

Descriptions of Habitat Quality

Existing condition means the degree of disturbance relative to the ability of a site to perform its physical, chemical, and biological functions. This factor evaluates site disturbances relative to the existing functional state of the system.

Fully functional means that the typical suite of functions attributed to the aquatic resource type are functioning naturally. Existing disturbances do not substantially alter important functions. Examples include: pristine (undisturbed) wetlands, aquatic resources with non-functional ditches or old logging ruts with no effective drainage, or minor selective cutting.

Partially impaired means that site disturbances have resulted in partial or full loss of one or more functions typically attributed to the aquatic resource type but functional recovery is expected to occur through natural processes. Examples include: clear-cut wetlands, aquatic areas with ditches that impair but do not eliminate wetland hydrology, or temporarily cleared utility corridor.

Impaired means that site disturbances have resulted in the loss of one or more functions typically attributed to the aquatic resource type and functional recovery is unlikely to occur through natural processes. Restoration activities are required to facilitate recovery. Examples include: areas that have been impacted by surface drainage and converted to pine monoculture or agriculture, areas that are severely fragmented, or wetlands within maintained utility corridors.

Very impaired means that site disturbances have resulted in the loss of most functions typically attributed to the aquatic resource type and functional recovery would require a significant restoration effort. Examples include: filled areas excavated areas, or effectively drained wetlands (hydrology removed or significantly altered.)