

Clean Water Starts at Home

Tip #3: Wetlands – Avoid or Minimize Impact

If you are considering grading, landscaping, dumping or similar work in low grassy or soggy areas on your property, first contact Coon Creek Watershed District (763-755-0975) or the Anoka Conservation District (763-434-2030, x14) to help determine if wetlands exist on your property. Some activities are regulated and may require a permit if they affect wetlands or other water bodies.

Why? Among other things, wetlands have been found to have several functions in the landscape. Wetlands can:

- reduce flooding by slowing or retaining runoff
- help meet water quality requirements by filtering out sediments, nutrients, and toxic substances
- provide habitat for many animals and plants

How do you know if it is a wetland?

It can be difficult. Many wetlands are not very wet. In fact, they may only be wet 10 days of the growing season and still have important landscape functions.



Legal-Ease

A permit is needed to excavate, drain, or fill any wetland. Why? The 1991 MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) calls for a ‘no net loss’ of wetlands so wetland draining, filling, & excavation activities need to be avoided, or minimized and then offset by either wetland restoration or replacement (called “mitigation”). Permits help us keep track of affected wetlands and, therefore, hydrologic balance.

Recommended Wetland Practices:

- Remove any added fill: sod, brush, rock piles, trash, wood chips, grass clippings
- Stop Mowing! Wetlands can function better when plants are taller and then usually have longer roots. **No mowing is allowed in wetland mitigation sites** - designed specifically to replace the benefits of a wetland lost to development
- Check first with the watershed district before
 - Excavating, even for ponds
 - Landscaping
 - Grading
 - Dumping

What defines a jurisdictional wetland?

Under *Normal** circumstances, a wetland must meet 3 criteria:

1. Soil: hydric (ex: wet peat or very black sand)
2. Hydrology: saturated soil (water table within 12” of surface), or inundation for at least 8 consecutive days during growing season.
3. Vegetation: supports, or ability to support, plants adapted to saturated soil conditions, i.e. oxygen depletion.

Professional determination is usually needed.

**many Anoka County wetlands do not meet Normal criteria, and so require other criteria.*

- Get a permit if you want to alter a wetland (or build a pond!)
 - Call CCWD or online: www.cooncreekwd.org > permit information
 - Plan at least 3 months ahead

Violations

Without a permit, excavating, draining, or adding fill in wetlands is a violation of the WCA. A permit from Coon Creek Watershed District (CCWD) is required within the CCWD boundary. Outside CCWD, contact the Anoka Conservation District.

Without a permit, a Cease & Desist Order may be issued.

Impact

Every time someone landscapes or dumps or grades into a wetland area, there is potential for negative impact on the functioning capability of that wetland; maybe the wetland cannot hold as much water, or filter stormwater runoff or infiltrate runoff because the soil has been compacted. Wetlands are important for good water quality.

If you have a soggy or grassy low area on your property, it is probably wetland. Unsure? Call Coon Creek Watershed District (763-755-0975) or the Anoka Conservation District (763-434-2030, x14) for further guidance. Be sure to give the full address.

Information provided by Coon Creek Watershed District: 763.755.0975 or email info@cooncreekwd.org.