

FAQs – Supporting Objective Determinations of Areas That Are Not “Waters of the United States” Post-Sackett Using Geospatial Tools

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How does USACE define "traceable decision?"

“Traceable decision” here means that the tool is capable of documenting its data, logic, and rationale regarding the output of the tool, is able to tie that rationale directly to WOTUS definitions, and is able to automate outputs of narrative descriptions of the tool’s logic (i.e., how and why the tool made the decision it did) and its connection to relevant regulations and laws.

How does USACE define "uncertainty quantification" and what is the acceptable threshold?

“Uncertainty quantification” here means identifying sources of uncertainty, quantifying the uncertainty (e.g. probabilities), and how uncertainty might affect the final outputs of the tool. There is no set threshold for uncertainty quantification for this tech challenge.

What temporal scale is required or preferred?

For this tech challenge, there is no required or preferred temporal resolution. The temporal resolution of the data and or methods described in the white paper should be relevant to hydrologic, climatic, environmental, and policy considerations for determining waters that do and do not meet the definition of WOTUS (e.g., seasonal hydrologic changes in streams and hydrodynamics of other aquatic resources). For example, remote imagery should have at least a monthly revisit frequency as described in the tech challenge announcement.

What spatial scale resolution is required?

For this tech challenge, data sources should provide sufficient resolution to support site-level decisions required by the Clean Water Act (e.g., remote imagery with a spatial resolution of 30 meters or better).

How are maritime boundaries / territorial seas considered in the requested tool for determining WOTUS?

The limits of USACE’s jurisdiction for territorial seas is extends from the baseline in a seaward direction to three nautical miles.

What is the historical use of satellite data in determining WOTUS? What is the appetite for using satellite earth observation for determining WOTUS?

As identified in the Requirements section of the tech challenge announcement, remote imagery, including satellite data, may be a part of this overall solution.

Does USACE have a preference or ranking for types of data sources used, e.g. field survey, lidar, satellite earth observation? Is it possible to elaborate?

There is no pre-decisional preference for the types of data sources used, and the focus will be on the stated project objective from the tech challenge announcement.

Do “federal lands” refer to federally owned lands (e.g., DOD installations, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks) or lands under federal jurisdiction via the Clean Water Act (i.e., all US lands and territories)?

Yes. As part of this tech challenge, “federal lands” means federally owned lands.