

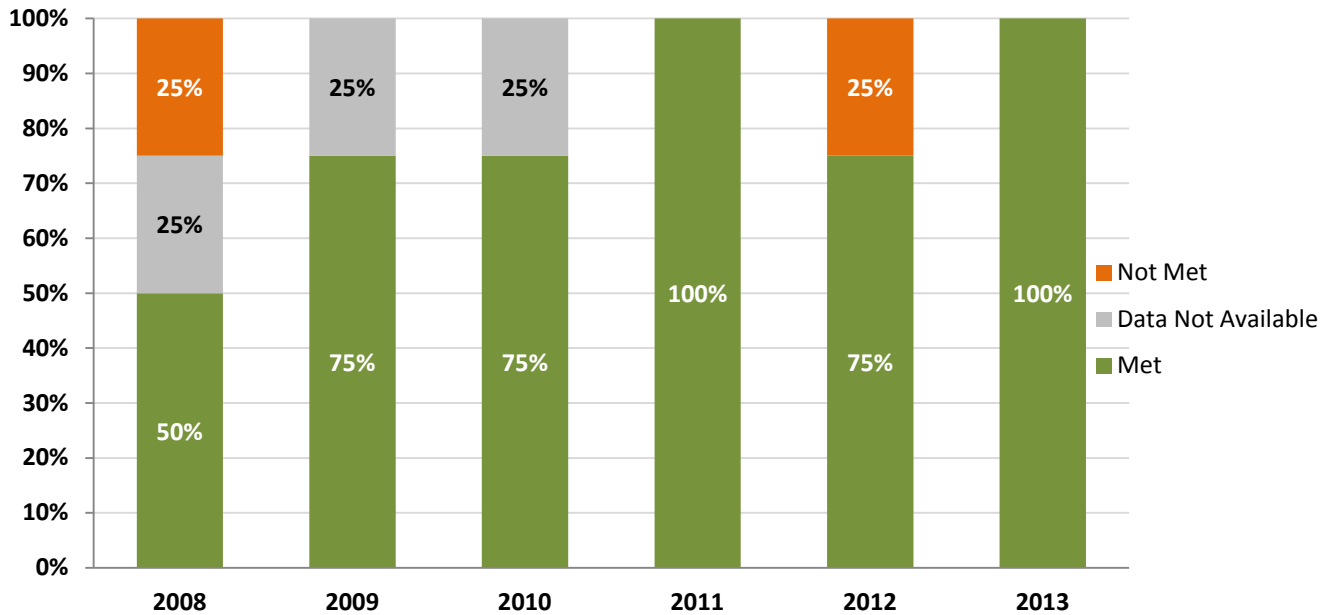
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Subobjective: Wetlands

EPA's Wetlands Program met both of their commitments in FY 2013. The Agency reported a no net loss of wetlands in the U.S. and a 27,000 increase in the number of acres restored and improved under EPA-funded programs. (Figure 59).

Figure 59: Wetlands Subobjective Six-Year Trend



FY 2013 ACS Code	Abbreviated Measure Description	Results and Commitment Status							Appendix Page Number (D-0)/ Figure Number
		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Subobjective 2.2.3 Increase Wetlands									
WT-SP21.N11	Net increase wetlands achieved (acres)	96,000 loss	128,000 loss				62,300 loss		D-35
WT-SP22	No net loss of wetlands			No Net Loss	No Net Loss	No Net Loss	No Net Loss	No Net Loss	D-36
WT-01	Number wetland acres restored and enhanced (cumulative)	61,856	82,875	103,507	130,000	154,000	180,000	207,000	D-36/Fig. 60
WT-02a	Number states/tribes increased wetland program capacity in one or more core elements	25	22	22	47	54	44	37	D-37
WT-03	Percent CWA 404 permits with greater environ. protection					88%	85%	78%	D-37

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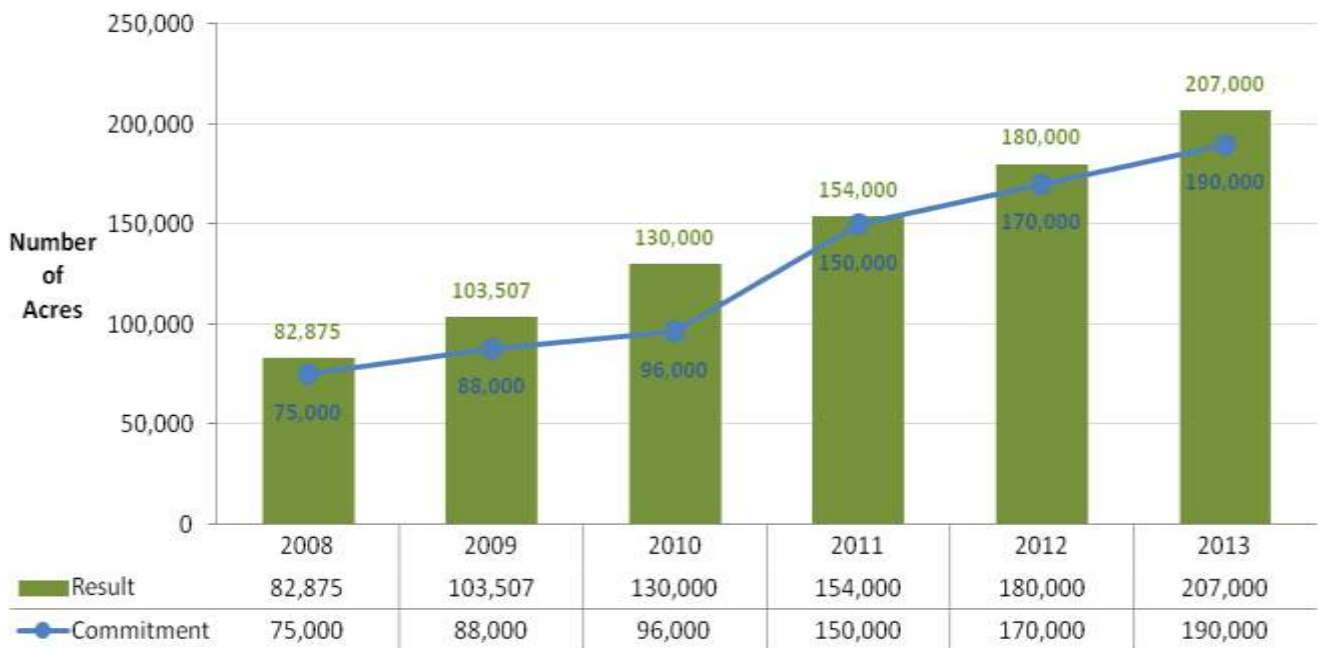
FY 2013 Performance Highlights and Management Challenges

Wetlands are among our nation’s most critical and productive natural resources. They provide a variety of benefits, such as water quality improvements, flood protection, shoreline erosion control, and ground water exchange. Wetlands are the primary habitat for fish, waterfowl, and other wildlife, providing numerous opportunities for education, recreation, and research. EPA recognizes that the challenges the nation faces in conserving our wetland heritage are daunting and that many partners must work together for this effort to succeed.

No Net Loss and the Number of Wetland Acres Restored/Enhanced: In 2013, EPA, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), states, and tribes, achieved a “no net loss” of wetlands under the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 regulatory program (SP-22). EPA continues to achieve this commitment through regional involvement and coordination in reviewing 404 permits issued by the COE. With each permit review targeted, EPA 404 permit experts assess whether their involvement resulted in a positive environmental outcome. It should be noted that achieving “no net loss” of wetlands is based upon the assumption in the Clean Water Act 404 permit that wetland mitigation projects meet performance standards.

EPA continues to exceed expectations in terms of the number of acres of wetlands restored and enhanced, with **207,000** acres restored and enhanced since 2002 (WT-1) (Figure 60). This was a 27,00 acre increased over the FY 2012 result. EPA has exceeded its commitment under this measure every year since 2004, due mostly to the combined efforts of local groups to restore wetlands under EPA funding programs. Although it is difficult to determine an accurate number of habitat acres that will be improved and restored—because projects can sometimes take a number of years to design, fund, implement, and complete—EPA has observed a long enough trend to be able to forecast improvements.

Figure 60: Wetland Acres Restored and Enhanced by Fiscal Year (WT-01)



EPA and its partners fell short in FY 2012 in achieving a net increase of wetlands on a nationwide basis. According to the latest Status and Trends report, there are 110.1 million acres of wetlands in the conterminous United States, and 62,300 wetland acres were lost over five years. The report, which represents the most up-to-date, comprehensive assessment of wetland habitats in the United States, documents substantial losses in forested and coastal wetlands. The rate of gains from reestablishment of wetlands increased by 17 percent from the previous study period (1998–2004), but the wetland loss rate increased 140 percent during the same time period. Although the losses of wetlands exceeded the gains, the net change was not statistically significant. The next updated Status and Trends Report will be published in 2022. The Status and Trends Report is on a 10 year cycle

Section 404 Permit Reviews and State and Tribal Wetlands Program Capacity: Beginning in FY 2010, EPA began tracking the number of Clean Water Act Section 404 standard permits that document requirements for greater environmental protection as part of the final permit decision. In FY 2013, **78%** of Section 404 permits contained recommendations for improvement in the final permit.¹⁸ This was below the FY 2012 result of 85% and the FY 2011 result of 88%.

As of FY 2013, **37** states and tribes have built capacities in the core program elements of wetlands monitoring, regulation, voluntary restoration and protection, and wetland water quality standards (WT-2a).¹⁹

¹⁸ Tracking capabilities began in 1/2010. Tracking totals will appear in FY11. Reported on by Regions and HQ.

“Requirements for greater environmental protection” are counted under this measure when EPA can document that its recommendations for improvement provided in one or more of the following issue areas were incorporated into the final permit decision:

1. Demonstration of adequate impact avoidance, including:
 - a) Determination of water dependency; b) Characterization of basic project purpose; c) Determination of range of practicable alternatives;
 - d) Evaluation of direct, secondary and cumulative impacts for practicable alternatives; e) Identification of Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative; f) Compliance with WQS, MPRSA, ESA and/or toxic effluent standards; g) Evaluation of potential for significant degradation.
2. Demonstration of adequate impact minimization
3. Determination of adequate compensation

Note: The documented permit decision can be in the form of an issued, withdrawn, or denied permit. The universe is the number of individual permits where EPA has the opportunity to comment (approximately 5,000/year). Regional priorities dictate the specific permits for which EPA submits comments. This number is typically less than 5,000.

¹⁹ This measure was changed in 2010 to gauge the number of states and tribes that have built the core elements of their programs (WT-2a) and have reached the point of managing fully functional wetland programs. The new measure tracks closely with EPA’s Core Elements Framework for State and Tribal Wetlands Program, which provides a more objective basis for measurement.