



## A NEW SEASON APPROACHES

After a very warm October, it's finally feeling like winter is near. All the warm weather has allowed for a bit of an extended field season and we've been very busy working to improve the watershed! In this edition of the Wheatley River Watershed News, we give you a recap on summer & fall projects, a look forward to upcoming workplans, lots of interesting facts about bats... and so much more!

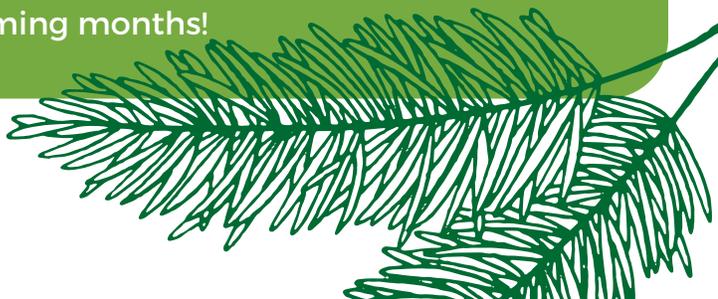
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## FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT!

We are thrilled to be one of the watershed groups to receive funding from the Supplemental 2M Fund. This fund originated from a one-time grant of \$2M that was given to the Watershed Alliance from the Province. All watershed groups were invited to submit an Expression of Interest for large enhancement projects of a complex nature that are difficult to fund or ineligible for funding under current programs.

WRIG will receive \$128,730 over 2 years to work to reconnect the Wheatley River to its floodplain along a particular section that has become entrenched. This project will help to re-establish the natural movement of sediment and to slow the rate of infilling of Rackham's Pond. Watch for more news on this project in the coming months!

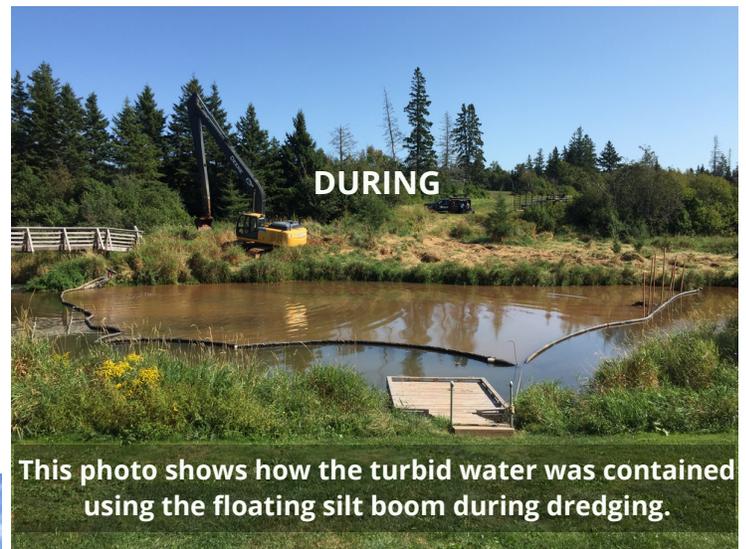


## PROJECT RECAP: SEDIMENT REMOVAL

We have spent quite a lot of time over the past few months on a major sediment removal project focused around Rackham's Pond. If you were down to the area in early September, you would have noticed a large excavator digging in the pond and exposed soils on the bank. Our goal with the excavation was to re-establish the deep-water pools for fish to take refuge in as they travel upstream through the Wheatley River. During the work, we used a weighted, floating silt boom (see photo below on right), which contained the turbid water and allowed the disturbed silt to settle out instead of washing downstream. We finished by mulching and revegetating the banks around the pond (see photo below) to prevent any further erosion.



This photo shows how much silt had built up in the pond.



This photo shows how the turbid water was contained using the floating silt boom during dredging.



This photo shows the exposed soils on the bank covered with straw to prevent erosion.

This excavation work is only one component of the project but it will likely have the biggest impact. The other components of the project focused on mitigating sediment inputs, improving canopy cover and controlling erosion in areas that we identified as high-priority. We'd like to extend a big thank you to the **PEI Climate Challenge Fund** for supporting and funding this 2-year project.

## PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



WRIG's photo contest has returned. We want you to capture our stunning watershed area! There are two entrance categories: landscape and wildlife. Photos will be judged by professional photographer John Sylvester. **PRIZES** available! Submit your entries via email to: [manager@wheatleyriver.ca](mailto:manager@wheatleyriver.ca) by **February 1, 2023**



## ALL ABOUT BATS by Robyn Caseley

Bats are one of the most misunderstood species in the world. We want to find out more about bats within this watershed and we need your help! If you have an old well on your property, know of any areas that may have hand-dug wells, or if you are interested in having a bat box installed, please contact us!

### BAT FACTS

- Most bats eat insects, making them excellent neighbours; they can catch hundreds of insects in just one hour.
- Bats can protect gardens and crops from damage and pests.
- PEI has 2 known bat species (the little brown bat & the northern *myotis*); both of which are endangered! They are 6-10 cm in length with a wingspan of 22-27cm.
- Bats are being decimated by a fungal disease called white-nose syndrome. This disease has reduced bat populations by almost 95% in eastern Canada.
- Bats hibernate from October to mid-May. They roost in tight crevices and holes, trees, caves, buildings and old wells!
- Bats only have one pup per year (in June or July), so providing them a safe haven is vital to their survival.

### Bat Myths & Misconceptions:

**Bats can become vampires: THEY CAN NOT!**

**Bats lay eggs: THEY DO NOT!**

**Bats are mammals and give birth to live pups.**

**Bats are blind: THEY ARE NOT!**

**In fact, bats are able to see in the dark.**

**Bats are rodents: NOT EVEN CLOSE!**

**They are more closely related to primates than mice or rats and are the only mammal to fly!**

**All bats have rabies: FALSE!**

**Less than 1% of bats have rabies; but just like any other wild animal, if you are bitten or scratched you should seek immediate medical attention.**



## FLOATING WETLAND ISLANDS AT RACKHAM'S POND *by Robyn Caseley*

We recently completed the construction and installation of three floating wetland islands! The islands were planted with native wetland species and anchored throughout the Rackham's Pond basin, on the Wheatley River. These structures will help to improve water quality and habitat conditions for brook trout and other wildlife species in the area.

### WHAT ARE FLOATING WETLAND ISLANDS?

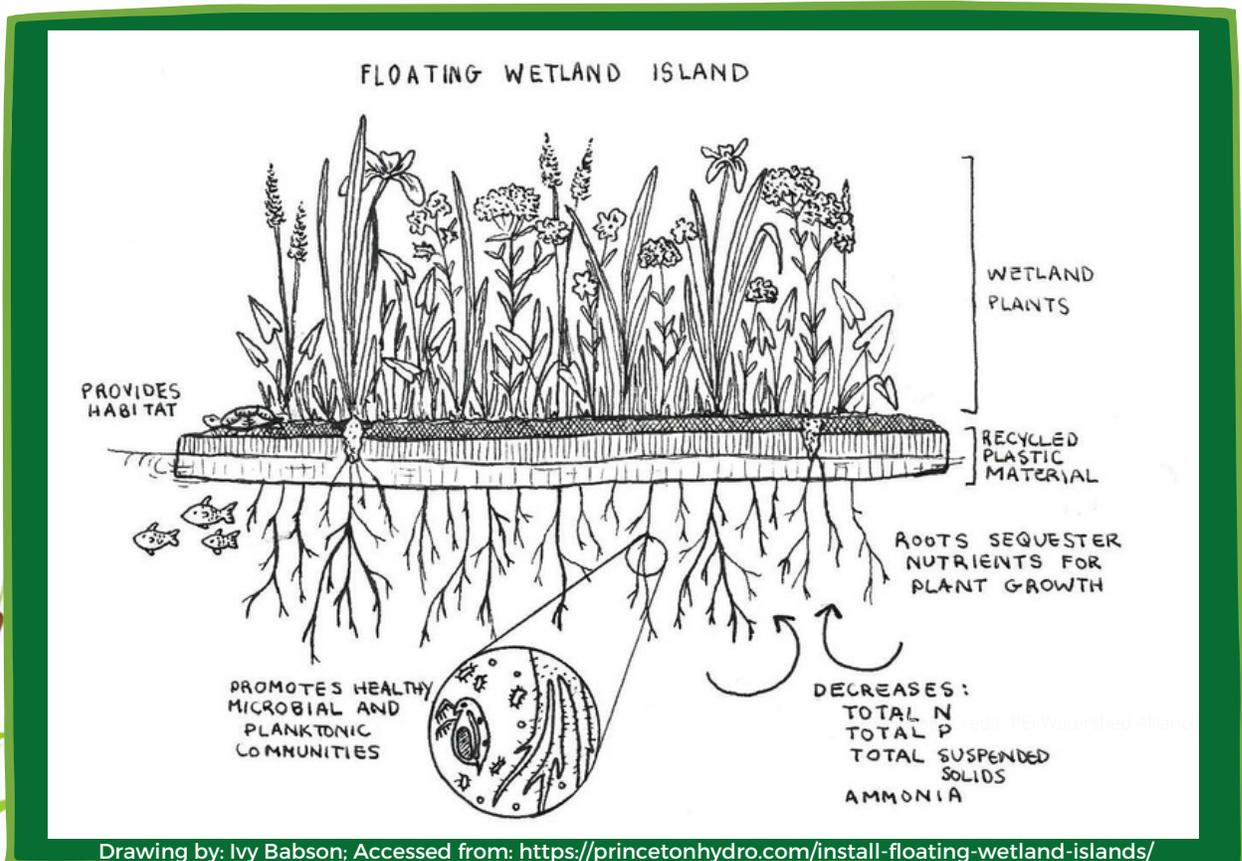
Floating wetland islands (FWIs) are small artificial platforms that are built to mimic natural wetlands and can have many benefits to water quality and wildlife. FWIs are filled with wetland plant species native to the area. Once established, roots will grow down through the platform and into the water.

### HOW ARE FLOATING WETLAND ISLANDS CONSTRUCTED?

There are many designs that can be used to build FWIs. We built a basic 6x6-ft frame with leftover lumber and attached a 20-ft long piece of 4" drain pipe stuffed with foam pool noodles around the perimeter of the frame for flotation. We lined the frame with small-mesh plastic fencing and covered it with coconut fiber matting and peat moss. We planted swamp milkweed, blue flag iris, tall cord grass, joe-pye weed, and blue vervain into the peat moss. Then we launched and anchored our FWIs!

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FLOATING WETLAND ISLANDS?

FWIs can improve water quality by removing excess nutrients from the water through uptake into the plants' root systems, and by reducing suspended sediments. These structures benefit fish by providing cover to protect them and shade to cool the water temperature. The FWIs can also provide habitat and food sources to birds, amphibians, and insects.



**WRIG would like to thank the Wildlife Conservation Fund for continuing to support our watershed group and funding this floating wetland islands project.**

# UPCOMING WORKPLANS

We know that hurricane Fiona destroyed many trees in the buffer zones around Wheatley River but the extent of these impacts is still unknown. In May 2023, we plan to assess the damages by conducting stream surveys, which will allow us to focus our summer work in the worst areas first. It is important that we are able to access and survey each individual stream as the system is all connected, and trout will travel through the entire system if it is accessible. Our main focus for field crews in the summer of 2023 will be clearing blockages in the streams.

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!



We are asking community members, landowners, and new property owners to get in touch. Please provide us with your name, address, and phone number so that we can reach out to you in the spring and assess the damage along your section of the river.



Email: [manager@wheatleyriver.ca](mailto:manager@wheatleyriver.ca) Phone: 902-963-3198

# BARACHOIS BEACH DUNES RESTORATION

by Hailey Blacquiere



In the aftermath of hurricane Fiona, there are many ecosystems left ruffled and in unideal conditions. One ecosystem in particular that all Islanders can connect with, is our beautiful PEI beaches. Within WRIG's watershed area, Barachois Beach, also known as golden sands, is a beautiful sand spit that changed significantly during the storm. We feel that something needs to be done to help restore and protect this stunning beach that so many call home, including the Piping Plovers!



Sand dunes are very sensitive ecosystems that are constantly changing and slow to build. The natural dunes along the Barachois sand spit do not have the added protection of being backed by a cliff face which makes it more difficult to collect sand deposits. Despite these difficulties, the dunes have been growing significantly in this location for over 15 years. Sadly, the damage inflicted during the storm wiped the dunes out completely in some spots along the beach and heavily in others.



Parks Canada has dealt with dune blowouts by placing dead coniferous trees into the dunes to act as natural catchments for blowing sand and to provide structure to the growing dune. We would like to try this technique along the worst sections at Barachois Beach with the help of your Christmas tree! What a great way to repurpose your tree after the holidays and to help speed up the restoration of the dunes right here in our back yard! Please watch for more details on this initiative including a tree drop-off date & time... as well as volunteer opportunities to help us place all the trees!

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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Phone: 902-963-3198

Website: [www.wheatleyriver.ca](http://www.wheatleyriver.ca)

Office: 2184 Church Road, Rustico

 [The Wheatley River Improvement Group](https://www.facebook.com/wheatleyriverimprovementgroup)

 [@wheatleyriverimprovementgroup](https://www.instagram.com/wheatleyriverimprovementgroup)

 [@wrigpei](https://www.tiktok.com/@wrigpei)

# CORPORATE SPONSORS & FUNDING SOURCES

- Blue Bay Farms Ltd.
- Conseil Acadien de Rustico
- Creekfield Homeowner's Association
- Cymbria Campground
- Cymbria Lions Club
- D & B Developments
- Gallant's Country Food Market
- Island Honey Wine Company
- Lilacs and Lanterns
- Oyster Bed Esso
- PEI Climate Challenge Fund
- PEI Watershed Management Fund
- PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund
- PEI Jobs for Youth Program
- Rackham Electric
- Rassicot Farm
- Skills PEI Student Funding
- Storybook Adventures
- Vanco Farms Ltd.

## A Special Thanks to

### Rackham's Pond Landowners:

Grant & Nancy Rackham

Steven Rackham

Melvin & Debbie Ling

Craig & Michele Ling

Charles & Laura Lipnicki

Phillip & Shirley Weatherbee

Jody Mokler

Susan Axworthy



## WHEATLEY RIVER IMPROVEMENT GROUP 2022-23 MEMBERSHIP

Would you like to be a part of restoring and protecting our watershed? This is your chance to help; join or renew your WRIG membership! All proceeds and donations go directly back into the community as we work to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment in the watershed.

Sponsor: \$100.00

Group: \$50.00

Family: \$20.00

Individual: \$10.00

The membership form is also available online here

Please mail the completed form and payment (cash or cheque) to:  
**2184 Church Road Hunter River,  
PE, COA 1N0**

Or send an e-transfer to:  
**[manager@wheatleyriver.ca](mailto:manager@wheatleyriver.ca)**

**Thank you for your support!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Add to WRIG's email list? YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \$\_\_\_\_\_