



Using hydrogeomorphic criteria to classify wetlands on Mt. Desert Island, Maine approach, classification system, and examples: USGS Scientific Investigations Report 2005-5244

Martha G. Nielsen, Glenn R. Guntenspergen, Hilary A. Neckles

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A wetland classification system was designed for Mt. Desert Island, Maine, to help categorize the large number of wetlands (over 1,200 mapped units) as an aid to understanding their hydrologic functions. The classification system, developed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), in cooperation with the National Park Service, uses a modified hydrogeomorphic (HGM) approach, and assigns categories based on position in the landscape, soils and surficial geologic setting, and source of water. A dichotomous key was developed to determine a preliminary HGM classification of wetlands on the island. This key is designed for use with USGS topographic maps and 1:24,000 geographic information system (GIS) coverages as an aid to the classification, but may also be used with field data. Hydrologic data collected from a wetland monitoring study were used to determine whether the preliminary classification of individual wetlands using the HGM approach yielded classes that were consistent with actual hydroperiod data. Preliminary HGM classifications of the 20 wetlands in the monitoring study were consistent with the field hydroperiod data. The modified HGM classification approach appears robust, although the method apparently works somewhat better with undisturbed wetlands than with disturbed wetlands. This wetland classification system could be applied to other hydrogeologically similar areas of northern New England.

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