

Sustainable Financing for State and Tribal Wetland Programs

By Leah Stetson, ASWM

Highlights of EPA's Sustainable Finance Training Workshop, Chelmsford, MA

Most state wetland programs are funded through a combination of state and federal sources. Securing sustained funding is always challenging, but even more so now when most states are cutting budgets in response to dramatically reduced tax revenue. Thus most state wetland programs are not growing and some are incurring cuts to staffing or support services.

State wetland program managers do work actively to find funding sources. Every year one or more states try to increase permit fees to cover increasing program costs. But formal actions to secure additional funding do not necessarily result in success. For example two years ago in Michigan the state legislature refused to allow an increase in state wetland permitting fees to cover increased program costs. As a result, the following spring the Governor proposed to return the Section 404 program to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a cost saving measure. It was only after many months of high profile news articles and public and private discussions that a compromise was reached that secured new funding.

As a result, states are always searching for ways to fund wetland programs. In response, EPA has initiated a project working with University of North Carolina to identify alternatives and opportunities to fund state and tribal wetland programs, and they have sponsored a series of workshops with states and tribes around the country. Below are some of the highlights of the potential resources shared during a workshop held in Chelmsford, MA on March 10, 2010.

Workshop Highlights

State and Tribal wetland programs have to pay for personnel, lab monitoring supplies, travel, contractual work, data management, mapping, website maintenance, outreach & education, training, permitting (e.g. site visits, applications), vehicles for field work, overhead expenses, grant administration, and other costs. Because a state has limited funds for its environmental programs, the state's (or tribal) wetland program has to identify additional sources of funding. To do this sometimes a state wetland program may partner with another agency on a grant, but then each agency only gets part of the funding. EPA's State Wetland Development Grant program has been an important source of support for many state wetland programs. But one of the challenges is that State Wetland Development Grants cannot be used for implementation; funds can only be used for program development, e.g. writing regulations but not issuing permits. Thus, most state wetland programs have funding that comes from other sources.



In the 1990s, when state wetland programs were growing all over the country, the idea of state wetland conservation plans was promoted by agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) as well as organizations like World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which published *Statewide Wetlands Strategies: A Guide to Protecting and Managing the Resource*.

<http://www.amazon.com/Statewide-Wetlands-Strategies-World-Wildlife/dp/1559632062> . State Wetland Conservation Plans provided a roadmap for a state to follow to develop and implement an holistic suite of regulatory and voluntary wetland programs including funding.

There are Clean Water Act grant funds that state wetland programs have successfully used for funding: Section 106, Section 104(b)(3), Section 319, state funding for monitoring and Wetland Program Development Grants (which is authorized under 104(b)(3).)

<http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/grantguidelines/> The Wetland Grants Database (WGD) is administered by EPA and houses summary information on projects that have been funded as well as pilot grants, model products and case studies. <http://iaspub.epa.gov/wgd-public>

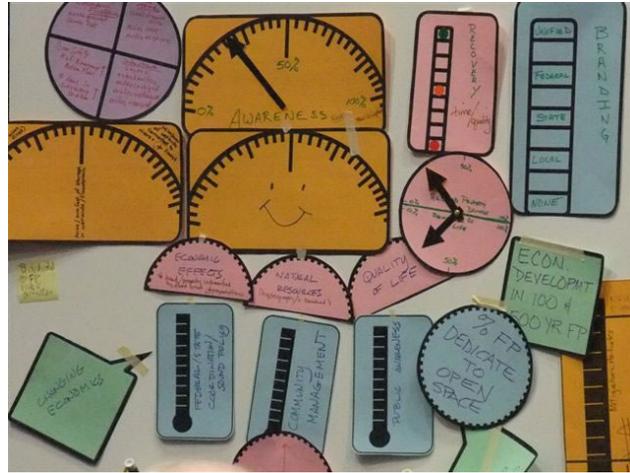
The Clean Water State Revolving Fund has historically been spent on wastewater treatment but since the Stimulus package in 2009, 20% of this fund must be spent on green projects, including wetlands. This new aspect works through loans, including forgivable loans which are much like a grant. <http://www.epa.gov/owm/cwfinance/cwsrf/>

Speakers made a comparison between state monitoring programs and land trust stewardship programs. Land trusts nowadays require stewardship funds to be included with easement donations. The cost of maintaining conservation easement properties is usually higher than the stewardship fees can cover (especially if there is ever a violation) but it is now considered standard to acquire this money upfront. For information on land trust funding easement stewardship programs, go to: <http://www.landtrustalliance.org/learning/training/online-training/conservation-easement-stewardship-funding/?searchterm=None>

One of the goals of the EPA workshop is to foster dialogue between state and tribal wetland programs as well as with technical assistance providers, such as New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC) and ASWM. The sessions focused on various aspects of financing wetland programs with examples from states and tribes.

Economic Tools for Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning was a special topic presented by Sam Merrill, Ph.D. of New England Environmental Finance Center. He presented some recent findings in a University of Southern Maine study on the warming of Casco Bay. Based on historic climate change data for the Casco Bay region, and on work relating the predictions of global climate models to local conditions, the report reveals striking climate trends in Maine's most populated watershed. To learn more about the report, visit:

<http://blogs.usm.maine.edu/muskie/2010/02/01/report-reveals-the-warming-of-casco-bay/>



Resources and Most Up-to-Date Presentations

Glenn Barnes of University of North Carolina prepared the workshop presentations on financing state wetland programs. He has led a series of day-long interactive workshops on sustainable finance, including sessions on federal grants for wetlands. The workshops are designed either around tribal programs or around state and tribal programs. For the most up-to-date and comprehensive information, click on *Sustainable Finance Strategies for Wetlands from States and Tribes*. All of these presentations may be found at this central website:

<http://www.efc.unc.edu/projects/wetlands/>

[Compendium of Federal Funding Sources for State and Tribal Wetlands Programs \(pdf\)](#)

[Sustainable Finance Strategies for Wetlands from States and Tribes \(pdf\)](#)

- [How Tribal Programs are Financed \(pdf\)](#)
- [Webinar on Sustainable Finance for State Wetlands Monitoring Programs \(recording, April 23 2009\)](#)

[Developing a Program Message \(pdf\)](#)

- [Good Example of a Wetland Program Message \(video\)](#)
- [Technical versus Business Point of View \(pdf\)](#)
- [Program Message Worksheet \(pdf\)](#)

[Grant Writing 101 \(pdf\)](#)

- [Sample State Grant Application \(pdf\)](#)
- [Sample Tribal Grant Application \(pdf\)](#)

[Building Effective Partnerships \(pdf\)](#)

- [State and Tribal Asset Maps \(pdf\)](#)
- [Blank Asset Map \(pdf\)](#)

[Working with the Media \(pdf\)](#)

- [Guidelines for News or Press Releases \(pdf\)](#)
- [Wetlands Media Example - Torres Martinez Tribe \(pdf\)](#)
- [Wetlands Media Example - Wisconsin \(pdf\)](#)

[Wetlands Financial Planning \(pdf\)](#)

[EPA's Wetlands State, Tribal and Local Initiatives Webpage](#)

Future Financing Workshops:

EPA Region 8 Training: September 24, 2010, Bozeman, MT

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