

Evaluating the Status of Wetland Conservation Integration with Multitype State Action Plans in the 50 US States

Zhenghong Tang

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

7620 KENNELLEY DR

LINCOLN NE 68516

9792181895

Email: ztang2@unl.edu

The protection of wetlands plays a critical role in sustaining ecosystem health and supporting human welfare. This study examines how wetland conservation is integrated into major types of state-level action plans across all 50 U.S. states, including climate action plans (CAPs), hazard mitigation plans (HMPs), nonpoint source pollution management plans (NPSPs), long-range transportation plans (LRTPs), and state wildlife action plans (SWAPs). A plan evaluation protocol consisting of 15 indicators was developed and applied to 196 state-level action plans to assess the extent of wetland conservation integration.

The results indicate that although many wetland conservation initiatives fall within the broader domain of environmental protection, a substantial number of state plans devote limited direct attention to wetland preservation. While wetland conservation is not always a primary focus of these plans, the analysis reveals varying degrees of integration between wetland conservation and other state-level planning efforts. Among the five plan types, SWAPs achieved the highest overall scores, reflecting the close ecological relationship between wildlife and wetland habitats. In contrast, LRTPs received the lowest scores, consistent with their more limited scope for addressing environmental concerns.

HMPs, NPSPs, and CAPs more frequently recognize wetland conservation as a valuable tool for hazard risk reduction, water quality improvement, and climate adaptation; however, substantial variation exists across states. Across all plan types, indicators related to interagency coordination and policy development received comparatively low scores, suggesting the need for more proactive and collaborative approaches among state agencies. Strengthening the integration of wetland protection and restoration within state-level planning frameworks is a critical step toward achieving the national goal of no net loss of wetlands and enhancing both the quantity and quality of wetlands in the United States.