

FUNCTIONS AND VALUES OF WETLANDS

- **Ecological Integrity** Wetlands are among the most highly productive plant communities. The most valuable wetlands are those that are intact, diverse in habitat, and buffered from human activity.
- **Wildlife Habitat** Wetlands are essential habitat for a large number of wetland species, particularly amphibians, waterfowl and wading birds.
- **Finfish Habitat** Streamside vegetation provides shade, which lowers water temperatures necessary for certain fish species, as well as refuge.
- **Nutrient Retention, Sediment Trapping, and Pollution Filtration** Wetlands remove and store levels of sediment and nutrients which might otherwise damage the aquatic ecosystem.
- **Flood Control** Wetlands reduce flood damage by acting as storage basins.
- **Shoreline Anchoring and Dissipation of Erosive Forces** Wetlands act as a buffer zone between watercourses and uplands reducing shoreline erosion and the accompanying sediment deposition within watercourses.
- **Groundwater Use Potential** Some wetlands recharge the water table and have a purifying effect on water discharged downstream.
- **Agricultural Potential** Floodplain wetlands contain nutrient rich soils.
- **Forestry Potential** Through proper management, many wetlands have a potential for production of forest products.
- **Visual and Esthetic Quality** Wetlands are often areas of scenic beauty providing wildlife viewing opportunities.
- **Educational Potential** Wetland areas can be an important tool for teaching ecological principles.
- **Water Based Recreation** Many streams, lakes and other wetland areas are canoeable and provide abundant fishing and viewing opportunities.
- **Noteworthiness** Many wetlands possess features - such as important historical or archaeological sites, unique geographical features, and endangered species - which give them a high value regardless of any other attribute.