



Wetlands & Stormwater Benefits

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Wetlands are dynamic ecosystems that provide multiple benefits including flood control, stormwater filtration and wildlife habitat. They are essential in the proper functioning of the hydrologic cycle. Wetlands are important for stormwater management. Almost any wetland can provide some measure of flood protection by holding the excess runoff after a storm, and then releasing it slowly. This lowers flood peaks by temporarily holding water and slowing the water's velocity. Wetlands can also store stormwater and allow for infiltration that recharges aquifers important for groundwater exchange. Wetlands protect water quality by trapping sediments and retaining excess nutrients and other pollutants such as heavy metals. According to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), 25% of Indiana was covered by wetlands in the early 1700s and now cover less than 4%. Today, wetlands are protected by state and federal laws. When a project is planned in Indiana that will impact a wetland, stream, river, lake or other Water of the U.S., the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) must issue a Section 401 Water Quality Certification (401 WQC). The Town of Merrillville Stormwater Utility works closely with IDEM, IDNR and Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to protect wetlands and ensure proper permitting and planning during new development.

A rectangular sign with a black border. At the top left, there is a red circle with a diagonal slash over a lawnmower icon. To the right is a silhouette of a bird standing in a wetland. Below this is the text 'WETLAND PROTECTION AREA' in large, bold, black letters. Underneath is the word 'CAUTION!' in red. The main body of text reads: 'THIS AREA IS PART OF A WETLAND MITIGATION PROJECT TO ESTABLISH NATIVE WETLAND PLANT AND ANIMAL HABITAT. PLEASE HELP US PROTECT THIS NATURAL RESOURCE.' Below this is the phrase 'Do Not Mow or Disturb' in a cursive font. At the bottom left, there are three bullet points: 'Improves water quality with native plants.', 'Provides wildlife habitat and food.', and 'Absorbs stormwater, reducing runoff.' At the bottom right is a small version of the Town of Merrillville Stormwater Utility logo. The background of the sign features a green grassy field at the bottom.

Wetlands are identified in the field by three main factors:

- **Soils:** area must contain hydric (wetland) soil types
- **Hydrology:** area must have presence of water or saturation at certain times of the year
- **Vegetation:** area must predominantly have wetland vegetation

Here are links to state and federal regulatory agencies:

- IDEM Wetlands Regulations: <http://www.in.gov/idem/wetlands/index.htm>
- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers: <http://www.lrc.usace.army.mil>
- IDNR Division of Water: <http://www.in.gov/dnr/water/2455.htm>

Visit us at our webpage at: http://merrillville.in.gov/departments/stormwater_management/
If you witness or suspect disturbance to wetlands, please call us at (219) 472-8668.