

CLUES TO WETLAND IDENTIFICATION: QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPERS, CONTRACTORS, SURVEYORS, FARMERS AND LAND OWNERS

Wetlands are areas where ground and/or surface water lingers for brief periods of time during the growing season (see Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) fact sheet, *An Introduction to Wetlands* and the enclosed map, "Growing Seasons for Wetland Hydrology").

In Pennsylvania, wetlands are protected by both state and federal regulations and may also be protected by local (municipal) regulations or ordinances. Wetlands are valuable because they function in ways that benefit the natural world, including the human community (see DEP fact sheet, *Wetlands: Functions at the Junctions*).

ARE WETLANDS PRESENT ON THE SITE? Take a walking inventory of fields, forests and woodlots. Ask the following questions:

Yes No

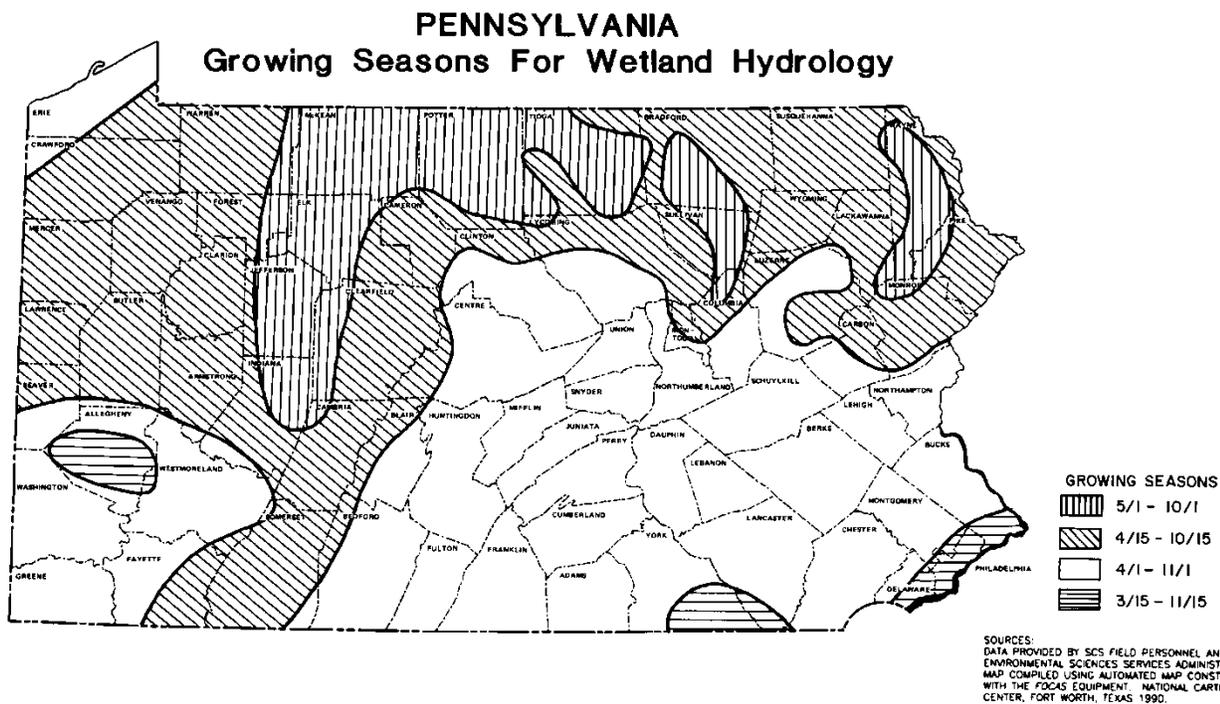
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|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there open bodies of water, ponds, lakes, streams or reservoirs? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there natural drainage channels (permanent or temporary)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the ground soggy or spongy under foot at any time during the growing season (see "Growing Seasons" map)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there "low spots" or depressions where water lies or pools for more than seven days during the growing season? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are swales, springs or seeps present? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there areas that should not be crossed with vehicles, tractors or other machinery for fear of "getting stuck"? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Has the site been "ditched" or "tiled" in spots to "dry it out"? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do some plants have roots growing from their stems, above the soil line? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there these plants: cattails, sedges (frequently with triangular stems), iris (flags), arrowheads, joe pyeweed, touch-me-not (jewelweed), rushes, sensitive fern, ironweed or skunk cabbage? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there these trees or saplings: willows, red or silver maples, box elders, black or green ash, sycamore or black gum? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are tree trunks expanded or swollen at the base? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are any trees "blown down" (windthrows), exposing a shallow but extensive root system? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are any of these shrubs present: blueberry, bush-type dogwoods (for example, red osier), alders, buttonbush or spicebush? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there cleared areas where water has scoured the surface and removed the plants? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there places where fallen leaves are discolored gray or black? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there silt/sedimentation deposits on decaying leaves lying on the ground or on living plant leaves, or on stems or tree trunks? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there drift lines (wreck lines) where sticks, leaves and other water-carried debris have lodged along a contour or at the base of vegetation? |

Yes No

- Is there a dark-brown layer of organic matter, over two inches thick, on the soil surface?
- Does sphagnum moss (a lush, green, juicy moss) cover the site?
- Is the soil composed primarily of peat (decaying sphagnum moss)?
- Does the soil smell like rotten eggs (sulfur)?
- Digging to a depth of 18 inches, is the soil color gray, gray-blue or gray-green or marked with spots, streaks or lines of different color? Note: In agricultural fields, these characteristics are observed below the plow-line.
- Does a soil test pit (a hole dug to 18 inches) fill with water or does water "trickle down the sides"?

If the answer is "Yes" to any of these questions, a wetland may be present on the property.

Further information and assistance is available. Observe! Ask questions! Be alert to changes in state and federal regulations! Be aware of local regulations/ordinances! Seek professional advice at state, federal and private levels! **It is important to note that permits are normally needed before any work is performed in a wetland.** Contact: regional offices of DEP Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands, Division of Wetlands, Encroachments and Training, the local county conservation district or the Natural Resource Conservation Service.



For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us, keyword: Wetlands,

or contact:

Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands
Division of Wetlands, Encroachments and Training
P.O. Box 8460
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8460
717-787-7432
Fax 717-772-0409