

What Do Wetlands Do For YOU?



What does a wetland do for the public? What is this really worth to the public and to the owner of the property where the wetland exists?

The public benefits from the practical and economic value of wetlands, as well as the aesthetic and recreational functions wetlands serve. Some of the functions of wetlands that have direct economic value to the public are listed below.

It is difficult to quantify the monetary value of each function in terms of cost to an individual taxpayer, but it is evident that several of the functions of a destroyed wetland would have to be replaced at public expense.

Storm buffers

Wetlands along the coast, such as mangrove wetlands, protect areas immediately inland from storms coming ashore, breaking the force of wind and water.



Where these functions are not provided by natural wetlands, taxpayers must pay for government programs for flood control, and insurance premiums or government relief funds must pay for property damage.

Water supply

Fresh drinking water in Hillsborough County comes from surface sources, such as the Hillsborough River, and from groundwater obtained from public or private wells. Wetlands collect water and direct it to these sources. Their removal means greater costs to locate, acquire, and transport water from other sources.

Water quality

Wetlands are well known in their abilities to assimilate and trap pollutants and sediments. This is where contaminants and toxins are filtered out or are broken down by biological activity. Loss of these wetlands means taxpayers face funding more water treatment facilities.

Providing these functions artificially through government funded programs would require considerable investment of taxpayer money. If wetlands are protected, the services will be provided free of charge.

Flood control

Wetlands receive stormwater runoff and release it gradually, reducing the danger of flooding by changing brief heavy flows to slower discharges that flow at less dangerous rates.

Wildlife Habitat

Wetlands provide habitat for a number of species, and provide nursery areas for commercial and recreational fishing. The thick vegetation and the rich soils provide refuge from predators and an abundant food supply. Commercially valuable fish, crabs and other creatures spend their earliest days in wetlands before moving into open waters.

Wetlands provide habitat for approximately 35 percent of United States listed or threatened species of plants and animals at some time during their life cycle. That means that approximately one-third of our nation's rare species are inseparably linked to wetlands. Many birds and waterfowl use wetlands as a stop-over during their migrations, but many birds will nest and winter in wetlands also.

Recreation

Wetlands also provide areas for recreational uses like fishing, hiking, birding, hunting, canoeing and boating. Florida's economy is vitally linked to its ability to provide clean, sparkling water to outside visitors.



Increase Property Value

Wetlands provide visual or noise barriers that can enhance the appearance and the value of surrounding properties.

Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County



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