



**Title:**  
**Wetland 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 and Operations

**Cross References:**

Subdivision and Development Policies and Procedures  
 Riparian Land Conservation and Management Policy  
 Watershed Management Plans

**Effective Date:** March 30, 2010  
**Revision Date:**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the Wetland Conservation and Management Policy is to conserve and manage wetlands, as these lands are an integral component of Alberta’s watersheds and perform many important functions, including but not limited to:

- protecting biodiversity and providing wildlife habitat;
- maintaining or improving water quality and quantity;
- contributing to groundwater recharge;
- 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 will provide the County, the development industry, and all other stakeholders with clear direction for the use and development of all municipal and private lands in proximity to wetlands.

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

- Statutory planning documents & 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).

*Recommendations for a New Alberta Wetland Policy*, Alberta Water Council (Edmonton: Alberta Water Council, 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.
- “Compensation” refers to a suite of options, as assessed by The County and Alberta Environment, to replace lost wetland area through science-based actions that are consistent with watershed and regional objectives, where they exist.
- “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*.
- “Rocky View” means Rocky View County.
- “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*.
- “Wetland” means land that is saturated with water long enough to promote wetland or aquatic processes, as indicated by poorly drained (hydric) soils, hydrophytic vegetation, and various kinds of biological activity that are adapted to the wet environment.<sup>1</sup>
- “Wetland complex” means a group of two or more wetlands that are hydrologically or ecologically connected, as determined by a qualified wetland aquatic environment specialist (QWAES).

**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 wetlands, within the County’s jurisdiction.
2. The County will, where appropriate, adopt watershed protection strategies identified in provincial policies and laws and address channelization and cumulative effects in watersheds.
3. The County’s policies for conserving and managing wetlands will align with provincial wetland and natural environment conservation and management objectives and policy statements, and whenever feasible, the County’s policies will enhance provincial objectives.
4. The County will create and implement appropriate land use patterns through planning documents within and adjacent to wetlands that will minimize possible negative effects on wetlands and their functions. These land use patterns may or may not include permitted and discretionary land uses.
5. The County will rely on science-based standards to develop setback requirements for wetlands.
6. When approving development within its boundaries, the County will work with developers, landowners, and other stakeholders to require the maintenance and/or restoration of wetlands to a functional condition, and where possible, to an enhanced or improved condition.
7. When development is proposed that affects a wetland within County jurisdiction, the County will require, through higher order planning documents, subdivision approval process, Development Permit and/or Building Permit and that the applicant demonstrate the mitigation of negative impacts on the wetland, in descending order of preference:
  - a. Avoid loss or degradation of wetlands.
  - b. Minimize loss or degradation of wetlands. The applicant must make a reasonable case to the County

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this policy, wetland includes wetland complexes and associated riparian lands

why avoidance cannot be fully achieved and provided appropriated compensations.

- c. Compensate for loss or degradation: As a last resort, when loss or degradation of a wetland is unavoidable or cannot be minimized,
8. Where avoidance of wetland loss or degradation cannot be achieved, in addition to Alberta Environment requirements, the County will require compensation as follows, in descending order of preference:
    - a. Restore wetland areas where they previously existed;
    - b. Construct wetlands where they did not previously exist;
    - c. Enhance existing wetland areas; or
    - d. Other restoration and/or enhancement of environmentally sensitive areas, as assessed and determined appropriate by the County.
  9. When approving development within the County's jurisdiction and affects a wetland, the County will recognize the importance of protecting the wetland from negative impacts through mitigation plans. The requirement for mitigation plans will be determined by Administration and may 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.
  10. Recognizing wetlands 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.
  11. The County, where appropriate, will inform the necessary provincial or federal authority or agency of any reported degradation, pollution or encroachment on wetlands in the municipality.
  12. With respect to wetland conservation and management, the County will consider the incorporation of new information and innovative practices as they become available through research and monitoring efforts undertaken locally, regionally, provincially, and/or nationally.

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