

The Wonders of Wetlands

How to know if you have a wetland on your property

What is a wetland?

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, including during the growing season (source: US EPA). When we picture wetlands, we often think of a swamp or marsh with definite standing water. Sometimes, wetlands can be indistinguishable without the proper tools to determine their defining features.



What defines a wetland?

Wetlands are defined by the presence of all 3 of these characteristics:

- **Hydrology (water saturation)**
- **Hydrophytic vegetation (water-loving plants)**
- **Water soils (hydric soils)**



Why are wetlands important?

After a storm, pollutants and sediment are picked up and carried into the nearest river or stream. As this water flows downstream and into a wetland, the water slows down, giving it time for sediments to settle out and nutrients to be used up. While the water is slow-moving, wetland plants help absorb and filter out pollutants; giving wetlands the nickname "nature's kidneys"!

Without wetlands, our bodies of water would not get the chance to filter out all the harmful contaminants that wash into them. It's our responsibility to protect these important features to keep our water clean!



For more information, contact Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District
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Wetland FAQs

How do I know if I have a wetland?

Wetlands must be determined by a trained professional that has the experience of identifying the three characteristics of a wetland. Sometimes, an area may only have standing water present in the spring and it appears to dry up in the summer, but could be a regulated seasonal wetland called a vernal pool.

A Surface Water or Wetland Delineation Report is created by conducting a field assessment of the area, collecting data, and mapping the wetlands and streams identified. This delineation report of wetlands and streams is then submitted to the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Can I build on a wetland?

Building on or degrading wetland habitats is not recommended because of the negative ecological impacts it causes and wetland soil conditions are poor for building. Impacts to low to good quality wetlands and streams are commonly permitted to be impacted by development.

If you are thinking about building in a wet area or need to impact a stream, please contact a wetland scientist who can perform a wetland delineation. The wetland delineation should be submitted with a Jurisdictional Determination Request to the USACE for confirming the locations and boundaries of regulated waters and is a first step in the development process.

Can I establish my own wetland?

Creating or restoring a wetland can provide important habitat to many reptiles, amphibians, and other wildlife as well as improve water quality. There are various resources in Ohio for establishing wetlands. The Natural Resources Conservation Service runs the **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** which provides funds to those who want to establish wetlands on agricultural land. Another funding source for building wetlands is the **H2Ohio** program which awards funding to public entities such as a city, village, park district, non-profit, or other governmental agency for certain projects aimed at improving water quality in Ohio, which includes those who are planning on building wetlands.



Is the wet spot in my yard a good place for a new pond?

Generally, no; areas that stay wet for even a short period of the growing season are often actually protected wetland areas! There are many factors to consider when building a pond such as soil types, topography, and hydrology of the area. Design mistakes can be very costly and are easily avoidable by planning ahead and being open to asking for technical advice.