



MISSISSIPPI

Original Wetland Acreage	Remaining Wetland Acreage	Acreage Lost	% Lost
9,872,000	4,067,000	5,805,000	-59%

Mississippi Wetlands: Palustrine wetlands in Mississippi include bogs, swamps, riverbank pioneer habitat, bottom-land forests, bayheads, coastal flatwoods, and savannahs. Bottom-land forests (forested wetlands), swamps (forested or scrub-shrub wetlands), and fresh marshes (emergent wetlands) account for most of Mississippi’s wetland acreage. Estuarine wetlands are the second-most common wetlands in Mississippi, including coastal marsh, estuarine, fresh, mud flats and cypress-tupelo gum swamp (estuarine forested wetlands).

<u>Summary</u>	<u>Individual Features</u>	<u>Regulation</u>	<u>Water Quality Standards</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>	<u>Monitoring and Assessment</u>	<u>Restoration</u>	<u>Public/Private Partnerships</u>
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SUMMARY

Overall Program:

The state program focuses primarily upon coastal wetlands below the watermark of ordinary high tide and adjacent wetlands.

Innovative Features and New Programs/Initiatives:

Currently Mississippi’s Coastal Zone Management Plan (Coastal Program) is being rewritten/revised. New programs include the Bureau of Mitigation Compliance, Comprehensive Resource Management Plan, and the Dredge and Beach Renourishment Program.

State Wetland Conservation Plan

The state does not have a wetland conservation plan.

No Net Loss/Net Gain Goal

The Department of Marine Resources strives to meet a goal of no net loss of coastal wetlands.

INDIVIDUAL FEATURES:

Regulation

Wetland Regulatory Statutes and Administrative Rules

Coastal Wetlands Protection Act, Miss. Code Ann. sec. 49-27-1 et. seq; Miss. Coastal Program - Chapter 8, Section 2. Certification is required from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources for most alteration of coastal wetlands.

Coastal Program: Mississippi's coastal program regulates some coastal wetlands in private ownership.

Wetland Definition and/or Delineation; Comparability With Federal Definition

Coastal Wetlands Protection Act: Coastal wetlands means all publicly owned lands subject to the ebb and flow of the tide which are below the watermark of ordinary high tide, all publicly owned accretions above the watermark of ordinary high tide, and all publicly owned submerged waterbottoms below the watermark of ordinary high tide.

Coastal Zone Management Program: Regulates tidal marsh, water bottoms, and major coastal rivers and streams including private lands. Tidal marshes are defined to include "areas of vegetated lands from the watermark of ordinary high tide seaward to a point where regulation ceases to exit.

Evaluation Methodology

Currently Mississippi's Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP) is used for all wetlands except pine savanna. The Hydrogeomorphic (HGM) model is used for pine savanna. HGM models are currently being developed for Tidal Fringe and Forested Headwater Riverine (Bayhead).

Regulated and Exempted Activities

Coastal Wetland Protection Act: Regulates most activities. Exemptions include lands under jurisdiction of any local port authority, lands conveyed for industrial development, and wetlands within 5 feet of private property although exempted activities must comply with the public policy of wetlands protection.

Coastal Zone Management Program: Regulates dredging, excavation, removal or filling of flora and fauna, dumping, filling, and creation of structures. Exemptions include construction of structures by water dependent industries; maintenance and repair of bulkheads, dredging to allow access to piers; oil and gas operations and construction by an individual of a house, fishing camp, or similar structure on his or her own property.

Special Provisions for Agriculture and Forestry

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) General Permit Program for Mississippi has guidance on General Permits for wildlife management areas, refuges, and parks; clean areas for wildlife management; agricultural type activities for the creation of habitat on food plats; and water management.

Penalties and Enforcement

Fines for violations of the Coastal Wetlands Protection Law range up to \$1,000 for single-family residential projects and up to \$10,000 for commercial type projects. In the case of continuing violations, each day should constitute a separate charge. Unresolved violations may be forwarded to the state Attorney General's office for further action.

Permit Tracking

Thorough records are kept in both a hard file and a computer database on every request for certification, which includes all pertinent information such as location of project, what was requested, exactly what was permitted and any mitigation information.

State General Permit (PGP or SPGP) for 404

The Corps Mississippi General Permit Program is reviewed every 5 years. There is a general permit for certain regulated activities in the coastal zone.

Assumption of Section 404 Powers

Mississippi has not tried to assume the Section 404 program.

Joint Permitting

A general permit is in effect for certain regulated activities in the coastal zone. The participating agencies include: Corps, Department of Environmental Quality, and the Department of Marine Resources.

Special Area Management Plans and Advanced Identification Plans

There have been no SAMP's or ADID's completed in Mississippi. However, the Coastal Zone Management Program authorizes the establishment of Special Management Areas. The Special Management Areas Program allows state, local, and federal agencies to enter into voluntary development plans for public facilities and services within areas whose use is historically, economically, and culturally tied to coastal waters.

Role of Local Governments

Local government agencies are notified of proposed activities according to the Coastal Wetlands Protection Act.

Staffing (Regulatory Staff)

Twelve full time staff (10 in Bureau of Wetlands Permitting, 2 in Bureau of Mitigation Compliance).

Water Quality Standards

Wetlands and Water Quality Standards

The state has adopted a Section 401 program but does not apply an anti-degradation policy to wetlands. Wetlands are included in the definition of "Waters of the State". However, the definition excludes wholly landlocked or privately owned water bodies which are not subject to Federal Clean Water Act jurisdiction.

Wetland Definition

Wetlands are defined as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

Designated Uses

Wetland Designated Users are included under the designated use for all waters of the states.

Narrative and/or Numeric Criteria

State water quality standards limit effluent discharges to natural wetlands.

Antidegradation Policy

None under the 401 certification program.

Other

None Identified.

Staffing (Wetland Water Quality Staff)

No information.

Mitigation

Mitigation Policy

Coastal policy on mitigation is being developed and refined.

Mitigation Banks

The Department of Transportation has established mitigation banks. There are nine public mitigation banks and five or six private mitigation banks. The Department of Marine Resources has jurisdiction over mitigation banks in the six lower counties. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality has shared jurisdiction with other mitigation banks in the state.

In Lieu Fee Program

The state does not have an in lieu fee program.

Ad Hoc Arrangements

The state uses preservation through the use of legal instruments.

Mitigation Database

Thorough records are kept in both a hard file and a computer database on every request for certification, which includes all pertinent information such as location of project, what was requested, exactly what was permitted and any mitigation information.

Staffing (Mitigation Staff)

None at present. Two staff members are expected by spring 2005.

Monitoring and Assessment

Mapping /Inventory

The Department of Marine Resources has NWI data for the three coastal counties (Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson) in digital format derived from the hardcopy maps prepared in 1996. The Cowardin classification scheme is used. A status and trends report has not been done.

Mapping of wetlands has been done for some areas of the coast via remote sensing. These areas are mainly coastal preserve areas. A somewhat detailed mapping effort has been completed for all of Jackson County but has not been applied to the other coastal counties.

Wetland Classification and Assessment

Currently Mississippi's WRAP is used for all wetlands except pine savanna. The HGM model is used for pine savanna. HGM models are currently being developed for Tidal Fringe and Forested Headwater Riverine (Bayhead).

Overall wetland gain and loss tracking system

The state does not have a tracking system.

Staffing (Monitoring and Assessment Staff)

Four full time staff.

Restoration

Program Description

Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program was established in 1992 to acquire, preserve, restore and manage sensitive coastal wetlands within 20 designated sites totaling around 72,000 acres. The program works with various local, state, federal, non-profit, and private partners to achieve its goals.

Restoration Program Goals

The primary goals of the program are to restore lost or degraded ecological functions and to preserve natural aesthetics.

Eligibility Criteria

The program focuses primarily on state-owned lands within the 20 designated sites. However, the program works closely with regulatory and mitigation staff to find additional restoration opportunities related to dredging or mitigation for wetland impacts.

Restoration Database

No formal database exists. Regulatory and mitigation staff track projects related to permitted activities.

Staffing (Wetland Regulation Program Staff)

Three staff-program manager and two biologists.

Public/Private Partnerships

Acquisition Program

The Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program, established in 1992, is actively acquiring coastal wetlands within 20 designated sites totaling some 72,000 acres. Currently, 40,000 of the 72,000 acres are owned and managed by the state or federal government.

Public Outreach/Education

Educating the public about the ecological and economic values of coastal wetlands is a primary goal of the Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program and the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Upon request, biologists are available to give presentations on coastal wetland habitats or particular flora or fauna. These presentations target all ages but are particularly geared for grade school children.

Project-specific outreach programs include the Gulf Coast Birding Trail; Tri-County Fire Cooperative; Moss Point Waterfront Development Plan; Gulf Coast Botanical Gardens at Beauvoir; field manuals for habitat identification; and the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan Conference, a forum for the public to discuss important issues related to smart growth, stormwater management, and GIS implementation.

The Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program also participates in the Celebrate the Gulf Festival, Southern States Environmental Conference, and sets up educational booths at various other conferences and festivals (e.g., Earth Day, Migratory Bird Day, Submerged Lands Conference).

Tax Incentives

§ 27-7-22.21. Income tax credit for donations of land or interest in land considered priority site for conservation under Mississippi Natural Heritage Program or adjacent to and along a stream fully nominated to Mississippi Scenic Streams Stewardship Program.

§ 89-19-1. Mississippi Conservation Easement Act of 1986.

Technical Assistance

N/A

Other Nonregulatory Incentives for Private Landowners

N/A

Wetland Training and Education

The Bureau of Mitigation Compliance performs wetland assessment/evaluation trainings for members of the regulatory community and wetland consulting community.

Watershed planning

The Bureau of Wetlands Permitting and the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan program are involved in watershed planning activities.

Special Problems

None Identified.

Coordination

None Identified.

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Contact Points

www.dmr.state.ms.us

Guidebooks, Brochures, Websites, Other Educational Materials

A Citizens Guide for Protecting Wetlands in Mississippi.

Marine Construction Standards for Shoreline Erosion Control and Shorefront Access Facilities.

Mississippi Coastal Program.

Mississippi Coastal Wetlands booklet.

Mississippi Coastal Habitats booklet.

Mississippi Coastal Preserves website.

Mississippi Coastal Preserves Wildflowers Poster I & II.

The Management of Jackson County Wetlands: A Guide for Landowners.

Coastworks: An Activity Book About Mississippi's Coastal Resources.

Pollution Prevention for Coastal Mississippi Marinas.

Don't Dump...Pump: A Guide to Marine Sewage Pumpout Stations in Coastal Mississippi.

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources general information brochure.

Coastal Markers—newsletter of the Department of Marine Resources.

Marine Resources and History of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Marine Discovery Series, Books 1-14. (For example, Book 14 is "Learning about Nonpoint Source Pollution")