

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