



FACT SHEET

Office of Water Resources / Fall 2007

WETLANDS # 7

VEGETATED WETLANDS

Not sure if you have a wetland on your property? There are many different types of freshwater wetlands in Rhode Island as defined by the *Freshwater Wetlands Act* and the *Rules and Regulations Governing the Administration and Enforcement of the Freshwater Wetlands Act*. This fact sheet is designed to help you understand **vegetated** freshwater wetlands including bogs, marshes, swamps, forested wetlands, shrub wetlands, submergent plant communities, and emergent plant communities.

Following are the official definitions of vegetated freshwater wetlands, which can also be found within the **Act** or in **Rule 4.00**:

- A **Bog** is a place where standing or slowly running water shall be near or at the surface during a normal growing season and/or where a vegetational community shall have over 50% of the ground or water surface covered with sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum*) and/or where the vegetational community shall be made up of one or more of, but not limited to nor necessarily including all of the following:

blueberries and cranberries (*Vaccinium*), leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), sundews (*Drosera*), orchids (*Orchidaceae*), white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), black spruce (*Picea mariana*), bog aster (*Aster nemoralis*), larch (*Larix laricina*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda glaucophyll*), azaleas (*Rhododendron*), laurels (*Kalmia*), sedges (*Carex*), and bog cotton (*Eriophorum*).

Act Section 2-1-20(1)

- A **Marsh** is a place not less than one acre in extent wholly or partly within the state of Rhode Island where a vegetational community shall exist in standing or running water during the growing season and/or shall be made up of one or more of, but not limited to nor necessarily including all of the following plants or groups of plants:

hydrophytic reeds (*Phragmites*), grasses (*Gramineae*), mannagrasses (*Glyceria*), cutgrasses (*Leersia*), pickerelweeds (*Pontederiaceae*), sedges (*Cyperaceae*), rushes (*Juncaceae*), cattails (*Typha*), water plantains (*Alismataceae*), burreeds (*Sparganiaceae*), pondweeds (*Zosteraceae*), frog's bits (*Hydrocharitaceae*), arums (*Araceae*), duckweeds (*Lemnaceae*), water lilies (*Nymphaeaceae*), water-milfoils (*Haloragaceae*), water-starworts (*Callitrichaceae*), bladderworts (*Utricularia*), pipeworts (*Eriocaulon*), sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*).

Act Section 2-1-20(5)

- A **Swamp** is a place not less than three acres in extent wholly or partly within the state of Rhode Island where groundwater shall be near or at the surface of the ground for a significant part of the growing season*, or where runoff water from surface drainage shall collect frequently, and/or where a vegetational community shall be made up of a significant portion of one or more of, but not limited to nor necessarily including all of the following:

red maple (*Acer rubrum*), elm (*Ulmus americana*), black spruce (*Picea mariana*), white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*), ashes (*Fraxinus*), poison sumac (*Rhus vernix*), larch (*Larix laricina*), spice bush (*Lindera benzoin*), alders (*Alnus*), skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), hellebore (*Veratrum viride*), hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), sphagnum (*Sphagnum*), azaleas (*Rhododendron*), black alder (*Ilex verticillata*), coast pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), blueberries (*Vaccinium*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), willow (*Salicaceae*), water willow (*Decodon verticillatus*), tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*), laurels (*Kalmia*), swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*), or species indicative of marsh.

Act Section 2-1-20(10)

* For the purposes of this definition, "significant part of the growing season" means that period of the growing season when water is present long enough to support a plant community of predominantly hydrophytic vegetation.

- A **Shrub Wetland** is a freshwater wetland dominated by woody plants less than 20 feet tall.
- A **Forested Wetland** is a freshwater wetland dominated by woody plants (trees) greater than 20 feet tall.
- A **Submergent Plant Community** is a freshwater wetland characterized by plants that grow principally below the surface of the water for most of the growing season. Submergent plants are either attached to the substrate or float freely in the water.
- An **Emergent Plant Community** is a freshwater wetland characterized by erect, rooted, herbaceous hydrophytic vegetation that is present for most of the growing season in most years, and that may be persistent or non-persistent in nature.

HOW CAN I OBTAIN A COPY OF DEM'S WETLAND REGULATIONS?

A complete copy of DEM's *Rules and Regulations Governing the Administration and Enforcement of the Freshwater Wetlands Act* can be obtained from DEM's Office of Technical and Customer Assistance located at the Foundry Office Complex at 235 Promenade Street, Providence (401 222-6822). You may also find this information on the DEM website at <http://www.dem.ri.gov>.

Disclaimer: This Fact Sheet is for general information purposes only and is not meant to be used as a substitute for the Freshwater Wetlands Act or the *Rules and Regulations Governing the Administration and Enforcement of the Freshwater Wetlands Act*.