

Wetland Identification Checklist

There is more development than ever before in PEI. Properties that have not been developed previously due to drainage issues are now being considered for development.

Before you consider building, it is important to determine if there are sensitive environmental features, like wetlands. All wetlands are protected under the *Environmental Protection Act*.

It can be easy to identify wetlands like ponds and streams. However wetlands can include habitat that is more difficult to identify as wetlands, such as shrub swamps, wooded swamps and bogs.

The checklist below can help identify potential wetlands on your property.

Is it a mapped wetland?

Check the provincial mapping portal for mapped wetlands. Visit the PEI Wetland Mapping Guide to get started.

Even if the maps do not indicate the presence of a wetland, it's important to complete the checklist to ensure there are no unmapped wetlands on the property.



Is there evidence of water?

Check if answer is **YES**

Are there ponds, streams, springs or seeps in the area?

Are there "low spots" where water collects, or the ground is soggy for at least a week during late spring or summer?

Is the ground soggy under foot, or does water come to the surface when you step?

If the site is adjacent a farm field, are there areas at the field edges where crops do not grow or the plants are stressed?

Are there drainage channels or has the site been ditched or tilled in spots to "dry it out"?

Are there water marks or stains on tree trunks?

Are water-loving plants present?

Check if answer is **YES**

Are these plants present: cattails, sedges, rushes, Sphagnum moss, blue flag iris, sensitive fern, marsh marigold, ostrich fern, cinnamon fern, dwarf raspberry?

Are these shrubs present: speckled alder, dogwoods, willows, leatherleaf?

Are these trees present: red maple, eastern larch, eastern white cedar, black spruce, white or black ash, willow?

Do plants have roots growing from their stems above the soil?

If you are having trouble identifying plant species reference the PEI Wetland Field Guide.



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Are there wet soils or signs of them?

Dig a hole down 20 inches.

Check if answer is **YES**

Is the soil dark brown or black?

Does the soil smell like rotten eggs, feel greasy, mushy, or wet?

Can you squeeze out water?

Does water enter the hole after a few minutes?

Ask yourself these questions:

Check if answer is **YES**

Are there places you wouldn't drive a motor vehicle for fear of sinking?

Does the vegetation look different in a spot lower than the surrounding areas?

Do you hear frogs in the spring from that wet area?

If the answer is YES to any of these questions, there are indicators present that you may have a wetland on your property. At this point you should contact the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action to confirm the presence of wetland and may need to consider alternative locations for development. Depending on the extent of the identified unmapped wetland the Department may advise you to hire a wetland delineator.

Why are all wetlands protected?

Wetlands are an important component of the water cycle that we rely on for drinking water. They help purify water by trapping and breaking down contaminants like waste and sediments.

Wetlands help stabilize rivers, streams and coastlines. Disturbing or building on poorly draining soil can put your buildings and neighboring buildings at risk of flood damage.

Wetlands are important habitats for many species of wildlife and wetlands like forested swamps act as carbon sinks, capturing carbon we emit which reduces greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.



If you are unsure of wetland status, contact Environment, Energy and Climate Action for more information.

Phone: 902-368-5700 Toll-free: 1-866-368-5044 - DeptEECA@gov.pe.ca

PrinceEdwardIsland.ca/WetlandID

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