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## **Natural Environment Development Permit Guidelines**



## Area

Subdivision or alteration of land (including grading, tree clearing, and installation of services); and construction of, addition to, or alteration of a building or structure that occur in areas shown on Map 13 are subject to these Natural Environment Development Permit Guidelines. The areas shown on Map 13 show natural environment areas and include:

- land within 50m of streams
- land classified as sensitive ecosystems (through Metro Vancouver's Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory)

## Justification

Abbotsford's natural setting is characterized by a wide diversity and beauty of landscapes and natural features, including steep escarpments, forested slopes, sandstone rock faces, second growth and old growth forest, dry bluffs, streams, and riparian areas. These ecosystems provide many functions necessary for our health and well-being. Protection and enhancement of green spaces will improve water quality, increase recreational opportunities, mitigate flooding, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, reduce watercourse maintenance and dredging costs, improve air quality, provide habitat, sustain food production, and many other tangible and intangible benefits.

## Exemptions

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1. Lands within both the Agricultural Land Reserve and designated for Agriculture
2. A subdivision for lot consolidation or road widening
3. Construction, addition or alteration not exceeding 10m<sup>2</sup> (100ft<sup>2</sup>) where no variance(s) is (are) required
4. Notwithstanding exemption 3, all interior/exterior building alterations that do not expand the existing building foundation
5. Buildings that have been destroyed by fire and/or natural disaster less than 75%, as determined by the building inspector provided the building massing, siting and general appearance are as prior to destruction and the use conforms to the City's *Zoning Bylaw, 2014*
6. Emergency circumstances to remove any immediate danger
7. Municipal works, services and maintenance activities carried out by, or on behalf of, the City generally in accordance with these guidelines
8. A restrictive covenant that effectively protects the entire natural environment area is already registered on the subject property, all the conditions in the covenant are met, and the proposed activity will not affect any portion of the natural environment area
9. Where the proponent provides satisfactory information to the City that clearly demonstrates that the proposed activity will not be in conflict with the Development Permit Guidelines. The determination may need to be by a qualified environmental professional, which concludes that the portion of land being developed is not environmentally sensitive and the natural feature(s) is (are) no longer present due to previously approved development

## Objectives

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The following guidelines are intended to allow land to be used for its intended purposes, while also protecting, enhancing and/or restoring the City's natural environment areas; prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species; and protect water quality and quantity. New development should use the mitigation hierarchy to protect and improve the integrity, ecological health and biodiversity of Abbotsford's natural features and ecosystems.

## Guidelines

The following guidelines may be applied when setting Development Permit conditions:

### RIPARIAN HABITAT

To identify streamside habitat that requires protection and mitigation, and conditions for loss of habitat when unavoidable.

#### NE1 **Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area**

Establish setbacks in accordance with the Streamside Protection Bylaw, as amended.

#### NE2 **No Net Loss**

Ensure development results in no net loss of habitat area.

#### NE3 **Habitat Replacement and Restoration**

Where loss of habitat is unavoidable, replace the value of lost habitat at a ratio of 2:1.

### TERRESTRIAL HABITAT

To identify terrestrial habitat that requires protection and mitigation, and conditions for loss of habitat when unavoidable.

#### NE4 **Species at Risk**

Protect habitat where observations of species at risk have been identified by a qualified environmental professional.

#### NE5 **Habitat Replacement and Restoration**

Where loss of habitat is unavoidable, provide mitigation to offset the loss.

### MITIGATION, RESTORATION AND INTERFACE

To guide the mitigation, restoration and interface of a development with the natural environment.

#### NE6 **Site Design**

Design a project to fit the site rather than altering the site to fit the project.

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## **NE7 Environmental Assessment Reports**

An Environmental Assessment Report, arborist report, or any other report as appropriate may be required and reviewed to the satisfaction of the City.

## **NE8 Environmental Protection**

Protect natural environment areas identified for preservation in an Environmental Assessment Report through measures such as dedication to the City, establishing a restrictive covenant, or rezoning.

## **NE9 Effective Protection Plans**

Where critical habitat for species at risk is identified by senior government and an Environmental Assessment Report determines that the site has the potential to support the species at risk, an Effective Protection Plan will be prepared and submitted to senior government.

## **NE10 Flows, Drainage and Channel Geometry**

Ensure that development and associated activities do not impact a stream's base flows, natural drainage patterns, and the natural stream channel geometry.

## **NE11 Water Quality**

Protect water quality within the City's watercourses and drainage system by adhering to the Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) Bylaw and the Sewer Rates and Regulations Bylaw, as amended.

## **NE12 Tree Canopy**

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Conserve specimen trees and trees in stands (groups of trees along with their associated understory) to preserve long term health and stability of trees.

## **NE13 Wildlife Trees**

Create safe wildlife trees by using existing hazardous trees where they can be retained without impacting the proposed activity.

## **NE14 Root Systems**

Conserve trees by protecting their root systems from disturbance

## **NE15 Drip Line**

Do not undertake construction activities, including excavation, soil compaction, placement of fill, equipment storage, cutting, or understory vegetation removal within the drip line of any tree.

## **NE16 Native Species**

Within natural environment areas, only plant species native to the Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic Zone.

## **NE17 Invasive Plants**

Remove invasive plants and take measures to prevent their spread in accordance with best management practices or the recommendation of a qualified environmental professional.

## **NE18 Crossings through Natural Environment Areas**

Avoid locating trails, roads and utility corridors across protected natural environment areas. If such crossings are unavoidable then design crossings that:

- are perpendicular to the protected natural environment areas, as narrow as practically possible, and elevated where possible;
- are sited so as to minimize impacts on the vegetation, and where applicable, the stream channel;
- are sited so as to conform to the natural topography as much as possible; and,
- are constructed and maintained so as to prevent erosion and allow the natural movement of surface water and groundwater.

## **NE19 Fencing**

When adjacent to development and activity is anticipated, protect riparian areas with fencing.

## **NE20 Maintenance and Monitoring**

Maintain and monitor restoration or compensation sites to ensure that the works are completed in accordance with the Development Permit.

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