location?

Locations were selected at random from the [National Wetlands Inventory](#).² The list includes a set of base and oversample sites. When we cannot sample a base site, we replace it with a site from the oversamples. We are required to go through the list of locations in numerical order to maintain the study design. Wetlands are not selected because of any particular problem or water quality issue, or because of any recommendation for sampling by an agency or organization.



Map of base (green) and oversample (yellow) sites in Washington for the 2026 NWCA

¹<https://ecology.wa.gov/water-shorelines/wetlands/tools-resources/national-wetland-condition-assessment>

² <https://www.fws.gov/program/national-wetlands-inventory>

What we will be doing

The Ecology field crew will consist of up to six people who will spend around 8 hours collecting data on the site. During the field day we will:

- Identify the plants
- Collect soil and water samples
- Characterize land uses in and around the wetland

The data collected from each wetland will only be identified by its site number and the information will only be used for the national inventory. Data from each wetland will contribute to the overall regional and national picture of wetland condition. If you would like to see the results of the assessment for your site we can provide those data to you.

What we will not be doing

The field crew will not be conducting a formal delineation or rating of the wetland. There will be no permanent structures installed. No personal information will be collected or disclosed for purposes of this study. The information will not be used for any regulatory purposes.

Why it matters

Healthy wetlands enhance our quality of life and provide many critical services and recreational opportunities. Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world, home to an immense variety of fish and wildlife. They trap pollutants, store carbon and floodwaters, and buffer our shorelines from waves. This national assessment helps us understand the condition of wetlands across the nation. This helps us better plan for floods, as well as protect water quality and habitat.

By continuing our assessment in 2026 we can monitor the health of wetlands and find out how to protect them and the functions and values they provide to people and our environment.

Contact information

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ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, email ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov, call 360-407-6831, or dial 711 to call through the Washington Telecommunications Relay for services like text telephone (TTY). Visit ecology.wa.gov/ADA for more accessibility information.