

Indiana Wetland Job Approval Policy

Every NRCS employee authorized to perform wetland determinations will be required to complete specific levels of training and on-the-job experience, and demonstrate that they have the required skills, knowledge, and ability to make wetland determinations. The following specifies the minimum training and experience needed to complete wetland determinations. NRCS Indiana State Office Technology Staff will maintain Wetland Job Approval for each NRCS Indiana employee.

Each *NRCS Indiana Area* shall have a designated wetland policy person to assist the Area Conservationist (AC) with NRCS wetland policy and procedures. The NRCS wetland specialist (WS) will serve as the designated wetland policy person. If an NRCS Indiana Area does not have a WS then the AC will assign a qualified person to serve as the wetland policy person.

The wetland policy person shall:

- a. Achieve Basic Certification, Agricultural Determination Certification, and successfully complete the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) Reg. IV or NRCS equivalent course.
- b. Assist field personnel with wetland questions and issues.
- c. Coordinate quality assurance reviews of wetland determinations.
- d. Recommend wetland approval authority and maintain documentation for applicable approval authority at the area level.
- e. Will communicate approval authority to Technology Staff at the State Office.
- f. Represent NRCS at FSA local appeal hearings.
- g. Obtain field information for wetland mitigation and restoration plans.
- h. Obtain field information for minimal effect exemptions and complete minimal effect agreements and plans.
- i. Monitor wetland restoration and mitigation sites.

1. Basic Certification

Basic Certification allows NRCS personnel to complete the following:

- a. Explain USDA wetland policies to clients.
- b. Sign wetland determination letters.

To achieve Basic Certification, NRCS personnel will complete the following training:

- a. View Food Security Act Power Point Training and policy for wetland determinations with appropriate area staff.

2. Agricultural Determination Certification

- a) Agricultural Determination Certification allows NRCS personnel to:
 - a. Conduct Certified Agricultural Determinations (“Off-Site Determinations”).
- b) To achieve Agricultural Determinations Certification, NRCS personnel will complete the following:
 - a. Achieve Basic Certification.
 - b. On the job training with Resource Soil Scientist (RSS) and a demonstrated ability to identify hydric soils, as approved by a qualified NRCS soil scientist.
 - c. On the job or classroom training on remote sensing for wetland determinations and a demonstrated ability to identify wetland signatures, as approved appropriate area or state office staff.

- d. Successfully complete 2 determinations that are reviewed by Area Wetland Policy person or appropriate State Office Technology staff.

To maintain approval to complete Agricultural Determinations they will:

- a. Complete 4 wetland determinations per year.

3. Non-Agricultural Wetland Determination Certification

- a) Agricultural Determination Certification allows NRCS personnel to:
 - a. Conduct Certified Non-Agricultural Determinations (“On-Site Determinations”).
- b) To achieve Non-Agricultural Wetland Determination Certification, NRCS personnel will complete the following:
 - a. Achieve Basic Certification
 - b. View Food Security Act Power Point Training and policy for wetland determinations with appropriate area staff.
 - c. Capable of identifying Hydric Soils as certified by a qualified Soil Scientist.
 - d. Complete the COE Reg. IV course or equivalent NRCS course and/or training.
 - e. Ability to identify common plant species during the growing season and woody plants in winter and approved as competent in plant identification by appropriate area or state office staff.
 - f. Successfully complete 2 determinations that are reviewed by a qualified Area Wetland Policy person or appropriate State Office Technology staff.

Note: Employees with previous wetland determination experience can be certified by the NRCS Technology Staff if they have a demonstrated knowledge of the 1987 COE Manual and/or certified to complete wetland determinations from another NRCS state or Federal Agency e.g. COE.

To maintain approval to complete Non-Agricultural Wetland Determinations they will:

- a. Complete 3 non-agricultural wetland determinations per year.

4. Collaborative Wetland Determinations

NRCS employees who do not meet certification to complete non-agricultural wetland determinations independently may complete them in a collaborative effort. At a minimum at least one employee must be certified as competent in Plant ID (see item 3d) and another must be certified as capable of identifying Hydric Soils (see item 3b). Both employees must have successfully completed the Army Corps of Engineers Reg. IV or equivalent NRCS course and/or training..

5. Mitigation Certification

NRCS employees shall have the following training as described under each topic.

For Wetland Functional Assessment, Mitigation Ratio, Restoration/Mitigation Plans, and Minimal Effect, each employee must receive on the job training before certification from appropriate NRCS Indiana State Office Technology Staff.

All *mitigation easements* must be approved by the NRCS WRP Coordinator in accordance with WRP policy.