

Wetlands

What is a Wetland?

Wetlands are just as they sound – they are lands that are wet. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year. Some common names for different types of wetlands are swamp, marsh and bog.

Benefits of Wetlands

- Provide habitat (food, water, shelter) for a wide variety and number of insects, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and plants, including some threatened and endangered species.
- Slow down stormwater which may reduce flooding.
- Provide social enjoyment. People are drawn to places of beauty and enjoy many recreational activities such as bird watching, fishing, canoeing, hunting, photography and research.
- Act like a giant sponge to trap water which recharges groundwater supplies.

- Provide economic support. By providing habitat for wildlife, hunting, trapping, and fishing businesses can be successful.
- Wetlands are an excellent environment for growing crops like wild rice. They also support tourism with activities such as photography, canoeing, and bird watching.
- Filter out sediment from the water, absorb left-over nutrients, take out chemical pollution and reduce pathogens. Wetlands are referred to as the kidneys of the earth for their filtering qualities. Most city water treatments include some form of natural or created wetlands.

- Provide places for scientific research and education by studying plants and animals in their natural setting.
- Provide many different natural products. In many wetlands, humans are provided with items like food and medicine. Blueberries, cranberries, and wild rice are some unique foods that come from wetlands.
- Provide breeding bird populations - including ducks, geese, woodpeckers, hawks, wading birds and many song birds a place to nest and raise their young.
- Provide migratory waterfowl resting grounds.



DID YOU KNOW?

More than one-third of the United States' threatened and endangered species live only in wetlands, and nearly half use wetlands at some point in their lives.