

**Wetland Water Quality Standards Subcommittee
(of the Water Quality Standards Advisory Committee)**

**Held at NH Fish and Game Conference Room – Concord, NH
24 May 2012 10 am – 12 pm**

Members in attendance	
Cindy Balcius	John St. John
Don Kretchmer	Larry Morse
Eileen Miller	Mike Marchand
David Brennan	Ron Rhodes
DES staff:	
Christine Bowman	Ken Edwardson
Sandy Crystall	

Sandy Crystall opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She noted that the agenda did not include the suggested presentation on biomonitoring requested last month because staff was not available to present at this time with the startup of the field season.

No changes were suggested to the April 12, 2012 meeting minutes.

Agenda item 1. Comments on draft survey to seek updated Wetland GIS data from municipalities and other sources.

DES had requested comments on the draft wetland mapping survey that was distributed at the April meeting (and emailed with the 5/24 agenda). No comments had been provided to date. Sandy asked for any comments and John St. John suggested that we add to the short survey a request for any information from paper maps (if that is what the municipality has).

Agenda item 2. National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) (Level 3) and USA-RAM

Sandy gave a presentation on the 2011 NWCA field work conducted (13 visits) at the 11 sites including site selection, plot layout, soil samples, vegetation identification and sampling, buffer characterization, water quality and algae samples (for toxicity and chlorophyll-a). Sandy reviewed the level 2 RAM metrics in addition to the level 3 NWCA protocols. Raw data should be coming back from EPA soon. EPA report on the NWCA is expected in late 2013.

Agenda item 3. VHB Restoration Model, State RAMs (Rapid Assessment Methods) and Indices of Biological Integrity

As requested by the subcommittee at the last meeting, Sandy provided an overview of VHB's Wetland Restoration Assessment Model (WRAM), developed for ARM Fund Program (Merrimack River Watershed Restoration Strategy). The model has two components:

- **Site ID model** - to identify candidate wetland *restoration* sites
- **Site Prioritization Model** - to assess which of those sites would result in significant environmental benefit and would be considered high priority.

Additional information on the model and documentation can be found at: restorenhwetlands.com.

Other

Sandy described the wetlands assessment work that DES is involved in this summer. DES and the Natural Heritage Bureau - Department of Resources and Economic Development (NHB) will be applying several rapid assessment methods (RAMs) -- the NH Method, Floristic Quality Assessment (FQA), and the Ecological Integrity Assessment (EIA) 2.5 -- at wetlands in the Merrimack and coastal watersheds. We will be evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the

methods and appropriateness for use in permitting, wetland condition and assessments, and mitigation.

Discussion/Questions

Questions were raised about parameters related to trees and snags in the NWCA. Sandy described that there were specific protocols for identifying and counting them.

John St John asked about the connections between the RAMs and assessment methods and the designated uses. Discussion ensued about the aquatic life designated use and wetland condition information generated in a RAM.

Larry Morse noted that Maine added wetlands to the 2010 303(d) list of impaired waters for Aquatic Life due to “poor wetland habitat.” Sandy indicated that she would look into this and get more information for the subcommittee. Larry also mentioned Maine’s Impervious Cover TMDL.

David Brennan mentioned a recent USDA report that ranked the Contoocook and Merrimack as #2 and money to see water quality changes. Made link to wetland quality and public water supply quality. [Note from SC: The report, *Private Forests, Public Benefits*, can be found here: <http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/fote/benefits.html>]

Cindy Balcius requested that when Dave Neils gives his biomonitoring presentation to provide details on the sampling methodology particularly index periods and how one accounts for inter-year variations in weather, flow, etc.

Next Steps

John St John mentioned that, if possible, do not delay the next meeting as the group is in the ramp-up of information phase.

Suggested topics of interest would include how TMDLs will feed into the wetland assessment and possible impairments. That is, how a TMDL would be done on an impaired wetland.

The group agreed to meet next month if presenters are available.