

NB 190_13_1 ECS—Wetland Conservation Compliance (guidance on the use of the revised "National Wetland Plant List")

National Bulletin: NB_190_13_1 **Date:** October 18, 2012
Subject: ECS-Wetland Conservation Compliance (guidance on the use of the revised "National Wetland Plant List")

Purpose. To notify Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel of the availability and use of the revised "National Wetland Plant List", formerly titled "National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands: 1988 National Summary".

Expiration Date. September 30, 2013

Background. In December 2006, the NRCS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) transferring the leadership and maintenance of the "National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands: 1988 National Summary" (List 88) from the FWS to the USACE. Language in the MOA authorized a revision of the List 88 using NRCS, USACE, FWS, and EPA staff resources. The List 88 has been revised and the title has been changed to the "National Wetland Plant List" (NWPL). A Federal Register notice announcement of availability was released on May 9, 2012, and can be accessed at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-05-09/pdf/2012-11176.pdf>.

Explanation. This National Bulletin directs NRCS staff to use the revised NWPL, when making hydrophytic vegetation determinations for wetland identification and delineation purposes for the Swampbuster provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (as amended), and replaces the former List 88. The NWPL species data are available from the USDA PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov/>), the USACE NWPL https://wetland_plants.usace.army.mil/, and the NRCS wetland (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/water/wetlands/boundaries>) Web sites. Printed versions of the NWPL will not be produced. Note: using the USACE NWPL Web site requires acceptance of the Department of Defense security certificate.

The NWPL provides wetland indicator status ratings for each plant species listed (8,200 species) within each of 10 regions in which the species occurs. Each species is assigned 1 of 5 wetland ratings based upon their degree of occurrence in wetlands. These rating categories are (from greatest to lowest wetland occurrence), obligate (OBL), facultative wetland (FACW), facultative (FAC), facultative upland (FACU), and upland (UPL). The definitions of these ratings and the methods used to assign them can be found at the following Web site: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1047346.pdf

Changes to the List 88 reflected in the NWPL include:

- All plant species' taxonomy and synonymy have been revised to reflect the most current nationally accepted name standard and are consistent with recent botanical manuals and floras, and the USDA PLANTS Database.
- Regional boundaries have been redrawn on an ecological basis and conform to the USACE regional supplement boundaries. There are ten regions.
- Four regions have further been divided into subregions (Alaska (15), Atlantic & Gulf Coastal Plain (1), North Central & Northeast (1), and Eastern Mountains & Piedmont (1)). In these subregions, one or more species have been rated with a different indicator rating when compared to the rest of the region.
- The "+" and "-" suffixes formerly used as part of an indicator rating have been eliminated and conform to NRCS wetland policy.
- Trinomials (i.e., varieties and subspecies) have been eliminated. Each species is provided with a single average rating for a region or subregion.
- Species formerly assessed with "NI" (no indicator), "NO" (no rating), or "?" (tentative rating) have been assigned final ratings.
- County-level distribution information has been added as an aid in proper species identification.
- The numerical rating scale of species' occurrence in wetlands has been replaced with verbal definitions (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1047346.pdf).

Contact. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Ecological Sciences Division (202) 720-4716, or the Central National Technology Support Center, Wetland Technology Development and Acquisition Team, Fort Worth, Texas (817) 509- 3572.

/s/

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