



Delineating in Drought Conditions

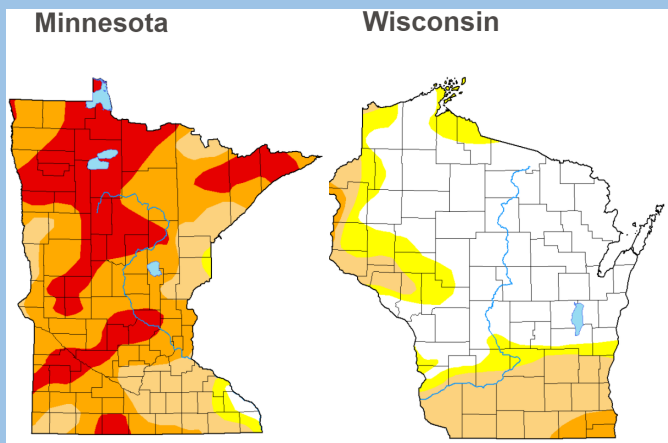
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Drought Conditions

There are severe to extreme drought conditions in many portions of the St. Paul District (Source: U.S. Drought Monitor).

Tan: Moderate Drought **Yellow:** Abnormally Dry
Orange: Severe Drought **Red:** Extreme Drought



Available Guidance for Delineators:

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Paul District (Corps) uses three regional supplements to the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual: <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/Delineation/>
 - Great Plains Regional Supplement
 - Northcentral/Northeast Regional Supplement
 - Midwest Regional Supplement
- Chapter 5** of the regional supplements, titled, "Difficult Wetland Situations," describes procedures delineators can use to evaluate the temporal shifts in vegetation and periodic lack of hydrology indicators potentially encountered during dry conditions.



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Will the Corps accept delineations conducted during drier than normal or drought conditions?

Yes! Many wetland indicators in the regional supplements were developed for use during dry season or drier than normal periods and could still be present under drought conditions. In some cases, delineators might need to revisit a site during normal or wetter than normal conditions, however; the Corps anticipates this will be rare. Chapter 5 procedures provide guidance on when a site may need to be revisited.

How to streamline delineation approval:

Delineators should follow procedures for submitting delineation reports to the Corps:

MN: <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Portals/57/docs/regulatory/RegulatoryDocs/Joint%20Guidance%20for%20Offsite%20Hydrology%20and%20Wetland%20Determinations.pdf?ver=2016-07-28-133732-90>

WI: <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Portals/57/docs/regulatory/RegulatoryDocs/Wisconsin%20Special%20Public%20Notice%20-%20203-4-2015.pdf>

Delineation reports should include the following:

1. Identification of all aquatic resources in the review area (wetlands, streams, lakes, ponds, etc.)
2. Antecedent precipitation analysis results and interpretation.
3. Offsite hydrology analysis for all agricultural wetland determinations.
4. Any previously approved delineations for the site in question.
5. A description of how Chapter 5 procedures were applied for any difficult wetland situations encountered.
6. Hydrology monitoring well data from a nearby reference wetland with similar soils and landscape position (when available).

Problematic Vegetation and Hydrology: Tips and Tricks

1. Delineators MUST evaluate field observations in the context of climatic conditions, and cannot use only field data from a single visit to inform their determinations. Delineators must use desktop information, longer term data and all available information when determining wetland boundaries.
2. *Hydrology Indicator C2– Dry Season Water Table* is applicable in areas experiencing drier than normal conditions in addition to during the typical dry season dates.
3. Seasonal wetlands and wetlands with saturated hydrologic regimes often exhibit shifts in vegetation and lack hydrology indicators during dry conditions. Delineators should base the wetland determination on the plant community that would NORMALLY be present during the wet portion of the growing season.
4. If vegetation within the wetland investigation area is substantially the same as that on a known reference wetland having similar soil, landscape position and known hydrology, then the delineator should consider the vegetation hydrophytic.
5. Delineators should check with the local SWCD or watershed district office to see if they have current hydrology monitoring data that might be applicable to the investigation site.
6. Delineators should use the remarks sections of the wetland data forms to describe field observations and document rationale.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I know if it is the dry season?

A: The typical dry season dates in the St. Paul District are as follows:

Great Plains Region: July 1st

Midwest Region: July 15th

Northcentral/Northeast Region: August 1st

Q: Where can I find precipitation and climate data?

A: You can find climate and precipitation resources in the regional supplements and Corps procedures for submitting delineation reports. You can also use the Corps Antecedent Precipitation Tool (APT), which is available for download at the following link: <https://github.com/jDeters-USACE/Antecedent-Precipitation-Tool/releases/tag/v1.0.13>

Q: When is the end of the growing season?

A: The end of the growing season is indicated by woody deciduous species lose their leaves and/or the last herbaceous plants cease flowering and their leaves become dry or brown.

Q: Will the District accept a delineation conducted outside of the growing season?

A: Conducting delineations during the growing season can avoid delays in delineation approval. The Corps may accept a Level 1 (desktop) delineation at any time of year; however Level 1 delineations are not sufficient for all sites.

Questions? Contact Senior Ecologist:

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