



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Norfolk District



CENAO-REG

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Document and Ephemeral Stream Assessment Form for Use with the Unified Stream Methodology (USM), for Use in Virginia

The Norfolk District Army Corps of Engineers (District) and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), hereby release a new assessment form for Ephemeral Streams, and a Frequently Asked Questions document for clarification of the USM, for use in wadeable streams in Virginia. These documents are available on the District's webpage at: <http://www.nao.usace.army.mil/Technical%20Services/Regulatory%20Branch/USM.asp> or on DEQ's website at: <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/wetlands/homepage.html>

BACKGROUND

The USM was developed as a result of a collaborative effort between the District and the DEQ, to establish a unified and consistent method for use in Virginia to assess proposed stream impacts and determine the appropriate amount of stream mitigation needed to offset those impacts. The USM replaced both the District's Stream Attribute Assessment Methodology (SAAM), and DEQ's Stream Impact and Compensation Assessment Methodology (SICAM). The USM builds on both previous methods and lessons learned. The USM was released for public comment on January 28, 2007. The Final Draft for Implementation of the USM was required for use on February 1, 2007. The Corps and DEQ are completing their review of the public comments received, and plan to release a new version of the manual, on or around September 1, 2008.

The Corps and DEQ will continue to evaluate comments and data with regard to the USM, and will release revised versions of the USM when appropriate. Each improved version will be noted with a revision number, and will only be released after public notice and comment. We continue to encourage the public to submit data derived from use of the USM to the individuals at the addresses listed at the end of this notice.

IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of the FAQs document and the Ephemeral Stream assessment form is to clarify the existing USM procedures, as described in the manual.

The FAQs are intended to address the questions most frequently asked by the public and staff regarding the USM, rather than to implement new procedures or methods.

The Ephemeral Stream assessment form is designed in accordance with the assessment procedure for ephemeral streams, as described in the USM Manual. This is not a new procedure, but rather should provide a form that is more conducive for use for ephemeral streams than the existing Stream Assessment Form (Form 1). The new form will calculate the Reach Condition Index (RCI) and the Compensation Requirement (CR) for ephemeral streams, as Form 1 currently does for intermittent and perennial streams. The term “Ephemeral Stream” is defined in the USM Manual, as well as in Corps regulations.

We do not anticipate that either the FAQs document or the Ephemeral Stream Assessment Form will result in substantive differences in the Compensation Requirement or Compensation Credit obtained using the USM. Both are intended for immediate use.

If you have any questions about the USM, please contact:

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