

Farms & Wetlands

What You Should Know Before You Plow

WETLANDS ARE A VALUABLE PART OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

They provide important benefits for people as well as fish and wildlife. We must be very careful about how we alter, drain, fill, flood, excavate, build roads, and in general, farm near a wetland.

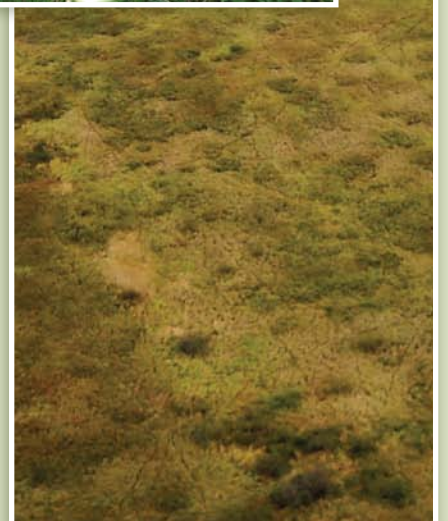
BENEFITS OF WETLANDS

WETLANDS KEEP OUR WATERSHEDS HEALTHY AND BENEFIT NOVA SCOTIANS. THEY

- ◆ moderate flood waters, purify water in rivers and streams, slow runoff rates, and minimize erosion
- ◆ remove organic waste, bacteria and excess nutrients, contaminants, and silt from surface, and ground water
- ◆ protect coastlines from storm surges
- ◆ contribute to drinking water supplies by storing and releasing surface water, and refilling groundwater reservoirs
- ◆ provide habitats for fish, wildlife, and plants, often for rare or endangered species
- ◆ support fisheries and food webs in nearby rivers, inlets, and coastal waters
- ◆ supply food, commercial products, and medicinal plants



Deer grazing in a freshwater marsh



LINKS to help determine if there is a wetland on your property

- ◆ Check the online Nova Scotia Wetland Inventory
www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/habitats/wetlands.asp
- ◆ Contact a Wetland Professional
www.gov.ns.ca/nse/wetland/wetland.professional.resources.asp

WHAT FARMERS NEED TO KNOW

The Nova Scotia Wetland Conservation Policy describes the provincial approach to regulating wetlands. Any agricultural activity near wetlands must consider the following

- ◆ altering two or more hectares of any wetland requires that a project proposal be evaluated under Nova Scotia Environment's Environmental Assessment process
- ◆ building in designated flood risk areas is prohibited in many municipalities by a Statement of Provincial Interest under the Municipal Government Act
- ◆ draining, filling, flooding, or excavating in a wetland is not allowed without approval from Nova Scotia Environment. All approvals to alter wetland require compensation
- ◆ building permanent roads through wetlands requires approval, unless the road runs through a wooded swamp and is less than 10 metres wide, and 600 m² in total area
- ◆ compensation for cranberry operations in natural bogs should be discussed with NSE, but primarily requires site restoration upon final closing of the operation

MINIMIZING IMPACTS

Impacts from farming in and around wetlands can be minimized by

- ◆ avoiding farming in wetlands whenever possible
- ◆ leaving a buffer (an undeveloped zone) between wetlands, watercourses, and farming activities. A minimum of 10 metres, more is better
- ◆ adopting farm practices that minimize field erosion to help avoid pollution of adjacent streams and wetlands
- ◆ avoiding or minimizing runoff from livestock, manure, and fertilizer use near streams and wetlands
- ◆ using fencing to minimize animal trampling in or near streams and wetlands to reduce erosion
- ◆ harvesting hay in a wetland after mid-July to avoid the grassland bird breeding season
- ◆ harvesting during the driest part of the year to minimize rutting, and erosion
- ◆ not building watering and irrigation ponds in wetlands. Whenever possible choose areas that naturally collect some water, but are not actually wetlands
- ◆ plowing or tilling across a slope instead of up and down the slope
- ◆ using temporary roads to access or cross wetlands, and minimizing road width
- ◆ ensuring proper use of culverts, drains, and/or road design to maintain flow through wetlands

APPROVALS ARE NOT REQUIRED FOR

- ◆ altering wetlands that are less than 100 square metres (approximately 1,000 square feet) in size
- ◆ farming activities in designated marshlands
- ◆ restoring and maintaining drainage systems and ditches
- ◆ creating ponds or cranberry bogs on higher ground away from natural wetlands
- ◆ harvesting trees, grazing animals, or making hay in a wetland. Care must be taken to minimize damage to these sensitive areas.

See the Nova Scotia Wetland Policy for a complete list of exceptions



LINKS For more information

- ◆ Nova Scotia Environment field office information
www.gov.ns.ca/nse/dept/division.emc.asp
- ◆ Application for approval to work in a wetland
www.gov.ns.ca/nse/wetland/wetland.alteration.asp
- ◆ Nova Scotia's Environment Act
www.nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/envromnt.htm
- ◆ Contact Nova Scotia Environment's Wetland Program at
902-424-2117 or wetlands@gov.ns.ca
- ◆ Visit Nova Scotia Environment's website for links to additional information
www.gov.ns.ca/nse/wetland

FACT SHEETS ALSO AVAILABLE:

- Wetlands in Nova Scotia
 - Wetland Checklist
 - Development & Wetlands
 - Wetland Compensation
 - Woodlots & Wetlands
 - Wetlands Policy Fact Sheet
- www.gov.ns.ca/nse/wetland/

