



Wetland Permit Review - Functional Evaluation

What to look for during a site visit to wetlands?

Wetland evaluation is a complicated process and your commission should consider hiring a certified wetland scientist to review the delineation and/or application if you have concerns about impacts to natural resources. The guidelines below offer a list of considerations that maybe used to review wetlands to determine basic functions and values. For more detailed information on evaluation wetlands go to the UNH Cooperative Extension website:

https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource001874_Rep2707.pdf. Another source of information is the wetland mapper: <http://nhwetlandsmapper.unh.edu/erma.html#x=1018055.0000&y=430555.0000&z=2&layers>. It is also helpful to review the NH DES Wetland Permit Guidance Document, Design Criteria and Plan Requirements found on the DES website: <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wetlands/documents/wet-permit-app-guidance-doc-b.pdf>

Below is a list of wetland functions and values that should be considered during the permit review process. When you visit a wetland with a proposed permit application consider the following:

Groundwater Recharge/Discharge- Consider the potential for a wetland to serve as a groundwater recharge/discharge area. Do private or public wells occur downstream? Is the wetland over a stratified drift aquifer? Is sandy soil present?

Flood flow Alteration—Consider the effectiveness of the wetland in reducing flood damage by water retention. Check the diversity and density of the vegetation. Is the wetland saturated for most of the season? Are organic sediment deposits present?

Production Export—Does the wetland have potential to produce food or usable products for humans or animals? Look for evidence of wildlife within the wetland. High vegetation density is often evidence of high food values.

Sediment/Shoreline Stabilization—Consider the effectiveness of the wetland to stabilize stream banks and shoreline against erosion. Are there indications of erosion in the wetland? Check the topographical gradient of the slope. What is the condition of the vegetation along the shoreline?

Wildlife Habitat—Consider the potential of the wetland to provide habitat for animals. Are birds using the wetland for migration? What is the water quality? Are there any signs of animals or indications of disturbance by species typically associated with wetlands?

Recreation—Consider if this area suitable for recreation such as hiking, canoeing, boating, fishing or hunting. Is the wetland system located within a park or forest or refuge? Is there access to the water for potential boating?

Educational/Scientific Value—Is the area suitable for an “outdoor classroom” or for scientific study or research? Does the wetland contain threatened, rare or endangered species? Is the area undisturbed and natural? Is the wetland within a safe walking distance to schools?

Uniqueness/Heritage—Consider if the wetland could provide special values. Is it designated a prime wetland? Is the wetland hydrologically connected to a state or federal designated scenic river?

Visual Quality/Aesthetics—Consider the visual quality of the wetland. Is the area visible from primary viewing locations? Is the surrounding land a contrast to the wetland? Does the wetland have unique vegetation or flowering plants?

Endangered Species Habitat—Consider the suitability of the wetland to support threatened or endangered species. Is the wetland known to contain threatened or endangered species?