

Project Name	Wetland Function and Value Inventory	Date	8/2/2024
To / Contact info	BCWD Board of Managers		
Cc / Contact info	Karen Kill, BCWD Administrator		
From / Contact info	Pat Conrad, Jimmy Marty		
Regarding	Updated Wetland Inventory and Function & Value Assessment Proposed Scope of Services		

Background

The District completed its original wetland function and value assessment during the 2nd generation planning process. All wetlands in the District were inventoried and all wetlands greater than 2.5 acres had an assessment of their functions and values through a methodology based on the Minnesota Routine Assessment Method (MnRAM). In the 2005 District Rule Revision process the Board made the decision to extend its wetland rules to all wetlands greater than 1.0 acre. In order to appropriately apply the BCWD wetland rule, an update to the function and values assessment was conducted on additional wetlands greater than an acre in size that had not previously been assessed.

At this time, the District's inventory needs updating to ensure classifications are accurate and align with current science and practice. The original inventory was based on National Wetland inventory (NWI) mapping, which was since updated by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in 2013. Further, technical understanding and the assessment methods for wetland function and value have evolved substantially over the last decade. For example, the MnRAM was initially developed in the 1990s as an assessment tool to identify management classes of wetlands for use by local authorities to help assess wetland management, protection, and regulatory activities. MnRAM was widely used in the following decades to inventory and assign management classes. Over the last 10 years, technical support for MnRAM has been phased out by the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) as MnRAM often lacks the precision to make wetland permitting/impact decisions for specific wetlands. On August 1, 2024 BWSR and Wisconsin DNR released a collaborative draft [Wisconsin-Minnesota Wetland Functional Assessment Tool](#) to provide a resource that can be used to assist in wetland regulatory implementation, conservation, and planning. It is our recommendation that the District: 1) update the current wetland inventory using the 2013 NWI maps and 2) use the draft functional assessment tool to re-assess function and value of a subset of District wetlands.

This scope is complementary to a second, concurrently proposed Groundwater Dependent Natural Resources (GDNR) Re-classification scope. The updated inventory will be integrated with the GIS product of the GDNR scope to provide a single, simplified layer for informing District projects and permitting decisions. Advancing these scopes concurrently would provide efficiencies in the GIS processing for each task.

Products of this scope will inform the District's watershed management plan by at a minimum providing a snapshot of current wetland function and value so that future management decisions reflect current practice, as well as help identify recommended watershed management plan activities. Assessing wetlands using the revised method will inform how to best apply it to District rules under as the accepted routine wetland assessment method by BWSR. The results will also help identify recommend activities such as need for targeted assessments. Further, the function and value assessment may also provide information on how wetland conditions have changed over time.

Although the new method differs from MnRAM, it is likely broad comparisons can be made for the subset of wetlands evaluated with the new tool. *Let's include a little discussion about how this assessment informs the watershed management plan: will this inform how the BCWD has managed its wetlands to date (i.e., through the regulatory program)? Do the two different assessment methods allow us to make these types of comparisons? At a minimum it will provide us with a current picture of wetland health so management decisions moving forward reflect current conditions and it will help us identify recommended activities (i.e., routine assessments) to include in the WMP.*

Scope of Services

EOR will first update the existing wetland inventory with the 2013 NWI map updates, complementary to the concurrently proposed GDNR reclassification scope. Select wetlands will then be evaluated using the Wisconsin-Minnesota Wetland Functional Assessment Tool. The draft tool indicates that in general, a single wetland can be evaluated in one day using desktop and field methods. Given this estimate, EOR proposes to evaluate a minimum of ten wetlands. As this number is a small fraction of the 1,758 NWI wetlands mapped within the District, prioritization of sites will be necessary. Sites will be prioritized for reassessment of function and value according to criteria determined with District staff. Criteria may include:

- Sites that validate results of the existing function and value assessment.
- Sites that validate the proposed remote reclassification of GDNR resources.
- Sites with high potential to be impacted by existing or proposed development.
- Sites that can serve as sentinel wetlands for evaluating long-term trends in wetland function/values in the District.

EOR will further assess the new Wisconsin-Minnesota Wetland Functional Assessment Tool for opportunities to streamline data collection and potentially leverage budget to assess additional sites.

Tasks	Estimated Hours	Estimated Costs
Update <i>existing</i> wetland inventory with 2013 NWI map updates.	N/A – assumed concurrent with separate GDNR scope	N/A – assumed concurrent with separate GDNR scope
Identify the wetlands to be assessed including a meeting with District Staff to review criteria and define prioritization process.	10	\$1,694
Conduct wetland assessment.	153 plus mileage	\$19,594
Project Management and Documentation	17	\$2,732

Assumptions:

- The wetland inventory update will be completed concurrent with the separate proposed GDNR reclassification scope.
- Completing the new assessment will take one day for each wetland based on the information provided by the developers of the assessment tool.
- District Staff will coordinate access to private properties.

Deliverables:

- GIS data of wetland inventory, integrated with GDNR GIS data (GDNR data to be provided as a separate scope).
- Wetland function and value assessment technical memorandum.

Estimated Hours and Cost

EOR - 180 hours: \$23,918

EOR - mileage: 250

Total: \$24,020

Board Action

1. Approve this Scope of Services in the amount of \$24,020 from account number XX to conduct the wetland inventory and functions and values assessment.