

EPA Wants It All

By Michael S. Coffman, Ph.D.

As described in the Summer 2014 story in *RANGE*, “The United EPA of America,” the Environmental Protection Agency is attempting to expand its jurisdiction from “navigable waters of the U.S.” as defined in the Clean Water Act to every mud puddle. The new jurisdiction would include intermittent streams, puddles and wetlands. Since our story was published there has been increasing opposition to the expansion of jurisdiction because it would extend EPA authority over almost every acre and citizen in America.

The impact can easily be seen in these two new maps that the EPA is using to define its new jurisdiction. The yellow in the Streams and Waterbodies map are intermittent streams that have water in them only occasionally, sometimes separated by years of being dry. The enlargements illustrate more detailed examples of the maps. By using these maps to define jurisdiction, very few areas in the United States will *not* be under EPA control requiring residents to get expensive and time-consuming government permits for doing anything.

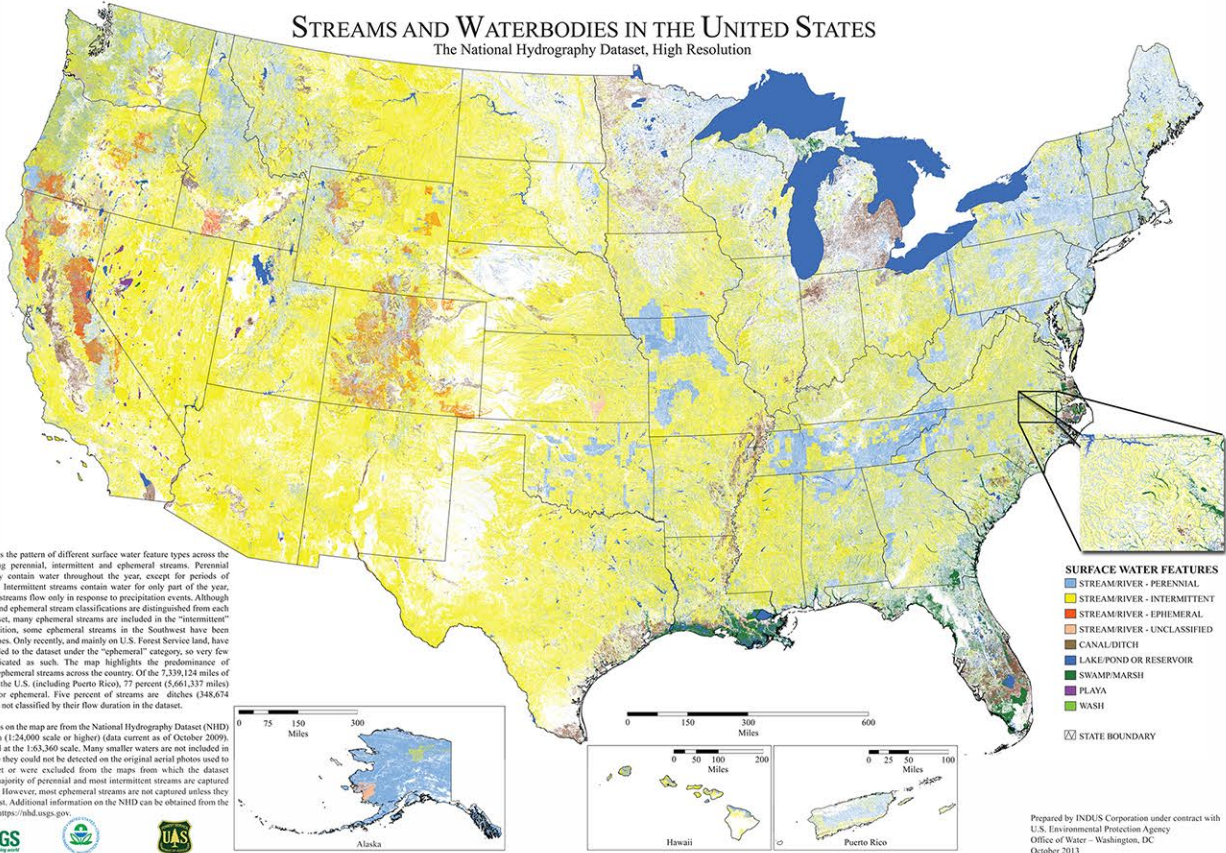
Since 1974, several federal agencies, including the EPA, have collaborated to draw the maps. The National Wetlands Inventory map has not yet been completed, as evidenced by blank counties and states. While the mapping effort was public information and posted in recent years on the Internet, strangely no maps were posted.

Rep. Lamar (R-TX), chairman of the Science, Space & Technology Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, and others on the committee were unaware of the magnitude of the efforts to map every depression that would hold water after rain, and were certainly not aware of the use of these maps to define EPA’s new jurisdiction. When the committee learned of the maps’ existence and how they were being kept secret, Lamar demanded that the EPA give the committee the digital maps, which were immediately posted at <http://science.house.gov/epa-maps-state-2013>. ■

See map next page.

STREAMS AND WATERBODIES IN THE UNITED STATES

The National Hydrography Dataset, High Resolution



This map displays the pattern of different surface water feature types across the country, including perennial, intermittent and ephemeral streams. Perennial streams generally contain water throughout the year, except for periods of extreme drought. Intermittent streams contain water for only part of the year, while ephemeral streams flow only in response to precipitation events. Although the intermittent and ephemeral stream classifications are distinguished from each other in the dataset, many ephemeral streams are included in the "intermittent" category. In addition, some ephemeral streams in the Southwest have been classified as washes. Only recently, and mainly on U.S. Forest Service land, have streams been added to the dataset under the "ephemeral" category, so very few streams are indicated as such. The map highlights the predominance of intermittent and ephemeral streams across the country. Of the 7,399,124 miles of linear streams in the U.S. (including Puerto Rico), 77 percent (5,661,337 miles) are intermittent or ephemeral. Five percent of streams are ditches (348,674 miles), which are not classified by their flow duration in the dataset.

The water features on the map are from the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) at high resolution (1:24,000 scale or higher) (data current as of October 2009). Alaska is mapped at the 1:63,360 scale. Many smaller waters are not included in the NHD because they could not be detected on the original aerial photos used to create the dataset or were excluded from the maps from which the dataset originates. The majority of perennial and most intermittent streams are captured at this resolution. However, most ephemeral streams are not captured unless they are in the arid west. Additional information on the NHD can be obtained from the NHD website at <https://nhd.usgs.gov/>.

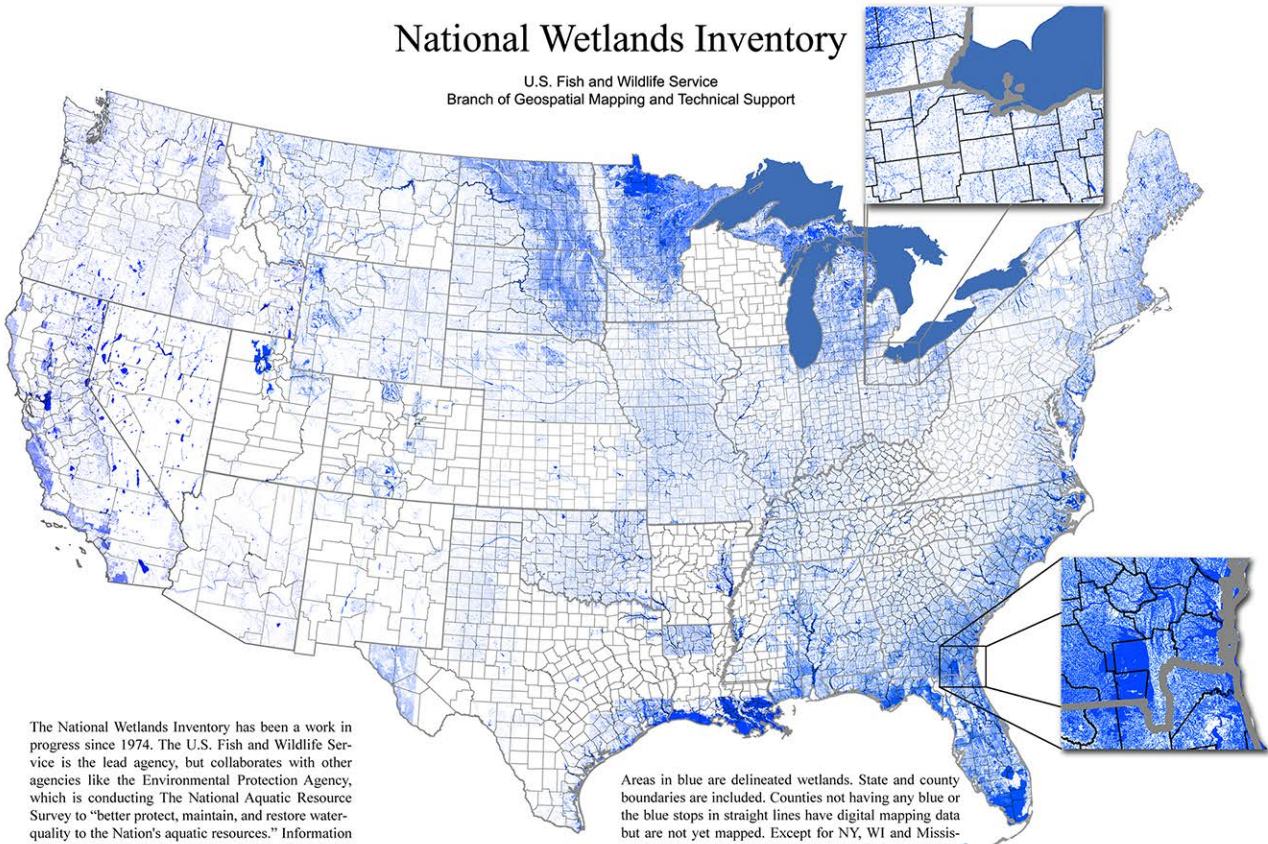
- SURFACE WATER FEATURES**
- STREAM/RIVER - PERENNIAL
 - STREAM/RIVER - INTERMITTENT
 - STREAM/RIVER - EPHEMERAL
 - STREAM/RIVER - UNCLASSIFIED
 - CANAL/DITCH
 - LAKE/POND OR RESERVOIR
 - SWAMP/MARSH
 - PLAYA
 - WASH
- ☒ STATE BOUNDARY

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National Wetlands Inventory

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Branch of Geospatial Mapping and Technical Support



The National Wetlands Inventory has been a work in progress since 1974. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the lead agency, but collaborates with other agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency, which is conducting The National Aquatic Resource Survey to "better protect, maintain, and restore water-quality to the Nation's aquatic resources." Information on the progress of the inventory has always been available for the public. However, the actual maps were not made public until mid 2014 when Congress demanded copies from the EPA and posted them on the House Science, Space and Technology page.

Areas in blue are delineated wetlands. State and county boundaries are included. Counties not having any blue or the blue stops in straight lines have digital mapping data but are not yet mapped. Except for NY, WI and Mississippi, most incomplete states and counties are west of the Mississippi River. Even so, much of the land area is delineated as wetlands which has huge regulatory implications.

