

CHAPTER 2

GOAL OF THE STATE WETLANDS STRATEGY

It shall be the goal of the State of Tennessee to provide the maximum practicable wetlands benefits to Tennessee and her citizens by conserving, enhancing, and restoring the acreage, quality, and biological diversity of Tennessee wetlands.

The management of wetlands and protection of their vital functions for the benefit of Tennessee citizens is a formidable challenge. It requires shared vision, intelligent resource-based planning, long-term commitment, and consistent cooperation. Since the Strategy was first published in 1994, we have increased our knowledge to enable us to better understand and manage our wetland resource. Most importantly, we continue to agree on a statewide goal and objectives, and the actions needed to realize that goal.

The state's goal acknowledges that the majority of the state's wetland resources are currently in private ownership and management, and are likely to remain so. It follows that many management decisions that will affect the quality and functions of wetlands will

be made by individuals, private corporations or non-profit organizations.

For this reason, one theme of the Strategy is to provide private owners of wetlands with the information they need to make informed management decisions that will benefit the owner, and at the same time protect wetlands functions and the public benefits that flow from wetlands. The Strategy calls for the State to collect and share information about the resource, and to offer technical assistance to private wetlands landowners, upon request.

The Strategy places responsibility for data collection and analysis with the State. Responsibilities include inventory and characterization of the state's wetland resources, creation of a GIS-based wetlands database, research, analysis and long term monitoring of status and trends. The Strategy calls for regular dissemination of technical information to planners and wetlands managers. Improved collection and analysis of monitoring data is the main priority of the implementation phase for this edition of the Strategy.

The Strategy also calls for the State to identify unique wetlands and potential restoration sites, and to rank them. The Strategy endorses the existing state policy to acquire certain unique or exceptionally high quality wetlands that

provide many public benefits, and to manage these wetlands in such a way as to protect or enhance their functions and benefits to the public. Another strong theme in the Strategy is restoration and enhancement of wetlands, both public and private, to offset previous losses, and to increase the resource base.

The State has a broad mandate to protect its waters, including its wetlands. Tennessee shares this mandate with federal agencies. The Strategy recognizes the need for an effective regulatory program, and offers recommendations with regard to water quality standards, record keeping and follow up of mitigation projects.

The conservation of wetlands is an institutional challenge, as well as a resource management challenge. Wetlands management is fragmented and sometimes inconsistent; agency mandates and program responsibilities may overlap or conflict. Public interests may not coincide with private interests.

For this reason, another strong theme in the Strategy is coordination and cooperative action. The Strategy calls for sharing the workload, sharing information and resources, and consistently communicating and coordinating among agencies and interest groups. In short, the Strategy calls for the creation of a working partnership between the public and private sectors.

The Strategy recognizes that the actions outlined here will require a commitment of staff and money. It endorses existing funding mechanisms, and calls on respective agencies to allocate adequate funds to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them. The Strategy has proven to be a very

effective tool to leverage federal funding for the actions outlined herein.

The Strategy provides the framework for wetlands protection in Tennessee. It is the foundation upon which participating agencies should build their wetlands protection efforts, and it is the evidence to be used when requesting support for those efforts.