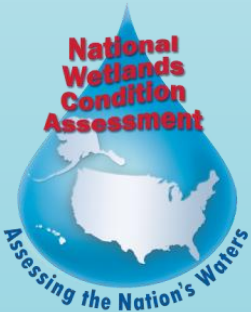


Lessons Learned from the 2011 National Wetlands Condition Assessment

Jamie Saxton and Dennis McCauley
Great Lakes Environmental Center, Inc.
Traverse City, MI

Michael Scozzafava and Gregg Serenbetz
US EPA Office of Water
Washington, DC



Overview

- Description of National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) and Great Lakes Environmental Center's (GLEC) role in the NWCA
- GLEC's challenges in assisting EPA with the completion of a "successful" NWCA:
 - Equipment procurement
 - Field methods training
 - Field sampling and Information Management (IM).
- Lessons learned from the NWCA and previous National Aquatic Resource Surveys (NARS)

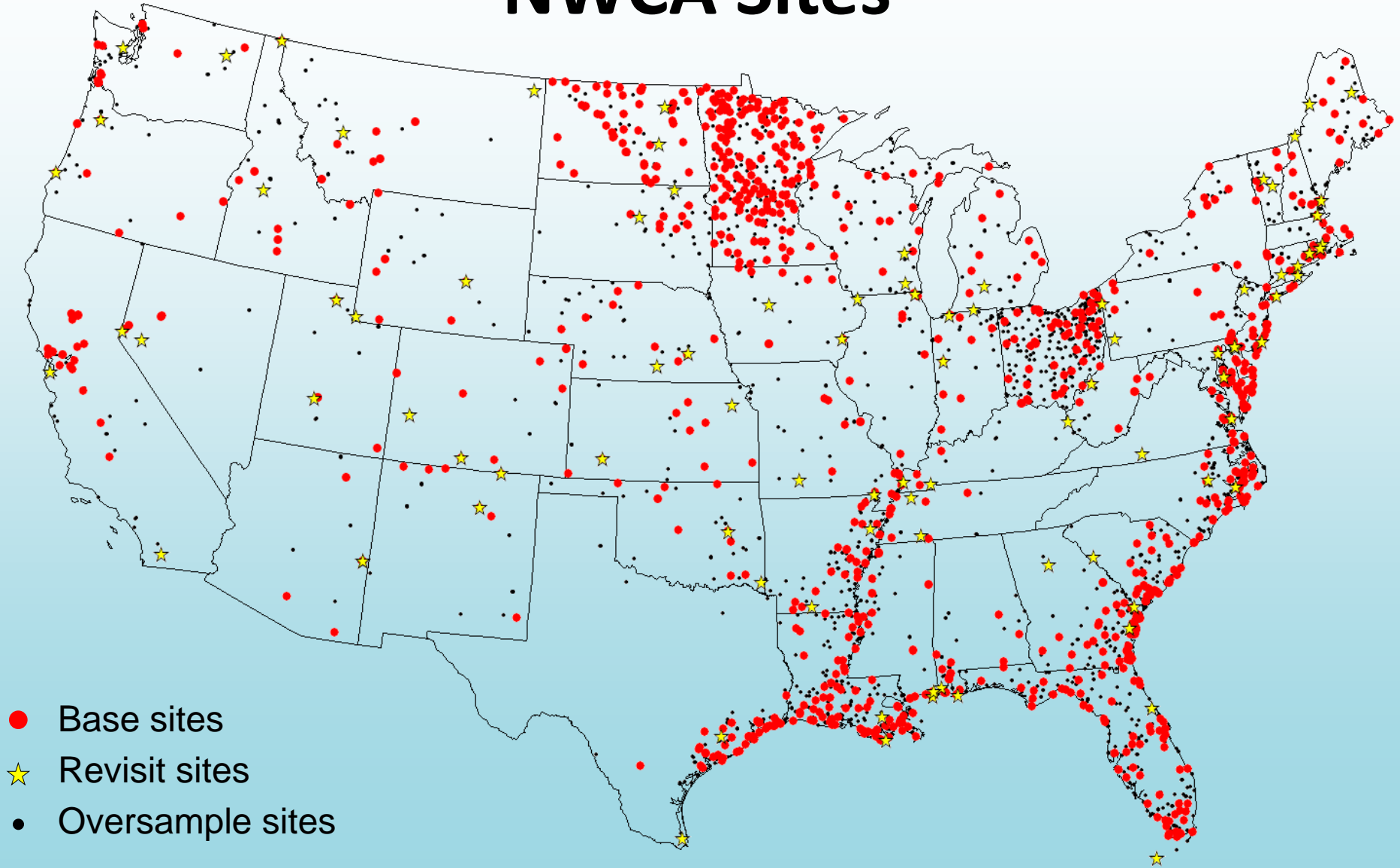
What is the NWCA?

The NWCA is a statistical survey of the condition of our Nation's wetlands. The NWCA is based on Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Status and Trends Classes and is designed to:

- Produce a report that describes the ecological condition of the Nation's wetlands;
- Assist states and tribes in the implementation of wetland monitoring and assessment programs that will guide policy development and aid project decision-making; and
- Advance the science of wetlands monitoring and assessment to support management needs.



NWCA Sites



GLEC's Role in NWCA

- Contractor to EPA tasked with the following:
 - Support the development of the QAPP, FOM, LOM, Site Evaluation Guidelines and Quick Reference Guide;
 - Develop and prepare field methods workshop training materials;
 - Conduct field methods workshops;
 - Provide field methods trainers, field crews and auditors;
 - Facilitate the procurement and distribution of sampling supplies for approximately 60 field crews responsible for sampling 1,260 sites;
 - Answer sampling and sample processing questions throughout index period;
 - Replace lost equipment, as necessary;
 - Initiate site and sample tracking; and
 - Other duties as assigned.
- GLEC had the same role for four previous NARS assessments

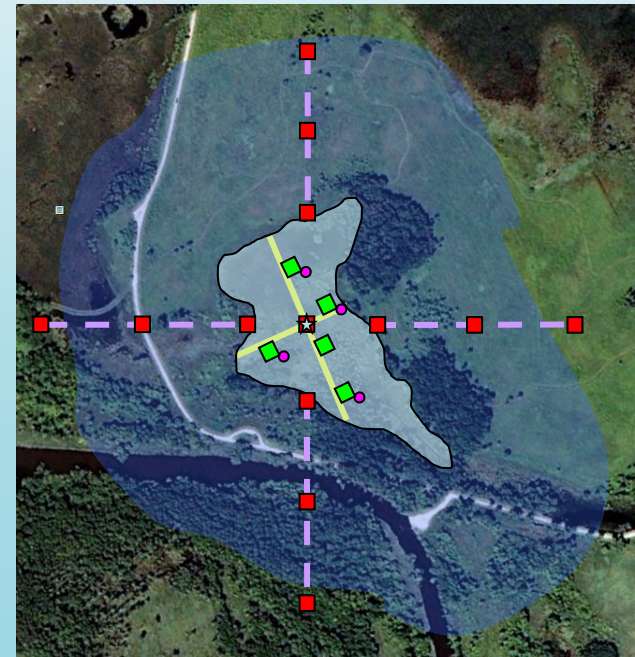
Challenges: Equipment Procurement

- Necessity of equipment versus “it would be nice to have it” and budget considerations
- Number of participating states, tribes and contractors
- State enhance/intensification studies
- Delivery of equipment to field crews



Challenges: Field Methods Training

- Field methods feasibility
 - Time budget (i.e. Can a field crew accomplish all sampling in one day?)
 - Processing samples in the field
 - Geographical considerations and the index period
- Regional field methods workshops
 - Number of participants
 - Location relative to appropriate training wetland



Challenges: Field Sampling and IM

- Crew sampling
 - Number of crews and sites
 - Sampling schedule
 - Enhancement studies
 - Obtaining access/permission to site
- Shipment of samples to analytical laboratories
 - Remote sites and holding times
 - Alaska
- Tracking of sites and samples





NLA

NRSA

NCCA

NWCA

Lessons Learned: Field Methods Training

- A “proof-of-concept” study is invaluable
 - Solidify intricacies in FOM methods
 - Must be completed before the train-the-trainer workshop to ensure that methods are accurate and complete
 - Reduces “last minute” changes that complicate the field effort
- Adaptive training is imperative, but the same message must be relayed across the country
- Require a “practice” day during the field methods workshop
- Avoid the addition of new parameters once field crews have been trained
- Stick to the protocols and ask questions

Lessons Learned: Field Sampling and IM

- Develop a meaningful site access strategy and implement it for all sites (i.e. site reconnaissance)
- Crews (particularly contractor) should seek local knowledge when possible
 - State resource agencies
 - Property owners
- Importance of Field Logistics Coordinator



Field Logistics Coordinator

Important duties during NWCA

- Immediately review submitted status and tracking forms for potential errors and omissions
- Weekly cross check between the status and sample portions of the tracking database to identify samples that may be being held longer than the designated holding period
- An open line of communication was established between the FLC and the analytical laboratories to determine if the samples are arriving in good condition.
- FLC followed up with field crew to provide corrections and help avoid similar issues with future samples
- Contact teams directly with corrections or questions. Providing immediate feedback to teams should result in a continually diminishing amount of errors.

“Never send four 22 year olds into the field alone.”





Questions?