



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

PUBLIC NOTICE

New England District

Published: December 1, 2025

Notice of Availability of the Draft New England Wetland Functional Assessment

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District (NAE), is announcing the availability of the New England Wetland Functional Assessment (NEWFA) Method and Draft User Guide. USACE-NAE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 1 led the development of NEWFA with consultation and feedback from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, state partners, and academicians throughout New England.

The NEWFA method is designed for use with project planning and USACE-NAE regulatory reviews. This new tool provides an improved and consistent method for assessing the functional capacity of wetland resources across all six New England states. While not mandatory for all permit applications, the use of NEWFA for complex project reviews will enable greater transparency on USACE-NAE Regulatory Program's evaluation of appropriate and commensurate compensatory mitigation for proposed impacts to jurisdictional wetlands from regulated activities.

The NEWFA Draft User Guide and Data Sheet are available for review, download and use on the USACE-NAE Regulatory Webpage under the Wetland Tools menu at:
<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/missions/regulatory/regulatory-field-tools/>

Additional appendices and supplemental materials (e.g. electronic data sheet, specialized GIS layers) will be posted when finalized.

Background

The Clean Water Act specifies that no Section 404 permit can be issued by USACE which will have an unacceptable adverse effect on the aquatic environment as determined by criteria established by the EPA, known as the 404(b)(1) Guidelines. In order to determine compliance with the guidelines, some projects require an assessment of wetland function as part of the permit review process.

For decades, USACE-NAE utilized a qualitative wetland assessment method for determining the type and level of wetland functions and values. The method, known as the Highway Methodology Supplement, was developed in 1995 along with a permit review process mainly used for highway projects. This descriptive approach to characterizing wetland functions and values has been used to assess resource impacts, evaluate alternatives, and determine appropriate compensatory mitigation requirements for larger permit projects.

Since the promulgation of the 2008 Mitigation Rule (33 CFR 332), there has been a need for a new assessment method for use in New England to support the shift to a preference for quantitative assessments. Therefore, in 2013, USACE partnered with EPA to initiate the development of NEWFA.

NEWFA Method

NEWFA is a model-based quantitative method that evaluates the intrinsic capacity of a wetland to perform individual functions (not value or condition). It delivers objective and repeatable results based on best available scientific information and is calibrated so that slight variations in input will not cause meaningful changes in output. The method accounts for the unique geomorphological characteristics and climate of the northeastern United States to generate regionally consistent results across all six New England states. Crucially, NEWFA is a rapid data collection method (Level 2 Assessment) designed to be cost-effective and user-friendly for trained individuals.

NEWFA assesses fourteen wetland functions (six Hydrology Functions, five Water Quality Maintenance Functions, and three Biota Support Functions). There are four resource-specific hydrology functions which are only evaluated when the relevant associated resource is present (i.e., not applicable to all wetlands). Functional capacity models were developed based on a review of existing assessment methods.

The NEWFA models evolved over three rounds of field testing and hundreds of simulations to improve their accuracy and develop effective data collection protocols. Functional capacity grades (FCG) are calculated for each individual function, rather than a single additive wetland score. Functional efficacy ratings of low/medium/high are used to interpret the FCG and can be used to inform appropriate compensatory mitigation ratios, and to generate “SMART” (specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable, trackable) mitigation performance standards.

NEWFA is expected to be most helpful for applicants of larger and/or more complex projects where there is a need for understanding the specific wetland functions that may be impacted and how they may be mitigated. Permit applicants should discuss use of NEWFA for their project(s) with the NAE Regulatory Project Manager during their pre-application meeting. Additional NEWFA resources and training opportunities will be posted and announced as they become available.

Public Comments

The one-year comment period ends on December 1, 2026. Comments and questions regarding NEWFA should be directed to the NAE Regulatory Division’s Technical Support Branch at cenae-r-newfa@usace.army.mil.

During this comment period USACE is soliciting feedback on all aspects of NEWFA, including the data collection protocols, functional models, clarity of the draft user guide, and any other components of the method. Comments will be shared with the EPA.

We welcome the inclusion of literature citations, experiential data, field testing results, and other relevant information. Feedback can be submitted in the form of a comment letter/email to cenae-r-newfa@usace.army.mil or as responses through the NEWFA questionnaire, which can be accessed here: <https://forms.osi.apps.mil/r/iEi7VZfNS> or using the QR Code below:

