**Comparison of the Kentucky Vegetation Index of Biotic Integrity (VIBI) to the Kentucky wetland rapid assessment method (KY-WRAM) as part of an intensification of EPA’s National Wetland Condition Assessment**

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Despite the many functions and benefits wetlands provide, 80% of Kentucky’s historic wetlands have been lost. The Kentucky Vegetation Index of Biotic Integrity (VIBI) was recently developed as a level 3, or intensive, wetland assessment. Although prior validation studies have been successful, more testing is needed before it can be recommended for use across the state. This study collected data from at 48 wetlands from across the state through an intensification of the EPA’s National Wetland Condition Assessment during 2016. As part of the intensification, vegetation data were collected and compared with the Kentucky Rapid Wetland Assessment Method (KY-WRAM), which is a rapid assessment method used to measure wetland condition. Despite differences in vegetation sampling methods, results suggest that data collected using the NWCA collection protocols is comparable to data collected using typical VIBI sampling procedures. The 2016 data overall supported the use of the VIBI across most of the state. VIBI scores were significantly higher in Category 3 (or highest condition) wetlands than in Category 2 (moderate condition) wetlands. However, VIBI scores from the 26 sites in the Four Rivers region did not differ between KY-WRAM categories. These results suggest that while the VIBI is well supported in most of the state, more data are needed before the VIBI can be validated and used in the far western part of the state. Low condition sites in particular are lacking from our current dataset. Further validation studies will focus specifically on the Four Rivers region in western Kentucky during 2018.