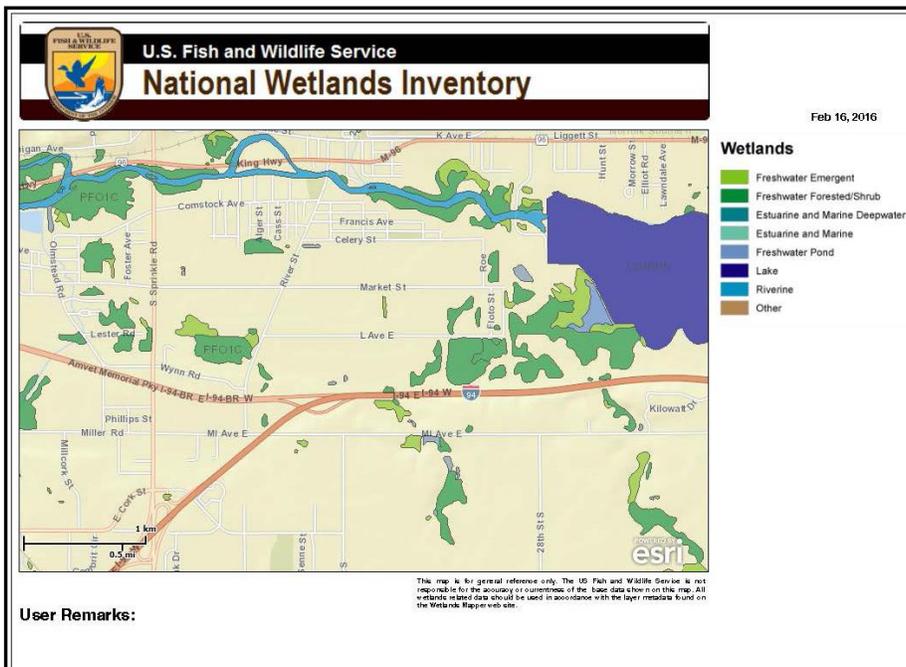


Wetland Delineation, When Is It Necessary?

As in any project, timelines are critical, but a thorough understanding of the project site can help keep it on track. The presence of one or more wetlands does not have to sidetrack or derail a development plan. It's important to understand that if your project involves any of the following activities it may require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and/or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE):

- Deposit or allow the placement of fill material in a wetland.
- Dredge, remove, or permit the removal of soil or minerals from a wetland.
- Construct, operate, or maintain any use or development in a wetland.
- Drain surface water from a wetland.

The first step in a project is often to determine if wetlands are present or not. Some wetlands are permanent or persistent while others are seasonal or intermittent and may not be readily identified at certain times of the year without appropriate knowledge of the soil characteristics, hydrologic conditions, and vegetation at a site. These three components are used to define the presence/absence of wetlands and the wetland boundaries. Even during the winter months, when the lack of a complete vegetation analysis can be a limiting factor, some information can be gathered and used to inform the planning process. Some mapping tools like the [Michigan Wetlands Map Viewer](#) and the [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory](#) can provide a starting point for the wetland identification and delineation process. We also rely on our experienced aerial photo interpretation and a number of aerial photo data sources for identifying wetlands and prioritizing areas of a site to look closely at during a site visit for a wetland delineation.



If your project will be on or near a lakeshore, river or stream bank, or a wetland it should be a priority to have these features mapped. Even an approximate location of these can be helpful for making informed planning decisions. You might be able to avoid these areas entirely and therefore, bypass the permitting process. Some projects may not directly involve a river, stream, creek, drain, or wetland but might be within an identified floodplain. MDEQ has a decision tree that may help determine if your project requires a permit from the state. Knowing where these features are may allow you to make plans without the need for a permit from the state or federal government. Alternatively, if the right information is obtained early enough in the planning process it may be possible to modify the plans to reduce or eliminate the potential wetland impacts without costly changes to plans already drawn up or time constraints posed by waiting for a permit approval. Many aspects of preparing a permit application can be completed while other planning processes move forward.



Some wetlands that hold water like this in the spring dry up by summer or fall. Soil that remains saturated with water for as little as two weeks during the growing season can develop the soil and vegetation characteristics to meet the definition of a wetland.

Some projects may meet the requirements for a General Permit (GP) or Minor Permit (MP). The objectives of the General Permit (GP) and Minor Permit (MP) categories are to reduce the time and cost of the permit process for applicants proposing minor activities while protecting aquatic resources. If a project fits one of the 25 GP categories or 53 MP categories it can typically be processed without issuing a public notice, which can shorten the application review process by 20 to 45 days. Projects that require a permit but which don't meet the criteria for a GP or MP fall under an Individual Permit. When a public hearing is requested, for example as part of an Individual Permit application, it can add 60 to 90 days to the review process to allow for any public comments. Compensatory mitigation may be required under a GP if the proposed project would impact an inland lake or stream. The MDEQ provides a Joint Permit Application that is designed to streamline the application process, particularly for certain waters such as the Great Lakes where jurisdiction overlaps with that of the USACOE. Michigan is one of only two states that have received authority from the federal government to administer the federal wetland program; one joint permit application is all that is needed if your project requires a permit from the MDEQ and USACOE.



Wetland delineations can be conducted at the end of the growing season if enough vegetation persists for proper identification.

Envirologic will provide your project team—which may include staff, architects, engineers or surveyors—with expertise in identifying and delineating wetlands and assessing the regulatory requirements of your project. When a project requires a wetland permit application, we can also provide that service. Additional [ecological services](#), such as threatened and endangered species surveys or [field services](#), such as geotechnical drilling can be incorporated as well to simplify your development process and to help keep your project on schedule.



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