

What is a Wetland? Swamps, marshes, bogs, fens, sloughs, and bottomlands are all common names for wetlands, but what makes a wetland a wetland? A single, comprehensive, definition does not exist that accurately defines all wetlands, because wetlands have diverse mixes of vegetation dependent on their location.

All wetlands do have some common traits, which define them. In general, wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil for part or all of the year, including the growing season for plants. Wetlands are in-between places, which lie between deep water in lakes and streams and dry land. Wetlands support an array of plants and animals which have adapted to life in saturated or flooded conditions. Wetlands have soils which differ from soils in dry areas, exhibiting characteristics that show the soil developed in saturated conditions. Wetlands can be identified by these basic indicators: vegetation, hydrology and soils. All three characteristics must be present during some portion of the growing season for an area to be a jurisdictional wetland - a wetland protected by the Clean Water Act.

For the purpose of regulation under the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) defines wetlands as: *Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.*



This information provided by the Clark County Soil and Water Conservation District, 9608 Highway 62, Charlestown, IN 47111

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District activities and programs will be made available to all citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, marital status or disability.

Wetland Mitigation



*A guide to volunteering
for the preservation of
Indiana's wetlands*



Why care about wetlands?

→ Because they...

Clean the water you drink—Wetlands are nature's water filters. They trap and remove mud, silt, and other particles carried by water that runs off the land.

Keep your house from flooding—Like giant sponges, wetlands can soak up huge amounts of rainwater.

Provide places for wildlife and plants to live—Nationwide, about 900 different kinds of wildlife need wetlands at some time in their lives, and nearly half of all endangered wildlife depend on wetlands for survival.

Provide places to enjoy nature—They are excellent for bird watching, canoeing, fishing, sightseeing, hunting, photography, and nature study.



What is Wetland Mitigation?

Unfortunately, wetlands are often affected by construction and other land disturbing projects. Wetland replacement, which is required by law, is known as **mitigation**. Mitigation is the last step in the three-step approach of (1) avoidance of impacts to wetlands, (2) minimization of impacts to wetlands, and (3) compensation. The purpose of mitigation is to compensate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands. However, finding appropriate mitigation sites often takes a great deal of time.

To help remedy this problem, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) has established a public portal for **Volunteer Mitigation**. The

interactive site assists with the connection of property owners



willing to provide land for mitigation and organizations that must complete mitigation as part of their project. The goal is to easily identify potential sites, and streamline restoration and other mitigation projects.

→ For more information on wetland mitigation visit <http://www.in.gov/idem/wetlands/2337.htm>.

How do you volunteer your wetlands?

IDEM's interactive Volunteer Mitigation site gives information on those property owners currently volunteering their land for mitigation, and also allows new volunteers to enroll their land. A tutorial with step-by-step instructions for the enrollment application can be found at <http://www.in.gov/idem/wetlands/2338.htm>. The application tool itself is located at <http://www.in.gov/idem/wetlands/pages/mitigation/>.