

GEHR Watershed Minute #12

Wetlands: (193 words)

Wetland areas such as marshes, swamps, bogs, and vernal ponds are vital natural and ecological resources in every watershed. Today more people recognize the value of these long unappreciated wetland environments as havens for animal species, buffers against storms and floods, cleansing agents in the nutrient cycle, storage reservoirs for aquifer recharge, and interesting places to visit and to learn about.

In addition to ecological services, wetlands also provide economic and recreational value to people. Wetlands can produce foods such as cranberries and rice, and animal harvests such as muskrats, otters, beavers, minks, and alligators.

Fishing and shell fishing industries harvest wetland dependent species like striped bass and shrimp, and wetlands forestry harvests include the Atlantic White Cedar. And wetlands are recreational sites for hunting, fishing, bird watching, and wildlife photography.

Since the 1700's, the United States has lost over 50% of its wetland resources along with their functions and values to farming, development, sea level rise, and storms. The wetlands that still remain today are fragile and under threat of being lost or degraded, so it is up to us to protect, enhance, and restore our critically important wetlands in the Watershed.