

# FACT SHEET

## Lake County Wetland Restoration and Preservation Plan

The Lake County Wetland Restoration and Preservation Plan ("WRAPP") will identify and assess the functional significance of existing, historic, and potentially restorable wetlands in Lake County, Illinois. The WRAPP report and interactive on-line planning tool will include data available to the development, environmental, and government sectors and the general public as well. This information can be used to guide planning efforts throughout the County and provide a basis for prioritizing wetland restoration and preservation efforts based on specific "wetland functions" (e.g., flood protection, water quality, wildlife habitat, etc.).

### Why a WRAPP?

Lake County has lost approximately 40-50% of the wetlands that existed prior to European settlement, primarily due to drainage for agriculture and conversion to urban land uses. The loss of wetlands and the important functions they provide have resulted in a higher risk of flooding, surface water quality degradation, and wildlife habitat deterioration. Recognizing these losses, Lake County has adopted a "no net loss" wetland policy and set a goal for a "net gain" of wetland function (Lake County Watershed Development Ordinance, Article I.B.10.).

### Benefits of the WRAPP

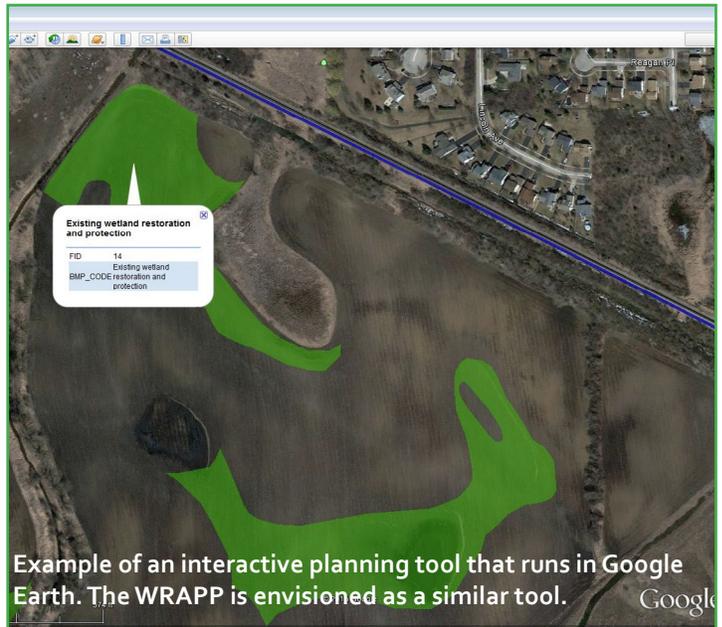
The WRAPP will provide a wide audience of end-users with a planning tool that can identify opportunities for preserving, restoring and enhancing wetlands as a means to maintain and increase wetland functions throughout Lake County. The WRAPP will:

- Help direct efforts of voluntary wetland restoration programs.
- Support wetland mitigation efforts by identifying potential mitigation and restoration sites.
- Help target limited resource dollars meant for restoring and preserving wetlands and their functions.
- Strengthen grant and funding requests.
- Identify critical areas in watershed planning.

### What is wetland function and why is it important?

"Wetland function" is a general term for the services that wetlands provide. Wetlands can store flood water, protect and enhance water quality, provide fish and wildlife habitat, and provide recreational opportunities and aesthetic benefits for communities. Each individual wetland has a unique set of functions and each wetland can perform these functions at different rates. Wetland enhancement and restoration activities improve these functions, while wetland degradation and loss diminish functions.

Lake County WRAPP is funded through a USEPA Region 5 Wetlands Program Development Grant.



Example of an interactive planning tool that runs in Google Earth. The WRAPP is envisioned as a similar tool.

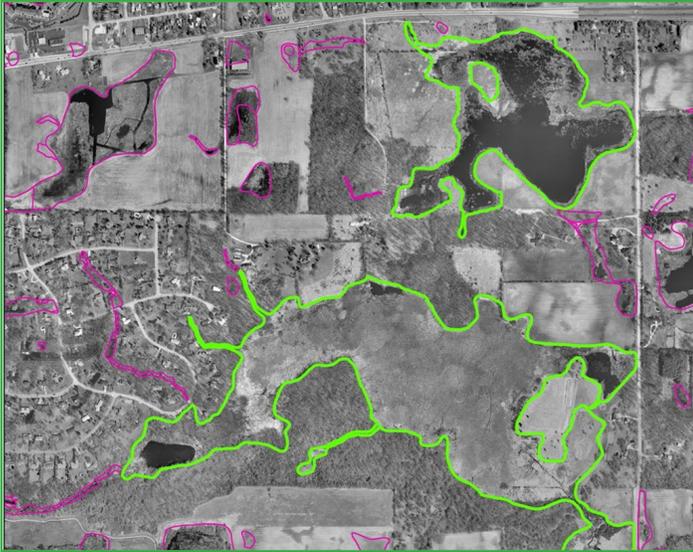


Examples of different types of wetlands - and wetland functions - found in Lake County.



(more)

Lake County Watershed Development Ordinance goal: "Conserve the natural hydrologic, hydraulic, water quality and other beneficial functions of wetlands by having, at minimum, no net loss of wetlands in Lake County, and further these beneficial functions of wetlands by having an objective of a 'net gain' in wetland function..."



Above: The outlined areas are identified as wetlands in the Lake County Wetlands Inventory. The two wetlands in green are clearly different from those in the pink and also from one another, and likely provide different wetlands functions. The WRAPP will provide information on the functions of individual wetlands.

#### What is a "functional assessment"?

A functional assessment determines the functions (services) a wetland provides and how well it performs each function. The study will be built on nationally-accepted methods developed from a growing number of similar studies around the region.

Functions will be assessed using a three-step process:

- Step 1: Collect and integrate data into a Geographic Information System (GIS) to classify wetlands according to their landscape position, landform, water body type, and water flow path ("hydrogeomorphic" assessment).
- Step 2 will be a preliminary assessment of the functions each wetland class provides (e.g., flood water storage, water quality enhancement, wildlife habitat, etc...) and a rating of the level to which each class provides a function (high, moderate, low).
- Step 3 will involve field studies of representative wetlands in each class to verify assumptions on the functions and ratings developed in Step 2.

SMC will apply this assessment process to current and historic wetland functions. With this information, users can compare functions between wetland classes, determine changes (i.e., lost functions) due to past activities, and predict possible changes from proposed activities.

#### Will the WRAPP consider the loss of wetland functions as the landscape of Lake County has changed over time?

Yes, the plan will estimate historic wetland functions, and the on-line tool will allow users to query various functional losses to help them make informed decisions.

#### Who is developing the WRAPP?

The Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC) is developing the WRAPP with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Plan development will include input and guidance from a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) comprised of local and regional wetland professionals, engineers, planners, and cartographers.

#### Will the WRAPP create more regulations or red tape for development projects?

No, the WRAPP will consist of data analysis, a summary report, and a web-based, interactive tool that can be used by a wide audience for planning purposes. It will not create any additional regulations or natural resource protections, replace the need for site-specific wetland delineations or jurisdictional determinations, or recommend land acquisition or zoning changes. Whether or not a potentially restorable wetland identified by the WRAPP is viable will depend on site-specific characteristics, landowner interest, agency funding/priorities, and other factors.

#### For more information:

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