Easlan Hobbs
Big Springs

FWS TEXAS FIELD CONVENTIONS

General

All standard non-tidal water regimes will be used, except for D, E, and G, and subclasses will accompany all vegetated classes.

The J water regime will primarily be used for Hobbs NE and SE and for the western edge of the Big Spring NW and SW maps, based on an ecoregion break which runs basically north to south.

With the exception of Hobbs SW, adjoining maps to the north and west need not be tied to this study area, but all maps should be consulted for improved consistency. There are no external ties to be made to the east or south.

Split classifications will be employed very infrequently and on the basis of spatial dominance as dictated by delineation clarity.

Aquatic bed classifications will not be used for this project as no AB was documented during field reconnaisance, and only 2% of the photography being used for the project was taken during the growing season when aquatic signatures are detectable.

As there is no official minimum mapping unit for this project, all "dot" wetlands will be pulled out unless it is clear that such units will not be of polygon size after being transferred to final map scale of 1:24,000.

Conservative care should be taken in evaluating the degree of wet conditions for the study area given the time of year for field reconnaisance and the observed flooding situation. Delineations and classifications should closely correlate to the actual photography as it more accurately reflects "normal" conditions.

The average growing season for the region is 217 days and extends from the first week in April to the first week in November.

Playas

Intermittent ponds or playas will usually be classified as either PEM1J or PEM1A, though seasonal (C) and even semi-permanent (F) conditions are possible. The "f" special modifier will be added when there is evidence of farming, which is often the case, and there may be occassional use of the "d" modifier if a given basin has a connecting ditch for draining water from the depression.

County soil surveys should be closely followed to aid in the identification and classification of playa wetlands. Especially in the case of farmed playas, signatures may often be faint or obscured though they correlate well with very "strong" hydric soils.

Practically speaking, all Randall Clay and Lipan Clay soils identify wet conditions and every attempt should be made to map these areas. In-the-field checksiting consistently supported these soils as reliable wetland indicators. Of lesser reliability was Roscoe Clay and Randall fine sandy loam (Dawson County only) which did not always correspond to wetlands.

In a general order of importance, playas should be evaluated on the following factors: 1) signature, 2) soils, 3) ecoregion, 4) land use, 5) topography, and 6) areal size. The following chart is a general guide to the classification of playas for this project:

* WEST/EAST OF ECOREGION BREAK * f = FARMED ("/" MEANS 50/60)		HYDRIC SOIL SITUATION					
		LIPAN/RANDALL		ROSCOE		OTHERS	
SIGNATURE STRENGTH	*	WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
STRONG - WATER OR DARK TONE, USUALLY GOOD BOUNDARY	NO f	A (C, F)		A		A	
	f	Af (Cf)		Af / Jf		Af / Jf	
MODERATE - LIGHTER TONE, NO WATER, POORLY DEFINED	NO f	J		J/U	J	U	J/U
	f	Jf		U	Jf/U	U	J/U
WEAK - VERY PALE TONE WITH INDEFINITE BOUNDARY	NO f	J/U	J	U		U	
	f	Jf / U		U		U	

Excavations And Impoundments

Stock ponds/tanks and the like which are situated along drainageways or on obvious inclines should be classified with an "h" modifier. Man-made ponds which appear on level ground without any apparent drainageway will be considered excavated (x) instead of impounded, unless an obvious impounding wall is present.

Perennial designations on the USGS topos consistently proved too liberal for most of the excavated and impounded ponds which were observed in the field. Most such bodies of water will be semi-permanently flooded (PUBFx or h) and occassionally seasonally flooded (C).

Numerous, small excavations, created primarily for livestock, dot the landscape of this region. If indicated at all on the topo, these areas may be designated as either perennial or intermittent. In each of these cases, the predominant classification will be PUSCx, though PUSAx will occassionally apply when little or no water is present and a white or light grey tone is visible. PUBFx will apply to relatively large, well-defined excavations which yield a very dark signature where water is present.

Gravel pits will generally not be classified as wetland unless there is water present on the photo. PUSCx will be the predominant label, but temporary (A) and also semi-permanent (F) conditions are possible.

Water-pumping windmills are prevalent in the area and are usually accompanied by either a very small metal tank or a somewhat larger excavation with a natural substrate. The excavations will be pulled out when possible and generally classified PUSCx or PUBFx (for darker and more prominent ponds). Metal tanks, which are identifiable by a perfectly round dot, should not be mapped as wetlands.

Oil and gas drilling rigs, also very common in the study area, often employ excavated pits which usually contain non-water fluids. Though some unused pits may collect natural precipitation runoff, none of these areas will be classified as wetland.

Man-made, artificially substrated pools of water such as fountains and swimming pools are not considered wetlands and shouldn't be mapped.

Woody Wetlands

Most woody vegetation in the work area will be scrub/shrub (SS) and limited to small polygons and linear delineations. When in doubt as to the scale of woody vegetated areas, pi's should err on the side of scrub/shrub and not forested (FO) height, based on field observation and the general lack of trees in the region.

The predominant species found for scrub/shrub wetlands was saltcedar (SS2) and not other common shrubs such as willows. In the absence of checksite information or a clear signature for broad-leaf deciduous vegetation, SS classifications are assumed to be needle-leaf deciduous.

Unlike SS wetlands, the predominant species found for forested wetlands were broad-leaf deciduous trees such as elm and willow. In the absence of checksite information or a clear signature for saltcedar, FO classifications are assumed to be FO1 and not FO2.

Rivers and streams

Perennial rivers are very rare in this area and there will be no R3 (upper perennial) classifications. R2 classifications will be based on a perennial designation on the USGS topo or specific collateral information. The major lower perennial systems are the Colorado River, the Brazos River, and the Clear Fork Of The Brazos River.

Intermittent streams will conservatively be pulled out, based equally on signature and hydrology. R4SBC wetlands will be limited to major drainages with clear scarring and an absence of vegetation. R4SBA units will show less scarring with greater vegetation, and should generally be limited to longer tributaries of pen width size.

Intermittently flooded streambeds (R4SBJ) may exist in Hobbs NE and SE, but their use will be very limited as even this driest of areas receives enough annual rainfall to preclude widespread use.

Neither R4SBF nor R2UBF will be used for this mapping effort.

Lakes And Reservoirs

Though most 10 to 20 acre ponds encountered in the field are usually considered permanently flooded (H), many of the natural lakes (20 acres or more) were observed to be more "seasonally" flooded. Each lacustrine situation will be independently evaluated for signature to delineate various zones ranging from permanently flooded (H) to temporarily flooded (A). Man-made reservoirs tended to be more permanently flooded and less subject to a wide variety of lacustrine zones.

Generally speaking, L1UBH(h) areas will be very deep blue/black, L2UBF(h) areas will be dark blue, L2USC(h) areas will be light blue, and L2USA(h) areas will be very light blue to white. There were no documented cases of L2USJ wetlands as either drier zones within a larger lacustrine system or as separate units.

Impounded, non-persistent emergents (L2EM2h) will be mapped with some of the reservoirs where no evidence of persistent EM such as bullrush or cattail was found during field reconnaisance. These areas typically returned a signature of smooth light pink (late autumn photography) and were underwater at the time of field checking.

Lake JB Thomas (Big Spring NW reservoir) will generally be mapped as it appears on the photography and no attempt will be made to correlate delineations with the pool elevation of the topo which indicates a much higher level.

Miscellaneous

Permanently flooded ponds (H) will generally only exist for 10 to 20 acre wetland units and most under 10 acres will only be semi-permanent (F).

Green signatures throughout the study area, thought to be some form of emergent vegetation before the field trip, will invariably be unconsolidated shore wetlands (USA,C).

There are many bright red signatures for vegetation, especially shrubs, which are not wetland. Many upland plants, particularly mesquite, take on an enhanced color in the presence of "wetter" conditions, but are still non-wetlands.

18% of the photography being used was taken during February and early March where vegetation signatures differ markedly from other dates of photography. Most significant during this "leaves off" period is the signature for saltcedar which takes on a much darker brick red to black tone. Emergent vegetation, especially within streambeds, is difficult to distinguish but also yields a generally dark grey signature instead of it's normal red.

A somewhat smoother dark grey "stained" signature of various sizes often looks like a wet condition where it exists in undisturbed areas, but will always be upland based on field and soil survey support.

The "K" water regime will be used sparingly for obvious artificially flooded wetland situations such as salt evaporation ponds (Cedar Lake, Hobbs NE) and sewage treatment ponds. In each of these cases the "K" water regime will stand on its own to describe flooding conditions and no additional water regime will be needed.

The "r" special modifier will be employed when it is clear that an artificial substrate, usually concrete, is being used to help retain water or retard erosion.