



A NEWSLETTER FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS
June 2008

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RVCA Regulations and Wetlands

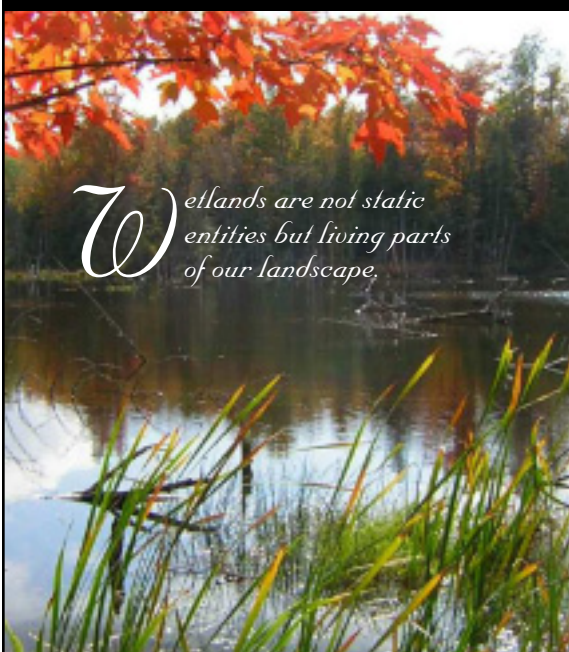
The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) conserves natural resources in the Rideau River valley for everyone's benefit. Sound planning is a critical part of protecting our land and water.

As part of this mandate, we regulate construction, reconstruction and the placement of fill on environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, shorelines and around waterways (Ontario Regulation 174/06 – Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation).

This regulation allows RVCA experts to review and approve development projects or any project that could interfere with valuable wetland functions (flooding, erosion and pollution control hydrologic cycle). In this way, the RVCA will help ensure clean water, natural shorelines and sustainable land use throughout the watershed.

Over 64 thousand hectares or about 15 percent of the Rideau Valley is wetland. Wetlands are of particular concern in the valley because of their impact on the base flow of many creeks. Wetlands are like giant sponges that store surface runoff from rain and snowmelt. Wetlands soak-up runoff and rain which helps control floods; wetlands then slowly release this water during dry spells which helps keep the creeks flowing. These natural functions make wetlands an essential part of the water cycle. Wetlands are also natural filters that improve water quality and are home to over 600 species of wildlife.





Wetlands are not static entities but living parts of our landscape.

The Economic Value of Wetlands

When wetlands are drained or degraded, there is a financial cost incurred by society to replace the ecological goods and services these wetlands provide, such as:

- ▶ increased water treatment costs
- ▶ increased illness and health care costs
- ▶ irrigation water shortage
- ▶ water hauling and deeper wells required
- ▶ increased insurance costs due to flooding
- ▶ decreased property value due to degraded aesthetic qualities
- ▶ decreased swimming/fishing opportunities
- ▶ decreased revenues from tourism activities associated with healthy ecosystems

*Natural Values: Linking the Environment to the Economy, Fact Sheet 6,
Ducks Unlimited Canada
April 2006.*

Common Questions and Answers

Part of my property is a wetland. Do RVCA Regulations apply here?

RVCA regulates:

- Wetlands that have been evaluated by Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) as being Provincially-Significant, and
- Provincially-Significant Wetlands (PSWs) that are identified in municipal Official Plans (OPs).

Both of these conditions must be in place before RVCA regulations apply.

The provincial law (*Ontario Regulation 174/06*) gives RVCA the ability to regulate development and interference with all wetlands (and areas surrounding the wetlands) regardless of their status with OMNR and municipal Official Plans; however, the RVCA Board of Directors has presently decided to only administer the regulation in PSWs identified in municipal OPs. As a result, RVCA regulatory requirements apply to about 60% (over 39,000 hectares) of wetlands in the watershed.

What types of activities require an RVCA permit?

RVCA mapping outlines regulated areas and is the starting point for all projects and their approval process. The RVCA must be consulted on activities such as clear-cutting, drainage changes or depositing fill in and around wetlands as a permit may be required. We need to ensure that these activities will not change the wetland's hydrology or grade. The same authority extends to rivers, lakes and streams, floodplains, ravines and steep slopes.

How do I find out if I'm in a "regulated area"?

Call or visit us. An Information Specialist can show you a map of your property and the regulated areas. Staff can also provide details on the regulation and advice on the approval process.

How can I have my say?

Municipal Official Plans have to be reviewed every five years. The review process allows for public consultation and everyone is encouraged to become engaged in the planning process.

With respect to recent proposed changes in the former Township of Goulbourn, the City of Ottawa's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC) will meet this fall to consider wetland issues and hear the public's views. Following this, a draft amendment to add the new wetlands to the Official Plan will be tabled. Until the City of Ottawa approves the new OMNR evaluated wetlands and includes them in their official plan, the RVCA intends to continue with its existing system. However, wetland areas that have been reduced as part of OMNR's 2008 Wetland Boundary Update will be given special consideration when pursuing project approval.

RVCA Meeting Dates,
Board of Directors and
Advisory Board Agendas,
Minutes (after approval),
Watershed Briefs and
Media Releases are
available on our website
at www.rvca.ca.

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