

Working towards a Water Strategy for New Brunswick :

Wetlands



Photo: Christie Ward, Environment and Local Government

What is a wetland?

A wetland is land that has the water table at, near or above the ground's surface and has unique soil and vegetation that is adapted to a wet environment.

Value of wetlands

Wetlands are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems in the world yet they are also the most threatened. Wetlands perform functions and have values that no other areas in the landscape do. They reduce flood and storm impacts, provide important habitat for fish, wildlife, recreation, and cultural opportunities.

In 1993, the Department of Natural Resources developed a classification

system for different types of wetlands in New Brunswick. This classification is broken into two groups, inland and coastal wetlands. Inland wetlands include bogs, fens, shrub wetlands, forested wetlands, aquatic beds and freshwater marshes. Coastal wetlands or also known as salt marsh is a coastal ecosystem between land and open salt water that is regularly flooded by the tides.

Protection of Wetlands in New Brunswick

The New Brunswick Wetland Conservation Policy was jointly released in 2002 by the Department of Environment and Local Government (DELG) and the Department of Natural Resources. The main focus of the policy is to ensure no loss of Provincially Significant Wetlands and no net loss of all other wetlands. The policy applies to:

- all wetlands equal to or greater than 1 hectare in size; and
- any wetland that is contiguous to a watercourse (linked by a surface channel), regardless of the size of the wetland.

DELG is responsible for the legislation that provides protection for wetlands. The *Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation (EIA)*, under the *Clean Environment Act*, and the *Watercourse and Wetland Alteration (WAWA) Regulation* under the *Clean Water Act*, provide specific regulatory mechanisms for managing development in or near wetlands.

The EIA process is a comprehensive review process that evaluates the potential impacts of major projects. Activities/alterations that have the potential to affect a wetland greater than two hectares may be subject to an EIA review.

Did You Know?

- Wetlands function as natural sponges that trap and slowly release surface water, rain, snowmelt, groundwater and

flood waters.

- Wetlands store carbon within their plant communities and soil instead of releasing it to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. Thus wetlands help to moderate global climate conditions.
- Wetlands act as nature's kidneys by removing harmful materials from water, such as excess nutrients and sediment, filtration of pollutants and contaminants.

Permitting Process

Any person intending to do work within 30 meters of a watercourse or wetland must apply for a Watercourse and wetland alteration permit. An online application program has been developed to help guide you to the proper permit application based on your answers to a series of site and activity specific questions. For more information please visit the DELG Website or follow the link provided.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.2935.html

It is illegal under the *Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Regulation (90-80) - Clean Water Act*, to make or perform any watercourse or wetland alteration unless authorized to do so by a WAWA permit issued by the Minister of Environment and Local Government.

In assessing potential developments in or near wetlands, DELG applies a three-step Wetland Mitigation Process to prevent the net loss of wetland function. These steps include, in sequential order: avoidance, minimization of unavoidable impacts, and compensation. Compensation will be required whenever unavoidable impacts (as determined through the steps outlined above) are permitted to occur to a wetland.

Categories of Wetlands:

There are two categories of wetlands in New Brunswick, Provincially Significant Wetlands and Regulated Wetlands.



Photo: Arielle Demerchant, Department of Environment and Local Government

Provincially Significant Wetlands

Provincially Significant Wetlands, identified in the Wetlands Conservation Policy, are given maximum protection, and have been regulated since 2002. These wetlands include coastal marshes, wetlands of the Lower Saint John River, and other special wetlands. Activities having any impact on these wetlands will not be approved unless the only purpose is to rehabilitate, restore, or enhance the Provincially Significant Wetland, or if the activity is deemed to provide necessary public function.

Regulated Wetlands

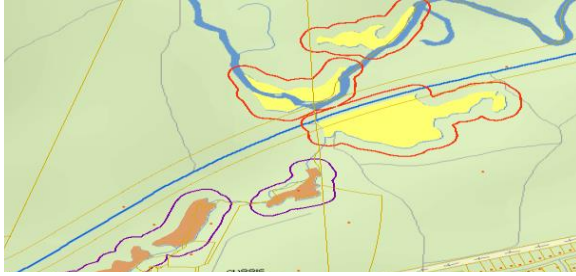
Certain activities are permissible in these wetlands or their 30 meter regulated buffers through the DELG permitting process.

Identifying Wetlands on Your Property?

Since 2011, as part of the short term strategy and to provide clarity as to permitting requirements, a [Regulated Wetlands Map](#) has been used to show wetland areas that are regulated under the Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Program.



Wetlands identified in yellow are provincially significant wetlands and the wetlands in orange are all other regulated wetlands.



Since 2011 DELG has been working with stakeholders towards the development of a long term strategy with the goal to strike a balance between environmental conservation and economic development. Currently wetlands are managed using a two category system with a single level of compensation. The long term strategy would see a more flexible three category system with a level of compensation associated with each category. It would further rely on a more accurate wetlands reference map to guide New Brunswickers as to when permit requirements apply.

For more information, contact the:

DELG Surface Water Protection Section or visit the DELG website below:

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