Association News - by Jeanne Christie, ASWM

In Southern Maine we are enjoying the warmest spring ever followed by what may be the warmest summer ever. On a particularly hot day, the temperatures might reach 90. It has also been dry, which is hard on the mosquito population—not that we’re complaining. Insect repellant was not required during a long weekend recently camping in Baxter State Park. Our ascent of Mt. Katahdin, the highest mountain in Maine, was clear and sunny and generally spectacular. Same with canoeing, visiting some ice caves and searching for moose. The garden is also thriving and evenings are spent freezing vegetables and watching the winter squash plants conquer the world.

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Wetlands in the Spotlight: 10 Easy Steps! - by Leah Stetson, ASWM

The nonprofit Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) launched a popular program last year called Wetland Gems. Wisconsin Wetlands Association’s purpose was to share with the public examples of wetlands and to showcase them as important places. The list of Wetland Gems built upon the results of existing planning documents produced by The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. All of the planning documents addressed natural communities of all types, and Wisconsin Wetlands Association pulled out information specific to wetlands that was useful in developing a list of high quality wetlands and existing threats to wetlands.

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Climate Change and Global Warming

It has been hot in other parts of the world. Temperatures have been high throughout most of the United States and in other countries as well. A thoughtful blog by Jay Gulledge posted at the Pew Center on Climate Change website [http://www.pewclimate.org/blog/gulledgej](http://www.pewclimate.org/blog/gulledgej) describes the direct relationship between the heat wave in Russia and the devastating floods in Pakistan. Put simply a high over Russia has sent its normal summer rainfall south to combine with the monsoon moisture over Pakistan. Something similar happened last winter when a persistent high in the northeast sent the mid-Atlantic Region a series of heavy snowstorms.

These extreme weather events have become more frequent and are expected as part of climate change and global warming. More heat equals more evaporation, which leads to larger, more damaging storm events. It is important for local, state and federal governments to respond with adaptation strategies. The Corps Reform Network has posted a good summary of changing weather trends around the country at [http://www.corpsreform.org/sitepages/downloads/climate-water-impacts-report.pdf](http://www.corpsreform.org/sitepages/downloads/climate-water-impacts-report.pdf). In recent months the White House Council on Environmental Quality with federal agencies that are members of the Climate Change Adaptation Task Force have been developing a report for the President with recommendations for adapting to climate change impacts both domestically and internationally. An interim report was issued in March and a final report is scheduled to be forwarded to the President in October. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/adaptation](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/adaptation)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has a web portal with many useful resources at: [http://www.climate.gov/#climateWatch](http://www.climate.gov/#climateWatch)

ASWM posts new information weekly on our wetlands and climate change webpage. Recently we added 15 new links to our section on State Climate Change Action Plans, including links to resources and publications on adaptation strategies and resources. [http://www.aswm.org/science/climate_change/climate_change.htm#state](http://www.aswm.org/science/climate_change/climate_change.htm#state)

2012 Farm Bill

It is not too soon to be thinking about the next Farm Bill, which is scheduled to be reauthorized in 2012.

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The Farm Bill includes the Wetlands Reserve Program and other important conservation programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/)


**Nationwide Permit Reauthorization**

The Section 404 nationwide permits are required to be re-issued by March of 2012. [http://www.usace.army.mil/CECW/Pages/nw_permits.aspx](http://www.usace.army.mil/CECW/Pages/nw_permits.aspx) The nationwide permits are re-issued through formal rulemaking every five years. It is likely that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be publishing a proposed rule in the coming months providing an opportunity for public comment. Concurrent with the issuance of the proposed rule states and tribes will be reviewing the proposed rule and developing plans to waive, condition or deny each of the proposed nationwide permits.

**Floodplain/Natural Hazard Policies**

The Obama Administration has re-organized and invigorated the Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force. The charge of the task force is to provide guidance to federal agencies and report to Congress on a conceptual framework that identifies strategies to implement a balanced approach to management of the nation’s floodplains. The Task Force held a listening session in May of 2010 to solicit input and ideas.

The task force has many significant challenges to address. These should include ensuring that natural resources in the floodplain are maintained and restored and providing ideas and recommendations on how to revise the National Flood Insurance Program. The following websites contain useful information.


Gulf Oil Spill Clean-up

Finally, the Deep Water Horizon oil spill has been capped. Many recent reports and analyses have focused on clean-up efforts, estimates of the amount of oil still in the Gulf and speculation regarding the long-term impacts on the Gulf’s ecology. It is likely to take many years to understand what effects the oil spill has and will have on the Gulf’s natural resources and the people who live there.

ASWM has established a Gulf oil spill webpage, where we will continue to post information related to Gulf wetlands and other aquatic resources at: http://aswm.org/science/oil_spill/index.htm

Recent coverage includes
Wood Hole Says Oil Trapped Deep, Degrading Very Slowly

Much Oil Remains in the Gulf, Researchers Estimate
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704868604575434074237252604.html

Gulf oil spill adds facet to Katrina recovery

Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill (Wikipedia site)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepwater_Horizon_oil_spill

Also, there are links to information on oil spill clean-up and wetland restoration (post-spill) here: http://aswm.org/science/oil_spill/index.htm#restoration

Tidal wetland, Jeanne Christie photos
Wetlands in the Spotlight – 10 Easy Steps!

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By Leah Stetson, ASWM

Wisconsin’s “Wetland Gems”

Wisconsin Wetlands Association staff divided the state into ecologically-based regions (rather than political) and identified high-quality wetland sites within each region. Their goal was to select sites that represented each type of wetland community in each region of Wisconsin. Using strategic selection criteria, Wisconsin Wetlands Association gave priority to wetland sites that were recognized in more than one of the planning documents. They met with ecologists. They looked at interconnected mosaics of wetland systems. They organized the list of sites by eco-region and showed their general locations on a digital map. They called the sites “Wetland Gems.” Each site has a fact sheet that describes the significance of the wetland type along with the threats, flora and fauna, for example, the Blue Swamp in Central Wisconsin [http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org/Gems/C4_Blue_Swamp.pdf].

In addition to the 93 sites selected for their ecological value, Wisconsin Wetlands Association also highlighted seven “workhorse” wetlands to illustrate the functions or services those wetland types provide. These include Turtle Valley Wildlife Area as an example of a wetland that provides for wildlife habitat; Spoehr’s Marsh for fishery habitat; the Greenseams Program as an example for flood attenuation; Halfway Creek Marsh for water quality protection; Oconto Marsh as an example for shoreline protection; Pheasant Branch for groundwater connections; and Mead Wildlife Area for providing recreation and education opportunities. Each site is shown on a map of the state. Carolyn Sandberg of Sandberg Cartography volunteered to provide the mapping services for the program. For more about the workhorse wetlands, go to: [http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org/gemsworkhorse.htm]

The goal of the Wetland Gems program was outreach, not protection. There have been many benefits derived from the program and the publication of the book, Wetland Gems. Local conservation groups can use the Wetland Gems program to help further their mission in protecting those areas connected to or listed among the Wetland Gems sites. Wetland Gems can be used as a tool and a talking point. When Wisconsin Wetlands Association says, “wetlands are diverse,” they can point to the sites featured among the Wetland Gems and say, “Look at the photos of these places, or better yet, go see the sites yourselves,” according to Katie Beilfuss of Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

The Wisconsin group used a classification system developed by Steve Eggers and Don Reed. [http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/plants/mnplant/index.htm]

Wisconsin Wetlands Association has received a lot of positive feedback about the Wetland Gems program. “The program emphasizes the positive and gives communities something to be excited about,” Beilfuss said. By collaborating with municipalities, “Friends of” groups, landowners, elected officials and Wisconsin DNR, they created a win-win for everyone. What people wanted, however, was a book.

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Although the Wetland Gems site information is available online (for free) many groups requested publication of the fact sheets in a spiral-bound book. Wisconsin Wetlands Association bound the glossy coffee-table style book themselves; it’s available for $25 a copy. Local photographers donated wetland photos for the use of the Wetland Gems program. It is an attractive and interesting book. Public libraries have requested it. A conservation group purchased over a dozen copies. Conservancy groups that manage sites included in *Wetland Gems* can use the book as a fundraising tool for wetlands protection. For more information about the program and book, go to: [http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org/gems.htm](http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org/gems.htm)

The Wetland Gems program has brought national attention to the state’s wetlands. Wisconsin Wetlands Association has become involved with the U.S. National Ramsar Committee and also established a statewide Ramsar Committee in Wisconsin, which selected prioritized sites with international importance from the Wetland Gems list. This group is now working with landowners from these priority sites to nominate the sites identified as priorities. This is the first time a strategic process has been used to determine which wetland sites need to be considered for Ramsar designation within a geographic or political area. For more information about Ramsar, go to: [http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-ramsar-movie/main/ramsar/1%5E24724_4000_0__](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-ramsar-movie/main/ramsar/1%5E24724_4000_0__)

Maine’s “Natural Landscapes”

Another example of a state project to identify important habitats was undertaken by the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP), which is housed within the state’s Department of Conservation. MNAP conducts inventories of lands that support rare and endangered plants, such as lady slippers, as well as rare and uncommon ecosystems, such as wetlands. MNAP is part of an international network of Natural Area Programs called NatureServe [http://www.natureserve.org/](http://www.natureserve.org/), which provides scientific information for effective conservation.

MNAP recently published a new book, *Natural Landscapes of Maine—a Guide to Natural Communities and Ecosystems* by Susan Gawler and Andy Cutko (2010). The Maine guide is organized by ecological type, rather than by site or eco-region. Examples of conservation lands that the public can visit are provided for each type. For instance, there are several conservation lands listed for Brackish Tidal Marsh, including Acadia National Park and the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. Another example, the public can visit Sears Island to experience a Hardwood Seepage Forest or go to

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Saco Heath Preserve to see an Atlantic White Cedar Bog, two rare types of ecosystems in Maine. The publication includes wetlands and upland plant communities.

The authors developed a classification system based on an earlier version of the publication and revised it with new data, adding new ecosystem types. The book divides the state into 104 natural communities and ecosystems, giving a 2 page description and photos for each type, for example, Balsam Poplar Floodplain Forest, Open Cedar Fen, Alpine Bog, Grassy Shrub Marsh, Riverside Seep. There are substantial sections in the book for wooded wetlands and open wetlands. The guide explains the differences between various peatland ecosystems, for example, describing coastal plateau bogs, domed bog, eccentric bogs, Kettle-hole bog ponds and so forth. It covers freshwater shoreline and tidal ecosystems, too. For more information about the guide, go to: http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mnap/publications/community_classification.htm

Using GIS to Identify and Classify Wetland Types

Advances in wetland mapping have encouraged a number of states to work on creating and updating digital maps that identify wetlands and other natural resources. The concept of using GIS to support identification of functionally significant wetlands has been around for over ten years. State and federal partners along with nonprofit organizations and consultants are currently working separately and collaboratively toward mapping wetlands throughout the Nation. A new web tool being developed by the USGS is the Wetlands Classification Image Gallery, where wetland professionals and the general public can submit pictures: http://aswm.org/swp/mapping/wetlands_classification_image_gallery_factsheet_060710.pdf

How to Launch a Similar Program in 10 Steps

Wisconsin’s Wetland Gems program used a process to identify important wetlands that can be readily duplicated in other states.

1. **Identify potential partners and decide on a purpose.** Potential partners might be state agency staff in the environment or conservation department; local/city planners and municipalities, conservation commissions; land trusts or other nonprofit organizations that deal with wetlands; the state’s Natural Areas Program or other wetland initiatives; universities and high schools; wildlife or nature preserves; national organizations like Association of State Wetland Managers, federal agencies such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), state and national park authorities, etc. The purpose might be educating the public about wetlands, identification of threatened sites that need protection, or some other goal. Be clear about the goals early in the process.

2. **Determine if there is an ongoing project that is accomplishing the same goal,** e.g. outreach and education about the importance of wetlands, identifying priority wetland types or sites in the state. If no other project is in the works, talk with partners to gather information about existing analyses of natural resources with a focus on wetlands, threats to specific wetland sites, important wetland types, etc. At this stage, identify the
suite of materials needed to promote the program, e.g. webpage, fact sheets, brochures, a book, video. This will aid in determining what data to gather (and in what format.)

3. **Assemble existing planning documents**, any available analyses of wetland threats, inventories of rare and endangered plants and draft an analysis of threats to wetlands. Also outline the important functions of wetlands that should be included, e.g. flood attenuation, shoreline protection, wildlife habitat.

4. **Develop selection criteria.** Use a science-based selection process. Decide which wetlands get priority and how many wetlands will be included in the program. This may include a focus on watersheds using ‘whole place planning,’ or prioritizing wetlands that face immediate threats from development, climate change and other impacts.

5. **Consult ecologists. Talk with planners and state agency staff** (from the wetlands, water quality program or related office). Meet with other partners to discuss possible wetland types and sites to be included. Before finalizing the list, **talk with the landowners** for the proposed/selected sites. Some sites might not be open to the public. Consider whether the list will include a mix of privately-owned and public lands. Some landowners will not want their sites promoted or identified on a map because of access issues or sensitive lands, rare & threatened species present, or other factors. Make sure to get the landowners’ support for the program before announcing or identifying sites publicly.

6. **Choose a classification system**—site-based or type-based, or a combination of these. If using a combination of systems, be sure to describe how the classification system was developed. For example, the project might use a type-based system developed by state ecologists, or the Cowardin standard.

7. **Gather data about the selected wetlands.** Take photographs, or ask local photographers if they would be willing to donate digital images of the wetlands for the project. Landowners may also provide photos and data about their site.

8. **Map the selected wetlands.** Alternatively, work with a cartographer to identify the general locations of the selected wetland sites or conservation / public lands to be used as examples of wetland types. Private property concerns over public access and other issues need to be weighed in decisions about identifying specific sites on a map.

9. **Promote the new program** (webpage, press releases, brochure, etc.). Work with partners to spread the word about the “special wetland places” or “important wetland types” in the state. Make fact sheets or a brochure to be distributed to local conservation groups and other partners throughout the state.

10. If desired, **bind the materials together in a book.** This could be sold to conservation groups, local schools and libraries, and distributed to the wider public (if made available in bookstores or online). Use the materials, web and print, as a talking tool to inform and educate the public, industries and other interest groups, elected officials and planners, when discussing the value of wetlands in the state.
Buried Far Away

By Michael Caron,
Wetlands Preservation Organization, Kansas

Editor’s note: The Wakarusa Wetlands are known by a few different names, including the Haskell-Baker Wetlands. The area is threatened by a proposed highway and is an important site ecologically and culturally.

The original photo was taken by Frank Rinehart, or perhaps his assistant Adolph Muhr. The subject is a Cocapah boy who attended the first National Indian Congress held in 1898 in Omaha, Nebraska. He is about the same age as many of the boys buried in the Haskell Cemetery. His name was Buried Far Away. However, it is important to know that the Cocapah, in his time, believed very strongly that their dead should never be buried. Cremation was the way of and to their ancestors.

I scanned the photo a few years ago to use in making a poster for our annual sunrise ceremony in the wetlands. The Summer Solstice is a time when many pray for the protection of threatened Native American sacred places all across America. Natives and non-native locals have been gathering in the Wakarusa Wetlands for years on that auspicious June morning because it is a place historically tied to memories of the children who died at Haskell or disappeared while attempting to return to their homelands. Long before I accidentally over-adjusted the contrast on this scanned digital image, Buried Far Away seemed to capture the story of Haskell and the wetlands better than any image I’d ever seen. I have no knowledge that this child ever attended Haskell or set foot in the wetlands. Nor do I have direct evidence Buried Far Away was related to anyone who died in any off-reservation boarding school.

How did Buried Far Away receive such a strange name? Thousands of Indian children in his time were being taken from their families to places like Haskell Institute, far away from their ancestral homelands. This young boy likely grew up in the general vicinity of Yuma, Arizona, though his people inhabited an area that stretched into adjacent California and Sonora, Mexico. Other children from his tribe were forcibly taken by the government, never to return. Many tribes had traditions of giving younger siblings, or even war captives, the names of dead sons and daughters. Others had a taboo against speaking the actual names of dead loved ones, using euphemisms, substitute names that showed proper respect for the deceased, like many of us speak of “remains” instead of “corpse”. Is this how Buried Far Away came by his name?

Haskell, where Rinehart’s photo collection is stored, was a place where far too many students died or disappeared in the early decades of its existence. The damp overcrowded dorms with no heat contributed to many of the deaths. Tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, and many other diseases spread easily taking heavy tolls. Farm and other work accidents were all too common in

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an environment where child labor was unregulated and viewed by authorities as the natural destiny of a race they believed incapable of anything more than hard labor.

Suicides, and perhaps as commonly terminal homesickness, claimed more lives. Some drowned or died of exposure trying to escape across the Wakarusa.

Haskell leaders, many of whom were Christian ministers, uniformly believed any funerary practice other than a traditional Christian burial, was “devil worship”. To be buried in the Haskell Cemetery was, for too many of the children who died at the school, a fate that would block them from ever being able to join their ancestors and loved ones in the next life. Their spirits became trapped.

The loss of a child who was buried far away caused unimaginably deep grief for many native families. It had a cultural and spiritual significance for many Native American families that modern people have difficulty comprehending.

For folks in my Vietnam generation perhaps the closest analogy would be the heart wrenching grief of so many of the families of American soldiers missing in action. Those sons and brothers, husbands and fathers were much older than most of the children who perished in our nation’s Indian boarding schools. I have seen their pain up close. Hugged tormented mothers, helped their once young daughters look for their missing fathers. I know that their suffering is deep and real, yet few carried the added misery of believing deep in their soul that what had happened would prevent them from ever rejoining their loved ones in the next life. That, in fact, was the one great comfort the majority of MIA relatives I have known through the years, many of whom are now deceased, expressed to me before passing.

What remains visible of Buried Far Away’s face is eerily moon-like. Those parallel line tattoos running down his cheek look to me as if he had a trench to carry away his tears. He seems half submerged, a bog-boy, half grown boogieman, refusing to stay buried beneath the surface. And his mouth, straight on almost speaking to us in one instant and the next moment it seems like the real lips are turned from us speaking past anything we could comprehend. He seems as far away as the man in the moon, yet so close I can almost feel his breath. Given the way wetlands so efficiently break down and redistribute dead souls, human and all their relations, who come to rest there, it is not unreasonable to believe that everything you see, smell and touch there is a part of what remains of the children who were lost at Haskell.

For more information about the Wakarusa Wetlands, go to:
http://www.sacredland.org/haskell-baker-wetlands/
http://www.engg.ksu.edu/chsr/outreach/tosnac/sites/haskell.html
http://www.facebook.com/wetlandspreservationorganization
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7KyeO6ZgGw

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