

**One Island Community**  
*One Island Future*



**Buffer Zones**  
**Fact Sheet**

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# Buffer Zones

## Regulation Changes

Since 1999, environmental buffer zones have been an important way to protect watercourses and wetlands across PEI. Recently changes were made to simplify the rules and improve the protection of our watercourses and wetlands.

The new Watercourse and Wetland Protection Regulations cover three main topics:

1. Watercourses and Wetlands
2. Buffer Zones
3. Grass Headlands

Each area has its own requirements.

### 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.

## 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.

## 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 Diagram 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
- build, repair or remove structures or obstructions of any kind
- operate vehicles or non-agricultural equipment
- cut down live trees and shrubs.

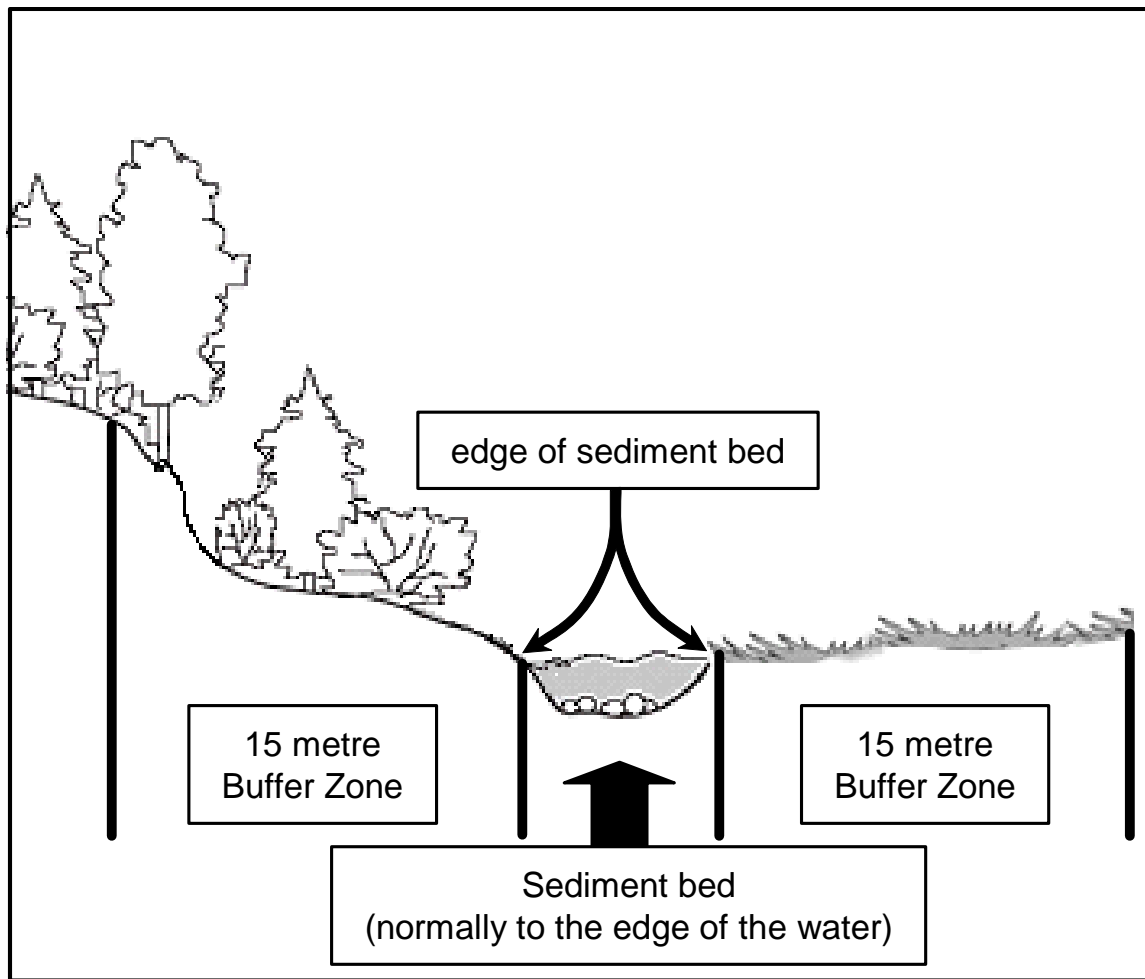


Diagram 1

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 (see Diagram 2):

- 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.

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 Department of Agriculture at 368-5650.

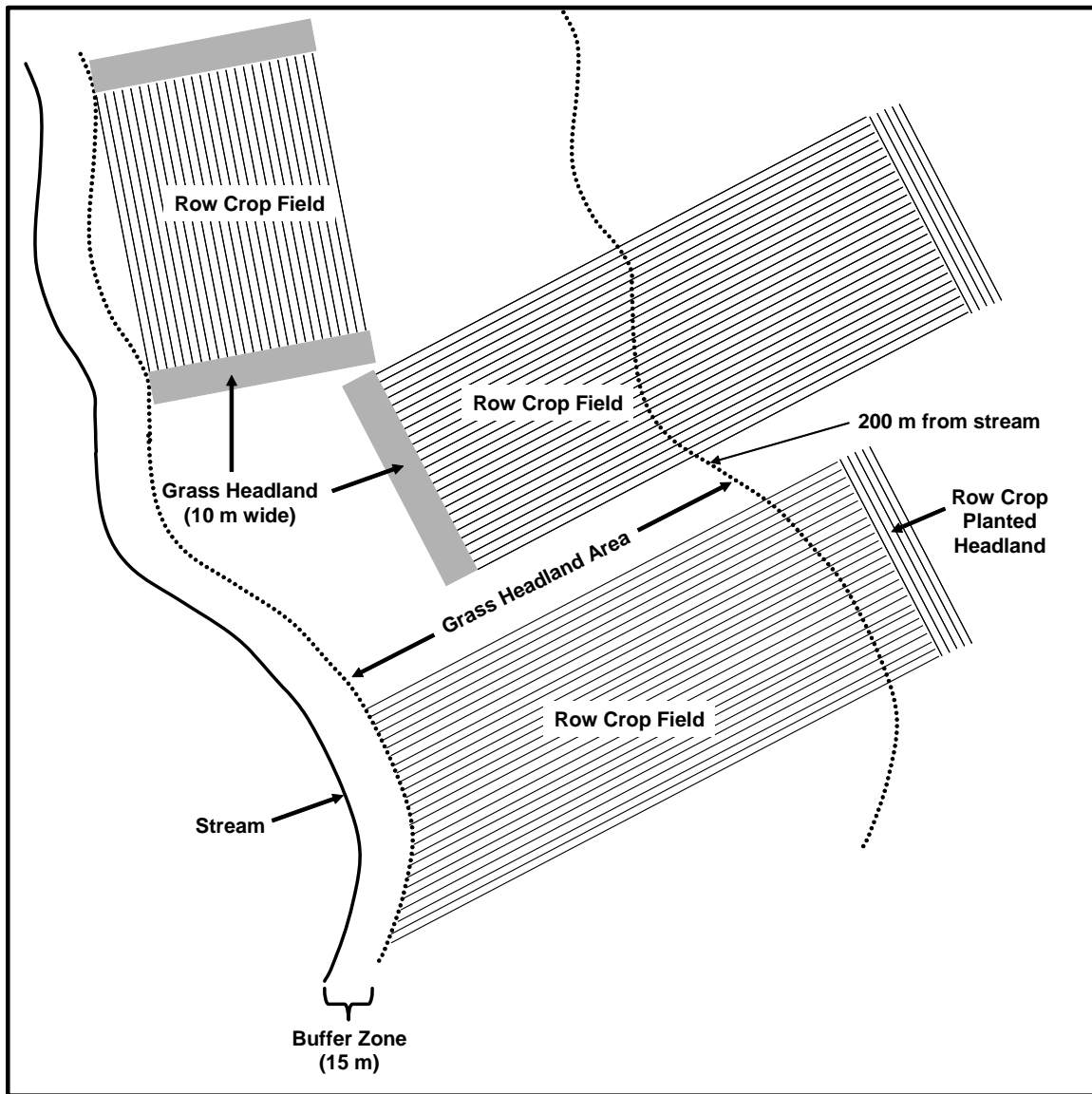


Diagram 2

## 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 Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

*This fact sheet is a short summary of the Watercourse and Wetland Protection Regulations. For all of the details about the rules, please read the regulations. You can get a copy from Island Information Service or on the Internet at [www.gov.pe.ca](http://www.gov.pe.ca).*

*Feel free to contact the Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry at 368-5052 if you have questions about any of the regulation details.*