

Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia



Are you planning a small subdivision or development on your property? This fact sheet provides information about ways you can protect environmental values on your property—enhancing your property value and protecting you from liability.

PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

Protecting the natural environment on your property during subdivision and land development can reward you.

- ☑ **Increased property values.** Properties with trees and greenspace are worth significantly more than those without.
- ☑ **Reduced development costs.** By clearing only a small part of a property to allow for construction, costs of land clearing can be reduced.
- ☑ **Compliance with government regulations.** Federal, provincial, and local governments have many laws and regulations in place to protect the natural environment. Proactive design and construction can help to avoid the liability of environmental damage.
- ☑ **Lower taxes.** If you donate land for conservation purposes, you may be eligible for income tax reduction under the federal Ecological Gifts Program. For more information see www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/egp-pde/

See over for ways to reap some of the rewards of protecting Environmentally Valuable Resources.

Land development changes the natural environment...

- ♦ Wildlife habitat—places where plants grow and animals live, feed or breed—may be disturbed or destroyed. Although one small change to the landscape may seem insignificant, combined changes can result in major disruptions to wildlife habitat and the environment. For a rare species, even a relatively small development can have a big impact on the local population.
- ♦ Travel corridors used by wildlife may be disrupted. Some species will die out if they can no longer safely reach their feeding or breeding areas.
- ♦ Water flows may change. Increased surface runoff from developed areas into waterways can harm stream life, erode banks, and flood neighbouring properties. Too much paving can reduce the amount of water going into the ground, causing groundwater shortages, loss of fish habitat, and degraded vegetation.
- ♦ Soils may be eroded during development, spilling sediments into nearby wetlands and water bodies and making them less hospitable for fish, frogs and other creatures.

Environmentally Valuable Resources include all features, sites, and species whose presence enhances the biodiversity of the area. They range in size from small patches to extensive landscape features and can include rare or common habitats, plants, and animals, and include

- ♦ rare and endangered species and ecosystems, including sensitive ecosystems
- ♦ rocky outcroppings, caves, cliffs, islands
- ♦ old vacant buildings, which may shelter bats or birds
- ♦ large snags, veteran trees, hollow trees, meadows/grasslands
- ♦ wetlands, seeps and vernal pools, even if they are wet for only a few months each year
- ♦ riparian vegetation, including vegetated gullies, fish spawning and/or rearing areas
- ♦ areas of concentrated wildlife use, such as winter ranges for ungulates (deer, bighorn sheep, etc.)
- ♦ snake/lizard dens, turtle nesting sites, raptor nest trees, heronries
- ♦ wildlife travel corridors (including riparian corridors)



SUBDIVISION

☑ Identify Environmentally Valuable Resources on your property before beginning subdivision. Your local government may be able to provide information.

☑ Subdivide the property so that buildings can be placed close to existing roads and utilities. This lowers infrastructure costs, and reduces the amount of land disturbed for this purpose.

☑ If you have significant areas with Environmentally Valuable Resources, consider selling or donating this land to the local government or a land trust organization as a park or protected area, or placing a conservation covenant on the property. Gifts of ecologically significant lands (eco-gifting) can bring considerable tax savings.

DEVELOPMENT

☑ Identify Environmentally Valuable Resources on the property BEFORE you begin land clearing or designing the development. These include such things as eagle nest trees, habitats for species at risk, year-round or seasonal streams and wetlands, and travel corridors for small or large wildlife. Many of these are protected by federal or provincial legislation.

☑ Identify environmental hazards on your property, including areas subject to erosion, flooding, wildfires, and wildlife conflicts. This will help to protect you from future liability issues. Your local government can help you to identify these hazards.

☑ Preserve trees and undergrowth on the property during and after construction. These will enhance the sale value of the property and help keep the air and water clean.

☑ Design and locate your development to avoid disturbing places or species with high environmental values. Talk to your local government about ways to concentrate development in areas with low environmental values—for example through ‘density bonusing’ or ‘clustering’.

☑ Prepare detailed plans for sediment and erosion control prior to initiating any site work.

For more information see *Develop with Care 2014: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia* **and other Guideline documents** <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html>