

How do I recognize a wetland

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Simply put, wetlands are identified by looking closely at three characteristics:

[Vegetation Indicators](#)  
[Hydrology \(water or "wetness"\) Indicators](#)  
[Soil Indicators](#)

Generally, when wetland plants (certain species used as wetland indicators called hydrophytic vegetation), wetland soils (hydric soils), and a certain degree of wetness (hydrology) prevail, the area is called a wetland; when these things do not prevail, the area is called an upland. There are some general situations in which an area has a strong probability of being a wetland. If any of the following situations occur, you should coordinate with the local Corps office to determine whether the area is a wetland:

- Areas that occur in a floodplain or depressions (low spots) in which water stands at or above the soil surface during the growing season. Caution: Most wetlands lack both standing water and waterlogged soils during at least part of the growing season.
- Areas that have plant communities that commonly occur in areas having standing water for part of the growing season (e.g., cattail marshes, bulrush marshes, and sphagnum bogs).
- Areas that have soils that are called peats or mucks.
- Areas that are periodically flooded by tides, even if only by strong, wind-driven tides.

Many wetlands can be easily identified in these general situations. However, in situations where it is unclear if wetland indicators prevail, it is necessary to carefully examine the area for the three characteristics of wetlands: vegetation, hydrology, and soil. If you observe definite indicators of any of the three characteristics, you should seek assistance from either the local Corps District Office or [someone who is an expert](#) at making [wetland determinations](#). This information is not intended to be used to make a final wetland determination or delineation; it is intend, however, to provide some general information concerning wetlands identification.

If you intend to place dredged or fill material in an area that might be a wetland, contact the Seattle District Regulatory Branch at

**(206) 764-3495** for assistance in determining if a permit is required.

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