



This is a supplement to the Citizen's Guide which provides basic information about Adirondack Park Agency regulations.

FRESHWATER WETLANDS

The New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act requires that an Agency permit be obtained for the following activities whether or not they occur within the wetland:

1. Any form of pollution directly in, or which drains into, the wetland, including application of pesticides or discharge of sewage effluent or other liquid waste into, or so as to drain into, the wetland;
2. Installation of any on-site sewage drainage field or seepage pit or any sewer outfall in, or within 100 feet of a wetland;
3. Any other activity which harms the wetland, including diversion of surface or subsurface drainage or natural water flows, or which substantially increases erosion of, or siltation or sedimentation into the wetland.

The Act also requires that permits be obtained for the following if they take place within the wetland itself:

1. Subdivision (including conveying a lot which has all or part of a wetland on it);
2. Draining, dredging, filling, or depositing soil, stones, sand, gravel, mud, rubbish or fill of any kind, either directly or indirectly;
3. Erecting structures, building roads, driving pilings, or placing any other obstructions, whether or not they change the pattern or flow or elevation of the water;
4. Clearcutting more than three acres.

The Agency will determine the exact location of wetland boundaries on your property if you are contemplating a subdivision or other new land use or development.

Please be aware that this flyer is only intended to provide general information regarding Agency jurisdiction. If an Agency permit is required (or if the property has previously been subject to Agency review) then other restrictions may apply.

WETLAND IDENTIFICATION AND IMPORTANCE

Deep Water Marsh

Areas of open water filled with plants that float freely or are rooted are called deep water marshes. The leaves of the rooted plants are either submerged or floating.

Such plants as pondweeds, duckweeds, and wild celery are important food for waterfowl. The shallow waters of a deep water marsh and the protecting vegetation make them important areas for fish spawning and nurseries.

Deciduous Swamp

These are wetlands where the covertype contains mostly live deciduous trees, twenty feet or more in height. The trees grow on hummocks or in seasonally or permanently flooded areas. Swamp maples and willows are evident in lowland deciduous swamps.

These swamps are spotted with dead trees which are used by flying squirrels and chickadees. The swamps provide a habitat for nesting waterfowl and a great variety of birds and wildlife. Their soils are usually very fertile, promoting rapid plant growth and a wide diversity of plants and animals.

Because these swamps filter great quantities of water, they play a very important role in purifying water and maintaining high water quality.

Wet Meadows

Wet meadows are wetlands where most of the cover is composed of sedges, rushes, and coarse grasses, most of which tend to grow in clumps. Groundwater is at or near the surface for much of the year, including significant parts of the growing season, creating saturated soils. These meadows are often found in the flood plains of lakes and rivers and in the areas once flooded by beaver dams or other impoundments. Their soils are mostly mineral in structure.

Bog

A bog is a closed wetland from which drainage is either extremely slow or absent and where the vegetation grows on a saturated mat of peat. The mat sometimes covers all of the surface of a shallow pond, sometimes it covers only a portion leaving open water. The peat is formed by species of sphagnum moss which die, but do not decay because of the acidity and low oxygen levels of the bog. All processes in a bog including nutrient recycling are slowed down by the stagnant acid water. This is why bogs are so sensitive. It takes centuries to recover from disturbance.

Emergent Marsh

Emergent marshes are shallow wetlands that are flooded with standing or running water much of the year. Their cover consists of such plants as cattails, bulrushes, pickerel weed, loosestrifes, and arrowheads. Emergent marshes have the most valuable covertype and one of the highest levels of productivity and habitat diversity. Not only does the vegetation in these wetlands provide nesting habitat, food, and cover for many waterfowl and other wildlife, but it adds large quantities of nutrients to food chains.

These marshes are attractive to muskrat, ducks and geese, herons, and egrets, mink and deer.

Shrub Swamp

A shrub swamp is a wetland where woody shrubs, less than twenty feet in height, make up most of the covertype. Shrub swamps are often found in floodplains, in frost pockets and other depressions, on the edges of ponds, lakes and bogs, along meandering streams, and in hillside drainages. These areas have two things in common: fresh water flowing through them and a high level of productivity.

Alders, hollies and viburnums typify these swamps and have berries which are eaten by a wide variety of birds. The shrubs are the nesting habitat of such diverse species as the rose-breasted grosbeak and kingbirds, and game birds, including woodcock, pheasant and grouse. It is also the habitat of beaver and otter, and waters adjacent to shrub swamps are essential to spawning northern pike.

Coniferous Swamp

A coniferous swamp is a wetland where most of the plant cover consists of live coniferous trees over twenty feet in height. The trees often grow on hummocks in deep organic deposits with pockets of water or sphagnum moss between them.

Coniferous swamps are most important because they give off large quantities of water over much of the year. In summer, this process helps keep surrounding soil temperatures low. This, combined with the cooling effects of the swamps' dense shade, helps maintain low water temperatures critical to the survival of cold water fish in streams running through these swamps.

The shelter offered by coniferous swamps creates clear wintering fields so important to the survival of deer and other animals and birds.

February 10, 2006