

**\* Water quality continues to need improvement.** Although point sources of pollution such as direct stream discharge of raw sewage have been curtailed significantly, non-point source pollution, such as untreated stormwater runoff from parking lots, is more difficult to control and continues to be a significant problem. The County discontinued its water quality monitoring program in 1980. The lack of County-wide information precludes a full historical assessment of water quality and limits the ability to quantify future impacts through computer modeling and statistical analysis. However, information from special studies is available for limited areas of the County including Watts Branch, Seneca Creek and Paint Branch. Although water quality has improved in the Potomac River; it has declined in other waterways.

**\* Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission signed the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement to provide comprehensive guidance for minimizing the negative impacts of land activities in the Chesapeake Bay drainage area.** The agreement provides specific goals for improving the Bay such as a 40 percent reduction in nutrient pollution by the year 2000.

## **5. WETLANDS**

The important role of wetlands as natural filters in maintaining water quality is acknowledged at the federal, state, and local levels. It is recognized that loss of wetlands means decreased water quality protection, flood control, and wildlife habitat. Wetlands also are vulnerable to off-site, indirect impacts such as hydrologic alterations and pollution.

**\* Regulations regarding the definition of, and allowable impacts to wetlands continue to evolve.** Wetlands are defined by the Planning Board's guidelines for Environmental Management of Development in Montgomery County,

Maryland as "an area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances does support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions, commonly known as hydrophytic vegetation." The federal definition of wetlands is currently under review.

Information on the location of major wetland areas in the County is available through Maryland Department of Natural Resources maps. The Montgomery County Planning Department requires more accurate delineations of wetlands by a developer's engineer during the development review process. This detailed delineation is also required by federal and state agencies as part of their permit review processes.

**\* Several levels of government regulate the impacts of development and construction activities on wetlands.** The intent of the various County, state, and federal regulations and guidelines is to first, avoid impacts; second, minimize and mitigate impacts; and third, replace wetlands lost through development. The creation of functional and sustainable replacement wetlands is both land intensive and expensive. The impacts of wetland avoidance and mitigation play a critical role in the development of public facilities and private projects.

**\* The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has identified twelve areas in Montgomery County as non-tidal wetlands of special state concern.** These include the Germantown Bog, Canal Bottomland, and McKee-Beshers West Swamp and are identified on the map. Excavation, filling, or other modification within a buffer of 100 feet of these wetland areas needs state permits. In contrast, disturbance of other non-tidal wetlands requires permits within only a 25-foot buffer. Both cases require water quality certification by the Maryland Department of the Environment as required by the Clean Water Act.

# NONTIDAL WETLANDS OF SPECIAL STATE CONCERN

