

**Draft Guidebook  
For Reference-Based Assessment  
Of The Functions Of  
Riverine Waters/Wetlands Ecosystems  
In The South Coast Region Of  
Santa Barbara County, California**

*Prepared for:*

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## DISCLAIMER

This Draft Guidebook was developed by the Santa Barbara County Water Agency, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region IX, the National Wetland Science Training Cooperative, and other cooperators (including the County Flood Control District, Parks Department, and Planning and Development Department, the Cities of Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, the South Coast Watershed Alliance, and the Conception Coast Project) to provide a basis for systematic, reference-based assessment of the functions of riverine waters/wetland ecosystems in the South Coast Region of Santa Barbara County, California. Steps taken to develop this review draft have been consistent with (1) guidance provided in the National Action Plan To Develop the Hydrogeomorphic Approach for Assessing Wetland Functions [Federal Register: August 16, 1996 (Volume 61, Number 160, Pages 42593-42603); Federal Register: June 20, 1997 (Volume 62, Number 119, Pages 33607-33620)], (2) Santa Barbara County policies and procedures, and (3) standard technical and analytical practices for collection and synthesis of data for ecological studies.

The Hydrogeomorphic Approach for Assessing Wetland Functions currently is in development or use by several federal and state agencies (e.g. the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, National Marine Fisheries Service). Consistent with guidance provided in the National Action Plan introduced above, the following activities are required to bring this *Draft Guidebook* to final form:

- A. Obtain an initial peer review of the *Draft Guidebook*
- B. Conduct an interagency and interdisciplinary workshop to critique the *Draft Guidebook*
- C. Revise the *Draft Guidebook* to reflect recommendations from peer review and workshop
- D. Obtain second peer-review of the *Draft Guidebook*
- E. Publish as an operational *Draft* of the regional wetland subclass HGM functional assessment guidebook to be used in the field
- F. Train users of HGM classification and evaluation
- G. Provide assistance to users
- H. Review and Revise Operational *Draft Guidebook* after field testing

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## FOREWORD

The following Guidebook has been prepared for Santa Barbara County as a tool to be used in the assessment of stream reaches and riverine wetlands in the south coast portion of the county. The assessment methodology presented in the guidebook is based on the Hydrogeomorphic (HGM) assessment methodology, which is currently the most accepted protocol for assessing wetland and riverine ecosystem functions. The purpose of this guidebook is to allow trained practitioners to achieve reproducible and logical evaluation results of riverine wetlands or stream reaches in an efficient manner. These assessments can then be used to evaluate areas for restoration potential, assess impacts due to existing or proposed projects, and monitor restoration success.

The use of this guidebook should be confined to the geographic region and hydrogeomorphic class (riverine waters/wetlands) for which it was developed. Use of this methodology outside these confines is inappropriate. It should also be kept in mind that the HGM methodology presented in this guidebook is designed to detect major changes to ecosystem function. Very small or minor perturbations to ecosystem functioning will likely not be detected.