

Wetland Field Assessment Toolkit Project

The Wetland Field Assessment Toolkit (WFAT) is being developed to enable rapid and transparent site-based assessment of the status of lacustrine and palustrine wetlands and their environmental values and risk factors. This will be achieved by integrating new tools and guidelines with existing Queensland Wetlands Program tools and guidelines. When completed the WFAT will form a key component of the Queensland Statewide Wetlands Assessment and Monitoring Project (QSWAMP).

Background

Many wetland tools have been developed for a landscape setting. Wetland managers and other stakeholders have identified a need for complimentary tools to assess wetland values which operate at a site scale and can validate or modify the assumptions made at the broader scale.

The Environmental Protection Regulation 2008 clarifies certain wetland environmental values (WEV), which are listed in Part 7, Section 81A of the regulation.

Method

The WFAT is currently being trialled with the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts and other stakeholders. This should allow toolkit developers to evaluate how well the WFAT would facilitate repeatable and relevant assessments of freshwater wetlands using the documented methods.

The WFAT has a major focus on hydrological processes and their significance in the landscape organised by WEV. WFAT enables the incorporation of existing biodiversity assessments into evaluations of wetland status to provide a thorough analysis of WEV.

The WFAT is principally derived from the draft Queensland Wetlands Program Wetland Assessment Tool (DERM 2011), developed to assess many potential aspects of wetland condition and risks to provide a combined score. WFAT is more specific in application, focusing on rapidly identifiable WEV relevant factors of state and the naturalness of processes, whilst pressures are evaluated through separate risk factors aligned to the same WEV.

The method allows for integration with existing planning tools such as Aquatic Conservation Assessments (outputs of AquaBAMM), the Queensland Wetland Buffer Planning Guideline and best practice management.

While many environmental values are biodiversity based, the tool has been developed independently to the ACAs. WFAT enables the co-evaluation of ACA scores against site-assessed wetland values and risk factors to provide integrated environmental reports.

Products

New WFAT tools and guidelines are:

- site survey form (proforma)
- evaluation and reporting framework for wetlands based on the values and numerical outputs including a software package that enables simple score setting, weighting and nomination of confidence levels
- combined methodology and user guide for recording the state of wetland values and risks
- policy guide for using the assessment tool in statutory based decisions.

Outcomes

The WFAT is intended to be used:

- to verify mapping and classification information
- for natural resource management
- to assist with development assessment decisions.

The Queensland Wetlands Program supports projects and activities that result in long-term benefits to the sustainable management, wise use and protection of wetlands in Queensland. The tools developed by the Program help wetland landholders, managers and decision makers in government and industry. The Program is a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland governments.

Contact wetlands@ehp.qld.gov.au
or visit www.wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au

QWP/2013/04

