



KEY INFORMATION

The lakebeds of Shawnigan and Cowichan Lakes, as well as the streambed of some other watercourses within the CVRD, are privately owned. Upland parcels may require a review of registered title boundary by a BC Land Surveyor to accurately identify the extent of upland parcels relative to lakes and other streams.

Watercourses move over time, which older title plans may not reflect. These movements are normal, natural, and support healthy watersheds.

Watercourses also change throughout the seasons, with periods of high flows in late fall to early spring, followed by droughts over summer. Watercourse assessments are typically conducted over multiple site visits, including during wet seasons, to ensure all watercourses have been assessed to their full extent.

Intermittent watercourses have dry seasons and fluctuating water levels. All streams require assessments during appropriate timing windows that assess the full stream extent.

COWICHAN VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT

Development Services

175 Ingram Street, Duncan, BC V9L 1N8

☎ 250-746-2620

Contact Us

Monday to Friday

8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Excluding Statutory Holidays

✉ ds@cvrd.bc.ca

🌐 cvrd.ca/planning-and-development

Additional Website Resources:

Development Permit resources

Riparian Areas Protection Regulation

Water Sustainability Act

Front Counter BC



RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT AROUND FRESHWATER & RIPARIAN AREAS

If there is a watercourse (e.g., streams, rivers, wetlands, ponds, and lakes) on or beside your property, contact the CVRD before you disturb the area.

CVRD, Provincial and, or Federal legislation may apply to you. This brochure is intended to assist land owners who are planning development activities around freshwater and riparian areas.

This pamphlet is a guide, not a substitute for the Federal Fisheries Act, the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR), Water Sustainability Act (WSA), or CVRD's bylaws and permit requirements.

WHAT ARE RIPARIAN AREAS?

Riparian areas are the areas bordering on streams, lakes, and wetlands that link water to land. These areas are critical to the maintenance of healthy watersheds.

Preventing damage to riparian habitat is easier than restoring it if damage has occurred. Land owners have a direct role to play in ensuring the health of their local ecosystems.

QUALIFIED ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS

Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEPs) are retained by landowners to complete stream and riparian assessments in support of development permits. These professionals work in their area of expertise and identify Stream Boundaries, Riparian Assessment Areas, Streamside Protection and Enhancement Areas (SPEAs), and prescribe measures to protect SPEAs before, during, and after construction.

DEVELOPMENT PERMITS

The CVRD's Riparian Protection development permit area applies to a minimum area 30 m horizontally from the stream boundary or ravine top of bank of any watercourse.

Development (e.g. buildings, structures, land alterations, and subdivision) proposed within the 30 m assessment area will require a development permit (DP) before proceeding. Building permits are issued for the construction of buildings and structures.

Development Application Process

1. Retain services of QEP to complete stream and riparian assessments.
2. Design a proposal to meet all RAPR and CVRD permit guidelines.
3. Submit all Development Permit documents into one complete package.
4. Submit RAPR report to province for review.
5. CVRD review of complete application informed by approved RAPR report.

Retroactive Development Application Process

1. Retain services of QEP to complete stream and riparian assessments.
2. QEP writes a Condition and Impact (CIA) Assessment report and submits it to the CVRD.
3. CVRD reviews CIA report to address non-compliance and directs DP application submission.
4. Submit DP application package.
5. DP issued for removal of development and restoration activities.

Development Permits are delegated to the General Manager of Land Use Services for issuance.

ZONING BYLAWS & VARIANCES

The CVRD currently has 8 different zoning bylaws for 9 Electoral Areas. In each zoning bylaw, a watercourse setback is established. The watercourse setback may be greater for larger watercourses than smaller ones. If a building or structure is proposed within a setback area, a development variance permit is required.

CONTRAVENTIONS & ENFORCEMENT

CVRD bylaw enforcement officers investigate complaints about people doing things on their property without the correct permits. If they find something that needs a permit but doesn't have one, fixing the problem usually takes more time and costs more money than getting the permits beforehand. The landowner could end up paying fines, restoring the land, or even moving buildings and structures to permitted areas.

How riparian areas work

