ARKANSAS

Arkansas Wetlands: Most of the wetlands in Arkansas are palustrine forested, scrub-shrub, and nonvegetated wetlands. The most extensive areas of wetlands in the state lie along the major rivers, such as the lower Mississippi, Arkansas, Red, White, and Little Rivers and their principal tributaries in the Mississippi Alluvial Plain, South Central Plains, and Arkansas Valley Ecoregions. Other wetlands are scattered throughout the State and are associated with springs and seeps in the Ouachita Mountains and Ozark Highlands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Wetland Acreage</th>
<th>Remaining Wetland Acreage</th>
<th>Acreage Lost</th>
<th>% Lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9,848,600</td>
<td>2,763,600</td>
<td>7,085,000</td>
<td>-72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Program

The state has no coastal or freshwater regulatory wetland program. State agencies review and comment upon federal Section 404 permits, and the state has a 401 Water Quality Certification Program, which is implemented by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ).

The state does however, have active non-regulatory programs. The state has formed the Arkansas Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team (MAWPT), comprising representatives from state agencies with an interest in wetlands. The MAWPT has been active in developing inventories and planning tools for agency and non-government use. To date, these tools and recommendations are not part of the regulatory programs.

Innovative Features and New Programs/Initiatives

The MAWPT has been active in developing planning tools and advocating some state legislation important to state wetland efforts. Arkansas now has the Arkansas Private Wetland and Riparian Zone Creation and Restoration Incentives Act and the Arkansas Private Wetland and Riparian Zone Creation and Restoration Incentives Act. The MAWPT developed a State Wetland Strategy, part of a larger Plan. The MAWPT is using GIS analysis to inventory high priority restoration and preservation areas within the Mississippi Delta region of the state. The MAWPT is also developing functional assessment tools to help with monitoring the progress of wetland restoration work. To date, the MAWPT has developed a Hydrogeomorphic (HGM) classification of the wetlands of Arkansas, which is published on the website. In

(Please click on heading above to go to that section.)

SUMMARY
addition, the MAWPT is developing HGM regional wetland assessment guidebooks for the Wetland Planning Regions of Arkansas (The Delta and Coastal Plain regions currently under development). The MAWPT also conducts various educational and outreach projects, including the development of a wetland curriculum for a state environmental education center, teacher’s wetland workshops, landowner’s guides to voluntary wetland restoration programs, university lectures, a biennial newsletter, and a new website (http://www.mawpt.org/).

State Wetland Conservation Plan

The Arkansas Wetland Conservation Plan (PLAN) is a comprehensive planning document under development by the MAWPT that combines wetland inventory information and state strategy recommendations to accomplish the following goals:

- Address wetland issues and concerns (i.e. mitigation, BMPs, public outreach, education, etc.);
- Identify priority areas for restoration, protection, and enhancement through individual Wetland Planning Area reports;
- Evaluate existing state agency resources, responsibilities, and wetland programs; and
- Provide recommendations for plan implementation in a State Wetland Strategy.

MAWPT’s two-pronged approach to developing the PLAN includes:

- **State Wetland Strategy** - Non-watershed specific evaluation of state-wide issues, objectives, institutional capacities, state resources, and recommended steps for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Arkansas Wetland Conservation Plan to meet both state-wide and watershed objectives; and
- **Wetland Planning Area Reports** - Identification and prioritization of emphasis areas within the watershed in order to focus voluntary wetland preservation, restoration, and/or enhancement efforts (maximizing the effectiveness of limited funding resources).

The strategy was completed in 1999, and the Wetland Planning Area Reports continue to be written. Documents that have been finalized are available on the Arkansas MAWPT website (www.mawpt.org). Many ongoing MAWPT projects fulfill or partially fulfill wetland objectives found within the Strategy, and constitute implementation of the plan: development of an HGM classification of the wetlands of Arkansas; development of HGM regional wetland assessment guidebooks for the Wetland Planning Regions of Arkansas; development of a wetland curriculum for a state environmental education center; public outreach in the form of teacher’s wetland workshops, landowner’s guides to voluntary wetland restoration programs, university lectures, and a biennial newsletter. In addition, the ongoing GIS analysis on a watershed-by-watershed basis within the Delta region of the state will complete the Plan.

No Net Loss/Net Gain Goal

No net loss/net gain is the first objective of the Arkansas State Wetland Strategy, but is not reflected in regulations or statute.

INDIVIDUAL FEATURES:

**Regulation**

**Wetland Regulatory Statutes and Administrative Rules**

None exist. However, the state natural resources agencies review all federal Section 404 permits. A technical review committee of state agencies makes recommendations to the Governor as to the official state position on permits.
Wetland Definition and/or Delineation; Comparability With Federal Definition

The state has no separate regulatory definition of wetlands.

Evaluation Methodology

While the state is developing HGM assessment procedures, they are not currently required within a regulatory context.

Regulated and Exempted Activities

N/A

Special Provisions for Agriculture and Forestry

N/A

Penalties and Enforcement

N/A

Permit Tracking

N/A

State General Permit (PGP or SPGP) for 404

N/A

Assumption of Section 404 Powers

N/A

Joint Permitting

N/A

Special Area Management Plans and Advanced Identification Plans

None exist.

Role of Local Governments

None exist.

Staffing (Regulatory Staff)

None exist.
**Water Quality Standards**

**Wetlands and Water Quality Standards**

Ark. Stat. Ann. 582-1903(b). The State has adopted a 401 program administered by ADEQ with no explicit standards for wetlands. The state does apply an antidegradation policy to substantial alterations of a water body, which may include wetlands. In addition, efforts are underway to designate extraordinary and ecologically sensitive areas.

**Wetland Definition**

None exist.

**Designated Uses**

Not for wetlands.

**Narrative and/or Numeric Criteria**

None exist.

**Antidegradation Policy**

None exist.

**Other**

None exist.

**Staffing** *(Wetland Water Quality Staff)*

1/2 person-year (ADEQ).

**Mitigation**

**Mitigation Policy**

No state policy exists.

**Mitigation Banks**

Arkansas Soil & Water Conservation Commission has worked with federal and state regulatory agencies to secure the approval for the Camp Nine wetland mitigation bank site. The Commission has purchased a 320-acre mitigation bank site in southeast Arkansas; they expect to have mitigation credits for sale by December 2001. The Camp Nine site is one of many banks envisioned by the state to be part of the State Mitigation Banking Program. Bank sites will be restored to improve wetland functions such as floodwater retention, wildlife habitat, and water quality improvement.

This state-sponsored banking program provides new opportunities for wetland permit applicants to offset unavoidable wetland impacts. The program works in a similar way to a conventional or entrepreneurial mitigation bank. Credits (units of trade) are earned at the site as the wetland functions are restored. These credits may then be purchased by permittees to fulfill compensatory mitigation requirements of their Section 404 wetland permits.
In Lieu Fee Program
None exist.

Ad Hoc Arrangements
None exist.

Mitigation Database
None exist.

Staffing (Mitigation Staff)
None exist.

Monitoring and Assessment
Mapping /Inventory
Mapping is limited to National Wetlands Inventory maps, not digital.

Wetland Classification and Assessment
The state’s MAWPT has developed an HGM classification for its wetlands, though this classification does not have an inherent “quality” scale. It is used for state planning, but is suitable for use in permitting and other applications (i.e. it is consistent with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Waterways Experiment Station HGM classifications and documents). The classification has allowed the state to identify and characterize rare wetlands. A description of the classification, keys, and description of wetland types can be found at http://www.mawpt.org/wetlands/classification/classes.asp.

Because the HGM classification approach is specifically geared towards wetland functions, it has also been the basis of development of Regional HGM Functional Assessment Guidebooks, which are currently under development with grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The functional assessment guidebook for the Delta region of the state is in draft form, and the one for the Coastal Plain region is under development. The MAWPT plans to develop similar regional guidebooks for the other wetland planning regions of Arkansas, pending grant support: Ouachita Mountains, Ozark Mountains, and Arkansas Valley. Like the classification, these wetland functional assessment guidebooks are being developed for use by the state for planning purposes and for monitoring publicly held wetlands. However, they are being produced consistent with Corps guidelines and will be appropriate for any other uses deemed appropriate at later times.

Overall Wetland Gain and Loss Tracking System
None at present.

Staffing (Monitoring and Assessment Staff)
None.
**Restoration**

**Program Description**

The state’s MAWPT has initiated a few small wetland restoration projects on state-owned land, but these are not part of a formal program available to private landowners.

**Restoration Program Goals**

No formal program goals.

**Eligibility Criteria**

No formal program goals.

**Restoration Database**

None exist.

**Staffing** (Wetland Restoration Program Staff)

None exist.

**Public/Private Partnerships**

**Acquisition Program**

No formal program.

**Public Outreach/Education**

The Arkansas MAWPT has compiled a Landowner’s Guide to Voluntary Wetland Programs in Arkansas, which can be accessed at: [Landowner’s Guide to Voluntary Wetland Programs in Arkansas](#).

This guidebook outlines federal, state, and private programs available to landowners for the restoration of wetlands.

The MAWPT also publishes a newsletter twice a year.

**Tax Incentives**

ACT 561- Arkansas Private Wetland and Riparian Zone Creation and Restoration Incentives Act. This Act creates tax credit incentives for the creation and restoration of private wetlands and riparian zones, and for other purposes. Landowners may receive up to $50,000 total credit for each project, and a maximum annual credit of $5,000/project for up to 10 years.

**Technical Assistance**

The Arkansas MAWPT has compiled a Landowner’s Guide to Voluntary Wetland Programs in Arkansas, which can be accessed below. This includes a lot of information on whom to reach for technical assistance.

[Landowner’s Guide to Voluntary Wetland Programs in Arkansas](#)
Other Nonregulatory Incentives for Private Landowners

Not Applicable.

Wetland Training and Education

The MAWPT assists with workshops to teach teachers in Arkansas about wetlands: what wetlands are, where they are found in Arkansas, how they are formed, what types occur in Arkansas, wetland ecosystem functions, and the value of those functions.

Watershed Planning

The MAWPT has conducted GIS analysis on many of the watersheds of the Delta Region of the state to determine priority areas for wetland restoration and preservation. The MAWPT intends to complete this work on a watershed-by-watershed basis throughout the Delta Region, and at a larger scale for the rest of the state.

Special Problems

None exist.

Coordination

The MAWPT was formed, at the request of the Governor's Office, to focus limited agency resources on state wetland conservation planning efforts. The MAWPT consists of representatives from six state agencies:

- Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC)
- Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC)
- Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
- Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ASWCC)
- Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC)
- University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service (UACES).

Many scientists from both the public and private sectors have contributed their expertise and assisted the MAWPT with the development of a state wetland conservation plan. The MAWPT has been funded since 1992 from EPA “State Wetlands Protection Development Program” monies to conduct statewide planning, develop conservation strategies and implement voluntary, incentive-based wetland conservation initiatives.

Contact Person(s)

Elizabeth Murray
Arkansas’ Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team Coordination Office
2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR  72032
(502) 223-6356
(501) 680-0319 (M)

Contact Points

See below.
Guidebooks, Brochures, Websites, Other Educational Materials

The MAWPT website (www.mawpt.org) has information on the wetlands of Arkansas, including the HGM classification, tax incentives, the Arkansas State Wetland Strategy, and many other documents available to the public such as the Landowner’s Guide to Voluntary Wetland Programs, and final Wetland Planning Area (watershed) reports. As new reports are published (additional Wetland Planning Area Reports, Regional HGM Functional Assessment Guidebooks, etc.), these will also be made available on the website.