



## Look for Wetlands when Grading or Clearing

Office of Water Quality

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## Grading or clearing?

You may have wetlands.

You may need a permit for impacts to wetlands.

Be on the lookout for wetlands on any property you are grading and/or clearing. Wetlands improve water quality by removing pollutants from surface waters. Additionally, wetlands help control water quantity by providing storage for flood waters. It is important to evaluate the impact of filling a wetland before you begin grading or clearing. You may need a permit for the work you plan to do within a wetland.

## How do I know if I have wetlands on my property/project site?

Use the free Indiana Waterways inquiry tool! <https://www.in.gov/waterways/>

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) created the Indiana Waterways website to facilitate the evaluation of the presence or absence of water resources, including wetlands, in an area. The agencies have also created the Waterways Inquiry Request form to help landowners determine when a permit is required for a potential project.

Wetlands include areas that may be dry for long periods of time but are still considered wetlands when they have waterlogged soils or groundwater levels that are high enough to support aquatic plants for part of the year. Wetlands are more complex than just wet soils or shallow standing water, and they require these three factors to be considered a wetland:

- Hydrology: The presence of surface water or waterlogged soils for part of the year. Surface water or waterlogged soils do **NOT** need to be present year-round or every year for wetlands to be present.
- Hydric soils: Wetland-specific soils which are permanently or seasonally saturated by water.
- Vegetation: A dominance of wetland plants (which could be trees) growing in saturated soil conditions.

Some types of wetlands that may not have standing water include bottomland forests, hydric flatwoods bogs, and wet meadows.

For more detail on recognizing wetland characteristics, see: [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Recognizing Wetlands Brochure](#)

## What types of activities should prompt a close look for the presence of wetlands?

You should use the Indiana Waterways tool if you are planning any of the following:

- Mechanical clearing (using heavy equipment such as bulldozers to remove or clear trees and stumps)
- Constructing a pond
- Stabilizing a streambank or shoreline
- Relocating a portion of stream
- Constructing a pedestrian/vehicle crossing in or over a stream
- Constructing, refacing, or repairing any seawall
- Constructing an underwater beach
- Filling out into a lake, stream, or river
- Dredging or excavation of any waterway
- Sand, gravel, peat, or other related mining activity within any waterbody
- Channelizing or removing meanders from any stream, ditch, or river
- Construction of any type of permanent or temporary dam, causeway, or other related structure
- Installation or replacement of a culvert

This list is NOT all-inclusive. There are other activities that may impact wetlands.

## What if I find wetlands on my property/project site?

To know the extent and boundaries of wetlands on your property, you will need to hire a wetland or environmental consultant to conduct a wetland delineation on the property. The wetland consultant will put together a report for you, called a wetland delineation report.

## How do I hire an environmental/wetland consultant?

IDEM can provide you with a list of environmental consultants who work in Indiana. The consultants included on this list are not recommendations of IDEM. Specifically, IDEM makes no endorsement or representation of any qualifications or lack of qualifications by any of the individuals or companies. Any firm that asks to be listed is included without review of qualifications. You should investigate these businesses like any other service or establishment that you would deal with. Additionally, here is the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Louisville District: Consultants List](#)

**Note: Failure to identify wetlands on your property/project site and/or failure to get the appropriate permits to impacting a wetland may result in an enforcement action against you.**