

Wetlands, streams, and other sensitive areas must be identified, named, and flagged in a consistent and standard manner for WSDOT projects. Sensitive areas must be clearly identified on plan sheets so that proper protections can be applied.

Implementing these WSDOT standards promotes consistency, streamlines the environmental process, eliminates confusion and errors, and improves communication between biologists, survey crews, project engineers, design teams, permit coordinators, regulatory reviewers, and contractors.

Use the following naming and flagging conventions unless a project-specific deviation is warranted.

Flagging

WSDOT standard flagging for wetlands and other waters is pink; plain pink or pink with printed “WETLAND BOUNDARY” or “WETLAND DELINATION” is acceptable. Flags should be placed where visual line of sight is present between flags so surveyors can easily follow flagging in the field. Typically ribbon flagging is used to hang on vegetation or other structures. Pin flags may be used when vegetation or structures are not available, (e.g. low-growing herbaceous communities, areas with bare ground, mowed or tilled areas, or tide flats).

Wetland Identification & Flag Numbering

Wetland Identification of Naming

Wetlands will be identified and named in sequence as they occur on the landscape, along a project corridor, using an alphanumeric character, including W (for wetland) followed by a sequential number (e.g. W1, W2, W3 etc.). If, after wetlands are named within in a geographic area (e.g., W1, W2, W3, etc.), a new wetland is identified between them, the new wetland will be named with an appended letter, indicating where it occurs in the sequential wetland order (e.g., W1A occurs between W1 and W2). This convention allows wetlands to be added to a project, while maintaining numeric order of wetland names in relation to their geographic sequence along a project corridor, and allows the plan reader to infer the relative locations of wetlands within the project area of potential effect (APE). On contract plans the entire name will be spelled out (e.g. Wetland 1).

Wetlands are named with numbers (e.g. W1, W2, W3 etc.) vs. letters (WA, WB, WC etc.), allowing projects with more than 26 wetlands to be identified in consecutive order.

Wetland Flag Numbering

Individual flags placed along wetland boundaries will be labeled with the alphanumeric wetland name, followed by a dash symbol and sequential numbers starting with 1. (e.g. W1-1, W1-2, W1-3 etc.).

Wetland Delineation Sampling Points

Wetland delineation sampling points (SP) will be denoted using a combination of the wetland alphanumeric identifier followed by a dash symbol and a sample point number (e.g. W1-SP1, W1-SP2, W2-SP1, etc.). Sample points are flagged, surveyed, and included on plan sheets. Each wetland will have a minimum of one pair of sample points; one for the wetland (e.g. W1-SP1) and a corresponding upland point (e.g. W1-SP2). Additional sample points should be included to document each vegetation class within the wetland (Cowardin class/National Wetland Inventory [NWI] class). For example, if a wetland includes palustrine emergent and palustrine forested, a sample point is required for each vegetation class.

Streams

Streams will be identified on contract plans using (in order of preference):

- A mapped stream name, or a local name.
- If a name is unavailable, the water resource inventory area (WRIA) stream catalog number will be used (e.g. WRIA 04-0207) available from [StreamNet Washington Stream Catalog](#) (only available for WRIA 1 through WRIA 24, Puget Sound & Olympic Peninsula).
- If in WRIA 1 through WRIA 24, and a stream catalog number is not available, a subset (a, b, c, etc.) of the closest assigned stream catalog number will be used (e.g. WRIA 04-0207a).
- For unnamed streams in WRIA 25 or higher, use a simple naming convention that works for the project such as “Unnamed Stream 1, Unnamed Stream 2, etc.”

Ordinary High Water Mark & High Tide Line

The ordinary high water mark (OHWM) and High Tide Line (HTL) will be named using the conventions OHWM 1, OHWM 2, OHWM 3 etc. and HTL 1, HTL 2, HTL 3 etc. Delineation flags are identified as OHWM 1-1, OHWM 1-2, etc. and HTL-1, HTL-2 etc. NOTE: review high tide line data, make field observations of physical indicators of HTL, and coordinate with WSDOT liaisons before flagging HTL.

Lakes

Lakes will be identified on contract plans using the mapped name.

Wetland Mitigation Sites

Wetland mitigation sites are typically named with the state route (SR) number where the impacts occur and the nearest named waterbody to the mitigation site (e.g. SR 520 Yarrow Creek Wetland Mitigation Site).

Identifying and Naming Sensitive Areas That Have Previously Been Identified

At WSDOT it is common to work on projects where sensitive areas were identified in the past, commonly referred to as “taking a project off the shelf” after it was initially activated and subsequently “shelved” or put on hold. When sensitive areas have preassigned names that differ from the aforementioned standards, the biologist will need to decide if keeping the originally assigned names is beneficial. It may be advantageous to retain the original sensitive areas names to maintain consistency between old and new documentation. When retaining the original naming convention, the biologist will need to determine how to name newly-identified sensitive areas and/or how to address the naming sequence if previously identified sensitive areas are omitted from the project.

Alternately, a biologist may determine that renaming features with the conventions described above would be beneficial. In that case, create a table indicating the correlation between old and new names so that documentation of differing vintages can be linked.