



COUNCIL POLICY C-ES02

Maintaining Biodiversity on Private Land

Prepared By: Environment and Community
Sustainability Services
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References: N/A
Function: Property Management

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to support the enhancement of the environmental integrity on privately held land assets in Parkland County by developing and implementing programs that are flexible and promote environmental conservation, enhancement and restoration.

POLICY STATEMENT

Parkland County views all lands with high biodiversity and environmental sensitivity as an important asset to the community and the eco-system within the County. There are numerous environmental, social and economic benefits associated with maintaining, restoring and enhancing the ecological integrity of lands held in private ownership. Parkland County acknowledges that in many cases, economic costs associated with conserving, enhancing and restoring environmental assets are borne by private landowners, but these efforts provide benefits to the biosphere and society as a whole. Therefore, this policy outlines Parkland County's strategy to promote and implement both incentives and voluntary programs to that encourage environmental stewardship on privately held lands.

DEFINITIONS

1. "Biodiversity" means the biological diversity, or variety, of plants and animals and other living organisms in a particular area or region.
2. "Enhancement" means a process that promotes the natural condition of a site through the preservation, restoration, or enhancement of all of the following applicable aspects: the site's native vegetation, the site's natural hydrology, the area's natural topography, the site's biodiversity, and its ability to act as a wildlife habitat.
3. "Ecological Goods and Services" means the benefits arising from the ecological functions of healthy ecosystems. Examples of ecological goods include clean air, fresh water. Ecological services include purification of air and water, maintenance of biodiversity, groundwater recharge through wetlands, and decomposition of wastes, soil, vegetation generation and renewal, and pollination of crops and natural vegetation.
4. "Privately Held Lands" means any lands not owned, leased, or managed by Parkland County or other levels of government, and which fall within Parkland County boundaries.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all privately held lands in Parkland County.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The General Manager of Development Services is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation and monitoring of this policy.
2. Environmental Services is responsible for implementing this policy with interested private landowners in partnership with other levels of government, societies and other non-governmental agencies.

STANDARDS

1. Enhancement, restoration and maintenance programs on privately held lands will be promoted and supported using three broad strategies:
 - a. **Education and Awareness:** Education and awareness programs will be designed and delivered to foster awareness and change towards environmental stewardship in Parkland County. The programs will include the environmental, social and economic benefits associated with maintaining, restoring and enhancing the ecological integrity of lands held in private ownership.
 - b. **Incentive and Voluntary Programs:** Incentive and voluntary programs will be developed and employed by Parkland County, and in partnership with other levels of government, societies and other non-governmental agencies to encourage landowners to voluntarily undertake activities that benefit the environment, and promote ecological goods and services on their properties. An example of an incentive and voluntary program is the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) Program.
 - c. **Voluntary Agreements:** Parkland County will assist and encourage organizations such as land trust societies, and conservation organizations to work with private landowners to enter into Voluntary Agreements that preserve and retain natural landscapes and environmentally sensitive features within landscapes. These landscapes and environmental sensitive features will be based the County's Environmental Conservation Master Plan. Parkland County may enter into Voluntary Agreements in the form of Conservation Easements, or similar mechanisms in order to maintain, and enhance the ecological integrity and biodiversity of lands held in private ownership.