



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240

DIRECTOR'S ORDER NO. 128

Subject: Habitat-based Impact Assessment Training

Sec. 1 What is the purpose of this Order? This Order establishes policy and guidance to ensure that Fish and Wildlife Service personnel possess professional training in Instream Flow Incremental Methodology (IFIM) and Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP).

Sec. 2 To whom does this Order apply? This Order applies to all employees, especially field office personnel involved in evaluating project impacts on aquatic or terrestrial habitats, or conducting land and water management and restoration activities.

Sec. 3 Why is this Order necessary?

a. Several laws mandate that we conduct environmental analyses and provide recommendations protective of fish, wildlife, and their habitats. These laws include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.
- (2) Endangered Species Act.
- (3) Federal Power Act.
- (4) National Environmental Policy Act.

b. We must ensure that our biologists have an understanding of and technical training in aquatic and terrestrial assessment methods. We lead the Department of the Interior in providing reviews of other agency proposals pursuant to 516 DM 7. To achieve understanding and full acceptance of our recommendations, we must conduct and present factual, reliable, and clear analyses that are based on the best available science and that use the latest assessment methods and technologies.

Sec. 4 What are these assessment methods? We have developed and use two primary methods: Instream Flow Incremental Methodology and the Habitat Evaluation Procedures.

a. IFIM is specifically designed for simulating and quantifying impacts of changes in flow, channel morphology, or water quality, resulting from water management or stream channelization actions on fish, invertebrates, and instream recreational activities.

b. HEP is designed to quantify habitat values and document impacts of habitat changes on a selected species or groups of species in both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. You can apply this method to assess impacts of land and water resource development projects or project alternatives.

Sec. 5 Who is responsible for ensuring training requirements are met?

a. Assistant Directors will ensure that appropriate staff within their areas of responsibility have and maintain professional expertise in IFIM and HEP.

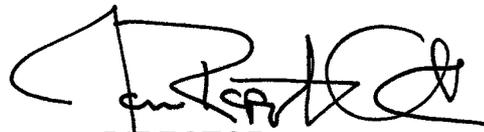
b. The Director, National Conservation Training Center will help identify our training needs through consultation with the Service Directorate, and will develop or supply IFIM, HEP, and other emerging and applicable habitat assessment training to our biologists and managers.

c. Regional Directors and Assistant Regional Directors will ensure that Regional Office personnel and field units that review or conduct habitat-based environmental analyses and habitat assessments possess working knowledge and technical capabilities in IFIM and HEP.

d. Project leaders and supervisors will require and recommend that biologists under their direction possess or secure in a timely manner professional training in IFIM, HEP, and other needed habitat assessment methods to ensure that Service conservation recommendations are fully supported by sound technical study results based on scientifically credible procedures.

Sec. 6 What are the training requirements for staff? Field biologists and managers with substantial involvement or responsibilities for scoping, guiding, or conducting project impact or instream flow assessment work, or reviewing such evaluations performed by others inside or outside the Service should possess basic core training in IFIM and/or HEP. At a minimum, this core training should include completion of IFIM correspondence courses offered by the National Training Center of the U. S. Geological Survey, assessment training courses offered or planned by the National Conservation Training Center, and/or HEP training offered by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Sec. 7 What is the effective date of this Order? This Order is effective immediately. We will include the contents of this Order in Parts 870 and 871 of the Fish and Wildlife Manual. This Order will expire on September 30, 2001, unless amended, superseded, or revoked.



DIRECTOR

Date: September 6, 2000