
Local Government Resource Guidebook Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR) Amendments 2027

Implementation Guidance

Prepared by

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose of this document	5
How to use this document	5
1.0 RAPR implementation process for local governments	5
Table 1: Local Government Tools Supporting RAPR	7
Typical RAPR development assessment process	7
1.1 Example language for local government tools	8
Official community plans (OCPs)	8
Development permit areas (DPAs)	9
Aquatic (Watercourse) Development Permit Area	10
2.0 Overview of 2027 amendments to RAPR	12
Table 2: Key 2027 RAPR amendments and local government considerations	12
3.0 Detailed description of 2027 RAPR amendments	13
3- 1. Definitions and terminology	13
3- 2. Assessment process under RAPR	14
Three development assessment methods: Rapid, simple and detailed	15
3- 3. Low-risk development under the 2027 RAPR	17
3- 4. Exemptions	18
3- 4.1 Repairs or reconstruction of existing structures	19
3- 4.2 Park dedication and covenant protection	19
3- 5. Naturally restricted areas	20
3- 6. Condition and Impact Assessments	21
3- 7. Undue hardship – maximum development footprint	22
4.0 Implementation tools and resources	23
2027 RAPR amendment implementation guidance and communications	23
Example public communication language	24
Provincial support resources	25
Contact information	25
Appendices	26
Appendix A: Definitions under the amendments	26
Appendix B: Graphics	29

Introduction

Federal, provincial and local governments recognize that conserving fish populations and protecting fish habitat are essential to the ecological, economic, and social well-being of communities across B.C. As development pressures continue to grow in many regions, protecting riparian areas—lands adjacent to streams, lakes and wetlands that support aquatic ecosystems—remains critical to sustaining healthy fish populations and resilient, functioning watersheds.

The **Riparian Area Protection Act (RAPA)** and the **Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR)** (B.C. Reg. 178/2019), together form the legislative and regulatory framework for protecting riparian areas during residential, commercial and industrial development. The RAPA sets direction for local governments to incorporate riparian protection measures into their zoning and land use bylaws. The RAPR sets out the detailed requirements for assessing development near streams and watercourses. Under the regulation, a local government must not approve development within a riparian area unless the applicable requirements have been met, as defined in the regulation. The RAPR aims to assist local governments in ensuring that the requirements of the federal Fisheries Act are being met in the development applications they are approving.

Amendments to the RAPR (2027 RAPR) were approved by Order in Council in February 2026 and will come into force on January 1, 2027. These amendments include:

1. New and clearer definitions
2. A new development assessment process (Rapid Assessment) for certain low-risk developments
3. New low-risk developments
4. Increased exemptions
5. Improved clarity and expectations around naturally restricted areas
6. A new Condition and Impact Assessment process for unauthorized works
7. Improved clarity and expectations around undue hardship

Together these changes are intended to improve consistency and transparency in the development review process while maintaining strong levels of environmental protection.

Note: Any assessment reports submitted before January 1, 2027, are to be reviewed under the 2019 version of the regulation. After this date, all new assessments must follow the updated regulatory requirements within the 2027 RAPR.

Purpose of this document

This guidebook was developed to support local governments in updating their zoning and land use bylaws to the 2027 RAPR. It is designed to provide practical cut and paste resources.

How to use this document

The guidebook begins with an overview of the RAPR implementation process for local governments (Section 1.0). This section provides context and supports understanding of how RAPR can be incorporated into local government zoning and land use bylaws.

Section 1.1 builds on this foundation by offering example language that can be embedded into local government planning tools. This content is organized by implementation type, including Official Community Plans, Development Permit Areas, and Aquatic (Watercourse) Development Permit Area. For each, sample language is provided for both meeting and exceeding the RAPR standard.

Section 2.0 provides an overview of the 2027 amendments, along with high-level considerations for local governments.

Section 3.0 provides more detailed information on each of the seven amendments, including considerations for updating zoning and land use bylaws to align with the changes.

Note: All example text that can be 'cut and pasted' into local government tools are provided in blue text boxes.

1.0 RAPR implementation process for local governments

Local governments play a central role in implementing the RAPR, as it applies to residential, commercial and industrial development activities near streams, lakes and wetlands in areas under local government jurisdiction. Under the RAPR, local governments must ensure that their bylaws and development approval processes contain either riparian protection provisions that are consistent with the regulation or provide an equal or greater level of protection.

Local governments typically implement the RAPR through planning and regulatory tools available under the Local Government Act and related legislation (see **Table 1**).

Development Permit Areas (DPAs) are the most commonly used mechanism for implementing RAPR and protecting riparian areas, as they allow local governments to regulate a range of development activities beyond building construction, including land alteration, vegetation removal and soil disturbance within environmentally sensitive areas. Local governments may also choose to adopt enhanced measures that provide additional riparian protection beyond minimum regulatory requirements, consistent with legislative provisions that allow local governments to meet or exceed provincial standards (Riparian Areas Protection Act, s.12(4)(b)).

Note: The RAPR applies to lands under local government jurisdiction but does not replace or override other applicable federal or provincial requirements. Depending on the project, additional permits or approvals may be required under legislation such as, but not limited to, the Water Sustainability Act, Land Act, Heritage Conservation Act, or the federal Fisheries Act.

Note: Local governments are also encouraged to consider riparian protection requirements in the planning and implementation of their own works and activities, as applicable.

Table 1 summarizes common tools that may assist local governments in updating and implementing the 2027 RAPR provisions within their bylaws and development approval processes.

Table 1: Local Government Tools Supporting RAPR

Tool	Legislative basis
Official Community Plan	Local Government Act, Part 14
Development Permit Areas	Local Government Act, Part 14
Zoning Bylaws	Local Government Act, Part 14
Subdivision Bylaws	Local Government Act, Part 14, Land Title Act, Part 7
Development Application and Approval Information Bylaws	Local Government Act, Part 14
Covenants	Land Title Act
Other Regulatory Bylaws Affecting Land Use (for example Floodplain bylaws)	Local Government Act, Part 9, and Community Charter
Bylaws for the addition and removal of soil and trees, protection of the natural environment	Local Government Act, Part 14, Section 524 Community Charter Part 2 Section 8

Typical RAPR development assessment process

1. The subject property is adjacent to, or contains, a RAPR-regulated stream, lake, or wetland
2. Proposed development is within the 30-metre Riparian Assessment Area (RAA)
3. Local government bylaws or Development Permit Area requirements trigger the RAPR process
4. QEP engaged by developer to do an assessment following RAPR Technical Assessment Manual
5. Assessment submitted to the province for review
6. Notification sent to local government once assessment meets the regulatory standard

Note: Draft bylaws may be submitted to the RAPR program for review and feedback. This review can help ensure alignment with provincial requirements and provide early feedback prior to bylaw adoption.

1.1 Example language for local government tools

Official community plans (OCPs)

Consistent with RAPR

[Insert local government] will protect, maintain, and restore riparian ecosystems by ensuring that all development near riparian areas is consistent with the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR). To support these objectives, we will:

- Require a professional assessment by a QEP qualified to conduct assessments under the RAPR for proposed development within the Riparian Assessment Area (30 m of a stream, watercourse, or waterbody, as defined in the regulation)
- Require restoration and remediation of impacted riparian areas

Exceed RAPR

[Insert local government] will protect riparian ecosystems as critical natural assets and will meet or exceed provincial requirements by applying a precautionary, watershed-based approach to land use planning and assessing the impact of development on natural assets. In addition to meeting the requirements of the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR), the local government will:

- Prioritize avoidance of development within riparian areas
- Require restoration of impacted riparian areas that results in improved ecological and hydrological function, to support long-term resilience
- Protect riparian areas as continuous ecological corridors that support biodiversity, flood water management, and water quality
- Ensure environmentally sensitive and hazardous areas are excluded from development
- Secure riparian protection areas in perpetuity through appropriate legal mechanisms
- Integrate riparian protection with watershed planning, ecological connectivity, and climate resilience objectives

Development permit areas (DPAs)

Sample DPA policy statement

[Insert local government] shall designate lands adjacent to watercourses, wetlands and riparian ecosystems as Aquatic (Watercourse) Development Permit Areas to protect ecological function, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat. Development within these areas must align with the Riparian Area Protection Regulation (RAPR).

RAPR-consistent

[Insert local government] will protect riparian areas associated with streams, lakes, wetlands, and other watercourses in accordance with the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR) (B.C. Reg. 178/2019), as amended.

Development proposed within a Riparian Assessment Area (RAA) must be assessed by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP), certified to conduct assessments under the RAPR, in accordance with provincial requirements, to ensure that development does not negatively affect riparian fish habitat. [Insert local government] will require that a riparian assessment report prepared by a QEP be submitted to the province for review prior to consideration of development approval. Following provincial review, the province notifies the QEP and the local government whether the report meets applicable regulatory requirements.

[Insert local government] will implement riparian protection measures through land use planning tools, including Development Permit Areas, zoning bylaws, or development approval processes, to support consistency with RAPR requirements.

Aquatic (Watercourse) Development Permit Area

RAPR-consistent

Proposed development within the Aquatic (Watercourse) Development Permit Area must be designed and carried out in a manner that meets the riparian protection standard as outlined in the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR).

1. Development proposed within the 30-metre Riparian Assessment Area (RAA) must comply with the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR) (B.C. Reg. 178/2019)
2. Applications for development within the Aquatic (Watercourse) Development Permit Area must include a riparian assessment report prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP), certified to conduct assessments under the RAPR, in accordance with provincial requirements. The report must be submitted to the province for review prior to consideration of development approval

Exceed RAPR

[Insert local government] recognizes the importance of riparian ecosystems in maintaining water quality, supporting fish and wildlife habitat, stabilizing stream banks, and contributing to overall watershed health. [Insert local government] will seek to:

- Protect and enhance riparian ecosystems and natural stream corridors
- Retain and restore native riparian vegetation, where feasible
- Support the restoration and enhancement of degraded riparian areas
- Maintain ecological connectivity along streams and wetlands
- Incorporate riparian protection into land use planning and development decisions

To support these objectives, [Insert local government] will require the submission of a riparian assessment report prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP), certified to conduct assessments under the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR), consistent with local government bylaws and processes established to meet or exceed provincial requirements prior to the consideration of a development approval.

Exceed RAPR

Development within the Aquatic (Watercourse) Development Permit Area should protect and enhance riparian ecosystems and maintain natural vegetation adjacent to watercourses.

1. Development proposals must be designed to avoid disturbance to riparian vegetation and ecological features wherever possible
2. Where disturbance to riparian vegetation occurs, restoration planting with native species may be required to support riparian ecological functions as informed by applicable best management practices
3. Impervious surfaces and structures should be sited outside the 30-metre Riparian Assessment Area (RAA), where feasible, to minimize encroachment
4. Where development is proposed within the 30-metre RAA, a riparian assessment prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) certified to conduct assessments under the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR) is required and must be submitted to the local government
5. Riparian restoration and enhancement must be incorporated into development proposals
6. Additional terms and conditions may be included in the Development Permit to address site-specific riparian features, functions, and biodiversity values, including but not limited to:
 - Increased setbacks from watercourses where site conditions, slope, erosion risk, or sensitive habitat features are present
 - Clustering of buildings, infrastructure and disturbance areas to reduce fragmentation of riparian and adjacent habitats
 - Retention of mature trees, large woody debris, and other structural habitat features, where safe and feasible
 - Measures to prevent the introduction or spread of invasive plant species and, where appropriate, removal of existing invasive species
 - Minimizing direct access to watercourses, and designing any necessary access to reduce bank disturbance and vegetation loss
 - Incorporation of green infrastructure or natural stormwater management approaches to reduce runoff, improve infiltration and protect water quality
 - Design measures to reduce indirect impacts to riparian areas, such as lighting, noise and domestic animal intrusion
 - Use of tools to support the long-term protection of riparian areas, such as covenants or other legal mechanisms, where appropriate

2.0 Overview of 2027 amendments to RAPR

The changes introduced through the 2027 amendments to RAPR are summarized in **Table 2**. The table also outlines key, high-level, considerations for local governments to update official community plans, development permit area guidelines and zoning bylaws to align with the 2027 RAPR.

Table 2: Key 2027 RAPR amendments and local government considerations

Amended section	Amendment and RAPR section * indicates new addition	Considerations for local governments
1. Definitions and terminology	Repeals, adds and updates terminology (Section 1 (1)).	Bylaws, development applications and other local government documents may require updates to reflect new terminology.
2. Development assessments	* Introduces Rapid Assessment method (Section 13.3) for certain low-risk developments.	Local governments may clarify how the Rapid Assessment pathway is addressed in revised development permit processes within Development Application Procedure bylaws.
3. Low-risk development	* Certain low-risk development activities will be allowed to occur in the streamside protection and enhancement area (SPEA) (for example, stairs, access paths, riparian restoration) as identified in Section 10.1 where specified conditions are met. These developments are subject to the rapid assessment process.	Low-risk developments remain subject to the RAPR. These developments may be assessed through the Rapid Assessment process in accordance with regulatory requirements, and local governments may incorporate this process within their development application procedures.
4. Exemptions	Updates to exemptions in Section 3 to allow certain activities within the SPEA or riparian assessment area (RAA) without provincial review, including repairs to existing structures and subdivisions where riparian areas are protected as parkland or through covenant.	Local governments may need to review and update development permit area exemptions to ensure alignment with the amendments and clarify when a RAPR assessment is required.

5. Naturally Restricted Areas	* Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEPs) must identify areas unsuitable for development due to unavoidable risks to sensitive ecosystems, environmental features, or safety as described in Section 1.1 .	Naturally Restricted Areas must be excluded from developable area calculations, which may reduce the available development footprint and influence site design, building siting and development layout. This may also affect the scope and approach of the assessment process.
6. Condition and Impact Assessment	* The B.C. government may require a Condition and Impact Assessment (CIA) report when development has already occurred or begun in a Riparian Assessment Area without proper approval (Section 5 (2)).	Development that has occurred within a riparian area without proper assessment and review may require a Condition and Impact Assessment (CIA) prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional and submitted to the B.C. government to identify mitigation and riparian restoration measures to meet regulatory requirements, before development proceeds.
7. Undue hardship footprint	Maximum development footprint is calculated after excluding naturally and legally restricted areas as described in Section 11(3) .	Local governments can assist in determining the development footprint by clarifying zoning setbacks and related requirements to QEPs early in the assessment process.

3.0 Detailed description of 2027 RAPR amendments

The following sections provide additional information on amendments 1 through 7 summarized in Table 2.

3- 1. Definitions and terminology

The 2027 amendments to the RAPR revise and replace key definitions and terminology to improve clarity and consistency in riparian assessments. These updated terms align with expanded assessment options and provide clearer direction to Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEPs) and local governments during development review processes. The updated and new terms introduced through the amendments, including those related to assessment types, low-risk development, naturally restricted areas, riparian restoration and others are listed in **Appendix A**.

Local governments must align their bylaws to reflect revised or expanded terms introduced through the RAPR amendments.

Example text:

- Terminology and definitions used in this bylaw shall align with those set out in the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (B.C. Reg. 178/2019), as amended January 1, 2027, and any subsequent amendments

Examples of new and updated definitions reflected in local government bylaws or policies may include:

“Protected Fish” means a vertebrate of the order *Petromyzontiformes* (lampreys) or class *Osteichthyes* (bony fishes) that, at any part of its life cycle, inhabits or is dependent on a stream.

- For the purposes of this bylaw, **protected fish** includes all fish species that inhabit or depend on a stream at any stage of their life cycle, including species identified under federal or provincial legislation

“Stormwater Detention Pond” means an artificially constructed pond, basin, wetland or other facility that is designed primarily for the purpose of storing stormwater runoff.

- For the purposes of this bylaw, a stormwater detention pond may be considered a water feature subject to riparian assessment requirements where it is connected to downstream fish habitat, in accordance with the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation

3- 2. Assessment process under RAPR

Local governments subject to the RAPR play an important role in protecting riparian areas and must meet minimum regulatory requirements as set out in the regulation. This is typically achieved by requiring the submission of a riparian development assessment report to the province for review to confirm it meets applicable requirements prior to the issuance of a development permit by the local government.

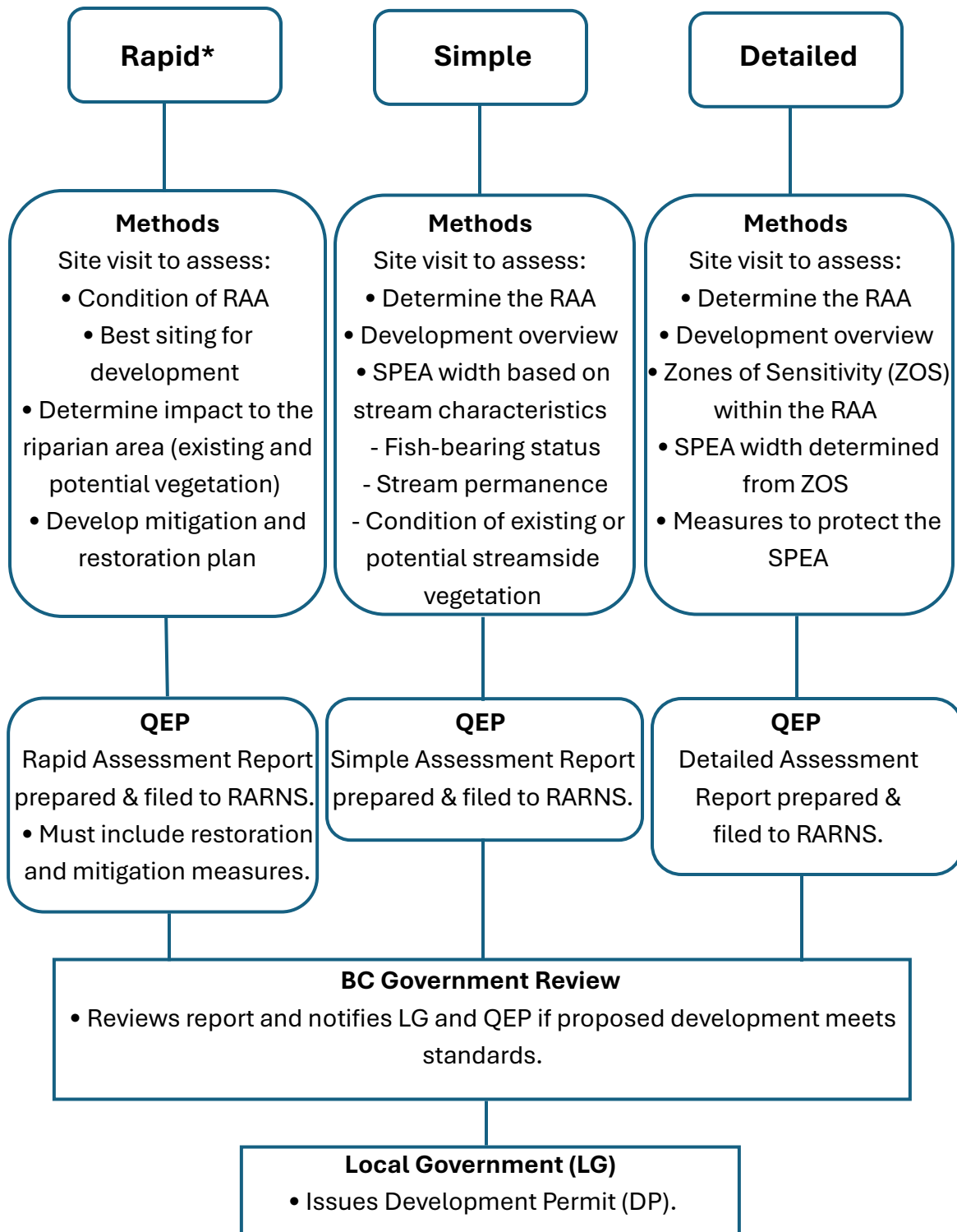
The RAPR Technical Assessment Manual provides the science-based assessment methods for QEPs to follow. It is these methods that, if followed, ensure developments are done in a way that avoids impacts to riparian areas and fish habitat.

Three development assessment methods: Rapid, simple and detailed

There are now three different development assessment methods available under RAPR: Rapid, simple and detailed. All three assessment methods are described in the RAPR Technical Assessment Manual.

The Rapid Assessment was introduced in the 2027 amendments for certain low-risk developments. Under specified conditions (see RAPR Section 10.1), some low-risk developments may occur within the **RAA**. The rapid assessment is intended to improve processing efficiency for low-risk developments while maintaining the riparian protection standard as established under the regulation.

Development assessment types



* Rapid Assessment specifically for candidate Low-Risk Developments that meet the conditions listed in B.C. RAPR update Section 10.1.

Figure 1: Development Application Process Under B.C. RAPR (2027).

3- 3. Low-risk development under the 2027 RAPR

Low-risk developments are defined in Section 10.1 of the regulation and include activities such as narrow access structures, bioengineered erosion control works, hazard tree removal and riparian restoration. Where conditions are met, these activities may be eligible for review through the Rapid Assessment pathway outlined above.

A QEP must assess the proposed activity to identify any effects on natural features, functions and conditions that support the processes of protected fish and confirm that the development meets riparian protection standards described in the regulation.

For low-risk developments, a Rapid Assessment Report must be prepared by a QEP and submitted to the province. Following review, if the report meets applicable regulatory requirements, the QEP and local government are notified. Where a local government has established “meet or exceed” bylaws and processes, Rapid Assessment Reports may be submitted directly to the local government for review and decision, in accordance with local processes.

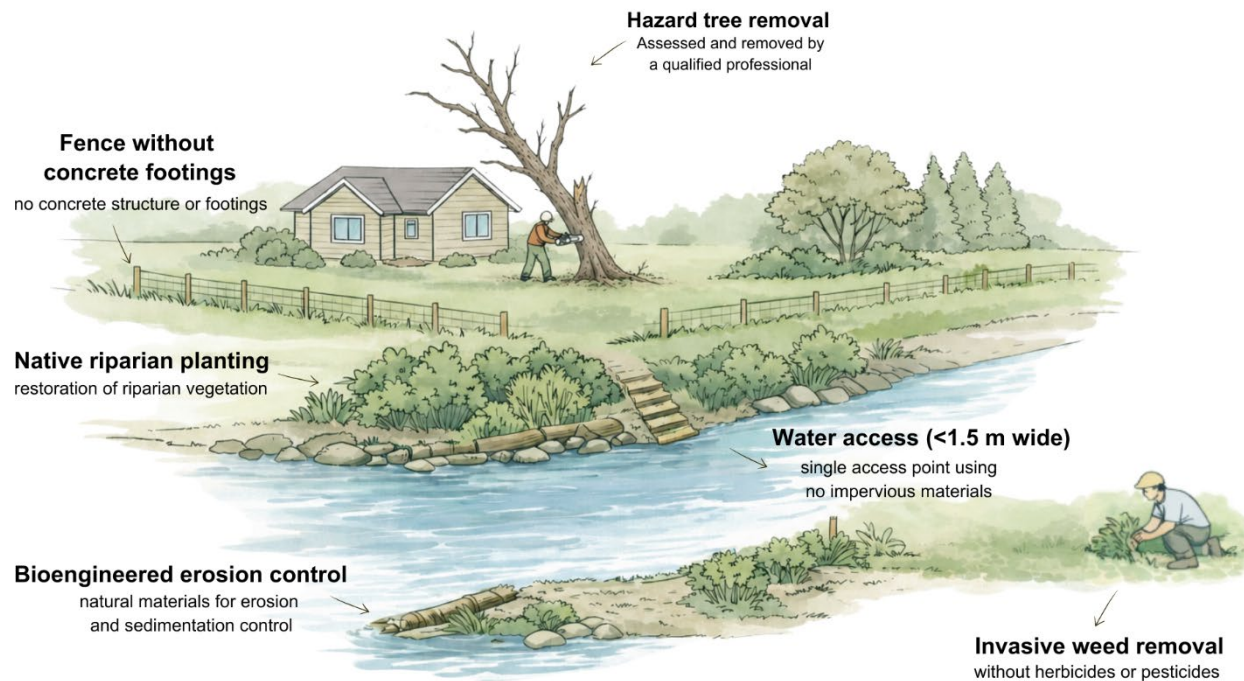
A Rapid Assessment Report must:

- Determine whether the development meets the riparian protection standard
- Clearly identify any effects of the proposed development on existing and potential natural features, functions and conditions within the RAA that support the life processes of protected fish
- Determine the mitigation measures required to address those effects
- Identify riparian restoration measures that **must** be carried out to restore the natural features, functions and conditions in the RAA, including in cases where the riparian protection standard is met

Example text:

- Where development qualifies as low-risk under Section 10.1 of the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation, the assessment may be completed using the Rapid Assessment method as described in the regulation and the RAPR Technical Assessment Manual

Examples of low-risk developments under RAPR (10.1)



Examples shown represent typical low-risk activities eligible for Rapid Assessment under the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation.

All developments must meet applicable regulatory conditions.

Figure 2: Example of low-risk developments under 2027 RAPR.

3- 4. Exemptions

The RAPR includes exemptions that identify specific circumstances where development activities may proceed without requiring the submission and review of a RAPR assessment. The 2027 RAPR (Section 3) updates several existing exemptions and introduces new exemptions to clarify when these provisions apply.

3- 4.1 Repairs or reconstruction of existing structures

The amendments allow limited repair or reconstruction of an existing building or other structure, where specific conditions are met. These changes provide additional flexibility for maintaining or repairing existing structures while ensuring redevelopment does not expand impact within the RAA or SPEA. The RAPR **does not apply** to development that meets the following conditions:

- The structure remains on its **existing foundation**
- **At least 25% of the building** above the foundation remains before reconstruction begins
- **Foundation repairs do not exceed 10%** of the existing foundation area
- The **building footprint is not expanded** and does not extend further into the RAA

Example text:

- Repairs or reconstruction of an existing building or structure is exempt from riparian assessment requirements where all conditions set out in Section 3(3)(a) of the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation are met, including that the building footprint is not expanded and does not extend further into the Riparian Assessment Area.

3- 4.2 Park dedication and covenant protection

The 2027 RAPR (Section 3(4)) provides an exemption in situations where a subdivision creates parcels or lots for the purpose of protecting, conserving, maintaining, restoring, or enhancing riparian areas. This exemption only applies to the lot that is protected, not to lots that will still be subject to development. Confirmation of how the lot will be protected or conserved is required as part of the exemption process.

This exemption may apply where:

- A subdivision creates parcels or lots that are dedicated or vested as parkland under the Land Title Act, Community Charter, or Local Government Act, **or**
- A subdivision creates parcels or lots that are protected in perpetuity by a registered covenant under section 219 of the Land Title Act to protect, preserve, conserve, maintain, restore, or enhance riparian areas

Local governments often incorporate exemptions within their development permit area bylaws for activities that are considered low risk or supportive of environmental protection. As part of implementing the 2027 RAPR, local governments will need to review and update existing exemption provisions.

Example text:

- Subdivision that creates parcels for the purpose of protecting, conserving, maintaining, restoring, or enhancing riparian areas may be exempt from Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR) assessment requirements where such parcels are dedicated as parkland or protected in perpetuity through a covenant under Section 219 of the Land Title Act

3- 5. Naturally restricted areas

The 2027 RAPR introduces the updated term '**Naturally Restricted Areas**', which refers to portions of a site that may be unsuitable for development due to environmental sensitivity or safety considerations.

Naturally Restricted Areas are areas where development, even with mitigation measures, would present significant risks to sensitive ecosystems or safety. In identifying these areas, a QEP considers factors such as species at risk, critical habitat, environmentally sensitive features and site conditions including flooding, erosion, slope stability and steep terrain. Naturally Restricted Areas are identified by a QEP through a site assessment and **are excluded when determining the maximum developable area.**

Additional details and definitions related to Naturally Restricted Areas are provided in **Appendix A.**

For local governments, identification of Naturally Restricted Areas may influence site design, subdivision layout and building siting, and inform how development proposals are reviewed and considered.

Naturally Restricted Areas are also a key input into calculating the **maximum development footprint** under **undue hardship** provisions (see Section 7), reinforcing the importance of early identification during the development review process.

Example text:

- Where identified through QEP assessment, Naturally Restricted Areas (as per Section 1.1) must be excluded from area of the site as per Section 11 (b)

3- 6. Condition and Impact Assessments

The amendments introduce a process for addressing situations where development has occurred within the RAA without the required approvals, or where development has not been completed in accordance with an approved RAPR assessment. In these cases, the province may require a **Condition and Impact Assessment** (CIA) to evaluate existing impacts and identify measures to restore or mitigate effects on riparian ecosystems before development can proceed.

Local governments are responsible for administering their bylaws and development approval processes and may take steps, where appropriate, to address activities that are inconsistent with applicable requirements, including requiring a Condition and Impact Assessment to inform remediation measures.

Where a **Condition and Impact Assessment** is required, local governments have a role in ensuring that development approvals are not issued until the impacts of existing unpermitted development have been appropriately addressed. In accordance with the RAPR, a local government must not approve a riparian development unless:

- A Condition and Impact Assessment report has been received
- A new development assessment report has been prepared for the proposed development; and the requirements for development approval under the regulation have been met based on the updated assessment

This process ensures that past or existing impacts are addressed **before** new development proceeds, supporting improved protection and restoration of riparian areas.

Example text:

- Where required by the B.C. government, a Condition and Impact Assessment (CIA) prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional must be submitted for review. This assessment is to evaluate existing development and identify mitigation and restoration measures to address effects and support alignment with regulatory requirements

3- 7. Undue hardship – maximum development footprint

The 2027 RAPR clarifies how the **maximum development footprint** is calculated in situations where **undue hardship** provisions apply. Undue hardship may arise where a parcel was legally created at the time of subdivision but is now significantly constrained by riparian features. In these circumstances, development may not be reasonably accommodated outside of the SPEA and specific requirements apply to determine the maximum development footprint of the site while maintaining riparian protection objectives.

While the maximum development footprint (allowable footprint) of undue hardship sites (30 percent or 40 percent, depending on the level of existing site disturbance) remain unchanged, these percentages are now applied to the remaining developable area of the site after excluding both legally and naturally restricted areas. This change may reduce the

amount of developable area on constrained sites and reinforces the importance of identifying naturally restricted areas early in the development review process.

Riparian assessment reports that include undue hardship scenarios must be submitted to the province. Through this process, the provincial government assesses whether the undue hardship provisions have been appropriately applied, including verifying that calculations are accurate, any required variance processes have been completed and decisions received, and that the proposed development is sited to minimize encroachment into the SPEA.

Example text:

- Where undue hardship provisions (RAPR s.11) apply, the maximum development footprint is calculated after excluding naturally restricted and legally restricted areas, as defined in Section 1.1
- Where undue hardship is proposed, supporting documentation must demonstrate that all applicable variance processes that could reduce legally restricted areas have been completed and decisions received
- Riparian assessment reports prepared in support of undue hardship must be submitted to the province for review, in accordance with the RAPR

4.0 Implementation tools and resources

2027 RAPR amendment implementation guidance and communications

Local governments play an important role in communicating regulatory changes to residents, property owners, developers and other interested parties. Clear, plain-language communication can help improve understanding of riparian protection requirements and support compliance during development review processes. Local governments may wish to share key updates through websites, newsletters and social media. They may also wish to provide clear guidance on when RAPR applies to development, and link to supporting resources on riparian health, fish habitat and development requirements.

Example public communication language

The following example language may be adapted by local governments for newsletters, website updates, or social media posts.

What's changing?

The B.C. government has amended the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation to improve how development near streams, lakes and wetlands is reviewed and permitted.

Key updates include:

- Clearer and new definitions to improve consistency in identifying riparian areas
- A new rapid assessment pathway for certain low-risk development activities
- Updated processes for addressing previously unpermitted development
- Expanded exemptions and restoration requirements in specific situations

These updates are intended to improve permitting timelines and transparency while continuing to protect fish habitat, water quality and riparian ecosystems.

Example website or newsletter message

The B.C. government of British Columbia has updated the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR), which helps protect streams, lakes, wetlands and other waterbodies that support aquatic habitat during residential, commercial and industrial development.

Riparian areas, the lands adjacent to water, play an important role in maintaining water quality, reducing erosion, mitigating flooding and providing critical habitat for fish and wildlife. If you are planning development or land alteration near a stream, lake, wetland, or ditch, additional requirements may apply. The updated regulation introduces new assessment options and clearer processes to support both environmental protection and more efficient development reviews and permitting timelines.

To learn more about how these changes may affect your project, visit: [\[link\]](#)

Planning development near a watercourse or ditch?

You may be required to hire a Qualified Environmental Professional, to conduct a riparian assessment and submit it to the province, under the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation. Considering riparian requirements early in the planning process can help streamline development reviews and reduce potential delays.

Provincial support resources

[B.C. government of BC RAPR home page](#)
[RAPR Local Government Resources](#)

Contact information

Email: RiparianAreas@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca

Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions under the amendments

Section 1 (2) of the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation, B.C. Reg. 178/2019, is Amended
(a) by repealing the definitions of “allowable footprint” and “naturally restricted area”,
(b) by repealing the definitions of “assessment”, “assessment report”, “detailed assessment”, “developable area”, “protected fish”, “riparian protection standard” and “simple assessment” and substituting the following:

Assessment: A condition and impact assessment or a development assessment performed in accordance with sections 12 [assessments] and 13 [performing assessments].

Assessment report: A report prepared in accordance with section 14 [assessment reports] in relation to a condition and impact assessment or a development assessment.

Detailed assessment: An assessment performed using the detailed assessment method referred to in section 13 (4).

Developable area: In relation to a site, means the area of the site other than:

- (a) The streamside protection and enhancement area
- (b) The naturally restricted areas of the site, as described in section 1.1[naturally restricted areas]
- (c) The legally restricted areas of the site

Protected fish: A vertebrate of the order *Petromyzontiformes* (lampreys) or class *Osteichthyes* (bony fishes) that, at any part of its life cycle, inhabits or is dependent on a stream.

Riparian protection standard: The standard of protection or enhancement of the natural features, functions and conditions in the riparian assessment area that must be met for a riparian development to proceed.

Simple assessment:An assessment performed using the simple assessment method referred to in section 13 (4),

by adding the following definitions:

- **Condition and impact assessment:** an assessment performed for the purposes of preparing a condition and impact assessment report
- **Condition and impact assessment report:** A report prepared for the purposes of section 6 (5)
- **Development assessment:** An assessment performed for the purposes of preparing a development assessment report
Development assessment report: A report that is prepared in relation to a proposed development but that is not a condition and impact assessment report

Ditch: A watercourse that:

- (a) Is artificially constructed rather than formed through natural processes
- (b) Is designed primarily for the purpose of draining property, agricultural land or roadways
- (c) Is not fed by natural headwaters, springs or groundwater sources

Low-risk development: A development described in section 10.1 [low-risk developments].

Maximum development footprint: The maximum area of a site in which development is permitted to take place as determined under section 11 (3) or (4) [undue hardship], as applicable.

Rapid assessment: An assessment performed using the rapid assessment method referred to in section 13 (3).

Riparian restoration: To rehabilitate or re-establish the natural features, functions and conditions that support the life processes of protected fish.

Stormwater detention pond: An artificially constructed pond, basin, wetland or other facility that is designed primarily for the purpose of storing stormwater runoff.

Surface flow: The movement of water across the landscape that is observable directly or through evidence such as scour or alluvial deposits.

(d) in paragraph (b) of the definition of “stream” by adding the following subparagraph:

(iv) a stormwater detention pond.

Appendix B: Graphics

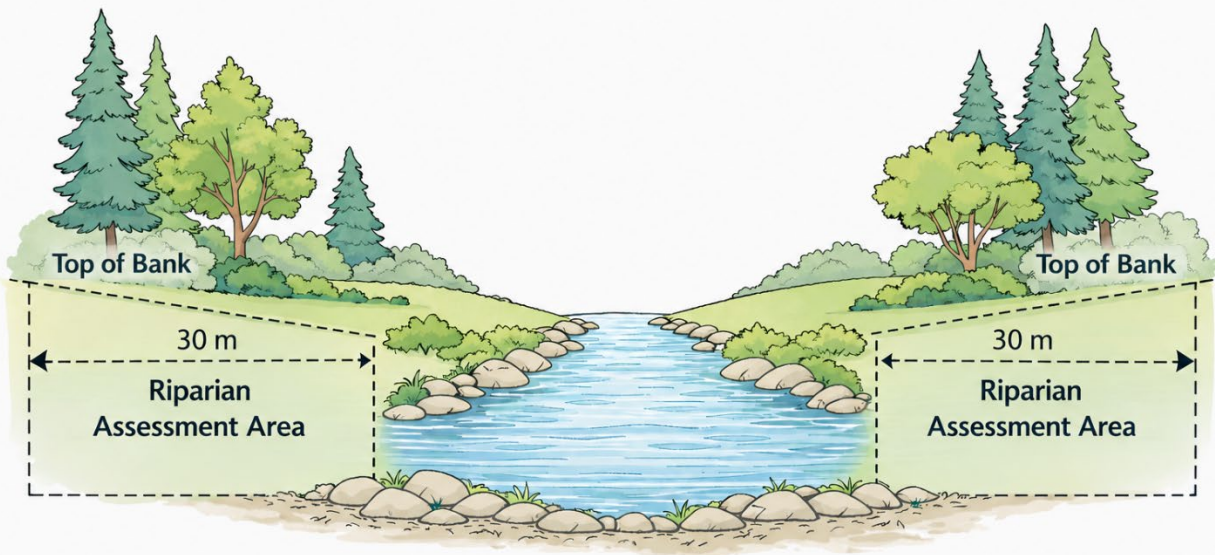


Figure A – Determining Riparian Assessment Areas

Figure A: Determining the Riparian Assessment Area (RAA).

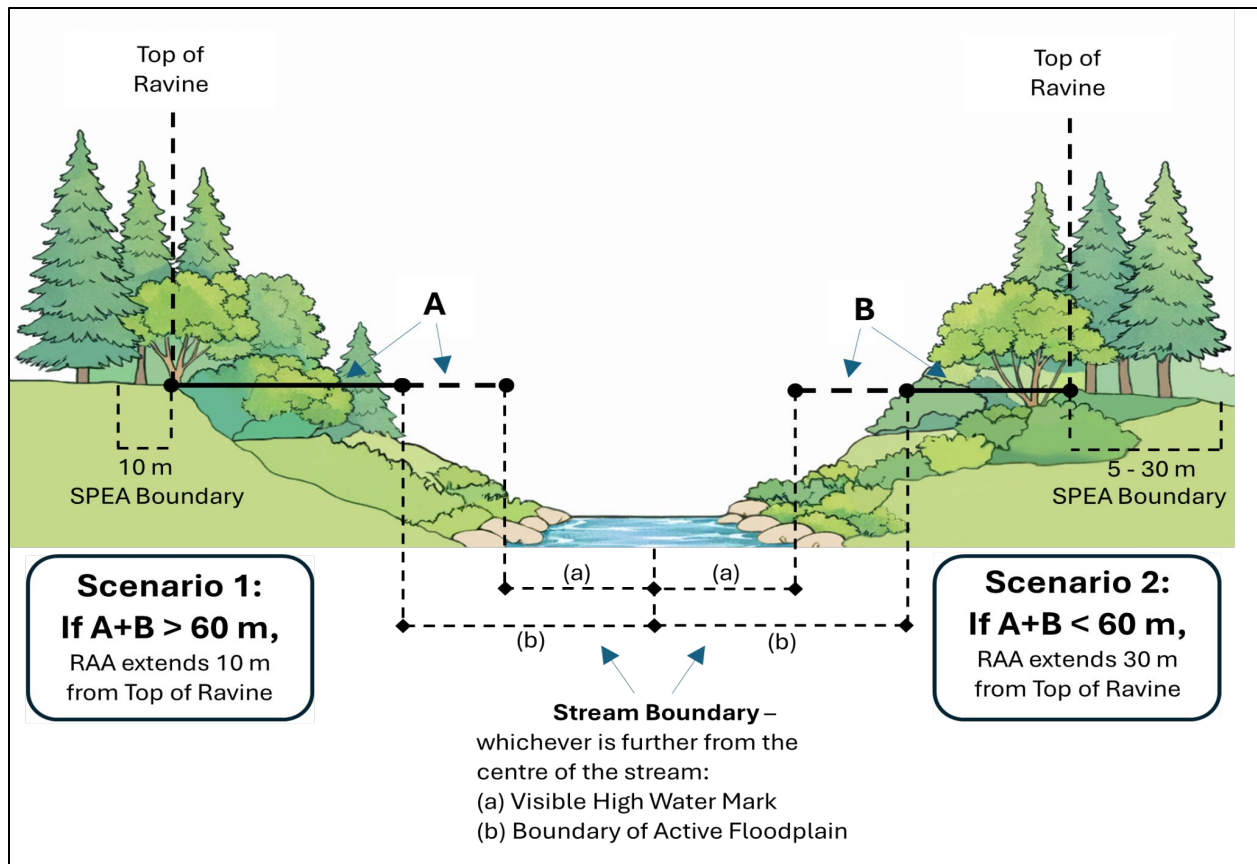


Figure B: Determining the Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area (SPEA) in a ravine under the Simple Assessment Methodology.

Table A: Determining width of the SPEA under the Simple Assessment Methodology

Watercourse type	Existing or potential ² Streamside vegetation conditions	Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area (SPEA) Width ³	SPEA Width ³	SPEA Width ³
		Fish Bearing	Non-Fish-Bearing (Permanent)	Non-Fish-Bearing (Non-Permanent)
Wetlands and all other watercourses includes Ravines <60 m in width¹)	Category 1 Continuous areas ≥ 30 m or Discontinuous but occasionally >30 m to 50 m	30 m	30 m	Minimum 15 m Maximum 30 m
Wetlands and all other watercourses (I includes Ravines <60 m in width¹)	Category 2 Narrow continuous areas = 15 m or Discontinuous but occasionally >15 m to 30 m	Minimum 15 m Maximum 30 m	15 m	15 m
Wetlands and all other watercourses (I includes Ravines <60 m in width¹)	Category 3 Very narrow continuous areas up to 5 m or Discontinuous but occasionally >5 m to 15 m	15 m	Minimum 5 m Maximum 15 m	Minimum 5 m Maximum 15 m
Ravines >60 m in width¹	N/A	10 m	10 m	10 m
Ditches	N/A	2× channel width ⁴ Minimum 5 m Maximum 10 m	2 m	2m

¹ Measured from Left Top of Bank to Right Top of Bank, excluding the stream channel up to high water marks.

² Potential vegetation is considered to exist if there is a reasonable ability for regeneration either naturally or with assistance through enhancement and is considered to not exist on part of an area covered by a permanent structure.

³ Measured from the Top of Ditch Bank for Ditches and from the Top of Bank for Streams and Wetlands.

⁴ Channel Width is determined by the width of the ditch at the midpoint between the ditch invert and the top of the ditch bank.