



Public Notice

Northcentral and Northeast Regional Supplement to the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual

U.S. Army Corps
Of Engineers
Buffalo District
CELRB-TD-R

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLIC NOTICE IS TO ANNOUNCE THE AVAILABILITY OF THE REGIONAL SUPPLEMENT AND TO SOLICIT INPUT ON THE PROCEDURES DESCRIBED WITHIN.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District, announces the availability of the Draft Northcentral and Northeast Regional Supplement to the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual (Environmental Laboratory 1987). This draft was developed by regional expert delineators with input from state and Federal agencies, academia and other local experts. It is being peer reviewed by a panel of independent scientists, the report from which will be available upon request. This draft is also being field tested by interagency teams of state and Federal agencies to determine the clarity and ease of use of the document and whether its use will result in any spatial changes in wetland jurisdiction for Clean Water Act Section 404 purposes.

We are specifically seeking public input, including scientific information/data, on the proposed hydrology, soils and vegetation indicators and data collection procedures in this draft document. Reviewers may wish to field test this manual as part of the public comment procedure. The protocol for this testing is to perform wetland delineations using both the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual and this draft regional supplement on the same data points. Reviewers should include data sheets from the manual and draft supplement, maps indicating data collection points (upland and wetland) and a completed questionnaire for each delineation point. The testing protocol and questionnaire are attached and the draft may be located at:

http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/cecwo/reg/reg_supp.htm

Comments must be submitted by **September 23, 2008**, to Ms. Jennifer McCarthy (CECW-CO), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 441 G. Street, NW, Washington DC 20314-1000 or by e-mail to: 1987Manual@usace.army.mil. Another public notice will be issued by the Buffalo District announcing the publication of the final supplement and the implementation date of this supplement.

SIGNED

Thomas C. Switala
Chief, Regulatory Branch

WETLAND DELINEATION FIELD EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire should be completed for each boundary delineation performed. The assumption is that two communities were evaluated, one wetland (= "lower community") and one upland (= "upper community") so that a boundary between them could be identified. Fill in the blanks or check spaces as appropriate. Attach copies of the completed field data forms.

Site Name or Location _____ Date _____

Evaluator(s) _____ Affiliation(s) _____

General Site Characteristics

Is the site ___ typical or ___ problematic? *If problematic, explain:* _____

Wetland (lower community)

Ecological System: ___ Saline Tidal ___ Fresh Tidal ___ Fresh Nontidal ___ Saline Nontidal

Wetland Type: ___ Forested ___ Shrub ___ Emergent ___ Moss/Lichen ___ Farmed (hay or crop)
Other (specify _____)

HGM Class: ___ Depression ___ Riverine ___ Fringe ___ Slope ___ Flat

Vegetative Cover: ___ Dense ___ Evenly Mixed w/Nonvegetated ___ Sparse

Nonwetland (upper community)

Habitat Type: ___ Forest ___ Shrub ___ Meadow/Prairie ___ Moss/Lichen ___ Farmed

Other (specify: _____)

1. Was there a marked difference in the two plant communities? ___ Yes ___ No
2. Was there a gradual change in vegetation between the two communities creating a significant "transition zone" between? ___ Yes ___ No. If so, how wide was this transition zone? _____ feet
3. Was there an abrupt topographic change between the two communities? ___ Yes ___ No

Boundary Determination

Compare results from the two methods: (1) current practice using the 1987 Manual and guidance memos, and (2) 1987 Manual with the draft Regional Supplement.

1. The wetland boundary was: ___ the same or ___ different.
2. If different, which method produced the boundary higher on the landscape?
___ Manual with current guidance or ___ Manual with Regional Supplement
3. What was the linear distance between the two boundaries? _____ feet
4. What type of indicator(s) were responsible for the difference in the boundaries?
___ Hydrophytic vegetation ___ Hydric soil ___ Wetland hydrology (*check all that apply*)

Assessment of the Indicators

Hydrophytic Vegetation

1. Did the lower community pass the current basic test for hydrophytic vegetation (i.e., >50% of the dominants had an indicator status of FAC or wetter, *excluding FAC-*)? ___ Yes ___ No

2. Did the lower community pass the "dominance test" in the Regional Supplement (i.e., >50% of the dominants were FAC or wetter, *counting FAC- as FAC*)? ___ Yes ___ No

3. What other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation were observed in the lower community?

a) List those from the Manual with current guidance: _____

b) List those from the Regional Supplement: _____

4. Was the vegetation in the lower community a problematic wetland community type?

___ Yes ___ No. *If so, briefly describe and explain how the problem was handled* _____

5. Did the upper community pass the current basic test for hydrophytic vegetation (i.e., >50% of the dominants had an indicator status of FAC or wetter, *excluding FAC-*)? ___ Yes ___ No

6. Did the upper community pass the "dominance test" in the Regional Supplement (i.e., >50% of the dominants were FAC or wetter, *counting FAC- as FAC*)? ___ Yes ___ No

7. What other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation were observed in the upper community?

a) List those from the Manual with current guidance: _____

b) List those from the Regional Supplement: _____

8. Did both methods reach the same conclusion regarding the presence of hydrophytic vegetation for the upper community? ___ Yes ___ No. *If not, briefly explain* _____

9. Were the hydrophytic vegetation indicators in the Regional Supplement clearly described and easy to apply? ___ Yes ___ No. *If not, briefly explain* _____

Hydric Soil

1. Did both methods find indicators of hydric soil in the lower community? ___ Yes ___ No

a) List those from the Manual with current guidance: _____

b) List those from the Regional Supplement: _____

2. Did the lower community contain a problematic hydric soil (i.e., one that lacked indicators)? ___ Yes ___ No. *If so, briefly describe the problem and explain how it was handled:* _____

3. Did both methods reach the same conclusion regarding the presence of hydric soil in the upper community? ___ Yes ___ No. *If not, briefly explain* _____

a) List indicators from the Manual with current guidance: _____

b) List indicators from the Regional Supplement: _____

4. Were the hydric soil indicators in the Regional Supplement clearly described and easy to apply? ___ Yes ___ No. *If not, briefly explain* _____

Wetland Hydrology

1. Did both methods determine that wetland hydrology was present in the lower community? (Requires 1 primary indicator or 2 secondary indicators.) ___ Yes ___ No

a) List indicators from the Manual with current guidance:

Primary: _____ Secondary: _____

b) List indicators from the Regional Supplement:

Primary: _____ Secondary: _____

2. Did the lower community contain a problematic wetland hydrology situation (i.e., one that lacked indicators)?

Yes No. *If so, briefly describe the problem and explain how it was handled:* _____

3. Did both methods reach the same conclusion regarding wetland hydrology for the upper community? Yes No. *If not, briefly explain* _____

a) List indicators from the Manual with current guidance:

Primary: _____ Secondary: _____

b) List indicators from the Regional Supplement:

Primary: _____ Secondary: _____

4. Were the wetland hydrology indicators in the Regional Supplement clearly described and easy to apply? Yes No. *If not, briefly explain* _____

Comments on the Regional Supplement

1. Were the indicators and procedures in the Supplement clear and easy to apply?

Yes No. *If not, how could they be improved?* _____

2. In your opinion, did the Regional Supplement make this wetland determination more defensible? Yes No. *Briefly explain* _____

3. Based on your testing, do you want to recommend other indicators that should be considered for further evaluation? Yes No. *List by indicator type:* _____

4. Was the Regional Supplement's field data form complete, understandable, and easy to fill out? Yes No. *If not, how could it be improved?* _____

5. Any additional comments or suggestions? _____

Field Testing Protocol

Northcentral and Northeast Regional Supplement

Organization of field testing teams:

District Offices of the Corps of Engineers in the Northcentral and Northeast Region (see the list of District coordinators at the end of this document) will coordinate and oversee the field testing of the draft Regional Supplement. Field testing will be done in cooperation with regional NRCS, EPA, FWS, and other interested federal and state agencies and universities.

Field teams will consist of available interagency experts, with the constraint that each team must include an experienced botanist and a soil scientist to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the basic data.

If needed, the District coordinator will provide team members with an introduction to the Regional Supplement and will explain any new or unfamiliar indicators as necessary to avoid confusion over interpretation of the indicators.

Site Selection:

Testing teams should focus on areas where permitting activity is high. There is no need to sample remote areas unless convenient opportunities arise.

Sample a number of typical wetland sites in each District or subregion, plus a selection of available "problem" situations. Problem situations should include, if possible, areas with unusual plant communities or soil types that may lack indicators, requiring use of Chapter 5 (Difficult Wetland Situations in the Northcentral and Northeast Region) to make the wetland determination.

Approach:

The basic testing approach is to document at least 2 sampling points at each field site, one point in the wetland and one point in the adjacent upland, and determine the location of the wetland boundary between them. The team should collaborate to make the determination and documentation as accurate as possible. Follow these general steps:

1. Document each sampling point based on existing practice (i.e., 1987 Manual with existing guidance memos and existing local interpretation). For each point, completely fill out the old (1992) wetland determination data form. Locate the wetland boundary based on current practice.

2. Document each point using the new (Regional Supplement) data form. Locate the wetland boundary based on indicators and guidance given in the Regional Supplement.
3. If the two wetland boundaries are different, measure the distance between them.
4. Fill out the attached questionnaire (one copy per field site) to help explain any differences seen in the two methods.
5. For each field site sampled, submit the following items to the appropriate District coordinator:
 - a. Completed 1992 and Regional Supplement data forms for each sampling point
 - b. Sketch map of the site with sampling points, wetland boundaries, and any other important features indicated
 - c. One copy of the Field Evaluation Questionnaire
 - d. Optional brief report as necessary to explain test results

List of Corps District Coordinators in the Northcentral and Northeast Region:

Christine Delorier, U.S. Army Engineer District, New York, NY, 518-266-6354

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