

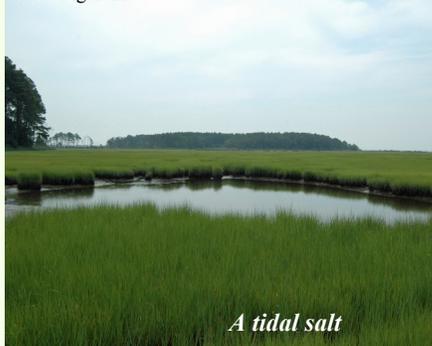
# Delaware Wetlands - What, why, and who?



Delaware's landscape is about 30% wetlands, yet we have lost approximately 50% of our wetlands since settlement. They are a special characteristic of our state and provide many benefits that protect and improve our quality of life. DNREC staff are here to help you learn more about their importance, provide guidance for landowners with wetlands on their property, and how we can all work together to protect these unique valuable habitats.

## What is a wetland?

Scott Figurski



*A tidal salt*

**In the simplest terms, wetlands are found where:**

**Hydrology** - The water table is at or near the soil surface during the growing season. *Wetlands do not have to be wet year round!*

**Soils** - Special soils are present that indicate the area is often wet.

**Vegetation** - Plant species that can tolerate a wet foot.



*Non-tidal wooded wetland*

## Are all wetlands the same?

There are many different types of wetlands but the most general way to separate wetlands are as non-tidal and tidal.

**Non-tidal** - represent 2/3rds of Delaware's wetlands. They are freshwater wetlands that are upstream far enough to not be influenced by the tide cycles.

**Tidal** - represent 1/3rd of Delaware's wetlands. They are flooded by the tide daily and are usually brackish to higher salt content.

## Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands provide a variety of benefits to humans and the environment. They provide habitat for plants and wildlife, clean our water, decrease the impact of severe storms, reduce flooding by absorbing runoff, and provide educational and recreational opportunities. When they are removed from the landscape, the services they would normally supply can cost significant amounts of time and money to attempt to replace.

- ◆ **Control flooding:** A one-acre wetland can hold 330,000 gallons of water to a depth of one foot.
- ◆ **Reduce pollution:** Microorganisms in wetland soils, in combination with vegetation, can remove nutrients and contaminants from water.
- ◆ **Drinking water supply and quality:** Wetlands contribute to sources of drinking water in Delaware.
- ◆ **Protect property:** Wetlands along the edge of water bodies help to stabilize shorelines and prevent erosion from occurring while absorbing storm energy before it reaches the upland edge.
- ◆ **Provide habitat:** Both coastal and inland wetlands provide habitat for many rare plant and animal species. They serve as nesting, feeding, and nursery grounds for fish, birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals including many popular sport species.
- ◆ **Store carbon:** Wetlands store large amounts of carbon and when wetlands are lost or degraded, CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere in large quantities.



# Delaware Wetlands - What, why, and who?

## Do I have wetlands on my land and how might they be regulated?

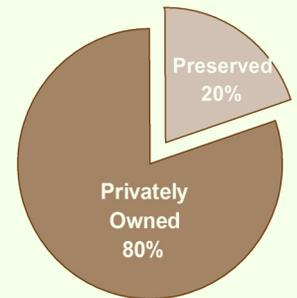
In Delaware, the vast majority of wetlands are privately owned, landowners can play a very important roll in wetland conservation. If you do have wetlands on your property, consider yourself lucky. They provide many services to the landscape and can offer you much enjoyment through wildlife watching and habitat stewardship.

### To determine if you have wetlands on your property and which agency to contact for permitting guidance:

First you'll need to contact a professional to determine if you have a wetland on your property and what regulations or ordinances might apply to it. DNREC can provide a list of consultants who are qualified to make the determination. DNREC can also help direct you to the appropriate agencies you may need to contact for permitting information.

**If there are wetlands on your property**, it means that you may need a permit from DNREC and/or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers if you are proposing any construction or landscape modification activity that might encroach upon the wetlands. Your County government may also have certain setback requirements from wetlands for the placement of structures. Be sure to contact DNREC and the Corps to discuss your plans for such activities as early as possible in the planning process.

### Delaware Wetland Ownership



## Contacts for Wetland Resources:

### State-regulated Wetlands - Tidal wetlands and subaqueous lands

State-regulated wetlands are all tidal wetlands and non-tidal wetlands >400 contiguous acres. Almost any activity in tidal wetlands requires a permit as does most activities in streams, ponds that have a connection to a stream, and ditches that function as streams.

To learn if you have wetlands on your property, for permitting information, to report violations, or for guidance on caring for wetlands on your property contact :

DNREC, Wetland and Subaqueous Lands Section  
(302)739-9943

<http://de.gov/wetlandpermits>

### Federally Regulated Wetlands - Non-tidal wetlands

Non-tidal wetlands are regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. If federally regulated wetlands exist on your property, a detailed onsite investigation is typically required to begin the permitting process.

To learn more contact:

Philadelphia District of the Army Corps of Engineers

Regulator of the Day: (215) 656-6728

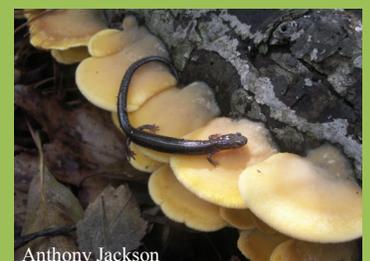
<http://www.nap.usace.army.mil/>

## What can I do to help conserve wetlands in Delaware?

- If you have wetlands on your property there are many voluntary restoration and protection programs with cost share or compensation in which you can enroll. To view a full list of opportunities visit: <http://de.gov/wetlandrestoration>.
- Volunteer with a local non-profit or state organization to do plant removal, clean ups, and much more! To learn more visit: <http://de.gov/wetlandvolunteer>.
- Enjoy your wetlands! Through the revenues gained from recreation in wetlands state agencies are able to protect and manage these valuable resources. To learn more visit: <http://de.gov/enjoywetlands>.
- Make your voice heard by attending public meetings and sharing your opinions and comments with your state and local representatives.

To learn more about what you can do visit:

<http://de.gov/howyoucanhelpwetlands>



Anthony Jackson

For educational information about wetlands, wetland health assessments, and how you can help contact the Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program:

<http://de.gov/delawarewetlands>  
302-739-9939

