



JUST THE FACTS...

ABOUT LOCAL WETLANDS INVENTORIES

Why Develop a Local Wetlands Inventory?

- ▶ The City of Lebanon wants to know which industrial-zoned lands are most suitable for development.
- ▶ Citizens and city officials in La Grande want to complete Goal 5 and adopt ordinances protecting streams and important wetlands.
- ▶ A Medford developer is considering several sites adjacent to Larson Creek for a planned unit development and golf course.
- ▶ Willetville is conducting a buildable lands inventory and evaluating its urban growth boundary.

In each of the above scenarios, a detailed wetlands inventory would provide much-needed information. To help meet such needs, the 1989 Oregon legislature authorized the Department of State Lands (DSL) to develop a Statewide Wetlands Inventory (SWI) suitable for planning and regulatory purposes. Community-based Local Wetlands Inventories (LWIs), conducted according to DSL standards, are an important element of the SWI. LWIs provide a planning tool for balancing the protection of wetland functions that are of value to a community with community development needs. An LWI is also required as base information for city or county Goal 5 (Natural Resources) or Goal 17 (coastal shorelands) wetland protection programs. And, advance information on the location of wetlands helps to avoid last-minute delays when beginning development or conducting real estate transactions.

What Is a Wetlands Inventory?

A wetlands inventory is a systematic survey of a fairly large geographic area to locate and map wetlands and classify them by type (for example, forested wetland or wet prairie). Many different inventory methods may be used, ranging from remote sensing (using aerial photography or satellite imagery) to on-the-ground surveys. The appropriate type of inventory method depends upon the intended uses, size of area to be covered, and available funds.

Overview of Inventory Types

There are two types of wetlands inventories that comprise the SWI—the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and the Local Wetlands Inventory (LWI). More about the SWI: <https://www.oregon.gov/dsl/WW/Pages/SWI.aspx>

National Wetlands Inventory

The NWI was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and covers the entire country (see NWI <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/index.html>). It relies on high-altitude aerial photos, with limited field work. While the NWI is extremely useful for many resource management and planning purposes, its small scale, accuracy limitations, age (1980s), and absence of property boundaries make it unsuitable for parcel-based decision making.

Local Wetlands Inventories

To augment the NWI in urban and urbanizing areas where more detailed inventory information is needed, DSL developed guidelines and rules for Local Wetlands Inventories. An LWI aims to map all wetlands at least 0.5 acres or larger at an accuracy of approximately +/-5 meters on a parcel-based map. Actual map accuracy varies, and areas that could not be field verified will be less accurate. (The LWI is not a substitute for a detailed delineation of wetland boundaries.) The LWI maps and report provide information about the inventory area and the individual wetlands, including:

- ▶ Total acreage of wetlands in the inventory area
- ▶ Acreage of each wetland type in the inventory area (e.g., 18 acres of forested wetland)
- ▶ Location, approximate size, and classification (type) of each wetland mapped
- ▶ A description of each mapped wetland
- ▶ A functions and condition assessment of all mapped wetlands >0.5 acres in size
- ▶ All tax lots containing wetlands

Who Conducts the Inventory, and What Is the Process?

An LWI may be initiated by a local government or by the state. Local governments contract with a wetland consultant to conduct the technical aspects of the inventory. Typical steps in the inventory process are:

- ▶ Select the inventory area and prepare a work plan
- ▶ Contact DSL for inventory requirements and guidelines, and for existing wetland delineations and determinations
- ▶ Obtain funding
- ▶ Develop and advertise a Request for Proposals to conduct the inventory
- ▶ Notify landowners of the impending inventory, and conduct a public meeting
- ▶ Conduct fieldwork and prepare draft inventory (consultant’s responsibility)
- ▶ DSL reviews the draft inventory and conducts a field review of the draft maps
- ▶ Hold a public meeting to review the draft maps; planning commission and elected officials also review the draft LWI products
- ▶ Prepare final inventory maps and report (consultant’s responsibility)
- ▶ DSL reviews and approves final inventory
- ▶ Local government notifies landowners of properties with wetlands mapped
- ▶ Local government adopts inventory

What Are the Regulatory and Planning Implications?

Once an inventory is completed and approved by DSL, there are certain requirements and implications:

- ▶ An approved LWI is incorporated into the SWI and is made available by DSL to other agencies and the public.
- ▶ Wetlands and waterways, regardless of whether or not they are mapped, may be regulated under the State Removal-Fill Law. If ground-altering site work is proposed, a more precise wetland boundary may need to be located (a “delineation”) to know where state permit requirements apply. Compliance with wetland and waterway regulations remains the responsibility of the landowner.
- ▶ Under Statewide Planning Goals 5 and 17, cities must conduct an LWI and wetland functions and condition assessment, and then identify locally significant wetlands (LSW). DSL adopted rules for how LSWs are identified, using information from the LWI. A protection program is then adopted by the local government to further guide the management of LSWs. (Contact the Department of Land Conservation and Development for more information on Statewide Land Use Planning Goals.)
- ▶ An approved LWI must be used by the local government (in place of the NWI) for the Wetland Land Use Notification process (a local-state coordination process).

Contact DSL for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Approved LWI maps https://www.oregon.gov/dsl/WW/Pages/Inventories.aspx <input type="checkbox"/> Location and status of existing/in progress LWIs <input type="checkbox"/> Technical assistance with conducting LWIs and function/condition assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of digital wetlands data <input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands planning https://www.oregon.gov/dsl/WW/Pages/WetlandConservation.aspx <input type="checkbox"/> Rules for Local Wetlands Inventories (OAR 141-086-0180 to 0240) <input type="checkbox"/> Rules for identifying Locally Significant Wetlands (OAR 141-086-300 to 350) <input type="checkbox"/> A copy of the <i>Oregon Wetland Planning Guidebook</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Further information on state wetland and waterway regulations
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