



Florida Department of Environmental Protection
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Tallahassee, FL 32399

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Wetlands

Florida's Natural Treasures

Wetlands... An Introduction

Wetlands are areas where water inundates the land or saturates the soil long enough to support a prevalence of plants that are specifically adapted to these conditions. Technically, wetlands are transitional lands between uplands and open waters.

Wetland Values

Mother Nature's Kidneys...
Wetlands can filter and absorb harmful pollutants as well as prevent sediments and excess nutrients from entering our open waters. They are also effective in flood control by containing rain after heavy storms.



Wetlands serve as nursery grounds for fish, shellfish and other aquatic animals. They are also essential to the survival of some endangered and threatened species such as the woodstork and Florida panther.

Typical Florida wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bayheads, bogs, cypress domes and strands, sloughs, wet prairies, riverine swamps, and marshes, hydric seepage swamps, tidal marshes, mangrove swamps and other similar areas.

Wetlands provide recreational opportunities to enjoy nature such as hiking and bird-watching.

Groundwater and drinking water supplies are recharged from the water that collects in wetlands and slowly filters into the ground.

Wetland Permitting Issues

Most types of dredging, filling and construction within wetlands or other surface waters require a permit. "Dredging" refers to any type of excavation conducted in wetlands or other surface waters and includes digging, pulling up vegetation by the roots, leaving vehicular ruts or any type of activity that disturbs the soil.

The term "fill" includes any material that is placed in wetlands or other surface waters. Dirt, sand, gravel, rocks, shells, pilings, concrete, grass clippings and trash are all considered fill.

Typical projects located in wetlands or other surface waters that require permits include:

- Filling for a house pad, septic tank or drainfield, driveway, laying sod for a lawn, etc.
- Removing trees or other vegetation
- Placing sand to create or restore a beach or to level a depression
- Dredging in channels and canals to provide new boating access
- Dredging to create a pond
- Digging a ditch to drain property
- Dredging for irrigation or recreation
- Constructing a boat ramp, dock or pier
- Cutting or trimming mangroves
- Discharging of dredged material into wetlands or other surface waters



"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, (s)he finds it attached to the rest of the world"

-- John Muir

Wetland Determinations

How do you know if your property is a wetland? The periodic occurrence of standing water or wet soil is a good indication you have a wetland. Because some wetlands have standing water for only part of the year, they may be difficult to recognize during dry conditions. The presence of common wetland plants such as cypress, willows, cattails or arrowhead is also a good indication that you have a wetland.

When in doubt...

Contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or a Water Management District for assistance.

Department of Environmental Protection District Offices



www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wetlands

Water Management Districts



Department of Environmental Protection Branch Offices

Northwest District Branch Offices:

Panama City Branch Office
2353 Jenks Avenue
Panama City, FL 32405
(850) 872-4375
Fax (850) 872-7790

Tallahassee Branch Office
2815 Remington Green Cir, Ste A
Tallahassee, FL 32308-1513
(850) 488-3704
Fax (850) 922-3620

South District Branch Offices:

Punta Gorda Branch Office
7451 Golf Course Boulevard
Punta Gorda, FL 33982
(941) 575-5814
Fax (941) 575-5812

Marathon Branch Office
2796 Overseas Highway, Ste 221
Marathon, FL 33050
(305) 289-2310
Fax (305) 289-2314

Northwest District Branch Office:

Gainesville Branch Office
101 NW 75th Street, Ste 3
Gainesville, FL 32608-1609
(352) 333-2850
Fax (352) 333-2856

Southeast District Branch Office:

Port St. Lucie Branch Office
1801 Southeast Hillmoor Drive
Ste C204
Port St. Lucie, FL 34952
(561) 398-2806
Fax (561) 398-2815