



# WHY WETLANDS MATTER:

## Protecting North Carolina's Coastal Treasures

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### What Are Wetlands?

Wetlands are areas where water meets land, including marshes, swamps, Carolina bays, bogs, and tidal flats. They may look like “empty” land, but these ecosystems are full of life and provide critical services for people and nature alike.

### The Benefits of Wetlands

 **Natural Storm Protection:** Wetlands act like sponges, absorbing storm surge and floodwaters. A single acre can store over 1 million gallons of stormwater, protecting homes, businesses, and communities.

 **Water Quality Guardians:** They filter pollutants, sediment, and excess nutrients, keeping rivers, sounds, and drinking water cleaner.

 **Wildlife Habitat:** Wetlands support fish, birds, and other wildlife, including species that fuel North Carolina's commercial and recreational fisheries, which rely on estuarine habitats for over 90% of commercial landings and 60% of recreational harvests.

### North Carolina's Wetlands Are Special

- NC coastal wetlands cover about 2.3 million acres, more than any other East coast state.
- They support fisheries that contribute nearly \$300 million annually to the state economy and sustain 5,500 jobs.
- Coastal tourism, including beach visits, boating, fishing, and wildlife viewing, generated \$36.7 billion in visitor spending in 2024, supporting over 230,000 jobs statewide.

### QUICK FACTS

- Wetlands can reduce property damage from flooding by thousands of dollars per event.
- Over 50% of U.S. wetlands have been lost, and N.C. continues to see wetland decline from development pressures.
- Protecting wetlands saves money and protects communities for the long term.

# How You Can Help Protect Wetlands

## For Property Owners & Residents:

- Avoid filling or draining wetlands on your property.
- Plant native species to support wetland ecosystems.
- Maintain natural buffers along waterways to reduce runoff and protect water quality.

## For Realtors & Contractors:

- Know wetland boundaries before building or selling property.
- Educate clients on local wetland protections and benefits.
- Use erosion control and stormwater best practices during construction.



## COMMUNITY ACTION MATTERS:

- ✓ Support local wetland restoration projects.
- ✓ Participate in public comment periods for development projects near wetlands.
- ✓ Learn about state and federal programs that protect wetlands, including the Clean Water Act and local conservation easements.

**Remember:** Healthy wetlands mean safer, more resilient communities. They sustain fisheries, support tourism, reduce flood risks, and protect property values. Every action counts.

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LEARN MORE: [WWW.NCCOAST.ORG](http://WWW.NCCOAST.ORG)

**Protecting wetlands protects  
your home, your community, and  
North Carolina's coast.**



North Carolina  
Coastal Federation  
*Working Together for a Healthy Coast*