



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality

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Eloy S. Inos  
Governor

Ralph DLG. Torres  
Lt. Governor

Frank M. Rabauliman  
Administrator

Frances A. Castro  
Director, DCRM

## NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION AND ADOPTION OF RULE

### ADOPTION OF RULE: ADOPTION OF "RAPID ASSESSMENT METHOD (RAM)" AND "RAM USER'S MANUAL"

**ACTION TO ADOPT RULE:** The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Division of Coastal Resources Management, HEREBY ADOPTS AS A RULE, the attached "Rapid Assessment Method and User's Manual", pursuant to the procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), 1 CMC §§ 9102, 9105 and applicable regulations.

**AUTHORITY:** The Division of Coastal Resources Management, under 2 CMC §§ 1501 et seq., is empowered to plan for and manage any use or activity with potential for causing a direct and significant impact on coastal resources in the Commonwealth and is authorized to adopt rules and regulations regarding those matters over which it has jurisdiction.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF RULE:** The Rapid Assessment Method (RAM) is prepared by Garcia and Associates for the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality's Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to establish uniform procedures necessary for DCRM to assess wetland conditions and monitor wetland impacts over time in order to support permitting and planning decisions. The RAM involves evaluating the general condition of individual wetlands using relatively simple field indicators in order to produce standardized assessments of these resources. It is intended to comply with applicable Commonwealth and Federal law, regulations, policies, and procedures and is not designed to be used to substitute for CNMI law. These policies and procedures are established for the guidance and use of agencies, officers, and/or administrators of the program and those under the authorizing agency's oversight. The emphasis and prime purpose of this manual is to provide a uniform assessment methodology for wetland ecosystems to ensure that the CNMI and public interests are furthered to the highest levels for standards and quality. Understanding both the current location and relative values of all CNMI wetlands is essential to support the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality–Division of Coastal Resources Management's permitting process and comprehensive management objectives. Development and implementation of this CNMI

RAM is intended to facilitate wetlands and mangrove evaluation and, by extension, support ecologically sound permitting, management, and mitigation efforts.

The 2015 Rapid Assessment Method and Manual are based on an amalgamation of field-tested assessment tools as well as the 1990 *Saipan Comprehensive Wetlands Management Plan*, and will provide improved methodology for developing an updated master wetlands map covering all of CNMI. Mapping and ranking of wetlands is essential to meet the management goals of achieving “no net loss” of wetlands and protecting their critical functions. The RAM Manual describes the design approach of this methodology, incorporation of federal classification systems as well as indicator metrics, and details the wetland functions that this manual is designed to assess. It also provides two-tiered data forms and guidance to users as to how these methods can be uniformly applied. The RAM Data Form includes general information, primary and secondary assessments which cover a range of wetland indicator metrics, and a functional assessment which is used to rate the capacity of the wetland to perform hydrologic, water quality, and habitat functions. The Manual is developed to streamline wetland valuation and assessment methodology in CNMI, and to support further development of mapping and comprehensive planning in regards to wetland resources.

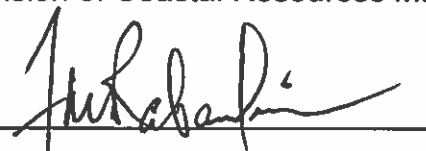
**DIRECTIONS FOR FILING AND PUBLICATION:** This Proposed Rule shall be published in the Commonwealth Register in the section on newly adopted rules and regulations (1 CMC § 9102(a)). The DCRM Director will take appropriate measures to make this Rule is known to the persons who may be affected by them.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Pursuant to the APA, 1 CMC § 9105(b) and applicable regulations, this adopted Rule is effective 10 days after compliance with 1 CMC §§ 9102, 9105 and publication in the Commonwealth Register.

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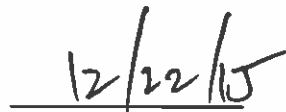
I, Frank Rabauliman, Administrator of the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, hereby approve the attached Rule, and further certify that the attached Rule, the Rapid Assessment Methodology and RAM Manual, is a true copy of the Rule as adopted by the BECQ's Division of Coastal Resources Management.

Submitted by:



FRANK M. RABAULIMAN

Administrator, BECQ



Date

Filed and

Recorded by:



Esther S.N. Nesbitt  
Commonwealth Register

01.14.2015

Date

Received by:

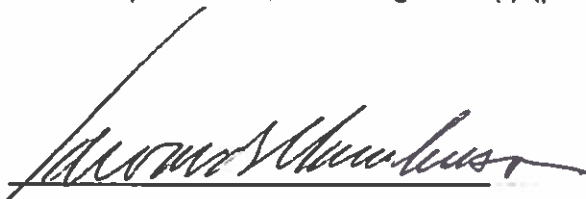


Esther S. Fleming  
Special Assistant for Administration

01/13/15

Date

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 2153(e) and 1 CMC § 9102(c), the rule attached hereto has been reviewed and approved as to form and legal sufficiency by the Attorney General and shall be published, 1 CMC § 2153(f) (publication of rules and regulations).



EDWARD MANIBUSAN  
Attorney General

1-22-16

Date