



Wetlands Are Protected by Laws, too...

Executive Order 11990: Requires federal agencies to take action to minimize destruction, loss, and degradation of wetlands and to preserve natural values of wetlands on federal lands.

Clean Water Act Section 404: Governs dredging and filling in jurisdictional waters, including wetlands. Jointly administered by Army Corps and EPA.

Endangered Species Act: Protects wetlands that offer unique habitat for endangered and threatened species. U.S. Fish and Wildlife administered

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): Requires federal agencies to prepare environmental documents disclosing impacts to wetlands.

*"In a green place lanced through
With amber and gold and blue -
A place of water and weeds,
and roses pinker than dawn
And ranks of lush young reeds
And grasses straightly withdrawn
From graven ripples of sands.
The still blue heron stands.*

- "The Blue Heron" by Theodore
Goodridge Roberts



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WETLANDS OF MONTANA



What are wetlands?

Wetlands are the link between land and water. In Montana wetlands are most often found as marshes, wet meadows, and fens. By definition wetlands are lands where saturation with water is the dominant factor determining the nature of soil development and the types of plant and animal communities living in the area. Acting as a transition zone for the flow of water, wetlands provide many benefits for the greater watershed and are important habitat for plants and animals.

Where are they?

Wetlands are more common and can be found in more places than you might think. In Montana, wetlands are most often found near river channels, surrounding lakes, at the bottom of valleys, or anywhere that receives a large amount of water runoff. Sometimes even highways can create wetlands along their edges from water runoff.

There are many wetlands that you can visit throughout Montana, Gallatin County, or even within our city limits. Check out the map on the back of this brochure to find a wetland near you.

A Unique Habitat

Montana's wetlands are home to endangered species, as well as unique plants that are not found in any other ecosystem. Some of the species of concern that live in the wetlands are Grizzly Bears, Great Blue Herons, the Western Toad, and the Ute lady's tresses orchid. Many of our trout species are dependent on wetlands for spawning habitat.

Common animals that are found in wetlands include ducks, turtles, pelicans, many hawks, and of course beavers.

Small Area, Large Impact

Wetlands only make up about 5 percent of the land surface in the United States but can have a very large impact.

- 31% of plant species in the USA can be found in wetlands
- An acre of wetland can store 1-1.5 million gallons of flood water
- Up to one-half of American bird species nest or feed in wetlands.



Wetland Benefits

By slowing down the flow of water, wetlands naturally allow sediment and pollutants to settle and filter out. Wetlands can absorb and breakdown nutrients from fertilizer, manure, leaking septic tanks, and other urban runoffs. These benefits combined with water storage and flood mitigation can be of great economic value to surrounding towns and communities. Many of the benefits wetlands provide are:

- Nutrient Capture and Breakdown
- Water Filtration
- Flood Mitigation
- Food Production
- Water Storage
- Recreation

Wetlands Under Threat

Despite all the benefits provided by wetlands the United States loses about 60,000 acres of wetland every year. These losses are due to commercial and urban expansion, industrial and agricultural runoff, climate change and pressure from non native and invasive species.

Resources:

For more information on wetlands checkout these online resources.

www.mtnhp.org/wetlands/

www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands

www.wl.fb-net.org