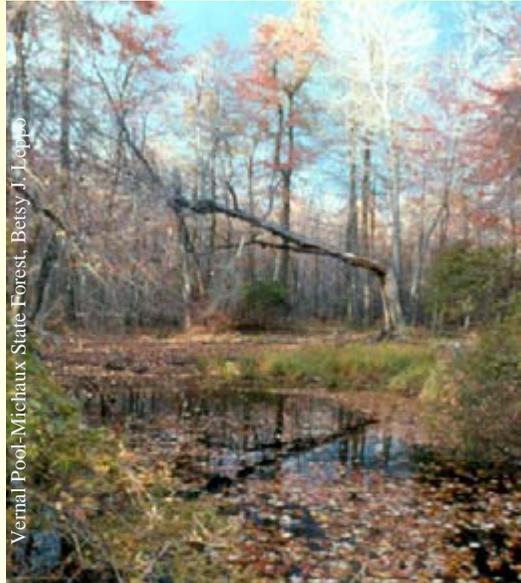


# Vernal Pools in Pennsylvania

## Stewardship Opportunities for Private Landowners



Vernal Pool-Michaels State Forest, Betsy J. Leppo



Wood frog, A. Shiel,  
PA Fish & Boat Commission

## What is a Vernal Pool?

A “*vernal*” or “seasonal” pool is a small, temporary body of water that is typically found in spring and early summer. These wet areas are filled almost entirely with rain or melting snow and are most often found in forested areas.

## Status of Vernal Pools in Pennsylvania

Vernal pools are threatened by logging, and human encroachment for agriculture, housing and other developments. The PA Natural Heritage Program tracks vernal pool habitats as communities of special conservation concern. Because they are seasonal, vernal pools are often overlooked and inadvertently destroyed.



Vernal Pool, G. Gress, The Nature Conservancy

## Why Are Vernal Pools Important?

- Vernal pools provide habitat for many animals, especially amphibians. Vernal pools do not support fish which prey heavily on eggs and larvae.
- Without seasonal pools, some animal species would not be able to compete and reproduce.
- Vernal pools serve as watering areas for a wide array of wildlife



Spotted salamander, Jack Ray

## Best Management Practices for Vernal Pools

The primary management actions for vernal pools include:

- Protect pools from runoff that contributes sediments and other pollutants
- Maintain buffers to protect water quality and, in woodlands, micro-climates
- Avoid use of certain pesticides and herbicides in and around seasonal pools.
- Avoid impacts from All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's).

For more information see:  
Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan Goals  
(Vernal Pools, Section 17) at:

<http://www.fish.state.pa.us/promo/grants/swg/00swg.htm>



## What Assistance May Be Available To Landowners?

- **Technical Assistance** for habitat management may be available through various conservation programs and personnel, including:
  - Landowner Incentive Program (LIP),
  - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Conservation Practice (CP38B)-Vernal Pools
  - A professional biologist can work to help you develop a habitat management plan that benefits wildlife and helps meet *your* wildlife management goals (see contact information).
- **Habitat Management Assistance** may also be available for implementing the habitat management plan for your property-contingent upon availability of funding.
- **Habitat Protection** funds for long-term protection, such as conservation easements, may be available for *your* land. Contact a resource professional.



## Many Wildlife Species Use Vernal Pools

Seasonal pools support a wide variety of wildlife which are dependent upon these temporary wet habitats. These species, which have evolved to survive periodic drying of these areas, are considered vernal pool indicators. These include:



- five species of amphibians
- fairy shrimp (a type of crustacean)
- three species of salamanders-the spotted, marbled, and Jefferson salamanders. Other species

dependent on vernal pools are the wood frog, and eastern spadefoot toad.

## Management Goals for Pennsylvania's Vernal Pools

- Protect critical habitat for species that depend on vernal pools.
- Maintain and improve quality of vernal pools & buffer areas.
- Provide technical and financial support to landowners for protection of vernal pools.



## What Can You Do?

Private landowners can play a key role in the conservation of vernal pool habitats and the species that live in them. If you own land and want to restore or establish vernal pools on your property, please contact a resource professional *soon*.

### For Technical Assistance

#### **Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission**

Division of Habitat Management

Phone: 814.359-5119

For PFBC Regional Habitat Biologists, see:

[http://www.fish.state.pa.us/dir\\_habitat.htm](http://www.fish.state.pa.us/dir_habitat.htm)

#### **Western Pennsylvania Conservancy**

800 Waterfront Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: (412) 288-2777 Fax: (412) 231-1414

[www.WaterLandLife.org](http://www.WaterLandLife.org)

#### **The Nature Conservancy**

2101 North Front Street, Building #1, Suite 200

Harrisburg, PA 17110

Phone: 717.232.6001

[www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org)

#### **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

Bureau of Forestry

Ecological Services Section

717-772-3444

<http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/>



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