

Topic

Overview Of The City’s Riparian Areas Policy For Protecting Fish Habitat

Overview

This document provides an overview of the Coquitlam Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR).

Related Publications

- > Citywide Official Community Plan
- > Zoning Bylaw 3000

Key Information

Intent Of The Riparian Areas Regulation

BC’s *Riparian Areas Regulation* (RAR) provides a means to determine, at the development application stage, protection measures for riparian or streamside areas so that these areas can continue to provide natural features, functions and conditions that support fish life. The City of Coquitlam recognizes that the Provincial RAR policy and subsequent City Bylaw amendment are both focused on the protection of fish habitat. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure compliance with all other relevant federal and provincial regulations and City policies including, but not limited to, those related to stormwater management, flood risk management, steep or unstable slopes and wildlife protection.**

How Is It Applied?

The City’s RAR policy applies only to new residential, commercial and industrial development and ancillary activities as outlined in Part 26 of the provincial *Local Government Act*. This section of the *Local Government Act* deals with rezoning (RZ), development permits (DP), development variance permits (DVP) and subdivisions (SD). It does not apply to Building Permit applications.

The RAR introduces a term called a Riparian Assessment Area (RAA), which is typically measured at 30 metres from the high water mark of a stream. If a proposed new development is either wholly, or partially, within the RAA, the development applicant has a choice of applying the Simple or the Detailed Assessment Methods for the determination of Streamside Protection and Enhancement Areas (SPEAs), inside of which development is not permitted.

If the Simple Assessment Methodology is chosen, the applicant can consult the QtheMap online mapping tool on the City’s website for a comprehensive map that shows the RAAs

and SPEAs based on the RAR Simple Assessment Methods for all known watercourses within developable areas of Coquitlam. Proposed new developments located outside of the SPEAs or RAAs will not be subject to the City's Riparian Areas Regulation policy. In this case, the applicant must still retain a BC Land Surveyor to accurately survey the location of the top-of-bank, and then apply the SPEA to that line. For more information, please consult the City's website at www.coquitlam.ca (search term: "Environmental Watercourse Mapping").

If the Detailed Assessment Methodology is chosen, the applicant is required to retain a qualified environmental professional (QEP – an applied scientist or technologist with appropriate expertise who is registered with an appropriate professional organization), to prepare an environmental assessment report prior to land development. The QEP must follow the Detailed Assessment Methods that are outlined in the provincial RAR, and then file the completed QEP assessment report under the Province's online RAR notification system. The City will notify the QEP after the completed QEP assessment reports have been received (and reviewed) so that the development application can proceed through the municipal development approval process.

Riparian Areas Regulation Variance Process

If a development applicant cannot meet the Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area (SPEA) setback as determined by a QEP using the Detailed Assessment Methodology, the development applicant must seek prior authorization to allow for the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat from Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Where unlawful harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat occurs without prior authorization, fines may be levied by DFO under the authority of the *Federal Fisheries Act*.

How To Find A Qualified Environmental Professional

The Province has established recommended qualifications and skill sets required of QEPs in preparing each of stage of the assessment environmental report. (This information is available on the Province's website). Individual QEPs are responsible for ensuring that they only undertake that portion(s) of the RAR assessment for which their area of expertise is recognized as acceptable for the purpose of providing that information. As a result, a RAR assessment report may need to be prepared by more than one QEP. Development applicants are advised to ensure coordination of information between consultants.

Training for QEPs is being delivered by Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina University College), in collaboration with the Provincial Ministry of Environment and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Vancouver Island University maintains a list of QEPs that have successfully completed the RAR Assessment Methods Training Course. The list may be found under the Natural Resources Extension Program (NREP) on the Vancouver Island University website: <http://www.mala.ca> (search word: "RAR"). Additionally, upon request, Environmental Services can provide a list of QEPs that have completed RAR assessment reports in Coquitlam (no recommendation is implied).

Riparian Areas Regulation

The RAR has been developed by the Province of British Columbia under the authority of the Fish Protection Act. It was enacted in 2001 and replaces the Provincial Streamside Protection Regulation (SPR). The Fish Protection Act requires that local governments include riparian area protection provisions, in accordance with the provincial regulations.

In May 2006, Coquitlam City Council amended the Zoning Bylaw to adopt the RAR provisions. Council also amended the Official Community Plan (OCP) to ensure consistency with the new RAR policy.

Links To Other Useful Information Sources And Contacts

For Provincial Riparian Areas Regulations (RAR), Policy, Assessment Methods or the Implementation Guidebook, please visit the website home page at

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/habitat/fish_protection_act/riparian/riparian_areas.html

For additional information related to any of provincial documents, please contact:

RiparianAreas@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca

For information related to the City of Coquitlam's RAR policy or SPEA/RAA mapping, please contact:

Environmental Services Project Specialist
City of Coquitlam
3000 Guildford Way
Coquitlam, B.C., V3B 7N2
Phone. 604.927.3400

**For further information please call 604.927.3430,
or visit www.coquitlam.ca.**

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