

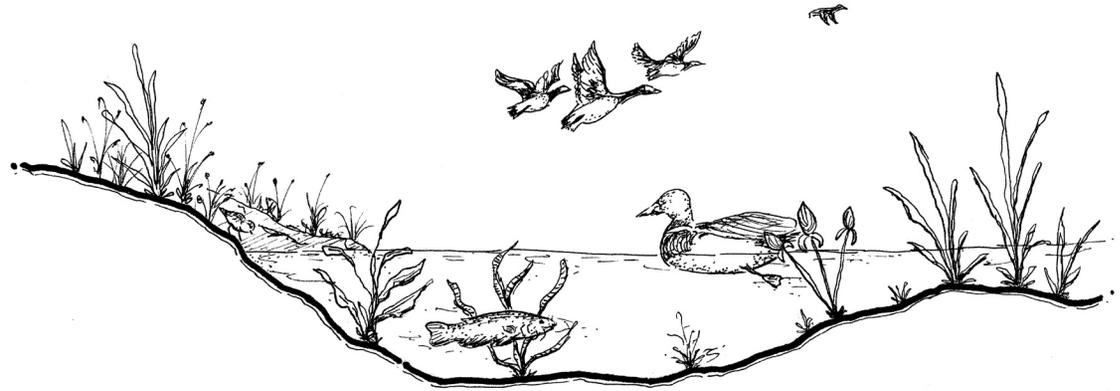
wetlands

Wetlands are transition areas between dry land and open water where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water all or part of the year. All wetlands have three common characteristics:

- 1) Wetlands are sometimes or always covered with water.
- 2) Wetland soils are hydric, meaning they are poorly drained and contain little or no oxygen.
- 3) Wetlands contain plants called hydrophytes or "water-lovers." These plants can survive with little or no oxygen (Lock 1993).

Wetlands play a vital role in a healthy ecosystem. They control flooding, store floodwater, provide a home to a diverse population of wildlife, filter pollutants from runoff, and provide many recreational opportunities (Utah Department of Natural Resources May 2000).

In the past, wetlands were considered wastelands. They were often drained and filled to accommodate development. The perception of wetlands has changed in recent years and their value is being recognized. In 1977, the Clean Water Act established a program to regulate the release of fill materials into U.S. waters, including wetlands. There is also a federal policy of "no net loss" that emerged in the late 1980s. "No net loss" means wetlands should be preserved wherever possible or must be replaced by "artificial" wetlands if they are converted to other uses ([US Fish and Wildlife Service](#) 4 Jan. 2005). These policies have increased the costs of developing wetlands, making them less attractive to developers.



Wetlands provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities while filtering pollutants from runoff.

references and further reading:

Gilmer, Maureen. Living on Flood Plains and Wetlands: A Homeowner's High-Water Handbook. Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1995.

Lock, Patricia A. Utah's Wetlands Handbook: A Guide to Proper Wetlands Management and Development. Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, 1993.

Utah Department of Natural Resources. A Landowner's Guide to Utah Wetlands. Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, May 2000.

[US Fish and Wildlife Service](#). 7 Dec. 2004. National Wetlands Survey. 4 Jan. 2005 <<http://wetlands.fws.gov/index.html>>.