

# How wetlands keep Puget Sound healthy

There were once an estimated 1.2 to 1.5 million acres of wetlands in Washington. By some estimates, the state has lost 50 percent of its wetlands. Urban areas have lost 70 to 100 percent.

## HOW WETLANDS HELP

### SLOWING AND STORAGE

Think of wetlands as giant sponges. When runoff enters, it is held and gradually released, helping to prevent flooding.

### RUNOFF AND WATER SUPPLY

Floodwater seeps through the soil and into groundwater, replenishing supply.

### WATER FILTRATION

Wetlands trap runoff. Sediment and pollution settle out. Animals and plants take up excess nutrients.

### HABITAT

Wetlands are havens for insects, plants and animals, including amphibians that can't survive anywhere else.

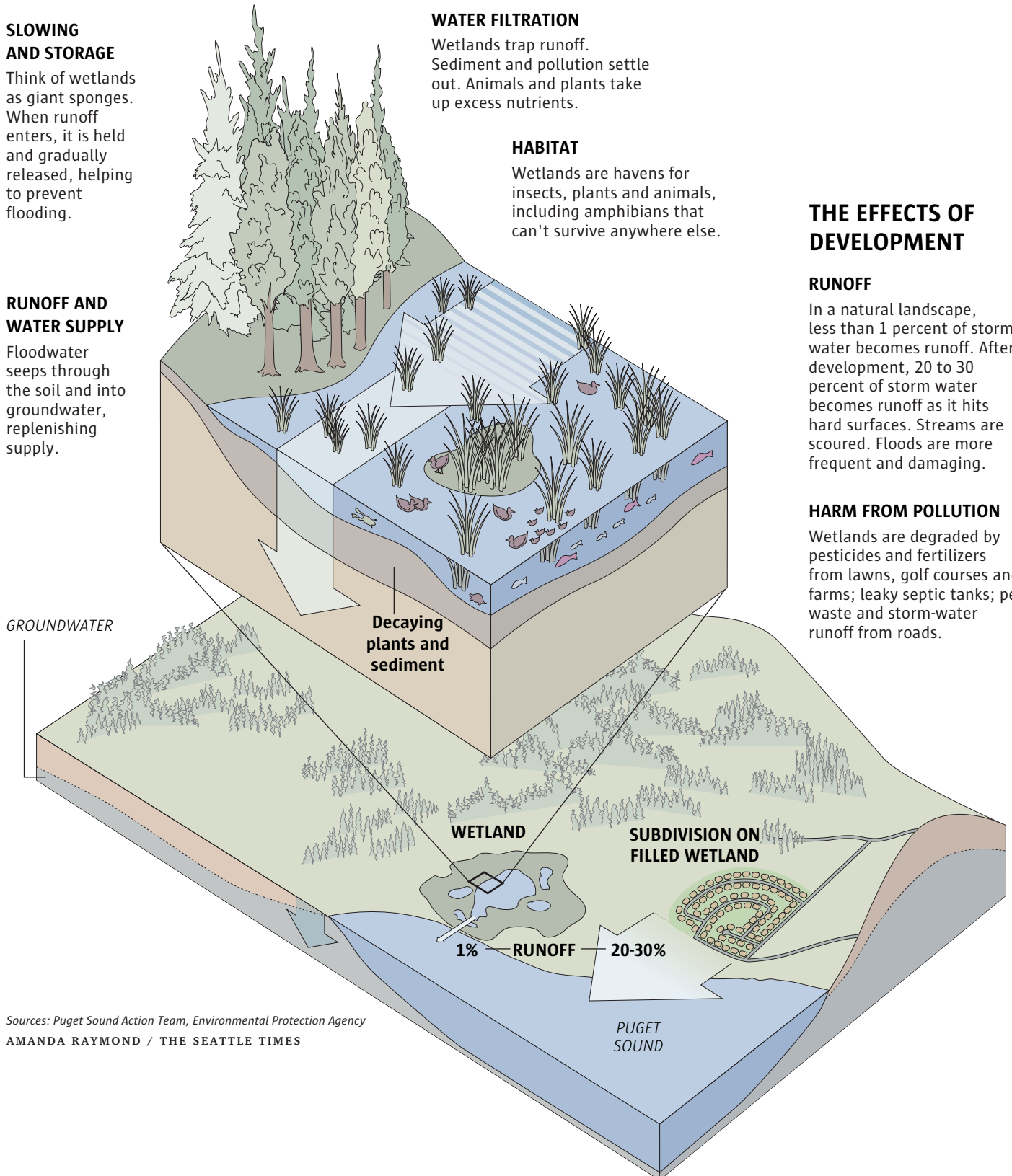
## THE EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

### RUNOFF

In a natural landscape, less than 1 percent of storm water becomes runoff. After development, 20 to 30 percent of storm water becomes runoff as it hits hard surfaces. Streams are scoured. Floods are more frequent and damaging.

### HARM FROM POLLUTION

Wetlands are degraded by pesticides and fertilizers from lawns, golf courses and farms; leaky septic tanks; pet waste and storm-water runoff from roads.



Sources: Puget Sound Action Team, Environmental Protection Agency  
AMANDA RAYMOND / THE SEATTLE TIMES