

Wetlands perform functions that deliver benefits to society, often referred to as ecosystem services. These ecosystem services include water supply, flood regulation, water purification, climate regulation, biodiversity, agriculture (e.g. grazing land), and amenity. A functional approach to wetland assessment enables a holistic view to be taken of the wide range of services that wetlands can provide. The functional assessment procedures (FAPs) in this volume translate best available scientific knowledge into reasonable predictions of how component parts of wetlands function in different landscape contexts. They can be used to indicate the potential and priorities for management options in areas such as flood control, pollution reduction and biodiversity conservation.

Functional assessment enables the user to predict the functioning of a wetland area without the need for comprehensive and expensive empirical research. The FAPs therefore provide a methodology that can be used by both experts and non-experts to assess wetland functioning relatively rapidly. The volume includes an electronic version of the FAPs on CD which automates aspects of the assessment once the initial recording stage is completed. It is anticipated that the FAPs will be used by a range of individuals or organisations concerned with wetland management who wish to gain a better understanding of the processes, functions, services or benefits and potential of the wetlands for which they have responsibility.

Edward Maltby is Professor of Wetland Science, Water and Ecosystem Management and Director of the Institute for Sustainable Water, Integrated Management and Ecosystem Research (SWIMMER) at the University of Liverpool, UK. Professor Maltby has an internationally recognised reputation for his research and policy advice on wetlands and their management. He has promoted the functional approach to wetlands through leadership of numerous major interdisciplinary projects in Europe contributing to the present text and also worldwide.

Other prominent applied studies have included peat investigations in the Falkland Islands associated with mine detection and clearance, and analysis in 1994 of environmental impacts of engineering works in the Tigris-Euphrates river basin on the marshlands of southern Iraq. He was elected chair of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Commission on Ecosystem Management 1996–2000 and played a major role in development of the Ecosystem Approach within the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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