**All about wetlands**

Minnesota may be the land of ten thousand lakes, but it could also be the land of ten *million* wetlands. These often misunderstood features are sometimes wet, sometimes dry, but always important to people and wildlife.

Officially, there are eight types of wetlands in Minnesota: bogs; shallow and deep marshes; shallow open water; shrub and wooded swamps; seasonal basins; wet meadows and calcareous fens. Minnesota has lost almost half of its wetland acreage since European settlement, but there are still roughly 10.62 million acres of wetlands remaining.

**Wander through a local wetland:**

[Insert info about local wetlands to visit]

In northeastern Minnesota, 90% of the state’s original wetlands still remain and 84% have high quality, natural vegetation. In the metro area, on the other hand, 82% of all wetlands have been taken over by invasive species like purple loosestrife and reed canary grass. Meanwhile, in southern and western Minnesota, only 5% of the wetlands remain.

Wetlands provide critical services to humans and wildlife. Along the edges of rivers, streams and lakes, they provide flood protection and reduce shoreline erosion. Some wetlands collect surface water from rain and melting snow and allow it to soak into the ground, replenishing groundwater supplies. Others bring cool, clean groundwater to the surface of the land, creating unique habitats for plants and animals.

Approximately 43% of threatened and endangered plant and animal species in the U.S. live in or depend on wetlands. Wetlands provide habitat for spawning fish, migrating waterfowl, breeding frogs and turtles, and insects such as dragonflies. Some of the species of concern found in Washington County wetlands include: fernleaf false foxglove, kittentails, creeping juniper, and American ginseng; red-shouldered hawks, blanding’s turtles, eastern hognose snakes, American brook lampreys, milk snakes and Louisiana waterthrush.

Today, wetlands are protected by Minnesota State Law. In general, the law prohibits draining, filling or otherwise altering a wetland. You are also required to get a permit for all projects that impact wetlands, including driveways, culverts, new construction and home additions.

In addition, [Insert local info about city or watershed wetland buffer rules]. Contact [Insert local wetland contact info here] for all questions related to wetlands.