



## National Wetlands Inventory

The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) is a vector database developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that maps and classifies the nation's wetlands. The NWI Program also periodically reports on the status and trends of wetlands, recording wetland losses (and re-established wetland gains) by wetland class. These reports do not cover status and trends in wetland condition. The first survey of wetland condition, the National Wetland Condition Assessment ([NWCA](#)), was conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2011. These wetland surveys are planned to reoccur every 5 years.

The NWI is used by national, state, and local government agencies, educational institutions, and private industry for land management, research, education, and planning. State and local government agencies use NWI extensively in planning to identify local wetlands and to limit and mitigate wetland losses during economic development.

Image analysts identify and classify wetlands for the NWI using aerial imagery at a scale of 1:24,000. The 8 wetland classes depicted in NWI are derived from a wetland classification developed by Cowardin et al. (1979), representing lakes and ponds, and marine, estuarine, riverine, and emergent wetlands. The Cowardin classification became the Federal standard in 1996.

### Things to know before using these data:

Because this data layer was created at a resolution of 1:24,000, the level of detail shown is relative to the scale of the data. For this reason, smaller wetlands may not be shown.

NWI data are incomplete for the nation; some areas have data recorded but not yet digitized. NWI has been developed over many years with some mapped areas dating back to the 1980s. As a result, there will have been changes to some mapped wetland areas during that time. The age of the data is available on the NWI web site.

### Reference

Cowardin, L.M., V. Carter, F.C. Golet, and E.T. LaRoe. 1979. Classifications of wetlands and deepwater habitats of the United States. FWS/OBS-79/31, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C.



### Where can I go for more information?

Various types of wetlands have been defined for specific purposes, for research, habitat classification, natural resource inventories, and environmental regulations. The USFWS provides a summary of [wetland definitions](#) and classifications online.

For access to the complete USFWS wetland dataset and map applications, visit [Wetland Mapper](#).

The USFWS also provides national, state, and regional wetlands [status and trends reports](#) covering the period from the 1950s to 2009 as well as a historic look at wetlands losses from the 1780s to the 1980s.

Click [here](#) for full U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service NWI metadata.

NOTE: The data described in this fact sheet have not been prepared or reviewed by the EnviroAtlas team; they are sourced from publically available external web services and as such are prepared, stored, and managed by the organization listed above. With current technology, the EnviroAtlas team has no control over the way these data display in our application. Please go to the sources listed here for more information.