

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

WETLAND PROGRAM CORE ELEMENTS PLAN

2013 - 2015



Prepared by the
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

For the
Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1

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CORE ELEMENT: Regulation

Goal: Avoid and minimize alterations and losses of wetlands for protection of the important functions and values they provide and facilitate effective restoration.

Action 1: Develop methods and guidance to improve wetland protection and regulatory processes				
Activities	2013	2014	2015	
A. Implement the <i>Rhode Island Stormwater Design and Installation Manual</i> and Low Impact Development (LID) w/ Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) including integrating permitting reviews	X	X	X	
B. Develop and refine policies to support implementation of the Stormwater Manual as related to wetland permitting	X	X	X	
C. Implement the Stormwater Manual stakeholder group	X	X	X	
D. Coordinate the Wetland / Water Quality Restoration team	X	X	X	
E. Implement process and customer service improvements identified via LEAN and other reviews of wetland permitting process; e.g. consolidated permitting for single family homes	X	X	X	
F. Develop workshop and/or field guide content w/ Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT)	X	X	X	
G. Update and refine outreach and guidance materials as needed to inform stakeholders and the public on the wetland regulatory process	X	X	X	
H. Compile and evaluate science on the effectiveness of wetland buffers	X	X		
Action 2: Improve Data Management				
Activities	2013	2014	2015	
A. Share detailed information with local governments on permits	X	X	X	

B. Complete planning for migration of wetland permitting data system	X	X	
C. Complete migration of wetland permitting data system to new platform		X	X
D. Design and implement data management system improvements to integrate wetland information with water resource information and expand access to information to targeted users		X	X
Action 3: Modify regulations to facilitate wetland restoration			
Activities	2013	2014	2015
A. Convene working group and identify proposed regulatory changes. Draft and promulgate revisions through rulemaking.	X	X	X

CORE ELEMENT: Monitoring and Assessment

Goal: Assess the condition of the State's wetlands to understand the cumulative impacts of human activities on wetlands and to improve their protection and management [New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) and DEM 2006]. Continue to develop wetland monitoring and assessment during the next three years building on projects completed with the Rhode Island Natural History Survey (RINHS), NEIWPCC, and technical advisors during the past six years.

Action 1: Update the Rhode Island Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan (NEIWPCC & DEM 2006)			
Activities	2013	2014	2015
A. To update the <i>Freshwater Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan</i> , convene meetings of wetland programs and of advisors; Brief the groups; Solicit feedback and identify new needs, uses, and ways to maximize cross-program monitoring. Draft <i>Plan</i> updates. Solicit comments, consider comments, and finalize <i>Plan</i> .	X	X	

B. In the <i>Plan</i> update, consider climate change and the impacts to wetlands that may occur due to sea level rise, changes in precipitation patterns, storm events, etc.	X	X	
C. Investigate sustainable financing for wetland monitoring, including conferring w/ the University of North Carolina, Environmental Finance Center	X	X	
D. Refine and document monitoring strategies for coastal saltmarshes.	X	X	
E. Integrate & cross-reference the updated <i>Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan</i> with the updated <i>Rhode Island Surface Water Monitoring Strategy</i> (DEM 2005)		X	X
F. Coordinate efforts on wetland monitoring and assessment w/ the Rhode Island Environmental Monitoring Collaborative	X	X	X
G. Continue to participate in the New England Biological Assessment of Wetlands Workgroup (NEBAWWG)	X	X	X
Action 2: Continue to develop and implement wetland monitoring and assessment tools and projects consistent with the updated Rhode Island Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Plan			
Activities	2013	2014	2015
A. Continue to explore development of wetland indicators and collaborate with regional Watershed Counts Environmental Indicator Initiative	X	X	X
B. Coordinate w/ DEM Geographic Information System (GIS) program and EPA Region regarding use of new imagery and Lidar that may be suitable for wetlands program uses and/or mapping. Seek advisory input re: possible mapping scope of work.	X	X	X
C. Develop and implement annual field monitoring and assessment project, complete data entry, analyses and reports.	X	X	X

D. Incorporate monitoring and assessment findings into wetland watershed profiles and distribute via DEM web.	X	X	X
E. Prepare Status and Trends report	X		X

CORE ELEMENT: Restoration and Protection

Goal: Restore the quantity and quality of wetlands and their functions and values. Develop and implement a freshwater wetland restoration strategy with the assistance of advisors and in collaboration with other voluntary restoration initiatives. There is a growing interest in habitat restoration in the State with the reemergence of the Rhode Island Habitat Restoration Team. Collaborate with partners to prioritize restoration opportunities and build capacity for wetland restoration.

Goal: Prevent degradation of wetland functions and values. Integrate non-regulatory wetland protection strategies into state and local (watershed) plans. Work with OWR programs and other stakeholders involved in watershed-based planning to produce such plans for RI's designated watershed planning areas.

Action 1: Integrate wetland protection and restoration into watershed-based planning			
Activities	2013	2014	2015
A. Develop statewide wetland restoration strategy, w/ advisors (freshwater & coastal)	X	X	
B. Inventory and report data on completed wetland restoration projects and activities	X		X
C. Improve capacity to track wetland restoration outcomes	X		
D. Integrate wetland protection into watershed based plans being developed by OWR surface water programs (NPS)	X	X	X

E. Disseminate information on vernal pool mapping in the W-P watershed	X		
F. Use sound science to reflect wetland habitat protection strategies in updated state wildlife conservation action plan	X	X	X
Action 2: Enhance Data Systems			
Activities	2013	2014	2015
A. Continue to build the data system and tools to track and report on restoration outcomes	X	X	
Action 3: Identify potential wetland and buffer restoration opportunities that support important Statewide goals of restoring fish and wildlife habitat, improving water quality, protecting people from flooding, and replacing heritage values important to people			
Activities	2013	2014	2015
A. Research various records and programs to identify key restoration opportunities.	X	X	
B. Collaborate with restoration initiatives through the RI Habitat Restoration Team and Southern New England Coastal Restoration Partnership (in development).	X	X	X
C. Conduct watershed- based projects to identify and assess wetland restoration opportunities	X	X	X
D. Design adaption strategies to support resilience of coastal saltmarshes to climate change		X	X
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