



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Seattle District

# Special Public Notice

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## UPDATED NATIONAL WETLAND PLANT LIST

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Seattle District announces the availability of the updated National Wetland Plant List (NWPL). The 2012 NWPL is a list of plant species with their updated nomenclature and assigned wetland indicator status. The NWPL plays a critical role in wetland determinations under the Clean Water Act and Food Security Act. Using sampling protocols outlined in the *Regional Supplements to the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual*, wetlands are evaluated based on the presence of three parameters: hydric soils, wetland hydrology, and hydrophytic vegetation. The wetland indicator status is used to determine whether the hydrophytic vegetation parameter is met.

The 2012 NWPL must be used for any wetland delineation site visits performed after June 1, 2012. The 2012 NWPL may be used in delineations/determinations conducted prior to that date. For the purpose of clarity and accurate interpretation, wetland delineation reports and the Regional Supplement Determination Data Forms should reference which wetland plant list was used for the delineation. This can be indicated in the Remarks portion of the Vegetation section of the Data Form.

The 2012 NWPL can be downloaded from the Corps wetland plant website in its entirety, by ecoregion, or by state. The website can be accessed from: [http://wetland\\_plants.usace.army.mil](http://wetland_plants.usace.army.mil) - click on the "Click Here to Proceed" link below the first paragraph. A new, streamlined website (no security certificates will be needed) will be forthcoming by June 2012; however the web address will stay the same. A citation for the 2012 NWPL is also available on the same web page. A direct link to the 2012 NWPL is: <https://rsgis.crrel.usace.army.mil/apex/f?p=703:23:0::NO>

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** As of May 18, 2012, the U.S. Department of Agriculture *PLANTS Database* has not been updated to reflect changes to indicator status in the 2012 NWPL.

**BACKGROUND:** The 2012 NWPL is based on the *National List of Plant Species That Occur in Wetlands* (Reed, 1988) (1988 NPL), which includes a list of plant species and their assigned indicator statuses. An indicator status reflects the likelihood that a particular plant species occurs in wetland or upland habitat. The five indicator status definitions as updated for the 2012 NWPL (Lichvar and Gillich, 2011) are:

- Obligate (OBL): These wetland-dependent plants require standing water or seasonally saturated soils near the surface to assure adequate growth, development, and reproduction and to maintain healthy populations.
- Facultative Wetland (FACW): These plants depend on and predominately occur with hydric soils, standing water, or seasonally high water tables in wet habitats for assuring optimal growth, development, and reproduction and for maintaining healthy populations. These plants often grow in geomorphic locations where water saturates soils or floods the soil surface at least seasonally.
- Facultative (FAC): These plants can occur in wetlands or non-wetlands. They can grow in hydric, mesic, or xeric habitats. The occurrence of these plants in different habitats represents responses to a variety of environmental variables other than just hydrology, such as shade tolerance, soil pH, and elevation; and they have a wide tolerance of soil moisture conditions.
- Facultative Upland (FACU): These plants are not wetland dependent. They can grow on hydric and seasonally saturated soils, but they develop optimal growth and healthy populations on predominately drier or more mesic sites. Unlike FAC plants, these plants are non-wetland plants by habitat preference.
- Upland (UPL): These plants occupy mesic to xeric non-wetland habitats. They almost never occur in standing water or saturated soils.

The lead responsibility to update the 1988 NPL was transferred from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to the Corps in December 2006. The 2012 NWPL is the culmination of a six-year interagency process that also involved the three other Federal agencies with legal responsibilities for wetlands: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, USFWS, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. The 2012 NWPL update represents the most complex and thorough evaluation of plant species' indicator status rating since the inception of the 1988 NPL, and the update process allowed greater input from the public and professional institutions than the original process.

The 2012 NWPL has 1,472 previously unlisted species and lists changes to the indicator status of 12% of the species on the 1988 NPL. For those species whose indicator status changed, there was nearly an equal split between species that received "wetter" ratings (e.g., change from FACU to FAC) and those that received "drier" ratings (e.g., change from FAC to FACU).

Specific changes to the 1988 NPL include:

- Updated indicator status
- Removed +/- modifiers from indicator status
- Providing the indicator status of over 8,200 plant species
- Updated nomenclature for over 2,400 species
- Ecoregions match those of the *Regional Supplements to the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual*.
- A dedicated website that includes photos, previous indicator status, and other botanical information.

The 2012 NWPL, background information including previous names and indicator status, public comments and responses to the comments received in response to the January 6, 2011, Federal Register notice, Frequently Asked Questions, and the website citation may be found at:

<http://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/RegulatoryProgramandPermits/techbio.aspx>

or at: [http://wetland\\_plants.usace.army.mil](http://wetland_plants.usace.army.mil).

**PURPOSE:** The 2012 NWPL uses the best available scientific and technical information to improve precision in determining the hydrophytic vegetation parameter when delineating upland/wetland boundaries for purposes of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and the Wetland Conservation Provisions of the Food Security Act. It also provides a procedure for continual future scientific updates and public input as more data are gathered and analyzed.

The Corps will continue to accept suggestions on the 2012 NWPL. Suggestions may be submitted to:

Mr. Robert Lichvar, Director of the National Wetland Plant List  
ERDC/ Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL)  
72 Lyme Road  
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755  
or e-mail: [NWPL@usace.army.mil](mailto:NWPL@usace.army.mil)

**REFERENCES:**

Lichvar, R. and J. Gillrich. 2011. *Final Protocol for Assigning Wetland Indicator Status Ratings during the National Wetland Plant List Update*. ERDC/CRREL TN-11-1 Hanover, NH: U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory.  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1047346.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1047346.pdf)

Reed, P.B., Jr. 1988. *National list of plant species that occur in wetlands: national summary*. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biology Report 88(24). 244pp. Washington, DC.  
<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/ecoservices/habcon/pdf/National%20List%20of%20Plant%20Species%201988.pdf>