

Caring for Your Land and Water

WETLANDS AND VERNAL POOLS

FACTSHEET 3



What is a wetland?

Wetlands are lands that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water, as well as lands where the water table is close to or at the surface.

There are two common wetlands types in southern Ontario:

Swamps – a treed wetland that typically has standing water in the spring that dries up by late in the summer season. They are found scattered throughout Southern Ontario often with patches of open water and bulrushes.

Marshes – open wetland with bulrushes, cattails or reeds as the dominant vegetation, with usually fairly deep standing or moving water, such as on pond, lake or river shorelines.

There are two other wetland types, however, they are rare in southern Ontario:

Bogs – a nutrient-poor wetland with sphagnum moss, often in a mat around the edge of an otherwise open pond, with low pH (acidic).

Fens – a nutrient-rich wetland characterized by shallow water with grass and sedge species as the dominant vegetation, with high pH (alkaline).

Action Steps

- ◆ Do nothing! Let your wetland and vernal pools be
- ◆ Start A Wetland Conservation Plan
- ◆ Construct a wildlife-friendly barrier made of shrubs or logs to keep out livestock
- ◆ Install bridges and/or boardwalks to minimize trampling and disruptions of the area
- ◆ Learn wildlife calls



Why should you protect your wetland?

Wetlands are one of the most productive and biologically diverse environments.

Wetlands have many hydrological benefits such as:

- Providing habitat for fish and wildlife as well as rare plants
- Providing erosion control
- Contributing to ground water recharge
- Reducing the chance of floods and stabilizing stream flows by releasing stored water slowly
- Helping to trap excess nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous
- Providing educational and recreational opportunities

What can you do?

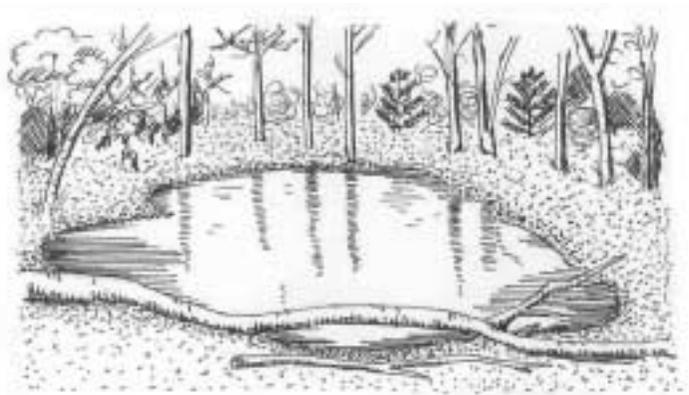
As a wetland landowner you could choose to participate in several programs for wetland conservation. Wildlife monitoring programs help you understand and appreciate your wetland. The Wetland Habitat Fund provides grants for wetland protection, tied to a conservation plan. The Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) and Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) can both apply to some wetlands. See Factsheets # 8 and # 9 respectively.

What is a Vernal Pool?

Vernal pools are small, isolated pools of standing water remaining in woodlands when the majority of surface water flow in the spring dissipates in the dry summer.

Vernal pools are home to a variety of wetland animals and provide food, drink, and breeding areas for them. Try to leave any existing vernal pools undisturbed, for wildlife to drink as well as for amphibian spawning.

Two amphibians that use vernal pools are Spring Peepers and Wood Frogs. To learn where go to learn to identify these amphibians and other wildlife monitoring programs (see Factsheet # 16: Observing Wildlife).



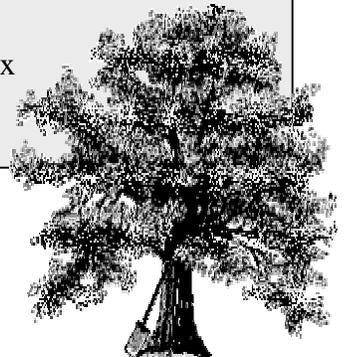
Who can you contact for assistance?

- ◆ Conservation Authority Biologist or Forester
- ◆ Local Nurseries

Other relevant factsheets in this series include:

- ◆ Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program
- ◆ Observing Wildlife
- ◆ Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program

Scientific references available upon request



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