EPA's Enhancing State and Tribal Program (ESTP)

Today's Topics:

1 - Wetland Program Plans (WPPs)

2 - Tips for developing a Good WPP

Background: EPA's Core Elements Framework (CEF)

➢ At the S/T level, wetland programs are found in many different agencies pursuing a range of goals differing according to their specific priorities and the wide range of wetland types and functions in their jurisdiction.

➢ While S/Ts have their own wetland goals, there is a common set of program objectives that EPA believes comprise a comprehensive wetland program.

➢ In 2009 (updated in 2023) EPA summarized these common objectives in the Core Elements of Effective State and Tribal Wetlands Programs, aka the Core Elements Framework (CEF).

EPA's Core Elements Framework (CEF)

➢ The CEF outlines the core elements of a S/T wetland program, describes each Core Element, and provides a comprehensive menu of program-building activities for each Core Element.

➢ Using the CEF, S/Ts can design their own roadmap towards development of a more comprehensive wetland program. S/Ts can implement the CEF depending on their individual program goals and available resources.

➢ The CEF also encourages S/Ts to pursue a strategic approach to their wetland program development through development of Wetland Program Plans (WPPs)

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What are the Core Elements?

EPA identifies 4 core elements that comprise and strengthen effective wetlands programs. These core elements are basic program functions that form the foundation of wetlands management and protection in any tribal water program.

The 4 Core Elements are:

1. Monitoring and Assessment;

2. Regulatory activities (including 401 certification);

3. Voluntary Restoration and Protection;

4. Water Quality Standards for wetlands.

Wetland Program Plans (WPP):
What are the benefits for States & Tribes?

➢ WPPs assist S/T program development by encouraging them to think strategically about what is needed over a period of several years to build their wetlands program.

➢ WPPs facilitate discussion between EPA and the S/Ts to help form a mutual understanding of the direction a tribal wetland program intends to take.

➢ WPPs allow EPA to be more effective in identifying/providing useful technical assistance to S/Ts within the Region or at the national level.

WPPs: Basic Information

WPPs are encouraged, not mandated.

➢ WPPs are reviewed, commented on, and approved by EPA Regions, but don't receive a "score."

➢ WPPs should be generally consistent with EPA's Core Element Framework, but don't have to cover all 4 of the Core Elements.

➢ S/Ts are encouraged to talk to their EPA Region early on about content and process for WPPs.

WWPs: Minimum Components

✓ Narrative description of overall program goal(s) for the time-period of the plan.

✓ Actions/activities generally consistent with the Core Element Framework to be undertaken.

✓ Implementation schedule for broader based actions and/or more specific activities (including overall timeline of 3-6 years).

Writing an WPP: Putting it all together

❖ Articulate goals and objectives for each Program Core Element.

❖ Actions should reflect how you plan to achieve those goals and objectives.

❖ If you can associate a "who" with an action, then do so.

❖ Consider engagement with other program partners/supporters in putting together a WPP, but it's not required.

❖ Don't think of WPPs as something you are doing just for EPA $$, consider other potential funding sources that could fund these actions.

Writing an WPP: Putting it all together

❖ Describe your actions as specifically (but as simply) as possible.

❖ If there are other documents that support an action, please provide that reference (or a link in your WPP)*.

❖ Identify your partners (briefly describe who is doing what).

❖ Consider how some of your proposed actions can support or build upon one another. Ex. Monitoring & Assessment and Restoration.
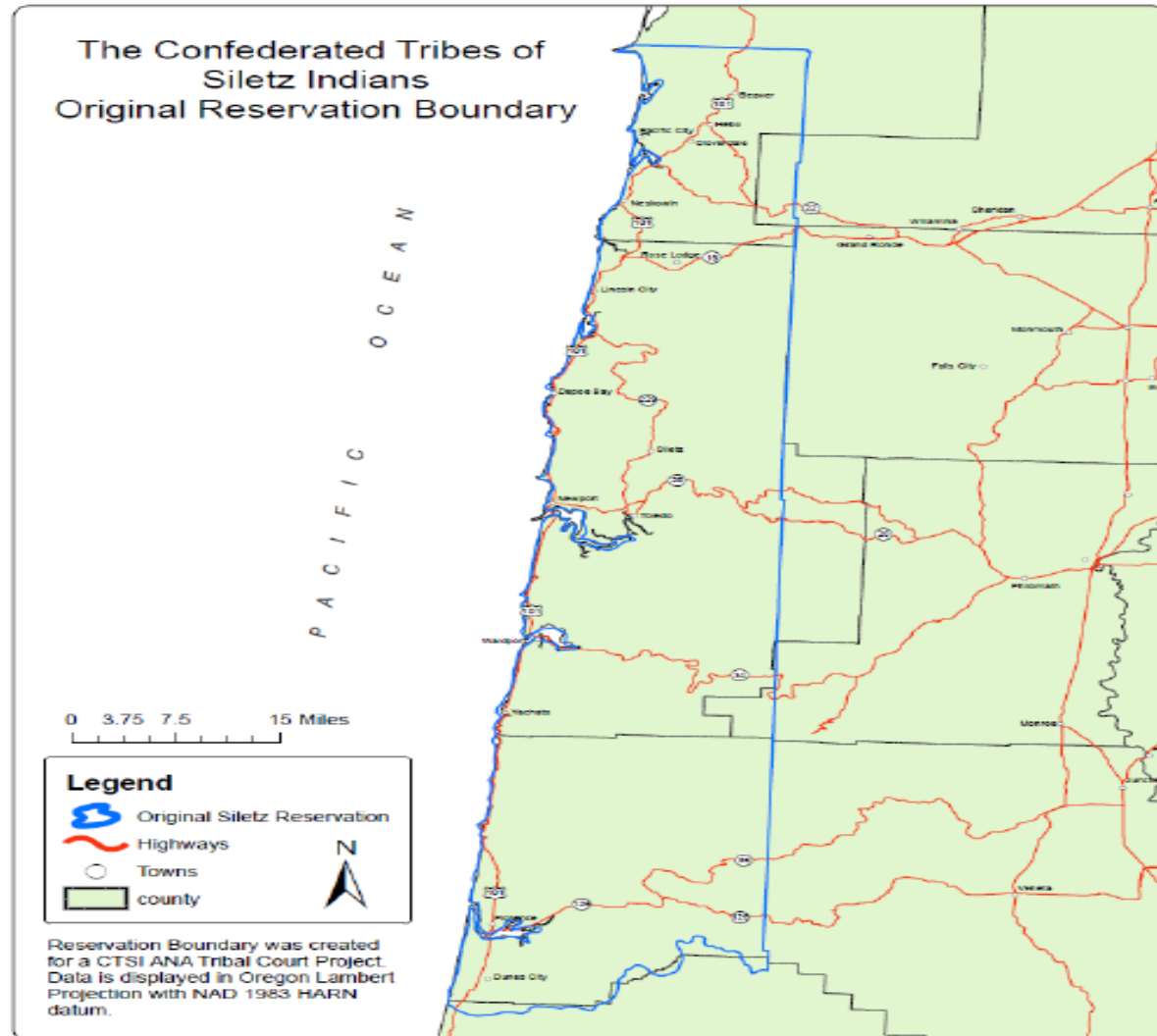
Writing an WPP: More Tips

❖ Think of this as an opportunity to include other partnership efforts that intersect with your activities.

❖ Identify the resources that you are trying to address (maps are useful, or a narrative description of wetland types found in your area, etc).

❖ If a past WPG recipient, explain how those previous efforts tie into your future efforts. If WPP is being developed under a current EPA grant, identify the grant #.

❖ Identify a POC for the plan (so others know who to ask questions of).

Identify Boundaries or Areas of interest

Map 1. Original Coast Reservation boundary.

Describe your existing program

❖ Existing authorities – Statutes, Rules, Ordinances, etc.

❖ Staff & Leadership – Areas of expertise, assigned areas, and duties

❖ Historic and existing actions/ activities of program

❖ Past WPDG grants and activities

Describe Future Program Activities

❖ Think about how activities might build upon each other

❖ Identify other potential Partners (other Agencies or Departments, etc) and how their activities might be linked

❖ Include future training needs to achieve desired knowledge or skills needed for program activities

Example Formats

Action (a) Identify program decisions relying on monitoring data and desired long-term environmental outcomes						
Proposed Activities	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Identify all programs' data needs, applications, and ongoing monitoring work	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Document comprehensive long-term goals for wetlands and key associated species		X	X	X	X	X
3. Identify how wetlands data can be used in watershed planning				X	X	X

Action (b) Define wetlands monitoring objectives and strategies						
Proposed Activities	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Work across Tribal Programs to define monitoring objectives and integrate efforts	X					
2. Examine other sources within and outside tribe for monitoring information		X				
3. Document the wetlands and key species monitoring strategy			X			
4. Determine classification scheme in order to logically group wetlands			X	X		
5. Describe site selection process			X			
6. Revise indicators/methods as needed			X	X	X	X

CORE ELEMENTS AND OBJECTIVES (C) = continuing/ongoing activity (N) = new activity	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
VOLUNTARY RESTORATION AND PROTECTION							
Objective 1: Prioritize wetland restoration and protection areas and actions, both on and off-reservation (C)	X	X	X				
Objective 2: Insure that all of the Tribes' land acquisition efforts fully incorporate assessments of wetland resources and wetland restoration potential in the early stages of acquisition (C)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Objective 3: Continue initiative (2019) to build inter-program capacity and commitment to respond to the growing threat from invasive plant plants (C)	X	X	X	X			
Objective 4: Enhance native vegetation species diversity and structural complexity in Tulalip wetlands and riparian corridors with an emphasis on increasing culturally significant and wildlife food and habitat species (C)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
WATER QUALITY STANDARDS FOR WETLANDS							
Objective 1: Continue refinement of draft water quality and monitoring standards identified in *Water Quality Standards for Surface Waters of the Tulalip Tribes* (Tulalip Tribes 2014a). (C)	X	X	X				
Objective 2: Incorporate data collected in the Monitoring and Assessment Strategy (EPA 3-level) into narrative water quality standards for wetlands.							
Objective 3: Expand the number of water quality sampling locations in wetlands (N)		X	X				
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH (Sample of activities that will span all four Core Elements above)							
• Widely distribute information sheets developed in 2019 that provide landowners (tribal and non-tribal) with basic information on restoration and enhancement of disturbed wetlands and riparian areas (N)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Expand wetland-related training for tribal staff within the Natural Resources Dept. and in other departments such as Forestry, Planning, Treaty Rights, etc. (N)		X	X	X	X	X	X
• At least semiannually, submit a write-up on a wetland related topic (e.g., functions of a well-known wetland on the reservation) to a Tulalip media outlet such as the Tulalip weekly newspaper (*syacab*) and monthly employee newsletter (*The Hub*) (N)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Continue participation in natural resource-related education & activity programs such as "scientist-in-the-schools," Earth Day, and Hibulb Cultural Center & Natural History Preserve events (C)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

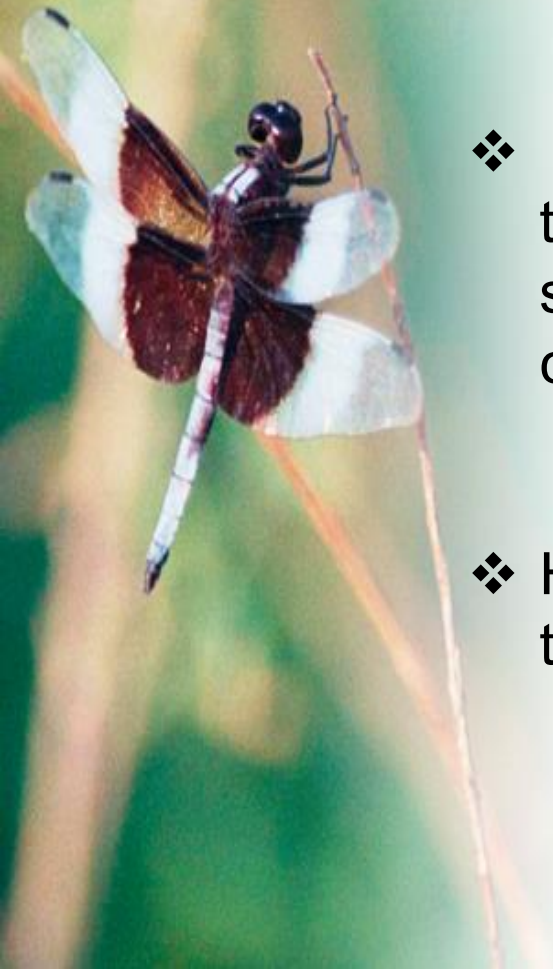# Wetland Program Plans: Relation to WPDGs

❖ WPPs are submitted to the EPA Regions independent of WPDG applications.

❖ Development or refinement of a WPP is eligible for funding under a WPDG.

❖ WWPs should include <u>all</u> significant activities State/Tribal program intends to carry out over the ensuing 3-6 years, not just activities it hopes to fund through WPDGs.

❖ Any State/Tribe with an approved WPP that is awarded a WPDG grant, should focus on activities articulated in their WPP.

WWPs & WPDGs

❖ Only program development activities articulated within a WPP can be funded through WPDGs (implementation activities cannot be funded).

❖ WPDG proposals to develop WPPs or carry out the activities in an approved WPP are placed in a separate "track" in the WPDG RFP, and do not compete against non-WPP proposals.

❖ However, more $$$ are usually made available in the WPP track of the WPDG RFP.

Wetland Program Plans: Some Numbers

- As of 2025, 87 WPPs approved by EPA.

- Of these 87 WPPs, 40 from states and 47 from tribes.

- WPPs breakdown by Core Element covered (most WPPs cover multiple Core Elements):

  - Monitoring & Assessment: 65

  - Regulation: 33

  - Voluntary Restoration & Protection: 40

  - Water Quality Standards for Wetlands: 35

Post-WPPs: Now what?

❖ Important to remember that WPPs will be made public upon approval from EPA.

❖ Be as specific as possible when articulating activities so that a reader would know if an activity has been accomplished or is proposed (i.e. grant proposals).

❖ Consider doing annual updates to WPPs as a matter of practice, instead of waiting to hear from EPA.

❖ To the extent possible, the Region will review WPP progress with a state/tribe every 2 or so years (ex: Are milestones being met? If not, why not? What help can EPA provide to get a program back on track? etc.)

Wetland Program Plans: Website

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Environmental Protection
Agency

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Contact Us About Wetlands

State and Tribal Wetland Program Plans

On this page are a list of the Wetland Program Plans by Region and then for the entire nation alphabetically. Click on the link below to go direct to the Region of interest.

Region 1 | Region 2 | Region 3 | Region 4 | Region 5 | Region 6 | Region 7 | Region 8 | Region 9 | Region 10 | by Element

Region 1

Core Element of a State/Tribal Wetlands Program

	Monitoring & Assessment	Regulatory	Voluntary Restoration & Protection	Water Quality Standards for Wetlands
Connecticut Wetland Program Plan (2023-2027) Contact: Darcy Winther (darcy.winther@ct.gov) ph: 860-424-3063	X	X	X	X
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (2019-2024) Contact: Lealdon Langley (lealdon.langley@state.ma.us) ph: 617-574-6882	X	X	X	X

CEF and WPP websites

❖ Website for the Core Element Framework:

http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/core-elements-effective-state-and-tribal-wetland-programs

❖ Website for approved Wetland Program Plans:

http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/state-and-tribal-wetland-program-plans