



Wetland Regulations: Frequently Asked Questions

More information can be found at: www.nation.on.ca/consultations



What is a Wetland?

Wetlands are biodiverse areas of land that are covered and/or saturated with water. They take form as marshes, fens, swamps, bogs and open water, and protect surrounding land from flooding and drought, while providing ample resources for plants, insects, birds and other wildlife to live and thrive.

Wetlands are important ecological systems and provide many benefits to surrounding homes and communities including flood attenuation, erosion protection, groundwater recharge, filtration of drinking water supplies, wildlife refuge, and forest cover, as well as recreational, educational, and research opportunities.

Typically, wetlands are associated with unstable, organic soils and generally not well suited for development.

Why does SNC regulate development in natural hazard areas and wetlands?

Conservation Authorities are delegated responsibility under Part VI of the Conservation Authorities Act to regulate areas within their jurisdiction.

The province has enacted a province-wide regulation titled Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions, and Permits to establish a standardized the approach to natural hazards and wetland regulation across the province.

Ontario Regulation 41/24 helps ensure public safety and protection of property from natural hazards. The regulation also works to prevent the destruction of sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands, shorelines, and watercourses.

Ontario Regulation 41/24 establishes Regulated Areas where permission to develop is necessary to mitigate the effects of flooding, erosion, or dynamic beaches; or where interference with wetlands and alterations to shorelines and watercourses might have an adverse effect on those environmental features.

A permit from SNC:

- Provides you with the steps needed to safely undertake your project;
- Helps protect you and your property from natural hazards; and
- Helps ensure sustainable development activities.



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Does my project require permission from South Nation Conservation (SNC)?

An SNC permit may be required if you plan to undertake work in or around the following Regulated Areas:

- River valleys (floodplains and shorelines);
- Watercourses (rivers, streams, creeks, etc.);
- Hazardous lands;
- Unstable soil or bedrock;
- Unstable slopes; and
- Wetlands

What activities require a permit?

- New construction, reconstruction, and additions or alteration to existing buildings or structures;
- Site grading including placing, dumping or removal of fill or other material;
- Straightening, changing, diverting or interfering with a channel of a river, creek, stream, watercourse, or shoreline; or
- Changing or interfering with a wetland.

How much does an SNC permit cost?

Permit fees are based on project type and review as established in SNC's [Board-approved Fee Schedule](#). Fees are reviewed and updated annually.

After you submit your application, the fee and file number will be confirmed and communicated to you by email.

Property owners are encouraged to contact SNC before applying to discuss their project and development needs. SNC provides free pre-consultation services and can help guide you through the permitting process. We would be pleased to meet with you in person, online, or by phone, at your convenience.



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SNC has regulated development within wetlands since 2006, what's changed with the new Government of Ontario Regulation?

SNC previously regulated development within Provincially Significant Wetlands and within certain Locally Significant Wetlands when requested by municipalities. Development and interference with these wetlands are not permitted.

The new regulation requires SNC to regulate all wetlands, not just those identified as "Provincially Significant", to achieve consistency across the province.

While most wetlands will now be regulated, the area where permission is required to develop near a wetland has been reduced from 120 metres to 30 metres in this update.

Additionally, SNC's local policies will include flexibility to permit development activities within wetlands where existing lots of record already exist, or in areas where planning processes have already been initiated.

My property now includes wetlands mapped within SNC's Regulation Limit, can I still build on this property or develop it further in the future?

Existing development rights (lots of record that existed before April 1, 2024) are respected and property owners can work with the Conservation Authority through the permitting process to establish suitable locations for development that limit wetland interference.

Property owners may still construct a single-family dwelling and accessory building in new wetland regulation areas, so long as there is an existing lot of record and a permit is obtained from the Conservation Authority.

Development activities associated with erosion control works and conservation or restoration projects are also permitted.

For properties that do not have existing development lots, further development or interference within a wetland will not be permitted, with some exceptions including, public infrastructure (roads, sewers, pipelines, etc.), certain replacements or additions to existing buildings and infrastructure, as well as maintenance, low-intensity or passive uses.



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My house is surrounded by the wetland, can I still add an addition or build a shed?

Replacements and maintenance to existing structures and infrastructure is permitted, along with minor additions and accessory structures.

If you are unsure or would like to speak with someone, SNC provides free pre-consultation services. We would be pleased to meet with you in person, online, or by phone.

What agricultural activities can take place in a wetland?

Existing agricultural activities can continue. No new activities are allowed in wetlands.

Agricultural activities are permitted within 30 metres of a wetland, as long as they do not negatively affect the function and characteristics of the wetland (e.g. no ditching, tile drainage, berms, etc.).

Can I cut trees in the wetland?

The limited cutting of trees for firewood or personal use is generally permitted. More extensive tree removal that is likely to impact the function of the wetland would require review and approval, likely requiring a sustainable forest management plan to proceed.

Why is development being restricted in wetlands?

The new regulation, introduced by the Government of Ontario, supersedes SNC's previous Regulation Limit and Policies that have been in place since 2006 and updated in 2023. This new update is required to meet the new provincial requirements and to achieve consistency throughout Ontario.

The new Ontario Regulation 41/24 establishes Regulated Areas where permission to develop is necessary to mitigate the threat of flooding, erosion, or dynamic beaches; or where interference with wetlands and alterations to shorelines and watercourses might have an adverse effect on those environmental features.

Wetlands are important ecological systems and provide many benefits to surrounding homes and communities including flood attenuation, erosion protection, groundwater recharge, filtration of drinking water supplies, wildlife refuge, and forest cover, as well as recreational, educational, and research opportunities.



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How are wetlands mapped?

Wetland mapping is produced using the best available elevation and land cover data from public datasets and is intended as a screening tool for development applications.

SNC will continually review and update wetland mapping as new information becomes available and site evaluations are completed.

Previously regulated wetlands were mapped using a combination of public datasets and on-site field verification. The Ontario Wetland Evaluation System, a provincial standard for assessing wetlands, was followed for both desktop and field work related to the mapping.

Will I be able to review the draft regulations maps and provide feedback?

Yes, draft regulations maps are available on SNC's [public consultations page](#).

Feedback is welcome and appreciated and residents may attend a public meeting or schedule individual meetings with SNC to learn more and provide comments.

What if I disagree with wetland mapping included on my property?

Property owners are encouraged to contact SNC with questions about wetland mapping and staff are available to complete free site visits to correct wetland boundaries.

How do I know if my property or a property I am looking to buy is in a Regulated Area?

SNC's Public Geoportal identifies Regulated Areas throughout SNC's jurisdiction. If your property is in a Regulated Area, please contact SNC before proceeding with your project as permission may be required.

Current owners, prospective purchasers, or their representatives may request information about a particular property through SNC's [Property Inquiry Service](#). Applicants will receive a letter outlining all identified natural hazards and features, in addition to potential impacts of development under Drinking Water Source Protection Plans and Sections 2.1 (Natural Heritage) and 3.1 (Natural Hazards) of the Provincial Policy Statement.

If your property is outside of SNC's jurisdiction, please contact your local Conservation Authority. You can find your local Conservation Authority [here](#).



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What is the Conservation Authority doing to manage and conserve wetlands?

Conservation Authorities work on behalf of their municipal partners to manage, conserve, and restore natural resources within its watershed jurisdiction.

Wetlands are key natural assets that provide significant benefits to people and the environment and SNC works through a variety of public and private partnerships to conserve and improve ecologically significant wetlands.

SNC manages a Land Securement Program and purchases and accepts donations of land every year, adding to the 13,000 acres of land owned in Eastern Ontario. Lands can be acquired through Canada's Ecological Gifts Program, donations, split receipt (partial purchase and donation) or through purchases, depending on the right fit for the donor family. Land purchases are prioritized based on SNC's Land Securement Strategy.

SNC also helps to restore wetland habitat and create new habitat in strategic locations, thanks to support provided by government and industry partnerships. Every year, SNC restores hundreds of acres of wetland habitat. Property owners may also work with SNC through various cost-share land stewardship programs to help complete habitat restoration projects on private property.

Through Conservation Authority Regulations Programs, SNC also works with municipalities, developers, and residents to guide sustainable development activities within and near wetland habitat. Property owners must obtain development permission, through a permit, to ensure that new construction activities do not impact the integrity or function of existing wetland habitat. SNC will help property owners plan their project through the permitting process to ensure that homes, minor additions, and accessory structures can still be built within existing lots of record.

Are there programs available to help improve wetland habitat on private property?

Yes, there are several landowner stewardship programs with cost-share funding available to improve wetland habitat.

SNC and other partner organizations like Ducks Unlimited Canada and ALUS Ontario East have formed a regional collaborative to implement these programs for farm and rural landowners. The Eastern Ontario Farm Stewardship Collaborative is a one-stop resource for private landowner stewardship funding in our region. If you are interested in completing a wetland or other natural habitat improvement project, you can fill out a simple interest form here: [Application Form - Eastern Ontario Farm Stewardship Collaborative](#)



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How is the public being invited to provide input on updated wetland mapping?

Notices have been provided to SNC's 16 member municipalities, First Nations, stakeholders, and 9 different local agricultural organizations. Newspaper and online advertisements are also posted during June 2024.

Please note that these consultations do not replace any municipal requirements or public notices to update policies or zoning schedules.

Letters are not distributed to individual property owners as existing development rights are maintained and respected.

Can I meet with someone to further discuss my project after the consultation?

SNC's Planning and Approvals Team is available for free consultation on projects.

Meetings can be held in person at our Finch office, online, by phone, or on site according to the project's needs and at your convenience. Please contact us at 1-877-984-2948 or info@nation.on.ca to book your free consultation.