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The Farmer Cares For the Land

WETLANDS

Wetlands are low areas that are saturated with water. Marshes and swamps are wetlands, as are the areas along creeks and rivers. These are called riparian areas.

Wetlands are an important part of the earth's ecosystem. They act like sponges to store water during the wet times of the year and release it into the aquifers and underground streams where we get most of our drinking water. When there are not wetlands to soak up the waters, rains are more likely to turn into floods, destroying homes, businesses and farms. Plants that grow in wetlands hold the soil and help keep it from being washed away.

Wetlands also help purify water. They filter out harmful chemicals and wastes. Dirty water gets a good cleaning when it flows through a wetland.

Wetlands provide homes for many birds and animals that need wet places to grow and reproduce. They are important rest and good stops for migrating birds. Many endangered plants and over 1/3 of the endangered animals live in or use wetlands.

At the time of the European settlement, there were about 215 million acres of wetlands in the lower 48 states. In the last 200 years, over 54 percent of those wetlands have been lost. Most were converted to agricultural uses. For many years people thought of wetlands as obstacles to farming. They were also considered breeding grounds for mosquitoes. The government encouraged landowners to drain wetlands.

Now we know more about wetlands. We realize how much they help the environment, wildlife, and humans. Federal laws have been passed to protect and preserve them. Some people don't like the wetland laws. People who have wetlands on their property think they should be able to use their property to earn money to support their families.

Problem	
Solution	
Cause	
Effect (s)	

Does the solution create another problem? If so, what is it? _____
