

Hydric Soils Information

Introduction

Hydric soils will have a number of agricultural and nonagricultural applications, including assistance in land-use planning, conservation planning and assessment of potential wildlife habitat. Hydric soil lists can include phases of soil series that may or may not have been drained. Some soil series, designated as hydric, have phases that are not hydric depending on water table, flooding, and ponding characteristics. Thus, the presence of a soil on a hydric soil list does not mean that the soil is in fact hydric. This is only an interpretive rating. Just as with all interpretations based on information in a published soil survey or other sources of estimated soil properties, if any portion of the range of estimated properties for a soil is within the criteria, then that soil appears on Hydric Soils Lists. For example, if a soil with a permeability of less than 6 inches per hour has an estimated water table of 1.0 to 2.0 ft. during any portion of the growing season, that soil would be on the hydric soil list, although most of the range in estimated water table (> 2.0 ft.) is outside the criteria. All hydric soil interpretations are/should be confirmed by on-site investigations.

All hydric soils must satisfy requirements of the definition. Hydric criteria are used to generate lists and these lists contain a listing of soils that have a probability of being hydric. An area that meets the hydric soil criteria must also meet the hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology criteria in order for it to be classified as a jurisdictional wetland (See the "Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual", 1987).

The National hydric soils lists, as well as other hydric soil information and criteria can be found at the following web site: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/soils/use/hydric/>. Since the National List is only compiled once a year and Web Soil Survey may be updated on a more frequent basis, Web Soil Survey (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>) should be deferred to when there is a discrepancy.

Definition

The Hydric Soil Definition (Federal Register, July 13, 1994) is: "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." This definition replaced the older 1991 version and accomplished two things. First, a soil that is artificially drained or protected (ditches, levees, etc.) is a hydric soil if the soil in its undisturbed state meets the definition of a hydric soil. Estimated soil properties for manipulated soils are based on best professional estimates of the properties thought to exist before manipulation. Second, the link between the definition and criteria was removed.

Several terms are frequently used to describe hydric soil delineation methodology. These are: Hydric Soil Definition, Hydric Soil Criteria, Hydric Soil Lists, Hydric Soil Indicators, and lastly, hydric soils. According to the deliberations of the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils (NTCHS), each of these terms has a specific meaning and use. All hydric soils must satisfy requirements of the Hydric Soil Definition. Hydric Soil Criteria are used to generate Hydric Soil

Lists. Hydric Soil Lists contain a listing of soils that have a probability of being hydric. Hydric Soil Indicators are primarily morphological indicators used for field identification of hydric soils. Hydric Soil Criteria and Hydric Soil Lists are primarily used as offsite assessment tools. A hydric soil is a soil that meets the Hydric Soil Definition; i.e., presence of one (or more) of the Hydric Soil Indicators is evidence that the definition has been met.