



OKLAHOMA

Original Wetland Acreage	Remaining Wetland Acreage	Acreage Lost	% Lost
2,842,600	949,700	1,892,900	-67%

Oklahoma Wetlands: Palustrine wetlands constitute most of Oklahoma’s wetland acreage. Palustrine wetlands in the State include forested wetlands such as bottom-land hardwood forests and swamps; emergent wetlands such as marshes and wet meadows; aquatic-bed wetlands characterized by submersed or floating plants in ponds, lakes, rivers, and sloughs; and sparsely vegetated wetlands such as small, intermittently flooded playa lakes. Most lacustrine wetlands in Oklahoma are in the larger playa lakes and in the shallows of the many reservoirs on rivers statewide. The State has extensive riverine wetlands.

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

Overall Program:

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) is designated as the lead agency for wetlands planning and development of a wetlands strategy. OCC is also responsible for organizing the interagency “Oklahoma’s Wetlands Workgroup”.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) reviews federal actions that impact wetlands in the state and is involved with wetlands mitigation. ODWC is also involved with implementing the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) is responsible for the state water quality standards, coordinating the National Flood Insurance Program, and the management and administration of water rights for both streams and groundwaters in Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is responsible for a limited wetlands regulatory program that is implemented through the 404 program and 401 water quality certification.

Innovative Features and New Programs/Initiatives

Oklahoma’s Wetlands Workgroup.

State Wetland Conservation Plan

Oklahoma's Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation Plan was completed in 1996, although it was never adopted by the Legislature.

No Net Loss/Net Gain Goal

The goal stated in Oklahoma's Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation Plan is as follows:

"The goals of the State of Oklahoma are to conserve, enhance, and restore the quantity and biological diversity of all wetlands in the state."

An objective within Oklahoma's Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation Plan states:

"To establish a net-gain wetlands policy for state-owned lands and a no-net-loss policy for state-funded projects to encourage the restoration, enhancement, and creation of wetlands."

INDIVIDUAL FEATURES:

Regulation

Wetland Regulatory Statutes and Administrative Rules

OAC 252:611-3-1. Water quality certifications required:

- (a) Certification from state required. In accordance with the provisions of Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act and the Environmental Quality Code, any applicant for a federal license or permit to conduct any activity including but not limited to, the construction or operation of facilities, dredge or fill, or other activities, which may result in any discharge into, or pollution or alteration of the waters of the State of Oklahoma, shall first obtain a water quality certification from the DEQ for such activity, facility or discharge will comply with the applicable provisions of Sections 301, 302, 303, 306, and 307 of the CWA, OWQS, and other applicable state requirements.
- (b) Types of federal applications for which certification issued. The DEQ issues, renews and modifies water quality certifications including, but not limited to, the following list. However, certification is not required for state issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permits.
 - (1) Permits issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under the NPDES program;
 - (2) Permits issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) under the Section 404 permit program for the discharge of dredged or fill materials;
 - (3) Applications to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a federal license to construct and operate a hydroelectric facility;
 - (4) Applications to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a license to operate a facility; and
 - (5) Permit issued by the U.S. Coast Guard that results in the discharge of wastewater or pollutants into navigable waters.

Wetland Definition and/or Delineation; Comparability With Federal Definition

The State of Oklahoma does not have a regulatory definition for wetlands, but it is recommended in Oklahoma's Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation Plan that the EPA and the Corps' regulatory definition be adopted.

Evaluation Methodology

Oklahoma does not currently have an evaluation methodology.

Regulated and Exempted Activities

Those that apply through the Section 404 program.

Special Provisions for Agriculture and Forestry

There are currently no special provisions.

Penalties and Enforcement

Done by the Corps through the Section 404.

Permit Tracking

The Corps has a permit tracking program.

State General Permit (PGP or SPGP) for 404

There is currently no state general permit for 404.

Assumption of Section 404

Assumption has been explored, but not undertaken by the state.

Joint Permitting

DEQ writes conditions to Corps' permits pursuant to 401 certification.

Special Area Management Plans and Advanced Identification Plans

No SAMPs or ADIDs completed or under development.

Role of Local Governments

Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association reviews proposed projects and makes recommendations, but the Corps makes the ultimate decision for approval or denial of a project.

Staffing

None.

Water Quality Standards

Wetlands and Water Quality Standards

Wetlands are not segregated out as a separate water body type and thus are included in the basic definition of "waters of the state". Water Quality Standards (WQS) assigned to waterbodies not specifically listed in the WQS documents with specific beneficial uses are assumed to support the primary beneficial uses of Warm

Water Aquatic Community and Primary Body Contact Recreation as well as others. Numeric criteria are associated with these assumptions and can be monitored for purposes of 303(d) listing.

Oklahoma's Water Quality Standards: http://www.owrb.state.ok.us/util/rules/pdf_rul/Chap45.pdf.

Wetland Definition

Oklahoma currently does not have a wetland definition in WQS.

Designated Uses

See standards above.

Narrative and/or Numeric Criteria

See above.

Antidegradation Policy

Antidegradation policy applies only to tier 1 since no wetlands have been designated as high quality waters (tier 2) or outstanding resource waters (tier 3) in Oklahoma.

Other

Currently, all wetlands are considered to be "unlisted waters" and are assigned default primary beneficial uses (see above).

Staffing

Part of 1 Full Time Employee.

Mitigation

Mitigation Policy

Oklahoma currently does not have a wetland mitigation policy.

Mitigation Banks

One wetland mitigation center (206 acres) exists in the state. This center may be used for off-site mitigation. The wetlands at the center are created/restored as interested parties sign-up for mitigation, unlike a mitigation bank where the restoration/creation has already been completed.

A volunteer wetland site registry (http://www.okcc.state.ok.us/Wetlands/wetlands_registry.htm) has been developed through OCC. This registry acts as a "clearinghouse", connecting property owners interested in restoring wetlands with those who need to restore or mitigate for wetland losses.

In Lieu Fee Program

This is done only through the Corps.

Ad Hoc Arrangements

None.

Mitigation Database

None.

Staffing

None.

Monitoring and Assessment

Mapping /Inventory

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has completed its National Wetlands Inventory mapping program for the state, classified by Cowardin et al., 1979. Paper copies of these maps reside at OWRB. OCC, OWRB, and FWS are currently in the process of digitizing these maps and creating an interactive wetlands mapping and analysis tool, 1/3 of the state should be complete in 2005.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has also completed its wetlands mapping project in response to the Farm Bill wetlands provisions, these maps are housed in the local conservation district offices.

Oklahoma has not done a status and trends report.

Wetland Classification and Assessment

The state does not currently have a wetland classification and assessment system. Projects are underway to develop wetland assessment methods for monitoring.

Overall wetland gain and loss tracking system

No.

Staffing

Part of 1 Full Time Employee.

Restoration

Program Description

Wetland restoration in Oklahoma is dependent upon numerous programs and partnerships including Joint Ventures, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, OCC, ODWC, NRCS, and FWS.

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Restoration Program Goals

There are no overall acreage goals for wetland restoration in the state, but the goal stated in Oklahoma's Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation Plan is as follows:

"The goals of the State of Oklahoma are to conserve, enhance, and restore the quantity and biological diversity of all wetlands in the state."

An objective within Oklahoma's Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation Plan states:

"To establish a net-gain wetlands policy for state-owned lands and a no-net-loss policy for state-funded projects to encourage the restoration, enhancement, and creation of wetlands."

Eligibility Criteria

For the wetland volunteer registry, wetland restoration generally refers to the rehabilitation of wetlands that may have been degraded or hydrologically altered in some fashion in the past, often involving the restoration of the hydrologic conditions and reestablishment of wetland vegetation. Wetland enhancement refers to existing wetlands whose functions (i.e., hydrology) have been significantly degraded. Sites with the following characteristics are preferred:

- Previously drained areas where ground or surface water has been removed by ditching or levees
- Low-lying areas which have been filled
- Sites adjacent to existing wetlands
- Areas adjacent to rivers or streams
- Historically forested bottomland areas
- Other areas with wetland development potential

Restoration Database

No overall database exists at this time, but the wetland volunteer registry collects approximate acreages and wetland type or location in the landscape.

Staffing

Part of 1 Full Time Employee.

Public/Private Partnerships

Acquisition Program

The state no longer has an acquisition program for wetlands.

Public Outreach/Education

OCC and ODWC present materials at conferences for natural resource professionals, public meetings for landowners, and wetland presentations as requested. ODWC provides Watchable Wildlife Areas (<http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/watchabl.htm>) across the state. Several of these areas provide the public an opportunity to view wildlife associated with wetlands.

Tax Incentives

There are no state tax incentive programs.

Technical Assistance

Assistance is available from the OCC, ODWC, and Ducks Unlimited.

Other Nonregulatory Incentives for Private Landowners

ODWC's Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program helps private landowners develop, preserve, restore, and manage wildlife habitat on private land with up to 50 percent cost share.

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture funds research, demonstration, and educational projects through their Oklahoma Producer Grant Program (<http://www.kerrcenter.com/HTML/opg.html>).

Wetland Training and Education

OCC offers WOW! The Wonders of Wetlands (<http://www.wetland.org/ecpubs.htm>) curriculum trainings for educators statewide. Local conservation districts offer wetland field days to primary and secondary students. OCC and local conservation districts also sponsor permanent wetland outdoor classroom facilities on school grounds or other public lands. The Oklahoma Environmental Education Coordinating Committee hosts an annual water festival for 5th graders (H2Oklahoma Water Festival) located in a targeted watershed (www.okcc.state.ok.us/ED/ED_OKEECC_projects.htm).

Watershed planning

Efforts have been made in a few watersheds in the state to integrate wetlands into broader resource planning efforts.

Special Problems

Special problems that exist in Oklahoma include the lack of state funding for wetlands projects and property rights issues related to wetlands.

Coordination

Oklahoma's Wetland Working Group was established as part of the 1990 Legislative directive to develop a wetland management strategy for Oklahoma. The group serves as a forum for information and technology sharing between groups within the wetlands arena. This interagency working group, comprised of tribal, state, local and federal entities, continues to meet to coordinate efforts to conserve, enhance, and restore the quantity and biological diversity of Oklahoma's wetland resources by implementing the state plan.

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Contact Points:

Information on Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Wetlands Program and contact points can be found at: <http://www.okcc.state.ok.us>.

Information on Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality's Water Quality Division can be found at: <http://www.deq.state.ok.us>.

Information on Oklahoma Water Resources Board Water Quality Division can be found at: <http://www.owrb.state.ok.us>.

Information on Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation can be found at: <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com>.

Guidebooks, Brochures, Websites, Other Educational Materials

Oklahoma's Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation Plan
[The Oklahoma Wetlands Reference Guide](#) (guidebook)
Oklahoma Wetlands - Wet, Wild and Wonderful (booklet)
Oklahoma's Wetland Resources: Appreciate the Values and Functions (poster)
Wetland Outdoor Classrooms (guidebook)
Wetland Conservation for Private Landowners (brochure)