

7.5. Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area

7.5.1. 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*.

7.5.2. Area

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

7.5.3. 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.

7.5.4. 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.

7.5.5. 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.

7.5.6. 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; or
- (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 impact the overall form and character of the building and would not impact the existing landscape or access provisions; or
- (c) Interior renovations; or
- (d) Actions and activities that are necessary to prevent immediate threats to life or property; or
- (e) Alterations to a parcel of land that has had an Environmental Assessment (EA) done, prepared by a Registered Professional Biologist (RPBio); or
- (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.

7.5.7. Guidelines

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

General

1. A monitoring report, as part of a Riparian Area Assessment, may be required (prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional - QEP or RPBio) prior to, and any time up to two years after construction to ensure that the required conditions of the development permit have been met.
2. Septic fields are prohibited in Riparian Areas (Schedule E6).
3. The City may consider a Development Variance Permit to prevent or minimize encroachment into the Sensitive Ecosystem Development Permit Area. Variances may include, but are not limited to: building setbacks, site coverage, height, or parking requirements.

Riparian and Wetland Areas

4. Maintain normal riparian processes such as flooding, seasonal drawdown, and groundwater recharge.
5. Riparian and Wetland Areas (See outline "Riparian & Wetland Area" in the 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.
6. Where disturbance of designated environmentally sensitive lands is unavoidable, the disturbed areas should be replanted with natural vegetation immediately following the construction or repair.
7. Ensure that development activities do not negatively impact the quality of surface water.
8. Reduce impervious surfaces through use of permeable materials and techniques to improve absorption (e.g. gravel, pavers, grasscrete, grass field for overflow parking).
9. Manage and minimize livestock crossings and access to water.
10. The City and/or Ministry of Environment may require vegetation or trees to be planted to control erosion, protect banks or protect fisheries.
11. 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 may include:
 - Potential impacts to habitat.
 - Mitigation measures to avoid impacts of development to fish and fish habitat.
 - Appropriate setbacks based on site conditions.

12. Development on identified wetlands is prohibited unless effective mitigative measures can be implemented.
13. Avoid filling or draining of permanent or seasonally wet areas.
14. Maintain wetland vegetation and structure.
15. Conduct construction that involves disturbance of soil in such a manner as to avoid direct run-off into wetlands.
16. Avoid locating roads, driveways and utility corridors through wetland ecosystems; where crossings must be located within the ecosystem the crossing should, to the extent feasible:
 - Be narrow and perpendicular to a wetland ecosystem;
 - Share facilities;
 - Minimize impacts on water bodies;
 - Conform to topography to minimize cut and fill;
 - Not restrict the natural movement of surface and groundwater;
 - Have appropriate native vegetation planted on shoulders to provide screening and assist soil stability.
17. Establish buffers on public lands where possible.
18. Owners of land within Riparian and Wetland Areas are encouraged to dedicate or enter into a conservation covenant to protect the sensitive area.
19. Storm water drainage systems will be designed to cause minimal effect to the environmentally sensitive land.
20. Use constructed wetlands and detention ponds to slow the rate of runoff and improve the quality of rainwater through biofiltration.

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