



Proposed Criteria for Evaluation of Wetland Habitats

Being Considered for Protection by a Land Trust

For discussion purposes at the "Wetlands: Capacity Building for New York Land Trusts"

General Evaluation Criteria

1. Size
2. Stormwater attenuation capacity
3. Sediment/toxicant retention or nutrient removal capacity
4. Aquifer recharge function
5. Habitat Quality - higher quality wetlands include:
 1. Habitat diversity - a mix of openwater, emergent, shrub and forested wetland habitat types.
 2. Each community is dominated by native species
 3. Invasive species including, but not limited to, common reed, purple loosestrife and Eurasian milfoil are absent, or a minor component of the community.
6. Endangered Species/Habitat
7. Recreational Opportunities (hiking, cross-country skiing, boating, fishing)
8. Educational Function - including access/parking for public, school groups or researchers
9. Aesthetics - Wetland can be viewed by the public from one or more accessible viewpoints
10. Presence and integrity of upland buffer
11. Uniqueness -Wetland possess characteristics that distinguish it as unique, rare or valuable
12. Distance or connection to other resource areas
13. Existing and future regulatory jurisdiction and potential threats from development

14. Access

Applying Criteria to Individual Projects

A sub-set of these evaluation criteria may be best applied if resources are separated into two categories based on the size of wetlands. The reason for differentiating between large wetlands and smaller wetlands is due to the fundamental differences in the uses and values of the wetlands as well as the relative potential for threats to unprotected resources.

In New York State, outside of the Adirondack Park, the threshold for distinguishing large from small wetland could be set at the 12.4 acre threshold used by NY State Department of Environmental Conservation for regulating wetland habitats. Currently, under existing regulatory structure, isolated wetlands under this size (not mapped by DEC) may not be regulated or protected under law. The protection provided by a Land Trust in these cases may be vital. The functions provided by these smaller resources, closer to population centers, may not be comparable to larger resources located further from populated areas in terms of habitat quality or ecosystem function. However, small wetlands may be much more accessible and may serve a larger population for educational, recreational, and aesthetic purposes, may be vital for stormwater functions, and may be under the greatest direct threat from development pressure.

The following criteria are proposed for the two separate size categories:

Large - greater than 12.4 acres

15. Habitat Quality - higher quality wetlands include:

1. Habitat diversity - a mix of openwater, emergent, shrub and forested wetland habitat types.
2. Each community is dominated by native species
3. Invasive species including, but not limited to, common reed, purple loosestrife and Eurasian milfoil are absent, or a minor component of the community.

16. Endangered Species/Habitat

17. Aquifer recharge function

18. Recreational Opportunities (hiking, cross-country skiing, boating, fishing)

19. Educational Function - including access/parking for public, school groups or researchers

20. Aesthetics - Wetland can be viewed by the public from one or more accessible viewpoints

21. Presence and integrity of upland buffer

22. Uniqueness - Wetland possess characteristics that distinguish it as unique, rare or valuable

23. Distance or connection to other resource areas

24. Access

Small - Less than 12.4

25. Stormwater attenuation capacity

26. Sediment/toxicant retention or nutrient removal capacity

27. Recreational Opportunities (hiking, cross-country skiing, boating, fishing)

28. Educational Function - including access/parking for public, school groups or researchers

29. Aesthetics - Wetland can be viewed by the public from one or more accessible viewpoints

30. Presence and integrity of upland buffer

31. Uniqueness - Wetland possess characteristics that distinguish it as unique, rare or valuable

32. Distance or connection to other resource areas

33. Existing and future regulatory jurisdiction and potential threats from development

34. Access

QUESTIONS to Trigger Discussion:

Are all criteria represented here? What would be the top five criteria on your list? What criteria should weight towards NOT accepting a wetland property? Should wetland acquisition criteria be different than any other land-type acquisition? What information is needed for a meeting with a developer? Should a different stewardship/monitoring fee per acre be calculated due to differing, possibly more challenging management? Other comments? Questions?

If, after this workshop, you identify other answers, comments, or questions than those discussed please send them to Jennifer@aswm.org Thanks!