

# News Release

## DO WETLANDS IN THE RIDEAU VALLEY REDUCE FLOODING?

RIDEAU VALLEY, April 6, 2009 — YES THEY DO! According to wetland theory, and now according to scientific research on the wetlands of the Rideau Valley itself, wetlands reduce downstream flooding by storing water after a period of heavy rain or snowmelt. As a result of that water storage in wetlands, downstream flooding is less severe.

Hydrologists at the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) have just finished an in-house study and report called "Quantifying the Importance of Wetlands in the Management of Floods and Droughts in the Rideau Valley Watershed". They estimate that all wetlands in the watershed probably reduce the 1:100 year flood by roughly 10%!

Using numerical modelling techniques, RVCA scientists were able to quantify the potential cumulative effect of the loss of wetlands on peak flow discharges and minimum dry weather flows at selected locations within the watershed. It was found that flood risk would increase if wetlands are removed or lost. The water storage function of the wetland would no longer be available.

We are fortunate that about 15% of the Rideau Valley watershed consists of wetlands. Many jurisdictions in Ontario have much smaller numbers. Of the total 15% of wetlands in the Rideau Valley, 9% are already protected under the provincial status of Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs). The remaining 6% are locally significant wetlands or non-evaluated wetlands (non-PSWs) and are not currently protected by RVCA or provincial regulations.

RVCA analysis further revealed that the 1:100 year flood flow would increase by about 4% locally across the watershed with the loss of all non-PSWs in the valley. The impact of wetland storage and flood attenuation gradually diminishes downstream from the wetland location. The full Wetland Hydrology Report is available on the RVCA website [www.rvca.ca](http://www.rvca.ca) under What's New.

Flood reduction, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, water cleaning service, water recharge to aquifers...the evidence is mounting that wetlands in the Rideau Valley provide some major, cost-effective services to people and municipalities in this watershed.

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