

PEI Wetland Notes

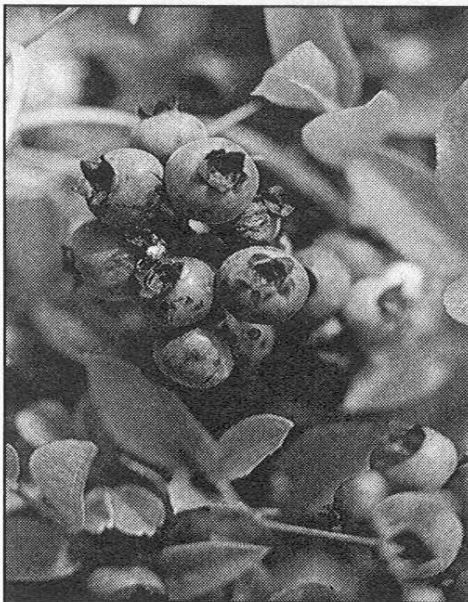


North American Waterfowl
Management Plan
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EASTERN HABITAT JOINT VENTURE

Wetlands and Blueberries

The wild blueberry industry on PEI has undergone a rapid expansion in recent years. Many properties containing blueberry lands also support wetland habitats. While some people still consider wetlands to be wastelands of little value to humans, wetlands are very productive areas that perform essential ecological functions. This fact sheet has been prepared to assist growers in managing wetlands on blueberry lands.



Blueberries

What is a Wetland?

A wetland is an area of land saturated with water or covered with water for at least part of the year.

Wetlands should not be confused with land that is simply *wet*; the presence of aquatic vegetation is indicative of a wetland habitat. Wetlands on PEI include ponds, marshes, bogs, and swamps.

Wetland Benefits

Wetlands are very productive areas that provide quality wildlife habitat. Ducks and geese, frogs, trout, mink, and muskrats are just a few of the species that live in and around wetlands. Many other species including warblers, raccoons, and woodcock are attracted to the wetland's edge. Predators like the red fox and hawks like the northern harrier are attracted to the abundance of prey species. Wetlands are important to these and many other wildlife species.

Wetlands help to maintain the health of the environment. Wetland vegetation can purify water by removing excessive nutrients and bacteria. Nitrogen and phosphorous inputs are broken down or assimilated by wetland plants and microorganisms, while bacteria are trapped and die in the dense vegetation. Wetlands play a role in maintaining water quality for humans as well as wildlife.

Wetlands also store surface water. In drier seasons this provides a source of water for living things and helps to maintain the water table. Surface flow is stabilized by wetlands after heavy rains. This allows sediments to settle out and helps to protect downstream areas from flooding and erosion.

Wetland Conservation on Blueberry Lands

Following these simple guidelines will help to ensure that wetlands can coexist with blueberry production.

*maintain a buffer zone of natural vegetation around wetlands. Buffer zones provide wildlife habitat, protect wildlife from human activities, filter contaminants from surface run-off and contribute to maintaining biodiversity.



Wetland protected by buffer zone

*be careful when burning blueberry areas. Ensure that the fire remains within the blueberry growing area. Burning within the wetland or buffer zone or using the wetland as a natural firebreak destroys wildlife and wildlife habitat.

NOTE: Remember that wetlands are protected by law. A watercourse alteration permit is required before undertaking any activities that could alter a wetland.

*use caution when applying pesticides to eliminate drift into non blueberry areas. Pesticides can be harmful to non-target plants and animals.

*limit human disturbance in and around the wetland and buffer zone. Drive around wetlands rather than through with equipment. Limit forest harvesting in the buffer zone to single tree selection cutting.

*install wood duck, tree swallow, and bat boxes in and around wetlands to provide additional wildlife habitat.

Additional Information

For further information or technical assistance contact the Department of Technology and Environment, Fish and Wildlife Division (902)368-4683.



Ducks Unlimited Canada



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