CHECKLIST FOR ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT/SAMPLING

Introduction

The checklist that follows provides guidance in making observations for an ecological assessment. It is not intended for limited or emergency response actions (e.g., removal of a few drums) or for purely industrial settings with no discharges. The checklist is a screening tool for preliminary site evaluation and may also be useful in planning more extensive site investigations. It must be completed as thoroughly as time allows. The results of the checklist will serve as a staring point for the collection of appropriate biological data to be used in developing a response action. It is recognized that certain questions in this checklist are not universally applicable and that site-specific conditions will influence interpretation. Therefore, a site synopsis is requested to facilitate final review of the checklist by a trained ecologist.

Checklist

The checklist has been divided into sections that correspond to data collection methods and ecosystem types. These sections are:

I Site Description

- IA. Summary of Observations and Site Setting

II Terrestrial Habitat Checklist

- IIA. Wooded
- IIB. Shrub/Scrub
- IIC. Open Field
- IID. Miscellaneous

III Aquatic Habitat Checklist – Non-Flowing Systems

IV Aquatic Habitat Checklist – Flowing Systems

V Wetlands Habitat Checklist

Checklist for Ecological Assessment/Sampling

I. SITE DESCRIPTION

1. Site Name: _____

   Location: _____

   _____

   County: _____ City: _____ State: _____

2. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

3. What is the approximate area of the site: _____

4. Is this the first site visit? 9 Yes 9 No. If no, attach trip report of previous site visit(s), if available.

   Date(s) of previous site visit(s): _____

5. Please attach to the checklist USGS topographic map(s) of the site, if available.

6. Are aerial or other site photographs available? 9 Yes 9 No. If yes, please attach any available photo(s) to the site map at the conclusion of this section.

7. The land use of the site is:

_____ % Urban

_____ % Rural

_____ % Residential

_____ % Industrial (___ light ___ heavy)

_____ % Agricultural

(Crops: _____)

_____ % Recreational

(Describe: note if it is a park etc.)

_____

_____

_____ % Undisturbed

_____ % Other

The area surrounding the site is:
_____ mile radius

_____ % Urban

_____ % Rural

_____ % Residential

_____ % Industrial (___light ____heavy)

_____ % Agricultural

(Crops: _____)

_____ % Recreational

(Describe: note if it is a park, etc.)

_____

_____

_____ % Undisturbed

_____ % Other

8. Has any movement of soil taken place at the site? 9___ Yes 9___ No. If yes, please identify the most likely cause of this disturbance:

9 Agricultural Use 9 Heavy Equipment 9 Mining

9 Natural Events 9 Erosion 9 Other

Please describe:

9. Do any potential sensitive environmental areas exist adjacent to or in proximity to the site, e.g., Federal and State parks, National and State monuments, wetlands, prairie potholes? *Remember, flood plains and wetlands are not always obvious; do not answer "no" without confirming information.*

Please provide the source(s) of the information used to identify these sensitive areas, and indicate their general location on the site map.

10. What type of facility is located at the site?

9 Chemical 9 Manufacturing 9 Mixing 9 Waste disposal

9 Other (specify)_____

11. What are the suspected contaminants of concern at the site? If know, what are the maximum concentration levels?

12. Check any potential routes of off-site migration of contaminants observed at the site:

9 Swales 9 Depressions 9 Drainage ditches

9 Runoff 9 Windblown particulates 9 Vehicular traffic

9 Other (specify)_____

13. If known, what is the approximate depth to the water table?_____

14. Is the direction of surface runoff apparent from site observations? 9 yes 9 no. If yes, to which of the following does the surface runoff discharge? Indicate all that apply.

9 Surface water 9 Groundwater 9 Sewer 9 Collection impoundment

15. Is there a navigable waterbody or tributary to a navigable waterbody? 9 yes 9 no

16. Is there a waterbody anywhere on or in the vicinity of the site? If yes, also complete Section III: Aquatic Habitat Checklist – Non-Flowing Systems and/or Section IV: Aquatic Habitat Checklist – Flowing Systems.

9 yes (approx. distance _____) 9 no

17. Is there evidence of flooding? 9 yes 9 no *Wetlands and flood plains are not always obvious; do not answer "no" without confirming information.* If yes, complete Section V: Wetland Habitat Checklist.

18. If a field guide was used to aid any of the identifications, please provide a reference. Also, estimate the time spent identifying fauna. [Use a blank sheet if additional space is needed for text.]

19. Are any threatened and/or endangered species (plant or animal) known to inhabit the area of the site? 9 yes 9 no *If yes, you are required to verify this information with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.* If species' identities are known, please list them next.

20. Record weather conditions at the time this checklist was prepared:

Date: _____

_____ Temperature (EC/EF) _____ Normal daily high temperature

_____ Wind (direction/speed) _____ Precipitation (rain,snow)

_____ Cloud cover

IA. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND SITE SETTING

Completed by _____ Affiliation _____

Additional Preparers_____

Site Manager_____

Date_____

II TERRESTRIAL HABITAT CHECKLIST

IIA. WOODED

1. Are there any wooded areas at the site? 9 yes 9 no If no, go to Section IIB: Shrub/Scrub.

2. What percentage or area of the site is wooded? (_____ % _____ acres). Indicate the wooded area on the site map which is attached to a copy of this checklist. Please identify what information was used to determine the wooded area of the site.

3. What is the dominant type of vegetation in the wooded area? (Circle one: Evergreen/Deciduous/Mixed) Provide a photograph, if available.

   Dominant plant, if known: _____

4. What is the predominant size of the trees at the site? Use diameter at breast height.

   9 0 - 6 in. 9 6 - 12 in. 9 >12 in.

5. Specify type of understory present, if known. Provide a photograph, if available.

IIB. SCHRUB/SCRUB

1. Is shrub/scrub vegetation present at the site? 9 yes 9 no If no, go to Section IIC: Open Field.

2. What percentage of the site is covered by scrub/shrub vegetation? (_____ % _____ acres). Indicate the areas of shrub/scrub on the site map. Please identify what information was used to determine this area.

3. What is the dominant type of scrub/shrub vegetation, if known? Provide a photograph, if available.

4. What is the approximate average height of the scrub/shrub vegetation?

   9 0 - 2 ft. 9 2 - 5 ft. 9 > 5 ft.

5. Based on site observations, how dense is the scrub/shrub vegetation?

9 Dense 9 Patchy 9 Sparse

IIC. OPEN FIELD

1. Are there open (bare, barren) field areas present at the site? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please indicate the type below:

9 Prairie/plains 9 Savannah 9 Old field 9 Other (specify) _____

2. What percentage of the site is open field? (_____ % _____ acres). Indicate the open fields on the site map.

3. What is/are the dominant plant(s)? Provide a photograph, if available.

4. What is the approximate average height of the dominant plant? _____

5. Describe the vegetation cover: 9 Dense 9 Sparse 9 Patchy

IID. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Are other types of terrestrial habitats present at the site, other than woods, scrub/shrub, and open field? 9 yes 9 no If yes, identify and describe them below.

2. Describe the terrestrial miscellaneous habitat(s) and identify these area(s) on the site map.

3. What observations, if any, were made at the site regarding the presence and/or absence of insects, fish, birds, mammals, etc.?

4. Review the questions in Section I to determine if any additional habitat checklists should be completed for this site.

III AQUATIC HABITAT CHECKLIST

Note: Aquatic systems are often associated with wetland habitats. Please refer to Section V, Wetland Habitat Checklist.

1. What type of open-water, non-flowing system is present at the site?

   9 Natural (pond, lake)
   9 Artificially created (lagoon, reservoir, canal, impoundment)

2. If known, what is the name(s) of the waterbody(ies) on or adjacent to the site?

   _____

3. If a waterbody is present, what are its known uses (e.g., recreation, navigation, etc.)?

4. What is the approximate size of the waterbody(ies)? _____ acre(s).

5. Is any aquatic vegetation present? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please identify the type of vegetation present if known.

   9 Emergent 9 Submergent 9 Floating

6. If known, what is the depth of the water? _____

7. What is the general composition of the substrate? Check all that apply.

9 Bedrock	9 Sand (coarse)	9 Muck (find/black)
9 Boulder (>10 in.)	9 Silt (fine)	9 Debris
9 Cobble (2.5 - 10 in.)	9 Marl (shells)	9 Detritus
9 Gravel (0.1 - 2.5 in.)	9 Clay (slick)	9 Concrete

   9 Other (specify) _____

8. What is the source of water in the waterbody?

9 River/Stream/Creek	9 Groundwater	9 Industrial discharge
9 Surface runoff	9 Other (specify) _____	

9. Is there a discharge from the site to the waterbody? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please describe this discharge and its path.

10. Is there a discharge from the waterbody? 9 yes 9 no. If yes, and the information is available, identify from the list below the environment into which the waterbody discharges.

9 River/Stream/Creek	9 onsite	9 offsite	Distance _____
9 Groundwater	9 onsite	9 offsite	
9 Wetland	9 onsite	9 offsite	Distance _____
9 Impoundment	9 onsite	9 offsite	

11. Identify any field measurements and observations of water quality that were made. For those parameters for which data were collected provide the measurement and the units of measure below:

_____ Area

_____ Depth (average)

_____ Temperature (depth of the water at which the reading was taken) _____

_____ pH

_____ Dissolved oxygen

_____ Salinity

_____ Turbidity (clear, slightly turbid, turbid, opaque) (Seecchi disk depth _____)

_____ Other (specify)

12. Describe observed color and area of coloration.

13. Mark the open-water, non-flowing system on the site map attached to this checklist.

14. What observations, if any, were made at the waterbody regarding the presence and/or absence of benthic macroinvertebrates, fish, birds, mammals, etc.?

IV AQUATIC HABITAT CHECKLIST – FLOWING SYSTEMS

Note: Aquatic systems are often associated with wetland habitats. Please refer to Section V, Wetland Habitat Checklist.

1. What type(s) of flowing water system(s) is (are) present at the site?

9 River	9 Stream	9 Creek
9 Dry wash	9 Arroyo	9 Brook
9 Artificially created (ditch, etc.)	9 Intermittent Stream	9 Channeling

9 Other (specify) _____

2. If known, what is the name of the waterbody? _____

3. For natural systems, are there any indicators of physical alteration (e.g. channeling, debris, etc.)? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please describe indicators that were observed.

4. What is the general composition of the substrate? Check all that apply.

9 Bedrock	9 Sand (coarse)	9 Muck (find/black)
9 Boulder (>10 in.)	9 Silt (fine)	9 Debris
9 Cobble (2.5 - 10 in.)	9 Marl (shells)	9 Detritus
9 Gravel (0.1 - 2.5 in.)	9 Clay (slick)	9 Concrete

9 Other (specify) _____

5. What is the condition of the bank (e.g., height, slope, extent of vegetative cover)?

6. Is the system influenced by tides? 9 yes 9 no What information was used to make this determination?

7. Is the flow intermittent? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please note the information that was used in making this determination.

8. Is there a discharge from the site to the waterbody? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please describe the discharge and its path.

9. Is there a discharge from the waterbody? 9 yes 9 no If yes, and the information is available, please identify what the waterbody discharges to and whether the discharge is on site or off site.

10. Identify any field measurements and observations of water quality that were made. For those parameters for which data were collected, provide the measurement and the units of measure in the appropriate space below:

_____ Area

_____ Depth (average)

_____ Temperature (depth of the water at which the reading was taken) _____

_____ pH

_____ Dissolved oxygen

_____ Salinity

_____ Turbidity (clear, slightly turbid, turbid, opaque) (Seecchi disk depth _____)

_____ Other (specify)

11. Describe observed color and area of coloration.

12. Is any aquatic vegetation present? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please identify the type of vegetation present, if know.

9 Emergent 9 Submergent 9 Floating

13. Mark the flowing water system on the attached site map.

14. What observations were made at the waterbody regarding the presence and/or absence of benthic macroinvertebrates, fish, birds, mammals, etc.?

V. WETLAND HABITAT CHECKLIST

1. Based on observation and/or available information, are designated or known wetland definitely present at the site? 9 yes 9 no

   Please note the sources of observations and information used (e.g., USGS Topographic Maps, National Wetland Inventory, Federal or State Agency, etc.) To make this determination.

2. Based on the location of the site (e.g., along a waterbody, in a floodplain) and site conditions (e.g. standing water, dark, wet soils; mud cracks; debris line; water marks), are wetland habitats suspected? 9 yes 9 no If yes, proceed with the remainder of the wetland habitat identification checklist.

3. What type(s) of vegetation are present in the wetland?

   9 Submergent 9 Emergent 9 Scrub/Shrub 9 Wooded
   9 Other (specify) _____

4. Provide a general description of the vegetation present in and around the wetland (height, color, etc.). Provide a photograph of the known or suspected wetlands, if available.

5. Is standing water present? 9 yes 9 no If yes, is water: 9 Fresh 9 Brackish
   What is the approximate area of the water (sq. ft.) _____
   Please complete questions 4, 11, 12 in Checklist III - Aquatic Habitat – Non-Flowing Systems.

6. Is there evidence of flooding at the site? What observations were noted?

   9 Buttressing 9 Water marks 9 Mud cracks

   9 Debris line 9 Other (describe below)

7. If known, what is the source of the water in the wetland?

9 Stream/River/Creek/Lake/Pond 9 Groundwater

9 Flooding 9 Surface Runoff

8. Is there a discharge from the site to a known or suspected wetland? 9 yes 9 no If yes, please describe.

9. Is there a discharge from the wetland? 9 yes 9 no If yes, to what waterbody is discharge released?

9 Surface Stream/River 9 Groundwater 9 Lake/Pond 9 Marine

10. If a soil sample was collected, describe the appearance of the soil in the wetland area. Circle or write in the best response.

Color (blue/grey, brown, black, mottled) _____

Water content (dry, wet, saturated/unsaturated) _____

11. Mark the observed area(s) on the attached site map.