

Environment and Conservation

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Policy for Development in Wetlands

POLICY DIRECTIVE

Division:	Water Resources Management	P.D.	W.R. 97-2	
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Subject:

Development in Wetlands

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Wetlands, which include bogs, fens, marsh, swamps, and shallow water, collect and store runoff, moderate and attenuate downstream flood flows, reduce downstream flooding and erosion, clean and purify water, recharge groundwater zones, and provide unique habitat for plants and animals. The wetlands of Newfoundland and Labrador are increasingly being altered from their natural state to support alternative land uses such as agriculture, urbanization, industrial development, and recreation. Unplanned and imprudent development of wetlands, including drainage, infilling, and channelization, have detrimental effects on the wetlands' and downstream water quality and water quantity, and on terrestrial and aquatic habitat, life, flora and fauna. The potential consequences of impacts on water resources include structural damage to bridges and culverts from increased flood flows; river bed erosion causing siltation; and detrimental impacts on fish resources, drinking water quality and recreational uses of water bodies.

The problem facing wetland management is that the ecological and socio-economic benefits of these ecosystems are usually not directly measurable and in many instances are not recognized until it is too late. The extensive nature of wetlands, peatlands in particular, in this province means that there is room for more developments to occur to meet social and economic needs, as long as hydrologic and environmental impacts are minimized.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This policy will establish the criteria for issuing a permit under Section 48 of the *Water Resources Act*, SNL 2002 cW-4.014, for all development activities in and affecting wetlands. The objective of the policy is to permit developments in wetlands which do not adversely affect the water quantity, water quality, hydrologic characteristics or functions, and terrestrial and aquatic habitats of the wetlands.

3.0 LEGISLATION

Water Resources Act, SNL 2002 cW-4.01, ("the *Act*") sections 30, 48 and 64

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Body of Water -	(Statutory definition from the <i>Act</i>) "body of water" means a surface or subterranean source of fresh or salt water within the jurisdiction of the province, whether that source usually contains liquid or frozen water or not, and includes water above the bed of the sea that is within the jurisdiction of the province, a river, stream, brook, creek, watercourse, lake, pond, spring, lagoon, ravine, gully, canal, wetland and other flowing or standing water and the land occupied by that body of water
Wetland -	(Statutory definition from the <i>Act</i>) "wetland" means land that has the water table at, near or above the land surface and includes bogs, fens, marshes, swamps and other shallow open water areas
Wetland development -	"Wetland development" means the carrying out of an activity or operation which includes the construction of ditches, mechanical disturbance of the ground, alteration of normal water level fluctuations, infilling, drainage, dredging, channelization, and removal of vegetation cover and/or organic matter on a wetland for social or economic benefits, or the making of any change in the use or the intensity of use of any wetland which affects its hydrologic characteristics or functions.

5.0 POLICIES

5.1 Developments Not Permitted

5.5.1 Infilling, drainage, dredging, channelization, removal of vegetation cover or removal of soil or organic cover of wetlands which could aggravate flooding problems or have unmitigable adverse water quality or water quantity or hydrologic impacts will not be permitted.

5.5.2 Developments of wetlands which are located within the recharge zones of domestic, municipal or private groundwater wells will not be permitted.

5.5.3 Placing, depositing or discharging any raw sewage, refuse, municipal and industrial wastes, fuel or fuel containers, pesticides, herbicides or other chemicals or their containers, or any other material which impairs or has the potential to impair the water quality of wetlands will not be permitted

5.2 Developments Requiring Written Permission

The following developments affecting wetlands will be permitted subject to the prior written permission of the Minister of Environment and Conservation (the "Minister") in accordance with the *Act*:

5.2.1 Removal of the surface vegetation cover of wetlands for extraction of peat, or for preparing the area for agricultural or forestry activities.

5.2.2 Construction of ditches, tile fields and other types of flow conveyances to drain wetlands for extraction of peat, or for preparing the area for agricultural or forestry operations.

5.2.3 Removal of the top soil or organic cover of wetlands for use as horticultural or fuel peat, or for preparing the area for agricultural or forestry activities.

5.2.4 Infilling, dredging, or any other disturbance of wetlands for the construction of permanent or temporary roads, bridges, culverts, trails, power and telecommunication transmission lines, pipelines, etc., through wetlands which would necessitate only minor disturbances to the vegetation and organic cover, the flow drainage pattern of the area and ground slope.

5.2.5 Infilling, dredging or other disturbance of wetlands for the construction of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional facilities or extension and upgrading of existing buildings and facilities within wetland areas.

5.2.6 Development related to recreational activities including the setting up of camp grounds, permanent and semi-permanent facilities, etc., on wetland areas.

5.2.7 Construction of flow control structures to alter the normal water level fluctuations of wetlands for the purposes of enhancing the quality or quantity of fish and other wildlife habitat.

5.3 Implementation of Mitigative Measures

All uses and developments of wetlands resulting in potentially adverse changes to water quantity or water quality or hydrologic characteristics or functions of the wetlands will require the implementation of mitigative measures to be specified in the terms and conditions for the environmental approval.

5.4 Restoration Measures

The terms and conditions of the environmental approval will specify the restoration measures to be implemented upon cessation of activities or abandonment of facilities on wetland areas.

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