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How do I find out if I have wetland, or need a permit to build on my property?

The Department of Environmental Quality offers several services for anyone in Michigan planning to develop their property and wanting to know if there are areas that should be avoided due to the presence of wetlands, streams, and lakes, or, alternatively, if a wetland, lake, or stream permit would be required from DEQ.

Wetlands are a significant factor in the health of the natural resources of Michigan, such as inland lakes, groundwater, fisheries, wildlife and the Great Lakes. According to a 1991 United States Fish and Wildlife Service report, over 50 percent of Michigan's original wetlands have been drained or filled, thereby making the protection of remaining wetlands that much more important.

The Wetland Identification Program (WIP) was established by the DEQ in 1998 to aid the public in determining the presence of regulated wetlands on their properties. The WIP program offers the opportunity for DEQ staff to conduct an on-site review to identify wetlands on the property, known as a Level 2 Identification, or to confirm boundaries located by a private professional wetland consultant, a Level 3 Identification. The fees for these services vary based on the level of the service requested, and the acreage of the area to be reviewed. More information on the WIP service is available online at www.michigan.gov/deqwetlands.

In 2006, the DEQ implemented a new program that allows landowners to schedule meetings on-site before they apply for a construction permit from the DEQ. Through Pre-application Meetings, property owners can meet with DEQ staff either in the DEQ office, or on a specific property. During site meetings, staff can determine if a project will require a permit, make suggestions for alternative methods for minimizing wetland, lake, and stream impacts, identify concerns with proposed construction, and provide information on mitigation requirements. Wetland boundaries are not identified during these meetings, nor is a preliminary determination on a project's permissibility given. However, this service greatly enhances the ability of permitting staff to provide guidance, and increases the speed and efficiency of the DEQ's permit process.

Fees for this service vary, ranging from no fee for an in-office meeting for a single family lot less than one acre in size, up to \$1,000 for larger scale developments. More information on the Pre-application Meetings, including a copy of the pre-application request form, is available at www.michigan.gov/deqwetlands.