Wetland Classification

CWMW Considerations

30 July 2009
Significance of Classification

- Classification as *taxonomy*
  - Groups objects to establish similarity of appearance and/or function among object types
  - Identifies relationships among wetland/aquatic area types and functions

- Classification as *organizing principle*
  - Places objects into well-established “bins” for record-keeping purposes
  - Standardizes approaches and procedures across agency boundaries
Implications for Wetland/Aquatic Area Monitoring

- Classification system must be compatible with *Definition* and with *Delineation* methodology
  - Classification system must be based on the same standardized wetland definition that is used by regulatory programs
  - Classification system must be based on a standardized methodology for identifying and delineating wetlands, which must be applied uniformly throughout state programs
Implications for Wetland/Aquatic Area Monitoring

“Standardized” Classification System means:

- State’s wetland data management framework will be based on the adopted classification system.
- All California agencies, applicants, consultants, etc., will use the same data framework for identifying and reporting wetlands/aquatic areas pursuant to state programs.
- Must “crosswalk” successfully with federal programs.
Identifying a California Classification System

- Currently
  - Several classification systems (state/federal) are in use in California
  - No single classification system appears to be compatible with regulatory programs across state agency boundaries

- Subsequently
  - Does State of California establish a state “classification” to standardize wetland/aquatic area monitoring procedures and data management?
Developing a Standardized (Technical) Wetland Classification

Why bother?

- Not all wetlands are the same – different types of wetlands have different functions, services, beneficial uses, etc.
- A classification system is needed to distinguish one type of wetland from another.
- The system should be standardized to foster collaborations and coordination among wetland interests.
Possible Technical Criteria for Selecting or Developing a Standardized State Wetland/Aquatic Area Classification System

- Includes all types of wetlands/aquatic areas in California.
- Reflects functional differences among wetlands/aquatic areas.
- Reflects differences in landscape position and water source that influence wetland/aquatic area form and function.
- Supports development of sample frames for Level 2 and Level 3 ambient surveys.
- Accommodates wetland/aquatic areas named in State policies and regulatory programs.
- Fosters collaborations with NWI, NHD, CDFG, and other local, state and federal interests.
- Can accommodate new wetland/aquatic area types.
CWMW Actions?

- Recognize the need for policy consolidation supporting a state classification approach and database management
- Recognize the need for resolving potential state/federal conflicts
- Recognize the need for technical assessment of options for state classification and support additional technical development work