

Wetland Water Quality Standards Resources

EPA Resources

1. Wetland Water Quality Standards Information


- [Narrative Templates for Wetland Water Quality Standards](#)
EPA and state water quality and wetland associations partnered to develop this online tool to assist states, territories, and authorized tribes (states) with developing protective and comprehensive narrative water quality standards for wetlands. The templates provide states with wetland-related terms to select from for developing water quality standards that best suit the needs of, and conditions in, a given wetland, wetland type or state.
- [Water Quality Standards for Wetlands: National Guidance](#) (July 1990 and Appendix D of the Water Quality Standards Handbook: Online Edition, 2014)
This document provides program guidance to states on how to apply water quality standards (WQS) to wetlands. This guidance reflects the level of achievement EPA expected states to accomplish by the end of fiscal year 1993. Phase 1 activities presented in this guidance include the development of WQS elements for wetlands based upon existing information and science. Phase 2 involves the further refinement of these basic elements using new science and program developments.
- [Nutrient Criteria Technical Guidance Manual: Wetlands](#) (June 2008)
This document describes elements of wetland nutrient criteria development including: classification of wetlands, monitoring program sampling design, and three methods for developing nutrient criteria. These methods are: using reference systems, refining classification systems using models and/or examining system biological attributes, and using or modifying published nutrient and vegetation, algal, and soil relationships as criteria. It focuses on developing numeric criteria for wetland systems in an ecoregion.
- [An Approach for Evaluating Numeric Water Quality Criteria for Wetlands Protection \(PDF\)](#) (51 pp, 2.8MB) (July 1991 and Appendix E of the Water Quality Standards Handbook: Online Edition, 2014)
This report provides an overview of the need for standards and criteria for wetlands and a description of the national numeric aquatic life criteria. It provides a possible approach for detecting wetland types that might not be protected by direct application of national numeric criteria and for making modifications based on site-specific guidelines.
- [Questions and Answers on Antidegradation \(PDF\)](#) (17 pp, 1.3M) (August 1985 and Appendix G of the Water Quality Standards Handbook: Online Edition, 2014)
This document provides guidance on the antidegradation policy component of water quality standards and its application. Question #13 addresses the application of antidegradation policy in the case of wetland fill permits under Clean Water Action Section 404.

2. General Water Quality Standards Information

- [Water Quality Standards Handbook: Online Edition](#) (2014)
This document provides a compilation of guidance to develop, review, revise, and implement WQS including recommendations for states, authorized tribes, and territories. It was issued in support of EPA's Water Quality Standards Regulation (40 CFR 131, as amended).

- [Water Quality Standards Academy](#)
To support water quality standards development, EPA offers the Water Quality Standards Academy which presents classroom-based and online courses, along with occasional satellite broadcasts. Online training models and information on classroom courses can be accessed at this website.
- 3. Water Quality Standards Linkage with Clean Water Act Section 401**
- [Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification: A Water Quality Protection Tool for States and Tribes \(PDF\)](#) (49 pp, 447.4K)(Interim Draft, April 2010)
This document includes a discussion of water quality standards as a basis for 401 certification decisions. It highlights wetland-specific water quality standards as way to ensure comprehensive consideration of wetlands in the 401 certification process (see p 19).
- 4. Water Quality Standards Linkage with Monitoring and Assessment**
- [Impacts on Quality of Inland Wetlands of the United States: A Survey of Indicators, Techniques, and Applications of Community Level Biomonitoring Data](#) (Excerpts from Report #EPA/600/3-90/073, now out of print)
This report describes how (a) existing resource data might be applied in the designation of "uses" for wetlands, (b) ambient biological criteria for wetlands might be developed or modified, and (c) wetlands might be periodically sampled (and data interpreted) to estimate their relative ecological condition, compliance with biological criteria, or need for restoration. Because of the lack of appropriate comparative studies of wetlands, the report does not provide biocriteria for wetlands, evaluate or prioritize potential indicators of wetland condition, nor endorse specific techniques for wetland biomonitoring and data analysis. Its intended use is mainly as a technical source document for future design, testing, and reporting of indicators.
 - [Methods for Evaluating Wetland Condition](#) (March 2002 – December 2008)
These modules are a starting point to help states and tribes establish biological and nutrient water quality criteria specifically refined for wetlands. They provide information that will help states and tribes develop biological assessment methods to evaluate both the overall ecological condition of wetlands and nutrient enrichment.

Non-EPA Resources

Links to non-EPA websites that provide additional information about water quality standards are listed below. You will leave the EPA.gov domain and enter another page with more information. EPA cannot attest to the accuracy of information on that non-EPA page. Providing links to a non-EPA website is not an endorsement of the other site or the information it contains by EPA or any of its employees. Also, be aware that the privacy protection provided on the EPA.gov domain (see [Privacy and Security Notice](#)) may not be available at the external link. 

1. Information Supporting Development of Wetland Water Quality Standards by States, Territories, and Authorized Tribes

- Association of State Wetland Managers
 - [Wetland Water Quality Standards for States \(PDF\)](#) (100 pp, 2.2MB) (2012)
This report was prepared by the Association of State Wetland Managers as part of a

broader project to help states adopt water quality standards for wetland ecosystems. It addresses selected issues with regard to the formulation and adoption of such standards. It provides the states with examples of draft narrative standards in Appendices A and B.

- [ASWM's Water Quality Standards for Wetlands Webpage](#)

The Association of State Wetland Managers maintains this webpage to provide information related to wetlands and water quality as well as to provide resources for states and tribes that are preparing for adoption of water quality standards for wetlands.

2. Information on Existing State Wetland Water Quality Standards

- Environmental Law Institute

- [State Wetland Program Evaluation: Phase I](#) (2005),
- [State Wetland Program Evaluation: Phase II](#) (2006)
- [State Wetland Program Evaluation: Phase III](#) (2007)
- [State Wetland Program Evaluation: Phase IV](#) (2007)

This set of four reports details findings of a multi-phase study designed to describe and analyze seven components of state wetland programs including water quality standards. Seven states with wetland-specific elements to their water quality standards are identified and a short overview of each program is provided.

- [State Wetland Protection: Status, Trends, and Model Approaches](#) (March 2008)

Section III of this report provides a summary of states with wetland water quality standards including a table which breaks out which wetland-specific elements (designated uses, criteria, and/or antidegradation) those states have developed.

- State of Colorado

- [Basic Standards and Methodologies for Surface Waters \(PDF\)](#)

Colorado's code of regulations describing basic standards and methodologies for surface waters including:

- standards specific to "surface waters in wetlands" (see section 31.11(1)(b))
- the process for assigning standards for "surface water in wetlands" (see section 31.7(1)(b)(iv)).

- State of Iowa

- [Water Quality Standards \(PDF\)](#) (25 pp, 368K)

Iowa's water quality standards including standards specific to class "B(LW)" waters; lakes and wetlands (see section 61.3(3)(b)).

- State of Minnesota

- [Water Quality Standards for Protection of Surface Waters of the State \(PDF\) \(222 pp, 920K\)](#)

Minnesota's administrative rules on water quality standards including:

- wetland standards and mitigation (see section 7050.0186)
- specific water quality standards for Class 2 waters of the state; aquatic life and recreation (see section 7050.0222 Subpart 6 for Class "2D" waters; wetlands)
- nondegradation for all waters (including rules to protect all waters from wetland alteration, see section 7050.0185).

- State of Nebraska

- [Nebraska Surface Water Quality Standards \(PDF\)](#) (263 pp, 8M)

Nebraska's administrative code for surface water quality standards including water quality standards for wetlands (see Chapter 7).

- State of North Carolina
 - [Classifications and Water Quality Standards Applicable to Surface Waters and Wetlands \(PDF\)](#) (131 pp, 949K)
North Carolina's water quality standards for surface waters and wetlands (see sections 15A NCAC 02B .0230 “Activities Deemed to Comply with Wetland Standards” and 15A NCAC 02B .0231 “Wetland Standards”).
- State of Ohio
 - [Ohio Water Quality Standards 3475-1-50 through 3475-1-54 \(PDF\)](#) (29 pp, 604 K)
Ohio’s administrative code describing wetland definitions, wetland narrative criteria, numeric chemical criteria for waste water discharges to wetlands, wetland use designation, and wetland antidegradation.
- State of Washington
 - [Water Quality Guidelines for Wetlands: Using the Surface Water Quality Standards for Activities Involving Wetlands \(April 1996\)](#)
This guidance document describes Washington's surface water quality standards and how the standards apply to wetlands. It describes how a water quality decision is reached regarding wetlands using the Antidegradation Decision-Making Process (including the role of wetland mitigation).
- State of Wisconsin
 - [Water Quality Standards for Wetlands \(PDF\)](#) (5 pp, 104K)
Wisconsin's administrative code describing water quality standards for wetlands.

3. Information on Existing Tribal Wetland Water Quality Standards

- Water quality standards for the approved tribes listed below contain wetland-specific elements (elements vary by tribe).
 - [Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe](#) (NY)
 - [Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa](#) (MN)
 - [Pueblo of Santa Clara](#) (NM)
 - [Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation](#) (MT)
 - [Northern Cheyenne](#) (MT)
 - [Hoopa Valley Tribe](#) (CA)
 - [Coeur d’Alene Tribe](#) (ID)
 - [Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation](#) (WA)
 - [Kalispel Indian Community](#) (WA)
 - [Lummi Tribe](#) (WA)
 - [Makah Indian Nation](#) (WA)
 - [Port Gamble S’Klallam](#) (WA)
 - [Spokane Tribe of Indians](#) (WA)
 - [Confederated Tribes of Umatilla](#) (OR)