

## ***Wetland Definitions***

**Anaerobic:** living in the absence of oxygen

**Aquatic:** lives in or on water

**Benthic:** being in or on substrate, usually refers to bottom-dwelling organisms

**Biodiversity:** the sum of all species of plants and animals. An ecosystem is considered healthy when it supports the most diverse numbers and types of species it is capable of supporting.

**Biogeochemical cycle:** the transport and transformation of chemicals in an ecosystem

**Bog:** nutrient-poor, precipitation-fed, acidic wetland formed over an accumulation of peat with no inflow or outflow and characterized by a distinctive plant community of peat mosses, shrubs, sedges, orchids, pitcher plants, sundews and coniferous trees.

**Bottomland:** lowlands along streams and rivers, usually on floodplains

**Buffer zone:** land adjacent to a sensitive area that minimizes outside impact

**Conservation easement:** a legal device that allows owners to divide up the set of rights that their ownership entails

**Constructed, wetland:** wetland specifically designed to treat both point and nonpoint sources of water pollution

**Creation, wetland:** conversion of an upland area into a wetland where a wetland never existed

**Decomposition:** the breakdown of organic or chemical matter by microbes

**Delineation, wetland:** determination of the boundary between wetland and upland

**Detritus:** dead and decomposing plant and animal material

**Dredging:** process of excavating materials from waters

**Drop roots:** roots that originate from the branches of trees and root in the surface sediments, found in mangrove trees

**Ecosystem:** a community of plants and animals interacting with one another and with their physical environment

**Emergent:** objects or organisms that are partly in water and partly exposed, such as plants that are rooted in water but whose upper parts are aerial or floating. Emergent wetland vegetation includes erect, rooted, herbaceous vegetation, such as sedges, rushes, and grasses

**Endangered:** any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range

**Enhancement, wetland:** improvement, maintenance and management of existing wetlands to benefit a particular function or value, possibly at the expense of other wetland values

**Estuary:** an area where fresh water and marine water mix

**Estuarine wetlands:** tidal marshes that are semi-enclosed by land and have changing salinity levels due to the estuarine environment

**Facultative:** a plant species that has an equal possibility of occurring in wetlands and uplands; one of five categories used to determine whether or not vegetation is hydrophytic

**Fen:** peat-accumulating, groundwater-fed wetland that receives water from mineral soils, usually vegetated with mosses and sedges.

**Flood duration:** the amount of time a wetland is under standing water

**Flood frequency:** the average number of times a wetland is flooded during a particular period of time

**Floodplain:** the flat area of land adjacent to a stream; stores and dissipates floodwaters

**Fringe wetland:** wetland that fringes an ocean or lake and is affected by tidal action

**Function, wetland:** any biological, chemical or ecological process that a wetland performs, such as nutrient removal, wildlife habitat support and sediment trapping

**Groundwater:** water beneath the Earth's surface

**Habitat:** when an area between two distinct ecosystems has the greatest biodiversity: the area or environment in which an organism lives

**Herbaceous:** soft-stemmed plant, not woody

**Hydric soil:** soil that formed under saturated, flooded or ponded conditions long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part

**Hydrology:** the study of the properties, distribution and effects of water on the Earth's surface, in soils and underlying rocks, and in the atmosphere

**Hydrologist:** a scientist who studies the properties, distribution and effects of water on the earth

**Hydrologic regime:** how water moves in and out of the wetland system

**Hydroperiod:** the seasonal level of water in a wetland, includes the frequency, timing, duration and amount of flooding

**Hydrophyte:** plants that grow in water or in soil too waterlogged for most plants to survive

**Hypoxia:** a condition of decreased oxygen levels in soil due to flooding

**Invasive species:** species that tend to spread:

**Jurisdictional wetland:** wetland regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act which meet the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers definition (must exhibit all three characteristics – hydrology, hydrophytes and hydric soils)

**Lacustrine wetland:** occur on the edges of lakes where the water depth is less than 2 meters (6.6 feet)

**Marine wetland:** associated with the high energy coastline

**Marsh:** wetland characterized by frequent or continual flooding and herbaceous vegetation such as cattails and rushes

**Mitigation:** the federal requirement that if an existing wetland must be destroyed, it be replaced by either restoring or creating a wetland of similar size (often larger) either in the same watershed or adjacent to it

**Mitigation bank:** a wetland area that has been restored, created, enhanced or preserved and set aside to compensate for future conversions of wetlands into non-wetland areas

**Native:** originally living, growing or produced in a certain place; indigenous

**Obligate:** plant species that occur in wetlands 99 percent of the time; one of five indicator categories used to determine if vegetation at a site is hydrophitic

**Organic matter:** plant and animal residue in the soil in various stages of decomposition

**Palustrine wetland:** freshwater, shallow wetlands that are not riverine or lacustrine, such as marshes or bogs

**Peat:** a deposit of partially decomposed or undecomposed plant material; accumulates in places that are sufficiently wet enough to slow decomposition

**Peatlands:** generic term for all types of peat-accumulating wetlands such as bogs and fens

**Perched:** wetland systems in which soils do not allow water to pass through them

**Permit:** a document or certificate giving permission to do something

**Persistent emergent:** emergent vegetation that remains past the growing season

**Playa:** shallow depression similar to a prairie pothole found in the Southwest; becomes wet after a rain and is alternately wet and dry

**Pocosin:** type of bog found in the southeastern United States

**Prairie pothole:** shallow, marsh-like pond found in the Dakotas and Nebraska

**Primary productivity:** the production of organic plant material

**Prop roots:** roots that extend down from branches of trees into the ground, providing additional support, found in mangroves

**Recharge:** occurs when water flows or seeps from the wetland into the surrounding groundwater

**Restoration, wetland:** activities that seek to return a degraded wetland or a hydric soil area to a previously existing natural wetland condition

**Riparian:** typically occurring or growing along the banks of rivers and streams

**Riverine:** a freshwater system associated with a river; riverine wetlands are those that occur within the river channel and are dominated by emergent vegetation that remains only through the growing season

**Saturation:** condition in which all available spaces are filled with water

**Standing water:** water collected on the surface of the land

**Stewardship:** behavior that exhibits a long-term commitment and sense of personal responsibility

**Sustainability:** goal of a system of development that meets the basic needs of all people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own life-sustaining needs

**Swamp:** wetland characterized by periodic soil saturation and dominated by trees or shrubs

**Terrestrial:** living on land or in the air, as opposed to aquatic (in water)

**Threatened:** any species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range

**Tidal marsh:** salt, brackish or freshwater marsh dominated by herbaceous vegetation and subject to tidal flows

**Value, wetland:** benefits that specific wetland functions provide to humans, such as timber harvest flood control and sites for recreation

**Vernal pool:** shallow, intermittently flooded wet meadow or forest, usually covered by water during the cool season but dry for most of the summer

**Water table:** the depth or level below which the ground is saturated with water

**Watershed:** an area of land that drains to a particular body of water

**Wet meadow:** wetland characterized by waterlogged soil and herbaceous vegetation, generally without standing water

**Wet prairie:** herbaceous wetland dominated by grasses, sedges and forbs, and with waterlogged soil near the surface most of the year

**Zonation:** distinct bands of vegetation; common in wetlands because different areas are dominated by different species

Sources: [http://www.iwla.org/sos/awm/kit\\_defn.html](http://www.iwla.org/sos/awm/kit_defn.html)