



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF WATER RESOURCES
Groundwater and Wetlands Protection Program



Guidelines for Qualified Professionals: Wetland Delineations

The following guidelines are provided to assist applicants and others in determining whether a professional is qualified to perform wetland delineations. "Wetland delineation" refers to the identification and delineation of the landward edge of freshwater wetlands predominantly characterized by the presence or absence of wetland vegetation and hydrologic indicators, including soil characteristics. Typically, these wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs, or other similar types. **These guidelines are not intended to certify a delineator's credentials or guarantee that the Department will concur with any delineation or identification completed by a professional purporting to meet these guidelines.** Professionals who meet these guidelines, however, are likely to possess the education and experience conducive to providing an acceptable wetland delineation.

Qualified professional wetland delineators should have the following minimum education and experience:

- 1) **Education:** A Bachelor's degree, or higher degree from an accredited college or university with successful completion of a course of study which includes at least the following:
 - a) **Biological Sciences:** At least twelve (12) semester hours in courses such as general biology, botany, general ecology, plant or aquatic ecology, general forestry, plant taxonomy, field botany, plant morphology, wetland ecology, and similar courses related to the biology and/or identification of non-ornamental, wild plants. Of the twelve (12) semester hours, a minimum of three (3) semester hours should be in field botany and an additional three (3) semester hours should be in wetland ecology.
 - b) **Physical Science:** At least twelve (12) semester hours in courses such as soil science, soil morphology, chemistry, hydrology, physics, geology, earth science, and similar courses. Of the twelve (12) semester hours, a minimum of three (3) semester hours should be a course in soil science (preferably soil morphology) and an additional three (3) semester hours should be in geology or earth science.
 - c) **Quantitative Science:** At least six (6) semester hours in courses such as math, calculus, basic statistics, population dynamics, experimental statistics and similar courses.
 - d) **Supplemental courses of study:** In those cases where the professional delineator's college curriculum is lacking in the areas noted in a, b, or c above, specialized supplemental courses may be substituted, especially in the area of plant identification and identification of hydric soils. Further, demonstration of substantial experience in the identification of plant species and wetland characteristics may suffice where specific courses of study are lacking.

- 2) **Experience:** A minimum of two (2) years of full-time professional experience conducting freshwater wetland identifications and delineations within the glaciated Northeastern portion of the United States is recommended. This experience may be gained by completing wetland identifications and delineations in Rhode Island or other states in compliance with municipal, state, or federal wetland regulatory programs. Experience with "vegetation" as one of the primary components of edge identification and delineation is imperative.

The professional wetland delineator should be experienced in the practices and procedures of R.I.D.E.M.'s Freshwater Wetlands Program and should be intimately familiar with the definitions of freshwater wetlands contained within the Rhode Island Fresh Water Wetlands Act and all current Rules and Regulations regarding freshwater wetlands.

A representative list of projects involving the professional wetland delineator should be provided to the applicant upon request. Examples of such projects may be on file with the R.I.D.E.M.'s Freshwater Wetlands Program. Review of Program files may provide the applicant with information to help determine if the professional wetland delineator meets the guidelines for education and experience.

Note: The Freshwater Wetlands Program is interested in any comments or concerns regarding these guidelines. Please address your comments to: **R.I. Dept. of Environmental Management, Freshwater Wetlands Program, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, R.I. 02908.**