



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Alaska District

Special Public Notice

ANCHORAGE
Regulatory Division (1145)
CEPOA-RD
Post Office Box 6898
JBER, Alaska 99506-0898

Date: May 8, 2017
Reference No.: SPN-2017-1
(In reply, refer to above number)
Expiration date: Valid Until Further Notice

AVAILABILITY OF THE UPDATED 2016 ALASKA WETLAND PLANT LIST AND THE UPDATED NATIONAL WETLAND PLANT LIST

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Alaska District, announces the availability of the updated 2016 Alaska National Wetland Plant List (2016 AK NWPL). The NWPL plays a critical role in wetland determinations under the Clean Water Act and Food Security Act. Wetlands are evaluated using three factors – hydric soils, wetland hydrology and hydrophytic vegetation. Using sampling protocols outlined in the 2007 Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Alaska Region (Version 2.0), the indicator status is then used to determine whether the hydrophytic vegetation factor is met.

Beginning on June 1, 2016, the 2016 AK NWPL must be used in any wetland identification/delineation performed. For the purpose of clarity and accurate interpretation, the 2016 AK NWPL needs to be referenced in delineation reports and when completing the Alaska Regional Supplement “Wetland Determination Data Form.”

The 2016 AK NWPL shows updated botanical nomenclature and the current indicator status for each plant species. An indicator status reflects the likelihood of a particular plant species occurring in wetlands (also known as a hydrophyte or plant species adapted to prolonged inundation or saturated soil conditions) or occurring in uplands. The five indicator status definitions are: OBL: Almost always found in wetlands, rarely found in uplands. FACW: Usually found in wetlands, but occasionally found in uplands. FAC: Commonly found in either wetlands or uplands. FACU: Occasionally found in wetlands, but usually found in uplands. UPL: Rarely found in wetlands, almost always found in uplands.

The lead responsibility to update the 1988 list was transferred from the US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) to the Corps in December 2006. The 2016 AK NWPL is an update to the 2014 AK NWPL. Updates to the NWPL are the result of ongoing national coordination efforts involving Corps’ districts with participation from other Federal agencies with legal responsibilities for wetlands: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the FWS, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These updates are the outcome of complex and thorough evaluations of plant species ratings since the inception of the 1988 list with increased input across professional institutions.

Specific changes to the 2016 AK NWPL include:

- Elimination of the Cook Inlet Lowland sub-regionalization for Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*); this species now has a Facultative Upland (FACU) status across Alaska.
- Updated nomenclature resulting in several changes to wetland plant species names in Alaska (e.g., *Ledum palustris* changed to *Rhododendron tomentosum*, *Potentilla palustris* changed to *Comarum palustris*, etc.).

The NWPL website, a dedicated on-line database with all regional plant lists, has been developed and is maintained for access to the public at http://wetland_plants.usace.army.mil. This on-line database provides access to updated plant lists, by ecoregion or by state, in Adobe or Excel formats. The website also makes available to the public: photos, videos, botanical references, as well as previous plant lists, status ratings, and pertinent botanical information. It also makes possible continual scientific updates and public input as more data are gathered and uses the best available scientific and technical information for improving precision in determining the vegetation factor 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. A citation for the NWPL is also available on the web.

Your suggestions on the 2016 AK NWPL and on the NWPL website may be submitted to Sheila Newman at Sheila.M.Newman@usace.army.mil or to 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 by e-mail to NWPL@usace.army.mil.

District
Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineer