

# Wetland Program Development Grant Evaluation



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## Why a Program Evaluation?

- WPDG program has funded \$179 million in projects between 1990 and 2006.
- Increased emphasis at EPA and government-wide on program efficiency and achieving outcomes:
  - OMB PART evaluations of most major EPA programs.
  - internal EPA evaluations of 41 programs between 1999 and 2006.
- Purposes of WPDG evaluation:
  - assess effectiveness of grants in building state/tribal wetlands programs.
  - ascertain what factors enhance or impede success in using the grants to build wetland programs (i.e., barriers and opportunities).
  - make recommendations on how EPA can improve use of WPDGs to help states/tribes build wetlands programs.
- The evaluation will not:
  - report on individual grantee performance.
  - compare grantees to each other with respect to grant program effectiveness.
  - include Wetland Demonstration Pilot grants.

# Wetland Program Development Grant Evaluation

## Basic Design of the Evaluation

- In order to perform an evaluation, a program must have goals to measure progress against.
- WPDG Program overarching goal is to build state/tribal wetlands programs.
- In FY2000 EPA identified six core elements of a comprehensive wetlands program: Regulation, Monitoring and Assessment, Restoration, Water Quality Standards for Wetlands, Public-Private Partnerships, Coordination.
  - in FY 2001, RFPs began to emphasize using grants to build core elements.
- Evaluation will focus on 4 of the 6 elements where bulk of grant money has been spent: Regulation, Monitoring, Restoration, and WQS.
- Period covered by evaluation is 2001-2006. We will review a set of grants from a variety of states/tribes and evaluate the degree to which these grants have built the core elements they were intended to address.

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## Basic Design of the Evaluation

- Through surveys/interviews and the review of grant deliverables, we will determine:
  - what role the grants play in advancing development of one or more core elements.
  - what main factors, internal or external to the WPDG program, help or hinder states/tribes in using the grants to build their wetlands programs.
- To further explore these factors, more detailed case studies will be written for a select number of the evaluation sample.
- To the extent possible, we will ascertain the degree to which dollars spent and number of grant projects affect the building of a given core element.
- Evaluation report will have recommendations for how EPA can help states/tribes more successfully develop their wetlands programs.

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## Design Details and Issues

- Evaluation objective is to measure progress towards developing core elements.
- A challenge is how to systematically gauge progress towards elements
- Closest EPA and states/tribes have come to articulating what it means to achieve core elements is the scoring criteria for Wetlands Demonstration Pilot.
- We are adopting slightly adjusted WDP criteria to ascertain progress made through grants.

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## Design Details and Issues

### *Sample Monitoring Criteria*

The state/tribe has:

- specific monitoring objectives
- a monitoring design for each objective
- a classification system
- wetland inventory maps
- wetland reference network
- uses core and supplemental indicators:
  - Level 1: landscape
  - Level 2: rapid assessment
  - Level 3: bio/eco indices

etc.

State X got a single grant for monitoring (2001-06) and has developed a wetland classification system; no other monitoring criteria were achieved.

Questions:

To what extent did grant play role in establishing or making progress towards a classification system?

If factors other than the grant program were critical in getting the classification system established, what were they?

Why have no other monitoring criteria been met?

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## Design Details and Issues

- Evaluation will look at work done under each grant in sample and assess how many criteria were achieved as a result of the work.
- Criteria do not represent achievements that states/tribes “should have” met, rather they are a common indicator of steps towards core element development.
- Through evaluation interviews we may learn of other important components to developing core elements.
- Not all WPDG grants are linked directly to core elements. Such grants will be left out of the analysis.

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## Next Steps

- Contractor will conduct actual evaluation, with guidance from EPA Program Evaluation Team (HQ and Region 8).
- Contractor will begin interviewing states/tribes this Spring.
- States/tribes to be surveyed have not yet been selected.
- Analysis should be complete by August 2007 and results will be available in Fall 2007 (in time for FY 2008 grant cycle).