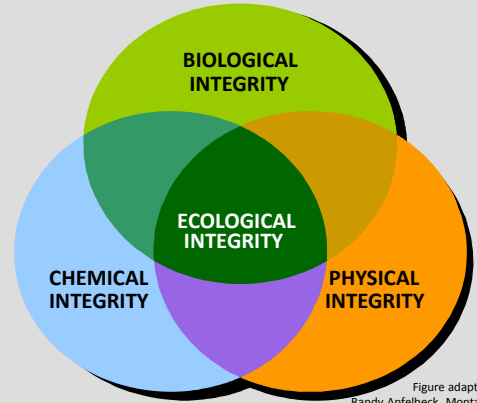


MONTANA WETLAND ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK



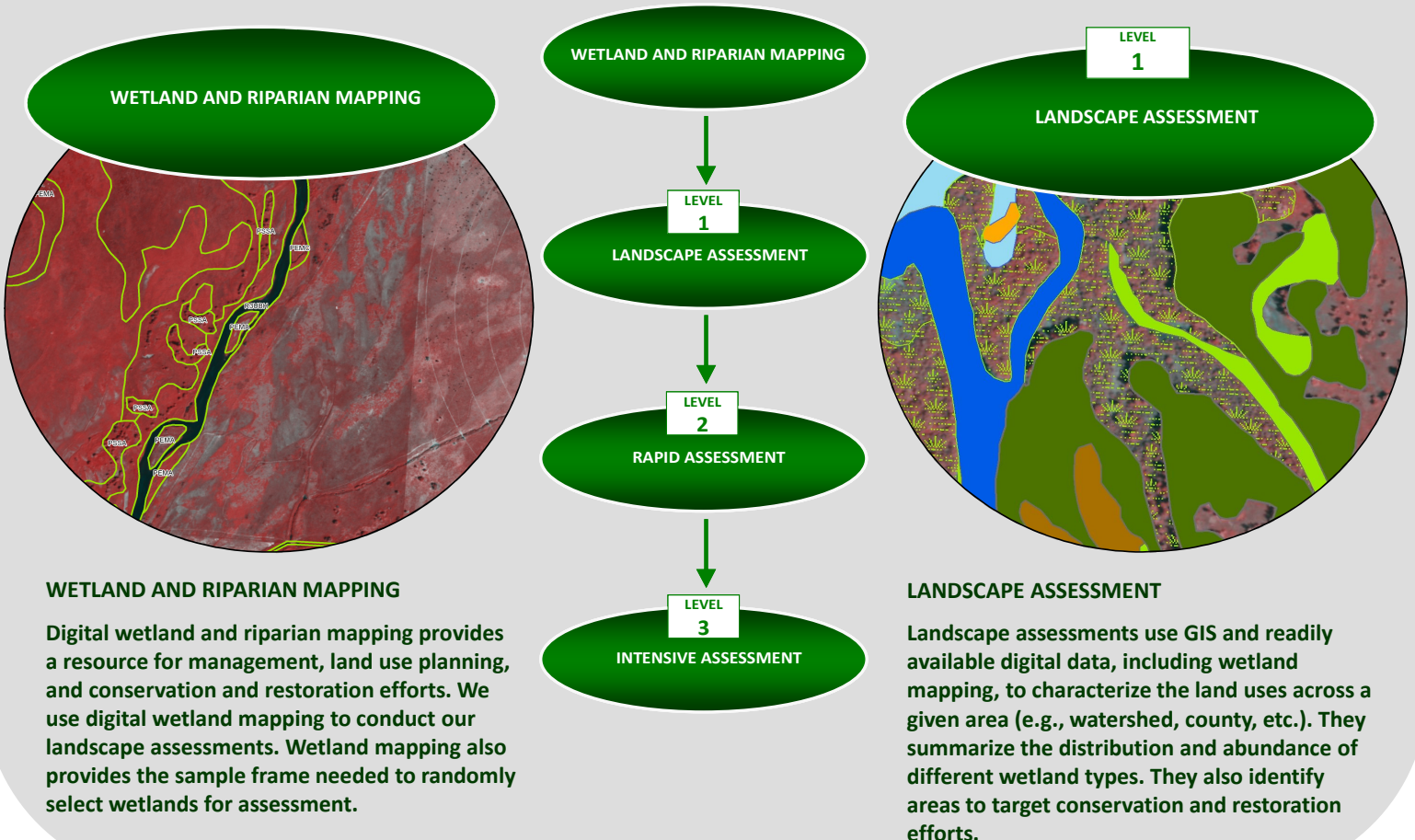
WETLAND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY ASSESSMENTS

The Clean Water Act (CWA) requires states and tribes to monitor and report on the quality of waters within their states, including wetlands. Wetland assessments provide information on the ambient condition of wetland resources, inform management decisions, and determine the effectiveness of wetland restoration projects. The principal objective of the CWA is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters. We can evaluate these factors in combination by determining the *ecological integrity* of wetlands through assessment of their condition. We follow the U.S. EPA's recommended Level 1-2-3 framework.



LEVEL 1-2-3 FRAMEWORK FOR WETLAND ASSESSMENTS

The Level 1-2-3 framework for wetland assessment and monitoring is a hierarchical three-tiered approach that involves increasing degrees of effort and cost with each increasing level of assessment. Level 1 assessments typically require the least amount of time and money; whereas, Level 3 assessments are the most detailed level of assessments, requiring the greatest level of effort. The Level 1-2-3 framework provides a flexible tool for wetland assessment and monitoring depending upon the availability of time, money, and staff.



CONTINUED →

LEVEL
2

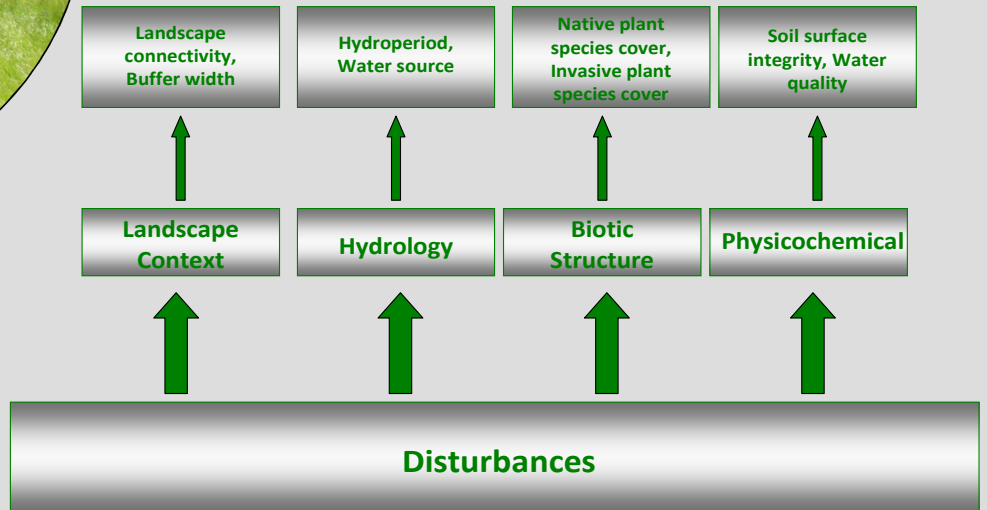
RAPID ASSESSMENT



The Montana Rapid Assessment Method assesses wetland condition based on *four major attributes*. Each attribute has associated metrics, which are scored by selecting the most appropriate statement from a list of descriptive narratives.

RAPID ASSESSMENT

Rapid assessments are used to evaluate the general condition of wetlands using observable field indicators. A rapid assessment is useful when funding, time, or staff is not available for intensive monitoring. The score from a rapid assessment represents where a particular wetland site falls along a condition gradient from least-disturbed condition to highly degraded.



LEVEL
3

INTENSIVE ASSESSMENT



INTENSIVE ASSESSMENTS

Intensive wetland assessments involve the collection of quantitative data and require the highest level of effort. Wetland plants are good indicators of wetland condition because they occur in all wetland systems, have high species richness, and show strong responses to human disturbances.

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