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LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD: IS THERE PROGRESS IN WETLAND ECOLOGY?

Where are we going in wetland ecology? What should be our priorities, as individual scholars and as a research community? From one perspective, directionality and progress are just not an issue. We collect information on wetlands, and we meet occasionally to tell each other entertaining stories about wetlands. From the other perspective, progress is the only issue. We have no need to write or speak unless we have something to report that advances us toward a specific target. I am clearly in the latter camp. That is to say, I think that science, and wetland ecology, must have a trajectory. We can uncover our trajectory by deliberately looking back. We can strengthen our trajectory by consciously looking ahead. Looking back, there are key realizations. Wetlands have a distinctive biota. The biota has shared traits. Flooding creates hypoxic soils. Peat often accumulates. Nutrient gradients and disturbance regimes modify effects of flooding. And so on. (These ideas are associated with names like Lavoisier, Pearsall, Penfound, Tansley, Salisbury, Laing, Sculthorpe, Clements, Dansereau and Odum.) Looking ahead, there are important objectives. (1) We need the ability to predict flood regimes, and which sets of species and processes will arise under those regimes. (2) We need explicit rules for how secondary effects (like fertility, disturbance, and grazing) further control species composition. We could call the former "predictive ecology" and the latter "assembly rules". These remain the central challenges of our field.

Session 13.6 Keese, D.*; Claassen, R.; USDA-NRCS, Temple, TX 76501 USA, USDA-ERS, Washington, D.C. 20036 USA; dan.keese@tx.usda.gov
USDA conservation policy: compliance provisions for wetland conservation

USDA wetland conservation provisions require land-owners to meet a minimum standard as a condition of eligibility for many Federal farm program benefits. Under current compliance requirements, eligibility could be denied to producers who: Produce an agricultural commodity on a wetland converted after December 23, 1985; or convert a wetland after November 28, 1990, such that agricultural commodity production is possible. Often referred to as Swampbuster. Producers violating these requirements risk losing all Federal farm program payments, not just payments associated the wetland in question. Compliance mechanisms are unique policy tools. Producers who decide to meet compliance requirements likely do so because benefits of compliance outweigh costs. Swampbuster constrains wetland conversion when: (1) wetlands are located on farms participating in Federal programs subject to Swampbuster, (2) in the absence of Swampbuster, those wetlands could be profitably converted to crop production, and (3) other policies are not applicable or effective in deterring wetland conversion. Many wetlands are in remote areas and unlikely to be converted because they cannot be easily incorporated into an existing farm. Swampbuster deters conversion only if conversion would otherwise be profitable. Swampbuster is just one of a number of policies designed to deter or discourage wetland drainage. Seemingly, compliance mechanisms have promoted wetland conservation. While USDA's CSR process may have flaws, these flaws do not mean compliance rates are low. Evidence from other sources shows wetland conversion for agriculture has been sharply reduced. Nonetheless, enforcement of compliance requirements will continue to be a challenge.

Session 13.7 Keese, D.; USDA-NRCS, Temple, TX 76501 USA; dan.keese@tx.usda.gov

The Food Security Act of 1985: wetland conservation in the agricultural landscape

Signed into law by President Ronald W. Reagan on December 23, 1985, the food security act of 1985 shifted the wetland conservation paradigm. For the first time, eligibility for USDA benefits was tied to compliance with land-use restrictions governing activity on a voluntary basis. Producers or land-owners who converted wetlands for agricultural commodity production after December 23, 1985, risked losing all USDA farm program benefits, not just those associated with the wetland in question. The act provided a concise, unambiguous wetland definition, requiring (A) hydric soils, (B) wetland hydrology, and (C) hydro-phytic vegetation. A converted wetland was manipulated such that agricultural commodity production was made possible. For wetlands converted and used for cropland prior to the act, varying levels of exemption from its conservation compliance provisions were provided. Prior converted cropland (PC) was exempt from hydrological manipulation restrictions. Hydrological manipulations on farmed wetlands (FW) and farmed wetland pasture (FWP) were confined to maintenance of a manipulation as it existed on December 23, 1985. Participants could be granted an exemption when wetland conversion was determined to have minimal effect on wetlands in the area. In the ensuing 25 years, the act's four amendments have consistently either strengthened or clarified its wetland conservation provisions. According to current estimates, the food security act of 1985, as amended, provides protection to roughly 90 million acres of wetlands across the United States.

Symposium 6.5 Kentula, M; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 200 SW 35th St., Corvallis, OR 97333; kentula.mary@epa.gov

ON LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESS IN PROFESSIONAL WETLAND SCIENCE

The Society of Wetland Scientists and the wetland profession are fortunate to have an abundance of leaders. These leaders respond to the needs of the Society for guidance and direction. They also consistently advance wetland science and improve the quality of wetland management. This talk will explore some of the qualities associated with leadership, including ability to inspire and effectiveness. Examples of these qualities as exemplified in the professional wetland community will be presented to illustrate how to recognize and emulate the leaders in our midst.