

Nontidal Wetlands

Classifications



Maryland Department of the Environment

What are nontidal wetlands ?

Nontidal wetlands are commonly known as marshes, swamps, bogs, wet meadows and bottomland forests. They are inland, freshwater areas not subject to tidal influence and are usually covered or saturated with water for long periods during the growing season.



How many acres of nontidal wetlands exist in Maryland ?

There are approximately 287,420 acres of vegetated nontidal wetlands in Maryland, comprising 4.6 percent of the state's land mass.

How are nontidal wetlands protected ?

The 1989 Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that directed the Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Administration, Nontidal Wetlands Division (which has since become part of the Maryland Department of the Environment, Water and Science Administration, Nontidal Wetlands & Waterways Division), to establish a statewide program for the conservation, enhancement, regulation, creation and monitoring of nontidal wetlands. The goal is no net loss of nontidal wetland acreage and function. The Division has written regulations and set up a permit program in order to meet this goal.

Why are nontidal wetlands important ?

Nontidal wetlands help protect the Chesapeake Bay and freshwater streams by filtering phosphorus and nitrogen and other pollutants from upland runoff. They are also areas that store flood waters and gradually release them, and are areas that replenish groundwater supplies. Nontidal wetlands provide habitat for fish and wildlife, some of which are endangered species. The scenic beauty and aquatic qualities of these special areas provide many opportunities for recreation and education.



What are the classifications of nontidal wetlands ?

Nontidal wetlands are classified according to the dominant type of vegetation. Nontidal wetland types in Maryland include the following:

- **Forested Wetlands** include swamps dominated by trees over 20 feet in height and many wooded floodplains. They are the most common type of nontidal wetlands. Common vegetation includes red maple, sweetgum, river birch and ashes. Forested wetlands provide excellent habitat values. Along streams, they help prevent nutrients and sediment from entering the water, and provide shade that helps maintain lower water temperatures critical to trout.
- **Scrub-Shrub Wetlands** include shrub swamps or wetlands dominated by small trees less than 20 feet in height. True shrub wetlands are relatively uncommon. Some bogs are classified as scrub-shrub wetlands. Plants include alder, buttonbush, dogwood, sweetbay magnolia and spicebush. They provide excellent cover and browse for wildlife. Many shrub wetlands become forested wetlands over time.

- **Emergent Wetlands** are marsh areas characterized by herbaceous vegetation. Common emergent vegetation includes cattails, sedges and rushes. Between the 1950's and 1970's the percentage of emergent wetlands decreased more than any other wetland type.
- **Aquatic Bed Wetlands** are found in some ponds and areas that are nearly always covered with water. They are the least common type of vegetated nontidal wetland. Species may include herbaceous plants such as spatterdock or pickerelweed. These wetlands are an important water source for plants and wildlife during drought. Waterfowl often use aquatic bed wetlands.



Is more information available ?

The following brochures and information sheets are available, free, from the Water and Science Administration, Nontidal Wetlands & Waterways Division, 1800 Washington Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21230, (410) 537-3768.

- Nontidal Wetlands Regulations and Agriculture
- Nontidal Wetlands Regulations and Aquaculture
- Nontidal Wetlands Regulations and Forestry
- Nontidal Wetlands Regulations and Development Activities
- Nontidal Wetlands Regulations and the Property Owner
- Nontidal Wetlands Regulations and Mitigation
- Nontidal Wetlands Regulations and Mitigation Bonding
- Nontidal Wetlands Classifications
- The Values of Nontidal Wetlands
- The Nontidal Wetlands Protection Program
- Nontidal Wetlands of Special State Concern
- Nontidal Wetlands Documents
- Are There Wetlands On My Farm?
- How to Recognize a Nontidal Wetland
- Are There Wetlands On My Property? - A Guide For the Developer