

WHAT ARE WETLANDS?

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. Wetlands may support both aquatic and terrestrial species. The prolonged presence of water creates conditions that favor the growth of specially adapted plants (hydrophytes) and promote the development of characteristic wetland (hydric) soils.

Wetlands vary widely because of regional and local differences in soils, topography, climate, hydrology, water chemistry, vegetation, and other factors, including human disturbance. In Veneta, there are over 200 acres of wetlands, most of which formed along the channels which convey stormwater runoff in a northeasterly direction towards Fern Ridge Reservoir, or northwest towards the Long Tom River. Both of these water bodies are listed as “water quality limited” by the state Department of Environmental Quality.

WHY ARE WETLANDS IMPORTANT?

Wetlands are complex landscapes that house and feed flora and fauna; store flood waters; maintain base flows; and recycle nutrients and chemicals while providing opportunities for recreation, education, and aesthetic experiences. Perhaps most importantly for our area, wetlands provide storage and treatment of stormwater runoff, reducing pollutants such as chemicals and sediments, controlling stream temperatures, and reducing flooding. Oregon's wetland resources are suffering substantial losses in geographic distribution and diversity.

- 40% of Oregon's wetlands have been drained, diked or filled since European settlement.
- 53% of western Oregon's wetlands have been lost to development or converted to other uses.
- Many existing wetlands are degraded because of poor land use practices.
- Nationally, nearly 35 percent of all rare and endangered animal species depend on wetlands.
- Loss of wetlands leads to increased flooding and decreased water quality.

SO I HAVE WETLANDS ON MY PROPERTY, WHAT CAN I DO WITH THEM?

The following uses are permitted within wetlands by VMC 18.10.

- **Removal of fill and any refuse that is in violation of local, state, or federal regulations. Removal of fill must be consistent with state of Oregon removal-fill regulations;**
- **Removal of non-native vegetation or invasive plant species;**
- **Planting or replanting with native plants;**

In Veneta, this typically means removal of Himalayan Blackberry and Scotch Broom. The Emerald Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Oregon has published a list of invasive species.

- **Channel maintenance to maintain storm water conveyance and flood control capacity, as required by local policies, state and federal regulations, or intergovernmental agreements;**

The City of Veneta maintains stormwater flows throughout the City. If you believe that channel maintenance is necessary, contact the City of Veneta Public Works Department.

- **Site management and maintenance practices, whose purpose it is to maintain or improve natural functions and values or protect public health and safety, and which are consistent with adopted plans and policies, including but not limited to perimeter mowing and other cutting necessary for hazard prevention;**

The important point here is that site management must be intended to maintain or improve the natural functions of the wetlands. Some wetlands benefit from periodic mowing, others do not. Mowing a wetland to increase your usable yard space is not allowed. If you have any questions, contact City Hall.

- **Wetland and natural area restoration and enhancement of natural functions and values which involve displacement, excavation or relocation of less than 50 cubic yards of earth and which carry out the objectives of this chapter and are consistent with adopted policies and plans;**

Wetland restoration can be a technical undertaking. Successful restoration requires considerable knowledge of hydrology, botany, and other specialized fields. If you would like to enhance or restore a wetland in your area, contact City Hall. We will put you in contact with knowledgeable experts who can help you reach your goals

- **Preservation and maintenance activities associated with historic structures.**

Very few, if any, structures in Veneta actually lie within the boundaries of significant wetlands.