

Conserving Wetlands at Frontenac's Correctional Institution

by Heather Jackson, Ducks Unlimited Canada

In the heart of the City of Kingston, Ontario, lies a 36-acre degraded wetland. "Not surprising," you're thinking.

A partnership restored the wetland. "Still not surprising," you're concluding.

The restoration project is located on the grounds of the Frontenac Institution, a correctional facility where minimum security offenders are partners in the project. Now, maybe, you're surprised.

The correctional facility includes a farm that provides eggs and dairy products to many of Canada's federal institutions. According to Erling Armson, a biologist with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), "Intensive drainage of the wetland over the last 80 years, combined with grazing by dairy cattle, and cropping of the land immediately surrounding the wetlands, has resulted in a lack of wetland and upland habitat cover."

Partners of the Frontenac Project have restored five wetlands and their adjacent uplands on the pasture area of the correctional facility. They installed five water-control structures to restore and maintain the wetlands' historical water levels. The partners also constructed fencing around the habitat to restrict cattle access. These changes have improved the habitats' quality and species diversity.

Changes also have occurred in the management of the facility's farm operation, with the inmates using a conservation-oriented pasture-management system. "The Frontenac Project is an excellent example of people within the community working together to achieve environmental objectives," said Larry Stebbins, warden of Frontenac Institution. "The project also provides inmates the opportunity to learn more about the environment through their on-going participation in its development and maintenance."

The Frontenac Project also has an educational component that targets the urban and agricultural sectors of the community. Public tours are held throughout the year to demonstrate wetland values and the advantages of using conservation practices that benefit not only wildlife but also agriculture and the community.

This restoration project supports the habitat goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's Eastern Habitat Joint Venture. Management and maintenance of the wetland complex is being undertaken by DUC on behalf of the Kingston Wetlands Working Group. The Frontenac Project is yet another example of Plan partner innovations that protect North America's habitat.