



June 25, 2015

IOWA INSTRUCTION 180 – 386 SECOND EDITION – WETLAND TECHNICAL
DECISION JOB APPROVAL AUTHORITY

IA386.0 PURPOSE

This Iowa Instruction provides guidance on wetland technical decision job approved authority. This instruction addresses Finding Number 11 in Iowa's Corrective Action Plan, which was identified as Finding #1 in December 9, 2013, Oversight and Evaluation (O&E) Report.

IA386.1 SCOPE

The documents will be referenced by NRCS employees in determining who has the authority to provide the aforementioned services and their levels of proficiency at each.

IA386.2 FILING INSTRUCTIONS

This Iowa Instruction will be posted on the Iowa NRCS Employee Website, which can be accessed under the Topics/People/NRCS Employees/Iowa NRCS eDirective, or at this link [Iowa NRCS eDirectives website](#).

IA386.3 EXHIBITS

See attachment.

/s/

Jay T. Mar
State Conservationist

Attachment

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(Iowa Instruction 180 – 386 Second Edition – June 2015)

Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180
Voice (515) 284-4222 – FAX (855) 261-3319
An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

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1. PURPOSE:

This Iowa Instruction provides guidance on wetland technical decision job approved authority. This instruction addresses Finding Number 11 in Iowa's Corrective Action Plan, which was identified as Finding #1 in December 9, 2013, Oversight and Evaluation (O&E) Report.

2. BACKGROUND:

The National Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM), Part 514.1(B) requires State Conservationists to maintain a roster of qualified employees by training and experience who have demonstrated the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct wetland determinations and delineations, scope and effect evaluations, functional assessments, minimal effects evaluations, and mitigation activities. The roster lists an employee's job approval authority (JAA) in a matrix of technical decision categories. The official roster will be maintained in Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide under "Legislated Programs, Job Approval Authority."

3. PROCESS:

This guidance is to be followed by NRCS employees when assigning responsibility for wetland determinations, mitigation and/or making minimal effect exemption evaluations. All NRCS employees completing wetland determinations, functional assessments or minimal effect exemptions must be trained and have the appropriate job approval authority in the use of the functional assessment models and/or the minimal effect exemption worksheet.

Job Approval Classifications and Requirements:

JAA Level 1 – Appropriate Training Courses and Basic Knowledge

Minimum training required to attain Level 1 JAA for the following categories: offsite determination/delineation; soils, vegetation, and hydrology determination/delineation and WC Labels:

- (1) Wetland Identification for Food Security Act Purposes – Phase 1: Basic Concepts (NEDC-000268) (online)
- (2) Wetland Delineation: National Food Security Act Purposes – Phase 2: Application (NEDC-000254) (5-day field/classroom), or equivalent course offered in-State
- (3) OJT or formal in-State training on NFSAM wetland conservation labels
- (4) Training on the use of the Iowa State Guidance document including State Offsite Methods

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Additional training required to attain Level 1 JAA for minimal effect and scope and effect determinations, functional assessment models, and wetland restoration or mitigation:

OJT and/or classroom training by State or Area-level specialists with Level 3 Job Approval Authority

Maintaining JAA Level 1 will require attendance at any training offered by the State or Area Office(s) that provides updates to wetland policy, procedures, or technical resources.

JAA Level 2 – Make Technical Determinations with Supervision/Review

- (1) Demonstration in the field of wetland delineation procedures including the documentation of soil indicators, the use of FSA Variance 5-18 and 5-54, hydrology indicators, and vegetation inventories.
- (2) Determinations will be reviewed by staff with JAA Level 3 before being issued. Data sheets need only be reviewed for those categories in which the individual has not obtained JAA Level 3.
- (3) Additional requirement in the Functional Assessment category: demonstrated ability to use functional assessment methods Hydrogeomorphic (HGM).
- (4) Additional requirement in the minimal effect and scope and effect category: demonstrated ability to use appropriate minimal effects assessments and related tools.
- (5) Additional requirement in the mitigation category: demonstrated ability to create and/or approve necessary documents.

Maintaining JAA Level 2 will require attendance at any training offered by the State or Area Office(s) that provides updates to wetland policy, procedures, or technical resources. Quality Assurance Reviews must show adherence to policy and procedure.

JAA Level 3 – Make Technical Determinations Independently

- (1) Demonstrated proficiency in applying the principles of wetland delineation and issuing wetland determinations consistent with technical and administrative requirements. Initial assessment will include verification of proficiency by staff with JAA Level 3 on a sample of recent technical decisions.
- (2) No review of work is needed in categories where JAA Level 3 is attained.
- (3) Can serve as Agency representative on appeals of wetland decisions if requested by the State Office.

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- (4) Additional requirement in both the minimal effect and scope and effect category: demonstrated proficiency in the use of appropriate minimal effects assessments and related tools.
- (5) Additional requirement in the Mitigation category: demonstrated proficiency in the creation and/or approval of necessary documents.

Maintaining JAA Level 3 will require attendance at any training offered by the State or Area Office(s) that provides updates to wetland policy, procedures, or technical resources. Quality Assurance Reviews must show adherence to policy and procedure.

Procedure: A Level 3 authority will initially be granted based on experience and demonstrated proficiency by the State Wetland Specialist. This rating will continue to be based on a satisfactory Quality Assurance Review. Level 2 and Level 1 abilities will be assigned as well.

Individuals with a job approval level of 1 have received the required training, and may have spent time observing a trained individual, but have not been allowed to perform determinations. A job approval Level 1 will be granted by the State Wetland Specialist following the completion of the required training and the initiation of On Job Training (OJT) with someone having a Level 3 authority.

Being raised from a Level 1 to a Level 2 will require time spent with a Level 3 until such time the latter is confident of their abilities and writes an email or letter to the State Wetland Specialist stating they should be designated as such. The Level 2 will then conduct wetland determinations which will be reviewed by the Level 3.

Once the Level 2 has demonstrated proficiency to the Level 3, the latter will write another letter or email to the State Wetland Specialist stating this and requesting the Level 2 be raised to a Level 3. From that point forward, this individual will operate independently unless performance dictates a readjustment to a Level 2.

Technical decisions related to the Wetland Conservation provisions of the Food Security Act will be completed by staff with JAA Level 3 or by staff with JAA Level 2 with review and approval by JAA Level 3 staff. The reviewing official (the Level 3) will document this review in the individual participant's case file.

Wetland determinations will be documented according to the procedures outlined in the NFSAM as amended (currently the 5th Edition amended with Circular 6), plus any needed forms or documents for minimal effect or scope and effect determinations, functional assessment models, and wetland restoration or mitigation. The person who documented the wetland determination technical decision will also prepare a delineation map with NFSAM wetland labels and acres assigned to each, and record the determination in the Iowa wetland determination geodatabase.

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Questions concerning job approval authority for wetland technical decisions should be directed to the State Wetland Specialist, or State Resource Conservationist.

Approved By: /s/

Date: June 25, 2015

Jay T. Mar
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180