

Applying Vegetation Dominance

Selecting Dominant Species by the 50/20 Rule

- Step 1. Estimate percent cover for each species (alternatively, estimate basal area or stem density for each species).
- Step 2. Add these numbers to get total cover (this sum may exceed 100% if plant canopies overlap extensively).
- Step 3. In descending order, identify species that contribute to more than 50% of total cover (species whose cover values are tied must be taken together).
- Step 4. Include any other species that by itself is 20% or more of total cover. Species identified in (3) and (4) are the dominants for this stratum.
- Step 5. Repeat steps (1) through (4) for all other strata. Determine the total number of dominants from all strata. A species may be counted more than once if it is a dominant in more than one stratum.

Example: Assume the following data came from a single stratum.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Percent Cover</u>
A	30
B	25
C	20
D	10
E	<u>5</u>
Total	90

Species A and B are dominants according to step (3) above, because together their sum ($30 + 25 = 55$) is more than 50 % of the total (50% of $90 = 45$).

Species C is also a dominant according to step (4), because its coverage (20) is 20 % or more of the total (20% of $90 = 18$). Thus, there are three dominants in this stratum A, B, and C. Repeat the procedure for each stratum.

***ALWAYS base your 50% from Step 3 and 20% from Step 4 relative to 100%. Adjust your percent cover accordingly so that the proper ratios are compared. You may need to adjust it up, as in the example, or down if your field findings percent cover total more than 100%.**

Making the hydrophytic determination

- Step 6. Look up the wetland indicator status of all dominants. Hydrophytic vegetation is present if more than 50% of the total number of dominants are FAC or wetter.

Example

(Hydrophytic = OBL, FACW, FAC+, FAC) (NON hydrophytic = FAC-, FACU, UPL)

FAC Neutral Test

When FAC species occur as dominants along with other dominants that are not FAC (either wetter or drier), the FAC species (+ or -) can be treated as neutral and the vegetation decision can be based on the number of dominant species wetter than FAC, as compared to the number of species drier than FAC. When a tie occurs or all dominant species are FAC, the nondominant species must be considered. A comprehensive analysis should be done in this case.