

HENV-207

 Cooperative
Extension Service

Kentucky Wetlands



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Photo courtesy: Emily Byers

Wetlands are special areas on the land. The three major parts of a wetland are water, soil, and plants. In wetlands, water covers the soil or is near the surface all of the time or at least part of the year. Wetland soils lack oxygen and may appear dark or gray.

Special plants that do not mind wet conditions live in wetlands. Common wetland plants include cattails, arrowheads, water lilies, sedges, and rushes.

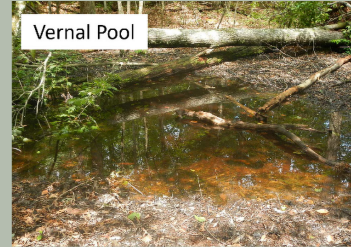


*Photos courtesy:
Amanda Gumbert*

Kentucky has several different kinds of wetlands that can be found across the state.

There are nearly 360,000 acres of wetlands in Kentucky. Vernal pools, swamps, and marshes are common in Ken-

tucky. There are other types of wetlands in Kentucky, too.



Vernal pools are seasonal. They are shallow ponds that dry up completely during the summer and fall. Swamps are dominated by trees and/or shrubs. They have standing water most of the year.

Marshes have mostly soft-stemmed plants. Marshes are flooded most of the time.

Photo courtesy: Amanda Gumbert



Wetlands are important in Kentucky and across the world. Wetlands are very productive ecosystems. They are home to many types of plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.



Photo courtesy: Eric Comley

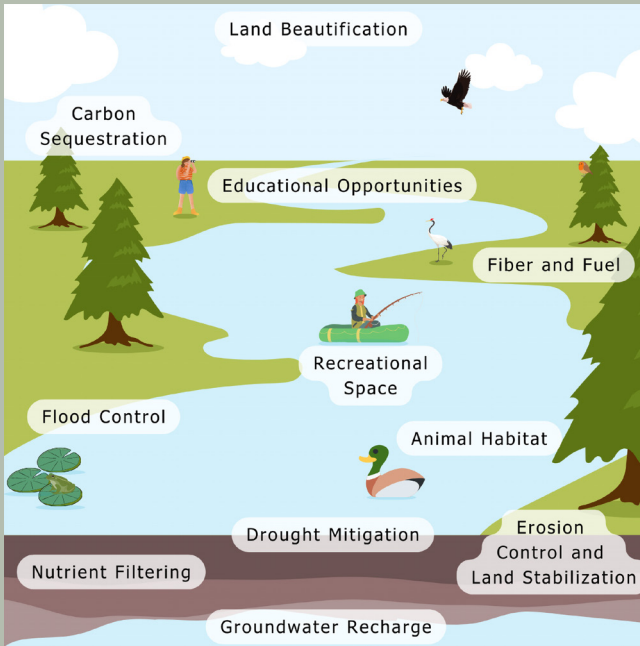
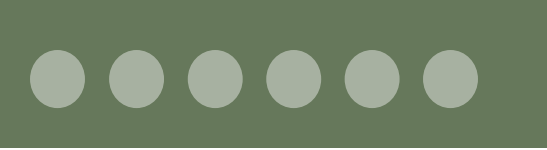


Photo courtesy: Emily Byers

Wetlands are often called nature's kidneys because they filter pollution out of the environment. They also help with flood control. Wetlands can trap soil that has washed off of nearby land.

Wetlands are important areas for recreation. People use wetlands for hunting, fishing, kayaking, and birdwatching. Wetlands also provide many opportunities to learn.



Some federal laws protect wetlands from being destroyed. Some programs encourage private landowners to protect wetlands. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers voluntary programs for farmers to restore and protect wetlands.

Kentucky also has programs to protect wetlands. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources manages 39,000 acres of wetlands to protect waterfowl habitat. The Kentucky Office of Nature Preserves protects and manages wetlands on state nature preserve lands.

Nonprofit groups also protect and restore wetlands. Groups like The Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited work with private landowners. They help landowners manage forested wetlands and waterfowl habitat.



Photo courtesy: Amanda Gumbert

You can protect wetlands, too! Here's how to help:

- Learn more about wetlands near you.
- Don't litter.
- Pick up any trash you see.
- Dispose of waste like motor oil, paints, and batteries properly.
- Pick up after your pet.
- Limit pesticide and fertilizer use.
- Cover bare soil with mulch or straw and seed with native plants.
- Enjoy wetlands by kayaking, birdwatching, taking photographs, and relaxing in nature!

To learn more about wetlands:

ID-279

Understanding and Protecting Kentucky Wetlands

<https://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/ID/ID279/ID279.pdf>

HENV-206

Understanding and Protecting Kentucky Watersheds

<https://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/HENV/HENV206/HENV206.pdf>



Photo courtesy: Eric Comley

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