

Enviro FACTS

PRESERVING OUR WETLANDS

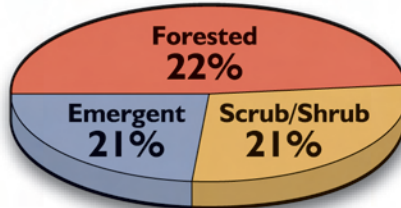
This small but vital part of our environment provides tremendous benefits

West Virginia's wetlands are unique transitional areas between land and water ecosystems. Despite their relatively small area – less than one percent, or 102,000 acres – wetlands provide many functions that benefit the environment. Wetlands provide erosion control, flood reduction, ground water recharge, surface water quality improvement, plus fish and wildlife habitat.

In recognition of the role wetlands play, and to preserve remaining wetlands for future generations, wetlands are protected by state and federal laws.

The term "wetlands" describes what are commonly known as marshes, bogs, swamps, wet meadows and shallow ponds. Wetlands are where flora-like pitcher plants and sundew grow, where game and nongame animals make their homes and where teachers and students can learn about physical and biological sciences in a living classroom.

Wetland distribution*



Many plants and animal species are entirely dependent on wetlands for their survival. Birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish and other aquatic life spawn, nest, breed, rest and raise their young in wetlands. Plants that require saturated soil conditions find wetlands a suitable environment to germinate, grow and flower.

Wetlands serve areas well beyond their boundaries. For example, local wetlands act

as sponges to absorb heavy rainfalls, thus preventing flooding downstream. Wetlands can be placed in three categories shown below: emergent, scrub/shrub, and forested.

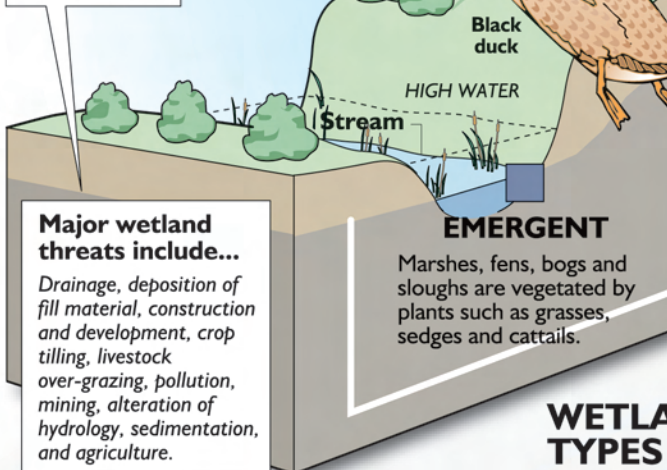
The state's largest wetland area, comprising about 9 percent of the state total, is located at Canaan Valley in Tucker County. This 6,700-acre complex of scrub/shrub and bog wetlands contains many species of flora unique to this part of the eastern U.S.

For more information contact:

? DEP Division of Water & Waste Management (304) 926-0495 or DNR-Wildlife Resources Section (304) 637-0245 or at www.dep.wv.gov

* An additional 36 percent of wetlands are categorized as Open Water (ponds and other nonvegetated areas).

Water table



Major wetland threats include...

Drainage, deposition of fill material, construction and development, crop tilling, livestock over-grazing, pollution, mining, alteration of hydrology, sedimentation, and agriculture.

WETLAND TYPES

