

## DEP Enhanced Mailing List - View List Message

This Message was sent out on Tuesday, December 10, 2019 @ 02:38 PM

**From:** dep.online@wv.gov

**Subject:** DEP Public Notice - New Wetland Assessment Tool - West Virginia Wetland Rapid Assessment Method

### New Wetland Assessment Tool

As part of West Virginia's compliance with "Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources; Final Rule" (Federal Register Vol 73, No. 70, April 10, 2008), the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) has developed a standardized method for functional assessment of wetlands in coordination with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) and the Inter-Agency Review Team (IRT), with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Wetland Program Development program. WVDEP plans to work with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the IRT to incorporate this methodology into permitting and mitigation actions.

West Virginia and federal goals for "no net loss" of wetlands refer not only to acreage but also to the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of wetland resources. The primary drivers for developing the West Virginia Wetland Rapid Assessment Method (WVWRAM) were (a) compliance with the 2008 Mitigation Rule and (b) providing information to state agencies and to the public to assist in avoidance of impacts and promote conservation of wetlands. The functional assessment metrics that make up WVWRAM are based on validated approaches currently in use by other states and organizations.

WVWRAM consists of a rapid field assessment and GIS assessment. Metrics are generated which answer the following questions:

- How effective is the wetland in improving water quality downstream, including sediment retention, nutrient processing, and pollutant removal?
- How effective is the wetland in slowing and storing flood waters and providing base flow to streams?
- How effective is the wetland in providing wildlife habitat and maintaining biodiversity and ecological integrity?
- What is the current quality or condition of the wetland?

Scores generated using this tool are based on a 0-1 index for 98% of wetlands in the state. Exemplary wetlands of special conservation concern (2% of wetlands) have scores above 1.0. Preliminary WVWRAM scores for all mapped wetlands (about two-thirds of state wetlands have been mapped) are available on the DEP website at: [https://tagis.dep.wv.gov/wvdep\\_gis\\_viewer/](https://tagis.dep.wv.gov/wvdep_gis_viewer/)

WVWRAM is designed to be performed by agency staff and organizations with experience in wetland delineation. Assessors are strongly encouraged to attend WVDEP-approved training prior to implementation of the WVWRAM protocol. Five 2-day WVWRAM training workshops were held in 2019, with 122 participants from 40 organizations completing the training.

### INFORMATION AVAILABLE:

The WVWRAM is available for inspection between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at the following location:

WV Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water and Waste Management

Watershed Assessment Branch  
601 57th Street SE  
Charleston, West Virginia 25304

Information about WVWRAM is also available on the DEP website at:  
<https://dep.wv.gov/WWE/watershed/wetland/Pages/default.aspx>

COMMENTS:

Comments and information relating to the WVWRAM are hereby solicited. All comments and information should be emailed to [DEP.Comments@wv.gov](mailto:DEP.Comments@wv.gov) or mailed to:  
WV Department of Environmental Protection Division of Water and Waste Management  
Watershed Assessment Branch  
601 57th Street SE  
Charleston, West Virginia 25304

Comments and information postmarked later than Friday, January 31, 2020 may not be considered.