



Wetlands are among the most productive wildlife habitats on earth!

Wetlands provide habitat for many species of reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals that are uniquely adapted to aquatic environments. Upland wildlife like deer, moose and bear commonly use wetlands for food and shelter.

The dense vegetation found in most wetlands provides places for wildlife to build homes and to hide from predators.

For many species, like the Canada goose, wood duck, great blue heron, muskrat, beaver, snapping turtle, and bullfrog, wetlands are primary habitats - the only places they can live. For others, such as black bear, moose, deer, wood frogs, and marsh hawks, wetlands are not primary habitat but are important for a part of their life cycle or during certain times of the year.

Raccoons depend on wetlands for a large portion of their food and are seldom found far from water.

# Woodlands, Wetlands & Wildlife

*Your wetland, a habitat for forest creatures*

Recent studies suggest that some wetland types are among the most productive ecosystems in the world!



Wetlands are ideal spots for Canada geese nests. Site selection is nearly always within 150' of water.

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for very long periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. When rivers overflow, wetlands' help to absorb and slow flood waters. Wetlands also absorb excess nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants before they reach rivers, lakes, and other water bodies.

Food

Water

Shelter

## Habitat

### Nurseries of life!

Often called "nurseries of life", wetlands provide habitat for thousands of species of aquatic and terrestrial plants, animals and birds.

Wetlands are vulnerable to disturbance. Once altered, their functions often never return to what they once were. Without protection, habitat and water quality can quickly degrade. This affects everyone down-stream. In the past, wetlands were altered or drained without much thought in Minnesota and we have now subsequently lost around 50% of our wetlands' since settlement.

Wetlands degradation and destruction is occurring more rapidly than in any other ecosystem. Most wetlands have been destroyed due to drainage, farming, housing, roads, construction, and other development.

Wetlands are particularly vital to black bears, who rely on wetland habitats to find shelter and safely raise their cubs. They can roam hundreds of miles across their large territories through tracts of wetland habitat.





Snapping turtles prefer water with muddy bottoms and lots of vegetation so that they can hide more easily. Snapping turtles spend almost all their time in water

## Wetland Regulations

In Minnesota, wetlands are governed by both state and federal laws. The state law is called the Wetland Conservation Act. The federal law is part of the Clean Water Act. If you are planning any activity that will impact wetlands, you must apply for a permit from multiple agencies. Luckily in Minnesota this is handled through the combined permit application. Certain types and sizes of activity are exempt but you must still have a permit.

The basic requirement is that "Wetlands must not be drained or filled, wholly or partially, unless replaced by restoring or creating wetland areas of at least equal public value under an approved replacement plan."

Wetland loss leads to increased flood and drought damage, nutrient runoff, water pollution, and shoreline erosion. It is also detrimental to our region's economy: recreation like fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching are large economic drivers in northern Minnesota.

There are 8 wetland types. Some are easily identifiable by areas of standing water or tree growth. Others require a trained eye to determine. The 8 types are as follows:

- Seasonally Flooded Basin
- Inland Fresh Meadow
- Shallow Marsh
- Wooded Swamps
- Open Water
- Shrub Swamps
- Deep March
- Bogs

# Forming a plan . . .

## Ask first!

It can be very difficult to identify wetlands and wetland regulations can be quite complex. Some examples of projects that could potentially affect wetlands include:

- Filling a low area of a residential lot for a building or lawn
- Tiling wet areas of cultivated fields
- Digging a pond in a low area
- Cleaning out an old ditch or improving an existing ditch
- Adding fill for a crossing of a stream or wet swale

If there is the potential for your project to impact a wetland, before you start it is important to contact your local regulatory authority.

**If you don't know where to start, Hubbard SWCD can help you determine which agency is your local contact. Or just ask for our wetland / shoreland regulation guide.**



**We can help you navigate the restrictions and regulations that govern properties connected to, or surrounding wetlands.**

**Phone: 218-732-0121  
Web: hubbardswcd.org**



**HUBBARD COUNTY  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

