



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Special Environmental Resource Concerns

Wetlands

Clean Air Act
Criteria Pollutants

Clean Air Act
Regional Visibility
Degradation

Clean Water Act

Coastal Zone
Management
Areas

Coral Reefs

Cultural
Resources

Endangered
and Threatened
Species

Environmental
Justice

Essential Fish
Habitat

Floodplain
Management

Invasive
Species

Migratory Birds

Prime and
Unique
Farmlands

Riparian Areas

Wetlands

Wild and Scenic
Rivers

Wetlands

Executive Order (E.O.) 11990 requires that Federal agencies take action to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands, and to preserve and enhance the beneficial functions of wetlands when “providing federally undertaken, financed or assisted construction and improvements.” NRCS policy for implementing the E.O. can be found at 190-GM, Part 410, Subpart B, Section 410.26. In addition, activities that impact wetlands often require a Clean Water Act, Section 404 permit from the Corps. Activities in wetlands that occur in the 100 or 500-yr floodplain are also subject to review under NRCS floodplain management policy (190-GM Section 510.25).

What is it?

Wetlands are defined differently within various Federal and State programs and for identification, delineation, and classification purposes. NRCS wetland protection policy defines wetlands as areas, natural or artificial, that have hydric soil, hydrophytic vegetation, and indicators of wetland hydrology. Generally, wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs, many bottomland hardwood areas and similar areas.

Why is it important?

It is the policy of the NRCS to protect and promote wetland functions and values in all NRCS planning and application assistance. NRCS activities must comply with E.O. 11990, Protection of Wetlands, and with NRCS policy for protection of wetlands. Wetlands serve a variety of significant biological functions important to the food chain, general habitat, and nesting, spawning, and rearing sites.

What can be done about it?

Since wetlands are highly variable and can be dry for most of the year, wetland delineation training is important. If wetlands will be impacted by a proposed activity, NRCS will identify whether practicable alternatives exist that either enhance wetland functions and values, or avoid or minimize harm to wetlands. If such alternatives exist, the client will be given the opportunity to select one of those alternatives. If the client selects a practicable alternative, the NRCS may continue technical assistance for the conversion activity as well as the development of the mitigation plan. If a practicable alternative is not selected, NRCS may assist with the development of an acceptable mitigation plan, but no further financial or technical assistance for the wetland conversion activity may be provided.

Wetlands at a Glance

Problems / Indicators - Wetlands with impaired functions	
Causes	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past or current draining • Removal of native vegetation • Presence of invasive species • Changes in local hydrology • Dredge and fill activities • Adjacent stream channel modifications • Pollution from point sources (e.g., CAFO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetland restoration • Tree/shrub establishment • Riparian forest buffers and/or herbaceous cover • Shallow water development and management • Fish passage • Incorporate 404 Permit conservation measures into planning design

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