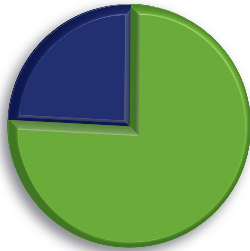


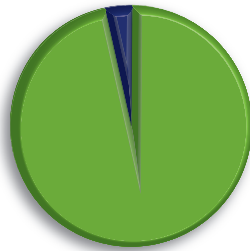
GOING, GOING...GONE?

The majority of Indiana's wetlands have been drained, filled in, and converted to other uses. When the first European settlers arrived in Indiana, almost one fourth of the state was covered with wetlands. Since then, about 85 of every 100 acres of these original wetlands have been lost, leaving less than 4 percent of the state in wetlands.


PRE-SETTLEMENT
 DRYLANDS - 76%
 WETLANDS - 24%



TODAY
 DRYLANDS - 96.5%
 WETLANDS - 3.5%



To learn more about Indiana wetlands, visit www.wetlands.IN.gov or call (800) 451-6027.



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GETTING YOUR FEET WET IN



Indiana Department of Environmental Management

DO WE HAVE WETLANDS IN INDIANA? YOU BET!

Some people think that wetlands are only found in places like the Florida Everglades, and not in Indiana. But like most midwestern states, Indiana is covered with wetlands! In fact, wetlands are found in every Indiana county. Most are very small, but they are scattered all over the state.



Marsh marigold

WHAT IS A WETLAND?

Wetlands come in many different sizes and types, so it is difficult to explain in a simple manner what is, and what is not, a wetland. In general, wetlands have a dominance of water-loving plants which can live in water or wet soil, are wet, flooded, or saturated for part of the year, and have soils which have formed under wet conditions. We typically refer to wetlands by other names, such as marshes, swamps, bogs, sloughs, or bottom lands. An area can be a wetland and not look like one because wetlands aren't usually wet year-round. In fact, some wetlands never have standing water in them!

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY LAND HAS WETLANDS OR NOT?

Wetlands are determined by carefully examining a site for the presence of wetland indicators. In order to be determined a wetland, an area must have all three of the following present:



Lotus leaves

1. a dominance of plants adapted for life in wet conditions (hydrophytic vegetation);
2. soils with characteristics typically formed under wet conditions (hydric soils); and
3. Surface water or waterlogged soils at or just below the surface for a sufficient period of time in most years to influence the plants and soils that occur there (indicators of hydrology).

If you wish to dredge, fill, excavate, or alter the shoreline of a wetland, you must first obtain a permit. In order to know if wetlands are on your property, you must hire a wetland or environmental consultant to conduct a wetland delineation on the property. For more information about wetland permits, contact IDEM at (800)451-6027 or visit www.wetlands.IN.gov.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT WETLANDS?

Wetlands provide many benefits to you and your family, including...



CLEANING 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. In certain situations, wetlands can be constructed to help purify contaminated water. They can remove excess fertilizer, human and animal waste, and even some pesticides and heavy metals.

KEEPING YOUR HOUSE FROM FLOODING

Like giant sponges, wetlands can soak up huge amounts of rainwater. This helps to reduce or prevent flooding. They also slow down the flow of water across the land, which reduces soil erosion and damage to streambanks, roadways, and buildings. And in dry seasons, wetlands slowly release the water they stored up when it was raining.

PROVIDING PLACES TO LIVE

Wetlands provide a place to live for many kinds of animals and plants. 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. Beavers and muskrats are examples of Indiana wildlife that are totally dependent on wetlands.



PROVIDING PLACES TO ENJOY NATURE

Wetlands are fun places to visit! They are excellent for bird watching, canoeing, fishing, sightseeing, hunting, photography, and nature study. Many schools use wetlands as outdoor classrooms, where kids and teachers can wade into learning!



Wood duck



Beaver



Twelve-spotted skimmer dragonfly



Green frog



Pitcher plant

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are more than 7,000 different kinds of plants that live in Indiana wetlands, including cattails, bulrushes, sedges, and water lilies.
- Wetland soils are made mostly of decomposed plants that grow and die in wetlands every year. They sink to the bottom, where they decompose slowly into rich, dark wetland soils.
- Wetland soils often smell like rotten eggs. Beneath the water, decaying vegetation produces sulfur and methane gases. Luckily, you don't really notice these smells unless the soil beneath the water is disturbed.
- Baldcypress, a relative of the ancient redwoods and sequoias in California, grow mostly in the southern United States, but there are a few wet areas and swamps in southern Indiana where baldcypress trees still flourish.
- The pitcher plant captures, drowns, and dissolves insects in its specialized leaves. This unique "meat-eating" wetland plant uses nutrients from the bodies of insects as natural fertilizer to help it grow in certain wetland environments.
- People once harvested and sold wild cranberries and blueberries from Indiana bogs, but today most of the bogs where they grow have been drained for other uses, so wild populations of these native plants are rare.