

Wetland and Stream Habitat

There has been significant loss of wetland and stream habitat in southern Ontario. These vital natural areas need to be protected and restored. Wetlands protect the quality and quantity of our groundwater by acting as natural filters, providing groundwater recharge areas, regulating stream flows, and storing flood waters. Riparian buffers along streambanks are important for reducing erosion and filtering contamination. Wetlands and streams provide fish and wildlife habitat.



Riparian buffers help protect our creeks and streams

- Wetland and stream habitat is an important aspect of sustaining the health and natural integrity of the watershed.
- Conservation Halton supports the protection and enhancement of wetlands and streams for each watershed in its jurisdiction.
- Scientific literature indicates that wetlands should comprise a minimum of 10% of a watershed. These targets are required for the ecological needs of fish and wildlife and the protection of groundwater sources.
- Scientific studies also indicate that at least 75% of the length of streams should be naturally vegetated to maintain healthy creeks. Streams should have a 30 metre natural riparian buffer on both sides as a minimum to reduce impacts from adjacent land use.
- Riparian buffers are the single most effective protection for our water resources. These strips of grass, shrubs, and/or trees along the banks of rivers and streams filter polluted runoff and provide a transition zone between water and human land use. Buffers are also complex ecosystems that provide habitat and improve the stream communities they shelter.
- Natural riparian buffers have been lost in many places over the years. Restoring them will be an important step forward for water quality, riverbank stability, wildlife, and aesthetics in the Halton watershed.
- Wetland and stream rehabilitation efforts should be focused initially in locations such as headwater areas, groundwater recharge sites, and shorelines.
- Wetlands also require naturally vegetated buffer areas that provide wildlife habitat and preserve wetland functions.

Summary

Conservation Halton's viewpoint on wetland and stream habitat promotes the value of protecting these natural areas for the health and natural integrity of the watershed and the safety of our drinking water.

Natural Cover on Watershed Creeks

- The enforcement of effective regulations is essential with development in flood plains and hazard areas, interference with wetlands, and alteration of watercourses.

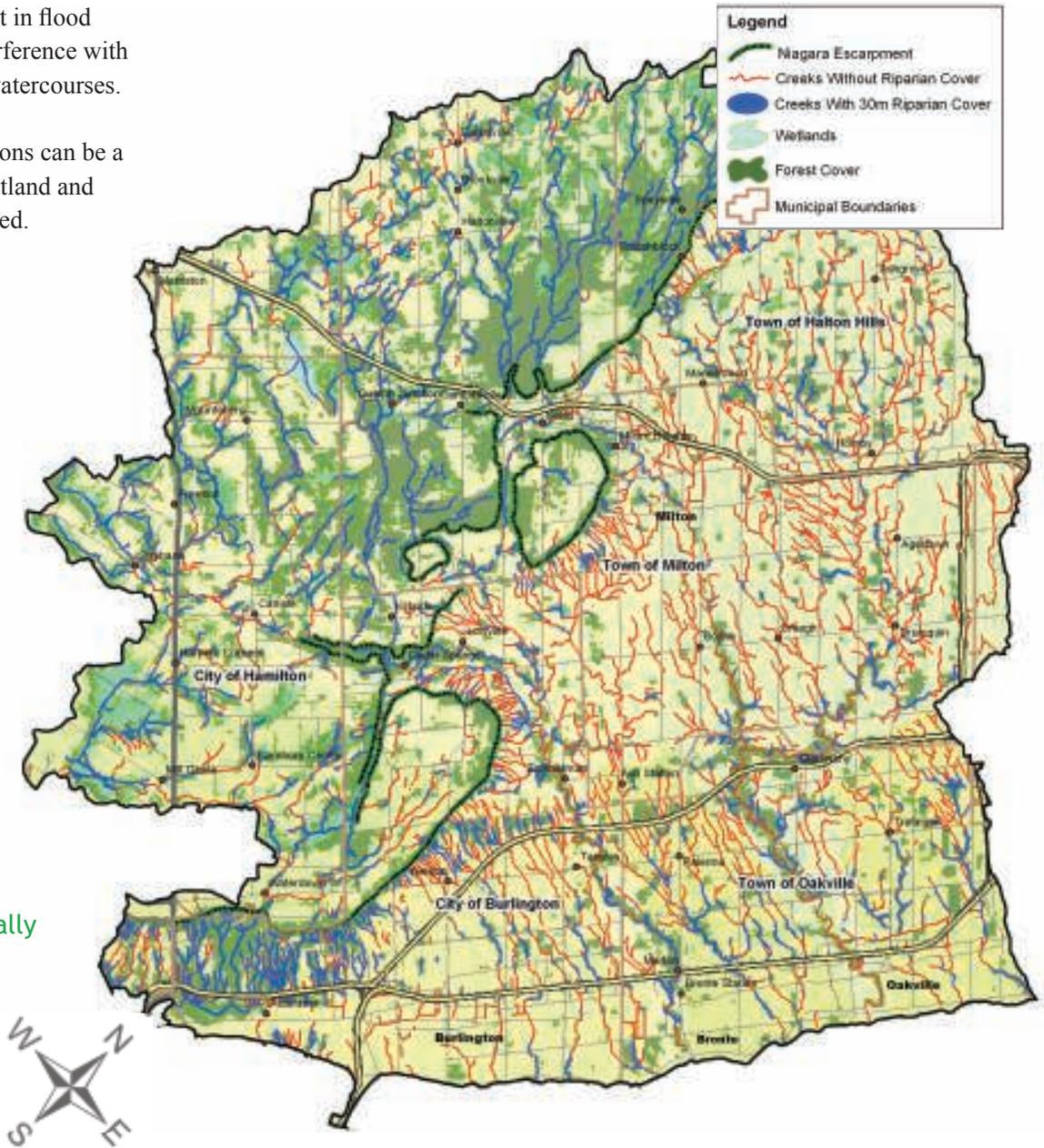
- Watershed stewardship actions can be a significant way to protect wetland and stream habitat in the watershed.

Conservation Halton offers programs for local residents interested in environmental stewardship initiatives on their properties.

How much wetland and stream habitat is enough?

Conservation Halton's watershed includes 964 square kilometres of land drained by 17 watercourses that flow into Lake Ontario.

To maintain healthy creeks, a minimum of 75% of the length of streams should be naturally vegetated including at least 30 metre buffers on each side to reduce impacts from adjacent land use.



Conservation Halton Natural Champion for a Healthy Watershed



Conservation Halton is the community based environmental agency that protects, restores and manages the natural resources in its watershed. Conservation Halton has staff that includes ecologists, land use planners, engineers, foresters and educators, along with a network of volunteers, who are guided by a Board of Directors that includes municipally elected and appointed citizens. Conservation Halton is recognized for its stewardship of creeks, forests and Niagara Escarpment lands through science based programs and services.

For more information about Wetland and Stream Habitat contact Conservation Halton:

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