

Core Element Framework Revisions

Wetland Water Quality Standards

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Water Quality Standards

The revisions include:

- Adding reference to the EPA Water Quality Standards Template in the Definition
- Deconstructed Objectives
- Deconstructed Actions
- Added new Actions
- Added new Activities for the original and revised Actions



Water Quality Standards

1. Definition
2. Goals & Benefits
3. Program Building Activities Menu
 - Objectives – 3
 - Actions – 10 to 14
 - Activities – 28 to 53
4. Resource



Water Quality Standards

Definition Proposed Revisions

Revisions: Definition-WQS

In 2016, EPA developed multiple templates to assist the nation in developing wetland water quality standards. These templates are available at the following link (<https://www.epa.gov/wqs-tech/templates-developing-wetland-water-quality-standards>). The templates are a tool to simplify development of protective wetland water quality standards. They address the three components of a WQS: *designated uses, criteria, and antidegradation*. The templates also provide wetland-specific terms and language so regulators can tailor standards to suit the needs of the wetland and their state, authorized tribe, or territory. Once developed, the state or tribe may submit the wetland WQS to EPA for review and approval.

Revisions: Definition-WQS

While existing WQS for surface waters may provide some protection, wetlands may need tailored WQS because they have different functions and different dynamics. Wetlands exist as ecosystems along the margins (land–sea, land–lake, land–river) and in depressional landscapes (e.g., prairie potholes in the Midwest and kettle-hole wetlands in the northern U.S.). By season and location, wetlands experience variable water depth and velocity, soil type and saturation levels, vegetation, nutrient levels, sediment type, and oxygen demand, both within a given wetland and among wetland types. Wetland-specific WQS provide robust protection for wetlands and their functions.

Most states do not have WQS specifically developed for protecting wetlands. Establishing narrative criteria is typically the best approach when first developing water quality standards for these complex waters. Where feasible, states could develop numeric criteria to target specific pollutants and other parameters that could impact wetland functions.

The Wetland WQS CE is a framework to follow, and for a more prescriptive set of Activities we recommend applying these templates (<https://www.epa.gov/wqs-tech/templates-developing-wetland-water-quality-standards>).

Water Quality Standards

Goals & Benefits

Goals & Benefits-stayed same

- Goals:

- 1) Overall increase in wetland function and condition
- 2) Provides the scientific basis to protect and restore wetlands

- Benefits

- 1) Permitting
- 2) Water Quality Certification
- 3) Monitoring, Assessment & Reporting
- 4) Restoration & Protection



Water Quality Standards

Program Building

Revisions: Objective 1

Objective 1 – Ensure wetlands are treated as waters within state and tribal water quality programs (Side Note: For Tribes – if they have TAS, but not WQS, then they would need to apply for WQS approval. If they do not have TAS nor approved WQS, then they would need to seek application for Water Quality Standards TAS. And if so, receive EPA approval [40 CFR 131.8], Tribe can submit water quality standards in the same manner as a state, and receive EPA approval, concurrently or after pursuing TAS.)

ACTIONS: remained the same

ACTIVITIES: remained the same

Revisions: Objective 2

Objective 2 – Develop wetland-specific water quality standards (remained the same)

ACTIONS:

- added 4 new Actions
- Reworded Action a
- Split Actions b, c, d into separate actions (these became new Actions)

ACTIVITIES:

- Added 25 Activities



This is where most of the revisions occurred.

Revisions: Objective 2

Original Objectives

| Actions |
|--|
| a. <u>Gather</u> and analyze monitoring data and other information that will become basis of wetland water quality standards |
| b. <u>Establish and adopt</u> appropriate wetland specific designated uses to be achieved and protected |



Proposed Objectives

| Actions |
|---|
| a. Collect and analyze monitoring data and other information that will become basis of wetland water quality standards |
| b. Establish appropriate wetland specific designated uses to be achieved and protected |
| c. Adopt appropriate wetland specific designated uses to be achieved and protected |

Revisions-Objective 2: Actions-Activities

Proposed Actions

Actions

- a. **Collect and** analyze monitoring data and other information that will become basis of wetland water quality standards
- b. **Establish** appropriate wetland specific designated uses to be achieved and protected
- c. **Adopt** appropriate wetland specific designated uses to be achieved and protected



Proposed Activities

Menu of Activities

- a. From 2 to 18 new Activities
 - Step-wise progression

- From 2 to 5 new Activities
 - Kept 1 original Activity
 - Eliminated 1 original Activity
 - Added 4 new Activities
 - Action b has 3 Activities
 - Action c has 2 Activities

Revisions: Objective 2

Original Objective

Actions

c. Establish and adopt narrative criteria where numeric criteria cannot be established or to supplement numeric criteria that qualitatively describe the condition or suite of functions that must be achieved to support a designated use



Proposed Objectives

Actions

d. **Establish** narrative criteria where numeric criteria cannot be established or to supplement numeric criteria that qualitatively describe the condition or suite of functions that must be achieved to support a designated use

e. **Adopt** narrative criteria that qualitatively describe the condition or suite of functions that must be achieved to support a designated use

Revisions-Objective 2: Actions-Activities

Proposed Actions

Actions

d. **Establish** narrative criteria where numeric criteria cannot be established or to supplement numeric criteria that qualitatively describe the condition or suite of functions that must be achieved to support a designated use

e. **Adopt** narrative criteria that qualitatively describe the condition or suite of functions that must be achieved to support a designated use



Proposed Activities

Menu of Activities

From 3 to 9 new Activities

- Kept 3 original Activities
- Added 6 new Activities
- Split between d and e
- Action d has 8 Activities
- Action e has 1 Activity

Revisions: Objective 2

Original Objective

Actions

d. Establish and adopt numeric criteria representing wetland specific values for chemical, physical, and biological parameters that may not be exceeded, must be exceeded, or some combination to protect or restore designated uses



Proposed Objectives

Actions

f. **Establish** numeric criteria representing wetland specific values for chemical, physical, and biological parameters that may not be exceeded, must be exceeded, or some combination to protect or restore designated uses

g. **Adopt** numeric criteria representing wetland specific values for chemical, physical, and biological parameters that may not be exceeded, must be exceeded, or some combination to protect or restore designated uses

Revisions - Objective 2: Actions - Activities

Proposed Actions

Actions

f. **Establish** numeric criteria representing wetland specific values for chemical, physical, and biological parameters that may not be exceeded, must be exceeded, or some combination to protect or restore designated uses

g. **Adopt** numeric criteria representing wetland specific values for chemical, physical, and biological parameters that may not be exceeded, must be exceeded, or some combination to protect or restore designated uses



Proposed Activities

Menu of Activities

From 3 to 7 new Activities

- Kept 3 original Activities
- Added 4 new Activities
- Action f has 6 Activities
- Action g has 1 Activity

Revisions: Objective 2

Original Objective

Actions

e. Better define state/tribal antidegradation policies for wetlands, requiring full protection of existing uses (functions and/or condition), maintenance of functions/condition in high quality wetlands, and a prohibition against lowering functions/conditions in outstanding national resource waters



Proposed Objective

Actions

Stayed same content
Re-lettered to **h**

Revisions - Objective 2: Actions - Activities

Original Action

Actions

h. Better define state/tribal antidegradation policies for wetlands, requiring full protection of existing uses (functions and/or condition), maintenance of functions/condition in high quality wetlands, and a prohibition against lowering functions/conditions in outstanding national resource waters



Proposed Activities

Menu of Activities

From 4 to 5 Activities

- Kept 4 original Activities
- Added 1 new Activity

Revisions: Objective 2

Original Objective

Actions

None Existed



Proposed Objective

Actions

i. Draft and finalize water quality standard regulations

Revisions - Objective 2: Actions - Activities

Proposed Actions

Actions

i. Draft and finalize water quality standard regulations



Proposed Activities

Menu of Activities

Generated 4 new Activities

Revisions: Objective 3

Objective 3 – Incorporate wetland specific water quality standards into agency decision making. (remained the same)

ACTIONS: remained the same

ACTIVITIES: remained the same



Questions? Comments...

The screenshot shows the EPA website's navigation bar with links for Environmental Topics, Laws & Regulations, and About EPA. A search bar is present on the right. The main content area is titled 'Wetlands' and features a sidebar with a list of links: Wetlands Protection and Restoration Home, Learn About Wetlands, Types, Functions, The Science of Wetlands, Monitoring and Assessment, Water Quality Standards (highlighted), Volunteer Monitoring, Constructed Wetlands, States and Tribal Governments, and Enhancing States and Tribal. The main heading is 'Wetland Water Quality Standards' with sub-tabs for Overview, Goals and Benefits, Developing/Using Standards, and Resources. The 'Overview' section contains text explaining that water quality standards (WQS) are the foundation of the water quality-based pollution control program mandated by the Clean Water Act (CWA). It states that WQS define goals for a water body by designating its highest attainable uses, setting criteria that reflect the current and evolving body of scientific information to protect those uses, and establishing provisions to protect water bodies from further degradation. It also notes that WQS developed specifically for wetlands help ensure that the provisions of the Clean Water Act are consistently applied to wetlands; they also provide a more relevant scientific basis for applying these provisions. WQS for wetlands are developed by states, territories, and authorized tribes in accordance with EPA's regulations at 40 CFR Part 131.

<https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/wetland-water-quality-standards>

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