



Water is a limited resource that is valued for many reasons including wildlife habitat, aquatic corridors, and historic, recreational, and cultural values. The Municipality is home to over 1,000 lakes, more than 20 rivers, innumerable streams, and 23 major shorelines. Lakes, rivers, wetlands, and coastal areas are vital to the quality and quantity of water and ground water. Protecting the vegetation around wetlands, or “riparian areas,” helps to protect the land, water, wildlife, and people.

What’s in the Draft Plan?

Riparian Areas

Current rules in place require that buildings, like homes and garages, must be at least 20 metres from the water. This distance can be more if the land is sloped. There are a few things allowed in the riparian area such as a small shed, a small deck, and trails.

To better protect ecosystems and wildlife, the Draft Plan increases the riparian area from 20 metres to a standard 30 metres. It also requires structures such as boardwalks and walkways to have permeable surfaces.

Wetlands

Protecting wetlands is a shared responsibility between the Province and the Municipality. The Municipality can’t stop property owners from applying for a permit to alter a wetland, but can discourage property owners from developing wetlands.

The Regional Plan proposes to:

- Not allow development in any wetland;
- Require a 30 metre riparian buffer on wetlands that are connected to watercourses;
- Require a 30 metre riparian buffer for Provincial Wetlands of Special Significance; and
- Cooperate with the Province to find more ways to protect wetlands.



Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is seeking feedback on the Draft Regional Plan (released June 2023). This Topic Summary provides a broad overview of objectives and policies contained in the Draft Plan. For further details, speak with a staff member or consult the Draft Plan. The Draft Plan is available online and in Halifax Public Libraries.

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Watershed Management & Watershed Studies

Watersheds are areas of land that drain, or “shed” water into a shared river system that connects all sources of water. How we use the land in each watershed can affect the health of the entire ecosystem within it.

The Municipality is creating an approach to balance how we use water and protect the associated ecosystems. This approach would include working with communities to find ways to manage water resources, improve watershed health, and adjust to changing situations.

The Draft plan proposes to:

- Monitor lakes through the Lake Monitoring program;
- Study watersheds before land is developed to establish a baseline for measuring success in minimizing post-development damage to watersheds; and
- Consider using natural bodies of water as community boundaries.

More information on this topic is contained in Chapter 6 of the Draft Plan.