

HOW TO SPOT WETLANDS FROM 100s OF MILES AWAY IN 3 EASY STEPS



SO YOUR TASK IS TO FIND A SITE OR MANY OF THEM ACROSS A BROAD GEOGRAPHIC AREA. You want to stay clear of wetlands and waters that will result in infeasibility or drastically increase project costs before you spend thousands on other portions of your due diligence. The steps below will take about 15 minutes and yield reasonably accurate results.

STEP 1

CHECK THE US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE NATIONAL WETLANDS INVENTORY MAP

Just Google “nwi wetlands mapper”, follow the links and drill down by state, county, zip code, etc. Coordinate search is the most efficient way to search and drill down to site level maps. If your property is mapped as wetland, it will be shaded or partially shaded. If not, you’re home free, right? Well, not so fast. Many of the nation’s wetlands are not mapped by the National Wetlands Inventory. Imagine that! Print the map, make note as to whether there are mapped wetlands in the general area, and set the map aside.

STEP 2

CHECK THE USGS TOPOGRAPHIC, 7.5 MINUTE QUADRANGLE MAP

Open your browser and type: <http://terraser.com> in the browser address field and drill down – there is an address option, but entering coordinates is quickest. Here look for blue lines or blue overlay that looks like little blue grass clumps anywhere in or near your project area. Also look for broad areas with few or no brown topographic lines, particularly such areas adjacent to or near any blue lines (streams) or the blue wetland ‘grass’ clumps discussed above. These latter areas are typically broad floodplains, stream terraces, and bottomlands that can be wetland.

STEP 3

CHECK THE US NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) WEB SOIL SURVEY

This step is very reliable. Google “Web Soil Survey”, then browse and click “Start WSS”. Drill down as you like, but again, coordinates are fastest. Select your area of interest, click soil map then print. Review the printed copy. The final page of the printed copy will contain a listing of soil types keyed to the printed map. Now, Google “NRCS Soil Descriptions”. You will come to a screen where you can enter the soil series name. Do this, hit return, and then “View Soil Description.” In the first few lines there will be a drainage class listed. If this says somewhat poorly drained, poorly drained, or very poorly drained, this may not be good. You will likely need the help of a qualified wetlands consultant to assist in a formal, on-site, wetlands determination.

ECA has completed thousands of wetland determinations and delineations. ECA has also successfully permitted many projects within wetland areas. If you have questions regarding wetlands identification or permitting, please contact Ben Salter: ben.salter@eca-usa.com, (828) 505-0755, or Marvin Webster: marvin.webster@eca-usa.com, (770) 667-2040 x101.

ECA is an environmental, cultural resources, and geotechnical consulting and engineering firm with a 20-year track record of excellent service to clients. ECA attributes its success to providing timely and innovative services and solutions with a persistent focus on the objectives of clients.

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