

Landowner Wetland Management and Incentives for Wetland Restoration

Ecosystem Services Fact Sheet

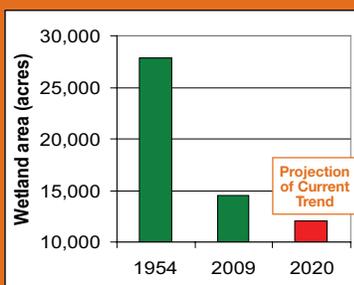
Fast Facts

Wetlands provide important ecosystem services to local residents.

Wetlands:

- improve water quality;
- allow water to collect and recharge into the ground;
- regulate climate;
- control flood, drought and erosion;
- provide opportunities for fishing and hunting; and
- provide aesthetic, educational, cultural, and spiritual benefits.

The number and area of wetlands in the Credit River watershed is decreasing, threatening the ecosystem services they provide to residents. If past trends continue, 18% (or 2,573 acres) of the remaining wetlands in the watershed could be lost by 2020.



The Study

Protecting existing wetlands and restoring those that were lost is critical. A large number of opportunities for wetland enhancement and restoration in the Credit River watershed are on private lands.

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) conducted a study of rural landowners (farm and non-farm) in the Credit River watershed to determine:

1. how they manage wetlands on their properties;
2. their attitudes towards wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide;
3. their willingness to take on wetland restoration or enhancement projects; and
4. their preference for incentives to take on such projects.

The study showed that farm and non-farm landowners share similar perceptions of wetlands and the services they provide, but their opinions on monetary forms of incentives differ.

Key Findings

Land management

- Over 50 per cent of landowners surveyed have wetlands on their land
- Over 30 per cent of respondents believe that they did work to improve or enhance wetlands on their land (claims not verified)
- Over 6 per cent of landowners surveyed believe that they created new wetlands on their land (claims not verified)
- Landowners that created or enhanced wetlands typically financed the work themselves

Attitudes about wetlands and the services they provide

- Most landowners surveyed felt that the current state and health of wetlands in the Credit River watershed was good
- Water purification was ranked the most important ecosystem service
- Recreation and education were ranked the least important

Key Findings CONTINUED

Non-monetary incentives to enhance, protect or create new wetlands

- Receiving more information on how the decline in wetland area affects them personally was ranked the most important motivator by landowners
- Public recognition of work done on private property was ranked the least important motivator
- Technical assistance was reported to motivate landowners more than public recognition

Monetary incentives to enhance, protect or create new wetlands

- Landowners surveyed indicated one time payments to be more motivational than annual payments



Farm-specific results

- Farmers, on average, indicated they would require an annual payment of \$656/acre/year to set aside productive land for wetland conservation and \$172/acre/year for marginal land
- It was estimated that approximately 40 to 57 per cent of farmers would participate in a wetland restoration program, depending on the program scenario and payment rate offered

Non-farm-specific results

- When asked about wetland restoration projects on their property with upfront cost that are fully funded by a third party, 67 per cent of non-farm respondents stated that they do not require annual payments
- The remaining 33 per cent of non-farm respondents indicated that in most cases they would require annual payments ranging from \$199 to \$434 per year. The amount would depend on the type of non-financial incentives provided and the type of wetland habitat created or enhanced on their land.

Participation in wetland restoration programs

This research suggests that with the appropriate program design and incentives, a significant number of landowners in the Credit River watershed would be willing to participate in a wetland enhancement/restoration program.

How the findings can be used

1. Survey results will be used to inform future wetland restoration campaigns. Knowing which audiences are most receptive to wetland enhancements on their land will allow for a more focused and effective campaign.
2. Results indicate a gap between people's perceptions of wetland health and the actual facts on the ground. Wetland health and coverage in the Credit River watershed are diminishing, however respondents largely shared the belief that the current state of wetlands was good. This indicates a need for greater outreach and education regarding wetland health.

The full report is available at: www.creditvalleyca.ca/egs

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Possibility grows here.