DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, SACRAMENTO
CORPS OF ENGINEERS
1325 J STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814-2922

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

November 30, 2001

Regulatory Branch

To whom it may concern:

To better serve the public, the District has revised its "Minimum Standards for Acceptance of Preliminary Wetlands Delineations". This document is designed to assist private wetland consultants to produce a uniform and consistent quality product. Adherence to these standards will facilitate the District's review of preliminary delineations and provide time savings to all those involved. I am enclosing the standards, which are effective immediately. Any questions or comments can be directed to the Regulatory Branch at the above address.

Art Champ
Chief, Regulatory Branch

Attachment

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF PRELIMINARY WETLANDS DELINEATIONS

November 30, 2001

The Regulatory Branch of the Sacramento District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (District), receives numerous requests to perform wetlands delineations for potential applicants for permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Due to limited staff and resources, the response time can be several months or longer. To expedite this process, the District encourages applicants to use consultants to conduct preliminary wetlands delineations, especially for large and/or complex areas. Preliminary delineations may then be submitted to the District for review and verification.

While accurate delineations by qualified individuals have resulted in a quicker review and response from the District, substandard or inaccurate delineations have resulted in unnecessary time delays for applicants. These delays are due to insufficient, incomplete, or conflicting data, which prevent the District from verifying the proposed wetland boundaries. Such delineations must be returned by the District to the applicant or consultant for revision.

To improve the quality and consistency of delineations, the District has developed minimum standards necessary for accepting a delineation for verification of the jurisdictional boundaries. Any submittal that does not meet these requirements will be returned to the applicant or consultant. All deficiencies must be corrected by the applicant or a consultant prior to re-submittal.

A. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The preliminary wetlands delineation report shall include:

- ❑ A statement that the delineation has been conducted in accordance with the 1987 "Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual."
- ❑ A narrative describing the wetlands.
- ❑ Justification for the wetlands boundaries.
- ❑ The total acreage of the project site.
- ❑ Existing field conditions such as season and flood/drought conditions.
- ❑ A discussion of the hydrology source(subsurface or surface, including potential irrigation influence) and drainage gradients.
- ❑ A site location map, preferably outlined on a 7.5-minute USGS quadrangle, along with any other pertinent maps of the site. The map must provide the name of the USGS quadrangle, Section, Township, Range, and UTM or latitude and longitude.
- ❑ Directions to the site.
- ❑ Contact information for the applicant(s) and property owner(s).
- ❑ A discussion of plant communities and habitat types present on the site and a list of the scientific name, common name(s), and indicator status of all plants.
- ❑ Soil descriptions, soil map(s), and a list of hydric soils or soils with hydric inclusions on the site.
- ❑ Any observed and/or documented examples of an interstate or foreign commerce connection. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Recreational or other use by interstate or foreign travelers.
  - Sale of fish or shellfish in interstate or foreign commerce.
  - Use by industries, including agriculture, operating in interstate or foreign commerce.
- ❑ A delineation map at an appropriate scale (for most projects, a scale of one inch to 100 or 200 feet).

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The map should not exceed one inch to 400 feet unless there are extenuating circumstances. (Note: map scales must be accurate and in round numbers, any maps using a photographic base must be corrected for distortions, and any overlays must be of identical scale) The map must include:

- The boundary of the entire project area.
- All features which meet the criteria for wetlands or other waters of the United States.
- Color or thatched coding of the different wetlands types present.
- Topography.
- Clearly and accurately identified data point locations and the location and identification number of surveyed or GPS established flags, stakes, or wetland boundaries.
- All waters of the U.S., including but not limited to, interstate waters, tributaries, wetlands, and all other waters such as intrastate lakes, rivers, streams, and mudflats as described in 33 CFR 328.3, must be shown on the delineation map. Those features which meet wetlands criteria or are potential waters of the U.S., but which may be isolated and lacking an interstate or foreign commerce connection or non-jurisdictional for other reasons must still be shown on the map. Any justification for the Corps to make a non-jurisdictional determination should be provided in the report.
- Standard mapping conventions (e.g., north arrow, location map, etc.) and other identifying features which facilitate the correlation of map locations with ground features (e.g., buildings, fence lines, roads, right-of-ways, trees, streams, topographic features, etc.).
- A reference block which identifies the project, the delineators, surveyors, date of initial preparation and date(s) of any revisions.
- Individual numbers or other designations for each water feature identified.
- A table displaying the respective size (in acres) of each water and the cumulative acreage of each type of water.

- Data sheets completely and appropriately filled out. Data forms may be modified from the Corps' standard version, but they must present all essential information necessary to make a wetlands/non-wetlands determination.
- At least one set of paired data points documented for each feature or complex. Additional data forms may be necessary depending on various factors including the size and shape of the wetlands on the site, difficulty in identifying a precise wetlands/uplands boundary, and the width of any transition zones.

Additionally, before the Corps can complete its verification of the delineation, wetland boundaries must be marked with flags or stakes. Flags or stakes must be individually numbered and surveyed by traditional methods or by GPS equipment accurate to less than one meter. The survey data must specify the geographic coordinate system used in referencing the data, including projection and datum (e.g., Latitude-Longitude : NAD-27 or UTM - Zone 10 : NAD83). Data should be provided in a digital geographic information system (GIS) format to expedite review, with ESRI Shapefiles being the preferred format. The Corps also strongly recommends that property boundaries be flagged or staked and surveyed.

Additional information often can expedite a wetland verification. Particularly helpful data includes topographic maps, aerial and ground photographs, and related reports. Expanded narrative reports may also clarify the investigation. However, the Corps emphasizes that these reports should be succinct with only the relevant information presented. Irrelevant, verbose, or perfunctory information will only delay the Corps' evaluation.

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF PRELIMINARY WETLANDS DELINEATIONS

IMPORTANT SOURCES OF INFORMATION

CORPS OF ENGINEERS WETLANDS DELINEATION MANUAL (1987 VERSION)
NATIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE (NTIS)
ATTN ORDER DEPT SPRINGFIELD VA 22161
703-487-4650 FAX 703-321-8547

WETLANDS PLANTS LISTS (Out-of-print lists available from NTIS above)
US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
PUBLICATIONS UNIT
1849 C STREET NW
MAIL STOP 130 -- WEBB BUILDING
WASHINGTON DC 20240

HYDRIC SOILS OF THE UNITED STATES (Obtain local lists from county or state NRCS offices)
NATIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE FOR HYDRIC SOILS
NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE
PO BOX 2890
WASHINGTON DC 20013

MAPPING PRODUCTS AND DIGITAL DATA (National Wetlands Inventory and USGS Topographic Maps)
USGS EARTH SCIENCE INFORMATION CENTER (ESIC)
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
507 NATIONAL CENTER
RESTON VA 22092
1-800-USA-MAPS
(703) 648-6045

FIELD INDICATORS OF HYDRIC SOILS IN THE UNITED STATES, VERSION 4.0 (March 1998)
Russell F. Pringle
NRCS, WSI, LSU
104 Sturgis Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-2110

Aerial Photography - National Sources of Photos (additional sources form ESIC above)
ASCS AERIAL PHOTO FIELD OFFICE
PO BOX 30010
SALT LAKE CITY UT 84130
(801) 524-5856

USGS EROS DATA CENTER
SIOUX FALLS SD 57198
(605) 594-6151

National List of Scientific Plant Names
USDA SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
OFFICE OF ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES
PO BOX 2890
WASHINGTON DC 20013
(202) 447-2587
Publ No. SCS-TP-159 (1982)

Keys to Soil Taxonomy (1982 ed.)
POCAHONTAS PRESS
832 HUTCHINSON DRIVE
PO DRAWER F
BLACKSBURG VA 24063
(703) 951-0467

Publication on "Redoximorphic Features for Identifying Aquic Conditions"
Technical Bulletin 301 of the North Carolina Agricultural Research Service (1992)
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS
PO BOX 7603 NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
RALEIGH NC 27695-7603