

Applied Concepts and Interpretation of Chapter 62-340, F.A.C.

This manual was developed to provide guidance for consistent interpretation of the wetland and surface water delineation rule by providing information and examples instructive of the intent of the various sections of the rule. Anyone familiar with wetland delineation or any other type of land evaluation understands that rarely are two non-contiguous properties exactly alike in their community structure and ecological condition. The primary parameters utilized to determine the boundaries between wetlands and uplands are *vegetation, soil characteristics, and hydrologic indicators*. The rule establishes the use of these parameters for consistent application to wetland delineation.

Care should be given to evaluate *all facts and factors* influencing these parameters whenever feasible. Throughout the manual, guidance is provided for the use and interpretation of data considered. This guidance is based on a compilation of extensive statewide experience in wetland delineation among DEP and WMD staff. Implementation of the procedures within this rule does require some degree of knowledge and experience in evaluating plant communities, hydric soils and observations of the effects of surficial hydrology.

As you follow the procedures described herein and implement the rule, please remember that the rule was developed through the cooperative effort of the DEP, the five WMDs, many local governments, representatives of the regulated public and representatives of concerned citizen groups. The regulatory scope of this rule is intended to approximate the combination of *wetland* areas regulated by the DEP and the WMDs immediately prior to July 1, 1994, the effective date of the rule. Changes in the location of the *wetland or surface water* boundary in any particular area, if any, are more than likely because of the influence of procedures already employed in other areas of the state. Remember, this rule is a *statewide, unified* approach to wetland and other surface water delineation within Florida, and *it is the law* (subsection 373.412(2), F.S.).

Water is the driving force of a *wetland*. The influence of water in the concept of *wetlands* is best demonstrated by hydropatterns. *Hydropatterns* include the frequency, distribution and duration of surficial hydrology along with topographic and edaphic features. The hydropatterns of Florida wetlands are quite variable, differing both by type and location. Because of this, there is no single criteria by which the observation of water alone can be rationally and efficiently used to deduce wetland delineation. The influence of water in establishing wetlands is evaluated in the rule using the physical landscape markers provided by the hydropattern as expressed by the parameters of: vegetation, hydric soils and hydrologic indicators. This rule does not use mandatory hydrology criteria with respect to frequency, duration, and depth of inundation or saturation to delineate wetlands. Water as an indicator is never used alone or outside the control of reasonable scientific judgement. (See section 62-340.550, F.A.C., for special circumstances involving wetland hydrology). According to USDA - NRCS, areas with hydric soil, in the *undrained condition*, possess sufficient hydrology to support a hydrophytic community, yet not every area of hydric soil constitutes a *wetland*. To many observers, a community not dominated by wetland indicator plant species (subsections 62340.450(a) and (b), F.A.C.) is

not a wetland. Hydric hammock, as previously noted, often is dominated by non-listed vegetation. *Hydropatterns* provide the integrating link that determines if an area will be a wetland. In some areas of Florida, this has resulted in wetlands occurring beyond the edge depicted by listed vegetation. There is more to a *wetland* than an observation of inundation and species composition.



Cypress swamp