Meeting Minutes - MAWS Vernal Pool Technical Committee
Maine DEP Augusta, Maine (Ray Building Room LW2)
September 10, 2010

In Attendance:
VPTC: Rich Jordan, Dale Knapp, Jim Logan, Roger St. Amand, William McCloy, & Kathleen Miller
MDEP: Mike Mullen
MDIF&W: Don Katnik, Phillip DeMaynadier

This meeting was set-up as a follow-up to the VPTC meeting of August 6, 2010 (minutes attached).

1. Group discussed the current MAWS and MDIF&W Vernal Pool Reporting Forms and data input.

   a. Don discussed the process that the State uses to digitize vernal pool data as it is received. Each project gets a new database and each form is entered manually (unless submitted digitally by fill-outable forms). The forms then go to the Habitat Group for review (for significant/non-sig decisions, etc).

   b. Don has received at least 4 types of forms in 2010 (MAWS, IFW, Project Specific, and citizen scientist form from UMO/Audubon program). Only the IFW data form has headers that meet the headings of the state database and for the rest the state needs to look through the other forms to pick out the pertinent information to include in the database…difficult, time-consuming and slows returns.

   c. VPTC agreed to drop the MAWS form and change the Protocol to encourage VP investigators to use only the most recent IFW form. We agreed that it is important to have a single form that everyone uses for all data that is submitted to the State. This helps insure that everyone is gathering similar and repeatable field data.

   d. VPTC and IFW discussed some potential revisions to the current IFW form and discussed ways to make the form easier and more efficient to use (especially on large projects with lots of potential forms). This will include better guidance on how to truncate the amount of project and observer information required on the forms and reduction and elimination of some form sections.

   e. VPTC will submit potential/suggested changes to the IFW form in the next couple of weeks and will work on creating a field version of the IFW form that can be used to collect data on field-notebook-sized (5X7) rite-in-the-rain forms that can be easily transferred to the PDF format back in the office. As long as the headings and field numbers match those on the IFW form, data entry will be okay. This will allow flexibility for users as to how many pages they want their field forms to be.

   f. The fill-outable forms are preferred by IFW because it is directly linked to the state database, but they are not required (paper forms are still acceptable).

2. Group discussed what data is required to gather and submit.

   a. Paper forms are required for all VP info submissions (MAWS Protocol will require use of the most current IFW form starting in 2011).

   b. IFW is requiring (to the extent possible) that representative photographs of each resource for which forms are submitted be included. This should include

photographs of the entire resource (if possible) and photos of any evidence of 'manmade-edness''. This may be made mandatory through rule-making soon.

    c. Shapefiles (following naming convention and data quality procedures discussed in the MAWS protocol) can be submitted in lieu of paper maps. If submitters do not submit shape files they must include a paper map (eg if they just insert GIS coordinates, they must also include a paper map showing the resource on an aerial photo or topo map).

    d. IFW (DeMaynadier) said that they still want to see forms for all PVPs on smaller projects but that on larger projects, IFW does not need to see all data from the field effort. Specifically:

        i. IFW wants IFW VP data forms completed and submitted for <u>all</u> water bodies that have requisite number of egg masses to meet State Significance criteria – even non-natural water bodies (NOT SURE ABOUT PRESENCE OF RTE or FAIRY SHRIMP?)

        ii. IFW wants IFW VP data forms completed and submitted for all natural vernal pools (regardless of apparent productivity – even 0 egg masses)

        iii. IFW <u>does not</u> requiring/requesting forms for any non-natural vernal pool species breeding areas that do not meet the requisite egg mass numbers.

3. MDEP/IFW let us know how to get the MDEP's decision/report on whether or not a pool is significant sent to more than one person:

    a. Put the information (who should receive correspondence on the project) in a cover letter that accompanies your data to the IFW and DEP (included with paper copies of data forms and digital information (Shape files on CD/DVD/Thumbdrive/Etc). This will prevent DEP listing data from being sent to each individual field observer.

4. Question was asked to DeMaynadier about whether or not IFW was going to request MARAP cards to be filled out during vernal pool surveys.

    a. He said no.

5. VPTC members asked DEP/IFW if they could work on some clarification of terms and explanations of how observers should decide on whether features are "semipermanent" or "ephemeral" and "natural" vs "manmade" vs "natural-modified" (often difficult distinction to make in older impact situations).

    a. DEP will discuss internally – but is leaning towards the Protocol to provide suggestions.

6. This also brought up the discussion of what a permanent inlet/outlet is.

    a. Mike Mullen said that in the protocol/decision tree we are currently wrong. DEP has not defined inlet/outlet as an NRPA stream. Instead – it is what it says: a permanently flowing inlet or outlet can include a ditch/culvert/pipe/etc. The VPTC wondered what that means for headwater vernal pools on sideslope seeps, where you may have an ephemeral pool of water that may discharge groundwater year-round to a small perennial channel, but the pool itself dries enough to provide vernal pool habitat. No consensus reached.

7. Discussed next meeting: a large all-parties-invited stakeholder meeting in November with ACOE/EPA/DEP/IFW/USFWS and others to discuss the proposed form and protocol revisions.

RJ question to VPTC --- can one of you fill me in on or suggest our proposed next move with regard to the Corps? I sort of had my mind at Margarita's already by the time we discussed that)