

## Wetland Fact Sheet

Wetlands act like kidneys; they soak up and slowly release water. They are a very unique habitat type and hold many plant and animal species. No two are alike.

### Planning

- Cost-share assistance may be available through various programs.
- A suitable location is needed: hydric soils, topography, watershed, proper outlet, property lines, and utilities must all be considered
- Future maintenance and liability should be considered.
- Islands are not recommended. They make wildlife easy prey and also are hard to access to spray if unwanted vegetation occurs.

### Construction

- Components typically are: core trench, dam, principal pipe, emergency spillway and control box
- Install a core trench to avoid leakage and to locate tiles, if any.
- Be aware of existing tiles that need to be either destroyed or rerouted around the wetland.
- Are there existing utilities or easements that would be an issue?
- Proper compaction and anti-seep collars are required and are one of the biggest sources of failures.
- Allow grass to establish in the first year after construction
- Install at proper setbacks to neighboring property lines.
- The pool consists of a variety of water levels, from 4' depths down to mudflats.

### Common Non-Native Invasive Plants

- Phragmites or Giant Reed
- Reed Canary Grass
- Purple Loosestrife

Willow or Cottonwood Trees are native, but can aggressively take over a wetland.

Take action to limit growth while problem is small.

Manage with the application of appropriate chemicals, usually in early August when plants in full bloom.

### Other Vegetation

Cattails can be mowed or tilled, then flooded over to kill (if the weather conditions are right).

Spray cattails in early August, other times of the year don't bother.

Avoid water lilies, they are fast spreading and can overtake the wetland.

Woody vegetation can be girdled and then left standing.

Upland buffers don't need mowed; they should be undisturbed bird nesting cover.

### Food Plots

Planting food plots in wetland areas are not recommended, natural species are better.

### Dam Structure Maintenance

Mow dam 2-3 times per summer, be aware of box/tile locations as to not damage.

Check often to locate any damage done by mower or animals.

Inspect for muskrat damage or cave-ins.

Check for plugs in pipes and control box.

Lubricate gaskets in control box structure per manufacturer's recommendations.

There is a Bentonite/stone mix product that can be placed in a hole that swells to repair holes or small leaks.

Monitor wave erosion, stone riprap may need to be added to secure bank.

Flush the water control box at least annually by removing some stop logs and letting the water flow through. Clean debris from the inlet of the control box structure.

### **Advantages to Lowering Water Levels**

Wetlands do dry up as a natural cycle. This allows the soil to be exposed to air to which different species of vegetation respond. The more diverse the plants; the more diverse the critters. The seed bank is already there; supplemental planting is not needed.

When the ground is dry, cheaper chemicals can be used versus those that aren't labeled for aquatic usage per OEPA.

Vegetation can be mowed to allow chemicals to get to the surface better. Removing the thatch of growth from previous years will aid in chemical absorption.

Areas can be tilled, mowed, and/or burned, then sprayed to promote new growth. You would need a certified burn manager and a Division of Forestry Permit to legally burn. This process will likely need to be started 6-12 months prior to burn date.

If you can't lower the water level in your wetland, you can purchase wetland plants that come in the form of tubers from various companies. The Fairfield SWCD has a sample product catalog available. Also check the internet.

### **Drawdown timing**

To simulate what usually occurs in nature:

Year 1 in May – drawdown slowly

Year 1 in June/early July – keep dry

Year 1 in late July/August – add stop logs back in to allow rains to rebuild pool level and hold water

Year 2 – maintain medium levels entire year

Year 3 – maintain higher levels all year

Year 4 – repeat from the beginning

For optimal use by waterfowl, you want mudflats in late spring and flooded vegetation in the fall.

### **Muskrats**

Muskrats eat cattails.

They can be a healthy addition to the wetland, if they aren't damaging the dam.

Dam slopes 4:1 or flatter to avoid muskrats.

Chain link fence can be installed horizontally in levy during construction.

Do not place fencing on dam slope, muskrats will find openings underneath.

Muskrats can be trapped/killed year round, IF they are damaging the dam. Just being present is not justification for killing.

Also discourage beavers from taking up residence in your wetland.

### **Waterfowl**

Many waterfowl do not like human disturbance. Constructed or natural blinds improve viewing opportunities.

Wood duck box and other bird box plans are available at the Fairfield SWCD and on the Division of Wildlife website ([www.wildohio.com](http://www.wildohio.com)). Cedar boxes are better than the fiberglass ones which can get too hot. Be sure to protect the box from raccoons. The recommendation is to start with one box, check in the winter for egg shells to see if it had been used, then add more if so. If your site has a wooded corridor, birds will more than likely use the woods as a natural habitat.

### **Fish**

Avoid having Carp in your wetland. They tend to stir up the soil which doesn't allow sunlight to the vegetation. Wetlands constructed adjacent to permanent streams are most at risk for Carp and other nuisance fish species.