

# WETLANDS MANAGEMENT

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## 1. GOAL

**Protect Wetland Values.** Protect the hydrologic, habitat and recreational values of public wetlands. Land management practices will be directed at avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts on the following important functions of wetlands.

**A. Water quality:** Wetlands serve to filter nutrients and sediment from upland run-off.

**B. Water supply:** Wetlands serve to stabilize water supplies by storing excessive water during flooding and by recharging groundwater during dry periods.

**C. Habitat and recreation:** Wetlands provide important feeding, rearing, nesting, and breeding grounds for many species; related recreational use and aesthetic values also are important.

## 2. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

**A. Definition of Wetlands.** For purposes of inventory and regulation of wetlands, ADNR will use the definition adopted by the State of Alaska under the regulations of the Coastal Management Program (6 ACC 80.900(19):

Wetlands includes both freshwater and saltwater wetlands. Freshwater wetlands means those environments characterized by rooted vegetation which is partially submerged either continuously or periodically by surface freshwater with less than .5 parts per thousand salt content and not exceeding three meters in depth; saltwater wetlands means those coastal areas along sheltered shorelines characterized by halophilic hydrophytes and macro-algae extending from extreme low tide to an area above extreme high tide which is influenced by sea spray or tidally-induced water table changes.

For purposes of these management guidelines, wetlands are further divided into three classes: Class I, wetlands larger than 100 acres and all wetlands with a locatable stream outlet (the stream shall be considered part of the wetland); Class II, wetlands between 40 and 100 acres with no outlet; and Class III, wetlands less than 40 acres with no outlet.

**B. Retention of Wetlands in Public Ownership.** Class I and II wetlands generally will be retained in public ownership. Based on field inventory and analysis, however, DNR may determine, after consultation with affected agencies, that a Class I or II wetland does not have sufficiently high water quality,

water supply, habitat, and/or recreation values to merit public ownership.

Class III wetlands will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether public retention or other measures are necessary to protect their values.

## C. Retention of Land Adjacent to Wetlands.

1. Class I wetlands and certain surrounding lands (buffers) should remain in public ownership whenever feasible. A Class I wetland buffer shall include, at minimum, a 100-foot strip adjacent to the wetland. Restrictive use covenants and public access easements rather than public ownership may be used to protect Class I wetlands and associated buffers under conditions specified in D below.

2. Class II wetlands and certain surrounding lands (buffers) should remain in public ownership whenever feasible. A Class II wetland buffer shall include, at minimum, a 60-foot strip adjacent to the wetland.

Restrictive use covenants and public access easements, rather than public ownership may be used to protect Class II wetlands and associated buffers under conditions specified in D below.

3. Class III wetlands will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis through the public land disposal process or applicable public land management plans.

## D. Restrictive Use Covenants and Public Access Easements.

Class I and II wetlands (including outlet streams) and associated buffers should remain in public ownership whenever feasible. Restrictive use covenants and public access easements may be used rather than public ownership under the following conditions:

**1. Where the configuration of the wetland is such that surveying the meandering boundary of the wetland would be excessively expensive.** In this case an aliquot-part (rectangular) survey rather than a meander survey may be used along the edge of the wetland. This may result in small portions of wetlands being conveyed to private ownership. Restrictive use covenants and public access easements shall be applied to ensure that those portions of wetlands and associated buffers conveyed to private ownership remain in a natural state and that public access and use are maintained.

**2. Where an entire wetland is included with a parcel of land to be sold for private use.**

In this case the wetland and associated buffer may be conveyed to private ownership with restrictive use covenants which ensure that the wetland and associated buffer remain in a natural state. If there is a stream outlet from such a wetland, public access easements shall be reserved adjacent to the outlet and the wetland.

**E. Dredge and Fill Permits in Wetlands.** Permits for dredging and filling in wetlands, including permits for gravel extraction and the construction of roads and pads, will not be granted unless it is determined that the proposed activity will not cause significant adverse impacts to important fish and wildlife habitat or important ecological processes, or that no feasible and prudent alternative exists. Where it is not feasible and prudent to avoid such activities, other mitigative measures will be considered to meet the intent of this guideline.

**F. Operation of Heavy Equipment in Wetlands.** Permits issued for activities that require the use of heavy equipment in wetlands that have important hydrologic, recreation or habitat values will, to the extent feasible and prudent, require that damage to wetlands and wetland vegetation be avoided. Winter access only should be used in or across wetlands whenever feasible. DNR will consult with other affected agencies prior to issuing such permits.

**G. Other Guidelines Affecting Wetlands Management.** A number of other guidelines may affect wetlands management. For details of these guidelines, see the following sections of this chapter:

- Agriculture
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Recreation
- Settlement
- Subsurface Resources and Materials
- Transportation
- Instream Flow
- Lakeshore Management
- Public Access
- Stream Corridors
- Trails Management