

Proposed Capstone Conservation Policy

Policy to support the Strategic Plan and our
Environmental Sustainability Framework

2013-2030 Strategic Plan



Goal 4

Ensure effective stewardship of water, land, air and energy resources

The environment includes natural areas both within and around Strathcona County. The County is committed to protect and preserve our natural environment and to live sustainably, while addressing the challenges of growth pressures, development and environmental changes and threats to our biodiversity.

Promotion and protection of our natural environment is integrated into every aspect of civic life, guiding our decisions and public policy. Strathcona County manages its land, air, water, energy, material use, biological diversity and parks to ensure its citizens live in a healthy ecosystem. We recognize that being good stewards of our land and natural resources is a shared responsibility. We live in balance with our environment and decrease the use of our finite natural resources by living sustainably.

Strategic results

- ▶ Appropriate and effective use of agricultural land
- ▶ Natural areas and resources balance value for current and future generations
- ▶ Municipal buildings deploy efficient technology where appropriate
- ▶ Growth and development balanced with recognition and protection of the biosphere (Beaver Hills)
- ▶ County uses best practice approach to waste management

“We strive to be a model of ecological integrity, protecting our environment and preserving our agricultural heritage.”

Environmental Sustainability is...



Strathcona County's
**Environmental
Sustainability
Framework**



“The ability to maintain attributes or qualities that are valued in the natural environment.”



Strathcona County's

Environmental Sustainability Framework

- ✓ Guide responses to environmental issues
- ✓ Assess the impact of changes in the environment on residents and municipal operations
- ✓ Prioritize and plan for future environmental concerns
- ✓ Maintain a focus on current studies, indicators and trends
- ✓ Guide new policies
- ✓ Strengthen the County's commitment to integrated planning (environmental, social, economic)
- ✓ Ensure we are a leader in new, innovative and efficient technology
- ✓ Assist with the advocacy efforts of Strathcona County for environmental grant opportunities
- ✓ Assist in engaging residents, businesses, community groups in becoming more environmentally aware and motivated



Guiding Statements



- Land: urban areas are surrounded and connected by open green space and healthy natural areas, which are home to wildlife and provide recreational opportunities to residents.
- Air: air quality supports the health and well-being of its residents.
- Energy: employ advanced technology and sound management practices in the continuous effort to improve energy efficiency.
- Water: watersheds provide an adequate supply of quality freshwater for public and private use while ensuring a healthy ecosystem for future generations.
- Material use: leading procurement and waste management practices, which result in reduced and responsible use of resources and materials.

Policies categorized by ESF Guiding Statements

<p>Energy Strathcona County employs advanced technology and sound management practices in its continuous efforts to improve energy efficiency.</p>	<p>SER-004-006 Municipal Sustainable Buildings SER-009-012 Street Lighting SER-009-038 Light Efficient Community SER-009-040 Traffic Calming</p>
<p>Land Strathcona County's urban areas are surrounded and connected by open green space and healthy natural areas, which are home to wildlife and provide recreation opportunities to County residents.</p>	<p>SER-001-002 Surface Water Management and Erosion Control SER-001-009 Vertebrate Nuisance Control SER-001-034 Weed and Pest Control SER-001-006 Rural Roadside Vegetation Control SER-001-030 Community Garden SER-009-031 Dedication of Conservation Easements SER-009-032 Biophysical Assessment SER-009-034 Tree Conservation During Development SER-009-035 Tree Management SER-012-010 Legacy Lands SER-012-011 Land Management</p>
<p>Material Use Strathcona County uses leading procurement and waste management practices, which result in reduced and responsible use of resources and materials.</p>	<p>SER-009-033 Road Salt Management Plan SER-014-001 Procurement Policy</p>
<p>Water Strathcona County's watersheds provide an adequate supply of quality freshwater for public and private use while ensuring a healthy ecosystem for future generations.</p>	<p>SER-009-036 Wetland Conservation SER-012-009 Storm Water Management Facility Easements</p>
<p>Air Emissions Air quality in Strathcona County supports the health and well-being of its citizens.</p>	

New Proposed Capstone Policy

- New Policy that encompasses the range of six existing Policies (proposed Directives)
- New Policy guides decision-making and acts as a foundation for municipal actions to protect the air, water, land and biodiversity



Conservation of Biodiversity

SER-009-041 (NEW)

- Biological diversity is fundamental to sustaining life by supplying critical ecosystem services. These services are essential to support our well-being and economic growth.
- We value the biodiversity within the natural environment and are committed to conserving a healthy, connected, and well managed ecological network.
- We have a responsibility to plan, protect, manage, and restore the natural environment to ensure healthy resilient ecosystems.
- Purpose to guide conservation decision-making to protect our air, water, land and biodiversity.



Existing Policies translated to Directives

- Bylaw versus Policy/Directive = enforcement (penalties specified, fines levied)
- Policies & Directives = standards enforceable (if standards unmet, next steps will not proceed), majority referenced in Municipal Development Plan Bylaw and Land Use Bylaw (statutory documents)
- New and Updated Policies approved by Council
- New and Updated Directives approved by Administration
- Enforceability is the same
- To date, policy and procedure compliance is high, next level of enforcement (bylaw) has not been required

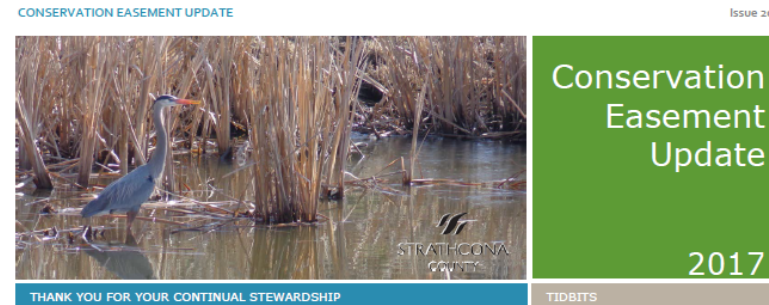
Existing Policies Rescinded

- Rescind 6 Policies in lieu of 5 Directives
- Administrative updates only

- Directives guide planning, protecting, managing and restoring the natural environment

Dedication of CE SER-009-031

- June 28, 2005
- 100+ easements registered, protecting over 1,275 ha of wildlife habitat
- Rescind Policy & Replace with Directive
- SER-009-031D Conservation and Environmental Reserve Easements



Monitoring Visit Summary

2017 marked the revival of Strathcona County's Conservation Easement (CE) Program. A mail-out was sent to each landowner with a CE on their property in the spring. You were one of the interested landowners that responded and invited me out to rekindle the relationship and experience the CE for myself. Thank you very much for your hospitality - I hope you feel comfortable reaching out with any questions or concerns!

Your Conservation Easement

While you may not be the original landowner who placed the Conservation Easement, the land has been protected and conserved since June 21, 2001. What an incredible success!

Due to the competing uses of the land - living space, livestock, trails, etc. - your CE area is fragmented. However, there is a great diversity seen within the area - wetland, marsh and drainage areas interspersed with forested areas alongside pasture.

Restrictions

There are a number of restrictions on the property - please contact me if you require a copy of the Conservation Easement Agreement, which lays out all the restrictions and other details.

According to the *Fence Allowance*, you may clear a maximum of 2.4 m adjacent to all property lines for the purpose of fencing. While there is cross-fencing, the intent is to limit the livestock access and to delineate the buildable area from the remainder of the CE area. If you have any questions about fencing, or how to make it wildlife friendly, please contact me.

The *Livestock Allowance* was altered this year at your request. Please reference the letter addressing the conditions of this allowance. I will be following up to see if the change is impacting the CE area in the coming years. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

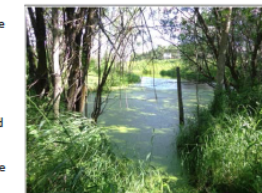
CEs in Strathcona County

Visit the Strathcona County CE page [here](#) for updates and more information about CEs in Strathcona County.



Conservation Easement Resource

The Environmental Law Center and Miistakis Institute have created a website that can answer many of your questions. Visit it [here](#)!



Share your thoughts!

Do you have suggestions on how to improve the CE Program? Would you like to be part of a larger community sharing experiences with CEs? Let me know!

Conservation Easement Update | Issue 2017

Note-worthy Observations

Native Plants

Many native plants were observed during the exploration of the CE area. See if you can spot them yourself as you enjoy your property:

- > Canada anemone
- > Bunchberry
- > Wild sarsaparilla
- > Fireweed
- > Common Labrador tea
- > Common pink wintergreen
- > Spotted coralroot

Invasive Weeds

What is a weed? Merriam-Webster defines a weed as "a plant that is not valued where it is growing and is usually of vigorous growth; especially one that tends to overgrow or choke out more desirable plants". This definition leaves the designation of what is considered a weed subjective. Instead, let's focus on invasive species that are regulated under the Alberta Weed Control Act. "Prohibited Noxious" weeds must be destroyed while "Noxious" weeds must be controlled.

Information on noxious and prohibited noxious weeds found in Strathcona County can be found [here](#). There is also a great online resource available through the Alberta Invasive Plant Council that can be found [here](#).



There were a few noxious weeds observed as well - please watch for and control the:

- > Oxeye daisy in the road ditch
- > Common tansy along the wetland and drainage course
- > Canada thistle by the pasture area and along the trails
- > White cockle along the driveway.

Other Wildlife

A red-tailed hawk and a white admiral butterfly were also seen hanging around the CE area.

CONTACT US!

Please feel free to contact Emily to share any of your own wildlife sightings, or if you want some assistance in identifying different plants!

CONTACT INFORMATION
Emily Kabotoff
Environmental Analyst, Strathcona County

780-464-8414

emily.kabotoff@strathcona.ca

Aerial Photo

Your CE

The CE covers the entire property, approximately 7.9 hectares (19.6 acres) (outlined in green). The buildable area allowance allows for a maximum area of 2.0 ha (5 acres) for homestead development



Control
invasive weeds



Check out
the wildlife and plant diversity!

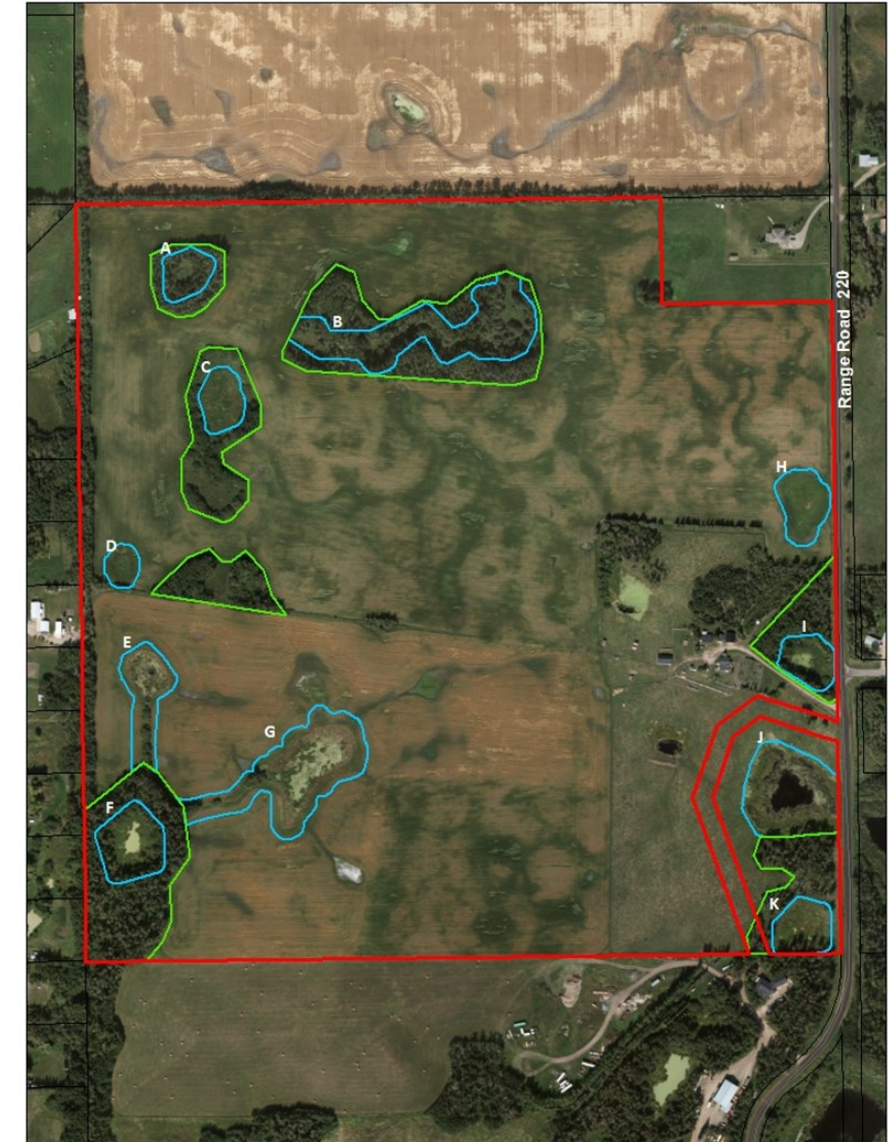


Watch
for livestock impact to forest understorey and drainage channel



Biophysical Assessment SER-009-032

- June 28, 2005
 - 60+ BA's completed for internal planning projects
 - 60+ BA's completed in support of external planning projects (ACP's, ASP's, industrial development)
 - Referenced in MDP
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- Rescind Policy & Replace with Directive
 - SER-009-032D Biophysical Assessment



Tree Conservation During Development

SER-009-034

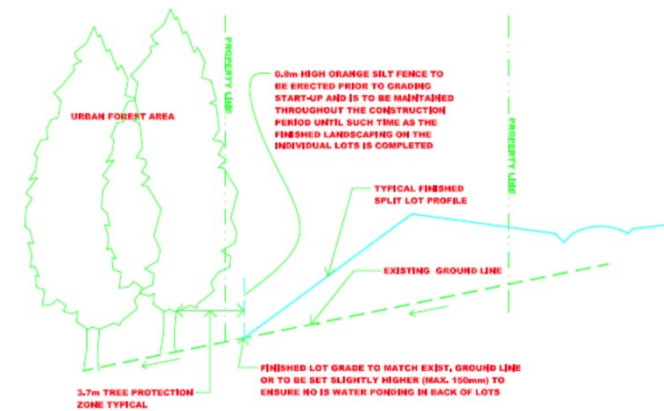
- August 25, 2011
- Applied to urban and rural developments
- Residential/commercial/industrial
- All County projects



- Rescind Policy, amalgamate with Tree Management, replace with Directive
- SER-009-042D Tree Conservation

Tree Management SER-009-035

- August 25, 2011
- 30+ bird surveys completed for County projects annually



- Rescind Policy, amalgamate with Tree Conservation During Development, replace with Directive
- SER-009-042D Tree Conservation

Wetland Conservation

SER-009-036

- March 3, 2009
- 204 ha (504 acres) impacted by development
- AVOID & MINIMIZE = 104 ha (257 acres)
- COMPENSATE @ 3:1 mitigation ratio =
 - ✓ 59 ha naturalized SWMF
 - ✓ \$2.4 million to DUC (\$14,000/ha - \$19,388/ha)
 - ✓ 15% directly applied to wetland restoration projects in the Beaver Hills
- Referenced in MDP
- Rescind Policy & Replace with Directive
- SER-009-036D Wetland Conservation

ALBERTA NAWMP PARTNERSHIP

DECEMBER 2016

YOUR GUIDE TO

**Making Wetlands Work
in Your Municipality**



Legacy Lands SER-012-010

- February 2, 2007
- Direct purchase of 80 ha adjacent to the Strathcona Wilderness Center and the location of the Beaver Hills Biodiversity Trail
- Referenced in MDP



- Rescind Policy & Replace with Directive
- SER-012-010D Legacy Lands

Summary...

- Proposed Policy and Directives meet the Strategic Plan
- Proposed Policy and Directives meet the ESF

- Is there support for the translation of 6 existing Policies to 5 Directives?
- Is there support for the new Capstone Policy?