

WETLAND AND WATERCOURSE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

Benefits



PURPOSE & HIGHLIGHTS OF ORDINANCE

- The importance of wetlands to water quality and the protection of our lakes and rivers can't be overstated. Wetlands large and small play a critical role in:
 1. Flood and storm water storage;
 2. Reducing the velocity of stormwater, which protects shorelines and stream banks from erosive forces of waves and high water flows, and allows sediments to settle out of the water before entering lakes and streams;
 3. Protecting water quality by removing and breaking down sediments, nutrients, and toxins;
 4. Providing floral diversity and wildlife habitat protection;
 5. Creating fishery habitat, and habitat for reptiles and amphibians; and
 6. Providing aesthetics and recreational opportunities.
- Adopting a wetlands ordinance is the only real way to regulate wetlands, because the ordinance applies local knowledge and resources to preservation of a local natural feature. Through the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act of 1994 (Act 451), state and federally protected wetland areas include those that are more than five acres, and wetlands of any size that are contiguous with other water bodies, such as streams, rivers, and lakes. This law also provides the legal authority for local governments to adopt more restrictive regulations that can protect wetlands that are less than five acres. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) encourages protection of smaller wetlands which perform functions as important as the larger wetlands yet are often under greater pressure from development.
- It is important that the Master Plan articulate the community's goals in preserving wetlands. These goals can be general in nature and can be linked with other environmental protection objectives. The Master Plan should also include a map that depicts areas of particular sensitivity and areas for potential protection.

