

The Vegetation Dynamics of Isolated Forested Wetlands

What is an 'isolated' wetland? Isolated wetlands exist in isolation from water bodies although groundwater may hydrologically connect the systems. Instead of being fed by streams, they form where topography and soils impound water, usually precipitation or belowground flows. This unique hydrology allows vegetation from both upland and wetland systems to persist.

What plants might I find in a Western Washington isolated wetland?

- Broadleaved trees tolerant of flooding such as Oregon ash, red alder, cascara, cottonwoods and aspen
- Conifers that persist at high points, namely Western red cedar, Alaska yellow cedar and occasional Western hemlocks or Douglas fir
- Sedges, swamp cabbage, and bulrushes often inhabit water-filled depressions
- Shallow water zones may be shrubby: Roses, salmonberry, elderberry, hardhack, and indian plum

Why study isolated forested wetlands?

Pacific Northwest forested wetlands are often high in their diversity of microclimates and the corresponding vegetation. By documenting the driving factors within these wetlands, ecologists may incorporate these dynamics into wetland mitigation or restoration plans. Similarly, by identifying where species are found within a wetland, hypotheses may be formed about the physiological performance of component species.

Nate Hough-Snee is a graduate student of restoration and plant ecology under Dr. Kern Ewing and Dr. Greg Ettl

