

# Reclamation Manual

## Directives and Standards

<b>Subject:</b>	Irrigation Suitability Land Classification for New Projects or Operating Projects
<b>Purpose:</b>	Establishes requirements for irrigation suitability land classification procedures associated with various Reclamation activities.
<b>Authority:</b>	Reclamation Project Act of 1902 (32 Stat 388); Fact Finders Act of 1924 (43 Stat. 702, 43 U.S.C. 462); Omnibus Adjustment Act of May 25, 1926 (44 Stat. 636); Reclamation Project Act of 1939 (53 Stat. 1192, 43 U.S.C. 485g); Reclamation Reform Act of 1982 (96 Stat. 1261, 43 U.S.C. 390 et seq.); and the Acreage Limitation Rules and Regulations (43 CFR 426).
<b>Approving Official:</b>	Office of Program and Policy Services
<b>Contact:</b>	Office of Program and Policy Services, Water and Environmental Resources Office, 84-55000

1. **Scope.** Applies to all irrigation suitability land classification performed as part of investigations and planning for new Reclamation projects, or new blocks, units or divisions of a project (projects), that include an irrigation purpose, as well as irrigation suitability land classification and/or reclassification requested by water user organizations on operating projects, or required by contract.
2. **Introduction.** Irrigation suitability land classification (land classification) investigations are an integral part of planning for new Reclamation projects that include an irrigation purpose. Land classification establishes the extent and degree of economic suitability of lands for sustained irrigation farming and serves as a basic factor for selecting lands to be included for irrigation service in Reclamation projects. These investigations contribute information used in determining project feasibility, project design and construction, proper land and water use, and project repayment requirements. Land classification and reclassification considerations may also be activities during the project development period and on operating projects.
3. **Responsibilities.** Responsibilities of Reclamation management for land classification activities are established in Reclamation Manual (RM) policy, *Determination of Irrigation Suitability of Proposed Project Lands, and Identification of Lands That May Receive Project Irrigation Water on Operating Projects*, WTR P06.
4. **Definitions.**
  - A. **Arable Land.** Classified land that, when farmed in adequate size units for prevailing climatic and economic settings and provided with the necessary on-farm improvements, will generate sufficient income from the commercial production of crops under irrigation to pay all farm production expenses; provide a reasonable return

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to the farm family's labor, management, and capital; and pay the operation, maintenance, and replacement costs of associated project irrigation and drainage facilities.

- B. **Commercial Irrigation.** Irrigation of commercial crops (i.e., crops grown to be harvested and marketed for sale by the producers of the crops) or of lands used for the pasturing or grazing of commercially marketed livestock (i.e., livestock raised for the purpose of generating income to the producers of the livestock).
  - C. **Irrigable Land.** Land, not limited to that which has been classified, under a specific Reclamation project plan for which a project irrigation water supply is or can be made available, and is provided or planned to be provided with irrigation, drainage, flood protection, and other facilities for sustained irrigation.
  - D. **Irrigation Suitability Land Classification (Land Classification).** The systematic evaluation of lands and their designation by categories (land classes) based on similar physical and chemical characteristics and related economic conditions with respect to suitability for agricultural production under irrigation and irrigation service under a plan for water and land resources development.
  - E. **Irrigation Suitability Land Reclassification (Reclassification).** The process of reevaluating land on an operating project that has already been classified.
  - F. **Operating Project.** Generally, an operating project is one for which the Secretary has 1) executed repayment and/or water service contracts,<sup>1</sup> and 2) issued public notice of completion,<sup>2</sup> even though additional blocks, units, or divisions may be added at a later time.
  - G. **Project Irrigation Water.** Project water made available for irrigation purposes pursuant to a contract with Reclamation.
  - H. **Project Water.** Surface or ground water, including project return flows, which is pumped, diverted, and/or stored, and for which Reclamation has the right of use. (See paragraph 3D of RM policy, *Voluntary Transfers of Project Water*, WTR P02, for a more detailed definition of project water.)
5. **Procedures.** This section outlines required procedures for land classification and reclassification. Guidance, including detailed procedures that can be utilized to perform land classification and reclassification activities that will conform to the requirements of these procedures, is available in *Reclamation Technical Guidelines for Irrigation Suitability Land Classification (Guidelines)*.

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<sup>1</sup> Omnibus Adjustment Act of 1926, Section 46.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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- A. **Procedures for Land Classification Activities Supporting New Project Authorization and Construction.** Land classification investigations provide supporting data for the authorization and construction of new Reclamation projects with an irrigation purpose. Secretarial concurrence with Reclamation's land classification must be obtained prior to project construction. On large projects constructed in blocks, units, or divisions, Secretarial concurrence may be sought for each individual block, unit, or division. The requirements for classification as stated in this section also apply to those lands to be provided project irrigation water for commercial irrigation under the Distribution Systems Loan Act (Public Law 84-130), and the Small Reclamation Projects Act as amended (Public Law 84-984).
- (1) **Preparing and Using Specifications to Perform Land Classification.** Land classifications will be conducted utilizing project-specific specifications, prepared prior to classification activities, which array the primary land factors (i.e., characteristics of soil, topography, and drainage) into ranges, which have similar economic significance in relation to irrigation suitability. The specifications will represent land factors that are expected to prevail under project conditions and ensure comparability of classification within a particular project area.
  - (2) **Requirements for the Land Classification Report.** A comprehensive land classification report (report) will be prepared that compiles and summarizes basic methods, data, and information used to determine land classes, including soil profile descriptions, chemical and soils laboratory data, field logs, graphic presentation of land class delineations, drainage conditions, and economic analysis. The report will include land classification maps or reference to the map numbers. A field review(s) of the project area will be performed during report preparation to verify the accuracy of the classifications and report. The review(s) will be documented and included in the report.
  - (3) **Submission of Land Classification Information for Approval and Concurrence.** The Regional Director will provide the Commissioner with a memorandum to request approval of land classification determinations, which require Secretarial concurrence, at least 60 days before the anticipated start of construction. The memorandum requesting approval will include the desired date for receipt of the approval and a land classification report [paragraph 5A(2) above], as well as the following information: the arable area that is requested for approval (summarized by acreage of land classification types), documentation of soil constituent assessments, quotations from language in the authorizing legislation and project feasibility reports that accurately describe the project service area, and any other information pertinent to approval. The Commissioner will evaluate the request and, if acceptable, approve the land classification investigation and submit a request to the Secretary for concurrence with his/her approval.

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### B. **Procedures for Land Classification and Reclassification Activities Following Project Construction.**

This section applies to land classification and reclassification activities during the project development period and on operating projects.

#### (1) **Land Classification during the Project Development Period Prior to Commencement of Operation.**

On newly constructed projects there may be an interim period after construction before a repayment contract is executed referred to as the development period. The official irrigable acreage determination for contract purposes is made after project construction is completed so as to include final, as-built conditions including on-farm irrigation development and actual constructed project features. There may be minor differences between irrigable acreage described and approved during processes described in paragraph 5A and those finalized at the end of the development period.

- (a) The Regional Director will submit a memorandum to the Commissioner that provides a complete and final description of the irrigable land within the project boundary. The memorandum will include a discussion of differences between the irrigable lands approved during actions described in paragraph 7A and the final, official irrigable lands including as-built conditions.

#### (2) **Land Classification and Reclassification on Operating Projects.**

As stated in Paragraph 7 of RM policy, *Determination of Irrigation Suitability of Proposed Project Lands, and Identification of Lands That May Receive Project Irrigation Water on Operating Projects*, WTR P06, water user organizations may request to have project lands classified or reclassified. Any classification or reclassifications performed in response to a water user request, or as required by a contract, will be performed in accordance with this paragraph.

- (a) Classification or reclassification of lands must be initiated by specific request of the water user organization (Section 8 of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939) or will be initiated as required by contract. The request will include an accurate listing of lands to be classified or reclassified and a reason(s) for the request.
- (b) The Area Manager in whose area the lands are located will process requests for classification or reclassification or initiate the action required by contract. For requests made by districts, the Area Manager will make a preliminary determination of whether the request is justified and recommend to the Regional Director and the water user organization, by memorandum, to proceed or not proceed with the request. The Regional Director will approve or deny each request for undertaking land classification or reclassification.
- (c) No lands will be classified or reclassified more often than at 5-year intervals (Section 8 of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939).

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- (d) The Regional Director may approve a request to assign an arable designation using data gathered from administrative, checklist-type, or other streamlined land classification methods if the following three conditions are all met: (i) the size of the parcel is 500 acres or less, (ii) the parcel is contiguous to and part of an existing irrigated farm tract, and (iii) the parcel has a current 5-year history of irrigation. This method of classification or reclassification may be utilized for up to the accumulative total of the lesser of 500 total acres or 10 percent of the total irrigable acreage of the water user organization. See the *Guidelines* for additional information about administrative, checklist-type, and other streamlined classification methods.
  - (e) The amount the requesting water user organization will be charged by Reclamation to perform the type of classification or reclassification work as addressed in paragraph 5B(2)(a) will be determined as per 43 CFR 426.11(d)(3) or as specified by contract. The water user organization will be required to pay any of the estimated costs of the classification or reclassification investigation applicable to it in advance. Upon completion of the classification or reclassification, the total actual Reclamation costs will be determined and the water user organization will pay any additional amount or be refunded any excess. The results of the classification or reclassification will be binding upon the requesting district and Reclamation.
- (3) **Land Classification or Reclassification to Add Lands To or Remove Lands From Irrigation Service.** Water user organizations may request to have land classification or reclassification performed by Reclamation in order to add lands to or remove lands from eligibility for irrigation service. However, if the purpose of the request is only to remove lands from commercial irrigation service, then an administrative removal of the irrigable status from the lands, rather than a reclassification from arable or irrigable to nonarable, is all that is required. In no way will repayment or other payment obligations due to the United States be reduced as a result of the removal of lands unless specifically approved by Congress.

### C. Land Classification for Class 1 Equivalency Determinations.

- (1) **Requests for Determinations.** Districts may request class 1 equivalency determinations.<sup>3</sup> Such determinations establish for the district the acreage of land with lower productive potential (classes 2, 3, and 4) that would be equivalent in productive potential to the class 1 lands in the local agricultural economic setting. Once the determination is made, landholders who are subject to the discretionary provisions of the Reclamation Reform Act of 1982 in that district and have

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<sup>3</sup> Section 207 of the Reclamation Reform Act of 1982 (RRA) (Public Law 97-293, 96 Stat. 1266) and Section 11 of the Acreage Limitation Rules and Regulations (43 CFR 426).

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classes 2, 3, or 4 lands will have the right to increased acreage entitlement by utilizing class 1 equivalency factors. Additional information related to the Reclamation Reform Act of 1982 can be found in RM directives and standards, *RRA (Reclamation Reform Act of 1982) Reference Manual*, PEC 02-02.

- (2) **Classification for Equivalency.** Adequate land classification is essential for the class 1 equivalency factor determinations and the associated determination of individual acreage entitlement. Classification performed for purposes of equivalency will conform to section 5B(2) of this directives and standards.
- (3) **Payment for Studies Other than Land Classification Performed for Class 1 Equivalency Determinations.** The costs for all studies needed for class 1 equivalency determinations, other than land classification, will be paid by the water user organization.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Acreage Limitation Rules and Regulations, 43 CFR Part 426.11(e).