

Wetland Conservation

References: *Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26 (MGA), s. 3 (a.1)*
Water Act RSA 2000 c. W-3

Public Lands Act RSA 2000 c. P-40

Cross-reference: SER-001-041 Conservation of Biological Diversity

Policy Statement

Strathcona County values wetlands for current and future generations and therefore recognizes wetlands as important components of municipal infrastructure. Conserving wetlands in urban and rural development areas is a priority for environmental, economic and human health.

Strathcona County will put in place specific procedures for landowners to realize the goal of No Net Loss of wetlands within the urban and rural areas of the County based on provincial requirements and municipal, community, and environmental needs. The goal of No Net Loss is to balance the loss of wetland functions through rehabilitation of former degraded wetlands or enhancement of healthy, functioning wetlands. As a last resort, compensation for lost functions will be sought through creation of wetlands where there was none before. No Net Loss requires proponents to work through a strict series of Mitigation activities – Avoid, Minimize and Replace – with clear criteria and defined outcomes, as set out by the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation (1991), Provincial legislation (*Water Act* and *Public Lands Act*), and the Provincial Wetland Policy (2013) and associated Directives (2017).

Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to ensure that Strathcona County has procedures designed to conserve wetlands within the County during planning and development.

Definitions

Wetland means land having the water table at, near, or above the land surface or which is saturated for a long enough period to promote wetland or aquatic processes as indicated by hydric (poorly drained) soils, hydrophytic (water loving) vegetation, and various kinds of biological activity which are adapted to a wet environment.

Guidelines

Strathcona County will minimize or reverse wetland loss, conserve existing wetland resources, convey the importance of wetlands to developers, industry and the public through education initiatives, and restore watershed function through wetland restoration projects.

Strathcona County shall ensure the conservation of wetlands during the process of developing land and constructing buildings and infrastructure, either through Avoidance, Minimization or Replacement. All development initiated by a landowner or a third party, including Strathcona County, shall be subject to this directive. In addition, all landowners must be compliant with the provincial *Water Act* and *Public Lands Act* as well as other provincial and federal laws and policies. All landowners are responsible for adherence to all relevant provincial and federal legislation/regulations.

Mitigation is a process to reduce loss of wetland by:

- **Avoid** wetland damage or destruction
- **Minimize** impacts and provisions of applicable compensation
- **Replace** permanent wetland loss

Policy Record

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Administrative Review: Planning and Development Services

Approved by:

Signed - Darrell Reid

Chief Commissioner

August 1, 2023

Date