

## Introduction

Wetland determinations for sites that are obviously non-wetland may be done accurately and more efficiently in the office using offsite methods. An example would be a request to add additional tile in a cropland that does not have any wet areas that cause crop stress in a year with normal precipitation; or a request to clear trees and farm an HEL field that has only non-hydric soil map units.

Offsite methods for making wetland determinations are authorized by 7 CFR Section 12.30(a)(4). The Food Security Act Wetland Identification Procedures (2010), distributed by NFSAM Circular No. 6, provides a variance to the Corps of Engineers 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual, Part IV, Section D, Subsection 1, "Onsite Inspection Unnecessary". The variance allows for the development and use of State Offsite Methods for making wetland determinations. Where applicable, the following Illinois Offsite Methods for Wetland Determinations may be used without a field visit. **For situations where the following three scenarios do not apply, use the existing Illinois Wetland Mapping Conventions with field verification, and/or the Food Security Act Wetland Identification Procedures (2010) for onsite investigations.**

Onsite determinations must be conducted in the following circumstances per NFSAM Part 514.1(A)(3):

1. Before withholding any USDA benefits (part of the area is a converted wetland (CW))
2. When USDA program participant requests an onsite determination
3. When there is an appeal
4. For a minimal effect determination request
5. In response to an FSA-569 or whistleblower complaint
6. In conjunction with a compliance status review
7. If there is inadequate information to make the determination offsite.

## Offsite Methods

### **NW**

In order for an offsite wetland determination of non-wetland (NW) to be made all of the following must be true for an area:

1. The area must contain only non-hydric soil map units that do not contain inclusions (including wet spot symbols) of hydric soil per the County Soil Survey.
2. The area must not be identified on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) as any type of wetland.
3. The area must not be in a landscape position where a wetland is likely to occur. (Level areas at the base of steep slopes, depressions, major drainageways, and fringes of water bodies.)
4. The area must not exhibit wetland signatures (see IL Wetland Mapping Conventions) on aerial photography in the case file (base maps and soil survey maps).

## PC

In order for an offsite wetland determination of Prior Converted Cropland (PC) to be made all of the following must be true for an area:

1. The area must be cropland.
2. The area must have been planted to a crop in 1985 and in most years since 1985.
3. The area must contain hydric soil map units; and/or non-hydric soil map units with possible hydric inclusions; and/or map symbols indicating wet spots per the County Soil Survey.
4. A review of all existing aerial photography for the area in the case file (black and white base maps, soils maps, etc.) does not exhibit wetland signatures (see IL Wetland Mapping Conventions).
5. A review of five years of FSA aerial crop history photography for the area, from years with "Normal Precipitation" (see Hydrology Tools for Wetland Determinations), does not show any wetland signatures (see Illinois Wetland Mapping Conventions) on at least 3 years of photography with one of the 3 years without a wetland signature being 1985 or earlier.
6. The area must not be identified on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) as any type of wetland.

## AW

In order for an offsite wetland determination of Artificial Wetland (AW) to be made all of the following must be true:

1. A shallow body of water that is permanently or semi-permanently inundated with water and is totally within non-hydric soil map units.
2. The shallow body of water appears to be a man made pond or there is credible documentation that the body of water was manmade.

### **Determination**

Where the above criteria are met, outline the area of the determination on the wetland determination map and place a NW or PC in each field as appropriate. If there are parts of a field that are NW and parts that are PC or AW, delineate and label each part on the determination map and calculate an acreage for each part. Complete and issue the determination according to NFSAM Part 514.1(E).