



Ph: 902-838-3351; Email: sea@pei.aibn.com; Website: www.seapei.org

WELCOME to SEA's – Environment Message of the Month:

Here you will read about important topics, issues and concerns that we think will be of interest to you, the reader. You will learn about the activities and projects SEA is doing to protect and enhance the environment and how you can become involved in making southeastern PEI a better place to live, work and play.

Red River Valleys

– Is this where some of PEI's watersheds are headed? –

Like the canary in the coalmine, PEI rivers tell us a lot about the health of our environment. They are the lifeblood of the province in the same way that your veins act like rivers carrying blood throughout your body to keep you alive. Many rivers run clear with clean gravel bottoms, have native trees and shrubs growing along their banks providing stabilization and shade for fish and other wildlife, and of course, there are plenty of fish for the devoted recreational fisher and the skilled mink that can't resist a quick snack.

Unfortunately, other rivers run red with tonnes of silt during heavy rain events. This causes huge negative impacts on the health of the system because it covers important gravel beds used for spawning, it will carry toxic chemicals from roads and fields into the waterway increasing the potential for a fish kill, and it depletes oxygen levels which then contributes to anoxic events in

ponds and estuaries. It is these very waterways that SEA is working hard to restore. This summer, our crew is working in the headwaters of the Valleyfield River clearing debris, cutting back alders, removing large blockages and restoring water flow – it's HOT, it's WET, it's DIRTY, and it's a BIG JOB, but it must be done! We are committed to doing this work so that our rivers will be restored to what they once were, making them some of the best places on PEI to fish and spend time!!

In just the past few weeks, we have cleared a total of 11kms of stream, we have removed 11 major and 14 minor/medium blockages that were impeding fish passage and holding back sediment. Four kilometers of thick alder swales have been thinned, and alders growing in the stream have been removed. Four crossings on the river have been assessed and SEA is working with landowners to address these collapsing structures. Five groundwater springs have been cleared to allow water to pass freely and assist fish in reaching these important spawning areas.

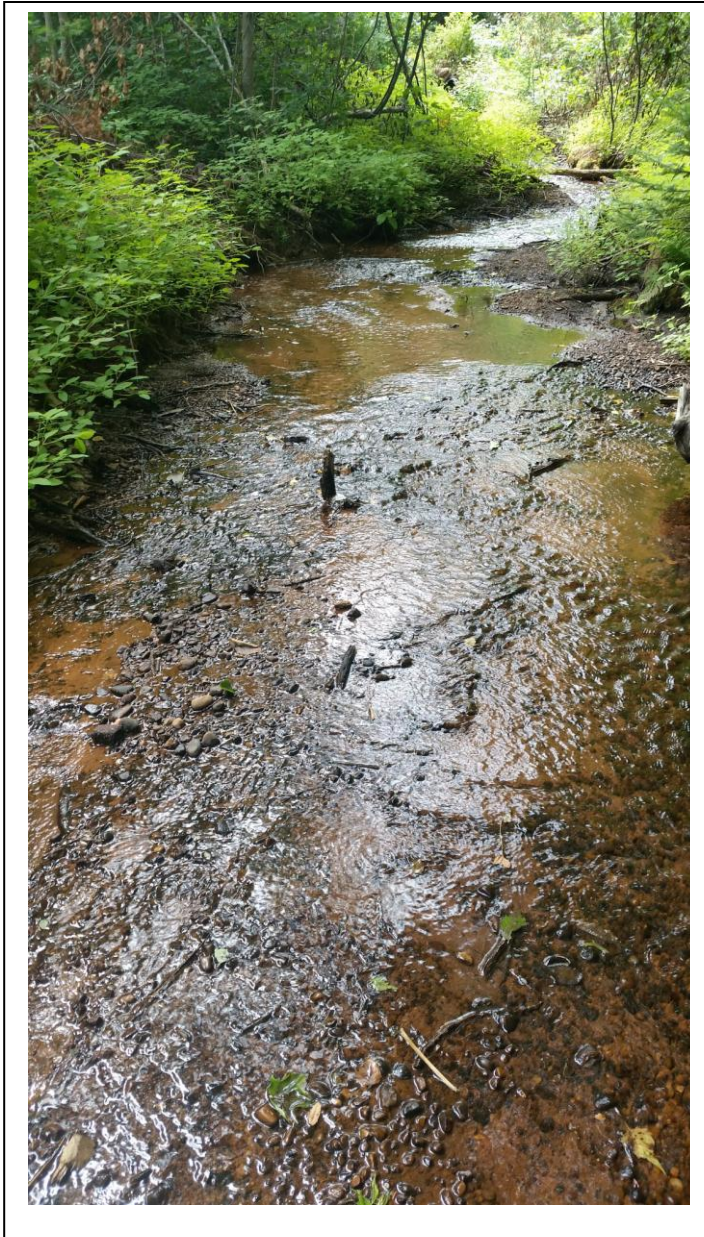
While we carry out this very important work, one of the major challenges that we face is *sedimentation*, or *siltation*. Wherever there is cleared land, whether from dirt roads, farming, logging, road building, or construction, PEI's sandy soils are vulnerable to erosion and will move quickly with water. Water collects at the low points on the land where our waterways are located, so if the sediment isn't captured by vegetation or a barrier, that is where the silt will end up – in our rivers, streams, ponds and estuaries. Some sediment movement is natural, but heavy amounts of it can literally destroy an ecosystem. This is especially true if pesticides and nitrates/fertilizer are mixed in because this can cause fish kills, like those we've seen in the news recently.

GovPEI requires establishing/maintaining a mandatory 15m bufferzone along all Island streams and wetlands, but in many areas this is not wide enough. There is good evidence that true riparian zones (the strips of land beside waterways) that have been planted with trees and shrubs offer the best protection. They fill up with roots and plant growth and are undisturbed year after year. Because farmers and loggers are unable to use buffers for production, then taking the extra step to plant trees and shrubs would show a true commitment to protecting waterways.

One nearby example of what silt can do to a waterway is found at the Loane Road bridge, just off the Valleyfield Road. This used to be an excellent swimming and fishing hole where people would launch small boats in the pond, but no more!! The sediment islands that have built up over the last fifteen years have made it nearly impossible to swim and launch boats in the pond. SEA is considering a large dredging project to remove the silt, but it is a big expensive job. We are asking the community for help and assistance in obtaining the resources required. If this is something you would like to help us achieve, please contact us, we would love to hear from you.

Many Islanders recognize the value of clean running streams to wildlife, but these waterways also reflect our attitude about respecting the environment. The damage from poor land practices is often out of sight, a long way from fields, forest or roads. Usually we don't have to build or create anything, just protect what we already have.

Healthy stream: Headwaters of Valleyfield River taken Aug 11, 2016



Not healthy stream: Loane Road bridge taken Aug 15, 2013

