

Enviro FACTSHEET

PRESERVING OUR WETLANDS

This small but vital part of our environment provides tremendous benefits

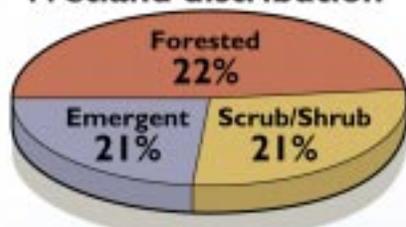
West Virginia's wetlands are unique transitional areas between land and water ecosystems. Despite their relatively small area—less than one percent, or 102,000 acres—wetlands provide many functions that benefit the environment. Wetlands provide erosion control, flood reduction, ground water recharge,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

Many plants and animal species are entirely dependent on wetlands for their

Wetland distribution*



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.

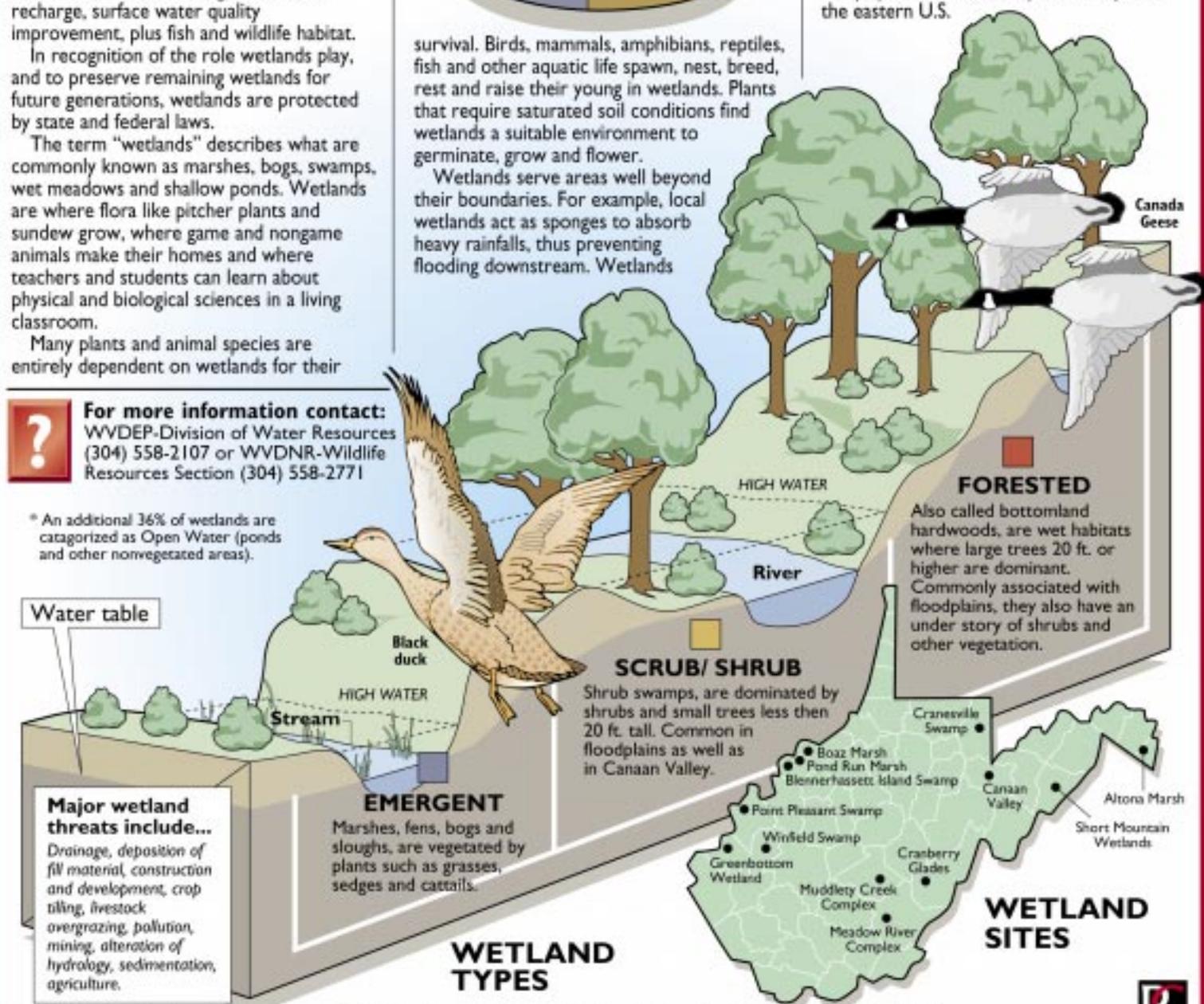
Wetlands serve areas well beyond their boundaries. For example, local wetlands act as sponges to absorb heavy rainfalls, thus preventing flooding downstream. Wetlands

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: WVDEP-Division of Water Resources (304) 558-2107 or WVDNR-Wildlife Resources Section (304) 558-2771

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



Water table

EMERGENT

Marshes, fens, bogs and sloughs, are vegetated by plants such as grasses, sedges and cattails.

SCRUB/ SHRUB

Shrub swamps, are dominated by shrubs and small trees less than 20 ft. tall. Common in floodplains as well as in Canaan Valley.

FORESTED

Also called bottomland hardwoods, are wet habitats where large trees 20 ft. or higher are dominant. Commonly associated with floodplains, they also have an under story of shrubs and other vegetation.

Major wetland threats include...

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

WETLAND TYPES

WETLAND SITES

