

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

2010 South Dakota (SD) Mapping Convention Update Environmental Assessment

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), SD, has assessed the environmental impacts of alternative state wetland mapping convention techniques. The entire state of SD is the study area. The state is located in the Northern Great Plains between North Dakota (to the north) and Nebraska (to the south). The state covers approximately 77,000 square miles.

The NRCS estimates that it will cost the agency approximately \$48 million to conduct onsite wetland investigations in all circumstances within the eastern third of the state alone. The NRCS is currently able to complete approximately half of the requested certified wetland determinations in a given year. The certified wetland determination backlog is projected to continue into the future and potentially increase. The NRCS has a need to provide timely customer service. The NRCS has the regulatory authority to determine if adequate information is available to make an offsite wetland determination. Therefore, the NRCS and Workgroup partners have identified an opportunity to address the issue.

The recommended action allows the optional use of offsite wetland procedures on certain potential wetlands and is described as follows: Potential wetlands that are depressionnal, not manipulated, not mapped on National Wetland Inventory (NWI), and have less than or equal to 30 percent wetland signatures would be labeled as Nonwetland (NW). Potential wetlands that are depressionnal, manipulated, not mapped on the NWI, and have less than or equal to 30 percent wetland signatures would be labeled NW/Prior Converted (PC). Potential wetlands that are depressionnal, not manipulated, have greater than or equal to 65 percent wetland signatures regardless of NWI status would be labeled as Wetland (W) if the soil was mapped hydric or had mapped hydric inclusions. All sites identified on NWI having less than 65 percent wetland signatures would continue to be field verified. Scope and effect would continue to be field verified for wetland sites labeled as Farmed Wetland (FW). Participant appeal rights would remain unchanged.

The recommended plan does not include physical construction and resources are not directly impacted. The recommended plan is not likely to have an adverse affect on any threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat; nor on any property eligible for or on the National Register of Historic Places. All appropriate coordination has been conducted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Minimal adverse impacts are anticipated for this project. A review of this Environmental Assessment concludes that the plan complies with the Clean Water Act.

The accompanying environmental assessment supports the conclusion that the project does not constitute a major federal action affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to implement the update to the SD Wetland Mapping Conventions.


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Date