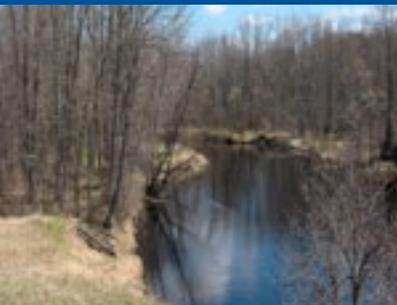




Floodplain Forest Wetlands

Type 1



Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter

Function and Values

Floodplain forest wetlands are perhaps most important for reducing shoreline erosion by pooling and absorbing flood waters and stabilizing the shoreline. These forested wetlands also provide an improvement to water quality by providing a filter for surface runoff and removing or retaining inorganic nutrients and processing organic wastes.

These temporary water holding basins frequently have an abundance of plant seeds and invertebrates, which makes them ideal nesting, feeding and resting areas for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds such as wood ducks, herons, egrets and songbirds. In spring, seasonally flooded basins are used as pairing ponds by ducks, and the abundant invertebrate population provides a protein-rich diet for egg-laying hens. During high water periods, these wetlands are important places for fish, amphibians and reptiles to reproduce.



Water Quality



Flood Control



Erosion Control



Habitat

Vegetation

Floodplain forest wetlands are dominated by mature, deciduous hardwood trees growing on soils associated with riverine systems. Dominant hardwood trees found in this wetland include silver maple, green ash, river birch, eastern cottonwood, American elm and black willow. The shrub layer, although usually lacking, is sparse.

Submergent and floating – vegetation requiring complete immersion, and are rooted in the bottom or free floating with majority of the leaves floating on the surface;

Emergent – rooted vegetation where most of the plant material is above the water surface; water levels must fluctuate for proper growth and seed germination (usually during drawdown in late summer);

Herbs and forbs – broad-leaved plants that typically grow either in the shallow water edges of wetlands, or ponds, and streams;

Shrub – woody vegetation that is less than 20 feet tall with single or multiple stems; species can be broad-leaved deciduous, or broad-leaved evergreen;

Tree – woody vegetation that dominates forested wetlands and is greater than 20 feet tall.

Floodplain forest wetlands are vegetatively productive because nutrients are periodically added to the system by flooding.



Silver Maple



Green Ash



American Elm



Black Willow



Eastern Cottonwood



River Birch



White Spruce



Aspen

What is a Wetland?

Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world and a source of support for all of the major groups of biological organisms.

By most standards, a wetland has mostly wet soil, is saturated with water either above or just below the surface, and is covered with plants that have adapted to wet conditions. A wetland is a term to describe a wide variety of wet environments from a slight depression, which holds water after spring runoff, to a forested swamp with peat soils.

The identification of wetlands can be difficult and it may be necessary for the landowner to hire a consultant to identify wetland boundaries. A consultant can also help with wetland replacement and permitting requirements.

Characteristics

Floodplain forest wetlands are poorly drained, shallow depressions located in the floodplain of a watercourse with no well defined inlets or outlets. These wetlands may have standing water for a few weeks each year, but are usually dry for much of the growing season. Floodplain forest basins are frequently cultivated. However, when these basins are not cultivated, wetland vegetation can become established. One unique aspect of floodplain forest wetlands is that the alternating periods of flood and drought can eliminate perennial plants so that annual plant species typically dominate the community.

Sequencing

Prior to any draining, filling or excavating in a wetland, proposed impacts to nonexempt wetlands must undergo a process known as sequencing. Sequencing is a step-by-step process that must be followed for clearly defined projects that intend to impact wetlands and reviewed to assess the efforts made by the applicant to follow these principles: avoidance, minimization, reduction or elimination of impacts over time, and replacement. Therefore, a Local Government Unit (LGU) may not consider or approve a wetland replacement plan unless the LGU finds that the applicant has demonstrated the activity impacting the wetlands has complied with all of the following principals in ascending order:

1. Avoiding Impacts

The first priority is to avoid impact to a wetland. If a project can be redesigned or relocated to eliminate any wetland impact, you must select this option.

2. Minimization

If St. Louis County determines that wetland impacts are unavoidable, you must then demonstrate that the project minimizes wetland impacts to the greatest extent possible. The county will determine if sufficient effort was made to minimize impacts by considering:

- The purpose of the project
- Size requirements of the project
- Location
- Sensitivity of the site design to the natural features of the site, including topography, hydrology, and existing vegetation

- The function and value of the wetlands on the site
- Applicants efforts to show alternatives to modify the size and scope of the project

3. Rectification

There may be times that a wetland impact is not possible to avoid, but the impact either is temporary or results in no net loss of wetlands. Temporary impacts may be approved by the county if the activity is completed and the physical characteristics of the wetland are restored within six months from the start of the activity. An example would be the construction of a temporary road through a wetland that is needed for a short term project. Once the project is completed, the road is removed. A performance bond would need to be provided to the county for an amount sufficient to cover the cost of restoring the wetland to pre-project conditions.

4. Reduction or Elimination of Impacts Over Time

Further impacts from draining or filling must be reduced or eliminated by managing the project in a manner that preserves remaining wetland functions and values. The county must require the applicants to implement Best Management Practices (i.e. silt fences) to protect wetland functions and values.

5. Replacement

Replacement wetlands must replace the functions and values that are lost from a wetland that is drained or filled. Replacement of wetland functions and values may occur at more than one location.

Conservation Level

In nonshoreland areas, floodplain forest wetlands are in the lowest protection level and have impacts limited to 10,000 square feet. To the extent that a local shoreland management ordinance is more restrictive than 10,000 square feet, the local shoreland ordinance applies. In shoreland areas, the impact is limited to 1,000 square feet.

Wetland Areas in Minnesota

This map illustrates the concentrated amount of wetlands present in northern Minnesota when compared to the amount of wetlands throughout the remainder of the state emphasizing the need for wetland conservation.



Typical Impacts

- Filling:** adding any material to change the bottom level of a wetland;
- Draining:** removing the water from a wetland by ditching, tilling, pumping, or other such techniques;
- Excavating:** dredging and removing soil and vegetation from a wetland;
- Diverting water:** preventing the flow of water into a wetland by removing water upstream, lowering lake levels, or lowering groundwater tables;
- Clearing:** removing vegetation by digging or scraping;
- Flooding:** raising water levels, either behind dams or by pumping or otherwise channeling water into a wetland so that water levels are too high for wetland vegetation and animals to survive (i.e., converting a wetland to a lake or pond);
- Diverting or withholding sediment:** trapping sediment through the construction of dams, channelization or other such projects that inhibit the regeneration of wetlands in natural areas of deposition, such as deltas;
- Shading:** placing pile supported platforms or bridges over wetlands, causing vegetation to die;
- Conducting activities in adjacent areas:** disrupting the interactions between wetlands and adjacent land areas, or indirectly impacting wetlands through activities at adjoining sites.

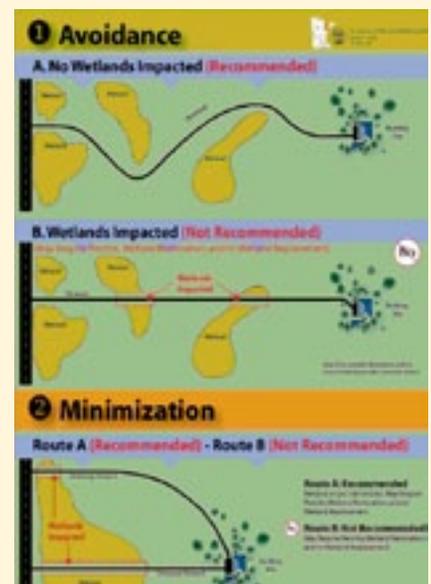
Do's

Rather than draining or filling wetlands, seek compatible uses involving minimal wetland alteration, such as waterfowl production, fur harvest, hay and forage, wild rice production, hunting and trapping leases, and selective timber harvest.

Maintain wetlands and adjacent buffer strips as open space.

Encourage neighbors, developers, and state and local governments to protect the function and value of wetlands in your watershed.

Select upland rather than wetlands sites for development projects and avoid wetland alteration or degradation during project construction.



Don'ts



St. Louis County Contact Information

Wetland Administration, Technical Assistance & Enforcement

Primary Contact for all Wetlands Issues

Contact these agencies **FIRST** if you suspect wetlands exist, to request a review, or obtain necessary permits for projects that may affect wetlands.

After working with primary contacts, try these agencies for additional technical assistance.

St. Louis County Planning and Community Development



Local administrators of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act. Provides plan and site reviews for wetland determinations, delineations, banking and replacement. Coordinates enforcement with DNR.

Soil & Water Conservation District North St. Louis or South St. Louis

Provides technical, educational, and financial resources to land occupiers in order to implement practices and projects that preserve, protect, and enhance water quality and other natural resources.

Fond Du Lac Reservation Office of Water Protection

Administers wetland regulations on all lands on the Fond du Lac Reservation and provides technical and educational resources to help protect and enhance water quality.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



Regulates deposition of fill or dredge material in waters of the U.S. or adjacent wetlands through section 404 of the Clean Water Act and section 10 of the Rivers Water Act of 1889.

State of Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR)



State Administration of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act

State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Waters Division



Regulates Public Waters Permits for all work within public water wetlands of types 3, 4 and 5 that are 10 or more acres in size or 2.5 acres in incorporated areas.

St. Louis County
Planning and Community
Development
Northland Office Bldg
307 1st St. S.
Virginia, MN 55792
Phone: 218-749-0633
800-450-9777
Fax: 218-749-0620

North St. Louis County
Soil and Water
Conservation District (SWCD)
US Bank Place
230 1st St. S. Ste 104B
Virginia, MN 55792
Phone: 218-749-2000
Fax: 218-749-2004

www.nslswcd.org

South St. Louis County
Soil and Water
Conservation District (SWCD)
215 N. 1st Ave. E.
Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: 218-723-4867
Fax: 218-723-4731

www.southstlouisswcd.org

Fond du Lac Reservation
Office of Water Protection
1720 Big Lake Rd.
Cloquet, MN 55720
Phone: 218-878-8022
Fax: 218-879-4854

U.S. Army
Corps of Engineers
1554 Hwy. 2, Ste 2
Two Harbors, MN 55616
218-834-6630

www.mvp.usace.army.mil

BWSR
394 S. Lake Ave. Ste 403
Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: 218-723-4923
Fax: 218-723-4794

www.bwsr.state.mn.us

DNR Waters
Duluth Metro
1568 Hwy. 2
Two Harbors, MN 55616
Phone: 218-834-1440
Fax: 218-834-6639

Rest of St. Louis County
7979 Hwy. 37
Eveleth, MN 55734
Phone: 218-744-7450
Fax: 218-744-7451

www.dnr.state.mn.us

www.stlouiscountymn.gov

About the Guide

This guide is designed to give general information about wetland regulations, identifying wetland areas, common species, and impacts to wetland areas for residents, contractors, and professionals associated with wetland property.

St. Louis County has over 1,000 lakes, countless rivers and streams, and hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands that provide recreational opportunities to both residents and tourists.

Obtaining the Guide

Copies of this guide are available free to all residents. Requests for a large number of guides should be directed to St. Louis County Planning and Community Development and may be charged a minimal fee to cover printing and production costs. All requests should be directed to:

218-725-5000
Toll Free Minnesota 800-450-9777
www.stlouiscountymn.gov

St. Louis County
Planning and Community Development
100 Missabe Building
227 West First Street
Duluth, MN 55802



Publishing Information

This project was funded in part by the Coastal Zone Management Act, by NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, in cooperation with Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program.

The Wetland Guide was developed and published by St. Louis County Planning and Community Development Department.

Information Updates

St. Louis County strives to maintain the latest information available. If any information in this guide is incorrect or any additional information is needed, please contact St. Louis County Planning and Community Development, 218-725-5000.