

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



National Association of Wetland Managers



In 2022, NAWM projects were supported by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management along with members and private donors. The Association would like to express its gratitude to those who have supported its efforts to protect the nation's wetlands through the application of sound science, training and education.

Thank you.





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## Letter from NAWM's Executive Director

Dear Wetlanders,

This was a year of new and exciting changes. As a nation, we slowly emerged out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the virus still lingers and we remain cautious, it feels great to finally be able to see people in person again without the need for face masks.

We also announced our rebranding from *The Association of State Wetland Managers, Inc.* (still our legal name) to the *National Association of Wetland Managers* (NAWM) which is our new DBA. The Association's new logo retains the frog but has changed to a circle to reflect a more inclusive mission moving forward. The intention behind the change was to let our community of practice (which includes not only states, but also tribes, local agencies, federal agencies, private consultants, non-profits, universities, and more), know that everyone has a seat at our table, particularly our tribal colleagues. NAWM will continue to robustly support state wetland programs and be a voice for state wetland programs in federal policy decisions and elsewhere. However, we feel that our impact will be greatly magnified by providing a framework for all wetland managers to collaborate, learn from each other, and improve our collective efforts to protect, restore and manage our critical wetland resources.

NAWM's office also moved into its new location in Portland, Maine. The staff are excited about our new location which is more conveniently located and near amenities. We had a few staffing changes in 2022 as well. In January we hired Portia Osborne as our new Project Manager. In July, we hired Justin Farino as our new part-time Administrative Assistant. In August we said goodbye and best wishes to Brenda Zollitsch, NAWM's Senior Policy Analyst, and in September we hired Ian Grosfelt as NAWM's new Environmental Analyst.

And the never-ending attempts to redefine Waters of the United States (WOTUS) surfaced again this year with a two-part rule-making process initiated by the U.S. Environmental Protection (EPA) Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), with a potentially significant U.S. Supreme Court case on the horizon. NAWM's Senior Legal Policy Advisor, Donna Downing, participated in the development of an amicus brief along with co-petitioners from the Association of State Floodplain Managers, NEIWPCC, the American Planning Association, and the American Water Works Association. NAWM also provided comments on Clean Water Act Sections 401 and WOTUS rulemakings as well as EPA's Proposed Determination to Prohibit and Restrict the Use of Certain Waters Within Defined Areas as Disposal Sites; Pebble Deposit Area in Southeast Alaska. All our policy letters from the year can be found on page 12.

Project-wise, NAWM was awarded multiple cooperative agreements by the U.S. EPA in 2021 that were launched early in 2022, including three multi-year training grants and a 2-year national Wetland Program Development Grant plus a new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contract in support of our Wetland Mapping Consortium webinar series. Two of NAWM's projects with EPA are focused on helping Tribes build and/or expand their own wetland and clean water programs which is truly very exciting. We also launched a new membership software program and portal for our members and created a Policy Tracker Tool as a new membership benefit. And we successfully launched our new mentorship program called the Mentorship Assistance Resource and Support Hub (aka MARSH), with the first mentorship cycle to begin in January of 2023.



This year we also celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act. I was honored to be among the few invited to attend the EPA Office of Water celebration on the banks of the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio on October 18th. NAWM celebrated throughout the entire month of October with membership deals, social media engagement, a special Hot Topics webinar, and more.

We also celebrated our first in-person Annual State/Tribal/Federal Coordination Meeting since the COVID pandemic. However, some people were still unable to travel this spring, so to ensure most of our colleagues could attend in person, we postponed the meeting until August. But it was well worth the wait – it was fantastic to see everyone again! We even held our very first annual meeting field trip and due to its success, we have committed to including an optional field trip in all our future annual meetings.

Financially, 2022 was a rough year for NAWM as funding for our federal awards was delayed by 3-4 months due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although our funding was stuck, we still had obligations to our states and tribes and to our membership to fulfill, such as keeping everyone informed about federal policy changes, facilitating communication and outreach between EPA, states, and tribes, organizing and hosting our Annual State/Tribal/Federal Coordination Meeting, responding to proposed rulemakings, and nurturing critical collaborations. However, we managed to stay afloat, keep everyone gainfully employed, and meet all our deadlines. I am proud to share that we now have 6 years-worth of projects lined up and anticipate hiring an additional employee in early 2023.

With gratitude,



Marla J. Stelk  
Executive Director



Photo by Tom Douglas, Bayou Preservation Association





## History

The Association of State Wetland Managers (Dba National Association of Wetland Managers) was established in 1983 in response to the need for state wetland program managers around the country to gather and explore ideas for improving wetland programs. NAWM is the nation's only professional association with leadership, representation, participation, and membership of individuals who manage and staff state and Tribal wetland programs. As an association representing co-regulators, NAWM acts as a catalyst, convener, and provider of information, dialogue, and technical assistance between the federal government and state and Tribal wetland program managers. NAWM has been working with the states, Tribes, federal agencies, and other partners on a wide variety of wetland issues for >40 years.

## Mission

The mission of the National Association of Wetland Managers (NAWM) is to build capacity for state and tribal members and foster collaboration among the wetland community of practice by encouraging the application of sound science to wetland management and policy, promoting the protection and restoration of wetlands and related aquatic resources, and providing training and education for members and the general public.

## Vision

As a result of NAWM's work, the wetland community has access to and effectively uses sound science, policy, and private/public partnerships to preserve, protect, and restore the nation's precious and limited wetlands and related aquatic resources.

# NAWM Leadership and Staff

## Officers



**Chair**  
**Mark Biddle**

DE Dept. of Natural  
Resources and  
Environmental Control



**Vice Chair**  
**Jill Aspinwall**

NJ Dept. of  
Environmental  
Protection



**Secretary**  
**Amy Lounds**

MI Dept. of  
Environmental Quality



**Treasurer**  
**Lauren Driscoll**

WA State Dept.  
of Ecology



**Past Chair**  
**Collis Adams**

Adams Environmental  
Consulting, LLC

## At-Large



**Stacia Bax**

MO Dept. of  
Natural Resources



**Denise Clearwater**

MD Dept. of the  
Environment



**Andrew Robertson**

Saint Mary's University  
of Minnesota



**Bill Ryan**

OR Dept. of State Lands



**Mary Ann Tilton**

NH Dept. of  
Environmental Services

## Ex-Officio



**Dave Davis**

Virginia Department of  
Environmental Quality



**David Fowler**

Association of State  
Floodplain Managers



**Tim Rach**

FL Dept. of  
Environmental  
Protection



**Matt  
Schweisberg**

Wetland Strategies and  
Solutions, LLC



**Samantha  
Vogeler**

KY Division of Water

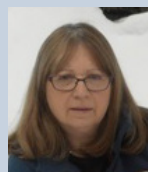
## NAWM Staff .....



**Marla Stelk**  
Executive Director



**Ian Grosfelt**  
Environmental Analyst



**Sharon Weaver**  
Webmaster



**Donna Downing**  
Sr. Legal Policy  
Advisor



**Marti Northover**  
Accounting and  
Human Resources  
Manager



**Laura Burchill**  
Office Manager



**Portia Osborne**  
Project Manager



**Dawn Smith**  
Communications  
Specialist



**Justin Farino**  
Administrative  
Assistant



## Board Committees

The following Board committees are open to any member in good standing to join:

- **Finance Committee:** the mission of the Finance Committee is to assist in monitoring and maintaining the fiscal health of the Association.
- **Legislative/Policy Committee:** the mission of the Legislative/Policy Committee is to provide advice to the Board and participate in comment letter writing and/or editing on behalf of the Board.
- **Applied Science & Projects Committee:** the mission of the Applied Science and Projects Committee is to assist with and review potential or ongoing projects or efforts to advance wetland science.
- **Outreach & Communications Committee:** the mission of the Outreach and Communications Committee is to assist with messaging and education in coordination with NAWM staff for Association members and partners.
- **Nominating Committee:** the mission of the Nominating Committee is to oversee the annual nomination process for board members.

## Meetings, Trainings and Workshops

- **MAWWG-NEBAWWG Joint Meeting:** This meeting was held at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum, MD from May 10-12, 2022. The meeting was planned in collaboration with NEIWPC and EPA Regions 1, 2, and 3.
- **NAWM General Membership Meeting:** This meeting was held virtually and separately from NAWM's annual State/Tribal/Federal Coordination (STFC) Meeting for the first time in 2022 due to the uncertainty regarding COVID and NAWM's STFC Meeting.



MAWWG-NEBAWWG Joint Meeting



## NAWM Annual State/Tribal/Federal Coordination Meeting

After having to postpone its scheduled meeting in April due to lingering concerns and travel restrictions related to the COVID pandemic, NAWM staff moved the in-person meeting to August 15-19. The meeting was held at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in West Virginia – the first time NAWM had been back to the NCTC since 2017 and the first time the meeting had been held in person since 2019. The meeting was attended by 114 in-person and 38 remote participants. Our keynote speaker was Ken Norton, an enrolled member of the Hoopa Valley Tribe, Director at Hoopa Valley Tribal Environmental Protection Agency (TEPA), and Chair of the National Tribal Water Council. Topics included WOTUS, 401, federal regulatory developments, Tribal programs, monitoring techniques and tools, compensatory mitigation, engaging underserved communities, effective outreach and communications, and funding for



nature-based solutions, among others. NAWM was able to support participation by three students with all expenses paid through its new Jon A. Kusler Student Scholarship Fund.

### Jon Kusler Student Scholarship Awardees



Jessica Bryzek,  
West Virginia University



Sindupa De Silva,  
West Virginia University



Andrew MacKenzie,  
West Virginia University

## Distinguished Service Award 2022

This year's Distinguished Service Award went to Linda Storm, a Wetland and Aquatic Ecologist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 10. Linda serves as the EPA Region 10's Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 Coordinator and as the Region's Tribal Lead for Enhanced State and Tribal Programs. In her 38-year long career with EPA she began as a CWA 402/NPDES permit writer and then became involved in all aspects of CWA Sections 404 and 401, where she works to support the protection, restoration and management of watersheds, wetlands, and other aquatic ecosystems together with other federal, tribal, state and local partners. Linda has undergraduate degrees in Botany and Anthropology, two masters degrees from the University of Washington (one in Wetland Ecology and Coastal Zone Management, the other in Environmental Anthropology) and she did PhD doctoral research work on the historical ecology of Coast Salish peoples long-term ecosystem management tending prairies, wetlands and other ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest.



## Webinars

NAWM hosted 16 webinars in 2022 as part of ongoing projects to improve state wetland programs and to further the efforts of the Wetland Mapping Consortium. NAWM utilizes webinars as a tool for communication and for reaching an audience that would not otherwise be able to travel to conferences or seminars.

### Members' Webinar Series

6 Webinars – 247 Total Attendees

### Hot Topics Webinar Series

4 Webinars – 275 Total Attendees

### Tribal Webinar Series

3 Webinars – 126 Total Attendees

### Wetland Mapping Consortium Webinar Series

3 Webinars – 667 Total Attendees

## Participation in Partner Meetings

Many of NAWM's usual partner conferences were cancelled in 2022 due to lingering concerns and issues around the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Wisconsin Wetlands Association Conference:** Organized, coordinated, and presented in a virtual Roundtable session with partners from the Society of Wetland Scientists on plans for our new joint mentorship program.
- **Joint Aquatic Sciences Conference: Presented in two symposiums:** 1) Lessons on Leadership and Mentorship: Tips and Stories, and 2) Working in Wetlands: The People, Planet and Profit Edition-Collaboration Required.
- **Ecological Restoration Business Association (ERBA) 6th Annual National Policy Conference:** Participated in a Roundtable discussion on WOTUS.
- **Chamber of Commerce:** Presented in a Roundtable discussion on WOTUS.
- **BeaverCon:** Presented virtually on NAWM's national dialogue results on beaver related restoration.



*Donna Downing, NAWM Senior Legal Policy Advisor, presenting at ERBA*



# Partners

## State/Tribal Wetland Managers

NAWM has members who are wetland managers representing 38 states and 15 Tribes.

## State Associations & Organizations

- Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA)
- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)
- Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM)
- Coastal States Organization (CSO)
- Environmental Council of the States (ECOS)
- Groundwater Protection Council (GWPC)
- New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC)

## Foundations

- Horne Family Foundation
- McKnight Foundation
- Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation

## Non-profits & Academic Institutions

- American Institute of Biological Sciences
- American Planning Association
- American Rivers
- Center for Wetlands & Stream Restoration
- Ducks Unlimited
- Environmental Law Institute
- Kenyon College
- Louisiana State University
- Michigan Wetlands Association
- Midwest Biodiversity Institute
- Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
- Muskie School of Public Service (University of Southern Maine)
- National Wildlife Federation

- Pennsylvania State University & Riparia
- Prairie River Network
- Ramsar U.S.
- Restore America's Estuaries
- River Network
- Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
- Society of Wetland Scientists
- Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
- Southern Illinois University
- Stetson University College of Law
- SUNY Buffalo Law School
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- The Water Institute of the Gulf
- The Wetland Conservancy
- Union of Concerned Scientists
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Virginia Tech
- Wisconsin Wetlands Association

## Federal Agencies

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
  - APHIS
  - Forest Service
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
  - National Wetlands Inventory Coastal Program
- U.S. Geological Survey



Photo by Dan Cary, Oregon Department of State Lands

# Policy Letters

February 13, 2022 –

## **NAWM Comments on Revised Definition of “WOTUS”**

The National Association of Wetland Managers (NAWM, formerly the Association of State Wetland Managers (ASWM)) submitted comments in response to the proposed rule, “Revised Definition of ‘Waters of the United States,’” EPA-HQ-OW-2021-0602. The NAWM letter addresses the following key issue areas: 1) importance of working with states and tribes to define WOTUS; 2) importance of a durable regulatory definition of WOTUS; 3) importance of proceeding to Rule 2; 4) environmental justice concerns; 5) need to consider climate change; 6) waters included in the definition of WOTUS; 7) WOTUS tools and implementation issues; and 8) considerations for Rule 2. The full comment letter can be [found here](#).

June 17, 2022 –

## **NAWM Helps Provide State-Tribal Perspectives on WOTUS to the U.S. Supreme Court in Sackett**

NAWM joined with other water resource management organizations and filed an amicus (“friend of the Court”) brief in the Sackett case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court, to provide a state and tribal water resource management perspective on issues before the Court. To read the amicus brief, [click here](#). In Sackett, the Supreme Court is deciding whether the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Environmental Protection Agency were correct when they used Kennedy’s “significant nexus” standard to conclude that wetlands on the Sackett’s Idaho property were jurisdictional. Oral arguments are scheduled for the first day of their 2022-23 Term, on Monday October 3, 2022, with a decision anticipated in the spring of 2023. All briefs and other documents in the Sackett case can be found at Search - [Supreme Court of the United States](#).



*Donna Downing, NAWM Senior Legal Policy Advisor, at the Supreme Court*

August 8, 2022 –

## **NAWM Comments on the Proposed Section 401 Certification Improvement Rule**

On June 9, 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed the Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification Improvement Rule. NAWM commented on the EPA proposed section 401 rule. NAWM believes section 401 is a powerful authority granted by Congress to states and authorized tribes and welcomed the proposed rule that acknowledges state authority and cooperative federalism. The sixty-day comment period closed on August 8, and as of August 6 the docket at regulations.gov recorded 2,493 public comments received on the proposal. See [NAWM’s comment letter](#).

August 26, 2022 –

## **NAWM Comments on the Proposed Determination to Prohibit and Restrict the Use of Certain Waters Within Defined Areas as Disposal Sites; Pebble Deposit Area, Southwest Alaska**

NAWM’s August 26, 2022, letter supports EPA’s proposed action to protect the watersheds underlain by the Pebble deposit for three primary reasons: (1) to protect the wetlands, streams, and other waters which provide critical habitat to salmon, other aquatic life, and a diversity of wetland-dependent wildlife; (2) to preserve the subsistence livelihood of Indigenous peoples and tribal values and culture associated with this region; and (3) for the economic value of the Pacific wild salmon fisheries which are inextricably linked to the health of the Bristol Bay watershed. [NAWM’s comment letter can be found here](#).



# 2023-2027 Strategic Plan

The new Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 summarizes the identified impact areas, goals, objectives, and milestones that were identified by NAWM's Board of Directors and staff during the two strategic planning retreats. Highlights are shown below, and the full plan can be [found here](#).

## OUR IMPACT AREAS & STRATEGIES

### 1) Conducting Policy Analysis

- ▶ Continue to excel in providing policy and legal analysis of Clean Water Act rules and regulations and other federal rulemakings that impact wetland and other aquatic resources.
- ▶ Expand policy focus areas to include agriculture, mitigation for multi-purpose projects, and nature-based infrastructure.
- ▶ Invest in a tool to track the lifecycle of relevant federal policies and executive orders.
- ▶ Hire a fellow.
- ▶ Identify and develop capacity building opportunities (e.g., open regional offices).

### 2) Educating Using Sound Science

- ▶ Hire a staff scientist.
- ▶ Build out NAWM's online training portfolio with tiered access.
- ▶ Explore adding field training opportunities for online training modules.
- ▶ Develop formative & summative evaluations for all projects.

### 3) Building Climate Resiliency

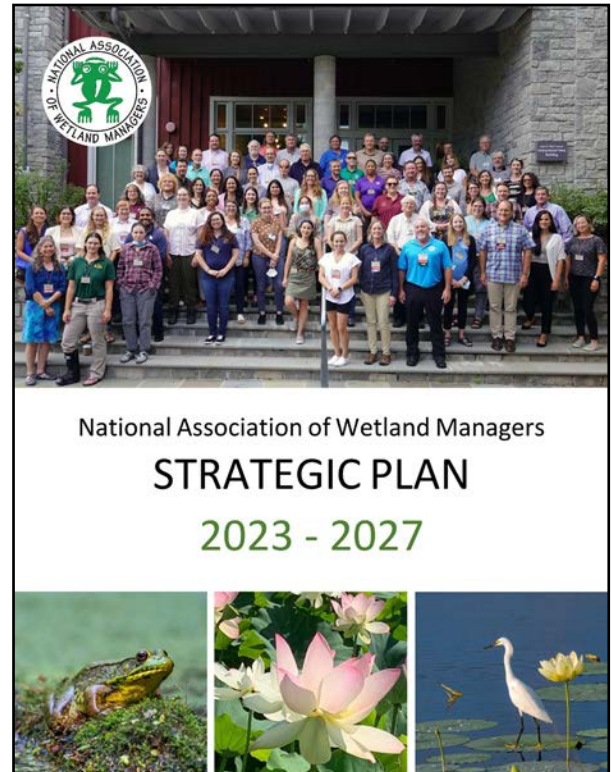
- ▶ Create a communications plan focused on climate change & wetlands.
- ▶ Update website information on climate change & wetlands.
- ▶ Document case studies from states, tribes, and other partners of local projects and efforts for climate resiliency.

### 4) Promoting Environmental Justice

- ▶ Develop Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Justice (DEIJ) training for all Board and staff.
- ▶ Provide meaningful opportunities for tribal input and partnerships on projects.
- ▶ Advance the mentorship program initiative (MARSH).
- ▶ Identify and initiate opportunities to connect with disadvantaged communities.

### 5) Empowering Local Communities

- ▶ Reach out to states and tribes to identify existing community outreach tools & resources.
- ▶ Create a national framework for the various state wetland associations to share information on best practices and resources for local communities.
- ▶ Update and expand NAWM's local wetland programs webpage.
- ▶ Explore partnerships with local land trusts, businesses, campgrounds, etc.

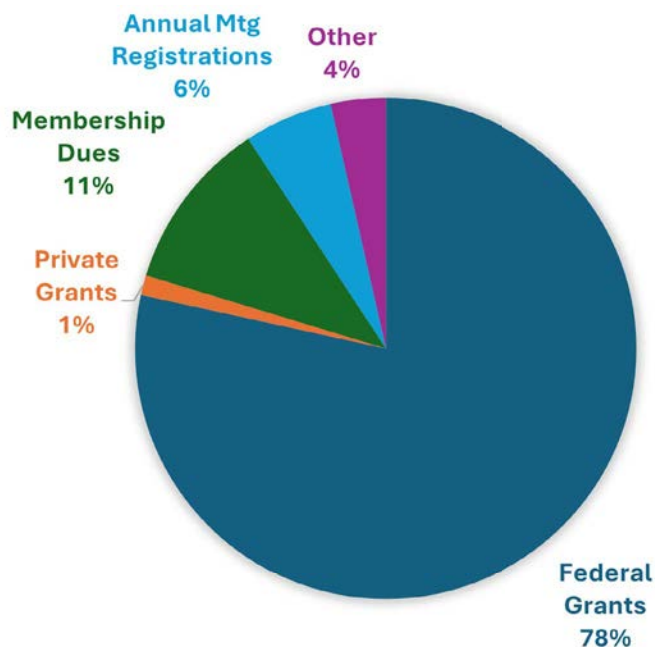


## FY 2022 Fiscal Snapshot

Overall, NAWM's FY 2022 audited financial statements and 990 show that 85% of NAWM's budget was spent on program services, while only 15% was spent on management and general expenses.

### REVENUE

The majority of NAWM's revenue is dependent on federal grants and contracts, which are primarily funded by the U.S. EPA. NAWM's total revenue for FY 2022 was \$586,978.



### EXPENSES

The majority of NAWM's expenses go to supporting NAWM's staff. NAWM's total expenses for FY 2022 were \$763,948.

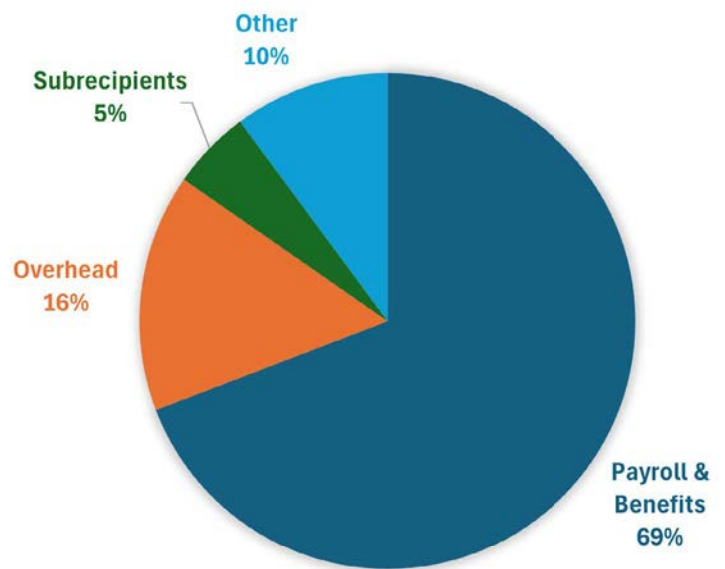


Photo by John Lowenthal, Cardno





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