

Appendix G. Glossary

The following list defines terms used throughout the NMRAM field guide and datasheets. The terms are listed alphabetically.

Abandoned Floodplain: A portion of the floodplain that no longer receives overbank flooding events because of avulsion of the channel away from this floodplain area, permanently altered river flow, or entrenchment of the active channel. Often deep rooted riparian vegetation communities are still supported with a dryer herbaceous understory, some upland trees and shrubs such as Ponderosa pine and Junipers species maybe present.

Abandoned Side Channel: Side channels that never, or only very rarely during extreme events, carry river flows as evidenced by their vegetated surfaces and lack of flood deposited sediment or wrack.

Abandoned Terrace: A relatively flat topographical feature formed through alluvial processes that is elevated above the current flood-prone height, and is considered far enough removed from the current active floodplain that it no longer receives overbank flood flow. Often these may support deep rooted riparian vegetation communities with a dryer herbaceous understory, and may also feature non-wetland trees and shrubs such as Ponderosa pine and Juniper species.

Active Channel: The portion of a channel that carries the fluvial system sediment.

Active Floodplain: Area of the floodplain that carries surface flow, ponding, or is surrounded by surface flow during flood events.

Active Side Channel: A secondary channel in a multi-channel system that is hydrologically connected to the main channel upstream and carries water flows regularly at or below bankfull depths. It may flow year round or intermittently, but carries water at least periodically, and frequently. It is smaller than the main channel and carries less water. An avulsion channel may be considered an active side channel if it functions as described above. A side channel is considered a high flow channel if it only carries flow during flood stages.

Animal Mounds/Burrows: Holes and mounds in the floodplain surface created by the activity of burrowing animals.

Assessment Area (AA): Term used in early versions of the NMRAM for the Sample Area (SA).

Avulsion Channel: Channels that have functioned as the primary channel in the past until an event or obstruction caused the channel to shift to another location. They may also become active side channels, or abandoned side channels, depending on how frequently they carry stream and flood flow. Oxbow lakes are often found along avulsion channels.

- Backwaters:** Backwaters are still eddies that provide aquatic and fisheries habitat outside the main current of the stream. These features may be disconnected at low water and open-access during high water.
- Bankfull:** The incipient elevation on the bank where flooding begins, associated with moderate frequent flow events.
- Bankfull Flow:** The discharge at which channel maintenance is most effective resulting in the average morphological characteristics of channels, and which has a recurrence interval of 1-2 years.
- Berm:** Mounded soil due to human earthwork that was intended to impact the flow paths of water across a floodplain.
- Beaver Pond:** Shallow palustrine wetlands created by beaver dams occupying all or some of the main or side channels and associated floodplain.
- Bars:** Depositional features that are “built” from repeated depositional events instead of being “cut from” pre-existing features through erosive processes. This includes channel bars that form longitudinally within the channel, and point bars that form at the inside of meander bends. They are considered vegetated if woody, perennial vegetation has become established and is more than five years old.
- Boulder:** A rock separated from the bedrock that exceeds 10.1 inches in diameter measured along the b-axis.
- Buffer Zone:** The area adjacent to the Sample Area that, in natural condition protects the wetland from impacts, encroachment and invasion.
- Community Type (CT):** A repeating, classified and recognizable assemblage or grouping of plant species.
- Complex Bank Edge:** A river bank that has complex morphology of crenulations, rather than a straight or uniform edge.
- Cobble:** Individual rock pieces that are between 2.5-10.1 inches in diameter measured along the b-axis.
- Cut Bank:** A steep eroding channel bank at the outside of a meander bend. For purposes of the NMRAM, only cut banks along channels that have perennial flow or that flow often are considered.
- Deep Pools:** Areas in the active channel that retain water during low flow and are generally too deep to support emergent vegetation. Can be considered a separate indicator if riffle-pool complexes are not present.
- Debris Jams:** Accumulation of woody debris in an active channel that can partially re-direct or completely obstruct water flow, and have the ability to retain sediment and alter channel morphology.

Depressional Features on Floodplains: Shallow, seasonally inundated depressions composed of very fine depositional sediments.

Downed Logs: Logs, over three feet in length and six inches in diameter that are not part of a living tree, and are lying on the ground.

Eddy: An area of counter-current water movement, usually along a bank edge, that can create a small whirlpool, and provides a refuge from the main current.

Fill: An area where soil has been deposited by human activity, as opposed to natural or fluvial processes.

Fire Pits: A burn scar from a camp fire.

Flood Prone Width: The area on the floodplain adjacent to the active channel whose outside edge corresponds to the elevation of double the maximum bankfull depth measured at the thalweg of a channel cross-section.

Floodplain: The area lateral to the stream that is generally flat-lying, and formed through alluvial processes which dissipate energies of higher flows under current climatic and hydrologic conditions.

Grading or Plowing: Alteration of the soil surface by road grader or plow.

Gravel Pit: Pit or hole created by removal of soil for use in another location.

Gully: A steep-sided erosional channel from 1 m to about 10 m across, larger than a rill.

High Flow Side Channel: Secondary channels parallel to the existing channel which carry water at flows that are higher than bankfull stages of the river.

Hydrophyte: A plant species found growing in areas where soils in the rooting zone are saturated much or all of the growing season.

Impervious Surfaces: Soil surfaces that are so compacted that water runs across these surfaces rather than infiltrating.

Inset Floodplain: The accretion of floodplain materials within the meander belt width and the abandonment of the former wider floodplain bench indicating a reduction in overall stream discharge.

Irrigation Channel: A manipulated open channel used for transporting water to support agriculture.

Irrigation-Driven Saline Mineral Crusts: The build-up of salts and mineral crusts on the soil surface due to irrigation. Often identified by white crust on the soil surface, usually in a patch with sparse vegetation.

Large Woody Debris (LWD): Accumulation of large wood and debris on the floodplain due to flood flow or other processes. At minimum, LWD should include wood with a three inch diameter.

Levee: A constructed or manipulated linear berm-like feature intended to act as a barrier to stream flow across the floodplain surface.

(Constructed-Abandoned) the feature no longer functions as intended, and is no longer maintained.

(Constructed-Maintained) the feature is a barrier to surface flow and is maintained.

(Natural) a feature that has formed through natural overbank depositional processes that acts like a barrier to small flooding events except through crevasse splays.

Minimum Map Unit: The minimum size that a vegetation patch must meet in order to be mapped for the NMRAM. This size differs depending on wetland subclass, and is provided in the Field Guides.

Fresh Sediment, New Depositional Features: Sediment that has been recently deposited as evidenced by sedimentary structures indicating flow and accretion.

Phreatophyte: A deep-rooted plant that obtains a significant portion of the water that it needs from the phreatic (zone of saturation) or the capillary fringe above the phreatic zone. They can usually be found along streams where there is a steady flow of surface or groundwater in areas where the water table is near the surface.

Plant Pedestal: An erosional feature between plant bases which causes the plant to appear elevated, as if on a pedestal.

Oxbow Lakes: Permanently ponded areas formed in cut-off meanders or in abandoned channels.

Rapid: A section of a river where the river bed has a relatively steep gradient, causing an increase in water velocity and turbulence.

Riffle: A riffle is a short, relatively shallow and coarse-bedded length of stream over which the stream flows at higher velocity and turbulence during low flow, than in comparison to a pool.

Rills: Small parallel rivulets formed by soil erosion.

River Available Floodplain: The floodplain that is potentially available to the river, and not disconnected by anthropogenic features such as levees and other constructed impediments. Ancient terraces are not considered river available floodplain.

Sample Area (SA): A delineated area within a Wetland of Interest in which NMRAM data collection is focused, and for which the final condition rating applies. The size and placement of a Sample Area is determined by the wetland subclass and described in the Field Guide.

Seeps/Springs: Water flowing from an aquifer to the surface.

Shoal: A submerged ridge, bank, or bar that rises near the surface of the river, and is exposed at low flows.

Standing Snags: Dead trees taller than six feet that remain rooted and upright.

Supporting Landscape: The additional area surrounding the buffer zone, that is included to evaluate the Surrounding Land Use metric.

Swale: Linear depressions on the floodplain lacking defined channels, but supporting vegetation communities that differ from the surrounding uplands, either in composition or productivity, due to increased water availability.

Terraces (Lateral and Island): relatively flat topographical features formed through alluvial processes that are above the active floodplain.

Undercut Bank: An area along a streambank that is concave, and creates an overhang.

Vegetation Map Polygon: A created map feature of relatively homogenous vegetation which is used in evaluating a number of the NMRAM biotic metrics.

Wrack Lines: Accumulation of debris at the high-water line that occurs along the ground or in standing vegetation.