WETLANDS PPA SUMMARY AND WORKPLAN

I. Regulation

Summary

Indicators:

Wetlands Regulatory Decisions
New regulations, maps or policies issued
Trainings for new regs or policies
Enforcement inspections, cases,
restoration acres restored, # sites restored

Why is this important?

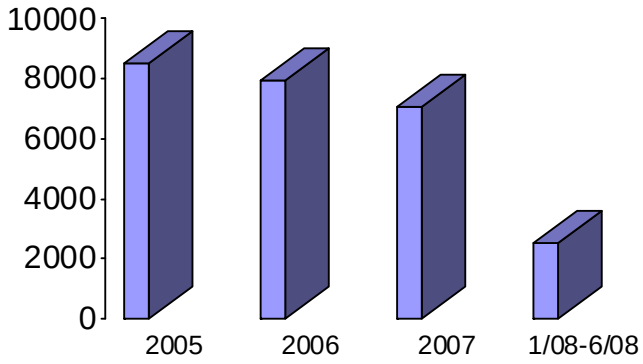
MassDEP's Wetlands Program protects wetlands to preserve the important environmental functions that wetlands provide, which include:

- the protection of ground and surface water quality,
- the prevention of flooding and storm damage,
- pollution prevention, and
- the protection of aquatic, shellfish and wildlife habitat.

A strong regulatory program allows us to reduce the loss of wetlands in Massachusetts and to preserve wetlands functions. MassDEP's Wetlands Program ensures the protection of inland and coastal wetlands, rivers and floodplains through implementation of the Wetlands Protection Act (Chapter 131 Section 40), the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations, and the 401 Water Quality Certification Program (Water Quality Regulations).

How are we doing?

Regulatory Filings



Through MassDEP's strong permitting program, we review of thousands of permit applications each year. The permit process results in the avoidance, minimization and mitigation of wetlands alterations. Approximately 5% of the permits issued by Conservation Commissions are appealed, and MassDEP experts decide on the controversial issues presented in each appeal.

The Wetlands Program is very active in developing improved regulations, policies, guidance, and training to keep current with new technologies. Some of the accomplishments during the past year include:

Accomplishment	Detail
Stormwater Management	New regulations issued January 2008
Stormwater Handbook	Issued March 2008, with revisions underway
Training for Stormwater Guidance	22 Trainings conducted between Jan-March 2008
Building Code in Coastal Areas	Coordinated with Dept. of Public Safety on new regulations issued in January, 2008
Building Code Trainings	5 Trainings conducted between May-June 2008
Building Code Coastal Resource Area Maps	Maps prepared for all coastal towns in Massachusetts June 2009
Dam Removal & the Wetlands Regulations	Issued December 2007
Training	MACC Annual Conference March 2008
Important Wildlife Habitat Maps	112 Town Maps – posting to web July 2008

Enforcement investigations are initiated through several means, including aerial photography that accurately tracks areas of wetlands loss, (See Wetlands Loss Summary), permit site inspections, phone calls, and other contacts with stakeholders. In 2008 the number of enforcement actions decreased from prior years, and MassDEP attributes this to the following causes:

1) Aerial photogrammetry for wetlands loss mapping is obtained once every 3-5 years and investigations are conducted in the intervening years. Many sites with the best enforcement potential have been acted on or are pending;
2) Publication of the aerial surveillance and enforcement actions have served as a deterrent to potential violators and provided opportunities for enforcement by Conservation Commissions;

Enforcement Statistics

Year	# Inspections	# Higher Level Enforcement cases	Acres ordered restored*	Linear ft. stream restored	# sites wetlands & streams restored	# sites erosion & construction prevented
SFY06	1101	130	8.7	1,880	33-50	16-25
SFY07	1155	122	24.2	7,543	82	33
SFY08	872 thru May	64	6.0	475	44	15

- includes Bordering Vegetated Wetlands, Land Under Water, Floodplain & Riverfront

Work Plan
What's behind the numbers

MassDEP is continually reevaluating the needs of the Conservation Commissions and the regulated community to identify issues that could be clarified and updated. One need that was identified for improvement is the ability to tabulate and report on the data we have. To address that need, MassDEP is currently developing a system that will integrate permitting and compliance and enforcement databases (see WIRE). This was made possible through an EPA grant. Our enforcement efforts against violators of the Wetlands Protection Act are a high priority and are always ongoing. In 2010 the next state flyover is planned to aid in identifying violations.

Improving results

Our regulatory program has been influenced by MassDEP's innovative wetlands loss mapping program (See Wetlands Loss Summary). This program and one-time Conservation Commission file review in 2002, shows there was a much higher percentage of illegal wetlands loss than permitted wetlands loss. As a result of this finding, MassDEP made a conscious effort to increase its time and effort on enforcement.

Task	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008
Permit Review-% of staff time	50.5	46.1	43.7	42.8	42.8	44.5
Enforcement-% of staff time	8.6	14.0	16.6	14.7	14.3	13.3
Compliance-% of staff time	3.9	7.0	8.4	6.8	5.8	6.4

Detailed work plans

In the upcoming Fiscal Year 2009, we are planning to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Develop a Coastal Wetlands Restoration Policy in coordination with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Wetlands Restoration Program that focuses on tidally restricted wetlands.
2. Develop a Coastal Geology Handbook to inform the public on current matters related to coastal resource areas (e.g. how to delineate, what is allowed, etc.).
3. Finalize the Stormwater Handbook that is a companion to the recently issued stormwater regulations.
4. Post Important Wildlife Habitat Maps referenced in “Wildlife Habitat Protection Guidance for Inland Wetlands” (March 2006) for 112 towns in western Massachusetts to website www.masscaps.org in July 2008. Mapping for the remaining towns in the state is underway and are scheduled to be complete in early 2010.
5. Wetlands Information Resource (WIRE) project to be completed by March 2009 (See WIRE Workplan). Substantial outreach project underway to get 75% of towns registered to use new eDEP forms by June 2009 to file forms and collect data electronically.

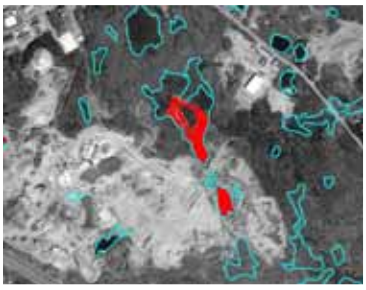
II. Wetlands Loss Mapping

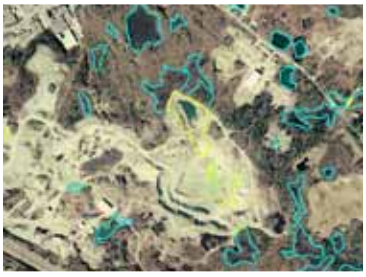
Summary

Indicators:
Percent of state with wetlands loss data from aerial photogrammetry;
Acres of wetlands Loss per flight
# of Wetlands Loss Polygons
Acres of Wetlands Loss per year
Wetlands loss enforcement cases
Cause of Wetlands Loss

Why is this important?

MassDEP's Wetlands Loss Mapping Project has accurately located and mapped wetlands using an innovative GIS-based computer program and a wetlands mapping database compiled since 1990. By comparing changes over time, these maps can identify those wetlands that have been filled. This effort has developed reliable and verifiable data on location, acreage and causes of freshwater wetlands loss beyond what MassDEP's permitting records reveal. By using the wetlands loss maps, we have been able to focus on enforcement and outreach efforts to improve wetlands protection.





How are we doing?

Analysis of the 2001 imagery determined that over 850 acres of wetlands at 3,244 sites were filled between 1990 and 2001. These data were collected from available aerial photography that covered 70% of the state. While this loss is a relatively small portion of the total wetlands in the state, it is far more than is acceptable. In 2005, a new flight covered the remainder of the state and identified wetlands loss that occurred between 2001 and 2005. Analysis of this information identified a loss of 482 acres at 1,473 sites. Depending on the region of the state, the rates of wetlands loss have remained the same, or been slightly reduced over the two periods of 1990-2001 and 2001-2005.

Wetlands Loss by Flights

Years Compared	% of State w/ Wetlands Loss Data[1]	# Wetlands Loss Polygons	Acres Lost
1990-2001	70	3244	840*
2001-2005	100	1473	482

*70% of the state (At same rate of loss, 100% would be 1200 acres).

[1] These numbers include permitted loss which is likely to have been replicated under permitting criteria. MassDEP is currently unable to identify replicated wetlands. This capability will exist upon the completion of the WIRE project.

Wetlands Loss Comparison by Region

Region	Acres lost 1990-2001	Acres lost/year	Acres lost 2001-2005	Acres lost/year
NERO*	222	20-28	87	22
SERO*	545	49-68	264	66
CERO**	73	24	81	20
WERO	no data	no data	49	12
Total	840	93-120	432	108

*NERO and SERO were initially flown between 1990 and 1993 and so the analysis represents an 8-11 year period.

**CERO was initially flown in 1999 and so the analysis represents a 3-year period.

MassDEP has been pursuing enforcement actions for confirmed violations found through wetlands loss mapping. These efforts have resulted in substantial penalties for violators, and restoration of the wetlands that were destroyed. Because the mapping allows identification of violations in a timely manner, restoration efforts are likely to be more successful. MassDEP has publicized successful enforcement cases to let people know that MassDEP has the ability to track wetlands change through aerial photogrammetry in hopes of deterring future violations.

Enforcement cases identified through aerial imagery program

Date	# Wetlands Loss Cases	Penalties*	Acres Restored
7/1/03-6/30/04	10	650,750	23.52
7/1/04 - 6/30/05	12	1,104,100	21.41
7/1/05 - 6/30/06	8	102,500	3.35
7/1/06-6/30/07	12	186,500	5.68
7/1/07 – 6/30/08	8	84,225	0.83
TOTAL	50	2,128,075	54.79

** Note that this total includes nearly $453,225 in suspended penalties and one SEP valued at $12,000.*

Using the wetlands loss mapping, MassDEP has also identified what types of activities account for the most change. In the 2001 imagery analysis, residential and commercial activities account for approximately 41% of wetlands losses. In the 2005 imagery analysis, commercial and residential activities continue to be a large cause of wetlands loss, at a combined 32%, and loss from agricultural and cranberry bog activities dropped from 32% to approximately 17%. By assessing the factors that have contributed to the losses enables MassDEP to target compliance, enforcement, outreach, and training to sectors that contribute to the greatest losses.

Wetlands Loss Type	2004 %(1)	2006 %(2)
Agriculture	32.3	7.2
Commercial Development	18.7	12.5
Cranberry Bog Activity	See agriculture	9.6
Other	21.0	22.4
Gravel Operation	5.5	5.6
New Road		2.9
Dock or Pier		.08
Residential Development	22.5	19.3
Transportation Infrastructure		2.3
Clearing - Unknown reason		16.4
Filling - Unknown reason		1.6
Total Acres	637	482

(1) 75% of total Wetlands Loss in SERO, NERO and CERO from 2001 imagery (637 acres of loss between 1990-2001in the 92 towns where permitting files were reviewed)

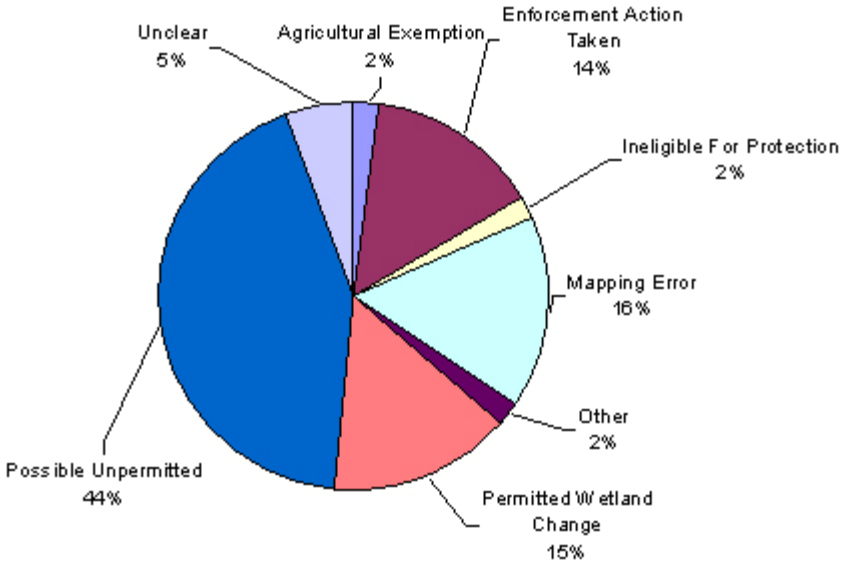
(2) 100% of Massachusetts from 2005 imagery (482 acres of loss between 2001-2005)

Maintaining Strong Performance

The Wetlands Loss Mapping Project is a major component in MassDEP's effort to protect the state's wetlands. For the first time there is hard data on the extent of wetlands loss. Prior to the development of this aerial photography database, information on loss was limited to information contained in MassDEP's permitting and enforcement files. Investigation has shown that the file data is incomplete and does not reflect the true extent of wetlands loss. We are continuing to investigate wetlands loss polygons and pursue enforcement and outreach efforts. We plan to continue flights every 3-5 years to update the data now available to Conservation Commissions and the general public. This information can be found on our website and will provide opportunities for others to pursue enforcement at these sites.

Improving Results

The analysis of the 2001 data had the benefit of a labor-intensive 92-town file review to gain data on causes of wetlands loss and whether these losses were permitted or illegal. The most significant finding from the 2001analysis is that a very large portion of the identified fill was unpermitted or likely unpermitted.



While that effort gave MassDEP invaluable data, the method was too inefficient and labor intensive to repeat. As a result, MassDEP has developed the Wetlands Information Resource (WIRE) Project that will substantially improve our ability to determine the causes and permitting status of wetlands loss on an ongoing basis (See WIRE Workplan).

The accuracy of the wetlands mapping and the photographic resolution has also improved using new techniques such as stereo digital imagery, field verification, and quality control work.

Detailed Work Plan

1. MassDEP is currently updating the wetlands baseline mapping and updated maps are expected to be available in December of 2009.

2. Efforts will be undertaken to schedule the next wetlands aerial photography mapping update and the geographic scope that will be covered. Analysis of wetlands loss will follow each mapping update. Wetlands aerial photography mapping is estimated to occur on a 3-5 year interval. The next full state over flight is anticipated to occur between Spring 2009 - 2011.

3. Integrate wetlands loss polygon data with the permitting and enforcement databases (See Wetlands Information Redesign (WIRE) Workplan).

4. Continue to make wetlands loss data available to Conservation Commissions and the general public via the internet.

III. Wetlands Information Resource (WIRE) project

Summary

Indicators:

i. Whether current, comprehensive, and accessible tracking database exists
[remaining indicators are future, after WIRE complete]
ii. Acres of impacted wetlands (wetlands loss)
iii. Linear ft. of impacted stream
iv. Acres of wetlands replaced
v. Acres of wetlands restored
vi. Linear ft. of stream replaced
vii. Whether MassDEP can report no net loss
viii. # programs, agencies using database for wetlands management purposes
ix. Acres of avoided wetlands impacts
x. Net change in total wetlands acres

Why is this Important?

MassDEP faces the challenge of integrating wetlands loss maps with permitting and enforcement data, and comparing the geographic location of permitted sites and enforcement sites on a single data layer and within a single database. This integration will allow MassDEP to determine whether a loss site is permitted or has a history of enforcement actions. It will also improve MassDEP's ability to determine the cause of the loss and to quickly take corrective action to address that loss. Prompt action is more likely to result in successful wetlands restoration where wetlands were illegally filled, or successful wetlands replication when constructed areas fail or are never built.

How are we doing?

In 2005, MassDEP received a three-year Wetlands Demonstration Pilot grant from EPA. The majority of the money from this grant has been dedicated to integrating the wetlands loss database with the wetlands permitting and enforcement databases. By combining these databases, MassDEP will be able to identify which wetlands losses are permitted and which are illegal, how much and what type of loss occurred, and which sites have had enforcement actions or investigations. The new system, the Wetlands Information Resource project (WIRE), will allow identification and tracking of wetlands replication areas associated with permitted projects, restoration associated with enforcement actions, and other restoration projects to track wetlands gain. The new database will have a map viewer as a central feature that will allow projects and enforcement actions to be easily located, and the data to be presented visually on GIS based photos and mapping to allow for substantially improved strategic planning.

A Data Needs Assessment (DNA) was completed in 2006 and in 2007 a consultant was hired to develop the new system. When complete, the system will be called the Wetlands Information Resource (WIRE). The new system is currently in testing, with a projected completion date of March of 2009.

Maintaining Strong Performance

The WIRE project has made impressive progress in less than three years. MassDEP's Wetlands Program Staff and staff from the Bureau of Resource Protection, Information Technology, and GIS designed a system that will accurately track wetlands data for the purpose of improving performance. Conservation Commissions, applicants and consultants provided input that refined the developing system. EPA specialists also provided input to the project.

Improving Results

For several years, MassDEP has had electronic filing forms posted on our eDEP website. Usage of the electronic filing forms, however, has always been very limited. Through the WIRE project we have developed new web-based electronic filing forms that will assist in the capture and management of the large volumes of permitting data received each year. The information captured through these forms will be integrated with the wetlands loss and enforcement data. MassDEP is actively working to develop and implement a significant outreach program to increase the percentage of applications filed electronically. Outreach will include training Conservation Commissions, applicants and representatives on the registration and submittal of the new electronic forms. We are working toward training and registering Conservation Commissions that receive the top 75% of wetlands filings by June 2009. A similar effort will be taken to reach applicants, especially frequent filers. This effort will reduce the amount of data entry needed by MassDEP staff, allowing them to focus on other important tasks that protect wetlands.

We are also planning to use the WIRE database to improve wetlands replacement success. Projects where replacement wetlands are proposed will be displayed visually in the database with a distinctive symbol, allowing us to quickly determine where those projects are, and develop strategies to follow up. Through the wetlands loss mapping

project, we will be doing a pilot analysis to determine if replacement sites can be observed on aerial maps.

Detailed Workplan

1. Transition from existing internal WETINFO permitting database to internal WIRE permitting component of database
2. Initiate WIRE Outreach Effort
3. Go ‘Live’ with WIRE external forms, including Notice of Intent, Order of Conditions, Abbreviated Resource Area Delineation Form, and Order of Resource Area Delineation Form
4. Go ‘Live’ with WIRE internal Wetlands Loss and Compliance and Enforcement modules – add to permitting module already live.
5. Bug Management – System Development completion
6. Continued outreach and training.

IV. Wetlands Restoration

Summary

Indicators:

policies, regulations, reports or task forces issued or participated in
projects participated in
Acres Restoration permitted [future after WIRE done]

Why is this important?

We protect wetlands to preserve the important functions they provide – recharge and protection of public and private water supply & groundwater; storm damage prevention and flood control, prevention of pollution, and providing food, shelter, overwintering and nesting/spawning habitat for fisheries, shellfish, and wildlife habitat. Destruction of wetlands destroys the functions those wetlands serve, but wetlands can also be harmed in other ways. For example, fragmentation of wetlands can interfere with the wildlife habitat functions of those wetlands far more than the few square feet of fill involved. Restoration of destroyed or degraded wetlands can be successful with a commitment among agencies to work together to streamline permitting, provide technical assistance, and obtain funding.

How are we doing?

MassDEP has demonstrated its commitment to wetlands restoration by participating in a number of efforts designed to facilitate and improve wetlands restoration projects.

Effort	Detail
Aquatic Habitat Restoration Task Force	Ongoing – MassDEP has been an active participant since the beginning in August 2007
Aquatic Habitat Restoration Task Force Report	Report Published January 2008
Wetlands Restoration Workgroup	Ongoing - Provides expertise and helps to streamline review of restoration projects
Dam Removal Policy	Published December 2007

The Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) established the Aquatic Habitat Restoration Task Force in May of 2007 to develop a blueprint for success of aquatic habitat restoration in Massachusetts. In January 2008, the *Aquatic Habitat Restoration Task Force Report* was published (Task Force Report). Among the recommendations of the report are:

- Enhance State Leadership of Aquatic Habitat Restoration
- Invest Strategically to Maximize Restoration Results

- Create an Informed Constituency.
- Ensure Efficiency in Regulating Restoration Projects

MassDEP's *Dam Removal Guidance* published in December 2007 discusses the benefits of Dam Removal, and provides clarification for applicants and Conservation Commissions on how to streamline the permitting process. MassDEP has also initiated development of a new wetlands restoration policy that focuses on tidally restricted wetlands. This policy is being developed in coordination with the EOEEA Wetlands Restoration Program and its publication is expected next year.

In addition to the Statewide *Aquatic Habitat Restoration Task Force*, MassDEP participates in a multi-agency workgroup in the Southeast Region to facilitate wetlands restoration projects. Through these workgroups, MassDEP has provided expertise on approximately 25 projects this year that are in pre-application, MEPA or permitting phases, including the Eel River Restoration project in Plymouth.

Restoration Projects Participated In FY08

Stage of Project	#Projects
Pre-application	5
MEPA Review	10
Permitting	10
TOTAL	25

Though the new WIRE database, a new feature will allow us to track bordering vegetated wetlands and salt marsh restoration acreage beyond mitigation projects.

Maintaining Strong Performance

MassDEP is continuing to look for opportunities to improve wetlands restoration efforts in Massachusetts by providing expertise on specific projects and providing regulatory changes and policies to streamline permitting.

Improving Results

Through strong advocacy and interagency coordination, MassDEP intends to encourage wetlands restoration to the maximum extent possible.

Detailed Workplan

1. Continued involvement in the Wetlands Restoration Work Groups to provide technical support and permit streamlining for restoration projects.
2. Development of Wetlands Restoration Guidance for Tidally Restricted Wetlands

V. Wetlands Monitoring & Assessment

Indicators:

sites visited
Watersheds Assessed through Monitoring & Assessment
Whether it is possible to monitor status/trends through monitoring & assessment (condition data correlation with CAPS data)
# of types of regulatory/programmatic decisions using M&A data
Towns mapped using M&A data

Why is this Important?

MassDEP has identified a need to monitor and assess wetlands condition as part of a comprehensive wetlands program as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Wetlands loss from dredge, fill and removal activities in wetlands identified through permitting or enforcement action has been the primary focus of the MassDEP Wetlands Program for years. Wetlands degradation, however, can also extend beyond the footprint of a project, or be caused by activities beyond wetlands jurisdiction, causing significant effects on wetlands health that are much more difficult to regulate. For example, increased development and stormwater runoff originating beyond wetlands jurisdiction can result in significant water quality and hydrological alteration, affecting wetlands health. Also, as buffer zones shrink due to land development, wetlands health may continue to degrade since buffer zones play an important role in preservation of the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of adjacent wetlands.

The Massachusetts wetlands monitoring and assessment strategy was developed to validate and/or better direct the program to protect the physical, chemical and biological integrity of Massachusetts' wetlands. Implementation of this monitoring and assessment strategy will increase understanding of wetlands health through the development of criteria that assesses wetlands condition, and collection of monitoring data that validates our findings. Our strategy will allow us to report on the status and trends of wetlands across the state, while developing more intense assessment of wetlands condition in specific watersheds, chosen for rapid assessment and monitoring. It is our goal to better protect wetlands through regulation, policy & additional outreach using the tools developed through effort.

How are we doing?

MassDEP's goal of implementing a comprehensive wetlands monitoring and assessment program lead to a collaboration with the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in late 2006 to develop a monitoring and assessment strategy. The central feature of this strategy is the Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS), a landscape-level assessment model that has been under development by UMass for several years, and was adopted by MassDEP in 2006 to identify potentially important wildlife habitat. Key components of CAPS are land cover mapping derived from GIS mapping and satellite imagery and 21 integrity metrics developed by expert teams, combined in a model that calculates a value between 0 and 1 for every $30m^2$ point in the landscape. The CAPS value represents the index of ecological integrity or

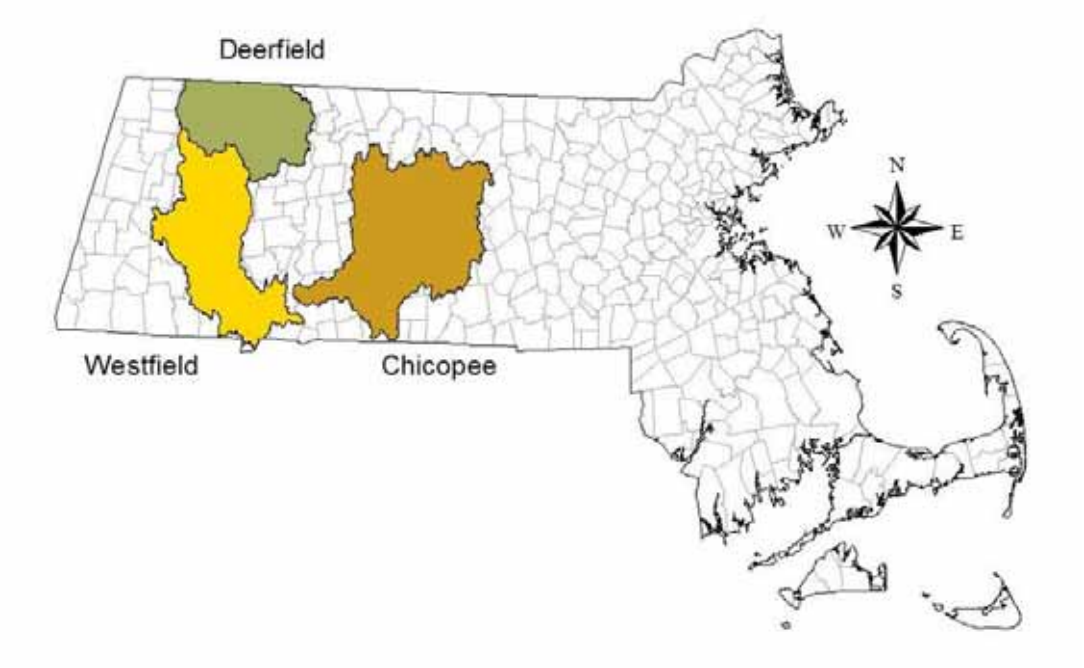
prediction about the ability of the wetlands to sustain its ecological condition in the long term and to recover from stress. CAPS does not assess ecological conditions on the ground, nor does it use field-based information in the CAPS models. Site-Level Assessments (SLAMs) and the subsequent development of Rapid Assessment Methods (RAMs) provide information about the ecological condition for a large number and wide range of wetlands. This is essential for testing and validating the CAPS predictions and modifying (as needed) the CAPS models. In 2007, MassDEP and UMass worked together to apply for Wetlands Program Development Grants (WPDG) from EPA to initiate the research for this project and to develop a strategy. The focus of effort in 2008 is the development of a SLAM to understand how wetlands condition is influenced by land use in the surrounding landscape.

Maintaining Strong Performance

In 2006, MassDEP issued a guidance document for wildlife habitat protection entitled "*Massachusetts Wildlife Habitat Protection Guidance for Inland Wetlands"* http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/laws/wldhab.pdf. As part of that guidance, MassDEP adopted use of CAPS maps to identify habitat of potential regional or statewide importance for use in Wetlands Protection Act permitting. These important habitat maps utilize the CAPS assessment to depict polygons representing 40% of the undeveloped landscape with the highest potential wildlife habitat value. The polygons depicted on the maps identify areas where a detailed wildlife habitat evaluation should always be conducted. MassDEP and UMass have posted important habitat maps for 112 cities and towns to a website for public use www.masscaps.org. The remaining cities and towns are scheduled to be mapped by early 2010.

Improving Results

A primary goal of the monitoring & assessment project is to validate the assumptions in the CAPS model so that it is based on empirical data instead of only landscape level data. After the CAPS model is validated, the important habitat maps will be updated, and CAPS can be used for other regulatory, policy and guidance development. In the summer of 2007, UMass researchers visited 57 wetlands sites in the Westfield River Watershed and 96 terrestrial sites in the Deerfield River Watershed to collect data for the monitoring & assessment strategy. New monitoring for 2008 began in May and approximately 80 sites in the Chicopee River Watershed will be visited for SLAM development.



2007/2008 Watersheds Studied/to be Studied

Metric	Detail (as of May 2008)
# Sites Visited	153
# Watersheds Assessed	2
# Condition Data types that correlates with CAPS data	2 – invasive plants, earthworms (needs further study in 2008)
# programmatic decisions using CAPS	1
# programmatic decisions using calibrated/validated CAPS maps	Not applicable yet
# town maps using CAPS	112
# town maps using validated CAPS	Not applicable yet

Detailed Workplan

1. Final Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) approval for 2008
2. Submit CAPS mapping report (2006 WPDG) and Summer 2007 Field Season Report (WDPG 2005) to EPA to close out these contracts
3. Visit 80+ sites and document wetlands condition
4. Work continues on important habitat maps and Ecological Integrity Maps
5. Develop SLAM and correlate data with CAPs integrity metrics
6. Draft SLAM report
7. 2009 Field Season QAPP
8. Revise SLAM report
9. Continued effort on policy development on stream connectivity using CAPS.

VI. Coordination with other Water Programs

Indicators:

trainings, # phone calls/emails, # ConCom coordination meetings, # site visits, # network meetings & workshops, # task force meetings & workshops completed

Why is this important?

MassDEP has a substantial outreach program that targets Local Conservation Commissions, applicants and representatives local non-profit environmental groups other state and federal regulatory and resource agencies, and the general public. MassDEP's outreach effort is critical in providing accurate and updated information to all stakeholders on issues related to wetlands and water quality protection.

MassDEP's Wetlands Circuit Rider Program is part of the larger outreach effort that provides technical, administrative, and regulatory assistance to the volunteer Conservation Commissions charged with the administration and enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA).

How are we doing?

MassDEP's Wetlands Circuit Riders have reached every Conservation Commission in the state and have become an invaluable resource for Conservation Commissions. Circuit Riders are praised by the Conservation Commission community for their outreach efforts, their informal hands-on approach, and their ability to tailor the training to the needs of the commissions.

MassDEP also consistently develops a substantial training and outreach effort that is presented at the MACC Annual Conference. This year, MassDEP presented workshops and/or information on Dam Removal, Stormwater, Clearwater Estates (a sample project filing), Wetlands Loss and WIRE.

Outreach Task	Detail
# Trainings	45
#Phone call/emails*	1958
# ConCom Coordination Meetings	80
# Site visits*	46
#Network meetings & workshops	28
# Task Forces or Conferences Participated in (partial list)	8 - Aquatic Habitat, Mosquito Control, Dam Safety, Restoration, ACOE Joint Processing, MACC Annual and Fall, NEIWPCC New England Biological Assessment Wetlands Work Group;
# Organizations/Agencies Coordinated with (partial list)	13- ASWM, NEIWPCC, Audubon, Riverways, ACOE, CZM, DMF, DFW, MNHESP, Nature Conservancy, MACC, UMass-Amherst, EPA

*first half of fiscal year

Maintaining Strong Performance

MassDEP actively maintains a web site that includes the most up to date regulations, policies, forms, guidance documents, reports, maps and other relevant information (http://www.mass.gov/dep/). Circuit Riders actively reach out to all stakeholders regularly.

Improving Results

A major effort is being developed to reach out and train Conservation Commissions, applicants and representatives to use MassDEP's electronic filing system in the new WIRE data system (See WIRE Summary & Workplan). This will result in less data entry by staff and improved planning.

Detailed Timetable for WIRE Outreach

1. Internal Staff Training – July 2008
2. Circuit Rider Training – September 2008
3. Begin outreach to Conservation Commissions, Applicants and Representatives – September 2008
4. New Permitting Forms posted on-line November, 2008
5. New Permitting Forms tested November – December 2008
6. New Permitting Forms available for general use January 2009
7. MACC Conference Training March 2009
8. Outreach continues – ongoing