

PA COUNCIL OF TROUT UNLIMITED
POLICY ON WETLANDS
JANUARY 2007

Pennsylvania's landscape is composed of less than two percent (498,000 acres) of wetland habitats. Substantial loss of these habitats has already occurred and additional losses are threatened by land use activities such as increasing urbanization; road construction; improper agricultural, lumbering, and mineral extraction practices; certain recreational activities; and conversions of wetlands to deepwater habitats (lakes and ponds).

Wetlands are areas inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Commonly known as bogs, marshes, seeps or swamps, many (perhaps most) wetlands are adjacent to or hydrologically connected to streams, rivers, ponds or lakes. Other wetlands, called isolated wetlands, are seemingly not connected to waterways. Wetlands provide critical functions and values to Pennsylvania's citizens and aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity including our coldwater fisheries resources.

The widely recognized functions and values of wetlands are to:

1. Deter erosion and sedimentation.
2. Buffer point and non-point sources of pollution.
3. Absorb and mitigate potential floodwaters.
4. Store snow melt and rainwater which discharges into streams and helps to maintain base flow.
5. Provide habitat for a rich diversity of vegetation and wildlife including rare, threatened and endangered species.
6. Provide organic materials to waterways which are especially important in infertile headwater streams.
7. Provide cover for fish and other aquatic organisms.
8. Provide shade to maintain cooler water temperatures.
9. Have scenic beauty, aesthetic and heritage values and serve as focal points for a variety of outdoor recreation, education and scientific research.

To ensure that wetland habitats receive the preservation and protection merited by their functions and values, PATU recommends the following policy guidelines:

1. Appropriate Commonwealth agencies shall be encouraged to develop stronger regulations to preserve and protect wetland habitats.
2. Any existing regulations or new regulations developed to preserve and protect wetland habitats must be strictly and equitably enforced statewide.
3. Any wetland disturbances should be reported to appropriate authorities.
4. Research projects on wetland habitat functions, values, preservation and protection shall be developed and supported.

5. Commonwealth agencies and other government entities shall be encouraged to develop and implement high quality educational programs to inform the citizens of Pennsylvania about the importance of wetland habitats and how best to protect and enhance them.
6. Wetland encroachment permits should be issued only for unavoidable impacts.
7. Highest quality wetlands must receive the highest level of protection in the permitting process.
8. A periodic review by a qualified independent entity should be conducted on the Commonwealth's wetland banking program.
9. Mitigation must only be used to reduce unavoidable impacts and ideally should result in a net gain.
10. Special attention shall be given to the prevention of adverse cumulative effects of wetland losses in any given watershed.
11. Commonwealth agencies and conservation organizations should be encouraged to purchase or acquire easements on wetlands.