



2016 Update National Wetland Plant List

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Background: When the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) announced the roll out of the updated National Wetland Plant List (NWPL) in May 2012, it was noted that periodic updates would occur as taxonomy or nomenclature changed, new species were identified, or re-evaluation of uncertain status ratings by interagency regional panels of botanists were performed.

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 in accordance with the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual and Regional Supplements. The NWPL is used in evaluating the vegetation factor.



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 rarely occur in water or saturated soils.

One of the primary advantages of a web-based list housed on the internet is the ability to make changes to this dynamic list more readily. The original 2012 NWPL was updated in 2013 and 2014. The last revision began in 2015 and was announced in the federal register on September 14, 2015, and included a proposed process for biennial updates. The 2016 NWPL will be published on the NWPL website and the updated list contains 8,092 plant species, a net increase of 35 species (39 species were added in the South Pacific Island (SPI) sub-region, 6 new species were added in the continental U.S., and 10 upland species were removed) from the 2014 NWPL. Since these 8,092 individual species can occur in more than one region, there are 27,984 unique ratings in the 2016 NWPL, of which a total of 495 ratings changed across all regions. The majority of these revisions were due to user requests, increased participation from the SPI sub-region, and an effort to reduce the variability of ratings nationally. No nomenclature or taxonomic changes occurred. Overall, these revisions represent a 1.8 percent change in ratings from the 2014 NWPL. During this update, a total of 1,689 species were reviewed. A summary of all the changes can be found on the NWPL website under the “What’s New?” section.

Implementation: Federal agencies will use the 2016 NWPL on all new Jurisdictional Determinations after May 1, 2016. Any delineations underway with the current list will be accepted, please just reference which list was used in your documentation. The NWPL can be found at http://wetland_plants.usace.army.mil.