



Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where standing water collects, covering and saturating the soil. Wetlands play an important role across the globe. They act as the “Earth’s kidneys” soaking up and filtering pollutants, which gives us clean water to drink. They are also home to diverse wildlife and provide flood protection during storms. Because of their important functions, it is important that we work to conserve our wetlands.



There are many types of wetlands - Oklahoma is home to inland wetlands rather than coastal wetlands. Inland wetlands are located near rivers, streams, lakes and deep basins with some appearing dry depending on the season. Whether they are wet or dry, they still function as a filtering system and are home to abundant plant and animal life.

Oklahoma has lost 67% of its wetlands to economic development, making it more important than ever to preserve and reclaim these lands. Federally, wetlands are protected through a no-net-loss objective, which requires property owners and developers to avoid destroying wetlands or construct new wetlands to replace lost acreage.



GRDA'S WATERSHED CONSERVATION PROGRAM

GRDA's Watershed Conservation Program
Guard the Grand

Common wetlands of northeast Oklahoma

Riparian Corridors

Located throughout Oklahoma, they exist in areas with low elevation where frequent flooding occurs.

These wetlands contain vegetation such as cottonwood, tamarisk, sedges and rushes.



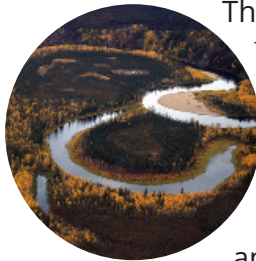
Closed Depressions

This type of wetland is created by a depression in the ground that lacks proper drainage. Sometimes this type does not have water for years at a time depending on the climate.



Oxbow Lakes

These wetlands are created from changing river paths. The water is typically shallow without woody plants. They usually remain wet and contain vegetation such as green ash, willow, and floating leafy plants.



Marshes

Primarily located in eastern Oklahoma, these wetlands exist in low elevations where frequent flooding occurs.



Forested

These types of wetlands are found primarily in the eastern part of Oklahoma. They primarily contain trees such as oak or pine.



Shoreline Zones

These are located directly next to ponds and lakes. They are home to vegetation such as cattails and willow.

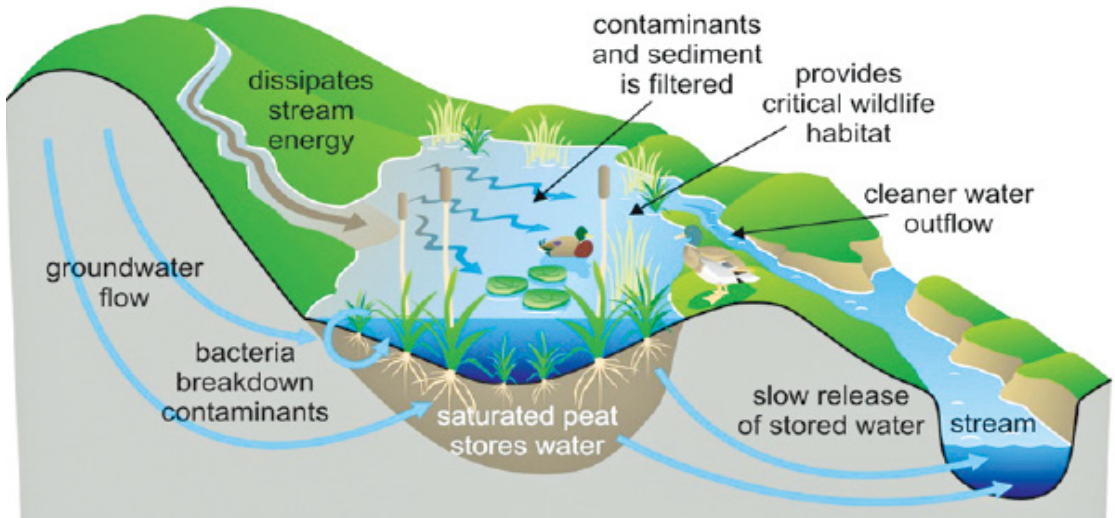


Identifying wetlands in your area

The three important wetland indicators are: vegetation, soil, and hydrology. It can be difficult to identify wetlands and if you are considering doing work on your property and are not sure the best thing to do is to double check with GRDA or hire a professional to make the determination for you. Some things to look for are wetland plants, they will be different than the plants you see in an upland area, waterlogged soil (if you dig down sometimes the soil will be a grey color, due to the lack of oxygen), and signs of seasonally standing water, such as watermarks on trees.

Some wetlands are federally protected under the Clean Water Act, especially those adjacent to large waterways, so double check before you dig!

How wetlands work



(www.geocaching.com)

Wetland functions, benefits and economics

Wetlands are home to hundreds of different species of wildlife and provide so many ecosystem services that they have been collectively valued at \$14.9 trillion dollars according to the EPA. Below are just some of the benefits wetlands provide to us all!

Water Storage

A wetland acts as a sponge. It temporarily soaks up and holds water which reduces or prevents flooding.

Water filtration

A wetland filters water by slowing it down as soon as it enters the system. This gives sediment more time to settle, providing plants an opportunity to absorb nutrients and remove pollutants from the water.

Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat

The shallow water and rich soils of wetlands are considered one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems. For example, many threatened and endangered species rely on wetlands for food and habitat.

Recreation

Wetlands can serve as an important community resource for recreation and economic activity. They provide unlimited learning opportunities through fishing, bird watching, photography, and education.

Constructed Wetlands

Wetlands are so beneficial they have been constructed all over the country for a variety of purposes such as wastewater treatment, stormwater management and for removing heavy metals.

Helpful resources for understanding wetlands in your area

To see a map of wetlands in your neighborhood, or any other location, you can use the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Wetlands Mapper tool. <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/>

This tool allows you to zoom in on your area of interest and click on highlighted areas which are labeled as wetlands. Clicking on these areas opens a description box that provides an explanation of the wetland type and its classification.

For information more specific to Oklahoma visit the Oklahoma Wetlands Program website at <https://www.ok.gov/wetlands/>



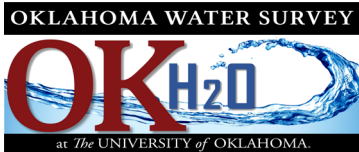
Guard the Grand is an educational program with the goal of fostering an ethic of environmental stewardship in Oklahomans residing in watersheds that flow into Grand Lake O' the Cherokees.

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