

# Wetland Protection Options



## Private Citizen

Assisting wetland protection through volunteering, reporting, mapping, and increasing pressure on the government.



## Property Owner

Cooperating with government in conservation efforts. Property owners cannot alter or do works in or around a stream or wetland unless they have obtained a provincial permit (Section 9, Water Act) and if in a designated area, they require a local development permit.



## Municipal Planner

Municipal Planners have a number of legislative and regulatory tools to protect wetlands, including bylaws, zoning, and enforcing legislation. Local governments do not have jurisdiction to enforce senior government legislation; but they can selectively choose to enforce their own bylaws.

**Stewardship:** Volunteer with your local watershed group (StreamKeepers, Naturalists, Green Societies, etc.). Volunteers can provide huge support to fill in gaps for protection. For example, they can undertake ecological monitoring and inventorying of wetlands and help guide regional stewardship activities. For more ideas, visit the stewardship centre website: <https://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/>

**Stewardship:** A landowner may enlist the support of a stewardship organization, like the [Delta Farmland & Wildlife Trust](#) that partners with farmers to steward their land, to help care for and retain the values of the wetland.

For more information, visit B.C. Wildlife Federation's Wetlands Education Program's website: <https://bcwf.bc.ca/wetlands-program/>

**Mapping:** Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping to help identify sites is a common tool used by municipalities. Municipalities can also incorporate mapping by citizen groups through tools like the Community Mapping Network's BC Wetlands Atlas, iNaturalist, or through direct submissions of data to the Conservation Data Centre!

Community Mapping Network: <https://www.cmnbc.ca/>  
iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/>  
I-MAP BC: <https://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/hm/imap4m>  
Conservation Data Centre: <https://tinurl.com/4h84psy6>

**Landowner contact:** If there is a wetland on private land, the community can increase the landowner's appreciation of the wetland. This may include cooperating with the landowner to bring in a naturalist to provide a tour and explain the importance of wetland functions and values. You can provide advice/resources on how they can steward the wetland. Start by writing a polite letter, followed up with an equally polite phone call.

Some useful tools to determine land ownership boundaries can be found here: <https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/explore>

**Cooperate with a Land Trust:** Land Trusts can provide significant conservation advice and support to property owners. For example, every year the Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) provides free and confidential land care visits with biologists to property owners living in watersheds around Victoria, BC.

Check out some of the organizations protecting Land Trusts across B.C.:  
Habitat Acquisition Trust: [www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca)  
Nature Conservancy Canada: <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/>  
Nature Trust B.C.: <https://www.naturetrust.bc.ca/>  
The Land Conservancy of B.C.: <https://conservancy.bc.ca/>  
Central Okanagan Land Trust: <https://coltrust.ca/>  
Fraser Valley Conservancy: <https://fraservalleyconservancy.ca/>  
Ducks Unlimited Canada: <https://www.ducks.ca/>

**Partnering at higher scales:** Matching activities to complement strategic direction (i.e., regional, provincial, and federal policies/direction). The Wetland Stewardship Partnership developed key documents to help protect wetlands and other ecologically sensitive sites through BC. For instance, Wetland Ways provides interim guidelines for best management practices, the Wetland Action Plan provides key strategies to protect wetlands at multiple scales, and the Green Bylaws Toolkit provides an overview of conservation options available to local and regional planners.

For more information, visit Wetland Ways: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/best-management-practices/wetland\\_ways\\_ch\\_10\\_development.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/best-management-practices/wetland_ways_ch_10_development.pdf)  
For more information, visit the Green Bylaws Toolkit: <https://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/green-bylaws-toolkit/>

**Developing and implementing a public education program:** May include a steering committee, drafting a plan, children's programs, site signage etc. E.g., A group of volunteers who want to teach the community about wetland functions, classifications, and importance. For more ideas see Section 5 (Activity Module 1.3) of the Wetlandkeepers Manual: [http://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/PDF\\_docs/StewardshipSeries/wetland.pdf](http://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/PDF_docs/StewardshipSeries/wetland.pdf)

You can also visit B.C. Wildlife Federation's website for more information on other environmental educational opportunities: <https://bcwf.bc.ca/>

**Conservation Covenant:** Landowners can voluntarily choose to establish a conservation covenant with a local government or an authorized land trust(s) which is a legal agreement registered on title to ensure that features of the land you want protected will remain so in perpetuity. A landowner may receive tax benefits (i.e., tax exemptions) for undertaking the partnership.

For more info, visit the Land Trust Alliance of BC: <http://www.ltabc.ca>

**Conservation Covenant:** Under the Riparian Tax Exemption provisions of the Community Charter, local governments can provide landowners with tax incentives if a conservation covenant is registered, and protection of riparian areas is upheld. This provides the landowner with a tax incentive and in return the landowner provides a form of environmental protection. A government should focus on raising awareness about this program and monitoring for compliance. Maintaining transparency also helps property owners understand the inherent workings of such an agreement.

For effective covenants, partner with organizations recognized by the Land Trust Alliance of B.C.: <https://ltabc.ca/>

**Mapping:** If mapping (using either a GPS or Google Earth) of a local wetland is possible, the data can be used to inform and engage stakeholders in open houses and city meetings. The data can also be given directly to local governments. Potentially, this can inform zoning. Municipalities can incorporate mapping by citizen groups through tools like the Community Mapping Network's BC Wetlands Atlas, iNaturalist, or through direct submissions of data to the Conservation Data Centre!

Community Mapping Network: <https://www.cmnbc.ca/>  
iNaturalist: <https://www.inaturalist.org/>  
I-MAP BC: <https://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/hm/imap4>  
Conservation Data Centre: <https://tinurl.com/4h84psy6>

**Neighbour's Rights:** If you own property next to a landowner who is disturbing the land and polluting your property, you may take legal action for nuisance. In common law, a "nuisance" is a condition on a property or some use of a property that interferes with a neighbouring owner's ability to enjoy their own property. Consult a lawyer or contact the [West Coast Environmental Law Foundation](#) in Vancouver for advice.

<https://www.wcel.org/>

**Consultation:** Partnering with stewardship groups, non-government organizations, and private citizens. For more information on stewardship groups, visit the Stewardship Centre for B.C.: <https://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/>

**Developing and implementing a public education program:** May include a steering committee, drafting a plan, children's programs, etc. For more ideas see Section 5 (Activity Module 1.3) of the Wetlandkeepers Manual: [http://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/PDF\\_docs/StewardshipSeries/wetland.pdf%20](http://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/PDF_docs/StewardshipSeries/wetland.pdf%20)

**Communicate to decision makers:** Prepare a presentation for council; municipalities have significant control over land uses. Your presentation should include an explanation of where the wetland is, its values and functions in your community, and what you would like to see done with it in the framework of existing bylaws. Including a poster, slides, or prints of the wetland will make the presentation more effective. Visit the Wetlands in B.C. document to find additional information on the importance of wetlands: [https://bcwetlands.ca/files.wordpress.com/2016/11/wetlandprimer\\_wsp\\_2010.pdf](https://bcwetlands.ca/files.wordpress.com/2016/11/wetlandprimer_wsp_2010.pdf)

**Transferring of Property:** You may decide to protect your wetland by arranging to transfer the property now or at a later date through a "life estate" to a conservation organization. Landowners can also achieve significant tax benefits for donating parcels of ecologically sensitive lands.

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Nature Conservancy Canada: <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/>  
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Ducks Unlimited Canada: <https://www.ducks.ca/>

**Enforcement options:** Deal largely with local bylaws and zoning. Tools include ticketing, notice on title, withdrawal of permit, remedial action, or an injunction.

**Amenity density bonus:** A developer can enter into an agreement with the city to build additional density in return for environmental protection.

**Pressure:** If local government officials do not realize wetlands are important to their constituency, then you need to let them know why they are important to you. Private citizens concerned about degradation of local wetlands can request local governments to do more. For example, local governments can designate sensitive ecosystems in Environmentally Sensitive or Watercourse Development Permit Areas or secure covenants with landowners with sensitive environments on private land (i.e., watercourses). For more information, visit the Green Bylaws Toolkit: <https://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/green-bylaws-toolkit/>

**Amenity density bonus:** As a developer, you can enter into an agreement with the city to build additional density in return for environmental protection.

**Riparian Areas Regulation:** Calls on local governments to protect riparian areas during residential, commercial, and industrial development by ensuring that proposed activities are subject to a science-based assessment conducted by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP). The QEP should (1) Assess habitat and the potential impacts to the habitat (2) Develop mitigation measures and (3) Avoid impacts from development to fish and fish habitat. So far, the RAR applies to the 15 regional districts and the municipalities within them.

**"Kitchen Table" Writing Parties:** Individual and personal hand-written letters are proven to be much more effective than mailing a pre-written letter sent en masse. Private citizens concerned about a wetland can assemble to throw a letter writing party whereby each individual writes a letter addressing local politicians. Keep each letter short and concise. Remember to provide constructive solutions to the problem.

**Reporting:** If you suspect a landowner or other agency (such a local government, utility or private company) does not have a provincial permit to do works in and around a wetland or stream (e.g., Water Act), report to [Conservation Officer Service](#) (1-877-952-7277). If you suspect a landowner does not have a local government permit, report to local government or Conservation Officer Service. When reporting is carried out, it is useful to supply photo evidence. If impacts are not obvious during the dry season, then record wetland at high water to help confirm impacts to wetlands that dry seasonally.

**Neighbour's Rights:** If you own property next to a landowner who is disturbing the land and polluting your property, you may take legal action for nuisance. In common law, a "nuisance" is a condition on a property or some use of a property that interferes with a neighbouring owner's ability to enjoy their own property. Consult a lawyer or contact the [West Coast Environmental Law Foundation](#) in Vancouver for advice.

**LEGEND**  
Partnership Building  
Public Education  
Enforcement  
Legal



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**Official Community Plan:** Developing a community plan that is consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and Regional Conservation Strategy (RCS). Can inform greenways, Development Permit Areas (DPAs), and infrastructure development.

**Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA):** A local government can register an Environmental or Watercourse Development Permit Area on a site to specify conditions and standards that must be met. Doing so, the current and future property owner will be required to obtain a development permit in order to: (1) build subdivision (2) construct (3) add onto/alter a building and (4) alter the land.

**Regulatory bylaws:** Municipalities can regulate activities, such as: Landscaping, the movement of soil, tree protection, watercourse protection, pesticide control, and control of alien invasive species.

**Impact Assessment:** Local governments may specify the areas or situations in which landowners must supply information on the anticipated impact on the community of proposed activities or development. Usually this takes the form of hiring a 3rd party professional to establish a report or study of the environmental significance of a property and consequences of the proposed development. This is a proactive measure that is more cost effective than dealing with damage.

**Security:** Local governments can require developers to pay security deposits that the municipality can use for habitat restoration and landscaping if damage occurs.