IMPROVE YOUR WELL-BEING: SPEND TIME IN AURORA'S WETLANDS!

Visit the *Star K Ranch* nature center, walk our trails, and linger on shady benches overlooking the wetlands.

Sand Creek Park's stream-crossing art feature and regional trails offer prime creekside and beaver wetland views.

Spot red-winged blackbirds among the cattails from the boardwalk at *Red-tailed Hawk Park.*

Quincy Reservoir does more than just store water. Come on out for fishing, boating, and hiking. Stay to check out our wetlands!

Check out these wetland sites too!

Jewell Wetlands
Horseshoe Park
Plains Conservation Center
Sand Creek Riparian Preserve at Auora Sports Park

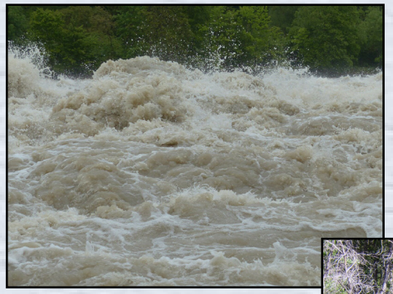
Visit auroragov.org/nature for more information on these and other Aurora natural areas. This brochure was produced by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency, and the City of Aurora. For a full report on the condition of Aurora's Wetlands visit **www.cnhp.colostate.edu**.

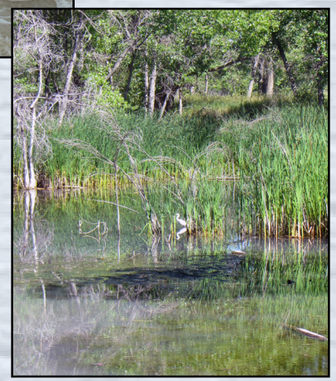
Getting Wild in AURORA

WETLANDS

Flood Control

Healthy wetlands function like a sponge. During heavy rains and high river flows, wetlands slow excess water down, spread it out across a wider area, and soak it up. These wetland "ecosystem services" greatly decrease the risk of damaging floods.





Improved Water Quality

Wetlands help clean the water that passes through them by catching sediment and removing nutrients, such as nitrogen, and other pollutants. Reducing pollutants in Aurora's water bodies improves quality of life for people and wildlife.

Riparian Corridors: Ours are Miles Long!

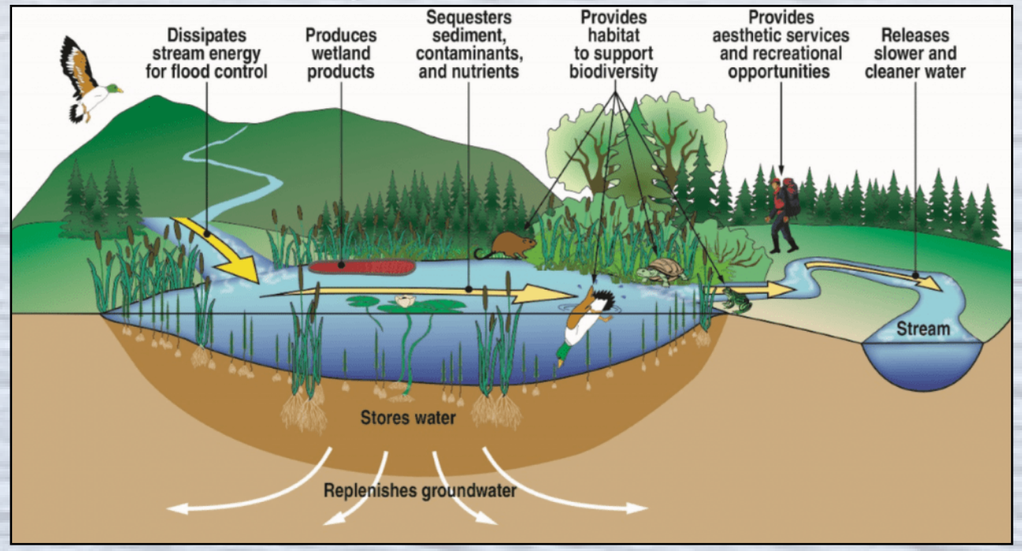
Many of Aurora's streams are located in lengthy riparian corridors with good condition cottonwoods, willows, and other water-loving trees and shrubs! Continuous networks of riparian corridor habitat in urban areas are increasingly uncommon. These riparian corridors and their adjacent upland buffers help protect wetlands and support safe wildlife travel. Wetlands connected to the stream also slow and naturalize stream flow, which helps native wetland plants become established, and thus increases stream health.

Beaver: Ecosystem All-Stars

Beaver dams create wetlands that restore stream connectivity, support aquatic vegetation, catch floodwater, improve water quality, store groundwater, and keep water in the stream longer. Beaver are restoring Aurora's wetlands in places like East Toll Gate Creek at Signature Park. This urban stream is downcut from erosion and stormwater (below left). Beaver dams are reconnecting the stream to the floodplain, reducing urban flood risk and restoring wetland habitat (below right).

Wetlands provide valuable ecosystem services:

P. Booth & S. Shock, exponent.com



Important Wildlife Habitat & Wetland Plants

Most wildlife species in Colorado need wetlands. Aurora's wetlands support habitat for at-risk species such as northern leopard frogs along Senec Creek, and bald eagles at the Plains Conservation Center.

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Common wetland plants in Aurora like wet soils, but each occupies a unique role in nature:

- Cottonwoods and peachleaf willows establish on sand, and provide nesting hbitat for eagles and owls.
- Cattails and bulrushes grow in shallow water, reduce erosion and urban pollutants, and provide waterfowl and songbird habitat.
- Spikerushes grow in moist meadows and stream banks, tolerate drought, and provide food for small mammals and waterfowl.
- Milkweeds grow in wet meadows, provide nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds, and are the only plants used by monarch butterfly eggs and caterpillars.

How you can help Aurora's wetlands:

- Advocate for protecting wetlands and their riparian buffers; let water naturally flow and buffer vegetation grow.
- Plant native species, and avoid using chemicals and disturbing the soil in and above wetlands.
- Connect to your watershed: recreate in, learn about, and be a steward for your water resources!