

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
Information Bulletin #27
(Second Amendment)
Subject: Wetland Conservation Guidelines

1. Purpose

The purpose of this information bulletin is to guide the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in proactively protecting and managing Indiana's wetland resources.

2. Resource Background

More than 85% of Indiana's natural wetlands have been drained or filled. As more wetlands are lost, the value of remaining wetland resources has increased.

Wetlands provide many benefits to the citizens of Indiana by:

- (1) supporting the state's forest, fish, and wildlife resources with critical habitat for species that have commercial and recreational value;
- (2) retaining and gradually releasing floodwater;
- (3) recharging ground water resources;
- (4) reducing the effects of erosion and chemical pollution in our state's waterways and lakes by trapping and utilizing nutrient and sediment runoff;
- (5) providing areas for many types of recreation; and
- (6) sustaining a number of rare and endangered plant and animal species.

The Natural Resources Commission recognizes that to protect these benefits, the IDNR must embark on wetland management activities to identify, protect, acquire, manage, restore, enhance, and create wetland resources.

3. Institutional Background

Several divisions in the IDNR maintain a diverse array of responsibilities related to wetland management. Each division has a slightly different central mission related to wetland management. Among these responsibilities are the following:

- The Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology oversees experimental releases of insects that act as biological controls on purple loosestrife and other invasive wetland plants.
- The Division of Fish and Wildlife acquires land through Wetland Conservation Areas, manages several wetland areas as habitat for fishing and hunting and through the Lake and River Enhancement Program, provides funding and technical assistance to lake associations and landowners for construction and maintenance of wetlands that treat nonpoint source pollution.
- The Division of Forestry provides technical assistance and administers incentive programs for the stewardship of forested wetlands (the major wetland type in Indiana), as well as managing wetlands on State Forest holdings.
- The Division of Nature Preserves manages natural areas that contain rare wetland types, such as bogs and fens, and wetland-related species, and through its Lake Michigan Coastal Program, plans for, preserves, and restores high quality wetland areas in the Lake Michigan basin. The program provides funding and technical assistance
- The Division of Reclamation advises landowners in development of wetlands for wildlife habitat over reclaimed mine lands.
- The Division of State Parks and Reservoirs restores, enhances and creates wetlands for the purposes of watershed protection, recreational activities including hunting and fishing, habitat enhancement and ecosystem restoration.
- The Division of Water administers permits for construction in floodways and lake construction on sites that may involve riparian wetlands.

In 1996, the department spearheaded a major initiative by sponsoring the publication of the Indiana Wetlands Conservation Plan. This planning document for all state agencies and citizens of Indiana has resulted in several additional activities, including contracting with Taylor University for development and testing of a wetland assessment method and cooperation with the Limberlost Pilot Focus Area to create a handbook for guiding local wetland conservation efforts. Other specific actions related to implementation of the plan are outlined in an attached brochure.

These IDNR divisions often interact internally over wetland issues through the permit system and technical assistance in wetland management. In addition, the IDNR provides assistance regarding wetland resources to external agencies and organizations, including the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the various Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Differences in operating philosophies and missions among these groups can result in conflicts over particular wetland management issues.

Since 1995, a coalition of representatives from the divisions has worked together periodically to develop and

update previous drafts of this information bulletin. In the presence of diverse missions among the individual divisions, the information bulletin will act as a unifying statement for the department that affirms the importance of wetland resources and provides a set of strategies for joint efforts in wetland protection and management through IDNR actions.

4. Policy Directive

The IDNR shall implement strategies, based on existing laws, to do each of the following:

- (1) Increase the quality, availability, and use of information concerning the historical, economic, and ecological values of wetland resources for present and future generations.
- (2) Use scientific criteria to assess key functions and values of existing wetlands prior to disturbance and to monitor results of projects following creation or alteration of wetlands.
- (3) Identify the remaining highest quality wetlands in order to prioritize them for protection or acquisition in a natural or seminatural state and to employ human intervention when necessary to maintain ecological structures, processes, and natural resources productivity.
- (4) Identify, restore, and manage intermediate or poor quality wetlands to accomplish specific purposes, (including ecological and natural resources productivity, flood control, water quality improvements, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic values) through biologically and scientifically sound manipulation.
- (5) Create and maintain new wetlands to provide one or more benefits of natural wetlands, alleviate some of the lost wetland acreage in the state, and strengthen the use and development of bioengineered systems for purposes such as wastewater treatment, floodwater retention, agricultural productivity, and landscape management.
- (6) Support the development of comprehensive wetland conservation plans that facilitate cooperative efforts between natural resource agencies and organizations involved in these issues.

By following these guidelines, citizens of the state of Indiana will continue to enjoy wetland resources which are necessary for maintaining a higher quality of life in Indiana.

5. History

This information bulletin became effective January 1, 2000, and superseded both the IDNR Wetland Conservation Guidelines published at 19 IR 551 (December 1, 1995) and the Information Bulletin #27 printed at 23 IR 947 (January 1, 2000). This bulletin was updated by the Natural Resources Commission in November 2006 to reflect additional funding programs available to the department and to reflect the transfer of the Division of Soil Conservation to the Department of Agriculture. This bulletin supersedes Information Bulletin #27 (First Amendment) printed at 23 IR 1260 (February 1, 2000).

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