

Appendix II: Definitions

Flooding Frequency Definitions

Flooding is the temporary inundation of an area by overflowing streams, by runoff from adjacent slopes, or by tides. Water standing for short periods after rainfall or snowmelt is not considered flooding and water standing in swamps and marshes is considered ponding rather than flooding.

Frequency of flooding is expressed as none, very rare, rare, occasional, frequent, and very frequent.

Frequent flooding means that it is likely to occur often under normal weather conditions. The chance of flooding is more than 50 percent in any year, but is less than 50 percent in all months in any year.

Very frequent flooding means that it is likely to occur very often under normal weather conditions. The chance of flooding is more than 50 percent in all months of any year.

Also considered is local information about the extent and levels of flooding and the relation of each soil on the landscape to historic floods. Information on the extent of flooding based on soil data is less specific than that provided by detailed engineering surveys that delineate flood-prone areas at specific flood frequency levels (Source: USDA-NRCS).

Prime and Other Important Farmland

In an effort to identify the extent and location of important farmlands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, in cooperation with other interested Federal, State, and local governmental organizations, has inventoried land that can be used for the production of the Nation's food supply.

“Prime farmland” as defined by USDA is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Prime farmland is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods and it either is not frequently flooded during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent.

For some of the soils identified in the tables and maps as prime farmland, measures that overcome a hazard or limitation, such as flooding, wetness, and droughtiness, are needed. Onsite

evaluation is needed to determine whether or not the hazard or limitation has been overcome by corrective measures.

“Unique farmland” is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, and other fruits and vegetables. It has the special combination of soil quality, growing season, moisture supply, temperature, humidity, air drainage, elevation, and aspect needed for the soil to economically produce sustainable high yields of these crops when properly managed. The waste supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Nearness to markets is an additional consideration. Unique farmland is not based on national criteria. It commonly is in areas where there is a special microclimate, such as the wine country in California.

“Farmland of Statewide Importance” is land that does not meet the criteria for prime or unique farmland yet is used for production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. The criteria for defining and delineating farmland of statewide importance are determined by the appropriate State agencies. Generally, this land includes areas of soils that nearly meet the requirements for prime farmland and the economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some areas may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable. Farmland of statewide importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by State law.

In some areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, land is considered “farmland of local importance” for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. This farmland is identified by the appropriate local agencies. Farmland of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance (Source: USDA-NRCS).

Farmland Classification Maps in Sub Area Assessments and Tables in Appendix I:

The Farmland Classification Maps that are included with other maps in the Sub Area Assessments and the farmland classification tables in the appendix are based on the soil types identified in soil surveys prepared by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. The classification as prime farmland, non-prime farmland, and farmland of statewide importance is based on the soil type and not on the current land use. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas. This is why many areas that are totally forested still have a map or data tables showing the classification of farmland in the various categories.

For some of the soils identified in the tables and maps as prime farmland, measures that overcome a hazard or limitation, such as flooding, wetness, and droughtiness, are needed. Onsite evaluation is needed to determine whether or not the hazard or limitation has been overcome by corrective measures (Source: USDA-NRCS).