

Inland Wetlands Activities and Trends 2003 Summary

The 2003 calendar year marks the fourteenth year of standardized reporting of municipal inland wetlands agency actions. The Connecticut Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act requires municipal inland wetlands agencies to report their actions to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) using a statewide activity reporting form. This summary contains information compiled from submitted statewide activity reporting forms for 2003. Reports were received from all but 27 municipal inland wetlands agencies from a total of 170 reporting municipal agencies and the DEP. State agency actions are also reported and accounted for only 0.3 percent of the total reported for 2003.

The pace of development in Connecticut is reflected in the volume of business activities our municipal inland wetlands agencies manage. Municipal inland wetlands agencies took 4,365 total actions in 2003 (Table 1). This represents a 1.5% increase over the 4,299 total actions in 2002. The majority of actions, approximately 91%, relate to permitting of regulated activities.

Wetland Fact

Actions associated with residential and commercial development accounted for 80% of municipal inland wetland agency actions in 2003.

The majority of activities permitted by municipal inland wetlands agencies across Connecticut involve actions affecting inland wetlands and watercourses associated with residential and commercial development. New residential development for single-family units accounted for 30.9 %, residential improvement by a homeowner accounted for 37.5 %, and commercial/industrial uses accounted for 9.1 % of all permitted wetland and watercourse alteration activities in 2003. Most of the remaining actions are associated with municipal improvements, agriculture and forestry, and state agency activities.

Connecticut's geographic location and robust economy guarantee that our state will be in demand for development. The DEP believes residential and commercial development will continue to be the majority of municipal inland wetlands agency actions in the future.

Total Actions Reported for 2003	
Actions Reported for 2003	Numbers Reported
Permits Issued ¹	2922
Permits Denied	132
Permits extended/amended	128
Map Amendments	151
Enforcement Actions	52
Jurisdictional Rulings ²	227
Agent Approvals	752
Appeal of Agent Approvals	1
TOTAL	4,365

Another significant trend is the regulation of activities outside of wetlands and watercourses within the upland review area. Many municipal inland wetlands agencies in Connecticut are routinely regulating activities in the upland review area; using the DEP publication "Guidelines Upland Review Area Regulations Connecticut's Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Act", as a catalyst to increase their upland review area to 100 feet while some municipal inland wetlands agencies routinely regulate at distances greater than 100 feet.

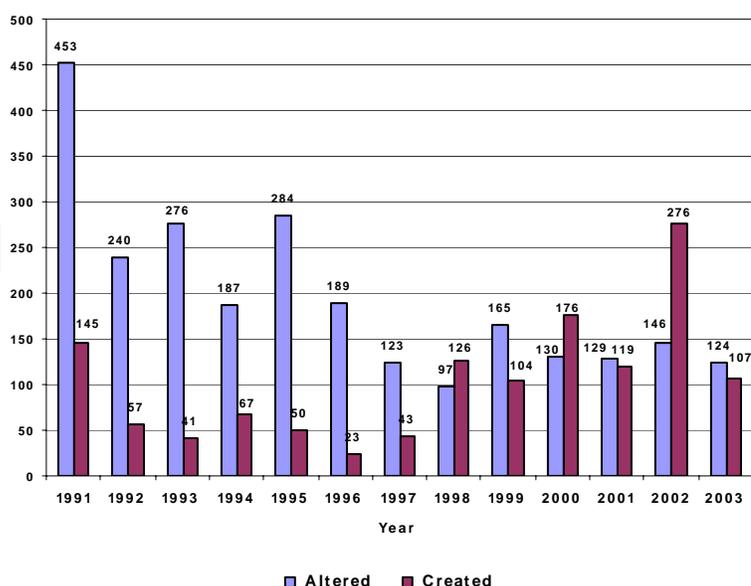
¹ Permits issued may include activities permitted in upland review areas which may result in no wetland alteration, conversion or loss.

² Jurisdictional rulings may include actions determining that no permit is required or that an activity is exempt. Jurisdictional rulings may result in alteration, conversion or loss of wetlands or watercourses.

The data for 2003 show that 33 percent of the activity types reported were located in an upland review area.

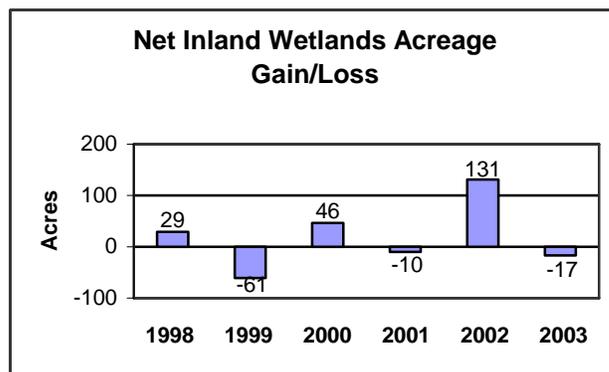
The long-term trend in Connecticut since 1990 indicates a steady decrease in the acres of permitted wetland alterations over time and an increase in wetlands creations over the same time period. The data for 2003 indicate that the mitigation of permitted wetland alterations is a continuing trend in Connecticut. For 2003, 124 acres of wetlands were permitted to be altered while 107 acres were authorized to be restored, enhanced or created. **The six-year average from the period of 1998 to 2003 shows that 1.1 acres are being created for each acre altered.**

Acres of Permitted Wetland Alterations and Creations per Year



The DEP believes that Connecticut has reached a no net loss – net gain of wetlands due to changes to the Act specifically authorizing mitigation of impacts, and the focus on training of municipal inland wetlands agencies and staff by the DEP since 1996. Regulatory authority reinforced by

way of the comprehensive training program has resulted in more municipalities seeking mitigation opportunities through the regulatory process.



The 2003 data suggest that municipal inland wetlands agencies are handling the large volume of proposed residential development with careful application of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act and their municipal regulations to reduce impacts to wetlands and watercourses, and are executing or implementing mitigation of such impacts in the regulatory process.

Overall, the status and trends regarding inland wetlands and watercourses for 2003 is especially encouraging to see that the no net loss-net gain of wetlands is becoming a long-term trend in Connecticut. The focus on the mitigation of impacts to wetlands and watercourses will need to continue as development in Connecticut impacts our landscape.

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