Public Notice

U S Army Corps of Engineers
Huntington District

In reply refer to Public Notice No.	Issuance Date: July 16, 2008
Stream:	Closing Date: September 15, 2008

Please address all comments and inquiries to:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District
ATTN: CELRH-OR-F Public Notice No. (*reference above*)
502 Eighth Street
Huntington, West Virginia 25701-2070 Phone: (304) 399-5210

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

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

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

Comments must be submitted by September 15, 2008, to Ms. Jennifer McCarthy (CECW-CO), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 441 G. Street, NW, Washington DC 20314-1000 or by e-mail to 1987Manual@usace.army.mil. Another public notice will be issued by this district announcing the publication of the final supplement and the implementation date of this supplement.

Attachments

Field Testing Protocol

Northcentral and Northeast Regional Supplement

Organization of field testing teams:

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

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

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

Site Selection:

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

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

Approach:

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

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

2. Document each point using the new (Regional Supplement) data form. Locate the wetland boundary based on indicators and guidance given in the Regional Supplement.

3. If the two wetland boundaries are different, measure the distance between them.

4. Fill out the attached questionnaire (one copy per field site) to help explain any differences seen in the two methods.

5. For each field site sampled, submit the following items to the appropriate District coordinator:

    a. Completed 1992 and Regional Supplement data forms for each sampling point
    b. Sk etch map of the site with sampling points, wetland boundaries, and any other important features indicated
    c. One copy of the Field Evaluation Questionnaire
    d. Option al brief report as necessary to explain test results

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

Christine Delorier, U.S. Army Engineer District, New York, NY, 518-266-6354
Theresa Hudson, U.S. Army Engineer District, Buffalo, NY, 716-879-4368
Michael Leggiero, U.S. Army Philadelphia District, Gouldsboro, PA, 570-842-1046
Michael Machalek, U.S. Army Engineer District, Chicago, IL, 312-846-5534
Tom Mings, U.S. Army Engineer District, St. Paul, MN, 651-290-5365
Paul Minkin, U.S. Army Engineer New England District, Concord, MA, 978-318-8283
Frank Plewa, U.S. Army Engineer Baltimore District, Carlisle, PA, 717-249-2522
John Ritchey, U.S. Army Engineer District, Detroit, MI, 574-232-1952

WETLAND DELINEATION FIELD EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

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

Site Name or Location_____ **Date**_____
Evaluator(s)_____ **Affiliation(s)**_____
_____ _____
_____ _____

General Site Characteristics

Is the site ___typical or ___problematic? *If problematic, explain*:_____
_____
_____

Wetland (lower community)

Ecological System: ___Saline Tidal ___Fresh Tidal ___Fresh Nontidal ___Saline Nontidal
Wetland Type: ___Forested ___Shrub ___Emergent ___Moss/Lichen ___Farmed (hay or crop)
___Other (specify_____)
HGM Class: ___Depression ___Riverine ___Fringe ___Slope ___Flat
Vegetative Cover: ___Dense ___Evenly Mixed w/Nonvegetated ___Sparse

Nonwetland (upper community)

Habitat Type: ___Forest ___ Shrub ___Meadow/Prairie ___Moss/Lichen ___Farmed
___Other (specify:_____)

1. Was there a marked difference in the two plant communities? ___Yes ___No
2. Was there a gradual change in vegetation between the two communities creating a significant "transition zone" between? ___Yes ___No. If so, how wide was this transition zone? _____feet
3. Was there an abrupt topographic change between the two communities? ___Yes ___No

Boundary Determination

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

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

Assessment of the Indicators

Hydrophytic Vegetation

1. Did the lower community pass the current basic test for hydrophytic vegetation (i.e., >50% of the dominants had an indicator status of FAC or wetter, *excluding FAC-*)? ___Yes ___No
2. Did the lower community pass the "dominance test" in the Regional Supplement (i.e., >50% of the dominants were FAC or wetter, *counting FAC- as FAC*)? ___Yes ___No
3. What other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation were observed in the lower community?
   a) List those from the Manual with current guidance: _____

   b) List those from the Regional Supplement: _____

4. Was the vegetation in the lower community a problematic wetland community type?
   ___Yes ___No. *If so, briefly describe and explain how the problem was handled*_____

5. Did the upper community pass the current basic test for hydrophytic vegetation (i.e., >50% of the dominants had an indicator status of FAC or wetter, *excluding FAC-*)? ___Yes ___No
6. Did the upper community pass the "dominance test" in the Regional Supplement (i.e., >50% of the dominants were FAC or wetter, *counting FAC- as FAC*)? ___Yes ___No
7. What other indicators of hydrophytic vegetation were observed in the upper community?
   a) List those from the Manual with current guidance: _____

   b) List those from the Regional Supplement: _____

8. Did both methods reach the same conclusion regarding the presence of hydrophytic vegetation for the upper community? ___Yes ___No. *If not, briefly explain*_____

9. Were the hydrophytic vegetation indicators in the Regional Supplement clearly described and easy to apply? ___Yes ___No. *If not, briefly explain*_____

Hydric Soil

1. Did both methods find indicators of hydric soil in the lower community? ___Yes ___No
   a) List those from the Manual with current guidance: _____

   b) List those from the Regional Supplement: _____

2. Did the lower community contain a problematic hydric soil (i.e., one that lacked indicators)? ___Yes ___No. *If so, briefly describe the problem and explain how it was handled:* _____

3. Did both methods reach the same conclusion regarding the presence of hydric soil in the upper community? ___Yes ___No. *If not, briefly explain* _____
   a) List indicators from the Manual with current guidance: _____

   b) List indicators from the Regional Supplement: _____

4. Were the hydric soil indicators in the Regional Supplement clearly described and easy to apply? ___Yes ___No. *If not, briefly explain* _____

Wetland Hydrology

1. Did both methods determine that wetland hydrology was present in the lower community? (Requires 1 primary indicator or 2 secondary indicators.) ___Yes ___No
   a) List indicators from the Manual with current guidance:
      Primary: _____ Secondary: _____

   b) List indicators from the Regional Supplement:
      Primary: _____ Secondary: _____

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

___Yes ___No. *If so, briefly describe the problem and explain how it was handled:* _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Did both methods reach the same conclusion regarding wetland hydrology for the upper community? ___Yes ___No. *If not, briefly explain*_____

_____

a) List indicators from the Manual with current guidance:

Primary:_____ Secondary:_____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

b) List indicators from the Regional Supplement:

Primary:_____ Secondary:_____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

4. Were the wetland hydrology indicators in the Regional Supplement clearly described and easy to apply? ___Yes ___No. *If not, briefly explain*_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comments on the Regional Supplement

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

___Yes ___No. *If not, how could they be improved?*_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. In your opinion, did the Regional Supplement make this wetland determination more defensible? ___Yes ____No. *Briefly explain*_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Based on your testing, do you want to recommend other indicators that should be considered for further evaluation? ___Yes ___No. *List by indicator type:*_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Was the Regional Supplement's field data form complete, understandable, and easy to fill out? ___Yes ___No. *If not, how could it be improved?* _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Any additional comments or suggestions? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____