



WETLANDS

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Historically, wetlands were viewed as useless areas of land filled or used for refuse disposal. However, freshwater and coastal wetlands play a vital role in the functioning ecosystem. They provide a unique habitat for many species of flora and fauna, enhance water quality by removing nutrients and serve as storage for floodwaters. To protect their integrity, wetlands are regulated at the Federal and State levels, and increasingly by many county and municipal agencies.

The potential impact of wetlands upon a particular property's value should be considered in all real estate transactions. Similarly, this is true for potential needs related to development projects. Whether specific to property purchase and development, wetlands should be professionally reviewed employing a three step process:

STEP 1 – IDENTIFICATION

Using methodology established by the US Army Corps of Engineers, the presence, absence and/or limits of wetlands are identified and established. This is done through an extensive investigation of soils, vegetation and hydrologic indicators. The identification process should be completed by a qualified individual who has the proper training, familiarity and expertise in employing appropriate and proven techniques to accurately evaluate a particular property specific to the presence of wetlands.

STEP 2 – VERIFICATION

Once areas of wetlands have been identified on a property, their limits (boundaries) should be verified by the respective overseeing governmental agency. Depending on a particular wetlands resource value, function, configuration and watershed affiliation, the extent to which the area will be regulated can be established. During this same verification process, establishment of upland transition areas (wetland buffers) are also made. These buffers are also strictly regulated as important to a functioning ecosystem and further protect the adjoining wetlands from adjacent development activities.

STEP 3 – MANAGEMENT

The identification of wetlands does not negate property value or prevent development. Rather the presence of wetlands needs to be managed as part of the development process. Designs must take into account the areas of wetlands and their associated buffers. They can further be managed through various permitting options, which may allow certain activities to occur within wetlands and wetland buffers. Early identification however is the key to the proper management. This approach prevents the potential need for expensive project redesign and schedule delays.

Stout and Caldwell Engineers, LLC has the experience, technical expertise and familiarity with the regulatory environment to successfully address wetland related issues and its potential impact upon property or proposed project. The firm regularly provides consultation for homeowners, developers, and prospective land buyers for simple and complex projects.

