Specification for Wetland Persistence Model

David Conklin, Oregon Freshwater Simulations, 11/17/20

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# Context

This document is the second of two specifications which are deliverables for the McKenzie wetlands research project. Please refer to the first one, “Specification for Thermal Loading Estimator”, dated 11/12/20, for context information.

This document is called for in Agreement Amendment 1 to the contract between Oregon Freshwater and Land Craft. The requirement is

“***Task* 1 (B) Wetland persistence model specifications**

***Task Description***  Wetland persistence CW3M model specifications

***Deliverable*** (B) A wetland persistence (fate) model incorporating expert guidance on critical wetland attributes and providing projections on the persistence of wetlands under CW3M climate models. Model performance specification is reasonable estimation of wetland persistence over projected timespans as determined by expert guidance and project team.”

# Model and Simulation Overview

2010-18 will be used as a calibration period. Future simulations will be made for 2019-2060. If actual data for 2019 is available, we may choose to extend the calibration period through 2019 and begin future simulations in 2020.

CW3M’s IDU layer for the McKenzie basin currently has 16,883 polygons with a total area of 330,708 hectares. Its reach layer has 1047 reaches. There are 954 HRUs, representing contiguous smaller areas which drain to a single reach or to several adjacent contiguous reaches. HRUs are made up of IDUs; HRU boundaries are coincident with IDU boundaries. CW3M’s spatial data files use the NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_10N projected coordinate system.

CW3M’s native units are metric. In the CW3M output files, areas are presented in square meters and hectares, depths in meters, volumes in cubic meters, flows in cubic meters per second (cms), temperatures in Celsius, and precipitation in millimeters of water.

CW3M has a 3-layer land use/land cover (LULC) hierarchy. The top level has just 8 categories (Unknown/Developed/Agriculture/Other veg./Forest/Barren/Wetlands/Water snow ice). As of 7/2/20, the top and middle levels in the hierarchy each have only a single Wetlands category (LULC\_A = 6 and LULC\_B = 61), and the bottom level has just two, Woody Wetlands (VEGCLASS = 190) and Herbaceous Wetlands (VEGCLASS = 195). Sixty-five IDUs totaling 519 hectares are classified as wetlands. All but four of the wetland IDUs are classified as woody wetlands; those total 500 hectares. The other four IDUs, classified as herbaceous wetlands, are near the point where the McKenzie flows into the Willamette.

The existing representation of wetlands in CW3M is a legacy of the WW2100 project, in which wetlands were not a focus. For the current project, we need to improve the wetland representation. We expect to add more (a dozen or more) wetland categories to the bottom level of the LULC hierarchy and possibly some to the middle level as well. These data improvements are necessary to meet the model performance specification, but the identification of the new categories and the preparation of a revised IDU GIS layer to make use of them requires expert knowledge about wetlands and GIS which is outside the scope of Freshwater’s modeling and simulation services.

# McKenzie wetlands in the initial versions of the IDU, HRU, and Reach data layers

There is an Excel spreadsheet named “Wetlands.xslx” in the CW3M Digital Handbook folder. It has data for wetlands in both the McKenzie and Clackamas basins. Initial data for the McKenzie shows 18 wetlands ranging in size from 7 to 162 ha and totaling 519 ha. For comparison, Clackamas data has 12 wetlands, ranging in size from 5 to 38 ha and totaling 204 ha.

# Data changes for better representation of wetlands

Note that CW3M has a convention that the LULC attributes of an IDU may change only from one year to the next, not multiple times within a single year. The items below are recommendations to Land Craft regarding preparation of a revised IDU layer. Freshwater will rely on Land Craft to supply the new layer and associated data.

Recommendation #1. Use the LULC\_A and LULC\_B attributes of wetland IDUs to represent things that rarely if ever change, such as landscape position and soils.  Use the third level LULC attribute (VEGCLASS) to represent vegetation classifications, for example to differentiate a cattail pond from a swamp with woody vegetation.  Use other attributes to represent things which change seasonally or daily, for example a WETNESS attribute for inundation depth and soil moisture.

Recommendation #2. Develop a shapefile which represents historic, current, and potential future wetlands, divided into polygons by LULC\_B values.  Intersect that shapefile with the existing IDU shapefile to produce a new IDU shapefile with more IDUs, where the boundaries of the IDUs in the original IDU shapefile are coincident with the outer boundaries of contiguous sets of 1 or more IDUs in the new IDU shapefile.

Recommendation #3. Populate initial condition data attributes in the new IDU layer with data for those attributes in the original IDU layer, except assign LULC\_A, LULC\_B, and VEGCLASS attribute values for wetland IDUs using the new classes developed in the first step.

# Simulation of changes in wetlands over time

CW3M will be used in this study to address the question of how McKenzie basin wetlands might change over the next half-century. In order to produce results which are relevant, the model must be able to produce changes in the wetlands in response to other changes, both natural and anthropogenic. Natural changes as used here are changes to the precipitation regime, seasonal temperatures, and so on. Anthropogenic changes would include development encroaching on wetland, changes in the upstream flow regime due to changes in reservoir operations or irrigation withdrawals, and so on. As of the beginning of the study, CW3M treats IDU wetlands as static: once a wetland, always a wetland. Real estate development encroachment on wetlands is not represented in CW3M’s land use model, nor is the loss of wetlands due to drainage, drought, or conversion to agriculture. At the very least, we will need to implement logic to tie the areal extent of a wetland to the quantity of water available to nourish it, as precipitation and from upstream. And we will need new logic to tie the temperature and volume of the water flowing out to the temperature and volume of the water flowing in.

CW3M can aggregate results from daily to yearly on either a calendar year basis or a water year basis. For this study, a water year basis seems more appropriate. Climate datasets begin on January 1st and end on December 31st. Simulation runs begin on January 1st and end on December 31st, regardless of whether the simulation results are aggregated on a calendar basis or water year basis. This has the consequence that when a 51-year simulation run is carried out, water year results are presented for only 50 complete water years, starting with October of the first calendar year and ending with September of the final calendar year. For example, when CW3M is run for the 51 (calendar) years 2010-2060, it produces results for only 50 complete water years, 2011-2060. Water years are named by the calendar year in which they end.

# How wetlands will be represented in the model

For the author’s convenience, in the description below, the present and future tenses are both used, as if some of the necessary additions had already been implemented. As of 11/16/20, a few changes have in fact already been made to the CW3M code.

In CW3M, the areas and shapes of IDUs are fixed in the model’s initial data and do not change during the simulation. This has the consequence that, in a given simulation year, an IDU may be classified (the LULC\_A attribute) as a wetland in its entirety or as not-a-wetland (e.g. agricultural or forested) in its entirety, but not as a combination of wetland and not-a-wetland. From one simulation year to the next, the classification of an IDU can be changed, for example from wetland to agricultural or vice versa. As noted previously, as of the beginning of this project, in CW3M wetlands are static; there is no logic to change an IDU’s LULC\_A attribute from wetland (LULC\_A=6) to anything else, nor any logic to change from something else to the wetland value. New logic to do so is discussed later in the section titled “Loss (or gain) of wetlands”.

The condition of a real wetland changes both seasonally and interannually. We’ll add a WETNESS attribute to represent how wet a wetland IDU is on a given day. The value of the WETNESS attribute will be set in the daily simulation loop. The WETNESS attribute is discussed below in the section titled “A WETNESS attribute”.

The representation of a wetland IDU most consistent with the overall CW3M design is as a flat-bottomed pool with soil at the bottom and vertical sides of uniform height. The vegetation type and water depth are taken as uniform across the area of the IDU. This representation can support outputs for water temperature and water depth whenever the wetland is inundated, and the degree to which the soil is saturated when it is not inundated. A more elaborate representation of a wetland IDU would be as a bowl with a curved bottom, so that increasing fractions of the IDU’s area are inundated as the water level rises, but we won’t attempt that representation in this project.

Conceptually, each wetland IDU adjacent to a reach may be visualized as a pool adjacent to a channel. When the wetland is wet and flow in the channel is low, water moves out of the pool into the channel by overflowing the side of the pool, and it can also move through the soil to the channel. When the wetland is dry and flow in the channel is higher, water can move from the channel into the pool, over the banks of the channel. CW3M does not have a mechanism for moving water laterally out of the channel directly into the soil of the adjacent IDU.

The pool has a capacity (idu WETL\_CAP, in units of depth). In this simple wetland model, we parameterize the reach with two values, a threshold flow (reach Q\_CAP, in cms), and a fraction (reach QSPILL\_FRC). Water always flows longitudinally down the channel, but at flow rates above Q\_CAP, the portion of the flow above Q\_CAP is divided between flow down channel and flow laterally over the sides of the channel into the adjacent pool.

A wetland IDU separated from a stream by another wetland IDU may be visualized as a second pool adjacent to the first but on the other side from the channel. The rim of the second pool is at the same height as the first pool, but the bottom of the second pool may be higher than the bottom of the first pool, so that the capacity per unit area of the second pool is smaller than the capacity per unit area of the first pool. The two pools are connected at the level of the bottom of the second pool, so the water level is the same in the two pools, as long as it is high enough in the first pool to reach the level of the bottom of the second pool.

The conceptualization described so far allows for nourishment of the wetland idus from a nearby reach, but it does not account for lateral flow into the wetlands from the soil of adjacent non-wetland IDUs. Nor does it account directly for a wetland slowing the runoff from upland precipitation. CW3M uses a version of the HBV precipitation-runoff model. HBV, at least as in CW3M, represents only lateral flow from the land into the stream, not from one parcel of land to an adjacent parcel. Even with these omissions, the conceptualization described so far may result in reducing the hydrograph peaks, since some of the water will detour into the adjacent pools on its way downstream.

Elaboration of CW3M’s precipitation-runoff submodel to include a representation of lateral runoff or subsurface flow between adjacent IDUs would entail changing the principal unit of computation from HRUs to the IDUs of which the HRUS are composed. This would amount to a major extension (or replacement) of the HBV submodel, and is outside the scope of the current project.

Another consequence of the current conceptualization is the inability to represent wetlands which are not adjacent to a reach. A single real wetland may be represented by multiple wetland IDUs forming a contiguous area, so long as at least one IDU is adjacent to a reach. In the data layers inherited from the WW2100 project, wetland #18, consisting of a single IDU (IDU\_ID=149851) in an HRU (HRU\_ID=2344) which drains to a reach of McGowan Creek (COMID=23773619), is an example of a wetland IDU not adjacent to a reach nor connected by adjacency to other wetland IDUs.

# Attributes of interest in the wetlands study

A number of attributes of the IDU, HRU, and Reach data layers may be used as inputs and outputs in the wetland simulations. An initial set of such attributes is:

WETL\_ID, WETNESS, WETL\_CAP in the IDU layer (new)

Q\_CAP, QSPILL\_FRC in the reach layer (new)

Q in the Reach layer, the flow in the outlet reach of the wetland

REACH\_H2O in the Reach layer, the volume of water in the reach

TEMP\_H2O in the Reach layer (new), reach water temperature

PRECIP in the IDU and HRU layers, precipitation

TEMP in the IDU and HRU layers, air temperature

AWS, SM\_DAY, and SOILH2OEST in the IDU layer, discussed below

# A WETNESS attribute

A new IDU attribute, WETNESS, is proposed as a generalization of the attributes for soil moisture. The calculation of WETNESS would likely make use of existing attributes for soil water holding capacity (AWS) and soil moisture (SM\_DAY and/or SOILH2OEST). Positive values of WETNESS are simply average water depth when the surface is covered by water. A value of zero indicates fully saturated soil with no standing water. The magnitude of negative values of WETNESS indicates how much water would have to be added to the soil to fully saturate it.

The idea of a WETNESS attribute was suggested by the use of negative “water depths” by Poiani and Johnson in their prairie wetland model (Poiani & Johnson 1993). Here is their description:

…negative “water depths” were calculated for certain cells in the GIS. This approximated depth to groundwater for vegetation types that were not permanently flooded or saturated. For example, suppose the water elevation over the entire wetland basin was 557.7 metres above sea level (m.a.s.l.). A cell in the center of the basin with a ground elevation of 557.0 m.a.s.l. would have a water depth of 0.7 m. In contrast, a cell at the edge of the wetland with an elevation of 558.0 m.a.s.l. would have a “water depth” (or depth to groundwater) of -0.3 m.

The proposed WETNESS attribute is the same as water depth for positive values, but differs from Poiani’s negative water depth in value. Poiani’s negative water depth is referenced to the elevation of groundwater, which is presumably the elevation of the water level in the nearest portion of their study area that has standing water. Negative values of the WETNESS attribute would instead be calculated from soil water holding capacity and an estimate of current soil moisture, probably using existing IDU attributes AWS, SM\_DAY, and SOILH2OEST.

Existing IDU attribute AWS is described in the CW3M data dictionary as “average soil water holding capacity” from SSURGO, in units of cmH2O. We can adjust the AWS values for wetland IDUs to tune our wetland model.

Existing IDU attribute SM\_DAY is the amount of water held in the soil, in mm, as tracked by the CW3M’s precipitation/infiltration/runoff submodel. It can change daily. Conceptually it applies to the soil from the surface down to a point too deep to be accessible by plants and too deep for water to flow laterally into the nearest downhill stream reach. SM\_DAY does not include aquifer water.

Existing IDU attribute SOILH2OEST is an estimate of plant available soil moisture, in mm of water, calculated during the growing season separately for the irrigated and unirrigated parts of HRUs containing agricultural IDUs.

The proposed WETNESS attribute is a floating point variable with meaningful values in the range of about +3000 to -1000, with 0 indicating mud, i.e. fully saturated soil with no standing water and little oxygen. Positive values of WETNESS represent the average depth of water covering the soil, in mm. Negative values of WETNESS in principle could be derived from the SM\_DAY attribute and the soil water holding capacity (AWS):

when there is no standing water, WETNESS = SM\_DAY - AWS

This formulation allows interpretation of the magnitude of negative WETNESS values as a measure of how much more water the soil will absorb before water begins to accumulate on the surface.

# Calculating the exchange of water between the wetland and the reach

### Wetland IDU parameters

WETNESS – a variable representing how wet the wetland (mmH2O)

WETL\_CAP – a parameter representing the depth of water (mmH2O) at which the water overflows back to the associated reach, assuming Q < Q\_CAP

WETL2Q – a variable representing the overflow from the wetland back to the reach

ELEV\_MEAN – the elevation above sea level of the bottom of the wetland conceptual tank

### Reach parameters

Q – flow, cms

Q\_CAP – below this flow rate, all the water exits downstream; above this rate, a fraction spills into the adjacent wetland (cms)

QSPILL\_FRC – the fraction of Q above Q\_CAP which spills into the adjacent wetland

Q2WETL – a variable representing the flow over the banks of the reach into the wetland

When Q > Q\_CAP and WETNESS < WETL\_CAP, then

WETL2Q = 0 and

Q2WETL = (Q – Q\_CAP) \* QSPILL\_FRC

When both Q > Q\_CAP and WETNESS>WETL\_CAP, a flood condition exists. How to set the values of Q2WETL and WETL2Q remains to be specified as of 11/16/20.

When Q < Q\_CAP and WETNESS > WETL\_CAP, then WETL2Q is > 0 and Q2WETL = 0.

WETL2Q is chosen so as to keep Q <= Q\_CAP

When WETNESS >= 0, SOILH2OEST = AWS\*10 (AWS is in cm, SOILH2OEST is in mm)

When WETNESS < 0, SOILH2OEST = AWS\*10 + WETNESS

It will be necessary to add logic to HBV::HBV\_IrrigatedSoil() to use SOILH2OEST for wetland IDUs when calculating the flow through the soil from the wetland into the reach. We will make the assumption that flow in the other direction, through the soil from the reach to the wetland soil, is negligible. In effect, the wetland gets its water only from precipitation and from overflow of the banks of the reach, and it loses water through overflow back to the reach and from flow through the soil back to the reach as calculated in the HBV submodel.

# Evolution of wetlands

Natural changes to wetlands occur in response to seasonal weather patterns and in response to climate change. The convention of our CW3M wetland model will be to allow for the wetland type (VEGCLASS) to change from year to year, and to represent seasonal changes by the values of associated IDU attributes as noted in an earlier section. We will make use of the state-and-transition model (STM) engine already used in CW3M for interannual changes in forested upland IDUs. Doing so will require the identification of the wetland states of interest and of the conditions under which wetlands transition between states. For example, as a multiyear period of lower-than-average precipitation extends longer and longer, a formerly perennial marsh may begin to lose its standing water in some seasons. The transition of the wetland from some VEGCLASS for a perennial marsh to a different VEGCLASS for a seasonally inundated wetland will be characterized by some transition rule in the STM, perhaps based on the WETNESS attribute staying less than zero for some number of days each year.

The STM engine in CW3M was originally (~2010) a reimplementation in C++ of the Vegetation Development Dynamics Tool (VDDT) from ESSA (<https://essa.com/explore-essa/tools/vddt/>). A practical way to approach the construction of the table of wetland states and their transition rules would be for a wetland domain expert like Dr. Zaret to build the model in the VDDT app on Windows. Freshwater could then port the tables to CW3M and update CW3M’s STM engine as necessary to make use of them. Such an approach would also streamline the process of verifying that the wetland STM is running correctly in CW3M, by allowing for direct comparison of simulation results obtained from the same input data on CW3M and VDDT.

# Loss (or gain) of wetlands

In the real world, a wetland which dries up and remains dry for a decade or so can transition to a dryland vegetation type. Wetlands may also be lost through conversion to agricultural use or developed use. Less frequently, wetlands are sometimes restored; the wetland at the junction of Chicken Creek with the Tualatin River is an example. We will need to add a process which runs at an annual timestep to implement land use changes involving IDUs changing into or out of wetland land cover (LULC\_A changing from 6 to something else, or changing from something else back to 6).

# Reality check

We need a way to assess our model’s skill at simulating the real world. We rely on hindcasting – driving the model with actual weather data and other historical records – and comparing the simulation results with temporally correlated historical observations. A working assumption for our wetland model development is that we will have historical data available for some wetlands, such as water depth as it varies seasonally and interannually, that we can compare to our simulation results. This data will be most useful if it is for years starting in 2010, as those are the years from which USGS flow gage readings are being used for calibration of CW3M’s Flow model. As of 11/16/20, no wetland historical data has not yet been acquired. In general, acquisition of historical data about actual McKenzie wetlands is outside the scope of Freshwater’s modeling and simulation services, and Freshwater will rely on Land Craft for such data. Kyla Zaret, the wetland consultant to LCOG and Land Craft, made this comment in an email on 7/17/20:

Regarding historic data:  There's a real dearth of quantitative information pertaining to palustrine wetlands in Oregon (especially those that don't include an open waterbody like a pond, lake or reservoir).  The [National Wetland Condition Assessment](https://www.epa.gov/national-aquatic-resource-surveys/what-national-wetland-condition-assessment) (NWCA) is one program (via the EPA) through which data on water depth, etc. are collected at such sites, but there are very few sites sampled per state relative to the total number of wetlands…  I would expect DEQ and the USGS to be the owners of data pertaining to water flow, temperature and quality (at least of riverine systems).  Around Portland, I'm told that some of the special stormwater districts may collect data at palustrine systems if they own or manage properties containing those types of wetlands.  Could EWEB have such data?

As noted in the earlier section on the evolution of wetlands, another avenue toward assessing the skill of CW3M’s new wetland code may be to run the more-or-less same simulations on CW3M and VDDT and compare the results.

# Summary of data needed from others

1. An expanded set of LULC\_A, LULC\_B, and VEGCLASS categories representing the wetland types of interest for this study.
2. A revised IDU layer with better representation of the wetland areas of interest, including attributes pertinent to our conceptual wetland model, e.g. WETL\_CAP.
3. A revised Reach layer (as described in the earlier Thermal Loading Estimator spec) with attributes pertinent to the wetland model, e.g. Q\_CAP and QSPILL\_FRC.
4. A VDDT state-and-transition model to be used as the definition of the STM to be implemented in CW3M.
5. Historical McKenzie wetland data which can be used to assess the hindcasting skill of the model.

# Placeholder data

Until better data is available, here are the wetland categories and other data which will be used for code development.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| LULC\_A | LULC\_B | VEGCLASS |  |  |
| 6 Wetlands | 61 Wetlands | 190 Woody Wetlands |  |  |
|  |  | 195 Herbaceous Wetlands |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| LULC\_A | LULC\_B | VEGCLASS |
| 6 Wetlands | Floodplain wetland adjacent to reach | Open water |
|  |  | Marsh |
|  |  | Swamp |
|  | Wetland connected to reach via adjacent wetlands | Bog |
|  |  | Mudflat |
|  | Isolated wetland not directly connected to reach | Perennial pond |
|  |  | Seasonal pond |
|  |  | Bog |
| 3 Other Veg | 31 Grassland/Herbaceous | Moist meadow |
| 4 Forest | 43 Mixed Forest | Wet woodland |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| State | Next state | transition rule |
| Open water | Marsh | suitable depth, soil, persistence of inundation |
| Marsh w/ emergent reeds | Swamp w/ mixed herbs | Occasional lack of inundation |
| Bog w/ herbs & shrubs | Mudflat w/ shrubs & grass | Seasonal lack of inundation, waterlogged soils |
| Mudflat w/ shrubs & grass | Moist meadow | Inundation is rare, moist soil is persistent |
| Moist meadow | Prairie (LULC\_A = 3 Other Veg) | No inundation, seasonal drier soils |
| Moist meadow | Wet woodland | No inundation, seasonally wet soils, persistence sufficient to develop an overstory |
| Wet woodland | Forest (LULC\_A = 4 Forest) | Seasonally dry soils |

# References

VDDT – Vegetation Dynamics Development Tool. [https://essa.com/explore-essa/tools/vddt](https://essa.com/explore-essa/tools/vddt%20%20)