

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Council Approves Changes to Riparian Setback Variance Process

#### Summary

The City of Nanaimo is doing more to protect local watercourses.

After completing a thorough review, Council has directed staff to revise the City's approach to how watercourse setback variances are handled. The review was launched in December 2012, after hearing public concerns about the long term health and protection of our watercourses and riparian setback areas in the City.

Staff consulted with a broad range of stakeholders including concerned citizens, members of the development community, qualified environmental professionals, City and provincial staff. A workshop was held as part of the process where stakeholders, City staff and Councillors worked together to identify key issues and opportunities to improve how the City's Watercourse development permit area and process can be improved.

Recommended changes include clearer criteria on how a watercourse variance request will be accepted, requirements for a broader ecological assessment that includes natural features, not necessarily critical to fish habitat and a requirement for a qualified environmental professional, such as biologists, to more closely monitor a project from design stage to post-construction.

*Strategic Link:* Protection of our watercourses is part of the City's Environmental Responsibility, one the four Pillars of Sustainability in the City of Nanaimo's Strategic Plan.

#### Key Points

- Watercourses and their adjacent riparian areas provide habitat and travel corridors for fish and other wildlife. They also act as natural water storage, drainage and purifying systems.
- Riparian areas have dense, structurally complex vegetation that are biologically more diverse. Providing food and shelter for fish and other wildlife.

#### Quotes

"Our watercourses are part of what makes Nanaimo so special. The City is working to do a better job at protecting our natural assets."

Rob Lawrance  
Environmental Planner  
City of Nanaimo

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