



# National Wetland Plant List

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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**Background:** The National Wetland Plant List (NWPL) was first developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 1988. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) assumed the lead responsibility for administering the list in December 2006.

The NWPL plays a critical role in wetland determinations under the Clean Water Act and the Wetland Conservation Provisions of the Food Security Act. Wetlands are evaluated using three factors – soils, hydrology and vegetation. The NWPL identifies the indicator statuses (UPL, FACU, FAC, FACW, and OBL) for each plant on the list. Using sampling protocols outlined in the Regional Supplements to the 1987 Federal Wetland Delineation Manual, the indicator status is then used to determine whether the vegetation factor is met.



The NWPL is a list of wetland plants and their assigned indicator statuses. An indicator status reflects the likelihood that a particular plant occurs in a wetland or upland. The five indicator statuses are: Obligate (OBL) plants that always occur in standing water or in saturated soils; Facultative Wet (FACW) plants that nearly always occur in areas of prolonged flooding or require standing water or saturated soils but may, on rare occasions, occur in non-wetlands; Facultative (FAC) plants that occur in a variety of habitats, including wetland and mesic to xeric non-wetland habitats but commonly occur in standing water or saturated soils; Facultative Upland (FACU) plants that typically occur in xeric or mesic non-wetland habitats but may frequently occur in standing water or saturated soils; and Upland (UPL) plants that almost never occur in water or saturated soils.

**Agencies involved in the process:** This national effort is led by USACE in collaboration with FWS, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Shortly after receiving the responsibility for the NWPL, USACE launched an interagency effort to update the list. This update represents the most complex and thorough evaluation of wetland plant species ratings since the inception of the 1988 list.

**Interagency Process – Web-based system for scientific input and opportunity for public input:** The updating process for the NWPL revolved around a Web-based system where participants could obtain information and view input made. It began with the updating of all scientific names and reorganization of plant lists using the same 10 boundaries identified in the regional wetland delineation manual supplements. Approximately 65 botanists and ecologists from the four agencies worked on National and Regional Panels for the 10 wetland regions of the U.S. and its territories.

Twelve rounds of voting and evaluation were completed on 8,200 plants typically found in wetlands. It's estimated that 442 external experts from federal, state, and tribal organizations, and the public

contributed over 130,000 entries and technical comments regarding a wetland status indicator by species during the twelve-round process. One of the rounds involved public input received through a Federal Register Notice (FRN) comment period. During the comment period, 377 individuals offered 16,432 votes on species status, 1,159 written technical comments and 35 written comment letters about the updating of the NWPL were received. Based on all the input, 18 algorithms were developed that represent either consensus on a species indicator status or weighting of input based on the evaluation of scientific evidence or information.

This national effort resulted in changes to the indicator status for 12% of the species on the 1988 list. For those species that changed, there was nearly an equal split between species that received wetter ratings and those that received drier ratings.

**Implementation:** The four federal agencies will use the updated NWPL on all new Jurisdictional Determinations performed after June 1, 2012. The updated NWPL can be found at [http://wetland\\_plants.usace.army.mil](http://wetland_plants.usace.army.mil). The four agencies signed an Interagency Agreement requiring use of the list by agency staff for wetland delineation purposes as required by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and the Wetland Conservation Provisions of the Food Security Act. The Federal Register Notice announcing the updated NWPL, the Interagency Agreement, and links to the final NWPL may be found under the Latest News Section of the Headquarters Regulatory homepage at: <http://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/RegulatoryProgramandPermits.aspx>