

Buffer Zones in PEI

Reference and source of figures: PEI Government "Buffer Zones Fact Sheet"
www.gov.pe.ca/environment/buffer-zones

Secondary reference: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, "Buffer Zones for a Healthy Watershed"



WINTER RIVER - TRACADIE BAY
WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

The importance of buffer zones

Buffer zones are areas of land, adjacent to a water course or water body, kept in permanent vegetation. Buffers protect water quality by slowing the flow of water, thus facilitating the trapping of sediment, organic matter, nutrients and pesticides. The vegetation that forms an essential part of a buffer zone uses some of the trapped nutrients for growth and provides critical habitat for micro-organisms. Micro-organisms attached to the soil and vegetation in the buffer zone also use the nutrients and organic matter for their growth and reproduction, and in the process transform some contaminants into less harmful forms. Depending on the vegetation established, the buffer zone can be a source of forage production for a farmer. Buffers also improve the aesthetics of a property.

Regulations

Regulations have governed environmental buffer zones to protect watercourses and wetlands across PEI since 1999, with amendments made in 2008 to widen buffers. These regulations describe the current minimum requirements, but our watershed association encourages property owners to enhance or expand buffer zones when possible, such as by planting additional trees and/or shrubs.

Watercourse and Wetland Protection Regulations cover three main topics, each with its own requirements: 1) Watercourses and Wetlands. 2) Buffer Zones and 3) Grass Headlands.

1. Watercourses and Wetlands

For watercourses and wetlands you need a permit to:

- alter any features or disturb the ground
- dump or remove any material or objects of any kind
- build, repair or remove structures or obstructions of any kind
- operate vehicles or equipment – except for launching a boat or the legal harvesting of a fishery resource
- alter or destroy vegetation, including cutting live trees and shrubs – except in a wooded swamp
- carry out stream enhancement activities.

What is a watercourse?

A watercourse is any stream, creek, pond, river, bay or coastal water body whether it contains water or not.

What is a wetland?

A wetland is an area of water-tolerant vegetation including marshes, swamps, bogs and meadows.

2. Buffer Zones

Buffer zones are next to all watercourses and wetlands. They are **15 metres** wide. For freshwater streams they are measured from the edge of the sediment bed (see Figure 1). For all tidal areas they are measured from the top of the bank. Tidal areas include the salt water part of rivers, bays and the outer coastline. For wetlands, buffer zones are measured from the edge of the wetland vegetation.

In buffer zones you need a permit to:

- alter or disturb the ground or soil
- dump any material or objects of any kind
- remove soil or rocks
- operate vehicles or non-agricultural equipment
- cut down live trees and shrubs
- build, repair or remove structures or obstructions of any kind.

Permits: www.gov.pe.ca/environment/buffer-zones

You **may not** grow agricultural crops or use pesticides in a buffer zone except those next to wetlands that are completely shrub swamps, bogs, wooded swamps, seasonally flooded flats, meadows or landlocked ponds.

You **may** prune trees and shrubs in buffer zones as long as you follow the rules above. You may also plant grass, trees and shrubs as long as you only use hand tools. You may also cut the grass in a buffer zone.

Agricultural equipment may turn in a buffer zone.

3. Grass Headlands

If you grow row crops such as potatoes, all rows that end within 200 metres of a watercourse or wetland must end:

a) in 10 metres of grass that was established before the year the row crop is grown,

or

b) at the edge of the buffer zone (see Figure 2).

This rule does not apply to growing corn. A grass headland is **not** needed where there is an approved management plan for the property. For information about management plans, contact the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Livestock

If you have an intensive livestock operation, you must follow all the rules mentioned above.

Also, you may **not**:

- allow any livestock waste to enter any watercourse or wetland
- build or expand any intensive livestock operation within 90 metres of any watercourse or wetland without authorization from the Provincial Department of Environment, Labour and Justice.

This information sheet is a brief summary, adapted from the one obtained from the Province of Prince Edward Island's Department of Environment, Labour and Justice. Please refer to the provincial regulations for all of the details, which can be obtained through government's Island Information Service or at www.gov.pe.ca or contact the Department if you have questions about any of the regulation details.

If you are interested in information about enhancing or expanding your buffer zone, please contact us. We can offer advice, and in some cases can provide trees and workers to help.

Last updated: July 3, 2014

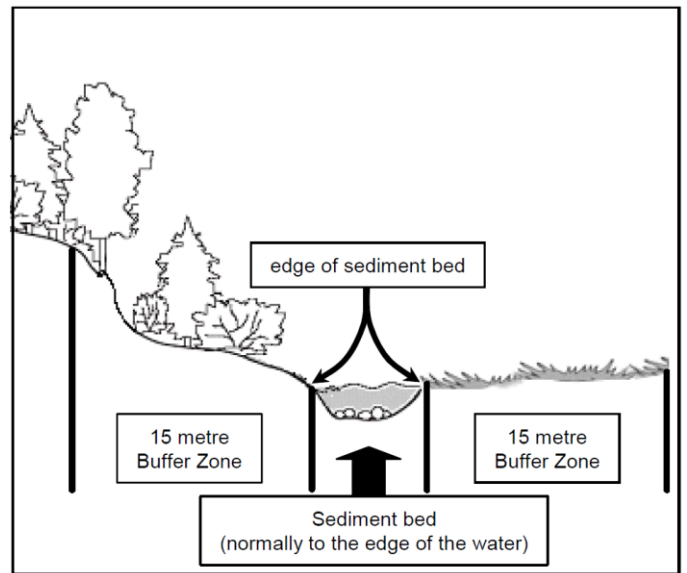


Figure 1.

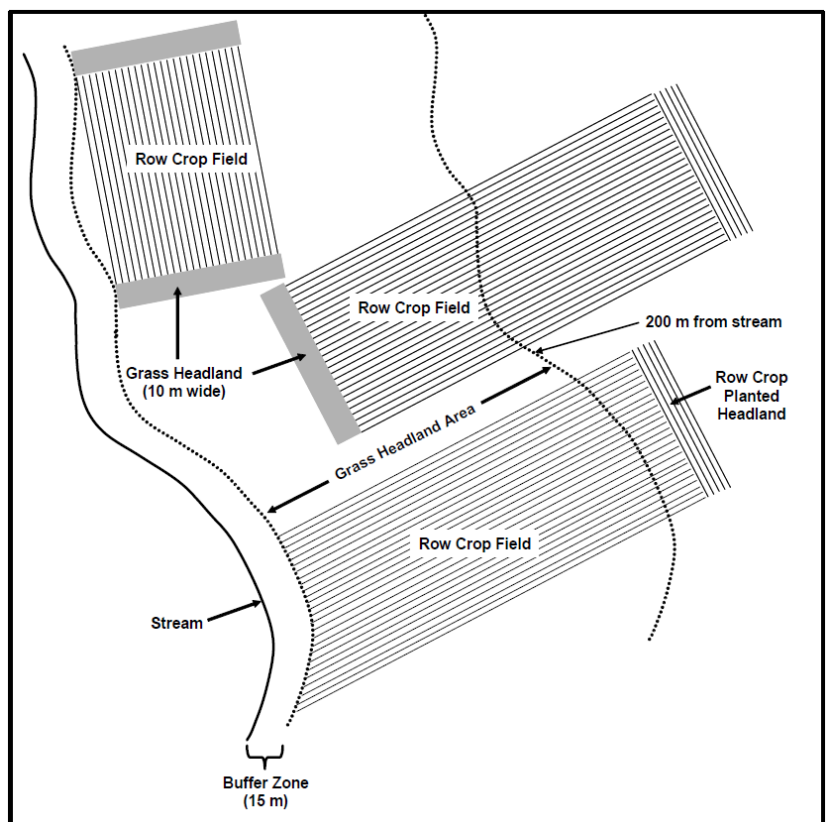


Figure 2.

Contact Us

Mailing Address:
630 Suffolk Road
Dunstaffnage, PEI
C1C 0P6



www.WinterTracadie.ca
www.facebook.com/WRTBWA
Email: info@WinterTracadie.ca