

Environmental Update ...

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Protecting Water Quality

While human actions can have a negative impact on groundwater and surface water resources in Prince Edward Island, many Islanders are taking action to protect our water quality. In the last in this three-part series, this week's column takes a closer look at how these actions are helping.

Preventing soil erosion is key to protecting water quality; and crop rotation and other soil conservation measures will go a long way toward that goal. Good crop rotation and practices such as conservation tillage, winter cover and strip cropping, lead to healthier soil. It has a greater resistance to erosion and is better able to absorb and hold moisture so there's less runoff. A healthier soil is also more productive and, therefore, requires less fertilizer. This is significant because fertilizers, as well as manure and sewage, contribute to high levels of nitrates in groundwater and excess nutrients in surface water. That's why good nutrient management planning is also important to ensure that no more fertilizer than necessary is applied to land.



Other practices which are helping reduce the effects of soil erosion on Island waterways include the use of silt fences and other erosion control measures in road construction; structures such as diversion terraces and hedgerows; and buffer zones on watercourses and wetlands. In addition to trapping sediment from runoff, buffer zones help filter other contaminants that can harm the aquatic environment such as pesticides.

While many of these measures relate to farmers and other landowners, **all** Islanders can help protect our drinking water and contribute to healthier waterways. Many municipalities have taken action by improving wastewater treatment facilities; and homeowners can do their part by properly disposing of hazardous materials and ensuring their septic systems and oil tanks meet current standards and are properly maintained. All of these measures are important to prevent contamination of our drinking water.



For more information on how you can help protect water quality, call the Water Resources Division: 368-5044 or toll free 1-866-368-5044.

To read the entire series Protecting Water Quality, visit our web site at www.gov.pe.ca/go/waterquality.

This week's Environmental Update was prepared by



Fisheries, Aquaculture and Environment