

## **Qualitative Descriptors for Application of the Ratio Matrix in Support of MVN's Interim Approach for Assessing Compensatory Mitigation**

### **Background**

The FY15 Appropriations Act prohibits New Orleans District's (MVN) expenditure of FY15 funds on the use of the MCM for regulatory actions within the State of Louisiana. As MVN proceeds with establishing a methodology to replace MCM, the Ratio Matrix (see below) will be utilized during the interim period to facilitate continued review of permit applications requiring compensatory mitigation for Clean Water Act compliance. Primary consideration will be given to the **functional quality** of wetlands present at the proposed project site when determining appropriate compensatory mitigation for authorized wetland impacts.

Wetlands provide diverse, often interrelated functions, values and services of importance to the public, such as: water quality sustainability; flood abatement; carbon cycling; fish and wildlife habitat; direct/indirect revenue generation and recreational activity support. In assessing the qualitative value of a wetland, consideration will be given to the overall functional performance based on **all** physical, chemical and biological characteristics. Therefore, the following general descriptors will be applied in the evaluation of wetland quality at a proposed project site.

### **High**

High quality wetlands are those exhibiting a majority of physical, chemical and biological functions typically attendant to the aquatic environment. Surface topography, water movement patterns, biotic community and landscape connectivity are characteristic of a generally intact functional ecosystem. While historic onsite activities and/or surrounding land uses may have affected the extent to which some specific ecological attributes are present, in the balance, wetlands at the project site continue to perform **most** of the intrinsic aquatic ecosystem functions.

### **Medium**

Medium quality designation applies to those wetlands that perform some of the important physical, chemical and biological functions typically attendant to the aquatic environment, although overall functional capacity is reduced. Natural processes, historic/ongoing site modifications and/or surrounding land uses have impaired the project site wetlands to a point such that the majority of functional outputs are not being observed. However, these sites continue to contribute to overall watershed health by performing **some** specific important aquatic resource functions.

## Low

Low quality designation applies to those wetlands where the overall capacity to perform important physical, chemical and biological functions typically attendant to the aquatic environment have been substantially degraded by natural processes, historic/ongoing site modifications and/or surrounding land uses. Such wetlands may have a specific identifiable associated resource value, but in a broad context they contribute only a **minor** extent to the overall health of the watershed.

In summary, this guide is intended for general use with typical situations to provide consistent and appropriate mitigation assessments. However, it is recognized that specific instances may occur that require special consideration (e.g., resource agency recommendations, unique aquatic resource impacts, etc.) to ensure proper compensatory mitigation.

Type of Mitigation	Habitat Quality of Impacted Wetland		
	Low	Medium	High
Re-establishment	1:1	1:1.5	1:2.5
Rehabilitation	1:1.1	1:2	1:4
Enhancement	1:1.2	1:4	1:6