

Guidance on 2014 Updates to Wetland Rating Systems and Buffers

April 2014 Shoreline Planners Meeting

Western Washington

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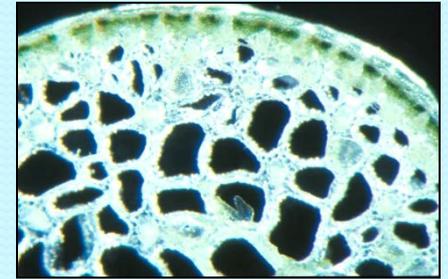
Shorelands & Environmental Assistance Program



What's Changing?

- Ecology is updating the Washington State wetland rating systems because the 2004 versions no longer represent the most current best available scientific information.
- Landscape factors are more important than the previous science indicated in determining how a wetland functions.
- These factors have been incorporated into a new scoring system.
- The new rating systems use decision points that are more scientifically supportable.

What's Changing?



- As a result of updating the rating systems, any wetland buffer strategy that uses habitat scores to determine buffer width will need to be adjusted to use the new scores.
- Ecology's recommended wetland buffer widths are unchanged.
- Individual wetland ratings may change, and thus the buffers that apply may be affected.

Updates to Wetland Rating Systems

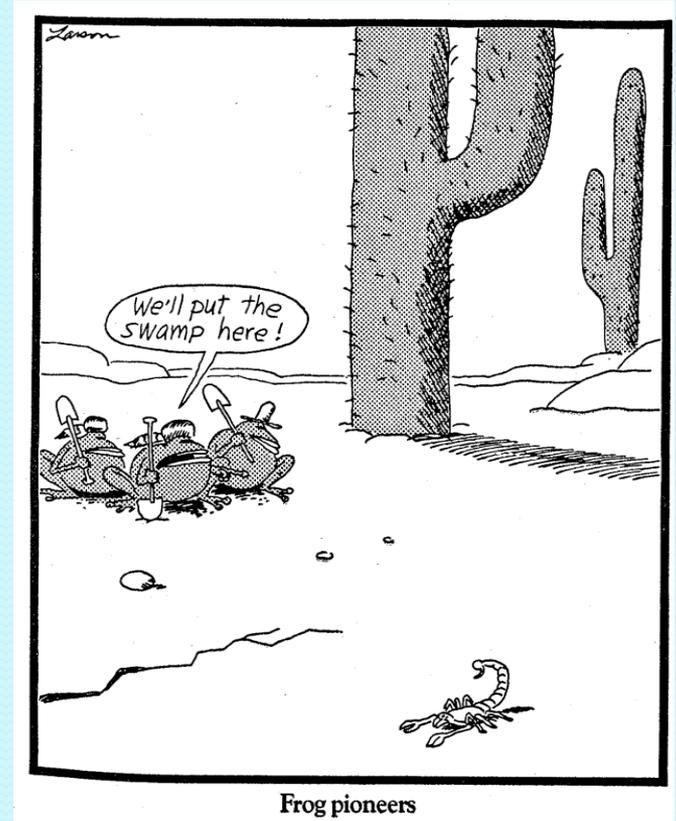
- Conversion of scores for each function to ratings of High, Medium, or Low.
- Replacement of the Opportunity section with two new sections: Landscape Potential and Value.
- Range of possible scores based on function changed to a range of 9–27 (from 1–100) to better reflect the accuracy of the method.

Updates to Wetland Rating Systems

- The addition of interdunal wetlands with very high habitat scores to the list of Category I wetlands.
- Incorporating the annotations added as comments in the 2006 annotated version.
- Natural Heritage Wetlands are now called “Wetlands with a High Conservation Value.”

Updates to Wetland Rating Systems

- Category I = 23-27
- Category II = 20-22
- Category III = 16-19
- Category IV = 9-15



How Does This Affect Categories?

Differences in ratings of the 111 wetland reference sites

Category	2004 Rating System	2014 Updated Rating System
I	13	11
II	52	44
III	39	49
IV	7	7

How Does This Affect Categories?

- 60 sites remain unchanged
- 30 sites had a lower category
- 21 sites had a higher category



Grass Lake Refuge, Olympia



- Changed from Category I to a high-scoring Category II
- Value part of water quality and hydrologic functions is now determined by three questions
- No longer a YES/NO question

Lake Sammamish State Park, Issaquah



- Changed from Category II to a Category I
- Landscape potential and value for habitat resulted in a higher score
- 2004 habitat questions did not assess the full range of factors

When is 2014 Rating System Going Into Effect?

- Final publications will be released by the end of May; trainings begin in June
- State permits: January 1, 2015
- Local governments: Depends on CAO language

Trainings on 2014 Rating System

- Two classes in June 2014 are full with waiting lists
- More classes will be scheduled in 2nd half of 2014
- If you have taken the training on the *credit/debit method*, you are already trained on the new aspects of the 2014 update (~150 people)

Update of Wetland Buffer Science

- Ecology recently released an update of the science pertaining to wetland buffers:
- This update was sent out for agency and peer review in August 2013 and finalized in October 2013.
- <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wetlands/bas/BufferUpdate.html>

Conclusions from Review of Buffer Science

- The new information on buffers provides a refinement of our knowledge.
- Wider buffers should still be more effective at protecting wetlands than smaller ones if all the other environmental conditions are the same.



Conclusions from Review of Buffer Science

- Width is only one of several environmental factors that affects how well a buffer protects a wetland. For example, width accounts for approximately 20% of the effectiveness of a buffer at removing nitrogen pollutants before they reach a wetland.



Conclusions from Review of Buffer Science

- Ecology will continue to review the science and management implications to determine whether changes to our buffer guidance are necessary.
- We will not introduce new buffer recommendations during the 2015-2018 GMA update.

Ecology's Buffer Publications

- Wetlands in Washington State, Volume 1: A Synthesis of the Science (Ecology Publication #05-06-006, March 2005)
- Wetlands in Washington State, Volume 2: Managing and Protecting Wetlands (Ecology Publication #05-06-008, April 2005)
 - Appendix 8C for Western Washington

Ecology's Buffer Publications

- Wetlands and CAO Updates: Guidance for Small Cities (Ecology Publications: Eastern Washington #10-06-001, Western Washington #10-06-002)
- Update on Wetland Buffers: The State of the Science (Ecology Publication #13-06-011, October 2013)
- <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wetlands/index.html>

Buffer Alternative 1 – NO CHANGE

(based on wetland category only—impacts from land use and wetland functions are NOT incorporated)

Category of Wetland	Widths of Buffers
IV	50 ft
III	150 ft
II	300 ft
I	300 ft

Buffer Alternative 2 – NO CHANGE

(based on wetland category and adjacent land-use intensity—wetland functions are NOT incorporated)

Category of Wetland	Land Use with Low Impact *	Land Use with Moderate Impact *	Land Use with High Impact*
IV	25 ft	40 ft	50 ft
III	75 ft	110 ft	150 ft
II	150 ft	225 ft	300 ft
I	150 ft	225 ft	300 ft

Buffer Alternative 3

(based on category, adjacent land-use intensity, and wetland functions)

Category IV wetlands (scoring 15 ~~30~~ points or fewer for all functions)

Wetland Characteristics	Buffer Widths by Adjacent Land-use Intensity	Other Measures Recommended for Protection
Score for all 3 basic functions is 15 30 points or fewer	Low -- 25 ft Moderate – 40 ft High – 50 ft	No recommendations at this time

Buffer Alternative 3

Category III wetlands (scoring 16-19 ~~30-50~~
points for all functions)

Wetland Characteristics	Buffer Widths by Adjacent Land-use Intensity	Other Measures Recommended for Protection
Moderate level of function for habitat (score for habitat 5-7 20-28 points)	Low - 75 ft Moderate – 110 ft High – 150 ft	No recommendations at this time
Not meeting above characteristic	Low - 40 ft Moderate – 60 ft High – 80 ft	No recommendations at this time

Buffer Alternative 3

Category II wetlands (scoring 20-22 ~~51-69~~ points for all functions or having the “Special Characteristics” identified in the rating system)

Wetland Characteristics	Buffer Widths by Adjacent Land-use Intensity (Apply most protective if more than one criterion is met.)	Other Measures Recommended for Protection
High level of function for habitat (score for habitat 8-9 29-36 points)	Low - 150 ft Moderate – 225 ft High – 300 ft	Maintain connections to other habitat areas
Moderate level of function for habitat (score for habitat 5-7 20-28 points)	Low - 75 ft Moderate – 110 ft High – 150 ft	No recommendations at this time
High level of function for water quality improvement and low for habitat (score for water quality 8-9 24-32 points; habitat less than 5 20 points)	Low - 50 ft Moderate – 75 ft High – 100 ft	No additional surface discharges of untreated runoff

Buffer Alternative 3

Category II wetlands (scoring 20-22 ~~51-69~~ points for all functions or having the “Special Characteristics” identified in the rating system)

Wetland Characteristics	Buffer Widths by Adjacent Land-use Intensity (Apply most protective if more than one criterion is met.)	Other Measures Recommended for Protection
Estuarine	Low - 75 ft Moderate – 110 ft High – 150 ft	No recommendations at this time
Interdunal	Low - 75 ft Moderate – 110 ft High – 150 ft	No recommendations at this time
Not meeting above characteristics	Low - 50 ft Moderate – 75 ft High – 100 ft	No recommendations at this time

Buffer Alternative 3

Category I wetlands (scoring 23 ~~70~~ or more points or more for all functions or having the “Special Characteristics” identified in the rating system)

Wetland Characteristics	Buffer Widths by Adjacent Land-use Intensity (Apply most protective if more than one criterion is met)	Other Measures Recommended for Protection
Natural Heritage Wetlands Wetlands with High Conservation Value	Low - 125 ft Moderate – 190 ft High – 250 ft	No additional surface discharges to wetland or its tributaries No septic systems within 300 ft of wetland Restore degraded parts of buffer
Bogs	Low - 125 ft Moderate – 190 ft High – 250 ft	No additional surface discharges to wetland or its tributaries Restore degraded parts of buffer
Forested	Buffer width to be based on score for habitat functions or water quality functions	If forested wetland scores high for habitat, need to maintain connections to other natural areas Restore degraded parts of buffer

Buffer Alternative 3

Category I wetlands (scoring 23 ~~70~~ or more points or more for all functions or having the “Special Characteristics” identified in the rating system)

Wetland Characteristics	Buffer Widths by Adjacent Land-use Intensity (Apply most protective if more than one criterion is met)	Other Measures Recommended for Protection
Estuarine	Low – 100 ft Moderate – 150 ft High – 200 ft	No recommendations at this time
Wetlands in Coastal Lagoons	Low – 100 ft Moderate – 150 ft High – 200 ft	No recommendations at this time
High level of function for habitat (score for habitat 8-9 29-36 points)	Low – 150 ft Moderate – 225 ft High – 300 ft	Maintain connections to other natural areas Restore degraded parts of buffer

Buffer Alternative 3

Category I wetlands (scoring 23 ~~70~~ or more points or more for all functions or having the “Special Characteristics” identified in the rating system)

Wetland Characteristics	Buffer Widths by Impact of Proposed Land Use (Apply most protective if more than one criterion is met)	Other Measures Recommended for Protection
Interdunal wetland with high level of function for habitat (score for habitat 8-9 points)	Low – 150ft Moderate – 225 ft High – 300 ft	Maintain connections to other habitat areas Restore degraded parts of buffer
Moderate level of function for habitat (score for habitat 5-7 20-28 points)	Low – 75 ft Moderate – 110 ft High – 150 ft	No recommendations at this time
High level of function for water quality improvement habitat (8-9 24-32 points) and low for habitat (fewer than 5 20 points)	Low – 50 ft Moderate – 75 ft High – 100 ft	No recommendations at this time
Not meeting any of the above characteristics	Low – 50 ft Moderate – 75 ft High – 100 ft	No recommendations at this time

Buffer Alternatives 3 and 3A

Step-wise scale vs. graduated scale for Category I, II, III wetlands
(assumes high land-use intensity, based on habitat score)

Points for Habitat from Wetland Rating Form	3 (Cat III/II)	4	5	6	7	8	9
Alternative 3	80/100	100	150	150	150	300	300
Alternative 3A	80/100	100	140	180	220	260	300

Buffers in Small Cities Guidance

Wetland Category	Standard Buffer Width	Additional buffer width if wetland scores 3-4 21-25 -habitat points	Additional buffer width if wetland scores 5-7 26-29 habitat points	Additional buffer width if wetland scores 8-9 30-36 habitat points
Category I: Based on total score	75ft	Add 30 ft	Add 90 ft	Add 150 ft
Category I: Bogs	190 ft	NA	NA	Add 35 ft
Category I: Natural Heritage Wetlands Wetlands with High Conservation Value	190 ft	N/A	NA	Add 35 ft
Category I: Coastal Lagoons	150 ft	N/A	Add 15 ft	Add 75 ft
Category I: Forested	75ft	Add 30 ft	Add 90 ft	Add 150 ft
Category I: Estuarine	150 ft	N/A	NA	N/A
Category II: Based on score	75 ft	Add 30 ft	Add 90 ft	Add 150 ft
Category I: Interdunal	110 ft	NA	N/A	Add 115 ft
Category II: Interdunal	110 ft	N/A	Add 55 ft	N/A
Category III (all)	60 ft	Add 45 ft	Add 105 ft	NA
Category IV (all)	40 ft	NA	NA	NA

2014 Rating System and SMP Updates

- What does this mean for jurisdictions in the middle of their comprehensive SMP update?



2014 Rating System and SMP Updates

- 1st Scenario: Finished comprehensively updated SMP, in which the CAO (using the 2004 rating system) is incorporated either within text of the SMP; by reference; or as an appendix. The next GMA update will be due between July 2015 and July 2018. If the objective of the jurisdiction is to have consistent wetland regulations in the CAO and SMP, we suggest:

2014 Rating System and SMP Updates

- Adopt a limited amendment to the SMP when the CAO is updated. Hold concurrent hearings on the CAO update and the limited SMP amendment during the 2015-2018 GMA update.
- If the CAO refers to the 2004 rating system “or as revised or amended,” a limited SMP amendment is still required in order to reference a specific, dated version of the CAO.

2014 Rating System and SMP Updates

- 2nd Scenario: Jurisdiction is in the process of adopting its comprehensive SMP update and is in the later stages of the process. Actions we suggest:

2014 Rating System and SMP Updates

- If the process is past the formal public comment period, leave the wetlands rating provisions as is for the comprehensive SMP update.
- Adopt a limited amendment to the SMP when the CAO is updated.
- Follow a dual public hearing process for both CAO and SMP limited amendment during 2015-2018 GMA update.

2014 Rating System and SMP Updates

- 3rd Scenario: Jurisdiction is still in early stages of adopting its comprehensive SMP update. We suggest:
 - Incorporate language into SMP using the 2014 rating system and buffers and adopt an updated CAO according to 2015-2018 GMA schedule.

Questions ???

- Clallam, Jefferson, Mason, Grays Harbor or Pacific Counties
 - Rick Mraz (360)407-6221; rmra461@ecy.wa.gov
- Wetland CAO Coordinator
 - Donna Buntten (360)407-7172; donna.buntten@ecy.wa.gov

Grass Lake, Olympia	Old Score	Rating	New Score
Water Quality Improvement			
Site Potential	15	H	3
<i>Opportunity multiplier</i>	<i>X2</i>		
Landscape Potential		M	2
Value		L	1
SCORE	30		6
Hydrologic Functions			
Site Potential	14	H	3
<i>Opportunity multiplier</i>	<i>X2</i>		
Landscape Potential		M	2
Value		M	2
SCORE	28		6
Habitat			
Site Potential	16	H	3
Opportunity	10		
Landscape Potential		M	2
Value		H	3
SCORE	26		8
TOTAL	84		21
Category	I		High II

Lk Sammamish St. Park	Old Score	Rating	New Score
Water Quality Improvement			
Site Potential	14	H	3
<i>Opportunity multiplier</i>	X2		
Landscape Potential		H	3
Value		H	9
SCORE	28		9
Hydrologic Functions			
Site Potential	9	M	2
<i>Opportunity multiplier</i>	X2		
Landscape Potential		M	2
Value		H	3
SCORE	18		7
Habitat			
Site Potential	10	M	2
Opportunity	7		
Landscape Potential		H	3
Value		H	3
SCORE	17		8
TOTAL	63		24
Category	II		I