

# 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...

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



Strathcona County's  
**Environmental  
Sustainability  
Framework**



# 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 guiding statements

## Energy

Strathcona County employs advanced technology and sound management practices in its continuous efforts to improve energy efficiency.

SER-004-006 Municipal Sustainable Buildings

SER-009-012 Street Lighting

SER-009-038 Light Efficient Community

SER-009-040 Traffic Calming

## 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.

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

## Material Use

Strathcona County uses leading procurement and waste management practices, which result in reduced and responsible use of resources and materials.

SER-009-033 Road Salt Management Plan

SER-014-001 Procurement Policy

## 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.

**SER-009-036 Wetland Conservation**

SER-012-009 Storm Water Management Facility Easements

## Air Emissions

Air quality in Strathcona County supports the health and well-being of its citizens.

# Proposed Capstone Policy

- New policy that encompasses the range of six existing policies (proposed directives) and also addresses the gaps
- 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

- 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.





# Conservation of Biodiversity

## SER-009-041

- Purpose to guide conservation decision-making to protect our air, water, land and biodiversity.
- We will strive to provide places designated for the
  - conservation of plant and animals species,
  - conservation of habitat
  - reduction of air pollution
  - improvement of water quality, and
  - recreational and cultural enjoyment of residents.
- We will protect the integrity of our natural resources while providing opportunities for appropriate forms of use that will benefit the community.



# Existing policies rescinded

- Rescind six policies in lieu of five directives
- Administrative updates only
- Directives guide planning, protecting, managing and restoring the natural environment

# Dedication of Conservation Easement

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

CONSERVATION EASEMENT UPDATE Issue 2017



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUAL STEWARDSHIP

## 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.

### Conservation Easement Resource

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



## 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](#).



### Other Wildlife

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

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.

### 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!

**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**  
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CONSERVATION EASEMENT UPDATE | Issue 2017

## 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 understory and drainage channel



# MDP Bylaw 20-2017 reference

Section	Policy #
3.2 Environment	9
Definition: an agreement registered against title whereby a landowner grants to the County (or other government, government agency, or non-profit society with conservation objectives satisfactory to the County) provisions for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the environment including the protection, conservation and enhancement of biological diversity and natural scenic or aesthetic values. A conservation agreement may provide for recreational use, open space use, environmental education use, and research and scientific studies of natural ecosystems.	

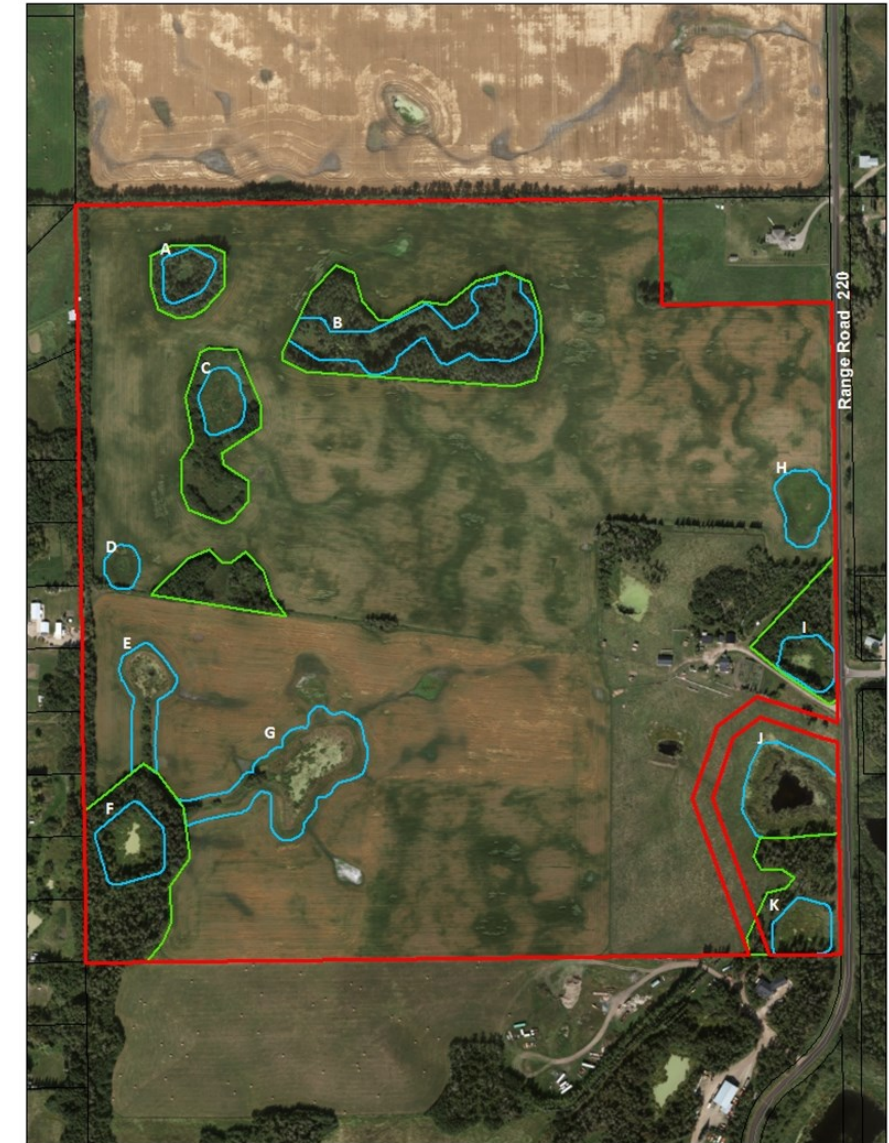


# Dedication of Conservation Easement

2005 Policy Statement (SER-009-031)	2019 Directive Statement (SER-009-031D)
<p>Dedication of Conservation Easement</p> <p>Under Division 2 of the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, Strathcona County has the authority to serve as a “qualified organization” for the purpose of holding an interest in a conservation easement in partnership with a private landowner.</p> <p>Strathcona County will fulfill the role of “qualified organization” and shall have in place principles and procedures for the assessment and voluntary dedication of Conservation Easement lands by private landowners.</p>	<p>Conservation and Environmental Reserve Easements</p> <p>Strathcona County will work with landowners with the goal of conserving biological diversity within the County. Strathcona County can use Conservation Easements and Environmental Reserve Easements to help build an inventory of protected areas within the County, on lands that continue to be privately owned.</p>

# Biophysical Assessment (BA)

- June 28, 2005
  - 60+ BA's completed for internal planning projects
  - 60+ BA's reviewed in support of external planning projects (ACP's, ASP's, industrial development)
- 
- Rescind policy and replace with directive
  - SER-009-032D Biophysical Assessment



# MDP Bylaw 20-2017 reference

Section	Policy #
3.2 Environment	4
4.4 Bremner Urban Reserve Policy Area	57, 60
5.2 Hamlet Policy Area	11, 22, 32, 68, 71
5.3 County Residential Policy Area	17, 18
5.4 Ag Small Holdings Policy Area	2, 22, 23
5.5 Ag Large Holdings Policy Area	21
5.6 Beaver Hills Policy Area	31, 32
5.7 Heartland Policy Area	20
5.8 Local Employment Policy Area	14
Definition: an assessment of the biological and physical elements of an ecosystem, including geology, topography, hydrology and soils.	

# Biophysical Assessment

2005 Policy Statement (SER-009-032)	2019 Directive Statement (SER-009-032D)
<p>Conservation Goal is to protect the integrity of our heritage and natural resources while providing opportunities for appropriate forms of use that will benefit the community.</p> <p>SC shall require a biophysical assessment of future development areas. The results of a biophysical assessment shall be used for prioritizing and dedicating Environmental Reserve, Environmental Reserve Easement, Municipal Reserve and Conservation Easement lands based on municipal, community and environmental needs.</p>	<p>SC will use the results of a biophysical assessment for prioritizing and dedicating Environmental Reserve, Environmental Reserve Easement, Municipal Reserve, Conservation Reserve and Conservation Easement lands based on municipal, community and environmental needs.</p>
<p>Definition: an assessment of the biological and physical elements of an ecosystem, including geology, topography, hydrology and soils.</p>	<p>Definition: an assessment of the biological and physical elements of an ecosystem, including geology, topography, hydrology and soils.</p>



# Tree Conservation during development

- 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

# MDP Bylaw 20-2017 reference

Section	Policy #
3.2 Environment	25
5.2 Hamlet Policy Area	34, 74
5.3 Country Residential Policy Area	20
5.4 Ag Small Holdings Policy Area	23
5.5 Ag Large Holdings Policy Area	22
5.6 Beaver Hills Policy Area	35
5.8 Local Employment Policy Area	16
Definition: Environmental Features means individual natural features which provide for biodiversity, such as a wetland or a tree stand.	

# Tree Conservation during development

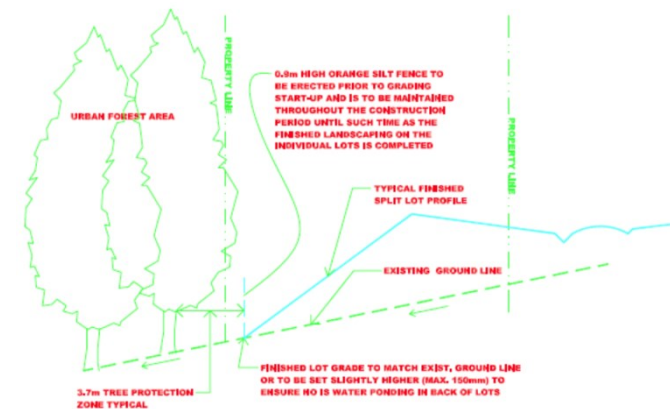
2007 Policy Statement (SER-009-034)	2019 Directive Statement (SER-009-034D)
<p><b>Tree Conservation During Development</b></p> <p>Strathcona County shall have in place specific guidelines for Developers and their consultants to determine the protection required to conserve trees within the urban and rural areas of Strathcona County based on municipal, community and environmental needs.</p> <p>Strathcona County shall ensure the conservation of trees during the process of developing land and constructing buildings and infrastructure. This will be accomplished by providing procedures to produce a;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tree Conservation Report (TCR); and</li> <li>2. Tree Protection Plan (TPP).</li> </ol> <p>All Development initiated by a private sector developer or by Strathcona County shall be subject to this policy.</p> <p>Short term success will be evident when construction is completed with minimal impact to conserved trees. Long term success will be evident when the conserved trees are sustainable and thrive for years after development.</p>	<p><b>Tree Conservation</b></p> <p>Strathcona County strives to conserve upland forest within the County's rural and urban areas by managing individual trees and tree stands to ensure the sustainability of the overall forest habitat.</p> <p>Strathcona County will take steps to ensure the conservation of trees within Strathcona County before, during, and after development. The County will inspect and manage the trees on County lands in order to conserve the urban and rural forests with Strathcona County.</p> <p>The County will also encourage the conservation of trees during development on private land by requiring developers to plan for tree conservation during development, through the subdivision and development agreement process. The intent is not only to retain trees within a development, but to prevent damage to trees during the construction and maintenance of a development.</p>



# 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



# MDP Bylaw 20-2017 reference

Section	Policy #
3.2 Environment	25
5.2 Hamlet Policy Area	34, 74
5.3 Country Residential Policy Area	20
5.4 Ag Small Holdings Policy Area	23
5.5 Ag Large Holdings Policy Area	22
5.6 Beaver Hills Policy Area	35
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Definition: Environmental Features means individual natural features which provide for biodiversity, such as a wetland or a tree stand.	

# Tree Management

2007 Policy Statement (SER-009-035)	2019 Directive Statement (SER-009-035D)
<p><b>Tree Management</b></p> <p>Strathcona County shall ensure the conservation of trees after development. This will be accomplished by establishing procedures to inspect and manage trees on County lands in order to conserve the urban and rural forests within Strathcona County based on municipal, community and environmental needs. This process is required after the Final Acceptance Certificate (FAC) development stages.</p> <p>Insofar as financial resources allow, Strathcona County will provide the community with safe and healthy trees. A system assigning County resources to the urban and rural forests on a prioritized basis shall be adopted. Levels of service shall be established for hazard trees dependant upon their priority ranking.</p> <p>The County shall have a comprehensive inspection and maintenance program to ensure that all tree stands are inspected on a regular basis and that any hazard trees that poses a health or safety hazard to the public shall be assessed and prioritized in accordance with this policy and repaired, removed or otherwise dealt with so as to mitigate that harm.</p>	<p><b>Tree Conservation</b></p> <p>Strathcona County strives to conserve upland forest within the County's rural and urban areas by managing individual trees and tree stands to ensure the sustainability of the overall forest habitat.</p> <p>Strathcona County will take steps to ensure the conservation of trees within Strathcona County before, during, and after development. The County will inspect and manage the trees on County lands in order to conserve the urban and rural forests with Strathcona County.</p> <p>The County will also encourage the conservation of trees during development on private land by requiring developers to plan for tree conservation during development, through the subdivision and development agreement process. The intent is not only to retain trees within a development, but to prevent damage to trees during the construction and maintenance of a development.</p>

# Wetland Conservation

- March 3, 2009
- 204 ha (504 acres) impacted by development
- Avoid and 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 and replace with directive
- SER-009-036D Wetland Conservation



# MDP Bylaw 20-2017 reference

Section	Policy #
3.2 Environment	12
5.4 Ag Small Holdings Policy Area	8
Definition: Wetland means land saturated with water long enough to promote wetland or aquatic processes or as defined by the Alberta Wetland Policy.	



# Wetland Conservation

2009 Policy Statement (SER-009-036)	2019 Directive Statement (SER-009-036D)
<p>Strathcona County recognizes wetlands as important municipal infrastructure components for environmental, economic and social sustainability and will conserve their value for present and future generations. Conservation of the wetlands in urban and rural development areas is a priority for environmental, economic and human health.</p> <p>Strathcona County will put in place specific procedures for landowners to realize the goal of No Net Loss of wetlands within the urban and rural areas of Strathcona County based on municipal, community and environmental needs. The goal of No Net Loss of wetland functions is to balance the loss of wetland functions, through rehabilitation of former degraded wetlands or enhancement of healthy, functioning wetlands. As a last resort, compensation for lost functions will be sought through creation of wetlands where there was none before. No Net Loss requires proponents to work through a strict series of Mitigation activities – Avoidance, Minimization, and Compensation – with clear criteria and defined outcomes, as set out by the legislation (<i>Water Act</i> and <i>Public Lands Act</i>), the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation (1991) and the Provincial Wetland Restoration/Compensation Guide (2007).</p>	<p>Strathcona County values wetlands for current and future generations and therefore recognizes wetlands as important components of municipal infrastructure. Conserving wetlands in urban and rural development areas is a priority for environmental, economic and human health.</p> <p>Strathcona County will put in place specific procedures for landowners to realize the goal of No Net Loss of wetlands within the urban and rural areas of the County based on provincial requirements and municipal, community, and environmental needs. The goal of No Net Loss is to balance the loss of wetland functions through rehabilitation of former degraded wetlands or enhancement of healthy, functioning wetlands. As a last resort, compensation for lost functions will be sought through creation of wetlands where there was none before. No Net Loss requires proponents to work through a strict series of Mitigation activities – Avoid, Minimize and Replace – with clear criteria and defined outcomes, as set out by the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation (1991), Provincial legislation (<i>Water Act</i> and <i>Public Lands Act</i>), and the Provincial Wetland Policy (2013) and associated Directives (2017, 2018, 2019).</p>

# Legacy Lands

- February 2, 2007
- Direct purchase of two properties (20 and 64 ha) adjacent to the Strathcona Wilderness Center
- Location of the Beaver Hills Biodiversity Trail
- Rescind policy and replace with directive
- SER-012-010D Legacy Lands



# MDP Bylaw 20-2017 reference

Section	Policy #
3.2 Environment	7
Definition: Natural Area means natural, sensitive or scenic lands owned by the County or the Province that are identified for conservation or nature appreciation or both.	



# Legacy Lands

2007 Policy Statement (SER-012-010)	2019 Directive Statement (SER-012-010D)
Strathcona County shall have in place a framework for the identification and acquisition of land with the goal to use the best available conservation science to protect areas of essential biological diversity and to provide a network of linkages across Strathcona County. The conservation of natural resources will create a legacy of places of importance to Strathcona County for the benefit of its present and future generations.	Strathcona County will identify and acquire land and will use the best available conservation science to protect areas of essential biological diversity and to provide a network of linkages across Strathcona County. The conservation of natural resources will create a legacy of places of importance to Strathcona County for the benefit of its present and future generations.



# Summary...

- ✓ Proposed policy more effectively meets the Strategic Plan
- ✓ Proposed policy more effectively meets the Environmental Sustainability Framework
- Is there support for the proposed policy to guide actions to protect the air, water, land and biodiversity while providing opportunities that will benefit the community?
- Is there support for rescission of the 6 existing policies?