

# Hennepin County Landowner Guide

for  
Conserving  
Natural  
Resources

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This guide is intended to help landowners care for their land and the natural resources on their property. The guide recommends practices that can be implemented to protect and enhance natural systems. Each section also suggests resources and publications that offer additional, more specific information for each subject area.

This guide provides information regarding natural areas such as prairies, wetlands, water resources and woodlands. Information about the control of noxious weeds and invasive plants, management of pastures and livestock, maintenance of private wells and septic systems, care of wildlife habitat, and management of household wastes is also included. By promoting environmental stewardship, we hope to preserve and enhance the environment in Hennepin County for current and future generations.

This resource was produced by Hennepin County Environmental Services in partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Service of Hennepin County.



**Hennepin County**  
Environmental Services  
612-348-3777



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# Preserving Wetlands

Wetlands act as a transition between water and land. In wetlands, the flow of water, the cycling of nutrients and the energy of the sun meet to produce one of the most unique and diverse ecosystems in the world.

The unique physical, chemical and biological functions of wetlands provide numerous benefits to people and wildlife including the following.

**Improved water quality** – Wetlands help protect water quality by absorbing sediment and other pollutants from runoff.

**Reduced flooding** – Wetlands help reduce flooding by retaining runoff after rainfall.

**Protection of shorelines** – Wetland vegetation stabilizes shorelines and minimizes erosion from waves.

**Recharge and discharge of groundwater** – Wetlands help replenish groundwater levels by retaining and infiltrating runoff and precipitation.

**Fish and wildlife habitat** – Wetlands provide diverse habitats for amphibians, birds and other wildlife and spawning areas for fish.

**Opportunities for recreation and aesthetic enjoyment** – Wetlands provide many opportunities for people who enjoy hiking, biking, bird watching and viewing natural areas.

# Types of wetlands in Hennepin County

Hennepin County has a wide variety of wetland types. Although wetlands are often filled with water, they do not necessarily contain water year-round. Some of the most important wetlands are only wet a small portion of the year. Wetlands in Hennepin County vary from small seasonally flooded areas to large shallow water basins to wooded bogs.

## The Wetland Conservation Act

The Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (MN Rule Ch. 8420) was enacted to maintain and protect wetlands and the benefits they provide. Under the Wetland Conservation Act, filling or draining a wetland without a permit is against the law.

You can avoid the expense and inconvenience associated with violating the Wetland Conservation Act by checking with local authorities before starting any activity on a wetland area. Your city and watershed organization can offer advice regarding whether a permit is needed for the proposed activity, how and where to apply for permits, and how to minimize the environmental impact of your project.

If you suspect that a wetland has been illegally filled, please contact the city, watershed organization or DNR Conservation Officer where the suspected violation is occurring.

## Identify wetlands on your property

There are three ways to identify wetlands on your property.

- **Look for wetland characteristics.** The wetland characteristics are:
  - Hydric (saturated) soils
  - Hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation
  - Hydrology (presence of water)
- **Check wetland inventories.** Wetland inventories can help you identify the location and type(s) of wetlands on your property.
  - The Hennepin County Wetland Inventory is available from Hennepin County Environmental Services.
  - A National Wetland Inventory is available from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service at [www.fws.gov/wetlands](http://www.fws.gov/wetlands).
- **Hire a wetland consultant to delineate wetlands on your property.** A wetland delineation will determine the exact size and type of wetlands on your property. A list of certified wetland consultants is available from the Board of Water and Soil Resources at [www.bwsr.state.mn.us](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us).



There are a wide variety of wetland types in Hennepin County. Wetlands can vary from:

1. seasonally flooded areas to
2. shallow water basins to
3. wooded bogs

# Protect and enhance the wetlands on your property

If you have wetlands on your property, you can take several actions to protect and enhance them.

- If you are considering digging a pond, cleaning a ditch or filling a wet area on your property, check first with your local city government and/or watershed organization (*See Watersheds*, pg. 23) to make sure the work will not impact a wetland.
- Maintain a buffer – a natural, undisturbed area of native vegetation – around the perimeter of the wetland.
- Plant a variety of native vegetation within and around your wetland. Plantings should be suitable for the type of wetland on your property.
- Keep grass clippings, tree branches, soil, leaves, gravel, other yard materials and fill out of the wetland.
- Restore water levels of wetlands that have been ditched or drained in the past. Removing sediment that has built up in a wetland will help restore water levels. Check with Hennepin County or your watershed organization to determine the best method for restoring water levels.



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# For more information

- Board of Soil and Water Resources  
[www.bwsr.state.mn.us](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us)  
651-296-3767
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)  
651-296-6157
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
[www.fws.gov/nwi](http://www.fws.gov/nwi)
- US Army Corp of Engineers, St. Paul District Regulatory (wetlands permits)  
[www.mvp.usace.army.mil](http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil)  
651-290-5375
- *Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States*  
Cowardin, Lewis M., Virginia Carter, Francis C. Golet and Edward T. LaRoe. U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 1979.
- *Floristic Quality Assessment for Minnesota Wetlands*  
Milburn, S.A., M. Bourdaghs and J.J. Husveth  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2007.
- Minnesota Routine Assessment Methodology (MnRAM)  
[www.bwsr.state.mn.us/wetlands/mnram](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/wetlands/mnram)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual  
Environmental Laboratory.  
U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station,  
Vicksburg, Mississippi. 1987.  
[el.erdc.usace.army.mil/wetlands/pdfs/wlman87.pdf](http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/wetlands/pdfs/wlman87.pdf)
- Wetland Conservation Act Rules  
Chapter 8420  
The Office of Revisor of Statutes  
St. Paul, Minnesota.
- *Wetland Plants and Plant Communities of Minnesota & Wisconsin*, second edition  
Eggers, Steve D. and Donald M. Reed.  
Us Army Corps of Engineers,  
St. Paul District. 1997.



# Resources

## Resources

- Hennepin County Environmental Services  
[www.hennepin.us/naturalresources](http://www.hennepin.us/naturalresources)  
612-348-3777  
Hennepin County provides a variety of information and technical assistance for managing your land.
- University of Minnesota Extension – Hennepin County  
[www.extension.umn.edu/county/hennepin](http://www.extension.umn.edu/county/hennepin)  
612-596-2110  
The University of Minnesota Extension provides outreach for the University of Minnesota and delivers educational programs and technical assistance on a variety of land management topics.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
[www.mda.state.mn.us](http://www.mda.state.mn.us)  
651-201-6000
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)  
651-296-6157
- USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
[www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov)  
763-241-1150, ext. 3
- Minnesota's bookstore  
[www.minnesotasbookstore.com](http://www.minnesotasbookstore.com)  
Minnesota's bookstore sells a variety of publications from Minnesota state agencies including many of the publications listed in this guide.
- Midwest Plan Services  
[www.mwps.org](http://www.mwps.org)  
Midwest Plan Services, based out of Iowa State University, sells a variety of low-cost agricultural publications.

## Books & publications

- *A Quick Reference Guide for Earth Friendly Home Landscaping*  
Hennepin County Environmental Services.  
[www.hennepin.us/sustainablelandscaping](http://www.hennepin.us/sustainablelandscaping)
- *Beyond the suburbs – A landowner's guide to conservation management*  
Preece, Kathleen. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2001.
- *Guide to Rural Living*  
University of Minnesota Extension, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2001.  
[www.extension.umn.edu/ruralliving](http://www.extension.umn.edu/ruralliving)
- *Living on Acreages*  
Carroll, Natalie and Don Jones.  
Midwest Plan Services, Ames, Iowa. 2006.
- *Small Scale/Small Field Conservation*  
NRCS, Washington, D.C.  
[landcare.sc.egov.usda.gov](http://landcare.sc.egov.usda.gov)



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