



VIRGINIA OFF-SITE CERTIFIED WETLAND DETERMINATION METHODS

A) PURPOSE

This document outlines the methods that will be used to conduct offsite certified wetland determinations for Food Security Act purposes in Virginia (certified Wetland Conservation compliance determinations). Off-site methods are state-specific procedures developed to interpret off-site and remotely-sensed data to assist in identifying wetlands. For areas where the natural vegetation has been removed and/or where hydrology may have been modified in the past such as agricultural lands, on-site methods may not be adequate to reflect long-term conditions and/or the conditions as they existed on December 23, 1985.

These off-site methods for conducting certified wetland determinations are designed to ensure consistency among NRCS employees with job approval authority to do wetland determinations (Designated Conservationist). These methods are based on the off-site wetland determination tools described in the National Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM) Part 514, Subpart A, 514.8 Exhibit, Food Security Act Wetland Identification Procedures,

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=40305.wba>

B) AN ON-SITE CONFIRMATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING DETERMINATIONS.

- Off-site information is not adequate to make the call **as non-wetland**
- Producer requests an on-site determination
- A minimal effect determination is being made
- If there is an “appeal” or reconsideration by the producer
- Prior to withholding any benefits resulting from conversion

C) GENERAL INFORMATION

Certified wetland determinations verifying compliance with Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions of the Food Security Act will be supported by off-site tools such as soils maps, various NRCS and Farm Service Agency (FSA) aerial photos FSA color slides, National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps, and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps, in either digital or hard copy. Products derived from high resolution LiDAR data can also be used where available. Climatic data and personal knowledge of an area will also be used. Soils maps and aerial images and photography will be the primary off-site tools used. Other tools listed above will be used to: (1) confirm the soils map and aerial image/photo information, (2) locate hydric minor components within soil map units or determine the presence of other probable hydric soil areas, and (3) provide information on past hydrology and cropping history. Off-site

wetland determinations will only be completed for Non-Wetlands (NW), if there is an indication of possible hydric areas using the tools above, an onsite determination will be required.

The agricultural history of a field is important when making Certified Wetland Determinations for Food Security Act purposes. Wetland conversions which brought wetlands into agricultural production **before** December 23, 1985 are given specific exemptions. Wetland conversions which occurred **between** December 23, 1985 and November 28, 1990 are treated differently than conversions which occurred **after** November 28, 1990.

NRCS will make certified wetland determination for Food Security Act purposes only in response to receiving Form AD-1026 or CPA-038, completed by a USDA program participant for the fields identified, or when notified of a potential wetland violation via receipt of Form FSA-569. NRCS will document each certified wetland determination on form NRCS-CPA-026e and map. A copy of the NRCS-CPA-026e and map showing the wetland labels and boundaries will be provided to the participant, along with a letter notifying appeal rights to the operator and/or owner associated with the tract, FSA, and the service center.