

Texas Wetland Mapping Conventions for the 1985 Food Security Act, as amended

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I. Introduction

This document contains the mapping conventions that will be used by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas to identify and delineate wetlands when off-site data is used for implementing the Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act, as amended. Designed to ensure determination and delineation consistency in Texas, these conventions are compatible with the NRCS National Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM) and the Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual (WDM) applicable to the region, and may be used as the basis for completing preliminary wetland determinations and/or used as supplemental documentation when completing on-site determinations.

In Texas, no certified wetland determination will be completed without an on-site visit to confirm the presence of all three wetland criteria, i.e., hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetlands hydrology.

Mapping conventions are accepted methods and procedures the NRCS uses to guide a wetland delineator when using off-site tools in the preliminary stages of wetland identification for making certified wetland determinations or delineations on agricultural lands. They are state-specific and developed to interpret off-site and remotely sensed data in identifying wetlands. Generally, mapping conventions are applied to disturbed areas, e.g., crop land, where they have been shown to work well.

II. Background

In January 2005, the departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Army withdrew from the 1994 Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) developed to streamline and promote consistency with

regards to wetland delineation. Subsequent to the 1994 MoA, amendments to the 1985 Food Security Act created differences between its wetland conservation provisions and those of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). For example, amendments in 2002 prohibited NRCS from sharing certain producer information with agencies outside USDA, making it illegal for NRCS to provide wetland delineations and determinations for CWA permitting and enforcement.

In February 2005, USDA and the Department of the Army issued Joint Guidance on conducting wetland determinations for both the Food Security and Clean Water acts. Significant among the guidance is:

- NRCS will conduct wetland determinations on land for participants, or persons intending to become participants, in USDA programs.
- To the Farm Service Agency, persons intent on becoming USDA program participants must submit Form AD-1026 (Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELCS) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification).
- The Corps of Engineers will conduct wetland determinations for CWA purposes.
- Each agency will inform landowners that their wetland determinations may not apply to the other agency's wetland programs.

III. General Information

- A. Wetlands that are a part of agricultural lands will be delineated using the NFSAM. Non-agricultural wetlands either adjacent to or interspersed within agricultural lands will be delineated using the WDM applicable to the region.
- B. The primary tools used to make the wetland determination include: soil surveys from Web Soil Survey; U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle sheets; climatological data; NRCS and Farm Service Agency (FSA) aerial photography; and the Hydrology Tools for Wetlands Delineation Manual. Additional tools include: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood hazard maps; quality aerial photography from reliable sources; stream/tide gage data available either from USGS or the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), Environmental Assessments (EA), watershed work plans; documents and maps from state and local government; USGS land use and land cover maps; and individuals with local expertise.
- C. To determine "average" conditions, this process will consider both above normal and below normal precipitation levels.
- D. Wetland areas large enough to be detected when interpreting aerial photography shall be mapped.
- E. Field checking of wetland determinations made from these conventions should be performed until individuals become proficient in off-site determination procedures.
- F. Copies of the forms used in this procedure and where to find them are:

1. Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification (AD-1026) at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eforms/formsearchervlet>
 2. Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Determination (NRCS-CPA-026) on fillable forms CD
 3. Wetland Documentation Record Remotely Sensed Data Summary (NRCS-CPA-32) on fillable forms CD
 4. Request for Certified Wetland Determination or Delineations (NRCS-CPA-38) at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eforms/formsearchervlet>
 5. Good Faith Determination – Wetland Activity (AD-1069) at <http://forms.sc.egov.usda.gov/eforms/formsearchervlet>
- G. When using these conventions, pertinent sections of the NFSAM and WDM are below. NFSAM can be found on-line at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/compliance>. WDM can be found on-line at <http://el.erd.c.usace.army.mil/elpubs/pdf/wlman87.pdf> and http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/cecwo/reg/reg_supp.htm.

Manual	Part	Title
NFSAM	513	Preparing to Make Wetland Determinations or Delineations
NFSAM	514	Making Wetland Determinations on Agricultural Land
NFSAM	515	Scope and Effect Determinations and Wetland Uses for Compliance
NFSAM	516	Minimal Effect Exemption
NFSAM	517	Mitigation of Lost Wetland Functions and Values
NFSAM	527	Appendix
WDM	Part IV	Methods

IV. Procedures

Wetlands associated with agricultural lands will be identified and delineated using the following procedures:

A. Data Sources and Synthesis:

1. Hydric soils list and county soil surveys from Web Soil Survey (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>). Determine if the site is a hydric soil map unit or a soil map unit with hydric inclusions. Identify any wet areas such as depressions, river wash, or other areas that meet ponding or flooding criteria.
2. FSA aerial photographs received with the AD-1026. If necessary, refer to the original aerial photograph.
3. 7.5-minute USGS quad sheet for wetland identification and evidence of alteration.

Quad sheets provide information on drainage patterns, general land use, topographic details, and general delineation of wet areas. Wet areas are based on the driest season of

the year; thus, the wet area may be greater in extent than shown. Depending upon the publication date of the quad sheet, altered vs. natural conditions may be determined from aerial photography.

4. Other available FSA or NRCS aerial photographs such as older black and white flights.

5. When reviewing aerial photography, the following signatures may be considered indicative of a wetland.

- a. Soil tonal differences
- b. Flooded or drowned-out crops
- c. Stressed crops due to wetness (yellow)
- d. Color of crop in dry or wet years (greener or yellowed)
- e. Surface water
- f. Vegetation color differences
- g. Vegetation differences due to different planting dates
- h. Wet areas included in set-aside land
- i. Unharvested crops
- j. Areas not farmed with the remainder of a field
- k. Patches of greener vegetation

6. When reviewing aerial photography, the following signatures may be considered indicators of manipulation.

- a. Dams
- b. Ditches
- c. Dikes
- d. Diversions
- e. Drains
- f. Terraces

g. Dredge and fill

h. Clearing of woody vegetation

B. Steps in Data Review. Complete the following steps and record the results on the NRCS-CPA-026.

1. Using Web Soil Survey, locate the site. Determine if the soil map indicates a hydric soil, a soil that could contain hydric inclusions, or wet areas.

2. Locate the site on a USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle sheet. Note any water or wetland features occurring on the site.

3. Locate the site on available aerial photographs. Cover a time span of at least five years.

4. Check the aerial photography above for recent hydrologic manipulations.

5. Review any other available information for the presence or absence of wetland signatures or alterations of the identified wetlands.

C. Make a Wetland Identification Decision

1. Based on support of the available data, the appropriate wetlands conservation determination shall be documented on the NRCS-CPA-026 and accompanying aerial photography. Pertinent supporting data will be added to the NRCS Field Office case file. While ensuring the entire wetland is included, mark the wetland boundary on the aerial photography provided with the original AD-1026.

2. If the available data is inconclusive or the wetland identification has been appealed, NRCS shall complete a field wetland delineation using NFSAM or WDM as appropriate.

3. The District Conservationist will consult with the appropriate NRCS Wetlands Specialist.

4. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers will accept the NRCS determination on agricultural lands, adjacent narrow bands of non-agricultural wetlands, and small, isolated pockets of non-agricultural wetlands with agricultural lands.

Appendix A. Wetland ID tools and their sources

Wetland ID tools	Sources
USGS topographic sheets, e.g., 7.5-minute quad sheets	1. f:\geodata\topographic image 2. Paper copies

	3. Field office map case
Site-specific maps	1. Producer case file 2. Customer Service Tool Kit 3. Field office map case
Soil maps including hydric soils	1. Producer case file 2. http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/ 3. Customer Service Toolkit 4. NRCS County Soil Survey – hard copy
Aerial photographs, including black and white NHAP and Color IR photography	1. Customer Service Toolkit: f:geodata 2. ArcGIS 3. Field office map case
FSA compliance slides	1. Local FSA office 2. Customer Service Toolkit: f:geodata
Climatological data	1. Producer case file 2. e-FOTG section II climatic data, WETS tables: http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/treemenuFS.aspx
Approved mapping conventions	1. e-FOTG, Section 1
<i>As built</i> drawing/design of prior drainage installation and/or allowable maintenance	1. Producer case file
Mitigation, restoration, creation or minimal effect evaluations, plans, and designs	1. Producer case file