

34# Hydrology

Where do you think the water in the Class of 1918 Marsh comes from? If you guessed rain and snow, you're right! But most of this water runs into the marsh from other sources, rather than falling on the marsh itself.

Some comes from rain falling on the roofs of buildings, parking lots, and roads near the marsh. This water arrives through engineered pipes that are part of the storm water drainage system. When rain pours during storms this water flows rapidly into the marsh and helps prevent or reduce flooding in nearby basements or on roads and parking lots. The same happens when the spring melt turns frozen water into flowing water.

Some rain and snow also soaks into the ground and flows slowly into the marsh below the surface. We call that groundwater. Groundwater that trickles down through the soil, gravel and sand is stored for awhile below the land surface and maintains water levels during periods with little rain. Some plants don't need deep roots because they can use water stored in the soil.

If you walk around the marsh, you'll see places where a storm sewer or overland flow brings water to the marsh. It is harder to see where the groundwater comes in, but these places are visible sometimes as springs.

Now where do you think the water in the Class of 1918 Marsh goes? See if you can find evidence of the water leaving the marsh and where it reaches Lake Mendota.