



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

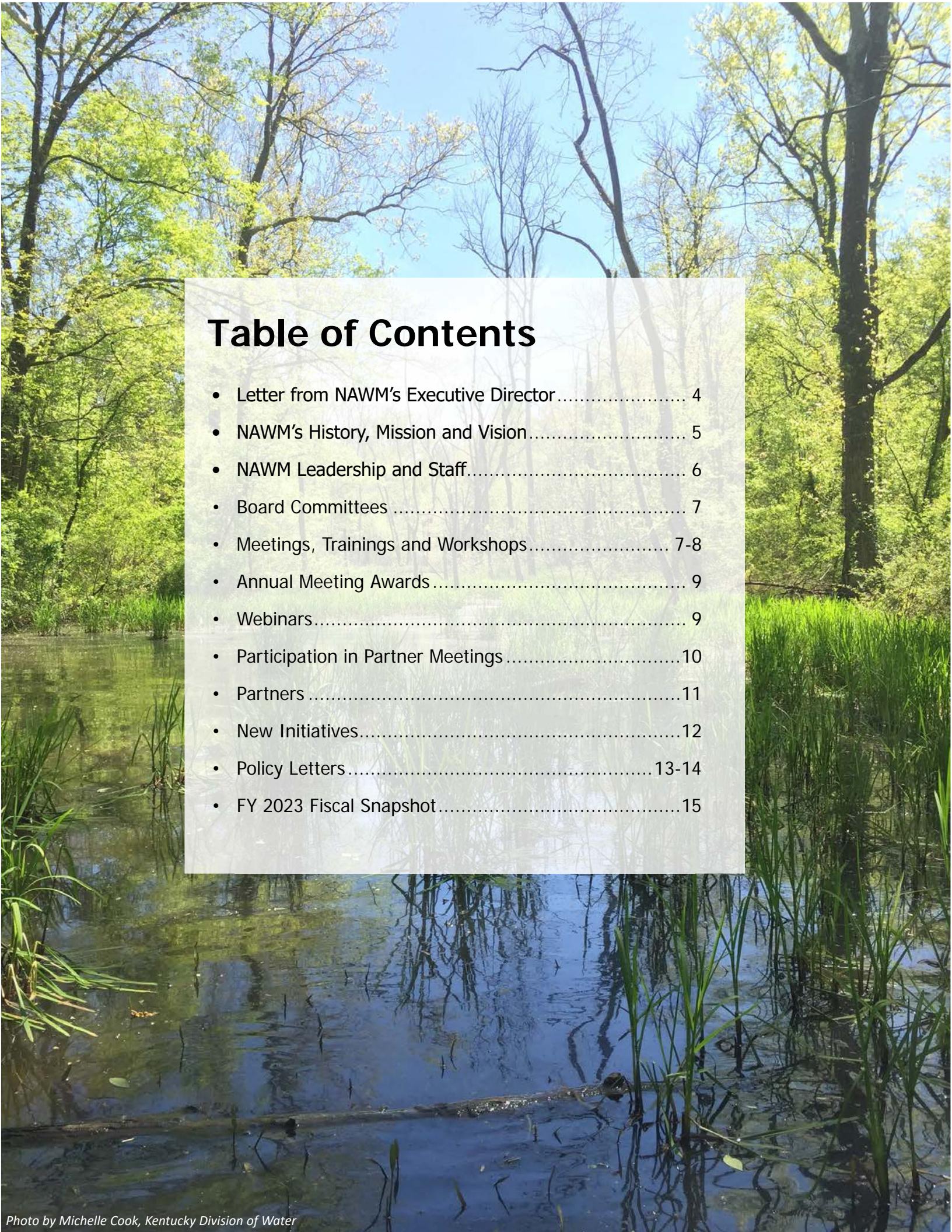
National Association of  
Wetland Managers



*Photo by Kristin Szabo. Nevada Division of Natural Heritage*

In 2023, NAWM projects were supported by the Horne Family Foundation, 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 year marked the 40th anniversary of the National Association of Wetland Managers (NAWM) and staff commemorated the milestone with fun events and outreach all year long. We kicked off celebrations with a retrospective article in the January/February edition of our membership newsletter, Wetland News, from Scott Hausmann who co-founded the Association with its first Executive Director, Jon A. Kusler, Esq., PhD. Other events included a special celebration at our annual State/Tribal/Federal Coordination Meeting held for the first time west of the Mississippi at the Arbor Day Farm's Lied Lodge in Nebraska City, Nebraska and fun commemorative activities via our social media channels and American Wetlands Month.

This has also been a year of growth for NAWM as we now have 10 staff working for us across 4 states, including our headquarters in Maine, and home offices in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. In February we hired our first Senior Science Policy Advisor, Jeff Lapp, who previously worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as their Region 3 Wetlands Branch Chief. One of our long-term goals is to open an office on the west coast, thereby increasing our reach and level of services for wetland managers across the country. At a time when many nonprofits and small businesses have been shuttering their doors after the economic downturn from the COVID pandemic, NAWM has weathered the storm and stayed true to our course. Our members, our Board of Directors, our staff, our partners, and our donors have made all the difference – so thank you!

Of course, the Sackett v EPA decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on May 25th also added in new layer of complexity to NAWM's work, with organizations and individuals across the nation contacting NAWM for assistance in interpreting the impacts of the decision and developing a response. Essentially, the Court reinterpreted the Clean Water Act (CWA) and changed the intent as written by Congress in 1972, excluding adjacent wetlands that protect water quality and more from federal protections. The Court held that the

"CWA extends to only those "wetlands with a continuous surface connection to bodies that are 'waters of the United States' in their own right," so that they are "indistinguishable" from those waters.'" This decision is incongruous with modern science and universally agreed upon understandings of hydrological connectivity and puts an unrealistic burden on states and Tribes to now protect those excluded wetlands on their own.

In response to the Sackett decision, I met up with NAWM's senior staff in Washington D.C. to meet with members of Congress and the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to discuss the critical need for more wetland program funding for state and Tribes. With the focus on states and Tribes to fill the gap in wetland protections left by the loss of federal protections, more funding will be needed for them to meet that challenge. In fact, the funds appropriated for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Wetland Program Development Grants program has remained essentially stagnant since its inception at around \$14m for all 50 states and hundreds of Tribes. Accounting for inflation, the program budget has lost value every year.

On a positive note, however, the Sackett decision created a space for multiple nonprofits and state and Tribal associations to meet and strategize how, as a community of practice, we can continue to protect our nation's valuable wetland heritage. I am optimistic that with all of us working together, we can forge a new framework for wetland conservation, restoration and protection in the U.S.

With gratitude,



Marla J. Stelk  
Executive Director



# About NAWM

## 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.



Photo by David Henderson

# NAWM Leadership and Staff

## Officers



**Chair**  
**Mark Biddle**  
DE Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Control



**Vice Chair**  
**Samantha Vogeler**  
KY Division of Water



**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



**Jon Goodin**  
Retired



**Tim Rach**  
FL Dept. of Environmental Protection



**Matt Schweisberg**  
Wetland Strategies and Solutions, LLC



**Jennifer Sheehan**  
Arkansas Game & Fish Commission



**Linda Storm**  
Retired

## NAWM Staff



**Marla Stelk**  
Executive Director



**Donna Downing**  
Sr. Legal Policy Advisor



**Jeff Lapp**  
Sr. Science Policy Advisor



**Portia Osborne**  
Project Manager



**Ian Grosfeld**  
Environmental Analyst



**Marti Northover**  
Accounting and Human Resources Manager



**Dawn Smith**  
Communications Specialist



**Sharon Weaver**  
Webmaster



**Laura Burchill**  
Office Manager



**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

- **EPA Region 9 ESTP Virtual Meeting**, March 1-2, 2023
- **University of Georgia/EPA Region 4 Training**, August 22-24, 2023
- **EPA Region 7 Virtual Wetland Delineation Training**, Sept. 6-8, 2023
- **EPA Region 7 In-Person Wetland Delineation Training**, Sept. 11-14, 2023
- **Advancing the Integration of Clean Water Act and Natural Hazard Mitigation Programs Training**, Cincinnati, OH, Sept. 12-14, 2023



EPA Region 7 Wetland Delineation Training in Cincinnati, OH



Region 4 ESTP meeting Choctaw MS

- **EPA Region 5 ESTP Meeting**, Chicago, IL, October 24-25, 2023
- **EPA Region 4 ESTP Meeting**, Choctaw, Mississippi, November 13-17, 2023
- **MAWWG 2023 Meeting**, Lancaster, PA, November 13-15, 2023

## NAWM Annual State/Tribal/Federal Coordination Meeting, May 2-4, 2023, Arbor Day Farm's Lied Lodge, Nebraska City, NE

This year's annual meeting was held for the first time at the Arbor Day Farm's Lied Lodge – it was also the first time NAWM held its annual meeting in Nebraska. In 2022, NAWM's Board of Directors made the decision to move NAWM's annual meeting every other year to a different location around the U.S., alternating with every other year at the National Conservation Training Center in order to reach more of our membership. The meeting was attended by 130 in-person and 36 remote participants. Our keynote speaker was Brian Fraser, Director of the Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds at the U.S. EPA. Topics included WOTUS, 404g, Tribal water quality standards, Tribal



### Jon Kusler Student Scholarship Awardees



Jahangeer Jahangeer  
University of  
Nebraska-Lincoln



Mary Moffett  
University of Florida

wetland programs, integrating clean water and natural hazard mitigation programs, mitigation banking, strategies for floodplain restoration, public engagement, advances in geospatial tools and technology, and effective outreach and communications, among others. NAWM was able to support participation by two students with all expenses paid through its Jon A. Kusler Student Scholarship Fund.



# Distinguished Service Award 2023

This year's Distinguished Service Award went to John Goodin. John served at the U.S. EPA for over 32 years – starting as a biologist in the wetlands regulatory branch in 1990. In less than 8 years, John advanced to the position of Chief of the Wetland Regulatory Branch and his career continued to advance thereafter, retiring in 2022 as the Director of the Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds. As the Director of OWOW, John led multiple programs related to the protection and restoration of the nation's waters. Chief among them were Clean Water Act efforts to monitor and assess water quality, develop restoration and nonpoint source pollution plans, promulgate rulemakings and guidance related to CWA jurisdiction, administer permitting for inland and ocean discharges of dredged and fill material, and advance state and local efforts under the National Estuary Program and Urban Waters Program. Before taking on the position as Director of OWOW, John was the Director of EPA's Wetlands Division, where he led the development and implementation of national wetlands policy, as well as the strategic and financial support of state programs and aquatic resource science. John also led EPA's Watershed Branch, where he created a new 303(d) Program vision for identifying and restoring impaired waters in collaboration with states. He also led the Wetlands and Aquatic Resources Regulatory Branch and was Acting Deputy Director of the Oceans and Coastal Protection Division. John holds a Master's degree in Zoology from the University of Western Australia and a Bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of Richmond.



## Webinars

NAWM hosted 22 webinars in 2023 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

8 Webinars – 809 Total Attendees

### Hot Topics Webinar Series

8 Webinars – 1,093 Total Attendees

### Tribal Webinar Series

5 Webinars – 156 Total Attendees

### Wetland Mapping Consortium Webinar Series

4 Webinars – 459 Total Attendees



*Photo by Sharon Weaver, NAWM*

# Participation in Partner Meetings

- **Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA) Mid-Year Meeting**, Alexandria Old Town, VA, March 15-16, 2023
- **Association of State Floodplain Managers Conference**, Raleigh, NC, May 8-12, 2023
- **National Mitigation and Ecosystem Benefits Conference**, Jacksonville, FL, May 8-11, 2023
- **Society of Wetland Scientists Annual Meeting**, Spokane, WA, June 27-July 30, 2023
- **ACWA Annual Meeting**, Boise, ID, August 9-11, 2023
- **Tribal Lands & Environment Forum**, Syracuse, NY, August 14-17, 2023
- **Ecological Restoration Business Association Policy Conference**, Sept. 27-29, 2023



Society of Wetland Scientists Annual Meeting



Society of Wetland Scientists Annual Meeting Field Trip

# Partners

## State/Tribal Wetland Managers

NAWM has members who are wetland managers representing 38 states and 29 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 Laura Burchill, NAWM

## New Initiatives



### M MENTORSHIP-ASSISTED A R RESOURCE & SUPPORT HUB R S H

A new, one-year mentoring program for students, early career professionals, and people transitioning between careers to network, gain experience, and receive one-on-one coaching to support their growth as wetland professionals.

**Mentorship Assistance Resource and Support Hub (MARSH):** In recognition of the growing gap between the demand for wetland professionals and the supply of candidates trained to begin working in wetlands, NAWM joined forces with the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) and the SWS Professional Certification Program (SWSPCP) to develop a mentorship initiative called the Mentorship Assisted Resource & Support Hub (MARSH). MARSH is a one-year mentoring program that aims to help students, early career professionals, and people transitioning between careers to network, gain experience, and receive one-on-one coaching to support their growth as wetland professionals. This year was the first year for the program and it was a huge success with 29 pairs of mentees and mentors who successfully completed the program.



Photo by Marla J. Stelk, NAWM

# Policy Letters

May 26, 2023 –

## Press Release: NAWM Responds to Sackett Decision

Yesterday, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Sackett established a new standard for determining when a wetland or other water is a water of the United States (WOTUS), that substantially reduces the extent of Clean Water Act (CWA) protections for wetlands and non-navigable tributaries. In effect, the Court has adopted the “relatively permanent” standard from Rapanos and eliminated a significant nexus as a basis for jurisdiction. All justices concurred in the judgement that the Sackett’s wetlands are not WOTUS, but for varying legal reasons laid out in concurring opinions. [Read full press release](#).

May 24, 2023 –

## NAWM and NEIWPCC Submit Letter to Senate Leadership Regarding Section 401

NAWM and NEIWPCC sent a letter to Senate Leadership expressing concern about the revisions to Clean Water Act section 401 water quality certification included in the U.S. House of Representatives debt ceiling-related bill. The House-passed legislation provisions would have, among other things, prohibited consideration of state or Tribal law when doing a section 401 certification analysis and provided that section 401 no longer applied to federal authorization of natural gas pipelines. NAWM and NEIWPCC urged the Senate to continue its historic recognition of, and deference to, states’ sovereign authority over the protection, management, and allocation of their water resources and to maintain the current proper balance between state and federal authorities. [Read the letter here](#).

May 30, 2023 –

## NAWM Submits Comments in Response to HUD’s Proposed FFRMS Rule

NAWM submitted comments in response to the U.S. Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Proposed Rule: 24 CFR Parts 50, 55, 58, and 200 Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands; Minimum Property Standards for Flood Hazard Exposure; Building to the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. NAWM emphasizes that HUD’s regulations governing floodplain management and the protection of wetlands to implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS), in accordance with the Executive order, “Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input” (E.O.s 11988 and 13690) is an important regulatory action to protect communities and improve resiliency in response to the effects of climatic changes. [Read letter here](#).

August 1, 2023 –

## NAWM Comments on Army Corps Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS for Yazoo Backwater Area

The National Association of Wetland Managers provided comment on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ plans to conduct an analysis of the proposed Yazoo Backwater Area Water Management Project. NAWM’s comments include consideration of potentially significant issues such as functional loss in affected wetlands, downstream effects, aquatic species, and environmental justice. [NAWM’s comment letter can be read here](#).



September 18, 2023 –

### **NAWM Comments on OMB's Draft Guidance for Assessing Changes in Environmental and Ecosystem Services in BCA**

The National Association of Wetland Managers provided brief comments on the Office of Management and Budgets proposed draft Guidance for Assessing Changes in Environmental and Ecosystem Services in Benefit-Cost Analysis. Overall, NAWM is supportive of this enhancement to regulatory decision-making and supports this policy initiative. [The comment letter can be read here.](#)

September 29, 2023 –

### **NAWM Provides Feedback on EPA's 2026 National Water Program Guidance**

NAWM provided feedback on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2026 National Water Program Guidance (NWPG). Given the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on Sackett vs EPA which significantly narrowed the reach of federal protections for wetlands and other aquatic resources across the nation, NAWM's recommendations are focused on mitigating the negative impacts resulting the loss of these critical protections. [Read the letter here.](#)



October 13, 2023 –

### **NAWM Comments on Proposed CWA 404(g) Regulations**

The National Association of Wetland Managers (NAWM, formerly the Association of State Wetland Managers (ASWM)) submitted comments in response to the proposed rule, "EPA-HQ-OW-2020-0276. 40 CFR Parts 123, 124, 232, and 233; revision to the regulations governing Clean Water Act (CWA) section 404 Tribal and State programs". The NAWM letter addresses the following key issue areas: 1) importance of working with states and tribes to provide resources to support assumption; 2) importance of a collaborative relationship between States and Tribes and EPA during the application process; 3) developing procedures to coordinate with neighboring Tribes and States; 4) development of clear expectations for applying States and Tribes; 5) importance of clearly articulating the retained waters analysis. [The full comment letter can be found here.](#)

December 20, 2023 –

### **NAWM Submits Comments on Revised Draft Guidelines for CWA Section 319**

NAWM submitted comments on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) revised draft of the nonpoint source (NPS) §319 grant guidelines. NAWM supports updates to the grant guidelines that clarify aspects of the program and give greater flexibility in addressing pollution. NAWM also strongly supports the inclusion of environmental justice and climate concerns in the new guidelines. NAWM also strongly supports the new emphasis on program co-benefits that can be achieved through an integrated planning process. [Read the letter here.](#)

December 27, 2023 –

### **NAWM Submits Comments on Draft Guidance for Implementing SCOTUS Maui Decision**

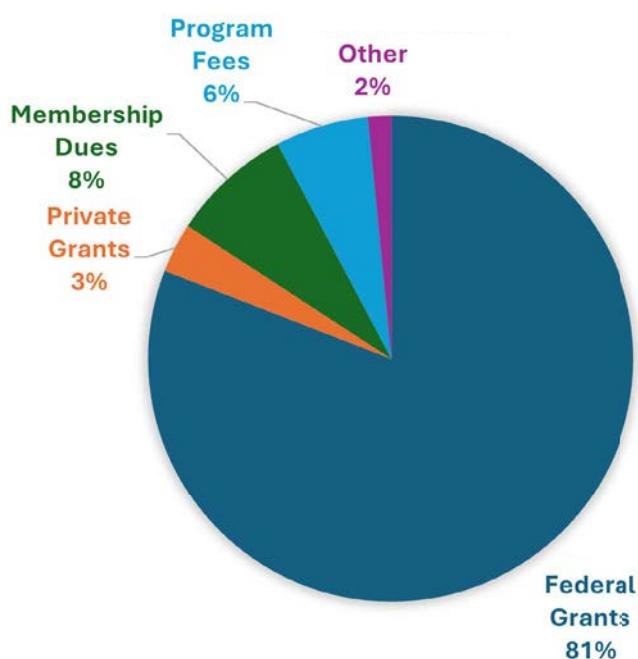
NAWM submitted comments on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in response to its notice of availability of draft guidance, "Implementing the Supreme Court's Maui Decision in the Clean Water Act Section 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit Program." The draft Maui guidance is helpful in explaining how states, Tribes, project proponents, and others should interpret the seven non-exclusive factors when assessing whether a discharge through groundwater is a functional equivalent of a direct discharge requiring authorization by a NPDES permit. NAWM's comments include five recommendations. [Read the letter here.](#)

# FY 2023 Fiscal Snapshot

Overall, NAWM's FY 2023 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.

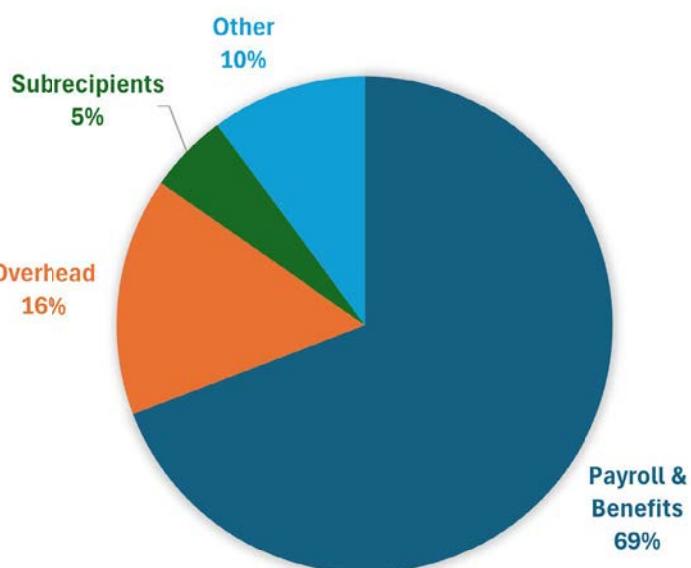
## REVENUE

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 2023 was \$1,080,109.



## EXPENSES

The majority of NAWM's expenses go to supporting NAWM's staff. NAWM's total expenses for FY 2023 were \$1,093,840.



*Photo by Andrew Sipocz, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department*



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