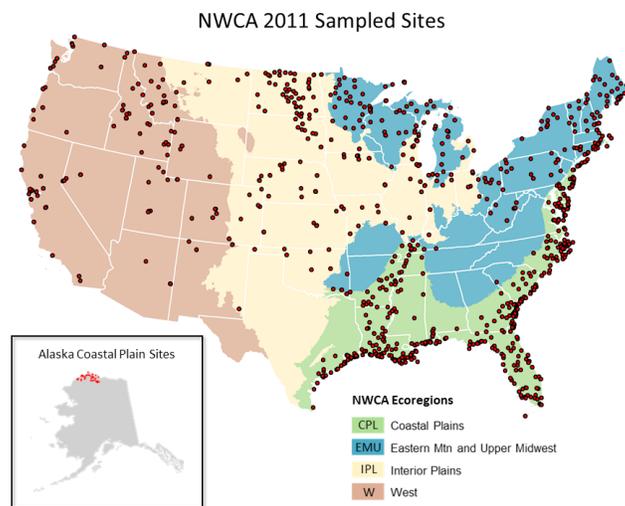


The National Wetland Condition Assessment 2011

The National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) 2011 is the first national scale evaluation of the ecological condition of U.S. wetlands, encompassing both tidal and non-tidal wetlands along our coasts to waterfowl-rich prairie potholes and meadows in the interior plains. It is part of the National Aquatic Resource Surveys, a series of statistically-based assessments designed to provide the public and decision makers with nationally consistent and representative information on the condition of the nation's waters.



What is the condition of our wetlands across the country?

The NWCA report finds that less than half of wetland area nationally has healthy plant communities.

48% **Biological condition:** 48% of wetland area nationally is in good biological condition, with 20% in fair condition and 32% in poor condition. Plant presence, abundance and trait information – e.g., invasive or native status, tolerance to disturbance – are used to assess biological condition. Poor biological condition can impact fish and wildlife species, reduce recreational opportunities, and lead to diminished water quality and flood retention benefits wetlands naturally provide.

What are the leading problems in wetlands?

Physical disturbances to wetlands and their surrounding habitat such as compacted soil, ditching, and removal or loss of vegetation, are the most widespread problems across the country. Wetlands with high levels of compacted soil are about twice as likely to have poor plant communities. Nonnative plants are also a problem across the country, particularly in the interior plains and west.

27% **Surface hardening:** More than a quarter of wetland area nationally has high occurrences of activities related to surface hardening (e.g. soil compaction, roads). These activities affect how water flows in and out of wetlands and the amount of water that enters and stays within wetlands, potentially impacting plant productivity, nutrient cycling, and overall physical habitat.

27% **Vegetation removal:** More than a quarter of wetland area nationally has high occurrences of activities related to plant removal. Removal or loss of vegetation, such as grazing, mowing, and forest clearing may increase sediment, nutrient, and pollutant loads entering and staying in a wetland.



23% **Ditching:** Nearly one quarter of wetland area nationally has high occurrences of ditching. Ditching affects how water flows in and out of wetlands, potentially impacting plant productivity, nutrient-cycling, and physical habitat.

19% **Nonnative plants:** Approximately one fifth of wetland area has high occurrence and abundance of nonnative plants. Nonnative plants replace native plants, resulting in loss of biodiversity and habitat for fish and wildlife species.



What are we doing to address problems?

The NWCA and recent studies on wetland gains and losses by the U.S. FWS suggest that more needs to be done to protect and restore our wetland resources in order to ensure healthier waters for future generations. EPA is working with partners to address wetland protection and restoration in the U.S. by:

- Overseeing dredge and fill permit decisions by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and two authorized states (Michigan and New Jersey) under Section 404 to ensure permits are scientifically up-to-date and consistent with current policy, as well as developing guidance, information and scientific tools for improving the management and public understanding of aquatic resource protections.
- Working with states and tribes directly and through the Association of State Wetland Managers to bolster the ability of states and tribes to manage, regulate and protect wetlands within their state and tribal lands.
- Providing technical and financial assistance to states and tribes for the development of wetland programs and tools for assessing, monitoring and addressing disturbances in wetlands.
- Working with other federal agencies on national programs to map, assess, manage and restore wetland resources on federal lands and to help private landowners be informed stewards of their wetland resources.
- Continuing to lead the Interagency Coastal Wetlands Workgroup on new tools, strategies, and information for protecting and restoring wetlands in coastal watersheds.

For more information see:

<https://www.epa.gov/national-aquatic-resource-surveys/nwca>

