

8. Development Permit Area Guidelines

8.5 Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area

8.5.1 Category

The Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area is designated under Section 488 (1) (a) (protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity) of the [Local Government Act](#).

8.5.2 Area

Unless exempted, the areas designated Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area as illustrated on Map Schedule E6.

8.5.3 Justification

The City of Quesnel is home to a variety of environmentally sensitive lands. Over one-third of the City is considered to be environmentally sensitive. This area is made up of mostly mature and old forests but also includes riparian and wetland areas (See ESA Schedule E6). These lands are designated in the Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area because of their environmental significance as wildlife and aquatic habitat and their sensitivity to disturbance by development. Environmentally sensitive lands play a vital role in Quesnel's natural environment. The adoption of area specific guidelines is necessary to help protect these highly biodiverse ecosystems.

8.5.4 Objective

The following guidelines are necessary to help protect ecologically sensitive and highly biodiverse ecosystems in Quesnel. While development is still possible in the Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area future development will be subject to strict guidelines.

8.5.5 Application

A development permit is required prior to the following activities:

- a. Subdivision (as defined in section [455](#) of the [Local Government Act](#)).
- b. Construction of, addition to, or alteration of a building or other structure.
- c. Alteration of land, such as the removal, disruption, or destruction of vegetation.

8.5.6 Exemptions

A Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit will not be required for:

- a. An alteration to a building that does not require the issuance of a building permit.
- b. Replacement, alteration or addition to a building such as new siding, roofing, doors, building trim, awnings, and/or windows where it does not negatively

8. Development Permit Area Guidelines

impact the overall form and character of the building and would not impact the existing landscape or access provisions.

- c. Interior renovations.
- d. Actions and activities that are necessary to prevent immediate threats to life or property.
- e. Alterations to a parcel of land that has had an Environmental Assessment (EA) done, prepared by a Registered Professional Biologist (RPBio).
- f. Hazardous tree cutting or modifications, determined by a Certified Arborist, when effort is made to first mitigate potential hazards and utilize the tree for wildlife habitat values.

8.5.7 Guidelines

Development permits issued in this area shall be in accordance with the following guidelines:

General

- 1. Riparian and Wetland Areas designated under the map in ESA Schedule E6 should remain free of development and in their natural condition except for fencing, trails, and works or plantings to control erosion, protect banks, protect fisheries or otherwise preserve and enhance the natural environment.
- 2. Maintain normal riparian processes such as flooding, seasonal drawdown, and groundwater recharge.

Management

- 3. Establish wetland and riparian buffers on public lands where possible.
- 4. Encourage owners of land within Riparian and Wetland Areas to dedicate land to the City or enter into a conservation covenant with the City to protect sensitive areas.
- 5. The City may consider a Development Variance Permit to prevent or minimize encroachment into the Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area. These variances may include but are not limited to changes to building setbacks, site coverage, height, and parking requirements.

Assessment and Reporting

- 6. Development permit applications in the Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area (ESA Schedule E6) may require an assessment report prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP), to be submitted to the City and appropriate provincial and federal agencies, in accordance to the *Water Sustainability Act* and *Riparian Areas Regulation* under the *Fish Protection Act*. The assessment report should include:
 - a. Potential impacts to habitat.

8. Development Permit Area Guidelines

- b. Mitigation measures to avoid impacts of development to fish and fish habitat.
 - c. Appropriate setbacks based on site conditions.
7. A monitoring report may be required to be prepared by a QEP or RPBio as part of a Riparian Area Assessment up to two years after construction to ensure required conditions of the development permit have been met.

Construction and Site Disturbance

8. Disturbed areas designated as environmentally sensitive should be replanted with natural vegetation immediately following the construction or repair.
9. Ensure that development activities do not negatively impact the quality of surface water.
10. Effective mitigation measures must be implemented for any development on identified wetlands.
11. Manage construction that disturb the soil to avoid erosion and direct runoff into wetlands.
12. Avoid filling or draining of permanent or seasonally wet areas.

Impacts from Site Design and Use

13. Maintain wetland vegetation and structure.
14. Planting additional vegetation or trees may be required to control erosion, protect banks, or conserve fisheries.
15. Avoid locating crossings such as roads, driveways, and utility corridors in wetland ecosystems.
16. If crossings must be located within wetland ecosystems, the crossing should to the extent feasible:
 - a. Be narrow and perpendicular to a wetland ecosystem.
 - b. Share facilities.
 - c. Minimize impacts on water bodies.
 - d. Conform to topography to minimize cut and fill.
 - e. Not restrict the natural movement of surface and groundwater.
 - f. Have appropriate native vegetation planted on shoulders to provide screening and assist soil stability.
17. Reduce impervious surfaces from development through use of permeable materials and techniques to improve absorption, such as gravel, pavers, and grasscrete.
18. Septic fields are prohibited in Riparian Areas (Schedule E6).
19. Manage and minimize livestock crossings and access to water.

8. Development Permit Area Guidelines

20. Design storm water drainage systems to result in minimal effects to environmentally sensitive lands.
21. Use constructed wetlands, bioswales, and detention ponds to slow the rate of runoff and improve the quality of rainwater through biofiltration.