

A Draft Regional Guidebook for Applying the Hydrogeomorphic Approach to Assessing Wetland Functions of Vernal Pool Depressional Wetlands in Southern California

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ABSTRACT: This Draft Guidebook is an assessment tool that focuses on the functioning of vernal pool wetlands within the Southern Californian eco-region, specifically San Diego County. Its purpose is to provide trained practitioners the means to achieve efficient, reproducible and logical functional assessment results for vernal pool wetlands in San Diego County, California. Results of these assessments can then be used in a variety of ways, such as evaluation of sites for restoration potential, assessment of impacts from existing or proposed projects and monitoring restoration success. Due to the high degree of variability experienced by temporary wetlands in arid climates, we have developed both direct and indirect functional indices for four of the five functions we identified. Direct assessments can only be made when there is sufficient precipitation to elicit the responses that demonstrate function, and we have sought to objectively define "sufficient." Consistent with an HGM approach, use of this Draft Guidebook should be confined to the geographic region and hydrogeomorphic class, subclass and pool types for which it was developed. Use of this methodology outside the boundaries of the reference domain is wholly inappropriate. We are hopeful that our approach can be modified for other pool types within the region, and to vernal pools in other parts of California and Oregon.

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