

Appendix F USACE Regulatory Guidance Letters

USACE Regulatory Guidance Letter No. 86-09, 14 August 1990, SUBJECT: Clarification of “Normal Circumstances” in the Wetland Definition (33 CFR 323.2 (c))

USACE Regulatory Guidance Letter No. 90-6, 14 August 1990, SUBJECT: Expiration Date for Wetlands Jurisdictional Delineations

USACE Regulatory Guidance Letter No. 90-7, 26 September 1990, SUBJECT: Clarification of the Phrase “Normal Circumstances” as it Pertains to Cropped Wetlands

USACE Regulatory Guidance Letter No. 05-05, 7 December 2005, SUBJECT: Ordinary High Water Mark Identification

USACE Regulatory Guidance Letter No. 16-01, October, 2016, SUBJECT: Jurisdictional Determinations

USACE Regulatory Guidance Letters can be found at <http://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Regulatory-Program-and-Permits/Guidance-Letters/>

Regulatory Guidance Letter 86-09

SUBJECT: Clarification of "Normal Circumstances" in the Wetland Definition (33 CFR 323.2 (c))

DATE: August 27, 1986

EXPIRES: December 31, 1988

1. This letter will serve to continue the guidance originally issued as RGL 82-2, regarding Corps policy on land-use conversion as it concerns regulatory jurisdiction. Specifically, the guidance addresses situations involving changes in the physical characteristics of a wetland which cause the area to lose or gain characteristics which would alter its status of "waters of the United States" for purposes of the Section 404 regulatory program.

2. The current definition of "waters of the United States" delineates wetlands as follows, at 33 CFR 323.2(c) The term wetlands means those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

The regulations now in force cover the actual discharge of dredged or fill material into "wetlands", as they are a part of the "waters of the United States". However, these regulations do not discuss what effect the conversion of a wetland to other uses (e.g., agricultural) has upon regulatory jurisdiction, once the land-use conversion has been accomplished.

3. As was stated in RGL 82-2, it is our intent under Section 404 to regulate discharges of dredged or fill material into the aquatic system as it exists and not as it may have existed over a record period of time. The wetland definition is designed to achieve this intent. It pertains to an existing wetland and requires that the area be inundated or saturated by water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support aquatic vegetation. We do not intend to assert jurisdiction over those areas that once were wetlands and part of an aquatic system, but which, in the past, have been transformed into dry land for various purposes. Neither do we intend the definition of "wetlands" to be interpreted as extending to abnormal situations including non-aquatic areas that have aquatic vegetation. Thus, we have listed swamps, bogs, and marshes at the end of the definition at 323.2(c) to further clarify our intent to include only truly aquatic areas.

4. The use of the phrase "under normal circumstances" is meant to respond to those situations in which an individual would attempt to eliminate the permit review requirements of Section 404 by destroying the aquatic vegetation, and to those areas that are not aquatic but experience an abnormal presence of aquatic vegetation. Several

instances of destruction of aquatic vegetation to eliminate Section 404 jurisdiction have actually occurred. Because those areas would still support aquatic vegetation "under normal circumstances", they remain a part of the overall aquatic system intended to be protected by the Section 404 program; therefore, jurisdiction still exists. On the other hand, the abnormal presence of aquatic vegetation in a non-aquatic area would not be sufficient to include that area within the Section 404 program.

5. Many areas of wetlands converted in the past to other uses would, if left unattended for a sufficient period of time, revert to wetlands solely through the devices of nature. However, such natural circumstances are not what is meant by "normal circumstances" in the definition quoted above. "Normal circumstances" are determined on the basis of an area's characteristics and use, at present and in the recent past. Thus, if a former wetland has been converted to another use (other than by recent un-permitted action not subject to 404(f) or 404(r) exemptions) and that use alters its wetland characteristics to such an extent that it is no longer a "water of the United States", that area will no longer come under the Corps regulatory jurisdiction for purposes of Section 404. However, if the area is abandoned and over time regains wetland characteristics such that it meets the definition of "wetlands", then the Corps 404 jurisdiction has been restored.

6. This policy is applicable to Section 404 authority only, not to Section 10.

7. This guidance expires 31 December 1988 unless sooner revised or rescinded.

FOR THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS:

Regulatory Guidance Letter 90-06

SUBJECT: Expiration Dates for Wetlands Jurisdictional Delineations

DATE: 14 August 1990

EXPIRES: 31 December 1993

1. Recently, questions have been raised regarding the length of time that wetlands jurisdictional delineations remain valid. In light of the need for national consistency in this area, the guidance in paragraph 4(a) - (d) below is provided. This guidance is subject to the provisions in paragraphs 5., 6., and 7.
2. Since wetlands are affected over time by both natural and man-made activities, we can expect local changes in wetland boundaries. As such, wetlands jurisdictional delineations will not remain valid for an indefinite period of time.
3. The purpose of this guidance is to provide a consistent national approach to reevaluating wetlands delineations. This provides greater certainty to the regulated public and ensures their ability to rely upon wetlands jurisdictional delineations for a definite period of time.
4.
 - a. Written wetlands jurisdictional delineations made before the effective date of this guidance, without a specific time limit imposed in the Corps written delineation, will remain valid for a period of two years from the effective date of this Regulatory Guidance Letter (RGL).
 - b. Written wetlands jurisdictional delineations made before the effective date of this guidance, with a specified time imposed in the Corps written delineation, will be valid until the date specified.
 - c. Oral delineations (i.e., not verified in writing by the Corps) are no longer valid as of the effective date of this RGL.
 - d. As specified in the 20 March 1989, Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of the Army and the Environmental Protection Agency Concerning the Determination of the Geographic Jurisdiction of the Section 404 Program and the Application of the Exemptions Under Section 404(f) of the Clean Water Act (MOA), all wetlands jurisdictional delineations (including those prepared by the project proponent or consultant and verified by the Corps) shall be put in writing. Generally this should be in the form of a letter to the project proponent. The Corps letter shall include a statement that the wetlands jurisdictional delineation is valid for a period of three years from the date of the letter unless new information warrants revision of the delineation before the expiration date. Longer periods, not to exceed five years, may be provided where the nature and duration of a

proposed project so warrant. The delineation should be supported by proper documentation. Generally the project proponent should be given the opportunity to complete the delineation and provide the supporting documentation subject to the Corps verification. However, the Corps will complete the delineation and documentation at the project proponent's request, consistent with other work priorities.

5. The guidance in paragraph 4(a) - (b) above does not apply to completed permit applications [33 CFR 325.1(d)(9)] received before the effective date of this RGL, or where the applicant can fully demonstrate that substantial resources have been expended or committed based on a previous Corps jurisdictional delineation (e.g., final engineering design work, contractual commitments for construction, or purchase or long term leasing of property will, in most cases, be considered a substantial commitment of resources). However, district engineers cannot rely upon the expenditure or commitment of substantial resources to validate an otherwise expired delineation for more than five years from the expiration dates noted in paragraph 4(a) - (b). At the end of the five year period a new delineation would be required. In certain rare cases, it may be appropriate to honor a previous oral wetlands delineation when the applicant can fully demonstrate a substantial expenditure or commitment of resources. However, the presumption is that oral delineations are not valid and acceptance of such must be based on clear evidence and equities of the particular case. This determination is left to the discretion of the district engineer.

6. When making wetlands jurisdictional delineations it is very important to have complete and accurate documentation which substantiates the Corps decision (e.g., data sheets, etc). Documentation must allow a reasonably accurate replication of the delineation at a future date. In this regard, documentation will normally include information such as data sheets, maps, sketches, and in some cases surveys.

7. This guidance does not alter or supercede any provisions of law, regulations, or any interagency agreement between Army and EPA. Further, this guidance does not impair the Corps discretion to revise wetlands jurisdictional delineations where new information so warrants.

8. Each district shall issue a public notice on this guidance no later than 1 September 1990. The public notice shall contain the full text of this RGL.

9. This guidance expires on 31 December 1993 unless sooner revised or rescinded.

FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CIVIL WORKS:

JOHN P. ELMORE
Chief, Operations, Construction and Readiness Division
Directorate of Civil Works

Regulatory Guidance Letter 90-07

SUBJECT: Clarification of the Phrase "Normal Circumstances" as it Pertains to Cropped Wetlands

DATE: 26 September 1990

EXPIRES: 31 December 1993

1. The purpose of this regulatory guidance letter (RGL) is to clarify the concept of "normal circumstances" as currently used in the Army Corps of Engineers definition of wetlands (33 CFR 328.3(b)), with respect to cropped wetlands.

2. Since 1977, the Corps and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have defined wetlands as:

"areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under *normal circumstances* do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions..." (33 CFR 328.3(b)) (emphasis added).

While "normal circumstances" has not been defined by regulation, the Corps previously provided guidance on this subject in two expired "normal circumstances" RGLs (RGLs 82-2 and 86-9). These RGLs did not specifically deal with the issue of wetland conversion for purpose of crop production.

3. When the Corps adopted the Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands (Manual) on 10 January 1989, the Corps chose to define "normal circumstances" in a manner consistent with the definition used by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in its administration of the Swamp-buster provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (FSA). Both the SCS and the Manual interpret "normal circumstances" as the soil and hydrologic conditions that are normally present, without regard to whether the vegetation has been removed [7 CFR 12.31(b)(2)(i)] [Manual page 71].

4. The primary consideration in determining whether a disturbed area qualifies as a section 404 wetland under "normal circumstances" involves an evaluation of the extent and relative permanence of the physical alteration of wetlands hydrology and hydro-phytic vegetation. In addition, consideration is given to the purpose and cause of the physical alterations to hydrology and vegetation. For example, we have always maintained that areas where individuals have destroyed hydro-phytic vegetation in an attempt to eliminate the regulatory requirements of section 404 remain part of the overall aquatic system, and are subject to regulation under section 404. In such a case, where the Corps can determine or reasonably infer that the purpose of the physical disturbance to hydro-phytic vegetation was to avoid regulation, the Corps will continue to assert section 404 jurisdictions.

5. The following guidance is provided regarding how the concept of "normal circumstances" applies to areas that are in agricultural crop production:

- a. "Prior converted cropland" is defined by the SCS (Section 512.15 of the National Food Security Act Manual, August 1988) as wetlands which were both manipulated (drained or otherwise physically altered to remove excess water from the land) and cropped before 23 December 1985, to the extent that they no longer exhibit important wetland values. Specifically, prior converted cropland is inundated for no more than 14 consecutive days during the growing season. Prior converted cropland generally does not include pothole or playa wetlands. In addition, wetlands that are seasonally flooded or ponded for 15 or more consecutive days during the growing season are not considered prior converted cropland.
- b. "Farmed wetlands" are wetlands which were both manipulated and cropped before 23 December 1985, but which continue to exhibit important wetland values. Specifically, farmed wetlands include cropped potholes, playas, and areas with 15 or more consecutive days (or 10 percent of the growing season, whichever is less) of inundation during the growing season.
- c. The definition of "normal circumstances" found at page 71 of the Manual is based upon the premise that for certain altered wetlands, even though the vegetation has been removed by cropping, the basic soil and hydrological characteristics remain to the extent that hydro-phytic vegetation would return if the cropping ceased. This assumption is valid for "farmed wetlands" and as such these areas are subject to regulation under section 404.
- d. In contrast to "farmed wetlands", "prior converted croplands" generally have been subject to such extensive and relatively permanent physical hydrological modifications and alteration of hydro-phytic vegetation that the resultant cropland constitutes the "normal circumstances" for purposes of section 404 jurisdiction. Consequently, the "normal circumstances" of prior converted croplands generally do not support a "prevalence of hydro-phytic vegetation" and as such are not subject to regulation under section 404. In addition, our experience and professional judgment lead us to conclude that because of the magnitude of hydrological alterations that have most often occurred on prior converted cropland, such cropland meets, minimally if at all, the Manual's hydrology criteria.
- e. If prior converted cropland is abandoned (512.17 National Food Security Act Manual as amended, June 1990) and wetland conditions return, then the area will be subject to regulation under section 404. An area will be considered abandoned if for five consecutive years there has been no cropping, management or maintenance activities related to agricultural production. In this case, positive indicators of all mandatory wetlands criteria, including hydrophytic vegetation, must be observed.
- f. For the purposes of section 404, the final determination of whether an area is a wetland under normal circumstances will be made pursuant to the 19 January 1989 Army/EPA Memorandum of Agreement on geographic jurisdiction. For those cropped areas that have previously been designated as "prior converted

cropland" or "farmed wetland" by the SCS, the Corps will rely upon such a designation to the extent possible. For those cropped areas that have not been designated "prior converted cropland" or "farmed wetland" by the SCS, the Corps will consult with SCS staff and make appropriate use of SCS data in making a determination of "normal circumstances" for section 404 purposes. Although every effort should be made at the field level to resolve Corps/SCS differences in opinion on the proper designation of cropped wetlands, the Corps will make the final determination of section 404 jurisdiction. However, in order to monitor implementation of this RGL, cases where the Corps and SCS fail to agree on designation of prior converted cropland or farmed wetlands should be documented and a copy of the documentation forwarded to CECW-OR.

6. This policy is applicable to section 404 of the Clean Water Act only.

7. This guidance expires 31 December 1993 unless sooner revised or rescinded.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

PATRICK J. KELLY
Major General, USA
Director of Civil Works



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**

REGULATORY GUIDANCE LETTER

No. 05-05

Date: 7 December 2005

SUBJECT: Ordinary High Water Mark Identification

1. Purpose and Applicability

a. **Purpose.** To provide guidance for identifying the ordinary high water mark.

b. **Applicability.** This applies to jurisdictional determinations for non-tidal waters under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and under Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899.

2. General Considerations

a. **Regulation and Policy.** Pursuant to regulations and inter-agency agreement,¹ the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) determines, on a case-by case basis, the extent of geographic jurisdiction for the purpose of administering its regulatory program. For purposes of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), the lateral limits of jurisdiction over non-tidal water bodies extend to the ordinary high water mark (OHWM), in the absence of adjacent wetlands. When adjacent wetlands are present, CWA jurisdiction extends beyond the OHWM to the limits of the adjacent wetlands. For purposes of Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, the lateral extent of Federal jurisdiction, which is limited to the traditional navigable waters of the United States, extends to the OHWM, whether or not adjacent wetlands extend landward of the OHWM.

Corps regulations define the term “ordinary high water mark” for purposes of the CWA lateral jurisdiction at 33 CFR 328.3(e), which states:

“The term *ordinary high water mark* means that line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas.”

1. Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of the Army and Environmental Protection Agency Concerning the Determination of the Geographical Jurisdiction of the Section 404 Program and the Application of the Exemptions under Section 404(f) of the Clean Water Act, January 19, 1989

This definition is virtually identical to the definition of the term “ordinary high water mark” found at 33 CFR Section 329.11(a)(1), describing the lateral extent of Federal jurisdiction over non-tidal traditional navigable waters of the United States subject to Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (RHA). When the definition from 33 CFR Section 329.11(a)(1) was reproduced at 33 CFR 328.3(e), the semi-colons of the former definition were mistakenly changed to commas in the latter definition. Consequently, the definition of “ordinary high water mark” in Part 328 is not as clear in meaning as is the definition of the same term in Part 329, even though the two definitions were to serve the same basic purpose (i.e., establishing the lateral extent of jurisdiction, in the absence of adjacent wetlands).²

Both definitions of the term “ordinary high water mark” begin by discussing physical characteristics that indicate the location of the OHWM on the shore of a water body. Furthermore, both OHWM definitions conclude with the statement the OHWM can be determined using “other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas”.³ Prior to this Regulatory Guidance Letter (RGL), neither the Corps nor the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued any additional clarifying national guidance for use by Corps regulatory program staff in identifying the location of the OHWM for the CWA on a case-by-case basis.⁴

b. **Practice.** In making OHWM determinations, Corps districts generally rely on physical evidence to ascertain the lateral limits of jurisdiction, to whatever extent physical evidence can be found and such evidence is deemed reasonably reliable. Physical indicators include the features listed in the definitions at 33 CFR Sections 328.3(e) and 329.11(a)(1) and other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas. In addition, districts use other methods for estimating the line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water, including, but not limited to, lake and stream gage data, flood predictions, historic records of water flow, and statistical evidence. To the maximum extent practicable, districts generally use more than one physical indicator or other means for determining the OHWM.

3. **Guidance.**

a. In determining the location of the OHWM for non-tidal water bodies under the CWA or the RHA, districts should give priority to evaluating the physical characteristics of the area that are determined to be reliable indicators of the OHWM. Physical evidence to be evaluated includes those items listed in the definitions at 33 CFR Sections 328.3(e) and 329.11(a)(1). Because many types of water bodies occur with varying conditions, including topography, channel morphology and flow dynamics, districts may consider other physical characteristics indicative of the OHWM.

2. CWA jurisdiction extends laterally landward of the OHWM to include all adjacent wetlands wherever such adjacent wetlands are present. This guidance addresses situations where no such adjacent wetlands exist.

3. Changes in the limits of waters of the U.S. are addressed in 33 CFR 328.5.

4. On 3 June 1983 the Corps of Engineers’ Chief Counsel distributed legal guidance to all Corps district and division counsel offices regarding certain legal questions relating to the geographic jurisdiction of Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, including questions relating to the OHWM.

b. The following physical characteristics should be considered when making an OHWM determination, to the extent that they can be identified and are deemed reasonably reliable:

Natural line impressed on the bank	Sediment sorting
Shelving	Leaf litter disturbed or washed away
Changes in the character of soil	Scour
Destruction of terrestrial vegetation	Deposition
Presence of litter and debris	Multiple observed flow events
Wracking	Bed and banks
Vegetation matted down, bent, or absent	Water staining
	Change in plant community

This list of OHWM characteristics is not exhaustive. Physical characteristics that correspond to the line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water may vary depending on the type of water body and conditions of the area. There are no “required” physical characteristics that must be present to make an OHWM determination. However, if physical evidence alone will be used for the determination, districts should generally try to identify two or more characteristics, unless there is particularly strong evidence of one.

c. Where the physical characteristics are inconclusive, misleading, unreliable, or otherwise not evident, districts may determine the OHWM by using other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas, provided those other means are reliable.⁵ Such other reliable methods that may be indicative of the OHWM include, but are not limited to, lake and stream gage data, elevation data, spillway height, flood predictions, historic records of water flow, and statistical evidence.

d. When making OHWM determinations, districts should be careful to look at characteristics associated with ordinary high water events, which occur on a regular or frequent basis. Evidence resulting from extraordinary events, including major flooding and storm surges, is not indicative of the OHWM. For instance, a litter or wrack line resulting from a 200-year flood event would in most cases not be considered evidence of an OHWM.

e. Districts will document in writing the physical characteristics used to establish the OHWM for CWA and/or RHA jurisdiction. If physical characteristics are inconclusive, misleading, unreliable, or not evident, the Districts’ written documentation will include information about the physical characteristics (or lack thereof) and other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas, which it used to determine the OHWM.

f. To complete an approved jurisdictional determination, districts will have complete and accurate documentation that substantiates the Corps decision. At a minimum, decisions will be documented using the standardized jurisdictional determination information sheet established by

5. In some cases, the physical characteristics may be misleading and would not be reliable for determining the OHWM. For example, water levels or flows may be manipulated by human intervention for power generation or water supply. For such cases, districts should consider using other appropriate means to determine the OHWM.

Headquarters and provided to the districts on August 13, 2004 (or as further amended by Headquarters). Documentation will allow for a reasonably accurate replication of the determination at a future date. In this regard, documentation will normally include information such as data sheets, site visit memoranda, maps, sketches, and, in some cases, surveys and photographs documenting the OHWM.

4. **Duration.** This guidance remains in effect unless revised or rescinded.



DON T. RILEY
Major General, US Army
Director of Civil Works



US Army Corps
of Engineers ®

REGULATORY GUIDANCE LETTER

No. 16-01

Date: October 2016

SUBJECT: Jurisdictional Determinations

1. Purpose. Approved jurisdictional determinations (AJDs) and preliminary JDs (PJDs) are tools used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to help implement Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (RHA). Both types of JDs specify what geographic areas will be treated as subject to regulation by the Corps under one or both statutes. This Regulatory Guidance Letter (RGL) explains the differences between these two types of JDs and provides guidance to the field and the regulated public on when it may be appropriate to issue an AJD as opposed to a PJD, or when it may be appropriate to not prepare any JD whatsoever.

The Corps has long provided JDs as a public service. In U.S. Army Corps of Engineers v. Hawkes Co., 136 S.Ct. 1807 (2016), the Supreme Court held that AJDs are subject to judicial review, and several members of the Court highlighted that the availability of AJDs is important for fostering predictability for landowners. The Corps recognizes the value of JDs to the public and reaffirms the Corps commitment to continue its practice of providing JDs when requested to do so, consistent with the guidance below. This clarification RGL does not change or modify the definitions of AJDs and PJDs included in Corps regulations, the documentation practices for each type of JD, or when an AJD is required by the terms of its definition (e.g., only an AJD can be used to determine presence/absence of waters of the U.S.). This RGL also does not address which aquatic resources are subject to CWA or RHA jurisdiction.

The aim of this RGL is to encourage discussions between Corps districts and parties interested in obtaining the Corps views on jurisdiction to ensure that all parties have a common understanding of the different options for addressing CWA and RHA geographic jurisdiction so that the most appropriate mechanism for addressing the needs of a person requesting a JD can be identified. This RGL does not limit the discretion afforded a district engineer by the regulations to ultimately determine, consistent with the guidance below, how to respond to a request for a JD. After a requestor is fully informed of the options available for addressing geographic jurisdiction, the Corps will continue its current practice of providing an AJD consistent with this guidance if the party continues to request one. The uniform understanding of the different types of JDs and the well-reasoned use of discretion in the manner described in this guidance is of substantial importance within the Regulatory Program. The district engineer should set reasonable priorities based on the district's workload and available regulatory resources. For example, it may be reasonable to give higher priority to a JD request when it accompanies a permit request. This RGL addresses similar issues included in RGLs 07-01 and 08-02. Both RGL 07-01 and 08-02 are hereby superseded by this RGL.

2. Background. The regulations implementing the CWA and RHA introduced the concept of JDs when they "... authorized its district engineers to issue formal determinations of the applicability of the [CWA or RHA] to . . . tracts of land." 33 C.F.R. 320.1(a)(6). The use of such determinations was not addressed by either statute, and the regulations make their use discretionary and do not create a right to a JD. The regulations authorize their use as a service to the public, and the Corps has developed a practice of providing JDs when requested, and in appropriate circumstances.

Corps practice has evolved to address questions of jurisdiction through the use of AJDs and PJDs. However, some jurisdictional inquiries may be resolved without a JD. For example, a letter confirming that no Corps permit is required for activities on a site may be sufficient for responding to requests in a particular case. These different means of addressing questions of jurisdiction are discussed further below.

It is the Corps responsibility to ensure that the various types of JDs, their characteristics, and the reasons behind the JD request, have been adequately discussed with the requestor so requestors can make an informed decision regarding what type of documentation will best serve their needs. The JD requestor, after being advised by the Corps, will determine what form of JD, if any, is best for his/her particular circumstance, based on all the relevant factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, the requestor's preference and reasons for the request, whether any kind of permit authorization is associated with the request for a JD (e.g., individual permit or general permit), and the nature of any proposed activity needing authorization. Such factors are also relevant to how such requests are prioritized by the district engineer. The Corps regulations implementing the CWA and RHA leave the decision of whether to issue a JD to the discretion of the district engineer. However, it will continue to be the agency's practice to honor requests for JDs unless it is impracticable to do so, such as when the Corps is unable to gain access to a site to complete a JD or the Corps lacks other information necessary to respond to the request based on a sound technical record.

3. Approved JDs. An AJD is defined in Corps regulations at 33 CFR 331.2. A definitive, official determination that there are, or that there are not, jurisdictional aquatic resources on a parcel and the identification of the geographic limits of jurisdictional aquatic resources on a parcel can only be made by means of an AJD. AJDs may be either "stand-alone" AJDs or AJDs associated with permit actions. Some "stand-alone" AJDs may later be associated with permit actions, but at time of issuance are not related to a permit application. A "stand-alone" AJD may be requested so that impacts to jurisdictional aquatic resources may be avoided or minimized during the planning stages of a project, or it may be requested in order to fulfill a local/state authorization requirement.

- a. Except as provided otherwise in this RGL, and provided that the Corps is allowed legal access to the property and is otherwise able to complete an AJD, the Corps will issue an AJD upon receiving a request for a formal determination regarding the jurisdictional status of aquatic resources on a parcel, whether or not the request specifically refers to an "AJD."

- b. An AJD:

- (1) will be used if the Corps is determining the presence or absence of jurisdictional aquatic resources on a parcel;
- (2) will be used if the Corps is identifying the geographic limits of

jurisdictional aquatic resources on a parcel;

(3) will remain valid for a period of five years (subject to certain limited exceptions explained in RGL 05-02);

(4) can be administratively appealed through the Corps administrative appeal process set out at 33 CFR Part 331; and,

(5) may be requested through the use of the enclosed "Request for Corps Jurisdictional Determination (JD)" in Appendix 1. Even if the JD requestor does not use the enclosed "Request for Corps JD", the same information and signature provided in the "Request for Corps JD" should be submitted to the Corps district with each JD request.

4. Preliminary JDs. A PJD is defined in Corps regulations at 33 CFR 331.2. When the Corps provides a PJD, or authorizes an activity through a general or individual permit relying on an issued PJD, the Corps is making no legally binding determination of any type regarding whether jurisdiction exists over the particular aquatic resource in question. A PJD is "preliminary" in the sense that a recipient of a PJD can later request and obtain an AJD if that becomes necessary or appropriate during the permit process or during the administrative appeal process. See Appendix 2 for the PJD form.

a. A PJD:

(1) may be requested in order to move ahead expeditiously to obtain a Corps permit authorization where the requestor determines that it is in his or her best interest to do so;

(2) may be requested even where initial indications are that the aquatic resources on a parcel may not be jurisdictional, if the requestor makes an informed, voluntary decision that it is in his or her best interest not to request and obtain an AJD;

(3) may be used as the basis for a permit decision; however, for purposes of computation of impacts, compensatory mitigation requirements, and other resource protection measures, a permit decision made on the basis of a PJD will treat all aquatic resources that would be affected in any way by the permitted activity on the parcel as jurisdictional;

(4) may include the delineation limits of all aquatic resources on a parcel, without determining the jurisdictional status of such aquatic resources; and,

(5) may be requested through the use of the enclosed "Request for Corps Jurisdictional Determination (JD)" in Appendix 1. Even if the JD requestor does not use the enclosed "Request for Corps JD", the same information and signature provided in the "Request for Corps JD" should be submitted to the Corps district with each JD request.

5. No JD Whatsoever. The Corps generally does not issue a JD of any type where no JD has been requested and there are certain circumstances where a JD would not be necessary (such as authorizations by non-reporting nationwide general permits). In some circumstances, including where the Corps verifies general permits or issues letters of permission and/or standard permits, jurisdictional questions may not arise. In other circumstances, where no DA permit would be required because the proposed activity is not a regulated activity or is exempt under Section 404(f) of the CWA and is not recaptured, preparation of a "no permit required" letter may be appropriate, and no JD is required, so long as that letter makes clear that it is not addressing geographic jurisdiction.

6. Processing. The "Request for Corps Jurisdiction (JD)" in Appendix 1 of this RGL is intended to help both the requestor and the Corps in determining which type of JD, if any, is appropriate. When the Corps receives a request for a JD, the Corps should first explain to the requestor the various types of JDs and their characteristics to ensure that an informed decision is made by the requestor as to the type of JD the Corps will issue, if any. The Corps should discuss with the requestor the intent and purpose of the JD request rather than responding to the request through issuance of a JD without such understanding. Providing an explanation upfront as to the differences between the types of JDs and discussing what the requestor may need can help clarify which JD type may be appropriate for the requestor, if any. It is agency practice to honor requests for JDs unless it is clearly impracticable to do so, such as when the Corps is unable to gain access to a site to complete a JD or the Corps lacks other information necessary to respond to the request based on a sound technical record.
7. Coordination with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and posting. The Corps will continue to coordinate with EPA per applicable memoranda. The Corps will also continue to post final AJDs on Corps websites until the AJDs expire (generally five years, see RGL 05-02). PJDs will not be coordinated with EPA or posted on Corps websites.
8. This RGL remains in effect unless revised, superseded, or rescinded.



DONALD E. JACKSON
Major General, USA
Deputy Commanding General
for Civil and Emergency Operations

31 Oct 2016

Date

Appendices

Appendix 1 - REQUEST FOR CORPS JURISDICTIONAL DETERMINATION (JD)

To: District Name Here

- I am requesting a JD on property located at: _____
(Street Address)
City/Township/Parish: _____ County: _____ State: _____
Acreage of Parcel/Review Area for JD: _____
Section: _____ Township: _____ Range: _____
Latitude (decimal degrees): _____ Longitude (decimal degrees): _____
(For linear projects, please include the center point of the proposed alignment.)
- Please attach a survey/plat map and vicinity map identifying location and review area for the JD.
- I currently own this property. I plan to purchase this property.
- I am an agent/consultant acting on behalf of the requestor.
- Other (please explain): _____
- Reason for request: (check as many as applicable)
 - I intend to construct/develop a project or perform activities on this parcel which would be designed to avoid all aquatic resources.
 - I intend to construct/develop a project or perform activities on this parcel which would be designed to avoid all jurisdictional aquatic resources under Corps authority.
 - I intend to construct/develop a project or perform activities on this parcel which may require authorization from the Corps, and the JD would be used to avoid and minimize impacts to jurisdictional aquatic resources and as an initial step in a future permitting process.
 - I intend to construct/develop a project or perform activities on this parcel which may require authorization from the Corps; this request is accompanied by my permit application and the JD is to be used in the permitting process.
 - I intend to construct/develop a project or perform activities in a navigable water of the U.S. which is included on the district Section 10 list and/or is subject to the ebb and flow of the tide.
 - A Corps JD is required in order to obtain my local/state authorization.
 - I intend to contest jurisdiction over a particular aquatic resource and request the Corps confirm that jurisdiction does/does not exist over the aquatic resource on the parcel.
 - I believe that the site may be comprised entirely of dry land.
 - Other: _____
- Type of determination being requested:
 - I am requesting an approved JD.
 - I am requesting a preliminary JD.
 - I am requesting a "no permit required" letter as I believe my proposed activity is not regulated.
 - I am unclear as to which JD I would like to request and require additional information to inform my decision.

By signing below, you are indicating that you have the authority, or are acting as the duly authorized agent of a person or entity with such authority, to and do hereby grant Corps personnel right of entry to legally access the site if needed to perform the JD. Your signature shall be an affirmation that you possess the requisite property rights to request a JD on the subject property.

*Signature: _____ Date: _____

- Typed or printed name: _____
Company name: _____
Address: _____

Daytime phone no.: _____
Email address: _____

***Authorities:** Rivers and Harbors Act, Section 10, 33 USC 403; Clean Water Act, Section 404, 33 USC 1344; Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, Section 103, 33 USC 1413; Regulatory Program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Final Rule for 33 CFR Parts 320-332.
Principal Purpose: The information that you provide will be used in evaluating your request to determine whether there are any aquatic resources within the project area subject to federal jurisdiction under the regulatory authorities referenced above.
Routine Uses: This information may be shared with the Department of Justice and other federal, state, and local government agencies, and the public, and may be made available as part of a public notice as required by federal law. Your name and property location where federal jurisdiction is to be determined will be included in the approved jurisdictional determination (AJD), which will be made available to the public on the District's website and on the Headquarters USACE website.
Disclosure: Submission of requested information is voluntary; however, if information is not provided, the request for an AJD cannot be evaluated nor can an AJD be issued.

Appendix 2 - PRELIMINARY JURISDICTIONAL DETERMINATION (PJD) FORM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. REPORT COMPLETION DATE FOR PJD:

B. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON REQUESTING PJD:

C. DISTRICT OFFICE, FILE NAME, AND NUMBER:

**D. PROJECT LOCATION(S) AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
(USE THE TABLE BELOW TO DOCUMENT MULTIPLE AQUATIC RESOURCES AND/OR
AQUATIC RESOURCES AT DIFFERENT SITES)**

State: _____ County/parish/borough: _____ City: _____

Center coordinates of site (lat/long in degree decimal format):

Lat.: xx.xxx° Long.: yy.yyy°

Universal Transverse Mercator:

Name of nearest waterbody:

E. REVIEW PERFORMED FOR SITE EVALUATION (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):

Office (Desk) Determination. Date: _____

Field Determination. Date(s): _____

TABLE OF AQUATIC RESOURCES IN REVIEW AREA WHICH "MAY BE" SUBJECT TO REGULATORY JURISDICTION.

Site number	Latitude (decimal degrees)	Longitude (decimal degrees)	Estimated amount of aquatic resource in review area (acreage and linear feet, if applicable)	Type of aquatic resource (i.e., wetland vs. non-wetland waters)	Geographic authority to which the aquatic resource "may be" subject (i.e., Section 404 or Section 10/404)

- 1) The Corps of Engineers believes that there may be jurisdictional aquatic resources in the review area, and the requestor of this PJD is hereby advised of his or her option to request and obtain an approved JD (AJD) for that review area based on an informed decision after having discussed the various types of JDs and their characteristics and circumstances when they may be appropriate.
- 2) In any circumstance where a permit applicant obtains an individual permit, or a Nationwide General Permit (NWP) or other general permit verification requiring "pre-construction notification" (PCN), or requests verification for a non-reporting NWP or other general permit, and the permit applicant has not requested an AJD for the activity, the permit applicant is hereby made aware that: (1) the permit applicant has elected to seek a permit authorization based on a PJD, which does not make an official determination of jurisdictional aquatic resources; (2) the applicant has the option to request an AJD before accepting the terms and conditions of the permit authorization, and that basing a permit authorization on an AJD could possibly result in less compensatory mitigation being required or different special conditions; (3) the applicant has the right to request an individual permit rather than accepting the terms and conditions of the NWP or other general permit authorization; (4) the applicant can accept a permit authorization and thereby agree to comply with all the terms and conditions of that permit, including whatever mitigation requirements the Corps has determined to be necessary; (5) undertaking any activity in reliance upon the subject permit authorization without requesting an AJD constitutes the applicant's acceptance of the use of the PJD; (6) accepting a permit authorization (e.g., signing a proffered individual permit) or undertaking any activity in reliance on any form of Corps permit authorization based on a PJD constitutes agreement that all aquatic resources in the review area affected in any way by that activity will be treated as jurisdictional, and waives any challenge to such jurisdiction in any administrative or judicial compliance or enforcement action, or in any administrative appeal or in any Federal court; and (7) whether the applicant elects to use either an AJD or a PJD, the JD will be processed as soon as practicable. Further, an AJD, a proffered individual permit (and all terms and conditions contained therein), or individual permit denial can be administratively appealed pursuant to 33 C.F.R. Part 331. If, during an administrative appeal, it becomes appropriate to make an official determination whether geographic jurisdiction exists over aquatic resources in the review area, or to provide an official delineation of jurisdictional aquatic resources in the review area, the Corps will provide an AJD to accomplish that result, as soon as is practicable. This PJD finds that there "*may be*" waters of the U.S. and/or that there "*may be*" navigable waters of the U.S. on the subject review area, and identifies all aquatic features in the review area that could be affected by the proposed activity, based on the following information:

SUPPORTING DATA. Data reviewed for PJD (check all that apply)

Checked items should be included in subject file. Appropriately reference sources below where indicated for all checked items:

- Maps, plans, plots or plat submitted by or on behalf of the PJD requestor:
Map: _____.
- Data sheets prepared/submitted by or on behalf of the PJD requestor.
 - Office concurs with data sheets/delineation report.
 - Office does not concur with data sheets/delineation report. Rationale: _____.
- Data sheets prepared by the Corps: _____.
- Corps navigable waters' study: _____.
- U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Atlas: _____.
 - USGS NHD data.
 - USGS 8 and 12 digit HUC maps.
- U.S. Geological Survey map(s). Cite scale & quad name: _____.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey. Citation: _____.
- National wetlands inventory map(s). Cite name: _____.
- State/local wetland inventory map(s): _____.
- FEMA/FIRM maps: _____.
- 100-year Floodplain Elevation is: _____. (National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929)
- Photographs: Aerial (Name & Date): _____.
or Other (Name & Date): _____.
- Previous determination(s). File no. and date of response letter: _____.
- Other information (please specify): _____.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The information recorded on this form has not necessarily been verified by the Corps and should not be relied upon for later jurisdictional determinations.

Signature and date of
Regulatory staff member
completing PJD

Signature and date of
person requesting PJD
(REQUIRED, unless obtaining
the signature is impracticable)¹

¹ Districts may establish timeframes for requestor to return signed PJD forms. If the requestor does not respond within the established time frame, the district may presume concurrence and no additional follow up is necessary prior to finalizing an action.