

# Maine NRCS State Off-Site Wetland Methods

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United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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# Changes

## Replaces

Maine NRCS off-site wetland Mapping Conventions –Feb 2010

## Added

Definition from NFSA Manual regarding State Offsite Methods

Definition of Wetland for Food Security Act purposes

Provides more background on wetland diagnostic factors

Expands on the comparison site concept

## Purpose

To be used as a resource in conjunction with FSA protocol

To enable Maine NRCS to utilize comparison sites/imagery signatures in a more consistent and defensible way.

# State Offsite Methods Definition

From NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT MANUAL (NFSAM) 180-CPA Circular No.6, Part 527

(2-14) State Offsite Methods (SOSM).-Methods developed by NRCS for the sole purpose of supplementing the off-site methodology in the [USA Corps of Engineers wetland delineation] manual for use in identifying wetlands for FSA purposes. The adoption process for State offsite methods will include solicitation of State Technical Committee recommendations. These methods may replace or supplement methods provided for in [State Mapping Conventions] SMCs. The use of "Hydrology Tools for Wetland Determination" contained in Title 210, National Engineering Handbook (NEH), Chapter 19, Part 650 shall be considered to be a SOSM. The SOSM must contain the objective criterion that defines wetland hydrology for each of the hydrology tools in Chapter 19.

# A Wetland, Defined for FSA

## Purposes, is;

Wetland, except when such term is a part of the term “converted wetland”, means land that

- (1) Has predominance of hydric soils;
- (2) Is inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions; and
- (3) Under normal circumstances does not support a prevalence of such vegetation, except that this term does not include lands in Alaska identified as having a high potential for agricultural development and a predominance of permafrost soils.

# Three Wetland Diagnostic Factors That Must Be Met For An FSA Wetland

## 1. Hydrophytic Vegetation

(2-9) Hydrophytic vegetation - "means a plant growing in (A) water; or (B) a substrate that is at least periodically deficient in oxygen during a growing season as a result of excessive water content" (16 U.S.C. section 3801(a)(13)).

## 2. Wetland Hydrology

(2-19) Wetland Hydrology - Inundation or saturation of the site by surface or groundwater during a growing season at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence hydrophytic vegetation.

## 3. Hydric Soils

(2-8) Hydric soil - "means soil that, in its undrained condition, is saturated, flooded, or ponded long enough during a growing season to develop an anaerobic condition that supports the growth and regeneration of hydrophytic vegetation" (16 U.S.C. section 3801(a)(12)).

# Comparison Site Definition

(2-4) Comparison Site.-A site in the local area that has the same hydric soil map unit as the subject site. The comparison site is used to make a decision on the presence of hydrophytic vegetation when the subject site is altered and the plant community that occurred prior to the alteration cannot be determined from onsite inspection or remote sensing and other remote data sources. The comparison site should support hydrologic conditions that are similar to what existed on the subject site prior to the alteration.

# Comparison Site Concept

A comparison site for FSA wetland determinations generally equates with what the Corps manual calls a “reference site”

Serves as an indicator of the “adjacent vegetation” for use in Atypical Situations (Section F) of the Corps manual

Comparison sites must be within the same MLRA as the subject site to be considered to be within the “local area”

Comparison sites should be based on the soil series concept transferred from the subject area, as used in the subject area’s specific soil map unit.

They should correspond to Ecological Site Description (ESD) data for the respective soil series.

Comparison sites will be approved for use by the State Soil Scientist by series and map unit within MLRAs.

# Conclusion

To be used as a resource in conjunction with Food Security Act protocol

To enable Maine NRCS to utilize comparison sites/imagery signatures in a more consistent and defensible way.

# Comments/Concerns

