**Wetland or stormwater pond?**

Natural wetlands occur along the edges of lakes, rivers and streams, and within natural depressions in the landscape that were left behind by glaciers. Not all ponds you see around town are wetlands, however.

Most commercial and residential developments built since the 1980’s utilize stormwater ponds to reduce flooding and downstream water pollution. Though these ponds may look natural, they are actually highly engineered systems, designed to control the rate of runoff and hold water back until sediment and other solids can settle out. Stormwater ponds have inlet and outlet pipes and need to be dredged periodically to remove the accumulated sediment.

Because stormwater ponds are designed to capture sediment and nutrients, they frequently turn green with algae in the summer. Though you might see ducks and geese landing in these ponds, they are NOT safe for fishing or swimming.

**Protect your local wetlands**

Natural wetlands also act as filters, pulling sediment, nutrients, and pollutants out of runoff water before it flows into lakes and streams. However, like human kidneys, they can become overwhelmed in the process. When wetlands get over-loaded, they no longer provide protection for lakes and streams and sometimes even become a source of water pollution.

Never dump leaves or grass clippings into wetlands – doing so is illegal and harms the ecosystem. Some cities and watershed districts require landowners to maintain a buffer of un-mowed native vegetation around wetands. [Insert local rules here.] These buffers are often identified on plat maps as drainage and utility easements. Some are marked with a small sign.