



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Fort Worth District

Joint Public Notice

Number: CESWF-11-TXRAM

Activity: Texas Rapid Assessment Method and Calculator

Date: April 24, 2012

The purpose of this public notice is to inform you of Regulatory Program information in which you might be interested. The notice includes the release of new impact and mitigation assessment tools designed to enable us to make predictable, reasonable, and increasingly transparent decisions on factors affecting the public interest. We hope you will participate in this process.

Regulatory Program

Since its early history, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has played an important role in the development of the nation's water resources. Originally, this involved construction of harbor fortifications and coastal defenses. Later duties included the improvement of waterways to provide avenues of commerce. An important part of our mission today is the protection of the nation's waterways through the administration of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Program.

Section 10

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is directed by Congress under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors of 1899 (33 USC 403) to regulate *all work or structures in or affecting the course, condition or capacity of navigable waters of the United States*. The intent of this law is to protect the navigable capacity of waters important to interstate commerce.

Section 404

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is directed by Congress under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344) to regulate the *discharge of dredged and fill material into all waters of the United States, including wetlands*. The intent of the law is to protect the nation's waters from the indiscriminate discharge of material capable of causing pollution and to restore and maintain their chemical, physical and biological integrity.

Contact

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JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, FORT WORTH AND TULSA DISTRICTS

SUBJECT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth and Tulsa Districts (USACE) have developed a wetland and stream conditional assessment model, referred to as the Texas Rapid Assessment Method (TXRAM). In March 2011, this methodology was released in a draft form, for the purpose of utilizing and testing the model for a period of one year. The USACE is issuing this second Public Notice to solicit comments on the draft model and its use. Following evaluation of the comments, a Final version of TXRAM will be released and distributed through a Public Notice. The USACE is also seeking comment on the Aquatic Resource Compensation Calculator (Calculator), which was also included in the March 2011 Public Notice. The TXRAM model and the Calculator can be downloaded at:

www.swf.usace.army.mil/pubdata/environ/regulatory/permitting/applicationforms/index.asp

DATE ISSUED: April 24, 2012

LOCATION: The use of TXRAM is applicable, but not mandatory, for all projects, including mitigation sites and proposed mitigation banks, located within the geographic regulatory boundaries of the USACE, Fort Worth and Tulsa Districts in the state of Texas (refer to Figure 1).

SUMMARY TXRAM: The Fort Worth and Tulsa Districts of the USACE have developed TXRAM to provide a rapid, repeatable, field-based conditional assessment methodology for evaluating the ecological condition of wetlands and streams located within each District's area of responsibility in the state of Texas. This model was released in draft form, and has been used for the last year. The use of TXRAM is not mandatory, but highly recommended, as it has served to streamline and improve the process of impact assessment and mitigation calculation. This method generates a single overall score of wetland or stream integrity. As such, TXRAM does not focus on specific ecologic functions or societal values provided by wetlands and streams. It is anticipated that TXRAM will be sufficient in most regulatory situations. However, on a project-specific basis, the USACE may request additional assessments or evaluations, since TXRAM is not an intensive, quantitative functional assessment.

The output from TXRAM is used for calculating baseline conditions as well as post-project conditions associated with actions subject to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. For proposed activities resulting in the loss or reduction in aquatic resource condition, the post-project condition would reflect anticipated adverse impacts. Additionally, for projects involving a proposed gain in aquatic resource condition, such as those associated with on-site restoration of temporary impacts or compensatory mitigation activities, the post-project condition would reflect anticipated beneficial effects. TXRAM may also be used in conjunction with monitoring requirements to track actual changes in wetland or stream condition over time. The TXRAM manual contains two separate modules, one for wetlands and one for streams, each of which describe the intended use, scope, background,

procedures, and guidelines. The Fort Worth and Tulsa Districts have issued this second Public Notice to solicit comments on the draft model and its use. Following evaluation of any comments received, a final version of TXRAM will be released and distributed through a Public Notice.

SUMMARY AQUATIC RESOURCE COMPENSATION CALCULATOR: In an effort to promote consistency and transparency, within the Regulatory program, the USACE is also proposing the use of an Aquatic Resource Compensation Calculator (Calculator). This Calculator was originally developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Engineering Design Research Center (ERDC) and is used in several other Districts. Data outputs from TXRAM will become data inputs for the Calculator. This information, in addition to acreage units for wetland impacts and/or linear feet units for stream impacts, will be used to generate a unit-less number that will represent mitigation debt. The second component of the Calculator will involve the input of baseline TXRAM data for a proposed mitigation site, along with either acreage units for wetland impacts and/or linear feet units for stream impacts associated with proposed mitigation activities. (Following this step, the predicted or anticipated TXRAM score upon full maturity of the mitigation project is calculated and input into the Calculator) along with a numerical representation (expressed as a percentage) of the risk of site failure. As a final step, the date (expressed in calendar years) from initiation of mitigation work to the anticipated project maturity (expressed in calendar years) is also input into the Calculator. Ultimately the Calculator will use these data sets to determine mitigation “debt” as compared to the predicted mitigation “asset” (credit), while incorporating elements such as risk of site failure and temporal delay (time until full site maturity). By using this Calculator, applicants can readily estimate mitigation needs and predicted ecological lift associated with compensatory mitigation efforts, for permittee responsible mitigation, and mitigation banks.

TXRAM AND AQUATIC RESOURCE COMPENSATION CALCULATOR TRAINING: The USACE is planning to host a training workshop in the early summer of 2012. This training will provide an introduction to the use of the TXRAM model and mitigation calculator. Information on this workshop will be announced through a Public Notice and press releases.

SUMMARY: This Public Notice is being distributed to all known interested persons in order to disseminate this information and to solicit comments on TXRAM and the Calculator. Comments will be accepted via regular mail or by email to: Jennifer.r.walker2@usace.army.mil. The close of comment period is May 24, 2012.

DISTRICT ENGINEER
FORT WORTH DISTRICT
CORPS OF ENGINEERS