

Chapter 5: Wetlands

Wetlands predominate within the Primary Study Area. Virtually all of the remaining undeveloped land in the Primary Study Area can probably be classified wetlands as defined by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which regulates development of wetlands. However, it may be useful for potential development plans to identify, within certain broad categories, the types of wetlands that may be encountered in specific areas. As part of the Inventory process, some informal mapping was performed within the Primary Study Area to identify potential wetland types. It should be stressed that the mapping that was performed for the Master Plan is not an official wetlands determination which will be required for specific development projects within the watershed.

The wetlands classifications used in the mapping are loosely based on the definitions used for the Granite Creek Soils Probe and Wetlands Investigation, performed by Stephl Engineers for HDR Alaska and Kean and Associates as part of the Granite Creek land clearing landfill development project. Since a detailed wetland mapping process was beyond the scope of the Indian River Master Plan, the wetland types were narrowed to three general classifications - Forested, Muskeg, and Riparian, and one non-wetland classification, Uplands. The results of the informal mapping are shown on [Figure 8](#), page 61.

The general wetland classifications are as follows (excerpted and paraphrased from the Stephl Wetlands Investigation report):

Open Muskeg Wetlands

These sites are on the flattest ground within the Primary Study Area. They are saturated to the surface and often include small ponds. The soils are organic, with peat soils predominating. Although peat probes were not undertaken, it is common to find peat layers up to 15 feet thick in this area. Muskeg wetlands are found in patches of up to 20 acres in size throughout the Primary Study Area. Muskeg wetlands will require wetland development permits.



Forested Wetlands

This classification includes both open canopy and closed canopy spruce and hemlock forests on undulating lands and slopes of up to 40%. Most of the forested undulating terrain (up to 15% slopes) will generally be classified as wetlands, and some if not all of the forested lands between 15% and 40% slopes will be classified as wetlands, although some may qualify as marginal uplands.

These areas are most likely to require specific wetlands classifications prior to any development.



Riparian Areas

Although not specifically having the types of vegetation and soils found in other wetland classifications, these areas along the river channel are periodically flooded during times of high flow in Indian River. Because the Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction over even small and intermittent stream channels, a permit

from the Corps is likely to be needed for any development within this area.

Uplands (Non-wetlands)

The Uplands classification generally includes hemlock or spruce-hemlock forests on steep slopes. These areas are characterized by relatively well-drained soils, with large stands of hemlock and spruce. These forested areas are generally found along the eastern and western edges of the watershed, above the valley floor. Although not classified as wetlands, much of this land may be difficult to develop due to steep terrain.