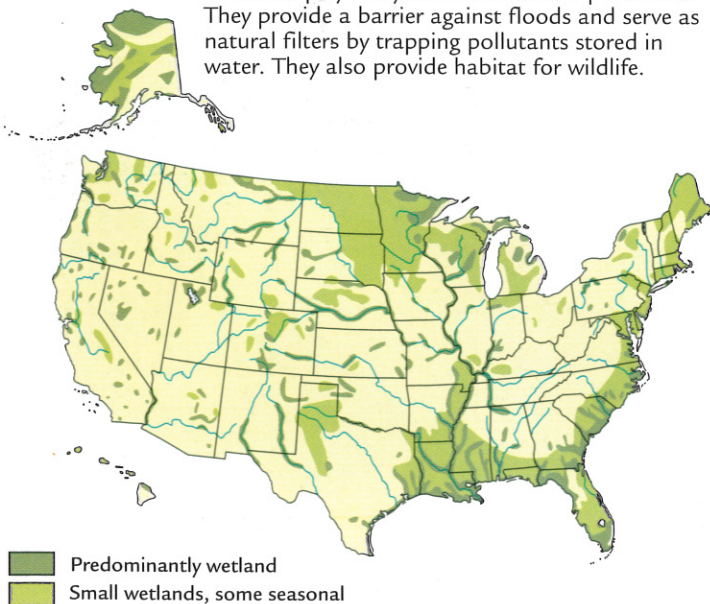


WETLANDS

Wetlands play a key role in watershed protection. They provide a barrier against floods and serve as natural filters by trapping pollutants stored in water. They also provide habitat for wildlife.



During the past 200 years, more than half the wetlands in the United States have been drained, filled, or paved to develop agricultural land or to expand cities, towns, and resorts. Part of this coastal marsh in South Carolina was destroyed to make room for housing.



California has the most extreme fire weather in the United States. Strong desert winds and frequent drought combine to produce major wildfires. Valleys and canyons create natural paths for wildfires.

TORNADOES AND HURRICANES

Hurricanes are powerful storms that form over tropical ocean waters and often strike the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. **Tornadoes** are quickly rotating columns of air that form under a thundercloud. Tornadoes can strike in any state, but frequently touch down in a belt known as "Tornado Alley."

