



Title:
Riparian Land Conservation and Management

Legal References:
 Municipal Government Act
 Water Act
 Water For Life Strategy
 Province of Alberta’s Framework for Water Management Planning
 AEPEA

Policy Category:
 Infrastructure Operations

Cross References:
 Subdivision and Development Policies and Procedures
 Wetland Conservation and Management Policy
 Watershed Management Plans

Effective Date: March 30, 2010
Revision Date:

Purpose:

The purpose of the Riparian Land Conservation and Management Policy is to conserve and manage riparian lands, as these lands perform many important functions, including but not limited to:

- protecting biodiversity and providing wildlife habitat;
- maintaining or improving water quality and quantity;
- reducing incidence of erosion and flooding; and
- providing recreational, education, and economic opportunities.

This policy will help The County to fulfill its legislative mandate through meeting legal and statutory requirements for the protection of provincial water resources, and other objectives, such as the Province of Alberta’s *Water for Life* strategy. Further, this policy and associated procedures will inform the County, the development industry, and all other stakeholders with clear direction for the use and development of all municipal and private lands containing and in proximity to riparian lands.

The County will consider this policy when adopting or amending the following:

- Statutory planning documents; and other planning documents adopted by Council;
- Rocky View Servicing Standards;
- The Land-Use Bylaw;
- Subdivision applications, Tentative Plans;
- Road Construction Plans and Approvals;
- Development and Building Permits;
- Other municipal bylaws;
- Other municipal policies and operational plans;
- Administration procedure manuals; and
- Any other relevant documents.

Authority:

Municipal Government Act, R.S.A. 2000, c.M-26 and regulations, Part 17: Section 622, Section 640, Section 664; Part 3: Section 60; Part 2: Section 7.

Water Act, R.S.A. 2000, c.W-3 and regulations.

Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, R.S.A. 2000, c.E-12.

Framework for Water Management Planning, Government of Alberta (Edmonton: Alberta Environment, 2003).

Water for Life: Alberta’s Strategy for Sustainability, Government of Alberta (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 2006).

Land Use Framework, Government of Alberta (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 2008).

Provincial Land Use Policies, Order in Council 522/96, Government of Alberta (Edmonton: Government of

Alberta, 1996).

Definitions:

- “Biodiversity” means the variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes of which they are a part, and includes diversity within and between species and ecosystems.
- “Council” means the Council of Rocky View County.
- “County” means Rocky View County
- “Development” means development as defined in Part 17 of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- “Riparian land” means the lands adjacent to lakes, rivers, streams, and other bodies of water, where the vegetation and soils show evidence of being influenced by the presence of water. Riparian lands are the green zones around lakes, rivers, streams, and other bodies of water. They are the transitional zone between surface water and the drier uplands and play a vital role in the healthy functioning of both.
- “Riparian” (Alberta Environment definition) means the banks of a river, stream, waterway, or other, typically, flowing body of water and the plant or animal communities along such bodies of water. Riparian areas are critical in reducing the negative effects of various land-uses on adjacent waters.
- “Subdivision” means subdivision as defined in the *Municipal Government Act*.
- “Water body” (Government of Alberta definition, modified) means any location where water flows, is standing or is present, whether or not the flow or the presence of water is continuous, intermittent, or occurs only during a flood, and includes but is not limited to wetlands and aquifers, but does not include part of irrigation works if the irrigation works are subject to a license and the irrigation works are owned by the licensee, except in the circumstances prescribed in the *Water Act*.
- “Watercourse” means the bed and shore of a river, stream, lake, creek, lagoon, wetland or other natural body of water, or a canal, ditch, reservoir, or other man-made surface feature, whether it contains or conveys water continuously or intermittently.

Policy Statements:

1. As a participating member of water management and watershed groups, the County recognizes the importance of supporting the conservation and effective management of riparian lands, within the County’s jurisdiction.
2. The County will investigate and, where appropriate, utilize source water protection strategies identified in provincial policies and laws to maintain source water quality and quantity for downstream users and the aquatic environment.
3. The County will, where appropriate, adopt watershed protection strategies identified in provincial policies and laws and address channelization and cumulative effects in watersheds.
4. The County’s policies for conserving and managing riparian land will align with provincial objectives and policies, and whenever feasible, the County’s policies will enhance provincial objectives.
5. The County will create and implement appropriate land use patterns through planning documents within and adjacent to riparian lands that will minimize possible negative effects on riparian lands and their functions. These land use patterns may or may not include appropriate permitted and discretionary land uses.
6. The County will rely on science-based standards to develop setback requirements for riparian lands adjacent to watercourses and water bodies.
7. When approving development within its boundaries, the County will require applicants (developers, landowners and others) to consider and demonstrate plans for the maintenance and/or restoration of riparian lands adjacent to natural water courses and water bodies to a functional condition, and where possible, to an enhanced or improved condition.
8. When approving development within its jurisdiction and its affects on riparian land, the County will recognize the importance of protecting riparian land from negative impacts through mitigation plans. The requirement of mitigation plans, to the satisfaction of Administration, will include but are not limited to:
 - a. Site-specific Stormwater Management Plan;
 - b. Regional Stormwater Management Plan;
 - c. Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan;

- d. Construction Plan;
- e. Biophysical Impact Assessment;
- f. Environmental Protection Plan.

9. Recognizing riparian lands as environmentally sensitive areas, the County may require dedication of these lands as Environmental Reserves or Environmental Reserve Easements at the time of subdivision, as guided by the Municipal Government Act and other municipal planning policies, guidelines, or documents.
10. The County, where appropriate, will inform the necessary provincial or federal authority or agency of any reported degradation, pollution or encroachment on riparian lands in the municipality.
11. With respect to riparian land conservation and management, the County will consider the incorporation of new information and practices as they become available through research and monitoring efforts undertaken locally, regionally, provincially, and/or nationally.