



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



CENAO-REG

January 18, 2007

Unified Stream Methodology for Use in Virginia
Final Draft for Implementation

The Norfolk District Army Corps of Engineers (District) and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), hereby release the Unified Stream Methodology (USM), in final draft form, for use in wadeable streams in Virginia beginning February 1, 2007. The new manual and data forms are available here

<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 DEQ to establish a unified and consistent method for use in Virginia to assess proposed stream impacts and determine stream mitigation requirements. The USM replaces 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 is a technical manual only; it is not an agency regulation and it will not change how either agency decides whether or not to issue permits. We anticipate that the USM will help achieve our agencies' mutual stream mitigation goals: simplicity of use; production of replicable results; enhancement of program predictability; and protection of the aquatic environment. We are releasing the USM as a final draft for implementation while we solicit comments with regard to its selected assessment parameters, field utility, credit structuring, and the overall applicability of its methodology for quantifying impacts and mitigation requirements. In addition, we 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 USM will be implemented on February 1, 2007 in accordance with the following guidelines:

- 1) For projects that have already been authorized by both the District and DEQ: If authorized construction in streams has already been initiated (or completed), those projects remain authorized and the permittees remain subject to all of the terms and conditions of their permits. If authorized construction in streams has not yet been initiated, permittees may choose whether to proceed subject to the terms and conditions (and mitigation requirements) of their permits, or they may request permit modifications

to address their mitigation requirements under the USM.

- 2) For all other projects that are currently under review by one or both agencies, including those that are received by the agencies between now and January 31, 2007, applicants have the option of using either the USM, or the more restrictive of the SAAM or the SICAM.
- 3) All permit applications for stream work that are received by both agencies after January 31, 2007 will be reviewed using the USM.
- 4) Any Mitigation Bank Prospectus submitted after January 31, 2007 will be reviewed using the USM. All other Banks that have been approved have the option of reassessing their stream credits using USM upon coordination and approval by the Mitigation Bank Review Team (MBRT).
- 5) All Trust Fund estimates made after January 31, 2007 will be based on a review using the USM.

COMMENT PERIOD: The District and DEQ are soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the Unified Stream Methodology in its Final Draft form. Any comments received will be considered by the District and DEQ to determine what, if any, changes to make to the USM before it is finalized. Comments on the USM should be made in writing, addressed to the Norfolk District, Corps of Engineers (ATTN: CENAO- REG), 803 Front Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23510-1096, and to DEQ at P.O. Box 1105, Richmond, Virginia 23218. All comments must be received by the close of business on March 17, 2007.

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

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