

Environment
CanadaEnvironnement
Canada

Canada

[Français](#)[Contact Us](#)[Help](#)[Search](#)[Canada Site](#)[What's New](#)[Topics](#)[Publications](#)[Weather](#)[Home](#)[About Us](#)**Quick Links:**[Programs](#)[Publications](#)[Site Map](#)**Sites:**

- ▶ [Acid Rain Biomonitoring](#)
- ▶ [Ecological Gifts](#)
- ▶ [National Wildlife Week](#)
- ▶ [Ontario Eastern Habitat Joint Venture](#)
- ▶ [Species at Risk in Ontario](#)
- ▶ [Wetlands of Ontario](#)
- ▶ [Wildlife Enforcement](#)
- ▶ [Project WILDSpace™](#)

Planning Work in or Around Wetlands?

When considering a project, it is important to remember that the essential physical, chemical and biological processes of wetlands are varied and complex. Wetlands have different functions throughout a watershed, all of which are needed to maintain healthy lakes, rivers and streams. Since a wetland does not function in isolation from the rest of the landscape, land use activities outside the wetland, can have an impact. For example, wells and septic systems located outside of a wetland can have detrimental effects on groundwater within a wetland. Also, impervious surfaces, such as roads, asphalt or concrete paths, and retaining walls, can change water drainage and alter the balance of water in a wetland.

Ducks, marsh birds, osprey, frogs, turtles, muskrat and several fish species depend on wetlands for their survival. Many wildlife species, such as deer, mink, pheasant, waterfowl, and songbirds, use wetlands as well as nearby upland habitats. Think of these upland areas as being part of, rather than separate from, a wetland's functions. Encourage the growth of grasses, shrubs, or trees around these areas to provide a buffer from surrounding land uses in order to protect both wetlands and uplands.

Buffers are natural areas of grasses, shrubs and trees that shelter sensitive wetlands and their inhabitants from adjacent land uses. These areas help to encourage ground nesting birds and other wildlife to use the wetland and also help trap soils and nutrients, reduce erosion, and protect wetlands from human disturbances. Many fish and wildlife species are more sensitive to disturbance during certain times of the year, such as when breeding and raising young. Therefore, although narrow buffers are sometimes adequate, in many situations much wider buffers are required. Landowners can establish or enlarge buffer areas by not mowing, and planting native grass, shrub, and tree species. Many nurseries specialize in selling native species appropriate for such areas.

Remember, wetlands that have been damaged by human impacts are difficult to restore. Mistakes can be costly. Before you undertake any work in or around wetlands consider some of the following basic principles:

- Maintain existing natural drainage in the wetland.
- Disturb wetland soils as little as possible.
- Minimize the amount of sediment, nutrients and contaminants that enter the wetland.
- Maintain, protect or establish essential upland habitat and provide a suitably wide buffer to this habitat which will protect it from disturbances from nearby land use.
- Avoid areas used by spawning fish, breeding amphibians, nesting birds, and other wildlife for rearing young.
- Harvest wetland resources or resources on nearby lands in a sustainable manner.

[NEXT - Getting Started](#)

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

[Top of Page](#)

[Français](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help](#) | [Search](#) | [Canada Site](#)
[What's New](#) | [Topics](#) | [Publications](#) | [Weather](#) | [Home](#) | [About Us](#)

part of Environment Canada's Green Lane™

[Webmaster](#)

Last Updated: 2005-10-10
Last Reviewed: 2005-10-10

[Important Notices and Disclaimers](#)

URL: <http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/docs/planning-e.html>