




# Washington State Wetlands Identification and Delineation Manual



March 1997

**Ecology Publication #96-94**

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# **Washington State Wetlands Identification and Delineation Manual**

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Prepared by:

Washington State Department of Ecology

March 1997  
Publication No. 96-94

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**Note to the User:** This document is the wetland delineation manual that is to be used in determining wetland areas when applying state and local government regulations under the Shoreline Management Act and the Growth Management Act in Washington State. This delineation manual is a revised version of the Corps of Engineers 1987 manual (see Preface for a description of the revisions). The relevant mandatory elements of this manual have been adopted into state regulations (WAC 173-22-080). In addition to the mandatory elements, this manual contains additional background material, recommended data gathering methods, illustrations and appendices. If you have any questions about the applicability of this manual to a particular regulatory situation, consult the appropriate agency with jurisdiction.

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# Acknowledgments

This document is a revised version of the Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual (Technical Report Y-87-1) which was originally prepared and published by the Environmental Laboratory of the Corps Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The original 1987 manual was developed by a host of wetlands staff from the Corps. These revisions were prepared by Andy McMillan, Wetlands Specialist with the Washington State Department of Ecology. Extensive review and support was provided by Kathy Kunz and Chris McAuliffe of the Seattle District Corps of Engineers, Dr. Fred Weinmann of the Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10, and Charles J. Newling of Wetland Science Applications, Inc. Additional review was provided by numerous interested parties in Washington State. Flow charts and diagrams designed by Tom Leonard. Cover art by Nikki McClure.

# Preface

The 1995 Washington State Legislature passed Engrossed Senate Bill 5776 which directed the Department of Ecology to “adopt a manual for the delineation of wetlands under this chapter that implements and is consistent with the 1987 manual in use on January 1, 1995, by the Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency.” This state manual is required to be used by all state agencies in the application of any state laws and regulations as well as by any city or county in the implementation of any regulations under the Growth Management Act.

The Corps’ Wetlands Delineation Manual (1987) was amended and clarified in 1991 and 1992 by the Corps headquarters office to reflect more current technical information developed since the original Manual was published. The “Questions and Answers on the 1987 Manual” memo issued October 7, 1991 provided clarification on several issues related to use of the 1987 Manual. The “Clarification and Interpretation of the 1987 Manual” memo issued March 6, 1992 directs that actual changes be made in the use of the Manual. The Seattle District Corps of Engineers and the Region 10 office of the Environmental Protection Agency have also issued regional clarification guidance (see Regional guidance dated May 23, 1994). While the regional guidance does NOT change the 1987 Manual, it provides a clarification of issues often misunderstood by users. All of these guidance documents may be found in Appendix E.

This document incorporates the key provisions of these guidance documents into the text of the Manual. The Corps’ 1987 Manual also includes numerous examples and references to wetland types found throughout the United States. This Washington State Manual has been revised to delete references to wetland types not found in Washington and include information and examples specific to the State of Washington. The organization, structure, and intent of the Manual remains essentially the same. **It is the intent of this document to result in the identification and delineation of the same areas as would be identified and delineated under the Corps 1987 Manual as it is currently applied in Washington state. Revisions are intended to incorporate all pertinent information into one document and to make the Manual easier to understand and apply in Washington.**

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# Introduction for the Layperson

Wetlands can exist where the surface is flooded for extended periods or where there is soil saturation because the groundwater is at or near the land surface. Recurrent, sustained saturation of the upper part of the soil profile is the most basic requirement for wetlands (Lewis, 1995).

Wetlands have many distinguishing features, the most notable of which are the presence of water at or near the surface, wetland soils, and vegetation adapted to or tolerant of saturated soils (Mitsch and Gosselink, 1993). These three characteristics (wetland hydrology, hydric soils, and hydrophytic vegetation) are sometimes referred to as “parameters” or “factors.” Observing evidence of the presence of each parameter (or factor), has become widely accepted as a valid way to confirm the presence or absence of wetlands. The delineation technique described in the Manual requires that the user observe evidence of hydric soils, hydrophytic vegetation, and sufficient water (or indirect evidence thereof) to cause the formation of hydric soils and the growth of hydrophytic vegetation.

A delineation manual is not meant to define a wetland, but rather to aid a delineator in applying a definition of wetlands to the landscape (Lewis, 1995). For the purposes of this Manual, the user is provided with indicators for each parameter (from the field or other data sources) that can be used to determine if a wetland is present, and to delineate its boundaries. The indicators have been developed through the study of wetland characteristics and can be considered accurate if used and interpreted correctly.

This Manual also provides the user with methods frequently used to collect, record, and interpret field data. Although the Manual will provide the user with good technical information, the accuracy of a delineation is directly dependent upon the education and experience of the user. A good delineator is a person who has extensive field experience, is familiar with wetlands ecology, is knowledgeable of the region in which they are working and exercises sound and unbiased scientific and professional judgment.

Regional experience for delineators is almost a necessity because of the variety of wetlands that appear on the landscape. Some wetlands can easily be delineated at all times of the year, some are difficult to identify because of unique characteristics, and some are difficult to identify at certain times of the year. It is frequently difficult to conclude the presence or absence of wetlands based on a single field visit at one time of the year.

Wetland identification and delineation in Washington state presents some unique challenges because of the varied geology and climate. Many Washington wetlands have highly seasonal hydrologic conditions due to seasonal variation in precipitation and prolonged summer drought. Wetlands east of the Cascade Mountains can be very different from wetlands west of the Cascades because of the different climate. Wetlands in the areas covered by continental glaciation can have very different characteristics than those in areas that were never glaciated. Lastly, human activities have significantly altered surface and groundwater hydrology, soils and vegetation in many parts of the state. All these elements influence where wetlands are found and how they appear.

It is the purpose of this manual to provide information and methods that will allow a delineator to make an accurate wetland delineation at any time of the year. However, it must be recognized that some wetlands will be more difficult to delineate than others and that all information collected must be used in conjunction with the knowledge and experience of the delineator. The proper collection and recording of field and other supporting data is one of the most critical aspects of any wetland delineation.

# Washington State Wetlands Identification and Delineation Manual

## Part I: Introduction

### Background

1. Recognizing the potential for continued or accelerated degradation of the Nation's waters, the US Congress enacted the Clean Water Act (hereafter referred to as the Act), formerly known as the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1344). The objective of the Act is to maintain and restore the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters of the United States. Section 404 of the Act authorizes the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, to issue permits for the discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the United States, including wetlands.
2. The 1995 Washington State Legislature enacted a bill (SSB 5776) requiring the Department of Ecology to adopt a wetland delineation manual that "implements and is consistent with the 1987 manual in use on January 1, 1995 by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Environmental Protection Agency." This manual is intended to be used in implementing the Shoreline Management Act and other applicable state statutes. The Manual is also to be used by local governments in implementing local regulations under the Growth Management Act.
3. This version of the Manual takes the original 1987 manual and incorporates the changes made by the federal government to the 1987 manual since that time. This includes the national guidance issued by the Corps in 1991 and 1992, and the regional guidance issued by the Corps and EPA in 1994. All other changes are of two types: 1) additional language added to assist the user in applying the manual to the variety of situations found in the state of Washington; or 2) cosmetic changes of material irrelevant to Washington. Since the original 1987 manual was developed for use throughout the United States, it contains many references that do not apply to our state. Where appropriate, references to species or situations found in Washington have been added.

### Purpose and Objectives

#### Purpose

4. The purpose of this manual is to provide users with guidelines and methods to determine whether an area is a wetland and to delineate its boundaries for purposes of Section 404 of

the Clean Water Act, the Shoreline Management Act and other applicable state laws, or local regulations adopted under requirements of the Growth Management Act.

## Objectives

5. Specific objectives of the manual are to:
  - a. Present criteria for identifying wetlands and distinguishing them from aquatic habitats and other nonwetlands.\*
  - b. Provide methods for applying the criteria.
  - c. Provide supporting information useful in applying the criteria.

## Scope

6. This manual is intended to assist users in identifying areas that meet the definition of wetlands found in state law (Shoreline Management Act, Growth Management Act) and the regulations of the federal Clean Water Act. Use of this manual is intended to identify the same areas identified in the Corps of Engineers 1987 Wetlands Delineation Manual and subsequent revisions. For purposes of the Clean Water Act this manual is limited in scope to wetlands that are a subset of “waters of the United States” and thus subject to Section 404. The term “waters of the United States” has broad meaning and incorporates both deepwater aquatic habitats and special aquatic sites, including wetlands (Federal Register 1982), as follows:
  - a. The territorial seas with respect to the discharge of fill material.
  - b. Coastal and inland waters, lakes, rivers, and streams that are navigable waters of the United States, including their adjacent wetlands.
  - c. Tributaries to navigable waters of the United States, including adjacent wetlands.
  - d. Interstate waters and their tributaries, including adjacent wetlands.
  - e. All others waters of the United States not identified above, such as isolated wetlands and lakes, intermittent streams, prairie potholes, and other waters that are not a part of a tributary system to interstate waters or navigable waters of the United States, the degradation or destruction of which could affect interstate commerce.

Determination that a water body or wetland is subject to interstate commerce and therefore is a “water of the United States” for purposes of federal jurisdiction shall be made independently of procedures described in this manual.

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\* Definitions of terms used in this manual are presented in the Glossary, Appendix A.

## Special aquatic sites

7. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies six categories of special aquatic sites in their Section 404 b.(1) guidelines (Federal Register 1980), including:
  - a. Sanctuaries and refuges.
  - b. Wetlands.
  - c. Mudflats.
  - d. Vegetated shallows.
  - e. Coral reefs.
  - f. Riffle and pool complexes.

Although all of these special aquatic sites are subject to provisions of the Clean Water Act, this manual considers only wetlands. By definition (see paragraph 26a), wetlands are vegetated. Thus, unvegetated special aquatic sites (e.g. mudflats lacking macrophytic vegetation) are not covered in this manual.

## Relationship to wetland classification systems

8. The technical approach for identifying and delineating wetlands does not constitute a classification system. It provides a basis for determining whether a given area is a wetland for purposes of federal, state and local regulations without attempting to classify it by wetland type. Different classification systems have been developed for wetlands, including the Cowardin system (Cowardin, 1979) for inventorying wetlands and the Hydrogeomorphic system (Brinson, 1993) for use with wetland function assessment approaches.

## Organization

9. This manual consists of four parts and five appendices. PART I presents the background, purpose and objectives, scope, organization, and use of the manual. PART II focuses on the criteria for wetlands, and stresses the need for considering all three parameters (vegetation, soils, and hydrology) when making wetland determinations and delineations. Since wetlands occur in an intermediate position along the hydrologic gradient, comparative criteria are also presented for deepwater aquatic sites and nonwetlands. PART III contains general information on hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology. Positive wetland indicators of each parameter are included. PART IV, which presents methods for applying the criteria for wetlands, is arranged in a format that leads to a logical determination of whether a given area is a wetland. Section A contains general information related to application of methods. Section B outlines preliminary data-gathering efforts. Section C discusses two approaches (routine and comprehensive) for making wetland determinations, and presents criteria for deciding the correct approach to use. Sections D and E describe detailed procedures for making routine and comprehensive determinations,

respectively. The basic procedures are described in a series of steps that lead to a wetland determination. All of the methods presented in PART IV are optional. The methods presented in PART IV are all valid methods which have been found to be effective in identifying wetland indicators. However, the user is free to use any scientifically valid method to determine if a wetland indicator is present. If a user has any questions about appropriate methods s/he should consult with the agency with jurisdiction.

10. The manual also describes (PART IV, Section F Atypical Situations) methods for delineating wetlands in which the vegetation, soils, and/or hydrology have been altered by recent human activities or natural events, as discussed below:
  - a. The definition of wetlands (paragraph 26a) contains the phrase “under normal circumstances,” which was included because there are instances in which the vegetation in a wetland has been inadvertently or purposely removed or altered as a result of recent natural events or human activities. Other examples of human alterations that may affect wetlands are draining, ditching, levees, deposition of fill, irrigation, and impoundments. When such activities occur, an area may fail to meet the diagnostic criteria for a wetland. Likewise, positive hydric soil indicators may be absent in some recently created wetlands. In such cases, an alternative method must be employed in making wetland determinations. A suggested method is outlined in Section F. These atypical situations occur when natural events or human actions alter a wetland so that one or more of the three parameters are difficult to determine. If the alteration is a natural event or a lawful, human action that has altered the hydrology of the site **so that wetland conditions no longer exist**, then the site should be identified as a non-wetland.
  - b. Natural events may also result in sufficient modification of an area such that indicators of one or more wetland parameters are absent. For example, changes in a river course may significantly alter hydrology, or beaver dams may create new wetland areas that lack hydric soil conditions. Catastrophic events (e.g. fires, avalanches, mudslides, and volcanic activities) may also alter or destroy wetland indicators on a site.

Such atypical situations occur throughout Washington, and all of these cannot be specifically identified in this manual.

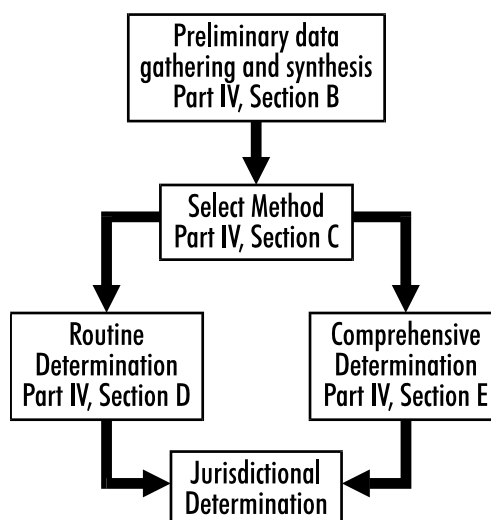
11. Certain wetland types, under the extremes of normal seasonal or annual variability, may not always meet all the wetland criteria defined in the Manual. An example is seasonal wetlands that may lack hydrophytic vegetation and/or wetland hydrology during the dry season. Such areas are discussed in PART IV, Section G, Problem Areas, and guidance is provided for making wetland determinations in these areas. However, such wetland areas may warrant additional research to refine methods for their delineation. Specific information on wetland types known to be difficult to identify in Washington state has been added to that section.

12. Appendix A is a glossary of technical terms used in the Manual. Definitions of some terms were taken from other technical sources, but most terms are defined according to the manner in which they are used in this Manual.
13. Data forms for methods presented in PART IV are included in Appendix B.
14. Supporting information is presented in Appendices C and D. Appendix C describes morphological, physiological, and reproductive adaptations associated with hydrophytic species. Appendix D discusses procedures for examining soils for hydric soil indicators.

## Use

15. This manual is for use by individuals needing to identify and delineate wetlands for federal, state or local regulatory purposes. [For determining federal jurisdiction on agricultural lands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service uses the Food Security Act Manual, Third Edition (180-V-NFSAM, Third Ed., March 1994) to identify and delineate wetlands. This manual is similar to the 1987 Corps of Engineers manual but does have some differences.]

The user is directed through a series of steps that involve gathering of information and decision-making, ultimately leading to a wetland determination. A general flow diagram of activities leading to a determination is presented in Figure 1. However, not all activities identified in Figure 1 will be required for each wetland determination. For example, if a decision is made to use a routine determination procedure, comprehensive determination procedures need not be employed.



*Figure 1 General schematic diagram of activities leading to a wetland/nonwetland determination.*

## Premise for use of the Manual

16. Three key provisions of the definition of wetlands (see paragraph 26a) include:
  - a. Inundated or saturated soil conditions resulting from permanent or periodic inundation or saturation by ground water or surface water.
  - b. A prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (hydrophytic vegetation).
  - c. The presence of “normal circumstances.”
17. **Explicit in the definition is the consideration of three environmental parameters: hydrology, soil, and vegetation. Positive wetland indicators of all three parameters are normally present in wetlands. Although vegetation is often the most readily observed parameter, sole reliance on vegetation or either of the other parameters as the determinant of wetlands can sometimes be misleading.** Many plant species can grow successfully in both wetlands and nonwetlands, and hydrophytic vegetation and hydric soils may persist for decades following alteration of hydrology that will render an area a nonwetland. The presence of hydric soils and wetland hydrology indicators in addition to vegetation indicators will provide a logical, easily defensible, and technical basis for the presence of wetlands. The combined use of indicators for all three parameters will enhance the technical accuracy, consistency, and credibility of wetland determinations. Therefore, all three parameters were used in developing the criteria for wetlands and all approaches for applying the criteria embody the multiparameter concept.

## Approaches

18. The approach used for wetland delineations will vary, based primarily on the complexity of the area in question. Two basic approaches described in the manual are (a) routine and (b) comprehensive.
19. **Routine approach.** The routine approach normally will be used in the vast majority of determinations. The routine approach requires minimal level of effort, using primarily qualitative procedures. This approach can be further subdivided into three levels of required effort, depending on the complexity of the area and the amount and quality of preliminary data available. The following levels of effort may be used for routine determinations:
  - a. **Level 1 - Onsite inspection unnecessary.** (PART IV, Section D, Subsection 1).
  - b. **Level 2 - Onsite inspection necessary.** (PART IV, Section D, Subsection 2).
  - c. **Level 3 - Combination of Levels 1 and 2.** (PART IV, Section D, Subsection 3).
20. **Comprehensive approach.** The comprehensive approach requires application of quantitative procedures for making wetland determinations. It should seldom be necessary, and its use should be restricted to situations in which the wetland is very complex.



Application of the comprehensive approach (PART IV, Section E) requires a greater level of expertise than application of the routine approach, and only experienced field personnel with sufficient training should use this approach.

## **Flexibility**

21. Procedures described for both routine and comprehensive wetland determinations have been tested and found to be reliable. However, site-specific conditions may require modification of field procedures. For example, slope configuration in a complex area may necessitate modification of the baseline and transect positions or the shape of sampling plots. Since specific characteristics (e.g. plant density) of a given plant community may necessitate the use of alternative methods for determining the dominant species, the user has the flexibility to employ sampling procedures other than those described. However, the basic approach for making wetland determinations should not be altered (i.e. the determination should be based on the dominant plant species, soil characteristics, and hydrologic characteristics of the area in question). The user should document reasons for using a different characterization procedure than described in the Manual. *CAUTION: Application of methods described in the manual or the use of modified sampling procedures requires that the user be familiar with wetlands of the area and use his/her training, experience, and good judgment in making wetland determinations.*



## Part II: Technical Criteria

22. The interaction of hydrology, vegetation, and soil results in the development of characteristics unique to wetlands. Therefore, the following criteria for wetlands are based on these three parameters.
23. Because wetlands may be bordered by both wetter areas (aquatic habitats) and by drier areas (nonwetlands), guidelines are presented for wetlands, deepwater aquatic habitats, and nonwetlands. However, procedures for applying the criteria for deepwater aquatic habitats and nonwetlands are not included in the manual.
24. The following definition of wetlands includes the language found in the federal Clean Water Act regulations. It also includes additional language found in the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and Growth Management Act (GMA) which specifically excludes several types of “artificial” wetlands. Many of these areas specifically excluded in the definition will meet the technical requirements for being a wetland (i.e. will meet all three criteria). This manual identifies all areas that meet the necessary wetland criteria and does not attempt to distinguish these “artificial” wetlands. If necessary, the user will need to independently determine if a wetland as identified by this manual fits in any of the categories of “artificial” wetlands specifically excluded in the SMA/GMA definition.

## Wetlands

25. The following definition, criteria, and technical approach comprise a guideline for the identification and delineation of wetlands:
  - a. Definition. The Corps of Engineers (CE) (Federal Register 1982), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (Federal Register 1985), the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and the Growth Management Act (GMA) all define wetlands as: Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. In addition, the SMA and GMA definitions add: “Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from nonwetland sites, including, but not limited to, irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway. Wetlands may include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from nonwetland areas to mitigate the conversion of wetlands.”

b. Wetlands meet the following criteria:

- (1) **Vegetation.** The prevalent vegetation consists of macrophytes that are typically adapted to areas having hydrologic and soil conditions described in a above. Hydrophytic species, due to morphological, physiological, and/or reproductive adaptation(s), have the ability to grow, effectively compete, reproduce, and/or persist in anaerobic soil conditions.\* Indicators of vegetation associated with wetlands are listed in paragraph 35.
- (2) **Soil.**
  - a. “All Histosols\*\* except Folists; or
  - b. Soils in Aquic suborders, great groups, or subgroups, Albolls suborder, Aquisalids, Pachic subgroups, or Cumulic subgroups that are:
    - (1) Somewhat poorly drained with a water table equal to 0.0 foot (ft) from the surface during the growing season, or
    - (2) Poorly drained or very poorly drained and have either:
      - (a) A water table equal to 0.0 ft during the growing season if textures are coarse sand, sand, or fine sand in all layers within 20 inches(in), or for other soils
      - (b) A water table at less than or equal to 0.5 ft from the surface during the growing season if permeability is equal to or greater than 6.0 in/hour in all layers within 20 in, or
      - (c) the water table is at less than or equal to 1.0 ft from the surface during the growing season if permeability is less than 6.0 in/hour in any layer within 20 in, or
  - c. Soils that are frequently ponded for long or very long duration during the growing season; or
  - d. Soils that are frequently flooded for long duration or very long duration during the growing season.”

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\* Species (e.g. *Alnus rubra*) having broad ecological tolerances can occur in both wetlands and nonwetlands.

\*\* Soil nomenclature follows Keys to Soil Taxonomy (current edition).

- (3) **Hydrology.** Areas which are inundated and/or saturated to the surface for a consecutive number of days for more than 12.5 percent of the growing season\* are wetlands, provided the soil and vegetation parameters are met. Areas inundated or saturated to the surface for a consecutive number of days between 5 percent and 12.5 percent of the growing season in most years (see Table 3) may or may not be wetlands. Areas inundated or saturated to the surface for less than 5 percent of the growing season are non-wetlands. Wetland hydrology exists if field indicators are present as described in Part III below.

- c. **Technical approach for the identification and delineation of wetlands.** Except in certain situations defined in this manual, evidence of at least one positive wetland indicator from each parameter (hydrology, soil, and vegetation) must be found in order to make a positive wetland determination.

## Deepwater Aquatic Habitats

26. The following definition, criteria, and technical approach comprise a guideline for deepwater aquatic habitats:
- a. **Definition.** Deepwater aquatic habitats are areas that are permanently inundated at mean annual water depths  $>6.6$  ft or permanently inundated areas  $\leq 6.6$  ft in depth that do not support rooted-emergent or woody plant species.\*\*
- b. **Criteria.** Deepwater aquatic habitats meet the following criteria:
- (1) **Vegetation.** No rooted-emergent or woody plant species are present in these permanently inundated areas.
  - (2) **Soil.** The substrate technically is not defined as a soil if the mean water depth is  $>6.6$  ft or if it will not support rooted emergent or woody plants.
  - (3) **Hydrology.** The area is permanently inundated at mean water depths  $>6.6$  ft.

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\* The period of inundation or soil saturation varies according to the hydrologic/soil moisture regime and occurs in both tidal and nontidal situations.

\*\* Areas  $\leq 6.6$  ft mean annual depth that support only submergent aquatic plants are vegetated shallows, not wetlands.

- c. **Technical approach for the identification and delineation of deepwater aquatic habitats.** When any one of the criteria identified in b above is present, the area is a deepwater aquatic habitat.

## Nonwetlands

27. The following definition, criteria, and technical approach comprise a guideline for the identification and delineation of nonwetlands:
- a. **Definition.** Nonwetlands include uplands and lowland areas that are neither deepwater aquatic habitats, wetlands, nor other special aquatic sites. They are seldom or never inundated, or if frequently inundated, they have saturated soils for only brief periods during the growing season, and, if vegetated, they normally support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life only in aerobic soil conditions.
- b. **Criteria.** Nonwetlands meet the following criteria:
- (1) **Vegetation.** The prevalent vegetation consists of plant species that are typically adapted for life only in aerobic soils. These mesophytic and/or xerophytic macrophytes cannot persist in predominantly anaerobic soil conditions.\*
  - (2) **Soil.** Soils, when present, are not classified as hydric, and possess characteristics associated with aerobic conditions.
  - (3) **Hydrology.** Although the soil may be inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water periodically during the growing season of the prevalent vegetation, the average annual duration of inundation or soil saturation does not preclude the occurrence of plant species typically adapted for life in aerobic soil conditions.
- c. **Technical approach for the identification and delineation of nonwetlands.** When any one of the criteria identified in b above is present, the area is a nonwetland.

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\* Some species, due to their broad ecological tolerances, can occur in both wetlands and nonwetlands (e.g. *Alnus rubra*).

# Part III: Characteristics And Indicators Of Hydrophytic Vegetation, Hydric Soils, And Wetland Hydrology

NOTE: Except in certain situations defined in this manual, evidence of at least one positive wetland indicator from each parameter (hydrology, soil, and vegetation) must be found in order to make a positive wetland determination.

## Hydrophytic Vegetation

### Definition

28. **Hydrophytic vegetation.** Hydrophytic vegetation is defined herein as the sum total of macrophytic plant life that occurs in areas where the frequency and duration of inundation or soil saturation produce permanently or periodically saturated soils of sufficient duration to exert a controlling influence on the plant species present. The vegetation occurring in a wetland may consist of more than one **plant community** (species association). The plant community concept is followed throughout the manual. Emphasis is placed on the assemblage of plant species that exert a controlling influence on the character of the plant community, rather than on indicator species. Thus, the presence of scattered individuals of an upland plant species in a community dominated by hydrophytic species is not a sufficient basis for concluding that the area is an upland community. Likewise, the presence of a few individuals of a hydrophytic species in a community dominated by upland species is not a sufficient basis for concluding that the area has hydrophytic vegetation. *CAUTION: In determining whether an area is “vegetated”, users must consider the density of vegetation at the site being evaluated. While it is not possible to develop a numerical method to determine how many plants or how much biomass is needed to establish an area as being vegetated or unvegetated, it is intended that the predominant condition of the site be used to make that characterization. This concept applies to areas grading from wetland to upland, and from wetland to other waters. This limitation would not necessarily apply to areas which have been disturbed by humans or recent natural events.*
29. **Prevalence of vegetation.** The definition of wetlands (paragraph 26a) includes the phrase “Prevalence of vegetation.” **Prevalence**, as applied to vegetation, is an imprecise, seldom-used ecological term. As used in the wetlands definition, prevalence refers to the plant community or communities that occur in an area at some point in time. Prevalent vegetation is characterized by the dominant species comprising the plant community or communities. **Dominant** plant species are those that contribute more to the character of a plant community than other species present, as estimated or measured in terms of some ecological parameter or parameters. The two most commonly used estimates of dominance are basal area (trees) and percent areal cover (shrubs and herbs). Hydrophytic vegetation is

prevalent in an area when the dominant species comprising the plant community or communities are typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

30. **Typically adapted.** The term “typically adapted” refers to a species being normally or commonly suited to a given set of environmental conditions, due to some morphological, physiological, or reproductive adaptation (Appendix C, Section 3). As used in the wetlands definition, the governing environmental conditions for hydrophytic vegetation are saturated soils resulting from periodic inundation or saturation by surface or ground water. These periodic events must occur for sufficient duration to result in anaerobic soil conditions. When the dominant species in a plant community are typically adapted for life in anaerobic soil conditions, hydrophytic vegetation is present. Species listed in Appendix C, Section 1 or 2, that have an indicator status of OBL, FACW, or FAC (Table 1) are considered to be typically adapted for life in anaerobic soil conditions (see paragraph 35a).

## Influencing factors

31. Many factors (e.g. light, temperature, soil texture and permeability, human-induced disturbance, etc.) influence the character of hydrophytic vegetation. However, hydrologic factors exert an overriding influence on species that can occur in wetlands. Plants lacking morphological, physiological, and/or reproductive adaptations cannot grow, effectively compete, reproduce, and/or persist in areas that are subject to prolonged inundation or saturated soil conditions.

## Geographic diversity

32. Many hydrophytic vegetation types occur in Washington state due to the diversity of interactions among various factors that influence the distribution of hydrophytic species. General climate and flora contribute greatly to regional variations in hydrophytic vegetation. Consequently, the same associations of hydrophytic species occurring in the Olympic Peninsula are not found in the Columbia Basin. In addition, local environmental conditions (e.g. local climate, hydrologic regimes, soil type, salinity, etc.) may result in broad variations in hydrophytic associations within a given region. For example, a coastal saltwater marsh will consist of different species than an inland freshwater marsh in the same region.

## Classification

33. Numerous efforts have been made to classify hydrophytic vegetation. Most systems are based on general characteristics of the dominant species occurring in each vegetation type. These range from the use of general physiognomic categories (e.g. overstory, subcanopy, ground cover, vines) to specific vegetation types (e.g. forest type numbers as developed by the Society of American Foresters). In other cases, vegetational characteristics are combined with hydrologic features to produce more elaborate systems. One example of such a system was developed for the FWS by Cowardin et al. (1979).



**Table 1**

## Plant Indicator Status Categories\*

| <b><u>Indicator Category</u></b> | <b><u>Indicator Symbol</u></b> | <b><u>Definition</u></b>   |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| OBLIGATE WETLAND PLANTS          | OBL                            | Plants that almost always occur (estimated probability >99%) in wetlands under natural conditions, but which may also occur rarely (estimated probability <1%) in nonwetlands. Examples: <i>Typha latifolia</i> , <i>Lysichitum americanum</i> |
| FACULTATIVE WETLAND PLANTS       | FACW                           | Plants that usually occur (estimated probability 67% to 99%) in wetlands, but also occur (estimated probability 1% to 33% in nonwetlands). Examples: <i>Fraxinus latifolia</i> <i>Cornus stolonifera</i> .                                     |
| FACULTATIVE PLANTS               | FAC**                          | Plants with a similar likelihood (estimated probability 34% to 66%) of occurring in both wetlands and nonwetlands. Examples: <i>Alnus rubra</i> , <i>Rubus spectabilis</i>   |
| FACULTATIVE UPLAND PLANTS        | FACU                           | Plants that sometimes occur (estimated probability 1% to <33%) in wetlands, but occur more often (estimated probability 67% to 99%) in nonwetlands. Examples: <i>Acer macrophyllum</i> , <i>Rubus discolor</i>                                 |
| OBLIGATE UPLAND PLANTS           | UPL                            | Plants that rarely occur (estimated probability <1%) in wetlands, but occur almost always (estimated probability >99%) in nonwetlands under natural conditions.  |

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\* Categories were originally developed and defined by the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory and subsequently modified by the National Plant List Panel. The three facultative categories are subdivided by (+) and (-) modifiers (see Reed 1988 and 1993).

\*\* FAC+ species are considered to have a somewhat greater estimated probability of occurring in wetlands than FAC species, while FAC- species are considered to have a somewhat lesser estimated probability of occurring in wetlands than FAC species.

## Indicators of hydrophytic vegetation

34. Several indicators may be used to determine whether hydrophytic vegetation is present on a site. However, the presence of a single individual of a hydrophytic species does not mean that hydrophytic vegetation is present. The strongest case for the presence of hydrophytic vegetation can be made when several indicators, such as those in the following list, are present. However, any one of the following is indicative that hydrophytic vegetation is present.\* One of the most common errors made in delineating wetlands has been to assume that the first indicator (a) must be met in every case. This has led to some wetland areas being called non-wetland. Keep in mind that any of the following indicators may be used to meet the vegetation criteria. However, when using any indicator other than (a) it is important to have solid documentation of wetland hydrology and hydric soils.
- a.     **More than 50 percent of the dominant species are OBL, FACW+, FACW, FACW-, FAC+, or FAC\*\* (Table 1) on lists of plant species that occur in wetlands.** A national interagency panel has prepared a National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands (Reed 1988a). This list categorizes species according to their affinity for occurrence in wetlands. [Regional subset lists of the national list, include a list for the northwest (Reed 1988b).]In addition, a 1993 supplement to the plants species list for Region 9 (Northwest) has been prepared (Reed 1993). Be sure to consult this supplement or any more recent supplements to confirm that a species has the proper indicator status. (The Seattle District of the Corps does not use the FAC neutral option as an indicator of hydrophytic vegetation but does allow the use the FAC neutral option as an indicator of hydrology and soils. See Hydrology indicator # 10, p. for definition)
- b.     **Other indicators.** Although there are several other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation, it will seldom be necessary to use them. However, they may provide additional useful information to strengthen a case for the presence of hydrophytic vegetation. Additional training and/or experience may be required to employ these indicators.
- (1)     **Visual observation of plant species growing in areas of prolonged inundation and/or soil saturation.** This indicator can only be applied by experienced personnel who have accumulated information through several

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\* Indicators are listed in order of decreasing reliability. Although all are valid indicators, some are stronger than others. When a decision is based on an indicator appearing in the lower portion of the list, re-evaluate the parameter to ensure that the proper decision was reached.

\*\* FAC- species do not count as FAC species for the purposes of meeting indicator a. Only FAC, FAC+, FACW (+,-) and OBL species count.

years of field experience and written documentation (field notes) that certain species commonly occur in areas of prolonged (>12.5 percent) inundation and/or soil saturation during the growing season. In certain situations, areas with wetland hydrology and hydric soils may be dominated by plant species classified as facultative upland. The most common examples in Washington are Western Hemlock forested wetlands and wet meadows planted with pasture grasses. It is important to keep in mind that facultative upland species are found in wetlands up to 33% of the time and, under certain circumstances, they can be the dominant species in a wetland plant community. Usually, however, FACU species are found in uplands. Thus, if you encounter a situation where the hydrology and soil parameters are **clearly** met, do not eliminate the area from consideration as a wetland based on a lack of prevalence of facultative or wetter vegetation. Species such as *Gaultheria shallon*, *Acer circinatum*, and *Pteridium aquilinum* may be found in these areas, often on hummocks or downed logs or stumps. More typical wetland species may occur in such areas, though often as non-dominants. Thus, occurrence of species commonly observed in other wetland areas provides a strong indication that hydrophytic vegetation is present. If you have strong evidence that the hydrology and soil parameters are met then the vegetation is acting as a hydrophyte and the area is probably a wetland. *CAUTION: It is necessary to have good documentation that the area experiences prolonged inundation and/or saturation in order to call it a wetland. The presence of standing water or saturated soil on a site at a single point in time or for short periods is insufficient evidence that the species present are able to tolerate long periods of inundation. The user must relate the observed species to other similar situations and determine whether they are normally found in wet areas, taking into consideration the season and immediately preceding weather conditions. If you encounter this situation, you may be dealing with an atypical situation (see Part IV, Section F) or a problem area (see Part IV, Section G).*

- (2) **Morphological adaptations.** Some hydrophytic species have easily recognized physical characteristics that indicate their ability to occur in wetlands. A given species may exhibit several of these characteristics, but not all hydrophytic species have evident morphological adaptations. A list of such morphological adaptations is provided in Appendix C.
- (3) **Technical literature.** The technical literature may provide a strong indication that plant species comprising the prevalent vegetation are commonly found in areas where soils are periodically saturated for long periods. Sources of available literature include:
  - (a) **Taxonomic references.** Such references usually contain at least a general description of the habitat in which a species occurs. A habitat

description such as, “Occurs in water of streams and lakes and in alluvial floodplains subject to periodic flooding,” supports a conclusion that the species typically occurs in wetlands. Examples of some useful taxonomic references are provided in Table 2.

- (b) **Botanical journals.** Some botanical journals contain studies that define species occurrence in various hydrologic regimes. Examples of such journals include: **Ecology, Ecological Monographs, American Journal of Botany, Journal of American Forestry,** and **Wetlands: The Journal of the Society of Wetland Scientists.**
  - (c) **Technical reports.** Governmental agencies periodically publish reports (e.g. literature reviews) that contain information on plant species occurrence in relation to hydrologic regimes. Examples of such publications include the CE preliminary regional wetland guides published by the US Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station (WES) and the wetland community and estuarine profiles of various habitat types published by the FWS.
  - (d) **Technical workshops, conferences, and symposia.** Publications resulting from periodic scientific meetings contain valuable information that can be used to support a decision regarding the presence of hydrophytic vegetation. These usually address specific regions or wetland types.
  - (e) **Wetland plant database.** The National Wetland Inventory is producing a Plant Database that contains habitat information on over 6,700 plant species that occur at some estimated probability in wetlands, as compiled from the technical literature.
- (4) **Physiological adaptations.** Physiological adaptations include any features of the metabolic processes of plants that make them particularly fitted for life in saturated soil conditions. *NOTE: It is impossible to detect the presence of physiological adaptations in plant species during onsite visits.* Physiological adaptations known for hydrophytic species are listed and discussed in Appendix C,.
- (5) **Reproductive adaptations.** Some plant species have reproductive features that enable them to become established and grow in saturated soil conditions. Reproductive adaptations known for hydrophytic species are presented in Appendix C.

**Table 2**

**List of Some Useful Taxonomic References**

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| <u><b>Title</b></u>   | <u><b>Author(s)</b></u>                              |
|---|--|
| <u>Gray's Manual of Botany</u> , 8th edition  | Fernald (1950)                                       |
| <u>Flora of the Pacific Northwest</u>   | Hitchcock and Cronquist (1973)                       |
| <u>A California Flora</u>   | Munz and Keck (1959)                                 |
| <u>Intermountain Flora - Vascular Plants of the Intermountain West, USA - Vols I and II</u> | Cronquist et al. (1972)                              |
| <u>Flora of Idaho</u>   | Davis (1952)   |
| <u>Manual of Grasses of the United States</u>   | Hitchcock (1950)                                     |
| <u>Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast</u>  | Pojar and MacKinnon (1994)                           |
| <u>Higher Plants of California, The Jepson Manual</u>                                       | Hickman (Ed.) (1993)                                 |
| <u>Mountain Plants of the Pacific Northwest</u>   | Taylor and Douglas (1995)                            |
| <u>Weeds of the West</u>  | Whitson (Ed.) (1992)                                 |
| <u>Wetland Plants of the Pacific Northwest</u>  | Weinmann, F.C. et al, USACE, Seattle District (1985) |
| <u>Trees, Shrubs, and Flowers to Know in Washington and British Columbia</u>                | Lyons and Merilees (1995)                            |
| <u>Western Wetland Flora, Field Office Guide to Plant Species</u>                           | USDA-NRCS  |

# Hydric Soils

## Definition

35. A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part. (USDA-NRCS 1995, Federal Register, 7/13/94, Vol. 59, No. 133, pp 35680-83). The following criteria reflect those soils that meet this definition:

## Criteria for hydric soils

36. Based on the above definition, the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils (NTCHS) developed the following criteria for hydric soils:
- a. “All Histosols\* except Folists; or
  - b. Soils in Aquic suborders, great groups, or subgroups, Albolls suborder, Aquisalids, Pachic subgroups, or Cumulic subgroups that are:
    - (1) Somewhat poorly drained with a water table equal to 0.0 foot (ft) from the surface during the growing season, or
    - (2) Poorly drained or very poorly drained and have either:
      - (a) A water table equal to 0.0 ft during the growing season if textures are coarse sand, sand, or fine sand in all layers within 20 inches(in), or for other soils
      - (b) A water table is at less than or equal to 0.5 ft from the surface during the growing season if permeability is equal to or greater than 6.0 in/hour in all layers within 20 in, or
      - (c) the water table is at less than or equal to 1.0 ft from the surface during the growing season if permeability is less than 6.0 in/hour in any layer within 20 in, or
  - c. Soils that are frequently ponded for long or very long duration during the growing season; or
  - d. Soils that are frequently flooded for long duration or very long duration during the growing season.”

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\* Soil nomenclature follows Keys to Soil Taxonomy (current edition)

The definition and criteria for hydric soils may change periodically as a result of revisions by the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils (NTCHS). The most recent NTCHS version should be used.

A hydric soil may be either drained or undrained, and a drained hydric soil may not continue to support hydrophytic vegetation or wetland hydrology. Therefore, not all areas having hydric soils will qualify as wetlands. Only when a hydric soil supports hydrophytic vegetation and the area has indicators of wetland hydrology may the area be referred to as a wetland.

37. A drained hydric soil is one in which sufficient ground or surface water has been removed by artificial means such that the area will no longer support hydrophytic vegetation. Onsite evidence of drained soils includes:
- a. Presence of ditches or canals of sufficient depth to lower the water table below the major portion of the root zone of the prevalent vegetation.
  - b. Presence of dikes, levees, or similar structures that obstruct normal inundation of an area.
  - c. Presence of a tile system to promote subsurface drainage.
  - d. Diversion of upland surface runoff from an area.

Although it is important to record such evidence of drainage of an area, a hydric soil that has been drained or partially drained still allows the soil parameter to be met. However, the area will not qualify as a wetland if the degree of drainage has been sufficient to preclude the presence of either hydrophytic vegetation or a hydrologic regime that occurs in wetlands.

*NOTE: the mere presence of drainage structures in an area is not sufficient basis for concluding that a hydric soil has been drained; such areas may continue to have wetland hydrology.*

## **General information**

38. Soils consist of unconsolidated, natural material that supports, or is capable of supporting, plant life. The upper limit is air and the lower limit is either bedrock or the limit of biological activity. Some soils have very little organic matter (mineral soils), while others are composed primarily of organic matter (Histosols). The relative proportions of particles (sand, silt, clay, and organic matter) in a soil are influenced by many interacting environmental factors. As normally defined, a soil must support plant life. The concept is expanded to include substrates that could support plant life. For various reasons, plants may be absent from areas that have well-defined soils.

39. A soil profile (Figure 2) consists of various soil layers (horizons) described from the surface downward. Most soils have two or more identifiable horizons. A soil horizon is a layer oriented approximately parallel to the soil surface, and usually is differentiated from contiguous horizons by characteristics that can be seen or measured in the field (e.g., color, structure, texture, etc.). Most mineral soils have A-, B-, and C-horizons, and many have surficial organic layers (O-horizon). The A-horizon, the surface soil or topsoil, is a zone in which organic matter is usually being added to the mineral- soil. It is also the zone from which both mineral and organic matter are being moved slowly downward. The next major horizon is the B-horizon, often referred to as the subsoil. The B-horizon is the zone of maximum accumulation of materials. It is usually characterized by higher clay content and/or more pronounced soil structure development and lower organic matter than the A-horizon. The next major horizon is usually the C-horizon, which consists of unconsolidated parent material that has not been sufficiently weathered to exhibit characteristics of the B-horizon. Clay content and degree of soil structure development in the C-horizon are usually less than in the B-horizon. The lowest major horizon, the -R-horizon, consists of consolidated bedrock. In many situations, this horizon occurs at such depths that it has no significant influence on soil characteristics.

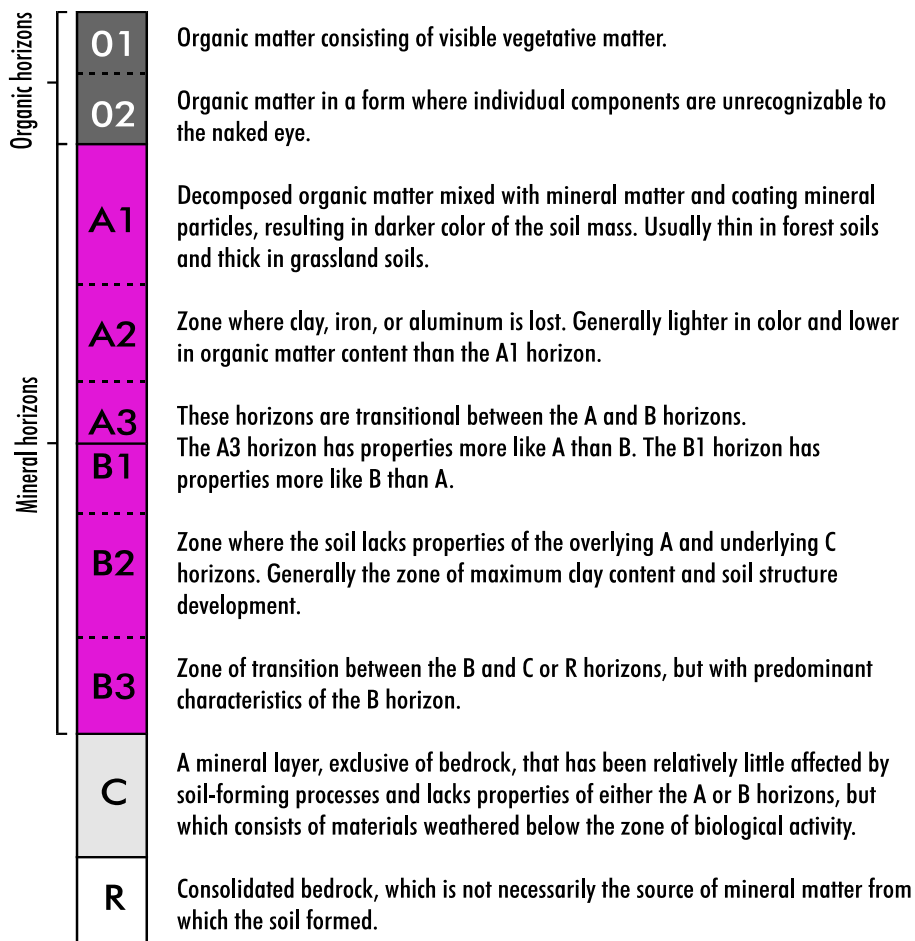


Figure 2. Generalized soil profile



## Influencing factors

40. Although all soil-forming factors (climate, parent material, relief, organisms, and time) affect the characteristics of a hydric soil, the overriding influence is the hydrologic regime. The unique characteristics of hydric soils result from the influence of periodic or permanent inundation or soil saturation for sufficient duration to affect anaerobic conditions. Prolonged anaerobic soil conditions lead to a chemically reducing environment, thereby lowering the soil redox potential. This results in chemical reduction of some soil components (e.g. iron and manganese oxides), which leads to development of soil colors and other physical characteristics that usually are indicative of hydric soils.

## Classification

41. Hydric soils occur in several categories of the current soil classification system, which is published in **Keys to Soil Taxonomy** (current edition). This classification system is based on physical and chemical properties of soils that can be seen, felt, or measured. Lower taxonomic categories of the system (e.g. soil series and soil phases) remain relatively unchanged from earlier classification systems.
42. Hydric soils may be classified into two broad categories: organic and mineral. Organic soils (Histosols) develop under conditions of nearly continuous saturation and/or inundation. All organic soils are hydric soils except Folists, which are freely drained soils occurring on dry slopes where excess litter accumulates over bedrock. Organic hydric soils are commonly known as peats and mucks. All other hydric soils are mineral soils. Mineral soils have a wide range of textures (sandy to clayey) and colors (red to gray). Mineral hydric soils are those periodically saturated for sufficient duration to produce chemical and physical soil properties associated with a reducing environment. They are usually gray and/or mottled immediately below the surface horizon (see paragraph 44d), or they have thick, dark-colored surface layers overlying gray or mottled subsurface horizons.

## Indicators of Hydric Soils (nonsandy soils)

43. Several indicators are available for determining whether a given soil meets the definition and criteria for hydric soils. Any one of the following indicates that hydric soils are present:\*
- a. **Organic soils (Histosols).** As a general rule a soil is an organic soil when: 1) more than 50 percent (by volume) of the upper 32 inches of soil is composed of organic

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\* Indicators are listed in order of decreasing reliability. Although all are valid indicators, some are stronger indicators than others. When a decision is based on an indicator appearing in the lower portion of the list, re-evaluate the parameter to ensure that the proper decision was reached.

soil material;\*\* or (2) organic soil material of any thickness rests on bedrock. Organic soils are saturated for long periods and are commonly called peats or mucks.

- b. **Histic epipedons.** A histic epipedon is an 8- to 16-inch layer at or near the surface of a mineral hydric soil that is saturated with water for 30 consecutive days or more in most years and contains a minimum of 20 percent organic matter when no clay is present or a minimum of 30 percent organic matter when clay content is 60 percent or greater. Soils with histic epipedons are inundated or saturated for sufficient periods to greatly retard aerobic decomposition of the organic surface, and are considered to be hydric soils.
- c. **Sulfidic material.** When mineral soils emit an odor of rotten eggs, hydrogen sulfide is present. Such odors are only detected in soils that are permanently saturated and have sulfidic material within a few centimetres of the soil surface. Sulfides are produced only in a reducing environment.
- d. **Aquic or peraquic moisture regime.** An **aquic** moisture regime is a reducing one; i.e., it is virtually free of dissolved oxygen because the soil is saturated by ground water or by water of the capillary fringe (Keys to Soil Taxonomy). Because dissolved oxygen is removed from ground water by respiration of microorganisms, roots, and soil fauna, it is also implicit that the soil temperature is above biologic zero (41°F at 19.7 inches) at the same time while the soil is saturated. Soils with **peraquic** moisture regimes are characterized by the presence of ground water which is always at or near the soil surface and exhibits chemically reducing conditions. Examples include soils of tidal marshes and soils of closed, landlocked depressions that are fed by permanent streams. Positive confirmation of this indicator usually involves repeated observation of water table depths and/or depth of inundation/saturation over time.
- e. **Reducing soil conditions.** Soils saturated for long or very long duration will usually exhibit reducing conditions. Under such conditions, ions of iron are transformed (reduced) from a ferric valence state ( $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) to a ferrous valence state ( $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ). This condition can often be detected in the field by a ferrous iron test. A simple colorimetric field test kit has been developed for this purpose. When a soil extract changes to a pink color upon addition of alpha-alpha-dipyridil, ferrous iron is present, which indicates a reducing soil environment. *NOTE: This test cannot be used in mineral hydric soils having low iron content, organic soils, and soils that have been desaturated for significant periods of the growing season. CAUTION: This test can only be used as a positive indicator of reducing conditions and it is only effective if it is done at the time that a mineral soil is actively reducing. While*

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\*\* A detailed definition of organic soil material is available in Keys to Soil Taxonomy (current edition).

*the presence of a reaction indicates anaerobic conditions, the lack of a reaction **does not** indicate a lack of anaerobic conditions.*

- f. **Soil colors.** The colors of various soil components are often the most diagnostic indicator of hydric soils. Colors of these components are strongly influenced by the frequency and duration of soil saturation, which leads to reducing soil conditions. Mineral hydric soils will be either gleyed or will have contrasting mottles and/or low chroma matrix. These are discussed below:

*NOTE: Soil terminology is undergoing constant change, and terms such as “mottles” and “low chroma colors” are being replaced with the term “redoximorphic features” (Vepraskas 1994). In order to retain consistency with the Corps 1987 Manual, and to use terms familiar to most wetland scientists, the older terms are used in this manual.*

- (1) **Gleyed soils (gray colors).** Gleyed soils develop when anaerobic soil conditions result in pronounced chemical reduction of iron, manganese, and other elements, thereby producing gray soil colors. Anaerobic conditions that occur in waterlogged soils result in the predominance of reduction processes, and such soils are greatly reduced. Iron is one of the most abundant elements in soils. Under anaerobic conditions, iron is converted from the oxidized (ferric) state to the reduced (ferrous) state, which results in the bluish, greenish, or grayish colors associated with the gleying effect. Gleying immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower) is an indication of a markedly reduced soil, and gleyed soils are hydric soils. Gleyed soil conditions can be determined by using the gley page of the Munsell Color Charts (Munsell Color 1990).
- (2) **Soils with contrasting mottles and/or low chroma matrix.** Mineral hydric soils that are saturated for substantial periods of the growing season (but not long enough to produce gleyed soils) will either have high chroma mottles and a low chroma matrix or will lack mottles but have a low chroma matrix (see Appendix D, Section 1, for a definition and discussion of “chroma” and other components of soil color). **Mottled** means “marked with spots of contrasting color.” Soils that have high chroma mottles (redox concentrations) and a low chroma matrix are indicative of a fluctuating water table. Hydric soils can also have low chroma mottles (redox depletions) that contrast with the matrix color. The soil **matrix** is the portion (usually more than 50 percent) of a given soil layer that has the predominant color. Mineral hydric soils usually have one of the following color features in the horizon immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower):

(a) Matrix chroma of 2 or less\* in mottled soils.

(b) Matrix chroma of 1 or less\* in unmottled soils.

*NOTE: The matrix chroma of some dark (black) mineral hydric soils (e.g. Aquolls) will not conform to the criteria described in (a) and (b) above; in such soils, gray mottles occurring at 10 inches or less are indicative of hydric conditions. Mollisols that are not hydric will still have dark colored surface soils.*

*CAUTION: Soils with significant coloration due to the particular chemical nature of the parent material may not exhibit the above characteristics. In such cases, this indicator cannot be used.*

**g. Soil appearing on hydric soils list.** Using the criteria for hydric soils (paragraph 37), the NTCHS has developed a list of hydric soils. Listed soils have reducing conditions for a significant portion of the growing season in a major portion of the root zone and are frequently saturated within 12 inches of the soil surface if they have not been effectively drained. *CAUTION: Do not use this indicator unless you have field verified that the profile description of the mapping unit conforms to that of the sampled soil.*

**h. Iron and manganese concretions.** During the oxidation-reduction process, iron and manganese in suspension are sometimes segregated as oxides into concretions, nodules or soft masses. These accumulations are usually black or dark brown. Concretions >2 mm in diameter occurring within 7.5 cm of the surface are evidence that the soil is saturated for long periods near the surface. *CAUTION: concretions may be relict features. Be careful to confirm that the hydrologic conditions that created the concretions still exist before relying on this indicator.*

### **Additional Indicators of Hydric Soils (for sandy soils)**

44. Not all indicators listed in paragraph 44 can be applied to sandy soils. **In particular, soil color may not be a reliable indicator in most sandy soils.** However, three additional soil features may be used as indicators of sandy hydric soils, including:

**a. High organic matter content in the surface horizon.** Organic matter tends to accumulate above or in the surface horizon of sandy soils that are inundated or saturated to the surface for a significant portion of the growing season. Prolonged inundation or saturation creates anaerobic conditions that greatly inhibit decomposition (oxidation) of organic matter.

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\* Colors should be determined in soils that have been moistened; otherwise, state that colors are for dry soils.

- b.     **Streaking of subsurface horizons by organic matter.** Organic matter is moved downward through sand as the water table fluctuates. This often occurs more rapidly and to a greater degree in some vertical sections of a sandy soil containing high content of organic matter than in others. Thus, the sandy soil appears streaked with darker areas. When soil from a darker area is rubbed between the fingers, the organic matter stains the fingers.
- c.     **Organic pans.** As organic matter is moved downward through sandy soils, it tends to accumulate at the point representing the most commonly occurring depth to the water table. This organic matter tends to become slightly cemented with iron and aluminum, forming a thin layer of hardened soil (spodic horizon). These horizons often occur at depths of 12 to 30 inches below the mineral surface. Wet spodic soils usually have thick dark surface horizons that are high in organic matter with dull, gray horizons above the spodic horizon. Generally, the nearer to the surface the spodic horizon, the more likely the soil is hydric.

*CAUTION: In recently deposited sandy material (e.g. accreting sandbars), it may be impossible to find any of these indicators. In such cases, consider this a problem area (Entisols).*

*NOTE: The NRCS developed and published Field Indicators of Hydric Soils in the United States in July 1996 (USDA-NRCS 1996). This document includes many useful indicators of hydric soil; however, some hydric soils will lack one of the indicators included in the NRCS document. Therefore, the indicators are useful only as positive indicators -- if one or more of the indicators is present, the soil is a hydric soil, but the lack of any of these indicators does not mean the soil is nonhydric. In addition, the Corps has not authorized the use of these new field indicators and has stated that while they may be used as additional information, they do not replace the indicators in the 1987 Manual, nor may they be used to contradict the 1987 Manual soil indicators. The same holds true for this manual.*

## Wetland Hydrology

### Definition

45.     The term “wetland hydrology” encompasses all hydrologic characteristics of areas that are periodically inundated or have soils saturated to the surface for a sufficient duration during the growing season. Areas with evident characteristics of wetland hydrology are those where the presence of water has an overriding influence on characteristics of vegetation and soils due to anaerobic and chemically reducing conditions, respectively. Such characteristics are usually present in areas that are inundated or have soils that are saturated to the surface for sufficient duration to develop hydric soils and support vegetation typically adapted for life in periodically anaerobic soil conditions. **Hydrology is often the least exact of the parameters, and indicators of wetland hydrology are sometimes difficult to find in the**

**field.** However, it is essential to establish that a wetland area is periodically inundated or has saturated soils for a sufficient duration during the growing season.

## Wetland Hydrology Criteria

46. Areas which are seasonally inundated and/or saturated to the surface for a consecutive number of days  $\geq$  12.5 percent of the growing season are wetlands, provided the soil and vegetation parameters are met. Areas inundated or saturated between 5 percent and 12.5 percent of the growing season in most years (see Table 3) may or may not be wetlands. Areas inundated or saturated to the surface for less than 5 percent of the growing season are non-wetlands. Wetland hydrology exists if field indicators are present as described below. (It is usually impractical to accurately measure the duration of soil saturation in the field because it takes repeated visits over a lengthy (several years) period of time. However, there has been a sufficient amount of research to support that the field indicators provided in the Manual and supplementary guidance can be good measures of both the frequency and duration of soil saturation

***A Note About Growing Season:*** Given the requirement that inundation/saturation must be present for a certain portion of the growing season it is important to understand how the concept of growing season should be applied. The definition of growing season is : “ The portion of the year when soil temperatures at 19.7 inches below the soil surface are higher than biological zero (41 degrees F). For ease of determination this period can be **approximated** by the number of frost-free days.”

Using climatic data provided in most modern soil surveys, growing season can be **approximated** as (in 5 out of 10 years) being from the last date in spring that the air temperature drops to 28 degrees F to the first date in the fall that it drops to 28 degrees F. (NRCS uses 24 degrees for wetland determinations on agricultural land. Several issues arise in determining the growing season:

- In portions of Washington state some plant species are growing during every month of the year;
- Each county soil survey has several locations for which air temperature data is tabulated. This can result in numerous “growing seasons” for each county;
- The data location nearest to a wetland delineation site may not be representative of the growing season for the site being investigated. For example, NRCS data may be from a site at sea level but the delineation site may be at a higher elevation with an annual temperature regime much different from the NRCS data site.

**Thus, it is important to use sound professional judgment based on careful observation to determine if the growing season is in progress.** For example, evidence of new or recent growth such as flowers, new shoots, new leaves, or swollen buds on plants suggests

that active growth is occurring. **Basically, if the predominant plants of the area in question are growing, it is the growing season.** Another method is to take soil temperature readings at 19.7 inches to determine if the formal definition is met. Soil thermometers are available at most forestry supply stores. Use sound professional judgment in interpreting the data tables in the soil surveys. Use the data set which makes the most sense for the site being investigated. Be particularly cautious when the site being investigated is located far from or in a different physiographic setting than the nearest data station.

For much of Western Washington at low elevations, the mesic growing season (March 1 to October 31), has been considered a good rule - except for some coastal areas which may have a year-round growing season. However, this rule should not be used if it conflicts with field data and observations.

## Influencing factors

47. Numerous factors (e.g., precipitation, stratigraphy, topography, soil permeability, human disturbance, and plant cover) influence the wetness of an area. Regardless, the characteristic common to all wetlands is the presence of an abundant supply of water. The water source may be runoff from direct precipitation, headwater or backwater flooding, tidal influence, ground water, or some combination of these sources. The frequency and duration of inundation or soil saturation varies from nearly permanently inundated or saturated to irregularly inundated or saturated. Topographic position, stratigraphy, and soil permeability influence both the frequency and duration of inundation and soil saturation. Areas of lower elevation in a floodplain or marsh have more frequent periods of inundation and/or greater duration than most areas at higher elevations. Floodplain configuration may significantly affect duration of inundation. When the floodplain configuration is conducive to rapid runoff, the influence of frequent periods of inundation on vegetation and soils may be reduced. Soil permeability also influences duration of inundation and soil saturation. For example, clayey soils absorb water more slowly than sandy or loamy soils, and therefore have slower permeability and remain saturated much longer. Type and amount of plant cover affect both degree of inundation and duration of saturated soil conditions. Excess water drains more slowly in areas of abundant plant cover, thereby increasing frequency and duration of inundation and/or soil saturation. On the other hand, transpiration rates are higher in areas of abundant plant cover, which may reduce the duration of soil saturation. Human disturbance, especially in agricultural lands may necessitate more rigorous analysis to determine the frequency and duration of inundation or saturation.

## Classification

48. Although the interactive effects of all hydrologic factors produce a continuum of wetland hydrologic regimes, efforts have been made to classify wetland hydrologic regimes into functional categories. These efforts have focused on the use of frequency, timing, and

duration of inundation or soil saturation as a basis for classification. A classification system developed for nontidal areas is presented in Table 3. This classification system was slightly modified from the system developed by the Workshop on Bottomland Hardwood Forest Wetlands of the Southeastern United States (Clark and Benforado 1981). More recent research indicates that duration of inundation and/or soil saturation during the growing season is more influential on the plant community than frequency of inundation/saturation during the growing season (Theriot, in press). Thus, frequency of inundation and soil saturation are not included in Table 3. The Corps Waterways Experiment Station has developed a computer program that can be used to transform stream gage data to mean sea level elevations representing the upper limit of each hydrologic zone shown in Table 3. This program is available upon request.

**Table 3**  
**Hydrologic Zones\* Nontidal Areas**

| <b><u>Zone</u></b> | <b><u>Name</u></b>   | <b><u>Duration**</u></b> | <b><u>Comments</u></b>  |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| I†                 | Permanently inundated  | 100%                     | Inundation >6.6 ft mean water depth                                 |
| II                 | Semipermanently to nearly permanently inundated or saturated | >75 % - <100%            | Inundation defined as £6.6 ft mean water depth                      |
| III                | Regularly inundated or saturated                             | >25% - 75%               |   |
| IV                 | Seasonally inundated or saturated                            | >12.5% - 25%             |   |
| V                  | Irregularly inundated or saturated                           | 35% - 12.5%              | Many areas having these hydrologic characteristics are not wetlands |
| VI                 | Intermittently or never inundated or saturated               | <5%                      | Areas with these hydrologic characteristics are not wetlands        |

\* Zones adapted from Clark and Benforado (1981).

\*\* Refers to duration of inundation and/or soil saturation during the growing season.

† This defines an aquatic habitat zone.



## Indicators of Wetland Hydrology

49. Indicators of wetland hydrology may include, **but are not necessarily limited to:** drainage patterns, drift lines, sediment deposition, watermarks, stream gage data and flood predictions, historic records, visual observation of saturated soils, and visual observation of inundation. Any of these indicators may be evidence of wetland hydrologic characteristics. Methods for determining hydrologic indicators can be categorized according to the type of indicator. Recorded data include stream gage data, lake gage data, tidal gage data, flood predictions, and historical records. Use of these data is commonly limited to areas adjacent to streams or other similar areas. Recorded data usually provide both short- and long-term information about frequency and duration of inundation, but contain little or no information about soil saturation, which must be gained from soil surveys or other similar sources. The remaining indicators require field observations. Field indicators are evidence of present or past hydrologic events (e.g. location and height of flooding). Indicators for recorded data and field observations include:\*
- a. Recorded data. Stream gage data, lake gage data, tidal gage data, flood predictions, and historical data may be available from the following sources:
    - (1) **CE District Offices.** Most CE Districts maintain stream, lake, and tidal gage records for major water bodies in their area. In addition, CE planning and design documents often contain valuable hydrologic information. For example, a General Design Memorandum (GDM) usually describes flooding frequencies and durations for a project area. Furthermore, the extent of flooding within a project area is sometimes indicated in the GDM according to elevation (height) of certain flood frequencies (1-, 2-, 5-, 10-year, etc.).
    - (2) **US Geological Survey (USGS).** Stream and tidal gage data are available from the USGS offices throughout the Nation, and the latter are also available from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. CE Districts often have such records.
    - (3) **State, county, and local agencies.** These agencies often have responsibility for flood control/relief and flood insurance.

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\* Indicators are listed in order of decreasing reliability. Although all are valid indicators, some are stronger indicators than others. When a decision is based on an indicator appearing in the lower portion of the list, re-evaluate the parameter to ensure that the proper decision was reached.

- (4) **Natural Resource Conservation Service Small Watershed Projects.** Planning documents from this agency are often helpful, and can be obtained from the NRCS field office in the county.

- (5) Planning documents of developers.

**b. Field data.** The following field hydrologic indicators can be assessed quickly, and although some of them are not necessarily indicative of hydrologic events that occur only during the growing season, they do provide evidence that inundation and/or soil saturation has occurred:

*CAUTION: Many delineators have made the mistake of assuming that the wettest conditions occur in the earliest part of the growing season - usually March and April. However, in some situations, the wettest time of the growing season may be later. This is especially true in areas that receive snowmelt runoff or irrigation water or are subject to tidal influence.*

- (1) **Visual observation of inundation.** The most obvious and revealing hydrologic indicator may be simply observing the areal extent of inundation. **However, because seasonal conditions and recent weather conditions can contribute to surface water being present on a nonwetland site, both should be considered when applying this indicator.**

- (2) **Visual observation of soil saturation.** Examination of this indicator requires digging a soil pit to a depth of 16 inches and observing the level at which water stands in the hole after sufficient time has been allowed for water to drain into the hole. The required time will vary depending on soil texture. In some cases, the upper level at which water is flowing into the pit can be observed by examining the wall of the hole. This level usually represents the depth to the water table. The depth to saturated soils will always be nearer the surface due to the capillary fringe. For soil saturation to impact vegetation, it must occur within a **major portion of the root zone** (usually within 12 inches of the surface) of the prevalent vegetation. The major portion of the root zone is that portion of the soil profile in which more than one half of the plant roots occur. *CAUTION: In some heavy clay soils, water may not rapidly accumulate in the hole even when the soil is saturated. If water is observed at the bottom of the hole but has not filled to the 12-inch depth, examine the sides of the hole and determine the shallowest depth at which water is entering the hole. When applying this indicator, the season of the year and preceding weather conditions as well as the duration of saturation must be considered.*

**NOTE: This indicator has caused confusion in relation to the hydrology criteria, which stipulates that saturation must be to the surface. If the water table (the level at which standing water is found in an unlined hole) is found within twelve inches of the soil surface in a nonsandy soil, one**

*can assume that soil saturation occurs to the surface. For sandy soils, the water table must be within six inches of the soil surface. However, simply finding the water table at the appropriate depth on one particular day, does not necessarily confirm that saturation to the surface for the appropriate length of time does occur. Conversely, finding the water table below the appropriate depth on one particular day does not necessarily confirm that saturation to the surface for the appropriate length of time does not occur.*

- (3) **Watermarks.** Watermarks are most common on woody vegetation. They occur as stains on bark or other fixed objects (e.g. bridge pillars, buildings, tree trunks, fences, etc.). When several watermarks are present, the highest reflects the maximum extent of recent inundation.
- (4) **Drift lines.** This indicator is most likely to be found adjacent to streams or other sources of water flow in wetlands, but also often occurs in tidal marshes. Evidence consists of deposition of debris in a line on the surface or debris entangled in aboveground vegetation or other fixed objects. Debris usually consists of remnants of vegetation (branches, stems, and leaves), sediment, litter, and other waterborne materials deposited parallel to the direction of water flow. Drift lines provide an indication of the minimum portion of the area inundated during a flooding event; the maximum level of inundation is generally at a higher elevation than that indicated by a drift line.
- (5) **Sediment deposits.** Plants and other vertical objects often have thin layers, coatings, or depositions of mineral or organic matter on them after inundation. This evidence may remain for a considerable period before it is removed by precipitation or subsequent inundation. Sediment deposition on vegetation and other objects provides an indication of the minimum inundation level. When sediments are primarily organic (e.g. fine organic material, algae), the detritus may become encrusted on or slightly above the soil surface after dewatering occurs.
- (6) **Drainage patterns within wetlands.** This indicator, which occurs primarily in wetlands adjacent to streams or in depressions with closed or restricted outlets and impervious subsoils, consists of surface evidence of drainage flow into or through an area that is restricted for a substantial duration. In some wetlands, this evidence may exist as a drainage pattern eroded into the soil, vegetative matter (debris) piled against thick vegetation or woody stems oriented perpendicular to the direction of water flow, or the absence of expected leaf litter. Scouring is often evident around roots of persistent vegetation. Debris may be deposited in or along the drainage pattern. *CAUTION: Drainage patterns also occur in upland areas after periods of considerable precipitation; therefore, topographic position must also be considered when applying this indicator.*

- (7) **Oxidized rhizospheres surrounding living roots** are acceptable hydrology indicators on a case-by-case basis and may be useful in groundwater driven systems. Rhizospheres should also be reasonably abundant and within the upper 12 inches of the soil profile. Oxidized rhizospheres should be supported by other indicators of hydrology if hydrology evidence is weak. *Caution: Make sure that the oxidation is occurring along live roots/rhizomes and thus, that they are not relict. Oxidized rhizospheres are the result of mineral deposition on and in the soil material surrounding the root and should not be confused with decomposing organic tissue.*
- (8) **Local soil survey data** - If you can field verify that the soil at your sampling site is a soil listed in the county soil survey or on the Washington State List of Hydric Soils, then the data in the soil survey referring to the flooding and/or high water table conditions for that soil can be accepted as valid for your site (assuming the site has not been effectively drained since the time it was mapped by the NRCS).
- (9) **Water-stained leaves** - Forested wetlands that are inundated at some time of the year will frequently have water-stained leaves on the forest floor. These leaves are generally grayish or blackish in appearance, as a result of being underwater for significant periods. This indicator should be used with caution as water-stained leaves don't always indicate long-term inundation/saturation. It is important to compare the color of the leaves in the area presumed to be wetland with leaves of the same species in an adjacent area that is clearly upland. Due to differential decomposition, there should be a distinct difference in the texture and color of the leaves.
- (10) **FAC neutral test** - In areas where hydrology evidence is weak or lacking, the FAC neutral test may be employed to corroborate the presence of sufficient hydrology. Apply as follows: compare the number of dominants that are FACW and OBL with the number of dominants that are FACU and UPL (ignore the "neutral" FAC dominants). If there are more dominants that are FACW or wetter than there are dominants that are FACU or drier, then one can infer that the plant community is reflecting the presence of wetland hydrology. If there is a tie, compare the number of FAC+ dominants with the FAC- dominants to see if there is a difference. If there is still a tie between the numbers of dominants, examine the nondominant species to determine if they provide an indication of how strongly hydrophytic the vegetation is. Any use of nondominants should be clearly documented and explained.
- (11) **Other** - Explain and provide rationale for use.

## Part IV: Methods

### Section A. Introduction

50. PART IV contains sections on preliminary data gathering, method selection, routine determination procedures, comprehensive determination procedures, methods for determinations in atypical situations, and guidance for wetland determinations in natural situations where the three-parameter approach may not always apply.
51. Significant flexibility has been incorporated into PART IV. The user is presented in Section B with various potential sources of information that may be helpful in making a determination, but not all identified sources of information may be applicable to a given situation. *Note: The user is not required to obtain information from all identified sources.* Flexibility is also provided in method selection (Section C). Three levels of routine determinations are available, depending on the complexity of the required determination and the quantity and quality of existing information. Application of methods presented in both Section D (routine determinations) and Section E (comprehensive determinations) may be tailored to meet site-specific requirements, especially with respect to sampling design.
52. Methods presented in Sections D and E vary with respect to the required level of technical knowledge and experience of the user. Application of the qualitative methods presented in Section D (routine determinations) requires considerably less technical knowledge and experience than does application of the quantitative methods presented in Section E (comprehensive determinations). The user must at least be able to identify the dominant plant species in the project area when making a routine determination (Section D), and should have some basic knowledge of hydric soils when employing routine methods that require soils examination. Comprehensive determinations require a basic understanding of sampling principles and the ability to identify all commonly occurring plant species in a project area, as well as a good understanding of indicators of hydric soils and wetland hydrology. The comprehensive method should only be employed by experienced field inspectors.

## Section B. Preliminary Data Gathering and Synthesis

53. This section discusses potential sources of information that may be helpful in making a wetland determination. When the routine approach is used, it may often be possible to make a wetland determination based on available vegetation, soils, and hydrology data for the area. However, this section deals only with identifying potential information sources, extracting pertinent data, and synthesizing the data for use in making a determination. Based on the quantity and quality of available information and the approach selected for use (Section C), the user is referred to either Section D or Section E for the actual determination. Completion of Section B is not required, but is recommended because the available information may reduce or eliminate the need for field effort and decrease the time and cost of making a determination. However, there are instances in small project areas in which the time required to obtain the information may be prohibitive. In such cases PROCEED to paragraph 55, complete STEPS 1 through 3, and PROCEED to Section D or E.

### Data sources

54. Obtain the following information, when available and applicable:

- a. **USGS quadrangle maps.** USGS quadrangle maps are available at different scales. When possible, obtain maps at a scale of 1:24,000; otherwise, use maps at a scale of 1:62,500. Such maps are available from USGS in Reston, Va., and Menlo Park, Calif., but they may already be available in the CE District Office. These maps provide several types of information:
  - (1) Assistance in locating field sites. Towns, minor roads, bridges, streams, and other landmark features (e.g. buildings, cemeteries, water bodies, etc.) not commonly found on road maps are shown on these maps.
  - (2) Topographic details, including contour lines (usually at 5- or 10-ft contour intervals).
  - (3) General delineation of wet areas (swamps and marshes). *Note: The actual wet area may be greater than that shown on the map because USGS generally maps these areas based on the driest season of the year.*
  - (4) Latitude, longitude, townships, ranges, and sections. These provide legal descriptions of the area.
  - (5) Directions, including both true and magnetic north.
  - (6) Drainage patterns.

- (7) General land uses, such as cleared (agriculture or pasture), forested, or urban.

*CAUTION: Obtain the most recent USGS maps. Older maps may show features that no longer exist and will not show new features that have developed since the map was constructed. Also, USGS is currently changing the mapping scale from 1:24,000 to 1:25,000.*

b. National Wetlands Inventory products.

- (1) **Wetland maps.** The standard NWI maps are at a scale of 1:24,000 or, where USGS base maps at this scale are not available, they are at 1:62,500 (1:63,350 in Alaska). Smaller scale maps ranging from 1:100,000 to 1:500,000 are also available for certain areas. Wetlands on NWI maps are classified in accordance with Cowardin et al. (1979). *CAUTION: Since not all delineated areas on NWI maps are wetlands under federal, state or local jurisdiction, NWI maps should not be used as the sole basis for determining whether wetland vegetation is present.* NWI “User Notes” are available that correlate the classification system with local wetland community types. An important feature of this classification system is the water regime modifier, which describes the flooding or soil saturation characteristics. Wetlands classified as having a temporarily flooded or intermittently flooded water regime should be viewed with particular caution since this designation is indicative of plant communities that are transitional between wetland and nonwetland. These are among the most difficult plant communities to map accurately from aerial photography. For wetlands “wetter” than temporarily flooded and intermittently flooded, the probability of a designated map unit on recent NWI maps being a wetland (according to Cowardin et al. 1979) at the time of the photography is in excess of 90 percent. *CAUTION: Due to the scale of aerial photography used and other factors, all NWI map boundaries are approximate.* The optimum use of NWI maps is to plan field review (i.e. how wet, big, or diverse is the area?) and to assist during field review, particularly by showing the approximate areal extent of the wetland and its association with other communities. NWI maps are available either as a composite with, or an overlay for, USGS base maps and may be obtained from the NWI Central Office in St. Petersburg, Fla., the Wetland Coordinator at each FWS regional office, or the USGS.
- (2) **Plant database.** This database of approximately 6700 plant species that occur in wetlands provides information (e.g., ranges, habitat, etc.) about each plant species from the technical literature. The database served as a focal point for development of a national list of plants that occur in wetlands.

- c. **Soil surveys.** Soil surveys are prepared by the NRCS for political units (county, parish, etc.) in a state. Soil surveys contain several types of information:
- (1) General information (e.g. climate, settlement, natural resources, farming, geology, general vegetation types).
  - (2) Soil maps for general and detailed planning purposes. These maps are usually generated from fairly recent aerial photography. *CAUTION: The smallest mapping unit is 3 acres, and a given soil series as mapped may contain small inclusions of other series.*
  - (3) Uses and management of soils. Any wetness characteristics of soils will be mentioned here.
  - (4) Soil properties. Soil and water features are provided that may be very helpful for wetland investigations. Frequency, duration, and timing of inundation (when present) are described for each soil type. Water table characteristics that provide valuable information about soil saturation are also described. Soil permeability coefficients may also be available.
  - (5) Soil classification. Soil series and phases are usually provided. Published soil surveys will not always be available for the area. If not, contact the county NRCS office and determine whether the soils have been mapped.
- d. **Stream and tidal gage data.** These documents provide records of tidal and stream flow events. They are available from either the USGS or CE District office.
- e. **Environmental impact assessments (EIAs), environmental impact statements (EISs), general design memoranda (GDM), and other similar publications.** These documents may be available from Federal agencies for an area that includes the project area. They may contain some indication of the location and characteristics of wetlands consistent with the required criteria (vegetation, soils, and hydrology), and often contain flood frequency and duration data.
- f. **Documents and maps from State, county, or local governments.** Regional maps that characterize certain areas (e.g., potholes, coastal areas, or basins) may be helpful because they indicate the type and character of wetlands.
- g. **Remote sensing.** Remote sensing is one of the most useful information sources available for wetland identification and delineation. Recent aerial photography, particularly color infrared, provides a detailed view of an area; thus, recent land use and other features (e.g. general type and areal extent of plant communities and degree of inundation of the area when the photography was taken) can be determined. The multiagency cooperative National High Altitude Aerial Photography Program (RAP) has 1:59,000-scale color infrared photography for



approximately 85 percent (December 1985) of the coterminous United States from 1980 to 1985. This photography has excellent resolution and can be ordered enlarged to 1:24,000 scale from USGS. Satellite images provide similar information as aerial photography, although the much smaller scale makes observation of detail more difficult without sophisticated equipment and extensive training. Satellite images provide more recent coverage than aerial photography (usually at 18-day intervals). Individual satellite images are more expensive than aerial photography, but are not as expensive as having an area flown and photographed at low altitudes. However, better resolution imagery is now available with remote sensing equipment mounted on fixed-wing aircraft.

- h. Local individuals and experts.** Individuals having personal knowledge of an area may sometimes provide a reliable and readily available source of information about the area, particularly information on the wetness of the area.
- i. USGS land use and land cover maps.** Maps created by USGS using remotely sensed data and a geographical information system provide a systematic and comprehensive collection and analysis of land use and land cover on a national basis. Maps at a scale of 1:250,000 are available as overlays that show land use and land cover according to nine basic levels. One level is wetlands (as determined by the FWS), which is further subdivided into forested and nonforested areas. Five other sets of maps show political units, hydrologic units, census subdivisions of counties, Federal land ownership, and State land ownership. These maps can be obtained from any USGS mapping center.
- j. Applicant's survey plans and engineering designs.** In many cases, the permit applicant will already have had the area surveyed (often at 1-ft contours or less) and will also have engineering designs for the proposed activity.

## Data synthesis

55. When employing Section B procedures, use the above sources of information to complete the following steps:
- **STEP 1 - Identify the Project Area on a Map.** Obtain a USGS quadrangle map (1:24,000) or other appropriate map, and locate the area identified in the permit application. PROCEED TO STEP 2.
  - **STEP 2 - Prepare a Base Map.** Mark the project area boundaries on the map. Either use the selected map as the base map or trace the area on a mylar overlay, including prominent landscape features (e.g., roads, buildings, drainage patterns, etc.). If possible, obtain diazo copies of the resulting base map. PROCEED TO STEP 3.

- **STEP 3 - Determine Size of the Project Area.** Measure the area boundaries and calculate the size of the area. PROCEED TO STEP 4 OR TO SECTION D OR E IF SECTION B IS NOT USED.
- **STEP 4 - Summarize Available Information on Vegetation.** Examine available sources that contain information about the area vegetation.

Consider the following:

- a. USGS quadrangle maps. Is the area shown as a marsh or swamp? *CAUTION: Do not use this as the sole basis for determining that hydrophytic vegetation is present.*
- b. NWI overlays or maps. Do the overlays or maps indicate that hydrophytic vegetation occurs in the area?, If so, identify the vegetation type(s).
- c. EIAs, EISs, or GDMs that include the project area. Extract any vegetation data that pertain to the area.
- d. Federal, State, or local government documents that contain information about the area vegetation. Extract appropriate data.
- e. Recent (within last 5 years) aerial photography of the area. Can the area plant community type(s) be determined from the photography? Extract appropriate data.
- f. Individuals or experts having knowledge of the area vegetation. Contact them and obtain any appropriate information. *CAUTION: Ensure that the individual providing the information has firsthand knowledge of the area.*
- g. Any published scientific studies of the area plant communities. Extract any appropriate data.
- h. Previous wetland determinations made for the area. Extract any pertinent vegetation data.

When the above have been considered, PROCEED TO STEP 5.

- **STEP 5 - Determine Whether the Vegetation in the Project Area Is Adequately Characterized.** Examine the summarized data (STEP 4) and determine whether the area plant communities are adequately characterized. For routine determinations, the plant community type(s) and the dominant species in each vegetation layer of each community type must be known. Dominant species are those that have the largest

relative basal area (overstory),\* height (woody understory), number of stems (woody vines), or greatest areal cover (herbaceous understory). For comprehensive determinations, each plant community type present in the project area must have been **quantitatively described** within the past 5 years using accepted sampling and analytical procedures, and boundaries between community types must be known. Record information on DATA FORM 1.\*\* In either case, PROCEED TO Section F if there is evidence of recent significant vegetation alteration due to human activities or natural events. Otherwise, PROCEED TO STEP 6.

- **STEP 6 - Summarize Available Information on Area Soils.** Examine available information and describe the area soils. Consider the following:
  - a. County soil surveys. Determine the soil series present and extract characteristics for each. *CAUTION: Soil mapping units sometimes include more than one soil series.*
  - b. Unpublished county soil maps. Contact the local NRCS office and determine whether soil maps are available for the area. Determine the soil series of the area, and obtain any available information about possible hydric soil indicators (paragraph 44 or 45) for each soil series.
  - c. Published EIAs, EISs, or GDMs that include soils information. Extract any pertinent information.
  - d. Federal, State, and/or local government documents that contain descriptions of the area soils. Summarize these data.
  - e. Published scientific studies that include area soils data. Summarize these data.
  - f. Previous wetland determinations for the area. Extract any pertinent soils data.

When the above have been considered, PROCEED TO STEP 7.

- **STEP 7 - Determine Whether Soils of the Project Area Have Been Adequately Characterized.** Examine the summarized soils data and determine whether the soils have been adequately characterized. For routine determinations, the soil series must be known. For comprehensive determinations, both the soil series and the boundary of each soil series must be known. Record information on DATA FORM 1. In either case, if

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\* This term is used because species having the largest individuals may not be dominant when only a few are present. To use relative basal area, consider both the size and number of individuals of a species and subjectively compare with other species present.

\*\* A separate DATA FORM 1 must be used for each plant community type.

there is evidence of recent significant soils alteration due to human activities or natural events, PROCEED TO Section F. Otherwise, PROCEED TO STEP 8.

- **STEP 8 - Summarize Available Hydrology Data.** Examine available information and describe the area hydrology. Consider the following:
  - a. USGS quadrangle maps. Is there a significant, well-defined drainage through the area? Is the area within a major floodplain or tidal area? What range of elevations occur in the area, especially in relation to the elevation of the nearest perennial watercourse?
  - b. NWI overlays or maps. Is the area shown as a wetland or deepwater aquatic habitat? What is the water regime modifier?
  - c. EIAs, EISs, or GDMs that describe the project area. Extract any pertinent hydrologic data.
  - d. Floodplain management maps. These maps may be used to extrapolate elevations that can be expected to be inundated on a 1-, 2-, 3-year, etc., basis. Compare the elevations of these features with the elevation range of the project area to determine the frequency of inundation.
  - e. Federal, State, and local government documents (e.g. CE floodplain management maps and profiles) that contain hydrologic data. Summarize these data.
  - f. Recent (within past 5 years) aerial photography that shows the area to be inundated. Record the date of the photographic mission.
  - g. Newspaper accounts of flooding events that indicate periodic inundation of the area.
  - h. NRCS County Soil Surveys that indicate the frequency and duration of inundation and soil saturation for area soils. *CAUTION: Data provided only represent average conditions for a particular soil series in its natural undrained state, and cannot be used as a positive hydrologic indicator in areas that have significantly altered hydrology.*
  - i. Tidal or stream gage data for a **nearby** water body that apparently influences the area. Obtain the gage data and complete (1) below if the routine approach is used, or (2) below if the comprehensive approach is used (OMIT IF GAGING STATION DATA ARE UNAVAILABLE):
    - (1) **Routine approach.** Determine the highest water level elevation reached during the growing season for each of the most recent 10 years of gage data.. Rank these elevations in descending order and select the fifth highest elevation. Combine this elevation with the mean sea level elevation of the

gaging station to produce a mean sea level elevation for the highest water level reached every other year. *NOTE: Stream gage data are often presented as flow rates in cubic feet per second. In these cases, ask the CE District's Hydrology Branch to convert flow rates to corresponding mean sea level elevations and adjust gage data to the site.* Compare the resulting elevations reached biennially with the project area elevations. If the water level elevation exceeds the area elevation, the area is inundated during the growing season on average at least biennially.

(2) **Comprehensive approach.** Complete the following:

(a) **Decide whether hydrologic data reflect the apparent hydrology.** Data available from the gaging station may or may not accurately reflect the area hydrology. Answer the following questions:

- Does the water level of the area appear to fluctuate in a manner that differs from that of the water body on which the gaging station is located? (In ponded situations, the water level of the area is usually higher than the water level at the gaging station.)
- Are less than 10 years of daily readings available for the gaging station?
- Do other water sources that would not be reflected by readings at the gaging station appear to significantly affect the area? For example, do major tributaries enter the stream or tidal area between the area and gaging station?

If the answer to any of the above questions is YES, the area hydrology cannot be determined from the gaging station data. If the answer to all of the above questions is NO, PROCEED TO (b).

(b) **Analyze hydrologic data.** Subject the hydrologic data to appropriate analytical procedures. Either use duration curves or a computer program developed by WES (available from the Environmental Laboratory upon request) for determining the mean sea level elevation representing the upper limits of wetland hydrology. In the latter case, when the site elevation is lower than the mean sea level elevation representing a 5-percent duration of inundation and saturation during the growing season, the area has a hydrologic regime that may occur in wetlands. *NOTE: Duration curves do not reflect the period of soil saturation following dewatering.*

When all of the above have been considered, PROCEED TO STEP 9.

- **STEP 9 - Determine Whether Hydrology Is Adequately Characterized.** Examine the summarized data and determine whether the hydrology of the project area is adequately characterized. For routine determinations, there must be documented evidence of frequent inundation or soil saturation during the growing season. For comprehensive determinations, there must be documented **quantitative** evidence of frequent inundation or soil saturation during the growing season, based on at least 10 years of stream or tidal gage data. Record information on DATA FORM 1. In either case, if there is evidence of recent significant hydrologic alteration due to human activities or natural events, PROCEED TO Section F. Otherwise, PROCEED TO Section C.

## Section C. Selection of Method

56. All wetland delineation methods described in this manual can be grouped into two general types: routine and comprehensive. Routine determinations (Section D) involve simple, rapidly applied methods that result in sufficient qualitative data for making a determination. Comprehensive methods (Section E) usually require significant time and effort to obtain the needed quantitative data. The primary factor influencing method selection will usually be the complexity of the required determination. However, comprehensive methods may sometimes be selected for use in relatively simple determinations when rigorous documentation is required.
57. Three levels of routine wetland determinations are described below. Complexity of the project area and the quality and quantity of available information will influence the level selected for use.
- a.     **Level 1 - Onsite Inspection Unnecessary.** This level may be employed when the information already obtained (Section B) is sufficient for making a determination for the entire project area (see Section D, Subsection 1).
  - b.     **Level 2 - Onsite Inspection Necessary.** This level must be employed when there is insufficient information already available to characterize the vegetation, soils, and hydrology of the entire project area (see Section D, Subsection 2).
  - c.     **Level 3 - Combination of Levels 1 and 2.** This level should be used when there is sufficient information already available to characterize the vegetation, soils, and hydrology of a portion, but not all, of the project area. Methods described for Level 1 may be applied to portions of the area for which adequate information already exists, and onsite methods (Level 2) must be applied to the remainder of the area (see Section D, Subsection 3).
58. After considering all available information, select a tentative method (see above) for use, and PROCEED TO EITHER Section D or E, as appropriate. *NOTE: Sometimes it may be necessary to change to another method described in the manual, depending on the quality of available information and/or recent changes in the project area.*

## Section D. Routine Determinations

59. This section describes general procedures for making routine wetland determinations. It is assumed that the user has already completed all applicable steps in Section B,\* and a routine method has been tentatively selected for use (Section C). Subsections 1-3 describe steps to be followed when making a routine determination using one of the three levels described in Section C. Each subsection contains a flowchart that defines the relationship of steps to be used for that level of routine determinations. *NOTE: The selected method must be considered tentative because the user may be required to change methods during the determination.*

### Subsection 1 - Onsite Inspection Unnecessary

60. This subsection describes procedures for making wetland determinations when sufficient information is already available (Section B) on which to base the determination. A flowchart of required steps to be completed is presented in Figure 3, and each step is described below.

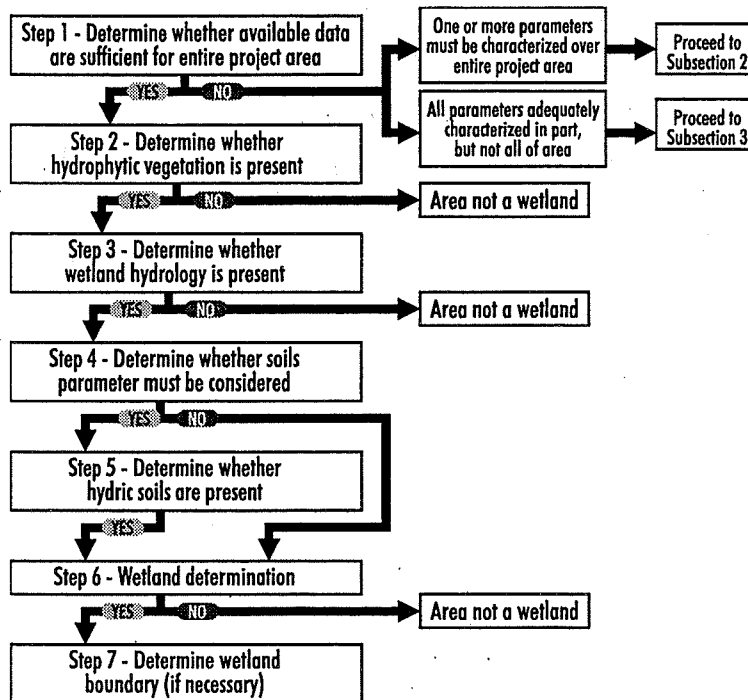


Figure 3. Flowchart of steps involved in making a wetland determination when an onsite inspection is unnecessary.

\* If it has been determined that it is more expedient to conduct an onsite inspection than to search for available information, complete STEPS 1 through 3 of Section B, and PROCEED TO Subsection 2.



## Equipment and materials

61. No special equipment is needed for applying this method. The following materials will be needed:
  - a. Map of project area (Section B, STEP 2).
  - b. Copies of DATA FORM (Appendix B).
  - c. Plant indicator status list and hydric soils list

## Procedure

62. Complete the following steps, as necessary:
  - **STEP 1 - Determine Whether Available Data Are Sufficient for Entire Project Area.** Examine the summarized data (Section B, STEPS 5, 7, and 9) and determine whether the vegetation, soils, and hydrology of the entire project area are adequately characterized. If so, PROCEED TO STEP 2. If all three parameters are adequately characterized for a portion, but not all, of the project area, PROCEED TO Subsection 3. If the vegetation, soils, and hydrology are not adequately characterized for any portion of the area, PROCEED TO Subsection 2.
  - **STEP 2 - Determine Whether Hydrophytic Vegetation Is Present.** Examine the vegetation data and list on DATA FORM 1 the dominant plant species found in each vegetation layer of each community type. *NOTE: A separate DATA FORM 1 will be required for each community type.* Record the indicator status for each dominant species. When more than 50 percent of the dominant species in a plant community have an indicator status of OBL, FACW, and/or FAC, hydrophytic vegetation is present. If one or more plant communities comprise of hydrophytic vegetation, PROCEED TO STEP 3. If none of the plant communities comprise hydrophytic vegetation, none of the area is a wetland. Complete the vegetation section for each DATA FORM 1.
  - **STEP 3 - Determine Whether Wetland Hydrology Is Present.** When one of the following conditions applies (STEP 2), it is only necessary to confirm that there has been no recent hydrologic alteration of the area:
    - a. The entire project area is occupied by a plant community or communities in which all dominant species are OBL.

- b. The project area contains two or more plant communities, all of which are dominated by OBL and/or FACW species, and the wetland-nonwetland boundary is abrupt\* (e.g. a *Spartina alterniflora* marsh bordered by a road embankment).

If either a or b applies, look for recorded evidence of recently constructed dikes, levees, impoundments, and drainage systems, or recent avalanches, mudslides, beaver dams, etc., that have significantly altered the area hydrology. If any significant hydrologic alteration is found, determine whether the area is still periodically inundated or has saturated soils for sufficient duration to support the documented vegetation (a or b above). When a or b applies and there is no evidence of recent hydrologic alteration, or when a or b do not apply and there is documented evidence that the area is periodically inundated or has saturated soils, wetland hydrology is present. Otherwise, wetland hydrology does not occur on the area. Complete the hydrology section of DATA FORM and PROCEED TO STEP 4.

- **STEP 4 - Determine Whether the Soils Parameter Must Be Considered.** When either a or b of STEP 3 applies and there is either no evidence of recent hydrologic alteration of the project area or if wetland hydrology presently occurs on the area, hydric soils can be assumed to be present. If so, PROCEED TO STEP 6. Otherwise PROCEED TO STEP 5.
- **STEP 5 - Determine Whether Hydric Soils Are Present.** Examine the soils data (Section B, STEP 7) and record the soil series or soil phase on DATA FORM 1 for each community type. Determine whether the soil is listed as a hydric soil. If all community types have hydric soils, the entire project area has hydric soils. (*CAUTION: If the soil series description makes reference to inclusions of other soil types, data must be field verified*). Any portion of the area that lacks hydric soils is a nonwetland. Complete the soils section of each DATA FORM 1 and PROCEED TO STEP 6.
- **STEP 6 - Wetland Determination.** Examine the DATA FORM 1 for each community type. Any portion of the project area is a wetland that has:
  - a. Hydrophytic vegetation that conforms to one of the conditions identified in STEP 3a or 3b and has either no evidence of altered hydrology or confirmed wetland hydrology.
  - b. Hydrophytic vegetation that does not conform to STEP 3a or 3b, has hydric soils, and has confirmed wetland hydrology.

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There must be documented evidence of periodic inundation or saturated soils when the project area:

- a. Has plant communities dominated by one or more FAC species;
- b. Has vegetation dominated by FACW species but no adjacent community dominated by OBL species;
- c. Has a gradual, nondistinct boundary between wetlands and nonwetlands; and/or
- d. Is known to have or is suspected of having significantly altered hydrology.

If STEP 6a or 6b applies to the entire project area, the entire area is a wetland. Complete a DATA FORM 1 for all plant community types. Portions of the area not qualifying as a wetland based on an office determination might or might not be wetlands. If the data used for the determination are considered to be highly reliable, portions of the area not qualifying as wetlands may properly be considered nonwetlands. PROCEED TO STEP 7. If the available data are incomplete or questionable, an onsite inspection (Subsection 2) will be required.

- **STEP 7 - Determine Wetland Boundary.** Mark on the base map all community types determined to be wetlands with a W and those determined to be nonwetlands with an N. Combine all wetland community types into a single mapping unit. The boundary of these community types is the interface between wetlands and nonwetlands.

## **Subsection 2 - Onsite Inspection Necessary**

63. This subsection describes procedures for routine determinations in which the available information (Section B) is insufficient for one or more parameters. If only one or two parameters must be characterized, apply the appropriate steps and return to Subsection 1 and complete the determination. A flowchart of steps required for using this method is presented in Figure 4, and each step is described below.

## **Equipment and materials**

64. The following equipment and materials will be needed:
- a. Base map (Section B, STEP 2).
  - b. Copies of DATA FORM 1 (one for each community type and additional copies for boundary determinations).
  - c. Plant indicator status list and hydric soils list.
  - d. Compass.
  - e. Soil auger or spade (soils only).
  - f. Tape (300 ft).
  - g. Munsell Color Charts (Munsell Color 1975) (soils only).

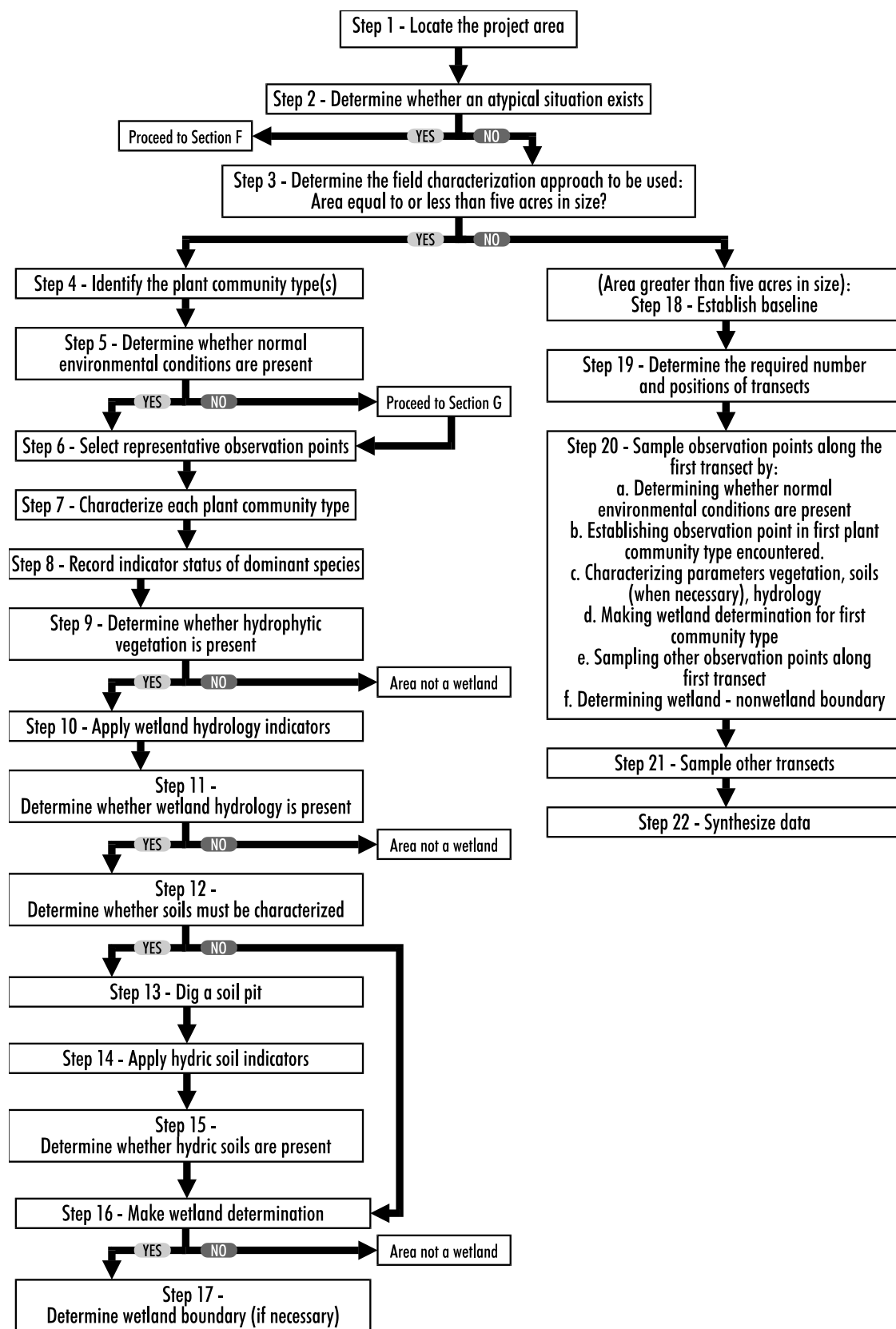


Figure 4. Flowchart of steps involved in making a routine wetland determination when an onsite visit is necessary.

## Procedure

65. Complete the following steps, as necessary:

- **STEP 1 - Locate the Project Area.** Determine the spatial boundaries of the project area using information from a USGS quadrangle map or other appropriate map, aerial photography, and/or the project survey plan (when available). PROCEED TO STEP 2.
- **STEP 2 - Determine Whether an Atypical Situation Exists.** Examine the area and determine whether there is evidence of sufficient natural or human-induced alteration to significantly alter the area vegetation, soils, and/or hydrology. *NOTE: Include possible onsite modifications that may affect the area hydrology.* If not, PROCEED TO STEP 3.

If one or more parameters have been significantly altered by an activity that would normally require a permit, PROCEED TO Section F and determine whether there is sufficient evidence that hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and/or wetland hydrology were present prior to this alteration. Then, return to this subsection and characterize parameters not significantly influenced by human activities. PROCEED TO STEP 3.

- **STEP 3 - Determine the Field Characterization Approach to be Used.** Considering the size and complexity of the area, determine the field characterization approach to be used. When the area is equal to or less than 5 acres in size (Section B, STEP 3) and the area is thought to be relatively homogeneous with respect to vegetation, soils, and/or hydrologic regime, PROCEED TO STEP 4. When the area is greater than 5 acres in size (Section B, STEP 3) or appears to be highly diverse with respect to vegetation, PROCEED TO STEP 18.

### Areas Equal to or Less Than 5 Acres in Size

- **STEP 4 - Identify the Plant Community Type(s).** Traverse the area and determine the number and locations of plant community types. Sketch the location of each on the base map (Section B, STEP 2), and give each community type a name. PROCEED TO STEP 5.
- **STEP 5 - Determine Whether Normal Environmental Conditions Are Present.** Determine whether normal environmental conditions are present by considering the following:
  - a. Is the area presently lacking hydrophytic vegetation or hydrologic indicators due to annual or seasonal fluctuations in precipitation or ground-water levels?
  - b. Are hydrophytic vegetation indicators lacking due to seasonal fluctuations in temperature?

If the answer to either of these questions is thought to be YES, PROCEED TO Section G. If the answer to both questions is NO, PROCEED TO STEP 6.

- **STEP 6 - Select Representative Observation Points.** Select a representative observation point in each community type. A representative observation point is one in which the apparent characteristics (determine visually) best represent characteristics of the entire community. Mark on the base map the approximate location of the observation point. PROCEED TO STEP 7.
- **STEP 7 - Characterize Each Plant Community Type.** Visually determine the dominant plant species in each vegetation layer of each community type and record them on DATA FORM 1 (use a separate DATA FORM 1 for each community type). Dominant species are those having the greatest relative basal area (woody overstory),\* greatest height (woody understory), greatest percentage of areal cover (herbaceous understory), and/or greatest number of stems (woody vines). PROCEED TO STEP 8.
- **STEP 8 - Record Indicator Status of Dominant Species.** Record on DATA FORM 1 the indicator status of each dominant species in each community type. PROCEED TO STEP 9.
- **STEP 9 - Determine Whether Hydrophytic Vegetation Is Present.** Examine each DATA FORM 1. When more than 50 percent of the dominant species in a community type have an indicator status (STEP 8) of OBL, FACW, and/or FAC, hydrophytic vegetation is present. Complete the vegetation section of each DATA FORM 1. Portions of the area failing this test are not wetlands. PROCEED TO STEP 10.
- **STEP 10 - Apply Wetland Hydrologic Indicators.** Examine the portion of the area occupied by each plant community type for positive indicators of wetland hydrology (PART III, paragraph 49). Record findings on the appropriate DATA FORM 1. PROCEED TO STEP 11.
- **STEP 11 - Determine Whether Wetland Hydrology Is Present.** Examine the hydrologic information on DATA FORM 1 for each plant community type. Any portion of the area having a positive wetland hydrology indicator has wetland hydrology. If positive wetland hydrology indicators are present in all community types, the entire area has wetland hydrology. If no plant community type has a wetland hydrology indicator, none of the area has wetland hydrology. Complete the hydrology portion of each DATA FORM 1. PROCEED TO STEP 12.

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This term is used because species having the largest individuals may not be dominant when only a few are present. To determine relative basal area, consider both the size and number of individuals of a species and subjectively compare with other species present.

- **STEP 12 - Determine Whether Soils Must Be Characterized.** Examine the vegetation section of each DATA FORM 1. Hydric soils are assumed to be present in any plant community type in which:
  - a. All dominant species have an indicator status of OBL.
  - b. All dominant species have an indicator status of OBL or FACW, and the wetland boundary (when present) is abrupt.\*

When either a or b occurs and wetland hydrology is present, check the hydric soils blank as positive on DATA FORM 1 and PROCEED TO STEP 16. If neither a nor b applies, PROCEED TO STEP 13.

- **STEP 13 - Dig a Soil Pit.** Using a soil auger or spade, dig a soil pit at the representative location in each community type. When completed, approximately 16 inches of the soil profile will be available for examination. PROCEED TO STEP 14.
- **STEP 14 - Apply Hydric Soil Indicators.** Examine the soil at each location and compare its characteristics immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower) with the hydric soil indicators described in PART III, paragraphs 44 and/or 45. Record findings on the appropriate DATA FORM 1's. PROCEED TO STEP 15.
- **STEP 15 - Determine Whether Hydric Soils Are Present.** Examine each DATA FORM 1 and determine whether a positive hydric soil indicator was found. If so, the area at that location has hydric soil. If soils at all sampling locations have positive hydric soil indicators, the entire area has hydric soils. If soils at all sampling locations lack positive hydric soil indicators, none of the area is a wetland. Complete the soil section of each DATA FORM 1. PROCEED TO STEP 16.
- **STEP 16 - Make Wetland Determination.** Examine DATA FORM 1. If the entire area presently or normally has wetland indicators of all three parameters (STEPS 9, 11, and 15), the entire area is a wetland. If the entire area presently or normally lacks wetland indicators of one or more parameters, the entire area is a nonwetland. If only a portion of the area presently or normally has wetland indicators for all three parameters, PROCEED TO STEP 17.
- **STEP 17 - Determine Wetland-Nonwetland Boundary.** Mark each plant community type on the base map with a W if wetland or an N if nonwetland. Combine all wetland

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\* The soils parameter must be considered in any plant community in which:

- a. The community is dominated by one or more FAC species.
- b. No community type dominated by OBL species is present.
- c. The boundary between wetlands and nonwetlands is gradual or nondistinct.
- d. The area is known to or is suspected of having significantly altered hydrology.

plant communities into one mapping unit and all nonwetland plant communities into another mapping unit. The wetland-nonwetland boundary will be represented by the interface of these two mapping units.

### Areas Greater Than 5 Acres in Size

- **STEP 18 - Establish a Baseline.** Select one project boundary as a baseline. The baseline should parallel the major watercourse through the area or should be perpendicular to the hydrologic gradient (Figure 5). Determine the approximate baseline length. PROCEED TO STEP 19.

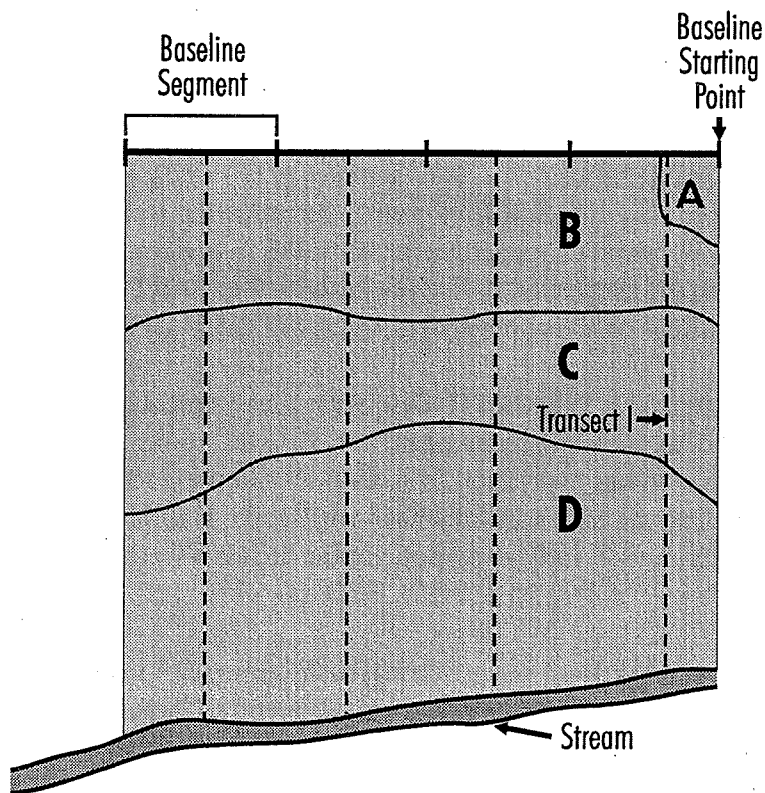


Figure 5. General orientation of baseline and transects (dotted lines) in a hypothetical project area. Alpha characters represent different plant communities. All transects start at the midpoint of a baseline segment except the first, which was repositioned to include community type A.



- **STEP 19 - Determine the Required Number and Position of Transects.** Use the following to determine the required number and position of transects (specific site conditions may necessitate changes in intervals):

| <u>Baseline length, miles</u> | <u>Number of<br/>Required Transects</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <0.25                         | 3                                       |
| >0.25-0.50                    | 3                                       |
| >0.50-0.75                    | 3                                       |
| >0.75-1.00                    | 3                                       |
| >1.00-2.00                    | 3-5                                     |
| >2.00-4.00                    | 5-8                                     |
| >4.00                         | 8 or more*                              |

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\* Transect intervals should not exceed 0.5 mile.

Divide the baseline length by the number of required transects. Establish one transect in each resulting baseline increment. Use the midpoint of each baseline increment as a transect starting point. For example, if the baseline is 1,200 ft in length, three transects would be established--one at 200 ft, one at 600 ft, and one at 1,000 ft from the baseline starting point. *CAUTION: All plant community types must be included. This may necessitate relocation of one or more transect lines.* PROCEED TO STEP 20.

- **STEP 20 - Sample Observation Points Along the First Transect.** Beginning at the starting point of the first transect, extend the transect at a 90-deg angle to the baseline. Use the following procedure as appropriate to simultaneously characterize the parameters at each observation point. Combine field-collected data with information already available and make a wetland determination at each observation point. A DATA FORM 1 must be completed for each observation point.

a. **Determine whether normal environmental conditions are present.** Determine whether normal environmental conditions are present by considering the following:

- (1) Is the area presently lacking hydrophytic vegetation and/or hydrologic indicators due to annual or seasonal fluctuations in precipitation or ground-water levels?
- (2) Are hydrophytic vegetation indicators lacking due to seasonal fluctuations in temperature?

If the answer to either of these questions is thought to be YES, PROCEED TO Section G. If the answer to both questions is NO, PROCEED TO STEP 20b.

b. **Establish an observation point in the first plant community type encountered.** Select a representative location along the transect in the first plant community type

encountered. When the first plant community type is large and covers a significant distance along the transect, select an area that is no closer than 300 ft to a perceptible change in plant community type. PROCEED TO STEP 20c.

- c. **Characterize parameters.** Characterize the parameters at the observation point by completing (1), (2), and (3) below:

- (1) **Vegetation.** Record on DATA FORM 1 the dominant plant species in each vegetation layer occurring in the immediate vicinity of the observation point. Use a 5-ft radius for herbs and saplings/shrubs, and a 30-ft radius for trees and woody vines (when present). Subjectively determine the dominant species by estimating those having the largest relative basal area\* (woody overstory), greatest height (woody understory), greatest percentage of areal cover (herbaceous understory), and/or greatest number of stems (woody vines). *NOTE: Plot size may be estimated, and plot size may also be varied when site conditions warrant.* Record on DATA FORM 1 any dominant species observed to have morphological adaptations for occurrence in wetlands, and determine and record dominant species that have known physiological adaptations for occurrence in wetlands. Record on DATA FORM I the indicator status of each dominant species. Hydrophytic vegetation is present at the observation point when more than 50 percent of the dominant species have an indicator status of OBL, FACW, and/or FAC; when two or more dominant species have observed morphological or known physiological adaptations for occurrence in wetlands; or when other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation (PART III, paragraph 35) are present. Complete the vegetation section of DATA FORM 1. PROCEED TO (2).
- (2) **Soils.** In some cases, it is not necessary to characterize the soils. Examine the vegetation of DATA FORM 1. Hydric soils can be assumed to be present when:
  - (a) All dominant plant species have an indicator status of OBL.
  - (b) All dominant plant species have an indicator status of OBL and/or FACW (at least one dominant species must be OBL).\*

When either (a) or (b) applies, check the hydric soils blank as positive and PROCEED TO (3). If neither (a) nor (b) applies but the vegetation qualifies as hydrophytic, dig a soil pit at the observation point using the procedure described in

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\* This term is used because species having the largest individuals may not be dominant when only a few are present. To use relative basal area, consider both the size and number of individuals of a species and subjectively compare with other species present.

\* Soils must be characterized when any dominant species has an indicator status of FAC.

Appendix D, Section 1. Examine the soil immediately below the A-horizon or 10-inches (whichever is shallower) and compare its characteristics (Appendix D, Section 1) with the hydric soil indicators described in PART III, paragraphs 44 and/or 45. Record findings on DATA FORM 1. If a positive hydric soil indicator is present, the soil at the observation point is a hydric soil. If no positive hydric soil indicator is found, the area at the observation point does not have hydric soils and the area at the observation point is not a wetland. Complete the soils section of DATA FORM 1 for the observation point. **PROCEED TO (3)** if hydrophytic vegetation (1) and hydric soils (2) are present. Otherwise, **PROCEED TO STEP 20d**.

(3) **Hydrology.** Examine the observation point for indicators of wetland hydrology (PART III, paragraph 49), and record observations on DATA FORM 1. Consider the indicators in the same sequence as presented in PART III, paragraph 49. If a positive wetland hydrology indicator is present, the area at the observation point has wetland hydrology. If no positive wetland hydrologic indicator is present, the area at the observation point is not a wetland. Complete the hydrology section of DATA FORM 1 for the observation point. **PROCEED TO STEP 20d**.

- d. Wetland determination.** Examine DATA FORM 1 for the observation point. Determine whether wetland indicators of all three parameters are or would normally be present during a significant portion of the growing season. If so, the area at the observation point is a wetland. If no evidence can be found that the area at the observation point normally has wetland indicators for all three parameters, the area is a nonwetland. **PROCEED TO STEP 20e**.
- e. Sample other observation points along the first transect.** Continue along the first transect until a different community type is encountered. Establish a representative observation point within this community type and repeat STEP 20c - 20d. If the areas at both observation points are either wetlands or nonwetlands, continue along the transect and repeat STEP 20c - 20d for the next community type encountered. Repeat for all other community types along the first transect. If the area at one observation point is wetlands and the next observation point is nonwetlands (or vice versa), **PROCEED TO STEP 20f**.
- f. Determine wetland-nonwetland boundary.** Proceed along the transect from the wetland observation point toward the nonwetland observation point. Look for subtle changes in the plant community (e.g. the first appearance of upland species, disappearance of apparent hydrology indicators, or slight changes in topography). When such features are noted, establish an observation point and repeat the procedures described in STEP 20c - 20d. *NOTE: A new DATA FORM 1 must be completed for this observation point, and all three parameters must be characterized by field observation.* If the area at this observation point is a wetland, proceed along the transect toward the nonwetland observation point until upland indicators

are more apparent. Repeat the procedures described in STEP 20c - 20d. If the area at this observation point is a nonwetland, move halfway back along the transect toward the last documented wetland observation point and repeat the procedure described in STEP 20c - 20d. Continue this procedure until the wetland-nonwetland boundary is found. It is not necessary to complete a DATA FORM 1 for all intermediate points, but a DATA FORM 1 should be completed for the wetland-nonwetland boundary. Mark the position of the wetland boundary on the base map, and continue along the first transect until all community types have been sampled and all wetland boundaries located. *CAUTION: In areas where wetlands are interspersed among nonwetlands (or vice versa), several boundary determinations will be required.* When all necessary wetland determinations have been completed for the first transect, PROCEED TO STEP 21.

- **STEP 21 - Sample Other Transects.** Repeat procedures described in STEP 21 for all other transects. When completed, a wetland determination will have been made for one observation point in each community type along each transect, and all wetland-nonwetland boundaries along each transect will have been determined. PROCEED TO STEP 22.
- **STEP 22 - Synthesize Data.** Examine all completed copies of DATA FORM 1, and mark each plant community type on the base map. Identify each plant community type as either a wetland (W) or nonwetland (N). If all plant community types are identified as wetlands, the entire area is wetlands. If all plant community types are identified as nonwetlands, the entire area is nonwetlands. If both wetlands and nonwetlands are present, identify observation points that represent wetland boundaries on the base map. Connect these points on the map by generally following contour lines to separate wetlands from nonwetlands. Walk the contour line between transects to confirm the wetland boundary. Should anomalies be encountered, it will be necessary to establish short transects in these areas, apply the procedures described in STEP 20f, and make any necessary adjustments on the base map.

### Subsection 3 - Combination of Levels 1 and 2

66. In some cases, especially for large projects, adequate information may already be available (Section B) to enable a wetland determination for a portion of the project area, while an onsite visit will be required for the remainder of the area. Since procedures for each situation have already been described in Subsections 1 and 2, they will not be repeated. Apply the following steps:
- **STEP 1 - Make Wetland Determination for Portions of the Project Area That Are Already Adequately Characterized.** Apply procedures described in Subsection 1. When completed, a DATA FORM 1 will have been completed for each community type, and a map will have been prepared identifying each community type as wetland or

nonwetland and showing any wetland boundary occurring in this portion of the project area. PROCEED TO STEP 2.

- **STEP 2 - Make Wetland Determination for Portions of the Project Area That Require an Onsite Visit.** Apply procedures described in Subsection 2. When completed, a DATA FORM 1 will have been completed for each plant community type or for a number of observation points (including wetland boundary determinations). A map of the wetland (if present) will also be available. PROCEED TO STEP 3.
- **STEP 3 - Synthesize Data.** Using the maps resulting from STEPS 1 and 2, prepare a summary map that shows the wetlands of the entire project area. *CAUTION: Wetland boundaries for the two maps will not always match exactly. When this occurs, an additional site visit will be required to refine the wetland boundaries. Since the degree of resolution of wetland boundaries will be greater when determined onsite, it may be necessary to employ procedures described in Subsection 2 in the vicinity of the boundaries determined from Subsection 1 to refine these boundaries.*

## Section E. Comprehensive Determinations

67. This section describes procedures for making comprehensive wetland determinations. Unlike procedures for making routine determinations (Section D), application of procedures described in this section will result in maximum information for use in making determinations, and the information usually will be quantitatively expressed. Comprehensive determinations should only be used when the project area is very complex and/or when the determination requires rigorous documentation. This type of determination may be required in areas of any size, but will be especially useful in large areas. There may be instances in which only one parameter (vegetation, soil, or hydrology) is disputed. In such cases, only procedures described in this section that pertain to the disputed parameter need be completed. It is assumed that the user has already completed all applicable steps in Section B. *NOTE: Depending on site characteristics, it may be necessary to alter the design and/or data collection procedures.*
68. This section is divided into five basic types of activities. The first consists of preliminary field activities that must be completed prior to making a determination (STEPS 1-5). The second outlines procedures for determining the number and locations of required determinations (STEPS 6-8). The third describes the basic procedure for making a comprehensive wetland determination at any given point (STEPS 9-17). The fourth describes a procedure for determining wetland boundaries (STEP 18). The fifth describes a procedure for synthesizing the collected data to determine the extent of wetlands in the area (STEPS 20-21). A flowchart showing the relationship of various steps required for making a comprehensive determination is presented in Figure 6.

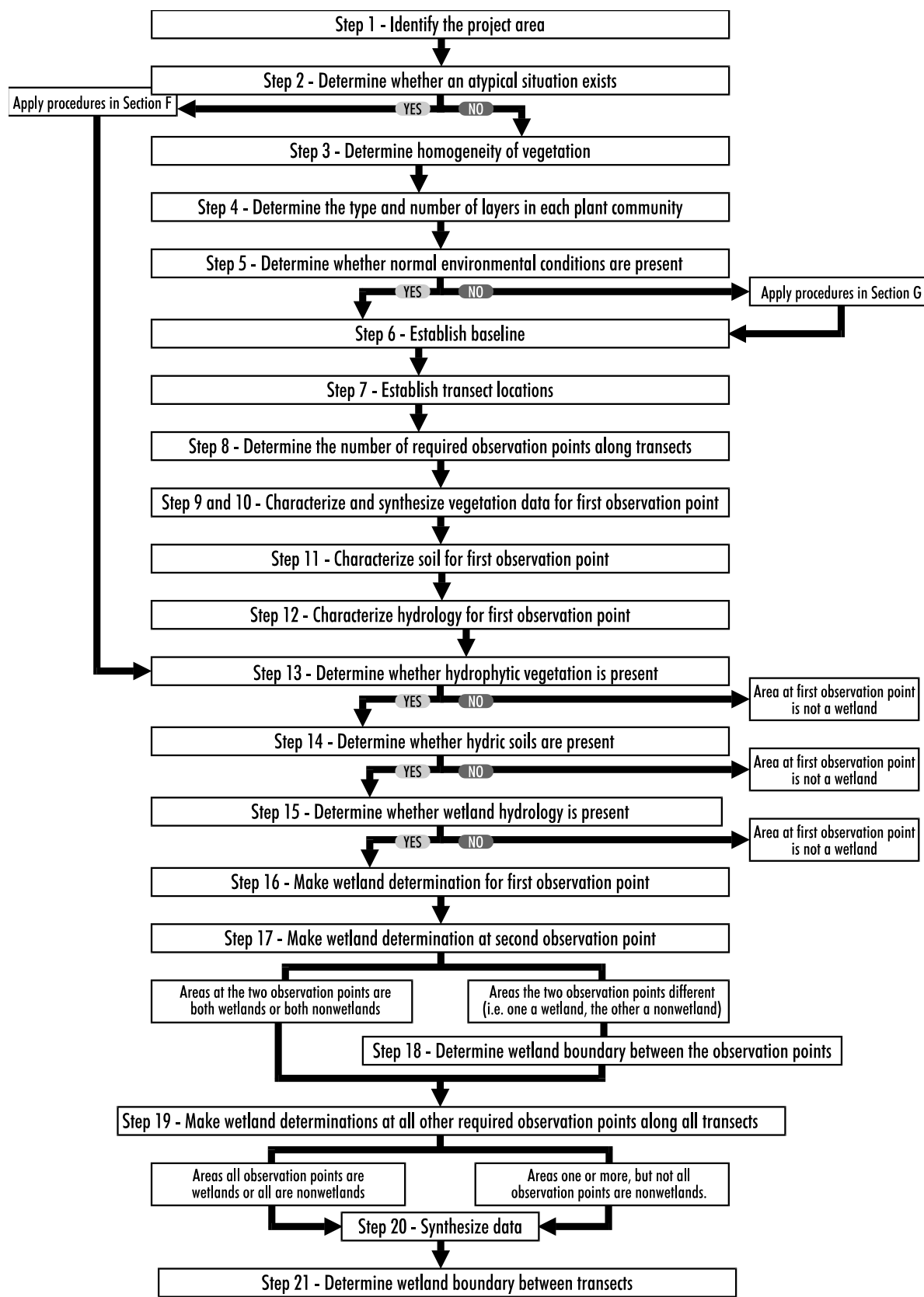


Figure 6. Flowchart of steps involved in making a comprehensive wetland determination (Section E).

## Equipment and material

69. Equipment and materials needed for making a comprehensive determination include:
- a. Base map (Section B, STEP 2).
  - b. Copies of DATA FORMS 1 and 2.
  - c. Plant indicator status list and hydric soils list.
  - d. Compass.
  - e. Tape (300 ft).
  - f. Soil auger or spade.
  - g. Munsell Color Charts (Munsell Color 1975).
  - h. Quadrat (3.28 ft by 3.28 ft).
  - i. Diameter or basal area tape (for woody overstory).

## Field procedures

70. Complete the following steps:

- **STEP 1 - Identify the Project Area.** Using information from the USGS quadrangle or other appropriate map (Section B), locate and measure the spatial boundaries of the project area. Determine the compass heading of each boundary and record on the base map (Section B, STEP 2). The applicant's survey plan may be helpful in locating the project boundaries. PROCEED TO STEP 2.
- **STEP 2 - Determine Whether an Atypical Situation Exists.** Examine the area and determine whether there is sufficient natural or human-induced alteration to significantly change the area vegetation, soils, and/or hydrology. If not, PROCEED TO STEP 3. If one or more parameters have been recently altered significantly, PROCEED TO Section F and determine whether there is sufficient evidence that hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and/or wetland hydrology were present on the area prior to alteration. Then return to this section and characterize parameters not significantly influenced by human activities. PROCEED TO STEP 3.
- **STEP 3 - Determine Homogeneity of Vegetation.** While completing STEP 2, determine the number of plant community types present. Mark the approximate location of each community type on the base map. The number and locations of



required wetland determinations will be strongly influenced by both the size of the area and the number and distribution of plant community types; the larger the area and greater the number of plant community types, the greater the number of required wetland determinations. It is imperative that **all** plant community types occurring in all portions of the area be included in the investigation. PROCEED TO STEP 4.

- **STEP 4 - Determine the Type and Number of Layers in Each Plant Community.** Examine each identified plant community type and determine the type(s) and number of layers in each community. Potential layers include trees (woody overstory), saplings/shrubs (woody understory), herbs (herbaceous understory), and/or woody vines. PROCEED TO STEP 5.
- **STEP 5 - Determine Whether Normal Environmental Conditions Are Present.** Determine whether normal environmental conditions are present at the observation point by considering the following:
  - a. Is the area at the observation point presently lacking hydrophytic vegetation and/or hydrologic indicators due to annual or seasonal fluctuations in precipitation or groundwater levels?
  - b. Are hydrophytic vegetation indicators lacking due to seasonal fluctuations in temperature?

If the answer to either of these questions is thought to be YES, PROCEED TO Section G. If the answer to both questions is NO, PROCEED TO STEP 6.

- **STEP 6 - Establish a Baseline.** Select one project boundary area as a baseline. The baseline should extend parallel to any major watercourse and/or perpendicular to a topographic gradient (see Figure 7). Determine the baseline length and record on the base map both the baseline length and its compass heading. PROCEED TO STEP 7.
- **STEP 7. Establish Transect Locations.** Divide the baseline into a number of equal segments (Figure 7). Use the following as a guide to determine the appropriate number of baseline segments:

| <u>Baseline Length, ft</u> | <u>Number of Segments</u> | <u>Length of Baseline Segment, ft</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| >50 - 500                  | 3                         | 18 - 167                              |
| >500 - 1,000               | 3                         | 167 - 333                             |
| >1,000 - 5,000             | 5                         | 200 - 1,000                           |
| >5,000 - 10,000            | 7                         | 700 - 1,400                           |
| >10,000*                   | variable                  | 2,000                                 |

\* If the baseline exceeds 5 miles, baseline segments should be 0.5 mile in length.

Use a random numbers table or a calculator with a random numbers generation feature to determine the position of a transect starting point within each baseline segment. For example, when the baseline is 4,000 ft, the number of baseline segments will be five, and the baseline segment length will be 4,000 ft. ÷ 800 ft. Locate the first transect within the first 800 ft of the baseline. If the random numbers table yields 264 as the distance from the baseline starting point, measure 264 ft from the baseline starting point and establish the starting point of the first transect. If the second random number selected is 530, the starting point of the second transect will be located at a distance of 1,330 ft (800 + 530 ft) from the baseline starting point. *CAUTION: Make sure that each plant community type is included in at least one transect.* If not, modify the sampling design accordingly. When the starting point locations for all required transects have been determined, PROCEED TO STEP 8.

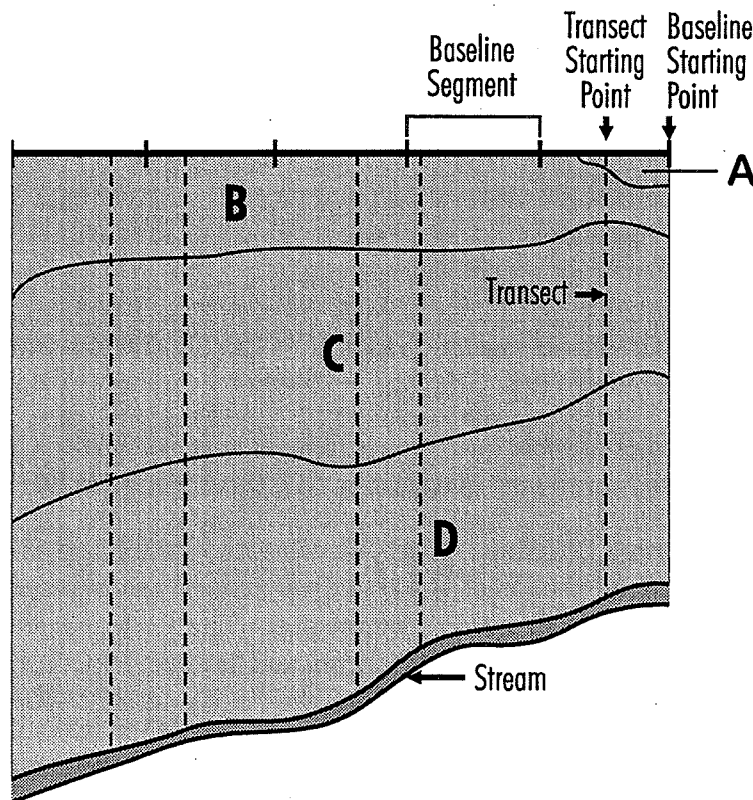


Figure 7. General orientation of baseline and transects in a hypothetical project area. Alpha characters represent different plant communities. Transect positions were determined using a random numbers table.

- **STEP 8 - Determine the Number of Required Observation Points Along Transects.** The number of required observation points along each transect will be largely dependent on transect length. Establish observation points along each transect using the following as a guide:

| <u>Transect Length, ft</u> | <u>Number of Observation Points</u> | <u>Interval Between Observation Points, ft</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <1,000                     | 2-10                                | 100  |
| 1,000 - <5,000             | 10                                  | 100 - 500                                      |
| 5,000 - <10,000            | 10                                  | 500 - 1,000                                    |
| ≥10,000                    | >10                                 | 1,000  |

Establish the first observation point at a distance of 50 ft from the baseline (Figure 7). When obvious nonwetlands occupy a long portion of the transect from the baseline starting point, establish the first observation point in the obvious nonwetland at a distance of approximately 300 ft from the point that the obvious nonwetland begins to intergrade into a potential wetland community type. Additional observation points must also be established to determine the wetland boundary between successive regular observation points when one of the points is a wetland and the other is a nonwetland. *CAUTION: In large areas having a mosaic of plant community types, several wetland boundaries may occur along the same transect.* PROCEED TO STEP 9 and apply the comprehensive wetland determination procedure at each required observation point. Use the described procedure to simultaneously characterize the vegetation, soil, and hydrology at each required observation point along each transect, and use the resulting characterization to make a wetland determination at each point. *NOTE: All required wetland boundary determinations should be made while proceeding along a transect.*

- **STEP 9 - Characterize the Vegetation at the First Observation Point Along the First Transect.\*** Record on DATA FORM 2 the vegetation occurring at the first observation point along the first transect by completing the following (as appropriate):
  - Trees.** Identify each tree occurring within a 30-ft radius\*\* of the observation point, measure its basal area (square inches) or diameter at breast height (DBH) using a basal area tape or diameter tape, respectively, and record. *NOTE: If DBH is measured, convert values to basal area by applying the formula  $A = \pi r^2$ . This must be done on an individual basis. A tree is any nonclimbing, woody plant that has a DBH of ≥3.0 in., regardless of height.*

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\* There is no single best procedure for characterizing vegetation. Methods described in STEP 9 afford standardization of the procedure. However, plot size and descriptors for determining dominance may vary.

\*\* A larger sampling plot may be necessary when trees are large and widely spaced.

- b. **Saplings/shrubs.** Identify each sapling/shrub occurring within a 10-ft radius of the observation point, estimate its height, and record the midpoint of its class range using the following height classes (height is used as an indication of dominance; taller individuals exert a greater influence on the plant community):

| <u>Height Class</u> | <u>Height Class Range, ft</u> | <u>Midpoint of Class Range, ft</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1                   | 1 - 3                         | 2                                  |
| 2                   | 3 - 5                         | 4                                  |
| 3                   | 5 - 7                         | 6                                  |
| 4                   | 7 - 9                         | 8                                  |
| 5                   | 9 - 11                        | 10                                 |
| 6                   | >11                           | 12                                 |

A sapling/shrub is any woody plant having a height >3.2 ft but a stem diameter of <3.0 in., exclusive of woody vines.

- c. **Herbs.** Place a 3.28- by 3.28-ft quadrat with one corner touching the observation point and one edge adjacent to the transect line. As an alternative, a 1.64-ft-radius plot with the center of the plot representing the observation point position may be used. Identify each plant species with foliage extending into the quadrat and estimate its percent cover by applying the following cover classes:

| <u>Cover Class</u> | <u>Class Range, %</u> | <u>Midpoint of Class Range, %</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1                  | 0 - 5                 | 2.5                               |
| 2                  | >5 - 25               | 15.0                              |
| 3                  | >25 - 50              | 37.5                              |
| 4                  | >50 - 75              | 62.5                              |
| 5                  | >75 - 95              | 85.0                              |
| 6                  | >95 - 100             | 97.5                              |

Include all nonwoody plants and woody plants <3.2 ft in height. *NOTE: Total percent cover for all species will often exceed 100 percent.*

- d. **Woody vines (lianas).** Identify species of woody vines climbing each tree and sapling/shrub sampled in STEPS 9a and 9b above, and record the number of stems of each. Since many woody vines branch profusely, count

or estimate the number of stems at the ground surface. Include only individuals rooted in the 10-ft radius plot. Do not include individuals <3.2 ft in height. PROCEED TO STEP 10.

- **STEP 10 - Analyze Field Vegetation Data.** Examine the vegetation data (STEP 9) and determine the dominant species in each vegetation layer\* by completing the following:
  - a. **Trees.** Obtain the total basal area (square inches) for each tree species identified in STEP 9a by summing the basal area of all individuals of a species found in the sample plot. Rank the species in descending order of dominance based on total basal area. Complete DATA FORM 2 for the tree layer.
  - b. **Saplings/shrubs.** Obtain the total height for each sapling/shrub species identified in STEP 9b. Total height, which is an estimate of dominance, is obtained by summing the midpoints of height classes for all individuals of a species found in the sample plot. Rank the species in descending order of dominance based on sums of midpoints of height class ranges. Complete DATA FORM 2 for the sapling/shrub layer.
  - c. **Herbs.** Obtain the total cover for each herbaceous and woody seedling species identified in STEP 9c. Total cover is obtained by using the midpoints of the cover class range assigned to each species (only one estimate of cover is made for a species in a given plot). Rank herbs and woody seedlings in descending order of dominance based on percent cover. Complete DATA FORM 2 for the herbaceous layer.
  - d. **Woody vines (lianas).** Obtain the total number of individuals of each species of woody vine identified in STEP 9d. Rank the species in descending order of dominance based on number of stems. Complete DATA FORM 2 for the woody vine layer. PROCEED TO STEP 11.
- **STEP 11 - Characterize Soil.** If a soil survey is available (Section B), the soil type may already be known. Have a soil scientist confirm that the soil type is correct, and determine whether the soil series is a hydric soil. *CAUTION: Mapping units on soil surveys sometimes have inclusions of soil series or phases not shown on the soil survey map.* If a hydric soil type is confirmed, record on DATA FORM 1 and PROCEED TO STEP 12. If not, dig a soil pit using a soil auger or spade and look for indicators of hydric soils immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower) (PART III, paragraphs 44 and/or 45). Record findings on DATA FORM 1. PROCEED TO STEP 12.

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\* The same species may occur as a dominant in more than one vegetation layer.

- **STEP 12 - Characterize Hydrology.** Examine the observation point for indicators of wetland hydrology (PART III, paragraph 49), and record observations on DATA FORM 1. Consider indicators in the same sequence as listed in paragraph 49. PROCEED TO STEP 13.
- **STEP 13 - Determine Whether Hydrophytic Vegetation Is Present.** Record the three dominant species from each vegetation layer (five species if only one or two layers are present) on DATA FORM 1.\* Determine whether these species occur in wetlands by considering the following:
  - a. **More than 50 percent of the dominant plant species are OBL, FACW, and/or FAC on lists of plant species that occur in wetlands.** Record the indicator status of all dominant species on DATA FORM 1. Hydrophytic vegetation is present when the majority of the dominant species have an indicator status of OBL, FACW, or FAC. *CAUTION: Not necessarily all plant communities composed of only FAC species are hydrophytic communities. They are hydrophytic communities only when positive indicators of hydric soils and wetland hydrology are also found.* If this indicator is satisfied, complete the vegetation portion of DATA FORM 1 and PROCEED TO STEP 14. If not, consider other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation.
  - b. **Presence of adaptations for occurrence in wetlands.** Do any of the species listed on DATA FORM 1 have observed morphological or known physiological adaptations (Appendix C, Section 3) for occurrence in wetlands? If so, record species having such adaptations on DATA FORM 1. When two or more dominant species have observed morphological adaptations or known physiological adaptations for occurrence in wetlands, hydrophytic vegetation is present. If so, complete the vegetation portion of DATA FORM 1 and PROCEED TO STEP 14. If not, consider other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation.
  - c. **Other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation.** Consider other indicators (see PART III, paragraph 35) that the species listed on DATA FORM 1 are commonly found in wetlands. If so, complete the vegetation portion of DATA FORM 1 by recording sources of supporting information, and PROCEED TO STEP 14. If no Indicator of hydrophytic vegetation is present, the area at the observation point is not a wetland. In such cases, it is unnecessary to consider soil and hydrology at that observation point. PROCEED To STEP 17.

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\* Record all dominant species when less than three are present in a vegetation layer.

- **STEP 14 - Determine Whether Hydric Soils Are Present.** Examine DATA FORM 1 and determine whether any indicator of hydric soils is present. If so, complete the soils portion of DATA FORM 1 and PROCEED TO STEP 15. If not, the area at the observation point is not a wetland. PROCEED TO STEP 17.
- **STEP 15 - Determine Whether Wetland Hydrology Is Present.** Examine DATA FORM 1 and determine whether any indicator of wetland hydrology is present. Complete the hydrology portion of DATA FORM 1 and PROCEED TO STEP 16.
- **STEP 16 - Make Wetland Determination.** When the area at the observation point presently or normally has wetland indicators of all three parameters, it is a wetland. When the area at the observation point presently or normally lacks wetland indicators of one or more parameters, it is a nonwetland. PROCEED TO STEP 17.
- **STEP 17 - Make Wetland Determination at Second Observation Point.** Locate the second observation point along the first transect and make a wetland determination by repeating procedures described in STEPS 9-16. When the area at the second observation point is the same as the area at the first observation point (i.e. both wetlands or both nonwetlands), PROCEED TO STEP 19. When the areas at the two observation points are different (i.e. one wetlands, the other nonwetlands), PROCEED TO STEP 18.
- **STEP 18 - Determine the Wetland Boundary Between Observation Points.** Determine the position of the wetland boundary by applying the following procedure:
  - a. Look for a change in vegetation or topography. *NOTE: The changes may sometimes be very subtle.* If a change is noted, establish an observation point and repeat STEPS 9-16. Complete a DATA FORM 1. If the area at this point is a wetland, proceed toward the nonwetland observation point until a more obvious change in vegetation or topography is noted and repeat the procedure. If there is no obvious change, establish the next observation point approximately halfway between the last observation point and the nonwetland observation point and repeat STEPS 9-16.
  - b. Make as many additional wetland determinations as necessary to find the wetland boundary. *NOTE: The completed DATA FORM 1's for the original two observation points often will provide a clue as to the parameter(s) that change between the two points.*
  - c. When the wetland boundary is found, mark the boundary location on the base map and indicate on the DATA FORM 1 that this represents a wetland boundary. Record the distance of the boundary from one of the two regular observation points. Since the regular observation points represent known distances from the baseline, it will be possible to accurately pinpoint the boundary location on the base map. PROCEED TO STEP 19.

- **STEP 19 - Make Wetland Determinations at All Other Required Observation Points Along All Transects.** Continue to locate and sample all required observation points along all transects. *NOTE: The procedure described in STEP 18 must be applied at every position where a wetland boundary occurs between successive observation points.* Complete a DATA FORM 1 for each observation point and PROCEED TO STEP 20.
- **STEP 20 - Synthesize Data to Determine the Portion of the Area Containing Wetlands.** Examine all completed copies of DATA FORM 1 (STEP 19), and mark on a copy of the base map the locations of all observation points that are wetlands with a W and all observation points that are nonwetlands with an N. Also, mark all wetland boundaries occurring along transects with an X. If all the observation points are wetlands, the entire area is wetlands. If all observation points are nonwetlands, none of the area is wetlands. If some wetlands and some nonwetlands are present, connect the wetland boundaries (X) by following contour lines between transects. *CAUTION: If the determination is considered to be highly controversial, it may be necessary to be more precise in determining the wetland boundary between transects. This is also true for very large areas where the distance between transects is greater. If this is necessary, PROCEED TO STEP 21.*
- **STEP 21 - Determine Wetland Boundary Between Transects.** Two procedures may be used to determine the wetland boundary between transects, both of which involve surveying:
  - a. **Survey contour from wetland boundary along transects.** The first method involves surveying the elevation of the wetland boundaries along transects and then extending the survey to determine the same contour between transects. This procedure will be adequate in areas where there is no significant elevational change between transects. However, if a significant elevational change occurs between transects, either the surveyor must adjust elevational readings to accommodate such changes or the second method must be used. *NOTE: The surveyed wetland boundary must be examined to ensure that no anomalies exist. If these occur, additional wetland determinations will be required in the portion of the area where the anomalies occur, and the wetland boundary must be adjusted accordingly.*
  - b. **Additional wetland determinations between transects.** This procedure consists of traversing the area between transects and making additional wetland determinations to locate the wetland boundary at sufficiently close intervals (not necessarily standard intervals) so that the area can be surveyed. Place surveyor flags at each wetland boundary location. Enlist a surveyor to survey the points between transects. From the resulting survey data, produce a map that separates wetlands from nonwetlands.



## Section F. Atypical Situations

71. Methods described in this section should be used only when a determination has already been made in Section D or E that positive indicators of hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and/or wetland hydrology could not be found due to effects of recent human activities or natural events. Recent means that period of time since legal jurisdiction of an applicable law began. This section is applicable to delineations made in the following types of situations:
- a. **Unauthorized activities.** Unauthorized discharges requiring enforcement actions may result in removal or covering of indicators of one or more wetland parameters. Examples include, but are not limited to: (1) alteration or removal of vegetation; (2) placement of dredged or fill material over hydric soils; and/or (3) construction of levees, drainage systems, or dams that significantly alter the area hydrology. *NOTE: This section should not be used for activities that have been previously authorized or those that are exempted from regulation. For example, this section is not applicable to areas that have been legally drained or not regulated. Some of these areas may still be wetlands, but procedures described in Section D or E must be used in these cases.*
  - b. **Natural events.** Naturally occurring events may result in either creation or alteration of wetlands. For example, recent beaver dams may impound water, thereby resulting in a shift of hydrology and vegetation to wetlands. However, hydric soil indicators may not have developed due to insufficient time having passed to allow their development. Fire, avalanches, volcanic activity, and changing river courses are other examples. *NOTE: It is necessary to determine whether alterations to an area have resulted in changes that are now the “normal circumstances.”* The relative permanence of the change and whether the area is now functioning as a wetland must be considered.
  - c. **Human-induced wetlands.** Procedures described in Subsection 4 are for use in delineating wetlands that have been purposely or incidentally created by human activities, but in which wetland indicators of one or more parameters are absent. For example, road construction may have resulted in impoundment of water in an area that previously was nonwetland, thereby effecting hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology in the area. However, the area may lack hydric soil indicators. *NOTE: Subsection D is not intended to bring into jurisdiction those humanmade wetlands that are exempted under applicable regulations or policy.* It is also important to consider whether the human-induced changes are now the “normal circumstances” for the area. Both the relative permanence of the change and the functioning of the area as a wetland are implied.
72. When any of the three types of situations described in paragraph 71 occurs, application of methods described in Sections D and/or E will lead to the conclusion that the area is not a

wetland because positive wetland indicators for at least one of the three parameters will be absent. Therefore, apply procedures described in one of the following subsections (as appropriate) to determine whether positive indicators of hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and/or wetland hydrology existed prior to alteration of the area. Once these procedures have been employed, RETURN TO Section D or E to make a wetland determination. PROCEED TO the appropriate subsection.

## Subsection 1 - Vegetation

73. Employ the following steps to determine whether hydrophytic vegetation previously occurred:

- **STEP 1 - Describe the Type of Alteration.** Examine the area and describe the type of alteration that occurred. Look for evidence of selective harvesting, clear cutting, bulldozing, recent conversion to agriculture, or other activities (e.g., burning, disking, or presence of buildings, dams, levees, roads, parking lots, etc.). Determine the approximate date<sup>\*</sup> when the alteration occurred. Record observations on DATA FORM 3, and PROCEED TO STEP 2.
- **STEP 2 - Describe Effects on Vegetation.** Record on DATA FORM 3 a general description of how the activities (STEP 1) have affected the plant communities. Consider the following:
  - a. Has all or a portion of the area been cleared of vegetation?
  - b. Has only one layer of the plant community (e.g. trees) been removed?
  - c. Has selective harvesting resulted in removal of some species?
  - d. Has all vegetation been covered by fill, dredged material, or structures?
  - e. Have increased water levels resulted in the death of some individuals?

PROCEED TO STEP 3.

- **STEP 3 - Determine the Type of Vegetation That Previously Occurred.** Obtain all possible evidence of the type of plant communities that occurred in the area prior to alteration. Potential sources of such evidence include:
  - a. **Aerial photography.** Recent (within 5 years) aerial photography can often be used to document the type of previous vegetation. The general type of

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<sup>\*</sup> It is especially important to determine whether the alteration occurred prior to implementation of applicable regulations.

plant communities formerly present can usually be determined, and species identification is sometimes possible.

- b.     **Onsite inspection.** Many types of activities result in only partial removal of the previous plant communities, and remaining species may be indicative of hydrophytic vegetation. In other cases, plant fragments (e.g. stumps, roots) may be used to reconstruct the plant community types that occurred prior to site alteration. Sometimes, this can be determined by examining piles of debris resulting from land-clearing operations or excavation to uncover identifiable remains of the previous plant community.
- c.     **Previous site inspections.** Documented evidence from previous inspections of the area may describe the previous plant communities, particularly in cases where the area was altered after a permit application was denied.
- d.     **Adjacent vegetation.** Circumstantial evidence of the type of plant communities that previously occurred may sometimes be obtained by examining the vegetation in adjacent areas. If adjacent areas have the same topographic position, soils, and hydrology as the altered area, the plant community types on the altered area were probably similar to those of the adjacent areas.
- e.     **NRCS records.** Most NRCS soil surveys include a description of the plant community types associated with each soil type. If the soil type on the altered area can be determined, it may be possible to generally determine the type of plant communities that previously occurred.
- f.     **Permit applicant.** In some cases, the permit applicant may provide important information about the type of plant communities that occurred prior to alteration.
- g.     **Public.** Individuals familiar with the area may provide a good general description of the previously occurring plant communities.
- h.     **NWI wetland maps.** The NWI has developed wetland type maps for many areas. These may be useful in determining the type of plant communities that occurred prior to alteration.

To develop the strongest possible record, all of the above sources should be considered. If the plant community types that occurred prior to alteration can be determined, record them on DATA FORM 3 and also record the basis used for the determination. PROCEED TO STEP 4. If it is impossible to determine the plant community types that occurred on the area prior to alteration, a determination cannot be made using all three parameters. In such cases, the determination must be based on

the other two parameters. PROCEED TO Subsection 2 or 3 if one of the other parameters has been altered, or return to the appropriate Subsection of Section D or to Section E, as appropriate.

- **STEP 4 - Determine Whether Plant Community Types Constitute Hydrophytic Vegetation.** Develop a list of species that previously occurred on the site (DATA FORM 3). Subject the species list to applicable indicators of hydrophytic vegetation (PART III, paragraph 35). If none of the indicators are met, the plant communities that previously occurred did not constitute hydrophytic vegetation. If hydrophytic vegetation was present and no other parameter was in question, record appropriate data on the vegetation portion of DATA FORM 3, and return to either the appropriate subsection of Section D or to Section E. If either of the other parameters was also in question, PROCEED TO Subsection 2 or 3.

## Subsection 2 - Soils

74. Employ the following steps to determine whether hydric soils previously occurred:

- **STEP 1 - Describe the Type of Alteration.** Examine the area and describe the type of alteration that occurred. Look for evidence of:
  - a. **Deposition of dredged or fill material or natural sedimentation.** In many cases the presence of fill material will be obvious. If so, it will be necessary to dig a hole to reach the original soil (sometimes several feet deep). Fill material will usually be a different color or texture than the original soil (except when fill material has been obtained from like areas onsite). Look for decomposing vegetation between soil layers and the presence of buried organic or hydric soil layers. In accreting or recently formed sandbars in riverine situations, the soils may support hydrophytic vegetation but lack hydric soil characteristics.
  - b. **Presence of nonwoody debris at the surface.** This can only be applied in areas where the original soils do not contain rocks. Nonwoody debris includes items such as rocks, bricks, and concrete fragments.
  - c. **Subsurface plowing.** Has the area recently been plowed below the A-horizon or to depths of greater than 10 in.?
  - d. **Removal of surface layers.** Has the surface soil layer been removed by scraping or natural landslides? Look for bare soil surfaces with exposed plant roots or scrape scars on the surface.
  - e. **Presence of human-made structures.** Are buildings, dams, levees, roads, or parking lots present?

Determine the approximate date\* when the alteration occurred. This may require checking aerial photography, examining building permits, etc. Record on DATA FORM 3, and PROCEED TO STEP 2.

- **Step 2 - Describe Effects on Soils.** Record on DATA FORM 3 a general description of how identified activities in STEP 1 have affected the soils. Consider the following:
  - a. Has the soil been buried? If so, record the depth of fill material and determine whether the original soil is intact.
  - b. Has the soil been mixed at a depth below the A-horizon or greater than 10 inches? If so, it will be necessary to examine the original soil at a depth immediately below the plowed zone. Record supporting evidence.
  - c. Has the soil been sufficiently altered to change the soil phase? Describe these changes.

PROCEED TO STEP 3.

- **STEP 3 - Characterize Soils That Previously Occurred.** Obtain all possible evidence that may be used to characterize soils that previously occurred on the area. Consider the following potential sources of information:
  - a. **Soil surveys.** In many cases, recent soil surveys will be available. If so, determine the soil series that were mapped for the area, and compare these soil series with the list of hydric soils (Appendix D, Section 2). If all soil series are listed as hydric soils, the entire area had hydric soils prior to alteration.
  - b. **Characterization of buried soils.** When fill material has been placed over the original soil without physically disturbing the soil, examine and characterize the buried soils. To accomplish this, dig a hole through the fill material until the original soil is encountered. Determine the point at which the original soil material begins. Remove 12 inches of the original soil from the hole and look for indicators of hydric soils (PART III, paragraphs 44 and/or 45) immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower). Record on DATA FORM 3 the color of the soil matrix, presence of an organic layer, presence of mottles or gleying, and/or presence of iron and manganese concretions. If the original soil is mottled and the chroma of

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It is especially important to determine whether the alteration occurred prior to implementation of applicable regulations.

the soil matrix is 2 or less,\* a hydric soil was formerly present on the site. If any of these indicators are found, the original soil was a hydric soil. (*NOTE: When the fill material is a thick layer, it might be necessary to use a backhoe or posthole digger to excavate the soil pit.*) If USGS quadrangle maps indicate distinct variation in area topography, this procedure must be applied in each portion of the area that originally had a different surface elevation. Record findings on DATA FORM 3.

- c. **Characterization of plowed soils.** Determine the depth to which the soil has been disturbed by plowing. Look for hydric soil characteristics (PART III, paragraphs 44 and/or 45) immediately below this depth. Record findings on DATA FORM 3.
- d. **Removal of surface layers.** Dig a hole and determine whether the entire surface layer (A-horizon) has been removed. If so, examine the soil immediately below the top of the subsurface layer (B-horizon) for hydric soil characteristics. As an alternative, examine an undisturbed soil of the same soil series occurring in the same topographic position in an immediately adjacent area that has not been altered. Look for hydric soil indicators immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower), and record findings on DATA FORM 3.

If sufficient data on soils that existed prior to alteration can be obtained to determine whether a hydric soil was present, PROCEED TO STEP 4. If not, a determination cannot be made using soils. Use the other parameters (Subsections 1 and 3) for the determination.

- **STEP 4 - Determine Whether Hydric Soils Were Formerly Present.** Examine the available data and determine whether indicators of hydric soils (PART III, paragraphs 44 and/or 45) were formerly present. If no indicators of hydric soils were found, the original soils were not hydric soils. If indicators of hydric soils were found, record the appropriate indicators on DATA FORM 3 and PROCEED TO Subsection 3 if the hydrology of the area has been significantly altered or return either to the appropriate subsection of Section D or to Section E and characterize the area hydrology.

### Subsection 3 - Hydrology

75. Apply the following steps to determine whether wetland hydrology previously occurred:

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\* The matrix chroma must be 1 or less if no mottles are present (see paragraph 44). The soil must be moist when colors are determined.

- **STEP 1 - Describe the Type of Alteration.** Examine the area and describe the type of alteration that occurred. Look for evidence of:
  - a. **Dams.** Has recent construction of a dam or some natural event (e.g. beaver activity or landslide) caused the area to become increasingly wetter or drier?  
*NOTE: This activity could have occurred a considerable distance away from the site in question.*
  - b. **Levees, dikes, and similar structures.** Have levees or dikes recently been constructed that prevent the area from becoming periodically inundated by overbank flooding?
  - c. **Ditching.** Have ditches been constructed recently that cause the area to drain more rapidly following inundation?
  - d. **Filling of channels or depressions (land-leveling).** Have natural channels or depressions been recently filled?
  - e. **Diversion of water.** Has an upstream drainage pattern been altered that results in water being diverted from the area?
  - f. **Ground-water extraction.** Has prolonged and intensive pumping of ground water for irrigation or other purposes significantly lowered the water table and/or altered drainage patterns?
  - g. **Channelization.** Have feeder streams recently been channelized sufficiently to alter the frequency and/or duration of inundation?

Determine the approximate date<sup>\*</sup> when the alteration occurred. Record observations on DATA FORM 3 and PROCEED TO STEP 2.

- **STEP 2 - Describe Effects of Alteration on Area Hydrology.** Record on DATA FORM 3 a general description of how the observed alteration (STEP 1) has affected the area. Consider the following:
  - a. Is the area more frequently or less frequently inundated than prior to alteration? To what degree and why?
  - b. Is the duration of inundation and soil saturation different than prior to alteration? How much different and why?

PROCEED TO STEP 3.

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<sup>\*</sup> It is especially important to determine whether the alteration occurred prior to implementation of Section 404.

- **STEP 3 - Characterize the Hydrology That Previously Existed in the Area.** Obtain all possible evidence that may be used to characterize the hydrology that previously occurred. Potential sources of information include:
  - a. **Stream or tidal gage data.** If a stream or tidal gaging station is located near the area, it may be possible to calculate elevations representing the upper limit of wetlands hydrology based on duration of inundation. Consult hydrologists from the local CE District Office for assistance. The resulting mean sea level elevation will represent the upper limit of inundation for the area in the absence of any alteration. If fill material has not been placed on the area, survey this elevation from the nearest USGS benchmark. Record elevations representing zone boundaries on DATA FORM 3. If fill material has been placed on the area, compare the calculated elevation with elevations shown on a USGS quadrangle or any other survey map that predated site alteration.
  - b. **Field hydrologic indicators.** Certain field indicators of wetland hydrology (PART III, paragraph 49) may still be present. Look for watermarks on trees or other structures, drift lines, and debris deposits. Record these on DATA FORM 3. If adjacent undisturbed areas are in the same topographic position and are similarly influenced by the same sources of inundation, look for wetland indicators in these areas.
  - c. **Aerial photography.** Examine any available aerial photography and determine whether the area was inundated at the time of the photographic mission. Consider the time of the year that the aerial photography was taken and use only photography taken during the growing season and prior to site alteration.
  - d. **Historical records.** Examine any available historical records for evidence that the area has been periodically inundated. Obtain copies of any such information and record findings on DATA FORM 3.
  - e. **Floodplain Management Maps.** Determine the previous frequency of inundation of the area from Floodplain Management Maps (if available). Record flood frequency on DATA FORM 3.
  - f. **Public or local government officials.** Contact individuals who might have knowledge that the area was periodically inundated.

If sufficient data on hydrology that existed prior to site alteration can be obtained to determine whether wetland hydrology was previously present, PROCEED TO STEP 4. If not, a determination involving hydrology cannot be made. Use other parameters (Subsections 1 and 2) for the wetland determination. Return to either the appropriate



subsection of Section D or to Section E and complete the necessary data forms.  
PROCEED TO STEP 4 if the previous hydrology can be characterized.

- **STEP 4 - Determine Whether Wetland Hydrology Previously Occurred.** Examine the available data and determine whether indicators of wetland hydrology (PART III, paragraph 49) were present prior to site alteration. If no indicators of wetland hydrology were found, the original hydrology of the area was not wetland hydrology. If indicators of wetland hydrology were found, record the appropriate indicators on DATA FORM 3 and return either to the appropriate subsection of Section D or to Section E and complete the wetland determination.

## Subsection 4 - Human-Induced Wetlands

76. A human-induced wetland is an area that has developed at least some characteristics of naturally occurring wetlands due to either intentional or incidental human activities. Examples of human-induced wetlands include irrigated wetlands, wetlands resulting from impoundment (e.g. reservoir shorelines), wetlands resulting from filling of formerly deepwater habitats, dredged material disposal areas, and wetlands resulting from stream channel realignment. Some human-induced wetlands may be subject to regulation. In virtually all cases, human-induced wetlands involve a significant change in the hydrologic regime, which may either increase or decrease the wetness of the area. Although wetland indicators of all three parameters (i.e. vegetation, soils, and hydrology) may be found in some human-induced wetlands, indicators of hydric soils are usually absent. Hydric soils require long periods for development of wetness characteristics, and most human-induced wetlands have not been in existence for a sufficient period to allow development of hydric soil characteristics. Therefore, application of the multiparameter approach in making wetland determinations in human-induced wetlands must be based on the presence of hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology.\* There must also be documented evidence that the wetland resulted from human activities. Employ the following steps to determine whether an area consists of wetlands resulting from human activities:

- **STEP 1 - Determine Whether the Area Represents a Potential Human-Induced Wetland.** Consider the following questions:
  - a. Has a recent human-induced change in hydrology occurred that caused the area to become significantly wetter?
  - b. Has a major man-induced change in hydrology that occurred in the past caused a former deepwater aquatic habitat to become significantly drier?

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\* Uplands that support hydrophytic vegetation due to agricultural irrigation and that have an obvious hydrologic connection to other "waters of the United States" should not be delineated as wetlands under this subsection.

- c. Has human-induced stream channel realignment significantly altered the area hydrology?
- d. Has the area been subjected to long-term irrigation practices?

If the answer to any of the above questions is YES, document the approximate time during which the change in hydrology occurred, and PROCEED TO STEP 2. If the answer to all of the questions is NO, procedures described in Section D or E must be used.

- **STEP 2 - Determine Whether a Permit Will be Needed if the Area is Found to be a Wetland.** Consider the applicable regulations and policy regarding human-induced wetlands. If the type of activity resulting in the area being a potential human-induced wetland is exempted by regulation or policy, no further action is needed. If not exempt, PROCEED TO STEP 3.
- **STEP 3 - Characterize the Area Vegetation, Soils, and Hydrology.** Apply procedures described in Section D (routine determinations) or Section E (comprehensive determinations) to the area. Complete the appropriate data forms and PROCEED TO STEP 4.
- **STEP 4 - Wetland Determination.** Based on information resulting from STEP 3, determine whether the area is a wetland. When wetland indicators of all three parameters are found, the area is a wetland. When indicators of hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology are found and there is documented evidence that the change in hydrology occurred so recently that soils could not have developed hydric characteristics, the area is a wetland. In such cases, it is assumed that the soils are functioning as hydric soils. *CAUTION: If hydrophytic vegetation is being maintained only because of human-induced wetland hydrology that would no longer exist if the activity (e.g. irrigation) were to be terminated, the area should not be considered a wetland.*

## Section G: Problem Areas

77. There are certain wetland types and/or conditions that may make application of indicators of one or more parameters difficult, at least at certain times of the year. These are not considered to be atypical situations. Instead, they are wetland types in which wetland indicators of one or more parameters may be periodically lacking due to **normal environmental conditions** or seasonal or annual variations in environmental conditions that result from causes other than human activities or catastrophic natural events.

### Types of problem areas

78. Representative examples of potential problem areas, types of variations that occur, and their effects on wetland indicators are presented in the following subparagraphs. Similar situations may sometimes occur in other wetland types. *Note: This section is not intended to bring nonwetland areas having wetland indicators of two, but not all three, parameters into jurisdiction. (The original list has been expanded to include problem areas common in Washington. The original list was never intended to be limiting. Likewise, this list is not intended to be limiting.)*
- a. **Wetlands on slopes (seeps) and other glacial features.** Slope wetlands can occur in certain glaciated areas in which thin soils cover relatively impermeable unsorted glacial material or till or in which layers of sorted glacial material have different hydraulic conditions that produce a broad zone of ground-water seepage. Such areas are seldom, if ever, flooded, but downslope groundwater movement keeps the soils saturated for a sufficient portion of the growing season to produce anaerobic and chemically reducing soil conditions. This fosters development of hydric soil characteristics and selects for hydrophytic vegetation. Indicators of wetland hydrology may be lacking during the drier portion of the growing season.
  - b. **Seasonal wetlands.** In Washington, some depression areas have wetland indicators of all three parameters during the wetter portion of the growing season, but normally lack wetland indicators of hydrology and/or vegetation during the drier portion of the growing season. For example, obligate and facultative wetland plant species (Appendix C) normally are dominant during the wetter portion of the growing season, while upland species (annuals) may be dominant during the drier portion of the growing season. Also, these areas may be inundated during the wetter portion of the growing season, but wetland hydrology indicators may be totally lacking during the drier portion of the growing season. It is important to establish that an area truly is a wetland. Water in a depression normally must be sufficiently persistent to exhibit an ordinary high-water mark or the presence of wetland characteristics before it can be considered as wetland potentially subject to jurisdiction. The determination that an area exhibits wetland characteristics for a sufficient portion of the growing season to qualify as a wetland must be made on a case-by-case basis.

Such determinations should consider the respective length of time that the area exhibits upland and wetland characteristics, and the manner in which the area fits into the overall ecological system as a wetland. Evidence concerning the persistence of an area's wetness can be obtained from its history, vegetation, soil, drainage characteristics, uses to which it has been subjected, and weather or hydrologic records. This situation is common in eastern Washington and parts of western Washington, where precipitation is highly seasonal and/or prolonged droughts occur frequently. It is important to become familiar with the types of wetlands found in these areas. In some cases, it may be necessary to withhold making a final wetland determination until a site is examined during the wet part of the growing season. Consultation with other experienced delineators may be helpful as well.

- c. **Vernal wetlands** - Although these systems are usually associated with California, Washington does have vernal wetlands, particularly in the region around Spokane. These wetlands are a distinct type of seasonal wetland described above. The hydrology in these wetlands is driven by winter and early spring rain and snowmelt and may be totally lacking by early summer. A wetland plant community grows and reproduces in spring in response to the wet conditions and is replaced by an upland plant community by summer. Attempts to delineate these wetlands in summer or fall may result in a false negative conclusion. In addition, during periods of extended drought, these wetlands may remain dry for several years.
- d. **Vegetated flats.** In both coastal and interior areas of Washington, vegetated flats are often dominated by annual species (usually non-persistent, broad-leaved emergents. that are categorized as OBL. Application of procedures described in Sections D and E during the growing season will clearly result in a positive wetland determination. However, these areas will appear to be unvegetated mudflats when examined during the nongrowing season, and the area would not qualify at that time as a wetland due to an apparent lack of vegetation
- e. **Mollisols (prairie and steppe soils)** - Mollisols are base-rich soils that are usually dark-colored. They are common in grassland areas of the state, especially in eastern Washington . These soils typically have deep, dark topsoil layers (mollic epipedons) and low chroma matrix colors to considerable depths. They are rich in organic matter due largely to the vegetation (deep roots) and reworking of the soil and organic matter by earthworms, ants, moles, and rodents. The low chroma colors of mollisols are not necessarily due to prolonged saturation, so be particularly careful in making wetland determinations in these soils. Become familiar with the characteristics of mollisols with aquic moisture regimes, and be able to recognize these from nonhydric mollisols.
- f. **Entisols (floodplain and sandy soils)** - Entisols are usually young or recently formed soils that have little or no evidence of pedogenically developed horizons (U.S.D.A. Soil Survey Staff 1975). These soils are typical of floodplains

throughout Washington, but are also found in glacial outwash plains, along tidal waters, and in other areas. They include sandy soils of riverine islands, bars, and banks and finer-textured soils of floodplain terraces. Wet entisols have an aquic or peraquic moisture regime and are considered wetland soils. Some entisols are easily recognized as hydric soils such as the sulfaquents of tidal salt marshes, whereas others pose problems because they do not possess typical hydric soil field indicators. Wet sandy entisols (with loamy fine sand and coarser textures in horizons within 20 inches of the surface) may lack sufficient organic matter and clay to develop hydric soil colors. When these soils have a hue between 10YR and 10Y and distinct or prominent mottles present, a chroma of 3 or less is permitted to identify the soil as hydric (i.e., an aquic moisture regime). Also, hydrologic data showing that NTCHS criteria #3 or #4 (p.6) are met are sufficient to verify these soils as hydric. Become familiar with wet entisols and their diagnostic field properties (see “Keys to Soil Taxonomy” (current edition), U.S.D.A. Soil Survey Staff 1975 and county soil surveys).

- g. **Red parent material and volcanic ash soils** - Hydric mineral soil derived from red parent materials (e.g., weathered clays, Triassic sandstones, and Triassic shales) may lack the low chroma colors characteristic of most hydric mineral soils. In these soils, the hue is redder than 10YR because of parent materials that remain red after citrate-dithionite extraction, so the low chroma requirement for hydric soil is waived (U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service 1982). Additionally, some hydric soils in Washington that are influenced by volcanic ash or other volcanic material may not exhibit hydric soil indicators. Become familiar with these hydric soils and learn how to recognize them in the field (see “Keys to Soil Taxonomy” current edition, U.S.D.A. Soil Survey Staff 1975 and county soil surveys).
- h. **Spodosols (evergreen forest soils)** - These soils are usually associated with coniferous forests. Spodosols have a gray eluvial E-horizon overlying a diagnostic spodic horizon of accumulated (sometimes weakly cemented) organic matter and aluminum (U.S.D.A. Soil Survey Staff 1975). A process called podzolization is responsible for creating these two soil layers. Organic acids from the leaf litter on the soil surface are moved downward through the soil with rainfall, cleaning the sand grains in the first horizon then coating the sand grains with organic matter and iron oxides in the second layer. Certain vegetation produces organic acids that speed podzolization including western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), spruces (*Picea* spp.), pine (*Pinus* spp.), larches (*Larix* spp.), and oaks (*Quercus* spp.) (Buol, *et al*, 1980). To the untrained observer, the gray leached layer may be mistaken as a field indicator of hydric soil, but if one looks below the spodic horizon the brighter matrix colors often distinguish nonhydric spodosols from hydric ones. The wet spodosols (formerly called “groundwater podzolic soils”) usually have thick dark surface horizons, dull gray E-horizons, and low chroma subsoils. In addition, the closer to the surface the spodic horizon is found, the more likely the soil is hydric. Become familiar with these soils and their

diagnostic properties (see “Keys to Soil Taxonomy” current edition, U.S.D.A. Soil Survey Staff 1975 and county soil surveys).

- i. **Interdunal swale wetlands** - Along the Washington coastline, seasonally wet swales supporting hydrophytic vegetation are located within sand dune complexes on barrier islands and beaches. Some of these swales are inundated or saturated to the surface for considerable periods during the growing season, while others are wet for only the early part of the season. In some cases, swales may be flooded irregularly by the tides. These wetlands have sandy soils that generally lack field indicators of hydric soil. In addition, indicators of wetland hydrology may be absent during the drier part of the growing season. Consequently, these wetlands may be difficult to identify.
- j **Vegetated river bars and adjacent flats** - Along streams, particularly in arid and semiarid parts of the state, some river bars and flats may be vegetated by FACU species while others may be colonized by wetter species. If these areas are frequently inundated for  $\geq 12.5\%$  of the growing season, they are wetlands. The soils often do not reflect the characteristic field indicators of hydric soils, however, and thereby pose delineation problems.

## Wetland determinations in problem areas

79. Procedures for making wetland determinations in problem areas are presented below. Application of these procedures is appropriate only when a decision has been made in Section D or E that wetland indicators of one or more parameters were lacking, probably due to normal seasonal or annual variations in environmental conditions. Specific procedures to be used will vary according to the nature of the area, site conditions, and parameter(s) affected by the variations in environmental conditions. A determination must be based on the best evidence available to the field inspector, including:
- a. Available information (Section B).
  - b. Field data resulting from an onsite inspection.
  - c. Basic knowledge of the ecology of the particular community type(s) and environmental conditions associated with the community type.

*NOTE: The procedures described below should only be applied to parameters not adequately characterized in Section D or E. Complete the following steps:*

- **STEP 1 - Identify the Parameter(s) to be Considered.** Examine the DATA FORM I (Section D or E) and identify the parameter(s) that must be given additional consideration. PROCEED TO STEP 2.

- **STEP 2 - Determine the Reason for Further Consideration.** Determine the reason why the parameter(s) identified in STEP 1 should be given further consideration. This will require a consideration and documentation of:
  - a. Environmental condition(s) that have impacted the parameter(s).
  - b. Impacts of the identified environmental condition(s) on the parameter(s) in question.

Record findings in the comments section of DATA FORM 1. PROCEED TO STEP 3.

- **STEP 3 - Document Available Information for Parameter(s) in Question.** Examine the available information and consider personal ecological knowledge of the range of normal environmental conditions of the area. Local experts (e.g. university personnel) may provide additional information. Record information on DATA FORM 1. PROCEED TO STEP 4.
- **STEP 4 - Determine Whether Wetland Indicators are Normally Present During a Portion of the Growing Season.** Examine the information resulting from STEP 3 and determine whether wetland indicators are **normally** present during part of the growing season. If so, record on DATA FORM 1 the indicators normally present and return to Section D or Section E and make a wetland determination. If no information can be found that wetland indicators of all three parameters are normally present during part of the growing season, the determination must be made using procedures described in Section D or Section E.

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# Appendix A: Glossary

**Active water table** - A condition in which the zone of soil saturation fluctuates, resulting in periodic anaerobic soil conditions. Soils with an active water table often contain bright mottles and matrix chromas of 2 or less.

**Adaptation** - A modification of a species that makes it more fit for existence under the conditions of its environment. These modifications are the result of genetic selection processes.

**Adventitious roots** - Roots found on plant stems in positions where they normally do not occur.

**Aerenchymous tissue** - A type of plant tissue in which cells are unusually large and arranged in a manner that results in air spaces in the plant organ. Such tissues are often referred to as spongy and usually provide increased buoyancy.

**Aerobic** - A situation in which molecular oxygen is a part of the environment.

**Anaerobic** - A situation in which molecular oxygen is absent (or effectively so) from the environment.

**Aquatic roots** - Roots that develop on stems above the normal position occupied by roots in response to prolonged inundation.

**Aquic moisture regime** - A mostly reducing soil moisture regime virtually free of dissolved oxygen due to saturation by ground water or its capillary fringe and occurring at periods when the soil temperature at 19.7 in. is greater than 5° C.

**Arched roots** - Roots produced on plant stems in a position above the normal position of roots, which serve to brace the plant during and following periods of prolonged inundation.

**Areal cover** - A measure of dominance that defines the degree to which aboveground portions of plants (not limited to those rooted in a sample plot) cover the ground surface. It is possible for the total areal cover in a community to exceed 100 percent because (a) most plant communities consist of two or more vegetative strata; (b) areal cover is estimated by vegetative layer; and (c) foliage within a single layer may overlap.

**Atypical situation** - As used herein, this term refers to areas in which one or more parameters (vegetation, soil, and/or hydrology) have been sufficiently altered by recent human activities or natural events to preclude the presence of wetland indicators of the parameter. Recent is intended to mean that period of time since legal jurisdiction of an applicable law began.

**Backwater flooding** - Situations in which the source of inundation is overbank flooding from a nearby stream.

**Basal area** - The cross-sectional area of a tree trunk measured in square inches, square centimetres, etc. Basal area is normally measured at 4.5 ft above the ground level and is used as a measure of dominance. The most easily used tool for measuring basal area is a tape marked in square inches. When plotless methods are used, an angle gauge or prism will provide a means for rapidly determining basal area. This term is also applicable to the crosssectional area of a clumped herbaceous plant, measured at 1.0 in. above the soil surface.

**Bench mark** - A fixed, more or less permanent reference point or object, the elevation of which is known. The US Geological Survey (USGS) installs brass caps in bridge abutments or otherwise permanently sets bench marks at convenient locations nationwide. The elevations on these marks are referenced to the National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD), also commonly known as mean sea level (MSL). Locations of these bench marks on USGS quadrangle maps are shown as small triangles. However, the marks are sometimes destroyed by construction or vandalism. The existence of any bench mark should be field verified before planning work that relies on a particular reference point. The USGS and/or local state surveyor's office can provide information on the existence, exact location, and exact elevation of bench marks.

**Biennial** - An event that occurs at 2-year intervals.

**Buried soil** - A once-exposed soil now covered by an alluvial, loessal, or other deposit (including man-made).

**Canopy layer** - The uppermost layer of vegetation in a plant community. In forested areas, mature trees comprise the canopy layer, while the tallest herbaceous species constitute the canopy layer in a marsh.

**Capillary fringe** - A zone immediately above the water table (zero gauge pressure) in which water is drawn upward from the water table by capillary action.

**Chemical reduction** - Any process by which one compound or ion acts as an electron donor. In such cases, the valence state of the electron donor is decreased.

**Chroma** - The relative purity or saturation of a color; intensity of distinctive hue as related to grayness; one of the three variables of color.

**Comprehensive wetland determination** - A type of wetland determination that is based on the strongest possible evidence, requiring the collection of quantitative data.

**Concretion** - A local concentration of chemical compounds (e.g. calcium carbonate, iron oxide) in the form of a grain or nodule of varying size, shape, hardness, and color. Concretions of significance in hydric soils are usually iron and/or manganese oxides occurring at or near the soil surface, which develop under conditions of prolonged soil saturation.

**Contour** - An imaginary line of constant elevation on the ground surface. The corresponding line on a map is called a recontour line.”

**Criteria** - Standards, rules, or tests on which a judgment or decision may be based.

**Deepwater aquatic habitat** - Any open water area that has a mean annual water depth >6.6 ft, lacks soil, and/or is either unvegetated or supports only floating or submersed macrophytes.

**Density** - The number of individuals of a species per unit area.

**Detritus** - Minute fragments of plant parts found on the soil surface. When fused together by algae or soil particles, this is an indicator that surface water was recently present.

**Diameter at breast height (DBH)** - The width of a plant stem as measured at 4.5 ft above the ground surface.

**Dike** - A bank (usually earthen) constructed to control or confine water.

**Dominance** - As used herein, a descriptor of vegetation that is related to the standing crop of a species in an area, usually measured by height, areal cover, or basal area (for trees).

**Dominant species** - As used herein, a plant species that exerts a controlling influence on or defines the character of a community.

**Drained** - A condition in which ground or surface water has been reduced or eliminated from an area by artificial means.

**Drift line** - An accumulation of debris along a contour (parallel to the water flow) that represents the height of an inundation event.

**Duration (inundation/soil saturation)** - The length of time during which water stands at or above the soil surface (inundation), or during which the soil is saturated. As used herein, duration refers to a period during the growing season.

**Ecological tolerance** - The range of environmental conditions in which a plant species can grow.

**Emergent plant** - A rooted herbaceous plant species that has parts extending above a water surface.

**Field capacity** - The percentage of water remaining in a soil after it has been saturated and after free drainage is negligible.

**Fill material** - Any material placed in an area to increase surface elevation.

**Flooded** - A condition in which the soil surface is temporarily covered with flowing water from any source, such as streams overflowing their banks, runoff from adjacent or surrounding slopes, inflow from high tides, or any combination of sources.

**Flora** - A list of all plant species that occur in an area.

**Frequency (inundation or soil saturation)** - The periodicity of coverage of an area by surface water or soil saturation. It is usually expressed as the number of years (e.g. 50 years) the soil is inundated or saturated at least once each year during part of the growing season per 100 years or as a 1-, 2-, 5-year, etc., inundation frequency.

**Frequency (vegetation)** - The distribution of individuals of a species in an area. It is quantitatively expressed as

$$\frac{\text{Number of samples containing species A}}{\text{Total number of samples}} \times 100$$

More than one species may have a frequency of 100 percent within the same area.

**Frequently flooded** - A flooding class in which flooding is likely to occur often under normal weather conditions (more than 50-percent chance of flooding in any year or more than 50 times in 100 years).

**Gleyed** - A soil condition resulting from prolonged soil saturation, which is manifested by the presence of bluish or greenish colors through the soil mass or in mottles (spots or streaks) among other colors. Gleying occurs under reducing soil conditions resulting from soil saturation, by which iron is reduced predominantly to the ferrous state.

**Ground water** - That portion of the water below the ground surface that is under greater pressure than atmospheric pressure.

**Growing season** - The portion of the year when soil temperatures at 19.7 inches below the soil surface are higher than biologic zero (5° C) (US Department of Agriculture - Soil Conservation Service 1985).<sup>\*</sup> For ease of determination this period can be approximated by the number of frost-free days (US Department of the Interior 1970).

**Habitat** - The environment occupied by individuals of a particular species, population, or community.

**Headwater flooding** - A situation in which an area becomes inundated directly by surface runoff from upland areas.

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<sup>\*</sup> See references at the end of the main text.

**Herb** - A nonwoody individual of a macrophytic species. In this manual, seedlings of woody plants (including vines) that are less than 3.2 ft in height are considered to be herbs.

**Herbaceous layer** - Any vegetative stratum of a plant community that is composed predominantly of herbs.

**Histic epipedon** - An 8- to 16-in. soil layer at or near the surface that is saturated for 30 consecutive days or more during the growing season in most years and contains a minimum of 20 percent organic matter when no clay is present or a minimum of 30 percent organic matter when 60 percent or greater clay is present.

**Histosols** - An order in soil taxonomy composed of organic soils that have organic soil materials in more than half of the upper 80 cm or that are of any thickness if directly overlying bedrock.

**Homogeneous vegetation** - A situation in which the same plant species association occurs throughout an area.

**Hue** - A characteristic of color that denotes a color in relation to red, yellow, blue, etc; one of the three variables of color. Each color chart in the Munsell Color Book (Munsell Color 1975) consists of a specific hue.

**Hydric soil** - A hydric soil is a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part. (USDA-NRCS 1995, Federal Register, 7/13/94, Vol. 59, No. 133, pp 35680-83). Hydric soils that occur in areas having positive indicators of hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology are wetland soils.

**Hydric soil condition** - A situation in which characteristics exist that are associated with soil development under reducing conditions.

**Hydrologic regime** - The sum total of water that occurs in an area on average during a given period.

**Hydrologic zone** - An area that is inundated or has saturated soils within a specified range of frequency and duration of inundation and soil saturation.

**Hydrology** - The science dealing with the properties, distribution, and circulation of water.

**Hydrophyte** - Any macrophyte that grows in water or on a substrate that is at least periodically deficient in oxygen as a result of excessive water content; plants typically found in wet habitats.

**Hydrophytic vegetation** - The sum total of macrophytic plant life growing in water or on a substrate that is at least periodically deficient in oxygen as a result of excessive water content. When hydrophytic vegetation comprises a community where indicators of hydric soils and wetland hydrology also occur, the area has wetland vegetation.

**Hypertrophied lenticels** - An exaggerated (oversized) pore on the surface of stems of woody plants through which gases are exchanged between the plant and the atmosphere. The enlarged lenticels serve as a mechanism for increasing oxygen to plant roots during periods of inundation and/or saturated soils.

**Importance value** - A quantitative term describing the relative influence of a plant species in a plant community, obtained by summing any combination of relative frequency, relative density, and relative dominance.

**Indicator** - As used in this manual, an event, entity, or condition that typically characterizes a prescribed environment or situation; indicators determine or aid in determining whether or not certain stated circumstances exist.

**Indicator status** - One of the categories (e.g. OBL) that describes the estimated probability of a plant species occurring in wetlands.

**Intercellular air space** - A cavity between cells in plant tissues, resulting from variations in cell shape and configuration. Aerenchymous tissue (a morphological adaptation found in many hydrophytes) often has large intercellular air spaces.

**Inundation** - A condition in which water from any source temporarily or permanently covers a land surface.

**Levee** - A natural or man-made feature of the landscape that restricts movement of water into or through an area.

**Liana** - As used in this manual, a layer of vegetation in forested plant communities that consists of woody vines. The term may also be applied to a given species.

**Limit of biological activity** - With reference to soils, the zone below which conditions preclude normal growth of soil organisms. This term often is used to refer to the temperature (5° C) in a soil below which metabolic processes of soil microorganisms, plant roots, and animals are negligible.

**Long duration (flooding)** - A flooding class in which the period of inundation for a single event ranges from 7 days to 1 month.

**Macrophyte** - Any plant species that can be readily observed without the aid of optical magnification. This includes all vascular plant species and mosses (e.g., *Sphagnum* spp.), as well as large algae (e.g. *Chara* spp., kelp).

**Macrophytic** - A term referring to a plant species that is a macrophyte.

**Major portion of the root zone** - The portion of the soil profile in which more than 50 percent of plant roots occur. In wetlands, this usually constitutes the upper 12 in. of the profile.



**Man-induced wetland** - Any area that develops wetland characteristics due to some activity (e.g., irrigation) of man.

**Mapping unit** - As used in this manual, some common characteristic of soil, vegetation, and/or hydrology that can be shown at the scale of mapping for the defined purpose and objectives of a survey.

**Mean sea level** - A datum, or “plane of zero elevation,” established by averaging all stages of oceanic tides over a 19-year tidal cycle or “epoch.” This plane is corrected for curvature of the earth and is the standard reference for elevations on the earth’s surface. The correct term for mean sea level is the National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD).

**Mesophytic** - Any plant species growing where soil moisture and aeration conditions lie between extremes. These species are typically found in habitats with average moisture conditions, neither very dry nor very wet.

**Metabolic processes** - The complex of internal chemical reactions associated with life-sustaining functions of an organism.

**Method** - A particular procedure or set of procedures to be followed.

**Mineral soil** - A soil consisting predominantly of, and having its properties determined predominantly by, mineral matter usually containing less than 20 percent organic matter.

**Morphological adaptation** - A feature of structure and form that aids in fitting a species to its particular environment (e.g. buttressed base, adventitious roots, aerenchymous tissue).

**Mottles** - Spots or blotches of different color or shades of color interspersed within the dominant color in a soil layer, usually resulting from the presence of periodic reducing soil conditions.

**Muck** - Highly decomposed organic material in which the original plant parts are not recognizable.

**Multitrunk** - A situation in which a single individual of a woody plant species has several stems.

**Nonhydric soil** - A soil that has developed under predominantly aerobic soil conditions. These soils normally support mesophytic or xerophytic species.

**Nonwetland** - Any area that has sufficiently dry conditions that indicators of hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and/or wetland hydrology are lacking. As used in this manual, any area that is neither a wetland, a deepwater aquatic habitat, nor other special aquatic site.

**Organic pan** - A layer usually occurring at 12 to 30 inches below the soil surface in coarse-textured soils, in which organic matter and aluminum (with or without iron) accumulate at

the point where the top of the water table most often occurs. Cementing of the organic matter slightly reduces permeability of this layer.

**Organic soil** - A soil is classified as an organic soil when it is: (1) saturated for prolonged periods (unless artificially drained) and has more than 30-percent organic matter if the mineral fraction is more than 50-percent clay, or more than 20-percent organic matter if the mineral fraction has no clay; or (2) never saturated with water for more than a few days and having more than 34-percent organic matter.

**Overbank flooding** - Any situation in which inundation occurs as a result of the water level of a stream rising above bank level.

**Oxidation-reduction process** - A complex of biochemical reactions in soil that influences the valence state of component elements and their ions. Prolonged soil saturation during the growing season elicits anaerobic conditions that shift the overall process to a reducing condition.

**Oxygen pathway** - The sequence of cells, intercellular spaces, tissues, and organs, through which molecular oxygen is transported in plants. Plant species having pathways for oxygen transport to the root system are often adapted for life in saturated soils.

**Parameter** - A characteristic component of a unit that can be defined. Vegetation, soil, and hydrology are three parameters that may be used to define wetlands.

**Parent material** - The unconsolidated and more or less weathered mineral or organic matter from which a soil profile develops.

**Ped** - A unit of soil structure (e.g. aggregate, crumb, prism, block, or granule) formed by natural processes.

**Peraquic moisture regime** - A soil condition in which a reducing environment always occurs due to the presence of ground water at or near the soil surface.

**Periodically** - Used herein to define detectable regular or irregular saturated soil conditions or inundation, resulting from ponding of ground water, precipitation, overland flow, stream flooding, or tidal influences that occur(s) with hours, days, weeks, months, or even years between events.

**Permeability** - A soil characteristic that enables water or air to move through the profile, measured as the number of inches per hour that water moves downward through the saturated soil. The rate at which water moves through the least permeable layer governs soil permeability.

**Physiognomy** - A term used to describe a plant community based on the growth habit (e.g., trees, herbs, lianas) of the dominant species.

**Physiological adaptation** - A feature of the basic physical and chemical activities that occurs in cells and tissues of a species, which results in it being better fitted to its environment (e.g. ability to absorb nutrients under low oxygen tensions).

**Plant community** - All of the plant populations occurring in a shared habitat or environment.

**Plant cover** - See areal cover.

**Pneumatophore** - Modified roots that may function as a respiratory organ in species subjected to frequent inundation or soil saturation (e.g., cypress knees).

**Ponded** - A condition in which water stands in a closed depression. Water may be removed only by percolation, evaporation, and/or transpiration.

**Poorly drained** - Soils that commonly are wet at or near the surface during a sufficient part of the year that field crops cannot be grown under natural conditions. Poorly drained conditions are caused by a saturated zone, a layer with low hydraulic conductivity, seepage, or a combination of these conditions.

**Population** - A group of individuals of the same species that occurs in a given area.

**Positive wetland indicator** - Any evidence of the presence of hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soil, and/or wetland hydrology in an area.

**Prevalent vegetation** - The plant community or communities that occur in an area during a given period. The prevalent vegetation is characterized by the dominant macrophytic species that comprise the plant community.

**Quantitative** - A precise measurement or determination expressed numerically.

**Range** - As used herein, the geographical area in which a plant species is known to occur.

**Redox potential** - A measure of the tendency of a system to donate or accept electrons, which is governed by the nature and proportions of the oxidizing and reducing substances contained in the system.

**Reducing environment** - An environment conducive to the removal of oxygen and chemical reduction of ions in the soils.

**Relative density** - A quantitative descriptor, expressed as a percent, of the relative number of individuals of a species in an area; it is calculated by

$$\frac{\text{Number of individuals of species A}}{\text{Total number of individuals of all species}} \times 100$$

**Relative dominance** - A quantitative descriptor, expressed as a percent, of the relative size or cover of individuals of a species in an area; it is calculated by

$$\frac{\text{Amount}^* \text{ of species A}}{\text{Total amount of all species}} \times 100$$

**Relative frequency** - A quantitative descriptor, expressed as a percent, of the relative distribution of individuals of a species in an area; it is calculated by

$$\frac{\text{Frequency of species A}}{\text{Total frequency of all species}} \times 100$$

**Relief** - The change in elevation of a land surface between two points; collectively, the configuration of the earth's surface, including such features as hills and valleys.

**Reproductive adaptation** - A feature of the reproductive mechanism of a species that results in it being better fitted to its environment (e.g. ability for seed germination under water).

**Respiration** - The sum total of metabolic processes associated with conversion of stored (chemical) energy into kinetic (physical) energy for use by an organism.

**Rhizosphere** - The zone of soil in which interactions between living plant roots and microorganisms occur.

**Root zone** - The portion of a soil profile in which plant roots occur.

**Routine wetland determination** - A type of wetland determination in which office data and/or relatively simple, rapidly applied onsite methods are employed to determine whether or not an area is a wetland. Most wetland determinations are of this type, which usually does not require collection of quantitative data.

**Sample plot** - An area of land used for measuring or observing existing conditions.

**Sapling/shrub** - A layer of vegetation composed of woody plants <3.0 in. in diameter at breast height but greater than 3.2 ft in height, exclusive of woody vines.

**Saturated soil conditions** - A condition in which all easily drained voids (pores between soil particles in the root zone are temporarily or permanently filled with water to the soil surface at pressures greater than atmospheric.

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\* The "amount" of a species may be based on percent areal cover, basal area, or height.

**Soil** - Unconsolidated mineral and organic material that supports, or is capable of supporting, plants, and which has recognizable properties due to the integrated effect of climate and living matter acting upon parent material, as conditioned by relief over time.

**Soil horizon** - A layer of soil or soil material approximately parallel to the land surface and differing from adjacent genetically related layers in physical, chemical, and biological properties or characteristics (e.g. color, structure, texture, etc.).

**Soil matrix** - The portion of a given soil having the dominant color. In most cases, the matrix will be the portion of the soil having more than 50 percent of the same color.

**Soil permeability** - The ease with which gases, liquids, or plant roots penetrate or pass through a layer of soil.

**Soil phase** - A subdivision of a soil series having features (e.g. slope, surface texture, and stoniness) that affect the use and management of the soil, but which do not vary sufficiently to differentiate it as a separate series. These are usually the basic mapping units on detailed soil maps produced by the Soil Conservation Service.

**Soil pore** - An area within soil occupied by either air or water, resulting from the arrangement of individual soil particles or peds.

**Soil profile** - A vertical section of a soil through all its horizons and extending into the parent material.

**Soil series** - A group of soils having horizons similar in differentiating characteristics and arrangement in the soil profile, except for texture of the surface horizon.

**Soil structure** - The combination or arrangement of primary soil particles into secondary particles, units, or peds.

**Soil surface** - The upper limits of the soil profile. For mineral soils, this is the upper limit of the highest (A1) mineral horizon. For organic soils, it is the upper limit of undecomposed, dead organic matter.

**Soil texture** - The relative proportions of the various sizes of particles in a soil.

**Somewhat poorly drained** - Soils that are wet near enough to the surface or long enough that planting or harvesting operations or crop growth is markedly restricted unless artificial drainage is provided. Somewhat poorly drained soils commonly have a layer with low hydraulic conductivity, wet conditions high in the profile, additions of water through seepage, or a combination of these conditions.

**Stilted roots** - Aerial roots arising from stems (e.g., trunk and branches), presumably providing plant support (e.g., *Rhizophora mangle*).

**Stooling** - A form of asexual reproduction in which new shoots are produced at the base of senescing stems, often resulting in a multitrunk growth habit.

**Stratigraphy** - Features of geology dealing with the origin, composition, distribution, and succession of geologic strata (layers).

**Substrate** - The base or substance on which an attached species is growing.

**Surface water** - Water present above the substrate or soil surface.

**Tidal** - A situation in which the water level periodically fluctuates due to the action of lunar and solar forces upon the rotating earth.

**Topography** - The configuration of a surface, including its relief and the position of its natural and man-made features.

**Transect** - As used herein, a line on the ground along which observations are made at some interval.

**Transition zone** - The area in which a change from wetlands to nonwetlands occurs. The transition zone may be narrow or broad.

**Transpiration** - The process in plants by which water vapor is released into the gaseous environment, primarily through stomata.

**Tree** - A woody plant >3.0 in. in diameter at breast height, regardless of height (exclusive of woody vines).

**Typical** - That which normally, usually, or commonly occurs.

**Typically adapted** - A term that refers to a species being normally or commonly suited to a given set of environmental conditions, due to some feature of its morphology, physiology, or reproduction.

**Unconsolidated parent material** - Material from which a soil develops, usually formed by weathering of rock or placement in an area by natural forces (e.g. water, wind, or gravity).

**Under normal circumstances** - As used in the definition of wetlands, this term refers to situations in which the vegetation has not been substantially altered by man's activities.

**Uniform vegetation** - As used herein, a situation in which the same group of dominant species generally occurs throughout a given area.

**Upland** - As used herein, any area that does not qualify as a wetland because the associated hydrologic regime is not sufficiently wet to elicit development of vegetation, soils, and/or hydrologic characteristics associated with wetlands. Such areas occurring within floodplains are more appropriately termed nonwetlands.

**Value (soil color)** - The relative lightness or intensity of color, approximately a function of the square root of the total amount of light reflected from a surface; one of the three variables of color.

**Vegetation** - The sum total of macrophytes that occupy a given area.

**Vegetation layer** - A subunit of a plant community in which all component species exhibit the same growth form (e.g., trees, saplings/shrubs, herbs).

**Very long duration (flooding)** - A duration class in which the length of a single inundation event is greater than 1 month.

**Very poorly drained** - Soils that are wet to the surface most of the time. These soils are wet enough to prevent the growth of important crops (except rice) unless artificially drained.

**Watermark** - A line on a tree or other upright structure that represents the maximum static water level reached during an inundation event.

**Water table** - The upper surface of ground water or that level below which the soil is saturated with water. It is at least 6 in. thick and persists in the soil for more than a few weeks.

**Wetlands** - Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

**Wetland boundary** - The point on the ground at which a shift from wetlands to nonwetlands or aquatic habitats occurs. These boundaries usually follow contours.

**Wetland determination** - The process or procedure by which an area is adjudged a wetland or nonwetland.

**Wetland hydrology** - The sum total of wetness characteristics in areas that are inundated or have saturated soils for a sufficient duration to support hydrophytic vegetation.

**Wetland plant association** - Any grouping of plant species that recurs wherever certain wetland conditions occur.

**Wetland soil** - A soil that has characteristics developed in a reducing atmosphere, which exists when periods of prolonged soil saturation result in anaerobic conditions. Hydric soils that are sufficiently wet to support hydrophytic vegetation are wetland soils.

**Wetland vegetation** - The sum total of macrophytic plant life that occurs in areas where the frequency and duration of inundation or soil saturation produce permanently or periodically saturated soils of sufficient duration to exert a controlling influence on the plant species present. As used herein, hydrophytic vegetation occurring in areas that also have hydric soils and wetland hydrology may be properly referred to as wetland vegetation.

**Woody vine** - See liana.

**Xerophytic** - A plant species that is typically adapted for life in conditions where a lack of water is a limiting factor for growth and/or reproduction. These species are capable of growth in extremely dry conditions as a result of morphological, physiological, and/or reproductive adaptations.



## **Appendix B: Sample Data Forms**



**DATA FORM 1 (Revised)**  
**Routine Wetland Determination**  
**(WA State Wetland Delineation Manual or**  
**1987 Corps Wetland Delineation Manual)**

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Project/Site:  | Date:         |
| Applicant/owner:   | County:       |
| Investigator(s):   | State:        |
|  | S/T/R:        |
| Do Normal Circumstances exist on the site?                      yes              no            | Community ID: |
| Is the site significantly disturbed (atypical situation)?              yes              no     | Transect ID:  |
| Is the area a potential Problem Area?                                      yes              no | Plot ID:      |
| Explanation of atypical or problem area:   |               |

**VEGETATION** (For strata, indicate T = tree; S = shrub; H = herb; V = vine)

| Dominant Plant Species | Stratum | % cover | Indicator | Dominant Plant Species | Stratum | % cover | Indicator |
|------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
|                        |         |         |           |                        |         |         |           |
|                        |         |         |           |                        |         |         |           |
|                        |         |         |           |                        |         |         |           |
|                        |         |         |           |                        |         |         |           |
|                        |         |         |           |                        |         |         |           |
|                        |         |         |           |                        |         |         |           |

**HYDROPHYTIC VEGETATION INDICATORS:**

% of dominants OBL, FACW, & FAC \_\_\_\_\_

Check all indicators that apply & explain below:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Visual observation of plant species growing in areas of prolonged inundation/saturation _____ | Physiological/reproductive adaptations _____           |
| Morphological adaptations _____   | Wetland plant database _____                           |
| Technical Literature _____  | Personal knowledge of regional plant communities _____ |
|   | Other (explain) _____                                  |

**Hydrophytic vegetation present?**                      yes              no

Rationale for decision/Remarks:

**HYDROLOGY**

|  |   |                                   |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Is it the growing season?                      yes              no   | Water Marks:    yes    no<br>on _____                       | Sediment Deposits:    yes    no   |
| Based on: _____ soil temp (record temp _____)<br>_____ other (explain)   | Drift Lines:        yes    no                               | Drainage Patterns:    yes    no   |
| Dept. of inundation:                      _____ inches   | Oxidized Root (live roots)<br>Channels <12 in.    yes    no | Local Soil Survey:    yes    no   |
| Depth to free water in pit:                      _____ inches  | FAC Neutral:        yes    no                               | Water-stained Leaves    yes    no |
| Depth to saturated soil:                      _____ inches   |   |                                   |
| Check all that apply & explain below:<br>Stream, Lake or gage data:                      _____<br>Aerial photographs:                      _____              Other: _____ | Other (explain):  |                                   |

**Wetland hydrology present?**                      yes                      no

Rationale for decision/Remarks:

**SOILS**Map Unit Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Series & Phase)

Drainage Class \_\_\_\_\_

Taxonomy (subgroup) \_\_\_\_\_

Field observations confirm    Yes    No  
mapped type?**Profile Description**

| Depth<br>(inches) | Horizon | Matrix color<br>(Munsell<br>moist) | Mottle colors<br>(Munsell<br>moist) | Mottle abundance<br>size & contrast | Texture, concretions,<br>structure, etc. | Drawing of soil<br>profile<br>( <u>match description</u> ) |
|-------------------|---------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
|                   |         |                                    |                                     |                                     |  |  |
|                   |         |                                    |                                     |                                     |  |  |
|                   |         |                                    |                                     |                                     |  |  |
|                   |         |                                    |                                     |                                     |  |  |
|                   |         |                                    |                                     |                                     |  |  |

**Hydric Soil Indicators:** (check all that apply)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Histosol                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Matrix chroma $\leq 2$ with mottles                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Histic Epipedon                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Mg or Fe Concretions                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sulfidic Odor                    | <input type="checkbox"/> High Organic Content in Surface Layer of Sandy Soils |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aquic Moisture Regime            | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Streaking in Sandy Soils                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reducing Conditions              | <input type="checkbox"/> Listed on National/Local Hydric Soils List           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gleyed or Low-Chroma (=1) matrix | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain in remarks)                           |

**Hydric soils present?**                      yes                      no

Rationale for decision/Remarks:

**Wetland Determination** (circle)

|                                 |     |    |  |
|---------------------------------|-----|----|--|
| Hydrophytic vegetation present? | yes | no |  |
| Hydric soils present?           | yes | no | Is the sampling point                      yes                      no |
| Wetland hydrology present?      | yes | no | within a wetland?  |

**Rationale/Remarks:****NOTES:**

## Data Form 2: Atypical Situations

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Plot Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### A. Vegetation:

1. Type of Alteration: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Effect on Vegetation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Previous Vegetation: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Attach documentation) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Hydrophytic Vegetation? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

### B. Soils:

1. Type of Alteration: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Effect on Soils: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Previous Soils: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Attach documentation) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Hydric Soils? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Hydrology:

1. Type of Alteration: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Effect on Hydrology: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Previous Hydrology: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Attach documentation) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Wetland Hydrology? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Characterized By: \_\_\_\_\_



# Appendix C: Vegetation

1. For a list of plants that occur in Washington's wetlands refer to:

- Reed, P.B., Jr. 1988. National list of plant species that occur in wetlands: Northwest (Region 9)." U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Biological Report 88(26.9).
- Reed, P.B., Jr. 1993. "1993 Supplement to list of plant species that occur in wetlands: Northwest (Region 9)." U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Supplement to Biological Report 88(26.9).

## Morphological, Physiological, and Reproductive Adaptations of Plant Species for Occurrence in Areas Having Anaerobic Soil Conditions

### Morphological adaptations

2. Many plant species have morphological adaptations for occurrence in wetlands. These structural modifications most often provide the plant with increased buoyancy or support. In some cases (e.g. adventitious roots), the adaptation may facilitate the uptake of nutrients and/or gases (particularly oxygen). However, not all species occurring in areas having anaerobic soil conditions exhibit morphological adaptations for such conditions. The following is a list of morphological adaptations that a species occurring in areas having anaerobic soil conditions may possess:

- a. **Buttressed tree trunks.** Tree species (e.g. *Taxodium distichum*) may develop enlarged trunks in response to frequent inundation. This adaptation is a strong indicator of hydrophytic vegetation in nontropical forested areas.
- b. **Pneumatophores.** These modified roots may serve as respiratory organs in species subjected to frequent inundation or soil saturation. Cypress knees are a classic example, but other species (e.g., *Nyssa aquatics*, *Rhizophora mangle*) may also develop pneumatophores.
- c. **Adventitious roots.** Sometimes referred to as "water roots," adventitious roots occur on plant stems in positions where roots normally are not found. Small fibrous roots protruding from the base of trees (e.g. *Salix nigra*) or roots on stems of herbaceous plants and tree seedlings in positions immediately above the soil surface (e.g. *Ludwigia* spp.) occur in response to inundation or soil saturation. These usually develop during periods of sufficiently prolonged soil saturation to destroy most of the root system. *CAUTION: Not all adventitious roots develop as a result of inundation or soil saturation. For example, aerial roots on woody vines are not normally produced as a response to inundation or soil saturation.*

- d.     **Shallow root systems.** When soils are inundated or saturated for long periods during the growing season, anaerobic conditions develop in the zone of root growth. Most species with deep root systems cannot survive in such conditions. Most species capable of growth during periods when soils are oxygenated only near the surface have shallow root systems. In forested wetlands, wind- thrown trees are often indicative of shallow root systems.
- e.     **Inflated leaves, stems, or roots.** Many hydrophytic species, particularly herbs (e.g. *Limnobium spongia*, *Ludwigia* spp.), have or develop spongy (aerenchymous) tissues in leaves, stems, and/or roots that provide buoyancy or support and serve as a reservoir or passageway for oxygen needed for metabolic processes.
- f.     **Polymorphic leaves.** Some herbaceous species produce different types of leaves, depending on the water level at the time of leaf formation. For example, *Alisma* spp. produce strap-shaped leaves when totally submerged, but produce broader, floating leaves when plants are emergent. *CAUTION: Many upland species also produce polymorphic leaves.*
- g.     **Floating leaves.** Some species (e.g. *Nymphaea* spp.) produce leaves that are uniquely adapted for floating on a water surface. These leaves have stomata primarily on the upper surface and a thick waxy cuticle that restricts water penetration. The presence of species with floating leaves is strongly indicative of hydrophytic vegetation.
- h.     **Floating stems.** A number of species (e.g., *Alternanthera philoxeroides*) produce matted stems that have large internal air spaces when occurring in inundated areas. Such species root in shallow water and grow across the water surface into deeper areas. Species with floating stems often produce adventitious roots at leaf nodes.
- i.     **Hypertrophied lenticels.** Some plant species (e.g. *Gleditsia aquatica*) produce enlarged lenticels on the stem in response to prolonged inundation or soil saturation. These are thought to increase oxygen uptake through the stem during such periods.
- j.     **Multitrunks or stooling.** Some woody hydrophytes characteristically produce several trunks of different ages or produce new stems arising from the base of a senescing individual (e.g. *Forestiera acuminata*, *Nyssa agechee*) in response to inundation.
- k.     **Oxygen pathway to roots.** Some species (e.g. *Spartina alterniflora*) have a specialized cellular arrangement that facilitates diffusion of gaseous oxygen from leaves and stems to the root system.



## Physiological adaptations

3. Most, if not all, hydrophytic species are thought to possess physiological adaptations for occurrence in areas that have prolonged periods of anaerobic soil conditions. However, relatively few species have actually been proven to possess such adaptations, primarily due to the limited research that has been conducted. Nevertheless, several types of physiological adaptations known to occur in hydrophytic species are discussed below.
- NOTE: Since it is impossible to detect these adaptations in the field, use of this indicator will be limited to observing the species in the field and checking the regional wetland plant list to determine whether the species is known to have a physiological adaptation for occurrence in areas having anaerobic soil conditions:*

- a.     **Accumulation of malate.** Malate, a nontoxic metabolite, accumulates in roots of many hydrophytic species (e.g. *Glyceria maxima*, *Nyssa sylvatica* var. *biflora*). Nonwetland species concentrate ethanol, a toxic by-product of anaerobic respiration, when growing in anaerobic soil conditions. Under such conditions, many hydrophytic species produce high concentrations of malate and unchanged concentrations of ethanol, thereby avoiding accumulation of toxic materials. Thus, species having the ability to concentrate malate instead of ethanol in the root system under anaerobic soil conditions are adapted for life in such conditions, while species that concentrate ethanol are poorly adapted for life in anaerobic soil conditions.
- b.     **Increased levels of nitrate reductase.** Nitrate reductase is an enzyme involved in conversion of nitrate nitrogen to nitrite nitrogen, an intermediate step in ammonium production. Ammonium ions can accept electrons as a replacement for gaseous oxygen in some species, thereby allowing continued functioning of metabolic processes under low soil oxygen conditions. Species that produce high levels of nitrate reductase (e.g. *Larix laricina*) are adapted for life in anaerobic soil conditions.
- c.     **Slight increases in metabolic rates.** Anaerobic soil conditions effect short-term increases in metabolic rates in most species. However, the rate of metabolism often increases only slightly in wetland species, while metabolic rates increase significantly in nonwetland species. Species exhibiting only slight increases in metabolic rates (e.g. *Larix laricina*, *Senecio vulgaris*) are adapted for life in anaerobic soil conditions.
- d.     **Rhizosphere oxidation.** Some hydrophytic species (e.g. *Nyssa aquatica*, *Myrica gale*) are capable of transferring gaseous oxygen from the root system into soil pores immediately surrounding the roots. This adaptation prevents root deterioration and maintains the rates of water and nutrient absorption under anaerobic soil conditions.

- e.     **Ability for root growth in low oxygen tensions.** Some species (e.g. *Typha angustifolia*, *Juncus effusus*) have the ability to maintain root growth under soil oxygen concentrations as low as 0.5 percent. Although prolonged (>1 year) exposure to soil oxygen concentrations lower than 0.5 percent generally results in the death of most individuals, this adaptation enables some species to survive extended periods of anaerobic soil conditions.
- f.     **Absence of alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) activity.** ADH is an enzyme associated with increased ethanol production. When the enzyme is not functioning, ethanol production does not increase significantly. Some hydrophytic species (e.g. *Potentilla anserina*, *Polygonum amphibium*) show only slight increases in ADH activity under anaerobic soil conditions. Therefore, ethanol production occurs at a slower rate in species that have low concentrations of ADH.

## **Reproductive adaptations**

- 4     Some plant species have reproductive features that enable them to become established and grow in saturated soil conditions. The following have been identified in the technical literature as reproductive adaptations that occur in hydrophytic species:

  - a.     **Prolonged seed viability.** Some plant species produce seeds that may remain viable for 20 years or more. Exposure of these seeds to atmospheric oxygen usually triggers germination. Thus, species (e.g., *Taxodium distichum*) that grow in very wet areas may produce seeds that germinate only during infrequent periods when the soil is dewatered. *NOTE: Many upland species also have prolonged seed viability, but the trigger mechanism for germination is not exposure to atmospheric oxygen.*
  - b.     **Seed germination under low oxygen concentrations.** Seeds of some hydrophytic species germinate when submerged. This enables germination during periods of early-spring inundation, which may provide resulting seedlings a competitive advantage over species whose seeds germinate only when exposed to atmospheric oxygen.
  - c.     **Flood-tolerant seedlings.** Seedlings of some hydrophytic species (e.g. *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) can survive moderate periods of total or partial inundation. Seedlings of these species have a competitive advantage over seedlings of flood-intolerant species.

## Appendix D: Hydric Soils

1. This appendix describes the basic procedure for digging a soil pit and examining for hydric soil indicators.

### Procedures for Digging a Soil Pit and Examining for Hydric Soil Indicators

#### Digging a soil pit

2. Apply the following procedure: Circumscribe a 1-ft-diameter area, preferably with a tile spade (sharpshooter). Extend the blade vertically downward, cut all roots to the depth of the blade, and lift the soil from the hole. This should provide approximately 16 inches of the soil profile for examination. *Note: Observations are usually made immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower).* In many cases, a soil auger or probe can be used instead of a spade. If so, remove successive cores until 16 inches of the soil profile have been removed. Place successive cores in the same sequence as removed from the hole. *Note: An auger or probe cannot be effectively used when the soil profile is loose, rocky, or contains a large volume of water (e.g. peraquic moisture regime).*

#### Examining the soil

3. Examine the soil for hydric soils indicators (paragraphs 44 and/or 45 of main text (for sandy soils)). *Note: It may not be necessary to conduct a classical characterization (e.g. texture, structure, etc.) of the soil.* Consider the hydric soil indicators in the following sequence (*Note: THE SOIL EXAMINATION CAN BE TERMINATED WHEN A POSITIVE HYDRIC SOIL INDICATOR IS FOUND*):

#### Nonsandy soils.

- a. Determine whether an organic soil is present (see paragraph 44 of the main text). If so, the soil is hydric.
- b. Determine whether the soil has a histic epipedon (see paragraph 44 of the main text). Record the thickness of the histic epipedon on DATA FORM 1.
- c. Determine whether sulfidic materials are present by smelling the soil. The presence of a rotten egg odor is indicative of hydrogen sulfide, which forms only under extreme reducing conditions associated with prolonged inundation/soil saturation.
- d. Determine whether the soil has an aquic or peraquic moisture regime (see paragraph 44 of the main text). If so, the soil is hydric.

- e. Conduct a ferrous iron test. A colorimetric field test kit has been developed for this purpose. A reducing soil environment is present when the soil extract turns pink upon addition of  $\infty$ - $\infty$ -dipyridil.
- f. Determine the color(s) of the matrix and any mottles that may be present. Soil color is characterized by three features: hue, value, and chrome. **Hue** refers to the soil color in relation to red, yellow, blue, etc. **Value** refers to the lightness of the hue. **Chroma** refers to the strength of the color (or departure from a neutral of the same lightness). Soil colors are determined by use of a Munsell Color Book (Munsell Color 1975).<sup>\*</sup> Each Munsell Color Book has color charts of different hues, ranging from 10R to 5Y. Each page of hue has color chips that show values and chromas. Values are shown in columns down the page from as low as 0 to as much as 8, and chromas are shown in rows across the page from as low as 0 to as much as 8. In writing Munsell color notations, the sequence is always hue, value, and chroma (e.g. 10YR5/2). To determine soil color, place a small portion of soil<sup>\*\*</sup> in the openings behind the color page and match the soil color to the appropriate color chip. *Note: Match the soil to the nearest color chip.* Record on DATA FORM 1 the hue, value, and chroma of the best matching color chip. **CAUTION:** *Never place soil on the face or front of the color page because this might smear the color chips.* Mineral hydric soils usually have one of the following color features immediately below the A-horizon or 10 inches (whichever is shallower):

(1) Gleyed soil.

Determine whether the soil is gleyed. If the matrix color best fits a color chip found on the gley page of the Munsell soil color charts, the soil is gleyed. This indicates prolonged soil saturation, and the soil is highly reduced.

(2) Nongleyed soil.

- (a) Matrix chroma of 2 or less in mottled soils.\*\*
- (b) Matrix chroma of 1 or less in unmottled soils.\*\*
- (c) Gray mottles within 10 inches of the soil surface in dark (black) mineral soils (e.g., Mollisols) that do not have characteristics of (a) or (b) above.

Soils having the above color characteristics are normally saturated for significant duration during the growing season. However, hydric soils with significant

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\* See references at the end of the main text.

\*\* The soil must be moistened if dry at the time of examination.

coloration due to the nature of the parent material may not exhibit chromas within the range indicated above. In such cases, this indicator cannot be used.

- g. Determine whether the mapped soil series or phase is on the national list of hydric soils (Section 2). *CAUTION: It will often be necessary to compare the profile description of the soil with that of the soil series or phase indicated on the soil map to verify that the soil was correctly mapped. This is especially true when the soil survey indicates the presence of inclusions or when the soil is mapped as an association of two or more soil series.*
- h. Look for iron and manganese concretions. Look for small (>0.08-inch) aggregates within 3 inches of the soil surface. These are usually black or dark brown and reflect prolonged saturation near the soil surface.

### **Sandy soils.**

Look for one of the following indicators in sandy soils:

- a. A layer of organic material above the mineral surface or high organic matter content in the surface horizon (see paragraph 45a of the main text). This is evidenced by a darker color of the surface layer due to organic matter interspersed among or adhering to the sand particles. This is not observed in upland soils due to associated aerobic conditions.
- b. Streaking of subsurface horizons (see paragraph 45c of the main text). Look for dark vertical streaks in subsurface horizons. These streaks represent organic matter being moved downward in the profile. When soil is rubbed between the fingers, the organic matter will leave a dark stain on the fingers.
- c. Organic pans (see paragraph 45b of the main text). This is evidenced by a thin layer of hardened soil at a depth of 12 to 30 inches below the mineral surface.



## **Appendix E: Corps of Engineers Guidance**

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
WASHINGTON, DC 20314-1000

27 August 1991

CECW-OR

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Implementation of the 1987 Corps Wetland Delineation Manual

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance concerning the implementation of the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual (1987 Manual) (Waterways Experiment Station Technical Report Y-87-1, January 1987). This guidance supercedes the guidance provided in John Studt's 21 August memorandum to the field. Further, this guidance is to be used in conjunction with memoranda dated 23 August, 1991, concerning wetlands delineation and the 1992 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act (Act). In accordance with the Act and the 23 August memoranda, the 1987 Manual is now used to delineate potentially jurisdictional wetlands in place of the 1989 **Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands**.

2. The guidance in paragraph 3 will be followed in the application of the 1987 Manual.

3. Use of the 1987 Manual is mandatory, however, the Appendices are modified as discussed below:

a. Appendix A: The definition of "under normal circumstances" provided in this glossary is modified pursuant to Regulatory Guidance Letter (RGL) #90-7;

b. Appendix B: Use of the data sheets provided is recommended, but is not mandatory;

c. Appendix C: Sections 1 and 2 - These sections are replaced with the May 1988 **National List of Plant Species That Occur in Wetlands** and associated regional lists (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Summary 88(24) and Biological Reports 88(26.126.13). The referenced lists will be used to determine the wetland indicator status of plant species and any subsequent updates will be adopted;

d. Appendix D: Section 2 - The most recent **Hydric Soils of the United States** list developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (SCS), will be used to determine if a particular soil has been designated as hydric by the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils. The current hydric soils list was published by SCS in December 1987, and any subsequent updates will be adopted.



4. All other current policy considerations concerning wetlands in general (e.g., RGLS) remain in effect during interim use of the 1987 Corps Manual.

5. The Waterways Experiment Station will provide each division and district copies of the 1987 Manual. In addition, a copy of the Environmental Effects of Dredging Technical Notes (EEDP-04-7) dated January 1988, an article which summarizes the methods for delineating wetlands as presented in the 1987 Manual, will follow under separate cover. The article does not reflect the guidance contained in this memorandum; however, it does provide a general overall summary of the 1987 Manual.

JOHN P. ELMORE  
Chief, Operations, Construction and  
Readiness Division  
Directorate of Civil Works

# Questions and Answers on 1987 Corps of Engineers Manual

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

7 October 1991

7 October 1991

CECW-OR

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Questions & Answers on 1987 Manual

1. In response to questions from the field, the Qs & As on the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual (1987 Manual) have been further clarified (in particular, questions #7 & 8). We clarified that for saturated only systems, the saturation must be to the surface for the appropriate number of days during the growing season. Furthermore, we clarified that the number of days for inundation or saturation to the surface are consecutive, not cumulative. The enclosed Qs and As dated 7 October, 1991 supercede those previously distributed under the cover memorandum of 16 September, 1991.

2. I want to again emphasize that the 1987 Manual stresses the need to verify that all three parameters exist prior to identifying and delineating an area as a wetland. Further, the 1987 Manual focuses on hydrology (i.e., inundation &/or saturation to the surface). In situations where hydrology is questionable, the 1987 Manual requires stronger evidence regarding the hydrophytic nature of the vegetation. The 1987 Manual also stresses the need to use sound professional judgment, providing latitude to demonstrate whether an area is a wetland or not based on a holistic and careful consideration of evidence for all three parameters. As indicated in the 1987 Manual and the attached Qs and As, careful professional judgment must be used in situations where indicators of hydrology are not clear and the dominant vegetation is facultative.

JOHN F. STUDDT  
Chief, Regulatory Branch  
Operations, Construction and  
Readiness Division  
Directorate of Civil Works

Enclosure

## Questions & Answers on 1987 Corps of Engineers Manual

1.Q. What is the definition and practical interpretation of the growing season which should be used in the application of the 1987 Manual?

A. The 1987 Manual defines the growing season as the portion of the year when soil temperatures at 19.7 inches below the soil surface are higher than biological zero (5 degrees C). This is the definition found in Soil Taxonomy, and growing season months can be assumed based on temperature regimes (e.g., mesic: March-October). The 1987 Manual further states this period can be approximated by the number of frost-free days. The Waterways Experiment Station (WES) indicates that the county soil surveys, which utilize 32 degrees, provide the growing season for each county. There is some flexibility in the determination of the growing season in the 1987 Manual. The growing season, based on air temperature in the county soil surveys, can be approximated as the period of time between the average date of the first killing frost to average date of the last killing frost, which sometimes does not accurately reflect the period of time when the soil temperatures are higher than biological zero. The source of the information may vary, however, the growing season generally is to be determined by the number of killing frost-free days. In certain parts of the country where plant communities in general have become more adapted to regional conditions, local means of **determining** growing season may be more appropriate and can be used.

2.Q. Should the determination of hydric soils be based on the presence of an indicator listed in the 1987 Manual or on the series name appearing on the **Hydric Soils of the United States** list, an indicator which is listed as less reliable in the hierarchy of hydric soil indicators in the 1987 Manual?

A. The order of soil indicators reliability as listed in the 1987 Manual remains valid and will be used. The reliability of the indicators is based on the fact that field verification of a soil's hydric characteristics is more accurate than mapping or soils lists. Soils listed on the most recent Hydric Soils list have been determined by the **National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils** (NTCHS) to meet the criteria for hydric soils. When in the field, verification that mapped hydric soils actually exhibit indicators identified in the 1987 Manual for hydric soils is recommended. Although a soil may appear on the list of hydric soils, inclusions or disturbances may alter this designation to some degree, so the list alone may not always be reliable. In obvious wetlands, if the soil is on the list and the area meets the hydrology and vegetation criteria, the area is a wetland. As found with the 1989 Manual, one cannot rely solely on the fact that a soil is mapped as hydric in making the wetland delineation. In all cases, best professional judgment should be used. The county lists provide valuable information, but again should not solely be relied on to make a final determination as to whether hydric soils are present. Verification of the presence of at least one of the indicators for hydric soils on the list (pgs. 30-34) is required in conjunction with the use of a county soils list. The national soils list to be used has recently been updated by

A. The definition of “under normal circumstances” in the 1987 Manual states briefly that this term refers to situations in which the vegetation has not been substantially altered by man’s activities.” As stated in item #3 of the memorandum of 27 August, 1991, the definition of normal circumstances used in the 1987 Manual has been clarified by Regulatory Guidance Letter (RGL) 90-7. Although this RGL deals primarily with agricultural activities in wetlands, paragraphs #3 & #4 discuss normal circumstances with respect to all areas potentially subject to 404. Further guidance on normal circumstances is found in RGL 86-9 regarding construction sites and irrigated wetlands. The guidance should be followed in preferential sequence of; 1) RGL 90-7, 2) RGL 86-9, and 3) 1987 Manual.

4.Q. Does the vegetation criteria in the 1987 manual require the use of the facultative (FAC)-neutral vegetation test (i.e., count the dominant species wetter & drier than FAC, and ignore all of the FACs in the vegetation determination)?

A. While the 1987 Manual mentions use of the FAC-neutral test for determining the presence of wetland vegetation in several places, the first indicator of wetland vegetation criteria is the presence of more than 50% of the dominant plant species FAC or wetter (not including FAC-species, which are considered nonwetland indicators under the 1987 manual). The indicator status of each of the dominant species is determined by consulting the current regional plant list published by the FWS. The 1987 Manual provides an option in this determination of applying the FACneutral test in cases where the delineator questions the status designation of a particular plant species on a subregional basis (see page 23). As always, any deviation from established protocol requires documentation. The FAC-neutral option may also prove useful in questionable areas or when the determination relies on the vegetation call in an area that is not otherwise an obvious wetland. Specifically, the 1987 Manual is replete with cautions and guidance that the Corps regulators **must be confident** that the area is wetland when the area has a FAC-dominated plant community. Uncertainty regarding the status of an area as a wetland where the dominant vegetation is FAC would be a valid reason to use the FACneutral option. Situations exist where use of the FAC-neutral method will not serve to provide any additional information as to the hydrophytic nature of the plant community (e.g., all species are FAC or there is an equal number of species wetter and drier than FAC such that they cancel each other out). In these cases, it may be appropriate to consider the + and - modifiers associated with some FAC species, which indicate the species frequency of occurrence in a wetter or drier environment, in the overall assessment of the vegetation parameter. Documentation supporting reasons for using the FAC-neutral option must always be provided and acceptance of delineations, as always, remains up to the discretion of the District.

5.Q. Can indicators for any of the criteria in the 1989 Manual be used as indicators for verification of the same or other criteria presented in the 1987 Manual?

A. The indicators of hydrology in the 1987 Manual differ from those of the 1989 Manual, and are not interchangeable. In particular, the hydrology determination in the 1989 Manual often relied on evidence of properties from the soil and/or vegetation parameters. Indicators provided in the 1989 manual for field verification of a certain criterion that are not presented in the 1987 Manual for application with the same criterion cannot be used except as additional information in support of the verification. It is unlikely that an area which is a wetland will fail to meet a criteria utilizing the indicators which are listed in the 1987 Manual.

6.Q. Will the other Federal agencies be utilizing the 1987 Manual in their wetland determinations as well as the Corps of Engineers?

A. EPA has concurred with the Corps using the 1987 Manual for all actions. Further, we understand that EPA will likely use the 1987 Manual for EPA's delineations as well. The other agencies (SCS & FWS) typically do not make delineations for purposes of Section 404.

7.Q. To what depth should one look in the soil to find indicators of hydrology?

A. In accordance with the 1987 Manual's guidance on reading soil color (D2), after digging a 16" soil pit observations should be made immediately below the A-horizon or within 10" of the soil surface (whichever is shallower). This guidance pertains to observations of indicators of the **soil criterion**. For indicators of saturation to the surface in the **hydrology criterion**, observations are made within a major portion of the root zone (usually within 12"), again in the 16" pit. Visual observation of standing water within 12" of the surface may, under certain circumstances, be considered a positive indicator of wetland hydrology (i.e., saturation to the surface) as stated on page 38. When using water table within 12" of the surface as an indicator of hydrology, care must be used to consider conditions and the soil types (i.e., to ensure that the capillary ability of the soil texture is considered in regard to the water table depth). Vegetation and soil properties used in the determination of hydrology in the 1989 Manual, are typically not available for field verification of this criterion in the 1987 Manual. However, the 1987 Manual allows for some flexibility with regards to indicators of wetland hydrology, and states that indicators are not limited to those listed on pages 37-41. Other indicators, such as some type of recorded data (e.g., soil surveys which provide specific and strong information about the soil series' hydrology) may be used to verify a wetland hydrology call in a saturated but not inundated area. Appropriate documentation to support the call is necessary in all cases.

8.Q. What length of time must wetland hydrology be present for an area to be determined a wetland under the 1987 Manual?

A. In the hydrology section of Part III, the 1987 Manual discusses the hydrologic zones which were developed through research at WES to indicate the duration of inundation and/or soil saturation during the growing season. Wetland hydrology is defined in the 1987 Manual as the sum total of wetness characteristics in areas that are inundated or have saturated soils for a sufficient duration to support hydrophytic vegetation. The 1987 Manual discusses hydrology in terms of a percent of the growing season when an area is wet (page 36). Generally speaking, areas

which are seasonally inundated and/or saturated to the surface for more than 12.5% of the growing season are wetlands. Areas saturated to the surface between 5% and 12.5% of the growing season are sometimes wetlands and sometimes uplands. Areas saturated to the surface for less than 5% of the growing season are non-wetlands. The percent of growing season translates to a number of days, depending on the length of the growing season in any particular area (e.g., 12.5% of a 170 day growing season is 21 consecutive days). This system for the classification of hydrologic zones based on stream gauge data transformed to mean sea level elevations is useful as a guide to time frames of wetness sufficient to create wetlands. The length of time an area is wet for hydrology is based on **consecutive** days during the growing season. If an area is only saturated to the surface for a period of between 5% and 12.5% of the growing season and no clear indicators of wetland hydrology exist (i.e., recorded or field data; also see answer #7 above), then the vegetation test should be critically reviewed. Specifically, in such cases a vegetative community dominated by FAC species would generally indicate that the area is not a wetland (unless the FAC-neutral test was indicative of wetlands). The actual number of days an area is inundated and/or saturated to the surface for an area to be called a wetland varies; the identification of an indicator of recorded or field data is necessary to document that an area meets the wetland hydrology criterion of the 1987 Manual (i.e., the list of hydrology indicators on pages 37-41, which are to be used in the preferential order shown; also see question #7). The number of days specified in the June 1991 **Hydric Soils of the United States** (i.e., usually more than 2 weeks during the growing season) as the criteria for hydric soils pertains to hydric soils and not the hydrology criterion of the 1987 Manual, which varies with the growing season as previously discussed.

9.Q. Will delineations made now under the 1987 Corps Manual be subject to redelineation under the revised 1989 Manual after it is finalized?

A. Wetland determinations made after 17 August, 1991, are made following the guidance provided in the 1987 Corps Manual and memoranda of 23 & 27 August, 1991 and these questions and answers. These delineations are subject to and remain valid for the period of time described in RGL 90-6. As discussed in Issue #4 of the preamble to the proposed revisions to the 1989 **Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands** issued 14 August in the **Federal Register**, wetland calls made after the issuance date of these revisions but prior to finalization of the revised manual may be subject to redelineation under the new manual at the request of the landowner. Final actions will generally not be reopened. Wetland calls made under the 1989 Manual are already subject to redelineation under the 1987 Manual in accordance with the guidance issued 23 August. Until such time as the proposed revisions to the 1989 Manual are finalized, it is unclear as to what effect, if any, the equity provision in the preamble to the proposed revisions will have on the 404 program. Therefore, written delineations made with the 1987 Manual will explicitly state they are final for a period of three years as specified in RGL 90-6, subject to any equity provisions that may be adopted as part of implementation of the final revisions to the 1989 Manual.

10.Q. How does the 1987 Manual compare to the 1989 Manual or its proposed revisions?

A. The various manuals have been compared by WES and the side-by-side comparison is available for your information.

11.Q. Will applicants be subject to delay with use of 1987 Manual?

A. During the initial transition to use of the 1987 Manual for wetland delineations as of 17 August, some delays are unavoidable. The Corps field offices must adhere to the procedures provided in the 23 August memorandum, while striving to expedite the review process to the extent possible. No offices should indicate that they cannot operate due to lack of guidance during this transition period. HQUSACE recognizes that there will be delays associated with implementing the Corps 1987 Manual and we will take these delays into account when reviewing district application performance data (e.g., % of IPs evaluated in 60 days). Districts should not stop the permit clock, but should indicate where substantial impacts to permit evaluation performance have resulted from implementation the 1987 Manual.

# Corps Clarification Letter

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

6 March 1992

CECW-OR

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Clarification and Interpretation of the 1987 Manual

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional clarification and guidance concerning the application of the **Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual**, Technical Report Y-87-1, January 1987, Final Report (1987 Manual). As discussed in my 20 February 1992 memorandum, procedures for the identification and delineation of wetlands must be fully consistent with both the 1987 Manual and the Questions and Answers issued 7 October 1991. The technical and procedural guidance contained in paragraphs 2 thru 6 below has been prepared by the Waterways Experiment Station (WES) and is provided as further guidance. The following guidance is considered to be consistent with the 1987 Manual and the 7 October Questions and Answers. Further, this guidance will be presented in the upcoming Regulatory IV wetlands delineation training sessions in FY 92. The alternative technical methods of data gathering discussed below are acceptable as long as the basic decision rules (i.e., criteria and indicators) established in the 1987 Manual are applied. Also enclosed is a revised data form which may be used in lieu of the routine data sheet provided with the 1987 Manual, if desired. As discussed in my 20 February 1992 memorandum to the field, regional approaches and/or alternative data sheets must be reviewed and approved by HQUSACE (CECW-OR) prior to regional implementation. Notwithstanding this requirement, we encourage interagency coordination and cooperation on implementation of the 1987 Manual. Such cooperation can facilitate the continued success of our use of the 1987 Manual.

2. Vegetation:

a. Basic rule: More than 50 percent of dominant species from all strata are OBL, FACW, or FAC (excluding FAC-) on the appropriate Fish and Wildlife Service regional list of plant species that occur in wetlands.



b. The 1987 manual provides that the 3 most dominant species be selected from each stratum (select 5 from each stratum if only 1-2 strata are present). However, alternative ecologically based methods for selecting dominant species from each stratum are also acceptable. The dominance method described in the 1989 interagency manual is an appropriate alternative.

5. Methods:

a. As stated in the 1987 Manual (footnote, p. 76), alternative plot sizes and dominance measures are acceptable.

b. For comprehensive determinations involving a patchy or diverse herb layer, a single, centrally located 3.28 x 3.28-foot quadrat may not give a representative sample. As an alternative, the multiple-quadrat procedure presented in the 1989 Manual (p. 42) is recommended.

6. Problem Areas

a. Page 93, paragraph 78 of the 1987 Manual states that similar problem situations may occur in other wetland types; therefore, problem areas are not limited to this list.

b. Problem soil situations mentioned elsewhere in the Manual include soils derived from red parent materials, some Entisols, Mollisols, and Spodosols.

7. Questions concerning this information should be directed to Ms. Karen A. Kochenbach, HQUSACE (CECW-OR), at (202) 272-1784, or Mr. James S. Wakeley, WES, at (601) 634-3702.

Encl

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# Public Notice

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23 May 1994

**SUBJECT:** WASHINGTON REGIONAL GUIDANCE ON THE 1987 WETLAND  
DELINEATION MANUAL

**Introduction and Background.** Several issues have arisen regionally regarding the identification and delineation of wetlands using the 1987 Corps of Engineers' Wetlands Delineation Manual

The purpose of this information paper is to provide guidance on specific issues which are frequently misunderstood when using the Manual. These issues include the following:

1. Interpretation of Hydrophytic Vegetation Indicators.
2. Other Hydrophytic Vegetation Field Indicators.
3. Methods for Analyzing Vegetation Communities.
4. Growing Season.
5. Interpretation of Normal Circumstances.
6. Interpretation of Hydrologic Data.

**ISSUE 1:** 1987 Manual, pages 19-26, Guidance on Indicators of Hydrophytic Vegetation” paragraphs 35 a and 35 b (1) , pages 19 and 23.

### Issue Description.

In the 1987 manual, the hydrophytic vegetation criteria are defined in **Part II** and are termed “diagnostic characteristics.” **Part III** describes the technical basis of the criteria and identifies **indicators** which help to determine if a criterion is met.

An item of particular concern has been proper interpretation of the vegetation indicators. We have found that many manual users focus only on the indicator which states that: More than 50% of the

dominant species (in a plant community) are OBL, FACW or FAC on lists of plant species that occur in wetlands.”

In Washington, we are aware of several wetland plant community types which do not provide a positive indicator of hydrophytic vegetation when consideration is limited to only indicator all (i.e., presence of over 50% FAC, FACW, or OBL plant species) These wetland communities can occur on either organic or **mineral** soils and under a wide spectrum of water regimes. They are generally referred to as Facultative upland (FACU) dominated wetlands.’Because FACU dominated wetlands are common in Washington, it is essential that hydrophytic vegetation indicators be properly interpreted.

It is important to consider that wetlands develop in response to hydrologic conditions; i.e., presence of water (we do not regulate hydrophytic vegetation or hydric soils of the U.S., rather we regulate **waters** of the U.S.) Thus, the known presence of wetland hydrology is very strong evidence of wetland occurrence if soils and vegetation are present. The utility and necessity for wetland identification manual(s) derives from our frequent inability to directly observe hydrologic conditions thus creating a need to rely on **indicators** of vegetation, soils, and hydrology to make a determination.

## **Guidance.**

There are several positive indicators for hydrophytic vegetation provided in the Manual. In referring to these indicators the 1987 Manual states: “. . . any one of the following is indicative that hydrophytic vegetation is present.”(listed on pages 19-26). Investigators should consider whether any of the positive indicators of hydrophytic vegetation are present and consider information on soils and hydrology before making a decision on the presence of hydrophytic vegetation.

There is also confusion regarding interpretation of indicator b (1) Visual observation of plant species growing in areas of prolonged inundation and/or soil saturation (page 23 of the 1987 Manual) . In general, if the hydrology and soils criteria are clearly met, then an area has prolonged periods of inundation or saturation. Thus, one has made an observation of plant species growing under wetland conditions consistent with the Diagnostic Environmental Characteristics (i.e., criteria) for vegetation.

Caution is urged in interpreting this field indicator. Documentation should be included to indicate that the situation observed is not the result of unusual flooding, particularly high rainfall, or a one time condition such as a temporary water diversion.

Interpretation of this field indicator is more difficult when soils and hydrology features are not so evident; i.e., during dry seasons when direct observation of wetland hydrology is not possible or where some drainage has taken place. In such cases, investigators should rely on their previous experience, consultation with other experienced delineators and the literature to determine if the vegetation community is known to occur in areas of prolonged inundation or soil saturation.

Vegetation information should be combined with soils and hydrology observations to make a wetland determination. Information sources used as a basis of the decision should be documented. Documentation should include description of previous field observations of similar communities, who was consulted, etc.

Investigators must also be certain that the site being investigated does not represent an **Atypical Situation** (Section F, Page 83 of the Manual). The site may also represent a **Problem Area** (Section G, Page 93) where positive evidence of vegetation is absent during some seasons of the year.

**ISSUE 2:** 1987 Manual, Pages 23, 24, 26, Paragraph 35 b (2) (3) (4) and (5): Other Hydrophytic Vegetation Field Indicators.

### **Issue Description.**

The Manual is inconsistent in its guidance regarding use of hydrophytic vegetation field indicators other than indicator a. In the section on routine delineation for areas under 5 acres, (page 61), the 1987 Manual states under Step 9: When more than 50% of the dominant species in a community type have an indicator status of OBL, FACW, and/or FAC, hydrophytic vegetation is present . . . [p]ortions of the area failing this test are not wetlands. In contrast to this, on page 65 of the 1987 Manual, in the method for areas greater than 5 acres in size at step 19 c. 1. it states: Hydrophytic vegetation is present at the observation point when 50% of the dominant species have an indicator status of OBL, FACW, and/or FAC; when two or more dominant species have observed morphological or known physiological adaptations for occurrence in wetlands; or when other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation are present.”

### **Guidance.**

**The size of the project site is irrelevant when applying the field indicators. observations of all evident field indicators should be recorded for each site investigated and all should be used to determine if hydrophytic vegetation is present.**

**ISSUE 3:** Methods used for determining dominant plant species.

### **Issue Discussion and Guidance.**

DATA FORM 1 in the 1987 Manual states under **Vegetation:** [list the three **dominant** species in each vegetation layer (5 if only 1 or 2 layers)]. Recent guidance (see reference 3) states that other ecologically based methods for selecting dominant species from each stratum are acceptable. Methods contained in the 1989 Manual are specifically referred to as acceptable. For example, when quantitative data is collected, the definition in the 1989 manual can be used. It states the following:

Dominant species are those species in each stratum that, when ranked in descending order of abundance and cumulatively totaled, immediately exceed 50 percent of the total

dominance measure for that stratum, plus any additional plant species comprising 20 percent or more of the total dominance measure for that stratum. Dominance measures include percent areal coverage and basal area, for example.

In low diversity communities, dominants will be less than five or three and may only be one. Sound professional judgment based on careful observation and data collection must be used in selecting dominant species.

#### **ISSUE 4: Growing season.**

##### **Issue Discussion.**

The manual defines the growing season as:

The portion of the year when soil temperatures at 19.7 inches below the soil surface are higher than biologic zero (5 degrees C). For ease of determination this period can be approximated by the number of frost-free days.”

Several issues arise in determining the growing season:

--In much of the Northwestern U.S. some plant species are growing during every month of the year.

--Each county soil survey has several locations for which air temperature data is tabulated. This can result in numerous growing seasons for each county.

--The data location nearest to a wetland delineation site may not be representative of the growing season for the site being investigated. For example, SCS data may be from a site at sea level but the delineation site may be at high elevation with an annual temperature regime much different than the SCS data site.

##### **Guidance.**

Use sound professional judgment based on careful observation to determine if the growing season is in progress. For example, evidence of new or recent growth such as flowers, new shoots, new leaves, or swollen buds on plants suggests that active growth is occurring. Basically, if plants are growing, it is the growing season.

Take soil temperatures at 19.7 inches to determine if the formal definition of growing season is met. Soil thermometers are readily available at most forestry supply stores.

Use sound professional judgment in interpreting the data tables in the soil surveys. Use the data set which makes the most sense for the site being investigated. Be particularly cautious when the site being investigated is located far from or in a different physiographic setting than the nearest data station.

For much of Western Washington the mesic growing season has, in the past, been considered a good rule of thumb; i.e., 1 March to 31 October (except for some coastal areas which may have a year round growing season and in areas that have more extreme winter temperatures which may result in a shorter growing season). However, this should not be used to conflict with field data and observations.

## **ISSUE 5: Normal Circumstances.**

### **Issue Discussion.**

The term 'normal circumstances' has created confusion for many Manual users as it is often misinterpreted to mean 'normal environmental conditions.' As such, users often confuse the methodology associated with the Section F (Atypical Situations) and the Section G (Problem Areas).

### **Guidance.**

Normal circumstances is an integral and important term in determining the extent of jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act. The term comes from the definition of wetlands:

Wetlands are those areas that are inundated and saturated for a frequency and duration sufficient to support and, under **NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES** do support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted to life in saturated soil conditions . . . . “

The original intent of this term was to assure that the extent of Federal jurisdiction would not be obscured by human-caused activities done without benefit of a Section 404 Permit. For example, if an individual removed the vegetation of a wetland, it would still be a wetland under normal circumstances. That is, physically removing the vegetation neither eliminates the site from jurisdiction nor from the definition of wetlands. The same would hold true if fill materials were placed in wetlands without benefit of permit; the area is still under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government even though the wetlands have been covered by unauthorized fill. These conditions are discussed in the Manual under Section F - Atypical Situations. There is also a methodology associated with Atypical Situations which helps the user assess the extent of jurisdiction when the wetland parameters are obscured due to unauthorized activities.

Keep in mind that if fill is placed **with benefit of permit** (that is, the fill is placed legally), that condition is now the new 'normal circumstances' and the area would not be considered jurisdictional, unless wetland characteristics return.

A 'problem area' is a wetland system that is a natural or naturalized system that may permanently or periodically lack certain field indicators for a specific parameter. These can be a seasonal wetland where hydrology is missing during the dry season; a newly created wetland; a wetland with soils derived from red parent materials; etc. This is discussed in Section G of the Manual and also in the March 6, 1992, Guidance.

## ISSUE 6: Interpretation of Hydrologic Data.

### Issue Discussion.

Many users of the Manual have spent considerable time and effort installing and monitoring ground water wells under the assumption that the water table must be at 12 inches for sufficient time during the growing season for the wetland hydrology criterion to be met. However, the hydrology criterion states:

The area is inundated either permanently or periodically at mean water depths  $\leq 6.6$  ft., OR the soil is saturated to the surface at some time during the growing season of the prevalent vegetation.’(Page 14, Diagnostic Environmental Indicators).

Under Field Indicators of Hydrology’the Manual states:

For soil saturation to impact vegetation, it must occur within **a major portion of the root zone** (usually within 12 inches of the surface) of the prevalent vegetation). Page 38, field indicators.

Well data only reflects the depth of the water table and not the zone of soil saturation. If the water table is near or at the surface for sufficient time, the observer can be reasonably certain that surface saturation is occurring. However, several soils can have a capillary fringe of 18 inches or greater (especially organic soils). In addition, wetland systems that are driven by surface water may have a deep water table where the root zones of the soil are saturated from persistent surface water (not just periodic rainfall).

While well data can be extremely useful, without supplemental observations of surface soil saturation and/or observations of surface ponding or flooding, the data may be meaningless.

Many users have also limited the amount of time that they make groundwater observations (2-3 months out of the year) making the assumption that this was sufficient time to adequately characterize wetland hydrology. This limited sampling time may incorrectly interpret the hydrology of the site. We recommend that the sample adequately reflect seasonal hydrology and its effect on vegetation (generally from about mid-October to mid-June to capture both dormancy and new growth)

### Guidance.

Ground-water well data must always be supplemented with observations of the extent in the soil profile of the capillary fringe. This can be done by examining a soil profile in the nearby vicinity of a ground-water well every time depth to the ground water is measured. Observations of surface ponding and/or flooding should also be made. In addition, soil temperatures at approximately 20 inches should be recorded to adequately determine extent of the growing season at that site. As

discussed in Issue 4, reliance on air temperature data to determine growing season may artificially restrict the time pat a site is actively functioning as a wetland.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.** Should you be interested in obtaining any of the available references cited or have further questions, please contact either of the following Federal agencies:

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## References

1. Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual. Technical Report Y-87-1. January, 1987.
2. CECW-OR Memorandum dated 7 October 1991 titled: Questions and Answers on 1987 Manual.
3. CECW-OR Memorandum dated 6 March 1992 titled: Clarification and Interpretation of the 1987 Manual.
5. Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands. January 1989.
6. Tiner, Ralph. How Wet is a Wetland? Great Lakes Wetlands, Vol. 2, No. 3. Summer, 1991.