

**GUIDELINES FOR NATIONWIDE PERMIT (NWP) 27
AQUATIC HABITAT RESTORATION,
ESTABLISHMENT, & ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES
IN NEW MEXICO AND TEXAS WITHIN
CORPS OF ENGINEERS ALBUQUERQUE DISTRICT**

NWP 27 Background

Scope

NWP 27 includes activities in waters of the United States associated with the restoration, enhancement, and establishment wetlands and riparian areas and the restoration and enhancement of streams and other open waters, provided those activities result in net increases in aquatic resource functions and services. Regional conditions may apply within Albuquerque District boundaries in Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. A full summary of the NWP 27 terms and conditions is available at <http://www.spa.usace.army.mil/reg/nationwides-new/nationwide%20permits.asp>.

NWP 27 Checklist for Applicants

The information below is intended to clarify information specific to requests for authorization under NWP 27. Also refer to the checklist form for information required for a complete Pre-Construction Notification submittal, which can be found at the Regulatory website: www.spa.usace.army.mil/reg.

Purpose

Clearly state the project purpose and objectives for aquatic restoration. A typical purpose description might include induced meandering to address prior channelization, establishing or restoring a wetland, enhancing floodplain functions, and/or enhancing riparian habitat. Ensure that the project purpose and objectives are detailed enough to allow the reviewer to assess how the proposed project fits the requirements of NWP 27. This permit is designed for activities resulting in net increases in aquatic function; all impacts to waters of the United States for NWP 27 should be beneficial and not adverse, and the project purpose should state how this would be achieved.

Existing Conditions

Describe in detail the existing conditions at the project site, as this is the baseline from which restoration efforts will be compared. Include current conditions such as channel form and dimensions (e.g., typical channel cross-sections and longitudinal profile data), watershed size, floodplain condition and function, existing wetland and riparian areas, habitat types, stream substrate, bed load and flow regime. This discussion should also include a description of known impacts (e.g., excessive use by livestock, artificial structures or channelization, road drainage,

etc.) that may have contributed to a degraded condition at the project site. Length of channel prescribed for project activities and the area of potential impact within the ordinary high water mark and/or wetland boundary should also be included. Geo-referenced photographs of existing conditions are required to gauge level of success for restoration efforts.

Reference and Supporting Data

Discuss the approach, e.g., reference wetland or stream reach, used to guide restoration purpose and goals. In many cases, a historical condition is the desired endpoint for restoration efforts. Reference sites and supporting data should typically be derived from a relatively undisturbed reach of the same waterway or desired wetland type within a short distance of the proposed project site. In some instances, historical supporting data, including personal accounts and aerial photos, are used for developing purpose and objectives of restoration. For stream restoration projects, the submittal should clarify if design dimensions are based on reference reach or calculated based on stream and watershed parameters (or a hybrid approach). In either case, the approach should be described in enough detail for the reviewer to understand how the proposed design was derived. Supporting data for wetland restoration projects should include, but is not limited to, soil types, source of hydrology, current and historical photos. All background information used to prescribe restoration efforts with definable goals at the project site should be included.

Monitoring Plan

A Monitoring Plan shall be submitted to the Corps for review and approval prior to commencing the authorized work, and should be included with the pre-construction notification. The monitoring plan should include a description of parameters to be monitored in order to determine if the project is on track to meet the project objectives and if adaptive management is needed. The level of required monitoring should be commensurate with the scale of the proposed restoration project, as well as the potential for risk to the functions and stability of the aquatic environment. Extensive landscape manipulation or reliance on engineered structures will require a more robust monitoring scheme (e.g., for stream restoration projects, the U.S. Forest Service Stream Team assessment protocols or Rosgen level 2 monitoring procedures may be required)..

Monitoring Report

Monitoring reports are documents intended to provide the Corps with information to determine if a project site is successfully meeting its objectives. An annual monitoring report shall be provided to the Corps by November 15 of each year for not less than five years. Should monitoring results indicate there has been a functional lift or, at a minimum, lack of impairment due to the project, a permittee may request to be released from monitoring after the third year.

Remedial and/or adaptive management recommendations to correct deficiencies in project outcomes will be based on information gathered during site inspections and should be included in the monitoring reports.

The annual monitoring report should follow the outline contained in Regulatory Guidance Letter (RGL) 08-03, and at a minimum include the following information:

- A narrative that provides a concise overview of site conditions and functions, with photographic documentation of the baseline conditions (first year only).
- A discussion of peak flows, with focus on spring and monsoon seasons, and the installed structures' response to high flows. This discussion should be cumulative from year to year to enable the reader to obtain an overall understanding of the structures' efficacy since installation.
- Photographs of not less than 3 locations adjacent to structures installed to determine both the efficacy of the structure as well as the encouragement of riparian/wetland vegetation growth. The same locations shall be photographed annually and displayed in the monitoring report. Differences shall be prominently noted, both in the report text and annotated in the photo captions. Submitted photos should be formatted to print on a standard 8 ½" x 11" piece of paper, dated, and clearly labeled with the direction from which the photo was taken. The photo location points should also be identified on the appropriate maps.
- Discussion of any unusual events that might have impacted or may impact the structures or the stream or wetland in the future, such as upstream landslides, unusually large snowpack, large-scale erosion event, drought etc.
- Dates of any recent corrective or maintenance activities conducted since the previous report submission, and specific recommendations for any additional corrective or remedial actions.

The original monitoring period may be extended upon a determination that performance standards have not been met or that the project is not on track to meet them (e.g., high mortality rate of vegetation). Monitoring requirements may also be revised or extended in cases where adaptive management or remediation is required. At any time, should conditions warrant, additional work to increase or repair the structures' efficacy may be required.