

What is a wetland?

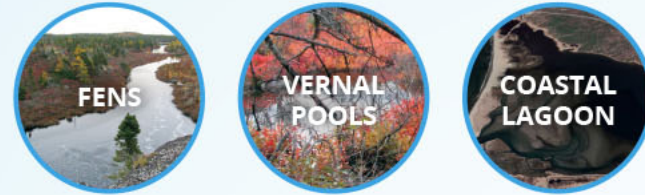
Wetlands are low lying areas of land where fresh or saltwater gathers. Wetlands, which contain water loving plants, may be quite small or span across very large areas. Wetlands hold standing or very slow-moving water and can be wet or dry depending on the season.

What are the top THREATS to wetlands?

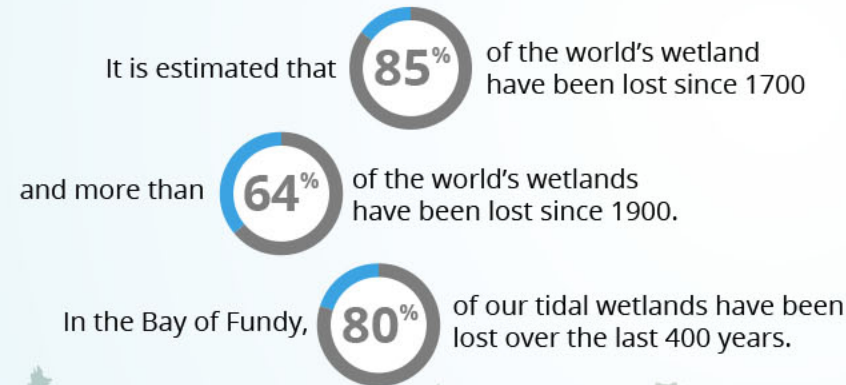
- Infilling of wetlands** for development (for residential, industrial and infrastructure projects)
- Climate change**, habitat shifting and changes to the hydrologic cycle
- Conversion of wetlands** for economic development purposes, such as agricultural, forestry and mining
- Excessive run-off** of pollutants from agricultural, fertilizers, and nutrients
- Invasive non-native species** (e.g., Japanese Knotweed)
- Household sewage**, leaking septic tanks, and urban wastewater
- Reckless off-road vehicle use**
- Poor stormwater management**
- Roads and driveways**



? Did you know that there are many different types of wetlands?



Wetlands are among the most biological, productive and diverse habitats in the world.



What are the benefits of wetlands?

- Wetlands act as natural sponges** by absorbing rainfall, allowing groundwater to replenish, and reducing flood impact.
- Wetlands clean water.** Some wetland plants and microorganisms absorb harmful pollutants and excess nutrients. Slow-moving water in wetlands allows sediment to settle on the bottom, trapping it before it gets washed into our lakes and streams (and drinking water supplies).
- Nova Scotia is facing severe sea level rise predictions. Tidal wetlands (salt marshes) protect coastal communities and infrastructure from climate change. These **wetlands buffer storms** by absorbing damaging wave energy. This is particularly important when hurricanes or severe storms come ashore.
- Wetlands are critical for biodiversity!** Wetlands are home to thousands of species, including plants, birds, amphibians and reptiles. These crucial species depend upon wetland habitats for their survival. Many of our unique and at-risk species, like the Blanding's Turtle, call wetlands home.
- The high storage capacity of wetlands helps **safeguard against dry seasons and drought** by soaking in and holding large quantities of water.
- A GPI Atlantic study, (2000), on Nova Scotia's water resource values wetlands provide an estimated **\$7.9 billion worth of benefits** in ecosystem services to Nova Scotians annually.
- Wetlands, particularly salt marshes, have **huge amounts of carbon stored** in their soils, and have the capacity with each tide to capture more. By protecting and restoring these wetlands, we have the opportunity to help mitigate climate change.
- Wetlands offer space** for recreation, food harvesting and overall community wellbeing. These important areas are sites for wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, canoeing, hiking, and gathering of edible and medicinal plants.
- Many wetlands are **important places used by the Mi'kmaq peoples** for hunting, trapping, fishing, harvesting shellfish and gathering traditionally used medicinal plants. They are considered important over-wintering areas for eels which are a source of food, skins, and medicines for Mi'kmaq all year.

What are the consequences of wetland destruction?

We need to protect our wetlands to avoid reduction of water supply, reduced water quality, loss of coastal climate change buffering, and loss of biodiversity. When we destroy wetlands, we can also be faced with increase abundance of weeds and mosquito issues, an increased risk and severity of algae blooms, loss of important protection during severe storms, and an increase risk of both floods and droughts.

PROTECTING WETLANDS PROTECTS US!