

Presentation to
Parkland County
Governance & Priorities Committee



Nature Policy Framework

Guy Greenaway, Corvus Centre for Conservation Policy

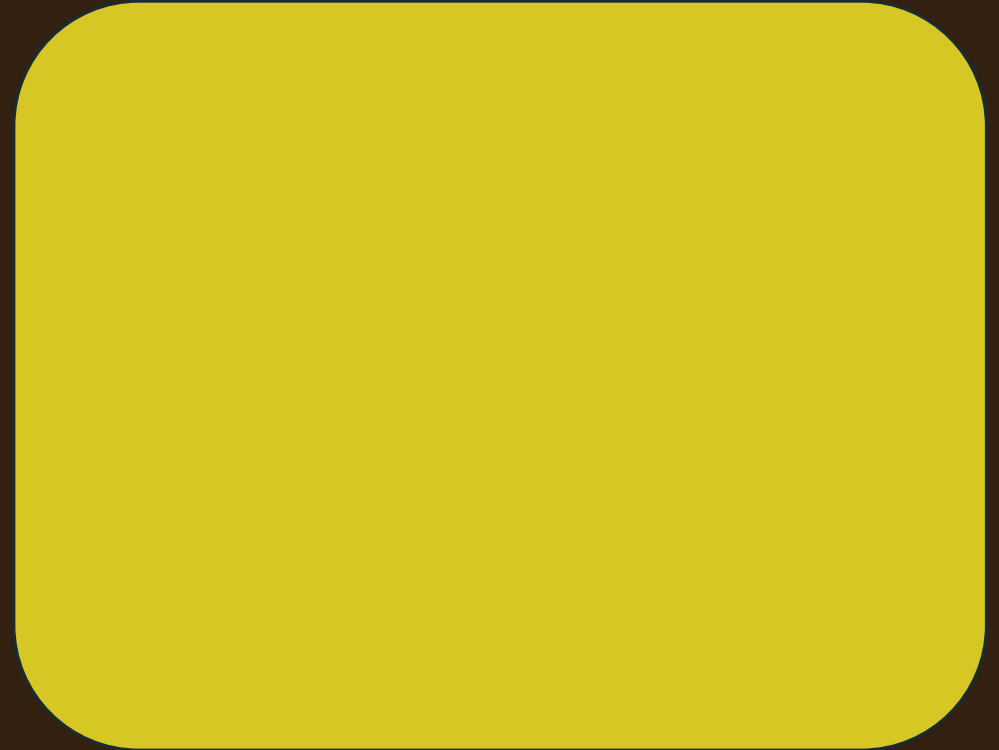
Krista Quesnel, Parkland County

April 15, 2025

Outline

Outline

Context



Outline

Context

- Conserving Nature as a Municipality
- Parkland County Circumstance

Outline

Context

Direction

- From Council
- The New MDP

Outline

Context

Direction

Developing the Framework

- Summary Goal
- The Work
- Strategy
- Role of the Framework
- Central Themes
- Conservation Tools

Outline

Context

Direction

Developing the Framework

Enabling Policies

- Approach
- Standardized Structure
- Policies Gaps Addressed

Outline

Context

Direction

Developing the Framework

Enabling Policies

Implementation

- Administration
- Next Steps

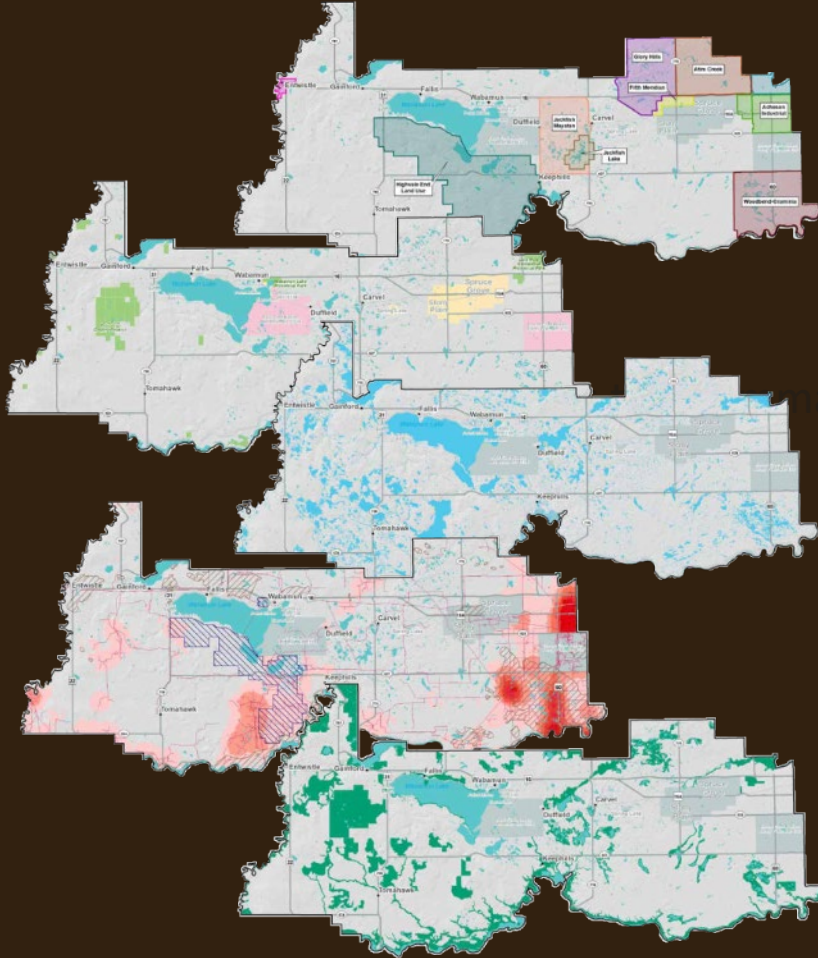
Context

Conserving Nature as a Municipality

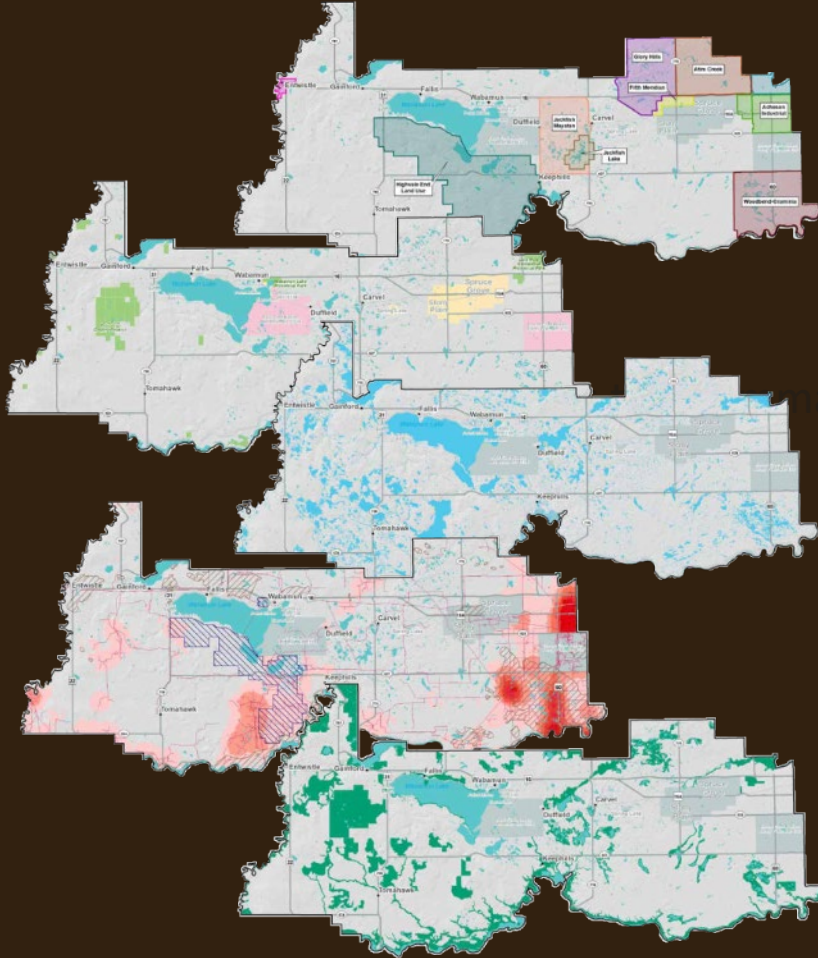
Conservation in the 21st Century

Applying Tools to Dilemmas

Conservation in the 21st Century



Conservation in the 21st Century



Conservation

- 'Systems' not 'pieces'
- Humans and nature
- Resilience / Endurance
- Development aware
- Function focused

Natural Features, Functions, Services



CONTEXT

NATURAL FEATURE



CONTEXT

NATURAL FEATURE

FUNCTION

CONTEXT

NATURAL FEATURE

FUNCTION

SERVICE

CONTEXT

NATURAL FEATURE

The “things”, the “parts”

FUNCTION

SERVICE

CONTEXT

NATURAL FEATURE

The “things”, the “parts”

FUNCTION

What is does even if
people are not around

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The value people derive
from that function

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WHY WE CARE

CONTEXT

NATURAL FEATURE

The “things”, the “parts”

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FUNCTION

What is does even if
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MANAGEMENT FOCUS

SERVICE

The value people derive
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WETLAND

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MANAGEMENT FOCUS

- Retains stormwater
- Provides aquatic habitat provision
- Replenishes subsurface aquifers
- Etc. ...

SERVICE

The value people derive
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MANAGEMENT FOCUS

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- Replenishes subsurface aquifers
- Etc. ...

SERVICE

The value people derive from that function

WHY WE CARE

- Flood mitigation
- Drought mitigation
- Wildfire mitigation
- Pollution filtration
- Etc. ...

How Municipalities Say 'Yes' and 'No'

RESTRICTION

How Municipalities Say 'Yes' and 'No'

RESTRICTION

GUIDELINE

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INNOVATION

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INNOVATION

Saying 'No'

How Municipalities Say 'Yes' and 'No'

RESTRICTION

Saying 'No'

Identifying proponent request circumstances where Council would say 'no' to the proposed activity.

GUIDELINE

INNOVATION

How Municipalities Say 'Yes' and 'No'

RESTRICTION

Saying 'No'

Identifying proponent request circumstances where Council would say 'no' to the proposed activity.

GUIDELINE

Saying 'Yes, but ...'

INNOVATION

How Municipalities Say 'Yes' and 'No'

RESTRICTION

Saying 'No'

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GUIDELINE

Saying 'Yes, but ...'

Identifying proponent requests circumstances where Council would say 'yes' to the proposed activity, but caveat that with guidelines that must be followed.

INNOVATION

How Municipalities Say 'Yes' and 'No'

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Saying 'No, but ...'

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INNOVATION

Saying 'No, but ...'

Identifying proponent request circumstances where Council would say 'no' to the proposed activity, but immediately identify innovative efforts that a proponent could take to secure a 'yes'.

Proposal Review

Proposal Review

HEALTH

EMPLOYMENT

ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE

ENVIRONMENT

Proposal Review

HEALTH

Increase available
hospital beds

EMPLOYMENT

Add new jobs

ECONOMY

Dollars-worth of new
economic activity

AGRICULTURE

Increase agri-business
operations

ENVIRONMENT

Proposal Review

CONTRIBUTORY

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ENVIRONMENT

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Proposal Review

CONTRIBUTORY

HARM REDUCTION

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HEALTH

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Limit the number of
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EMPLOYMENT

Add new jobs

Limit the number of
people who lose jobs

ECONOMY

Dollars-worth of new
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Limit the drop in economic
activity

AGRICULTURE

Increase agri-business
operations

Limit the number of
farmers who go broke

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ENVIRONMENT

Add to / protect the flow
of ecosystem services

Limit the amount of
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Proposal Review

CONTRIBUTORY

HARM REDUCTION

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HARM REDUCTION

Becoming 'Nature Positive'

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Parkland County Circumstance

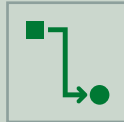
Environmental Conservation Master Plan



Objective: identify priority areas for conservation based on their inherent significance & sensitivity



ESA Definition: places that are vital to the long-term maintenance of biological diversity, soil, water and other natural processes at multiple scales, that can be used as a strategic conservation tool for land use planning and policy

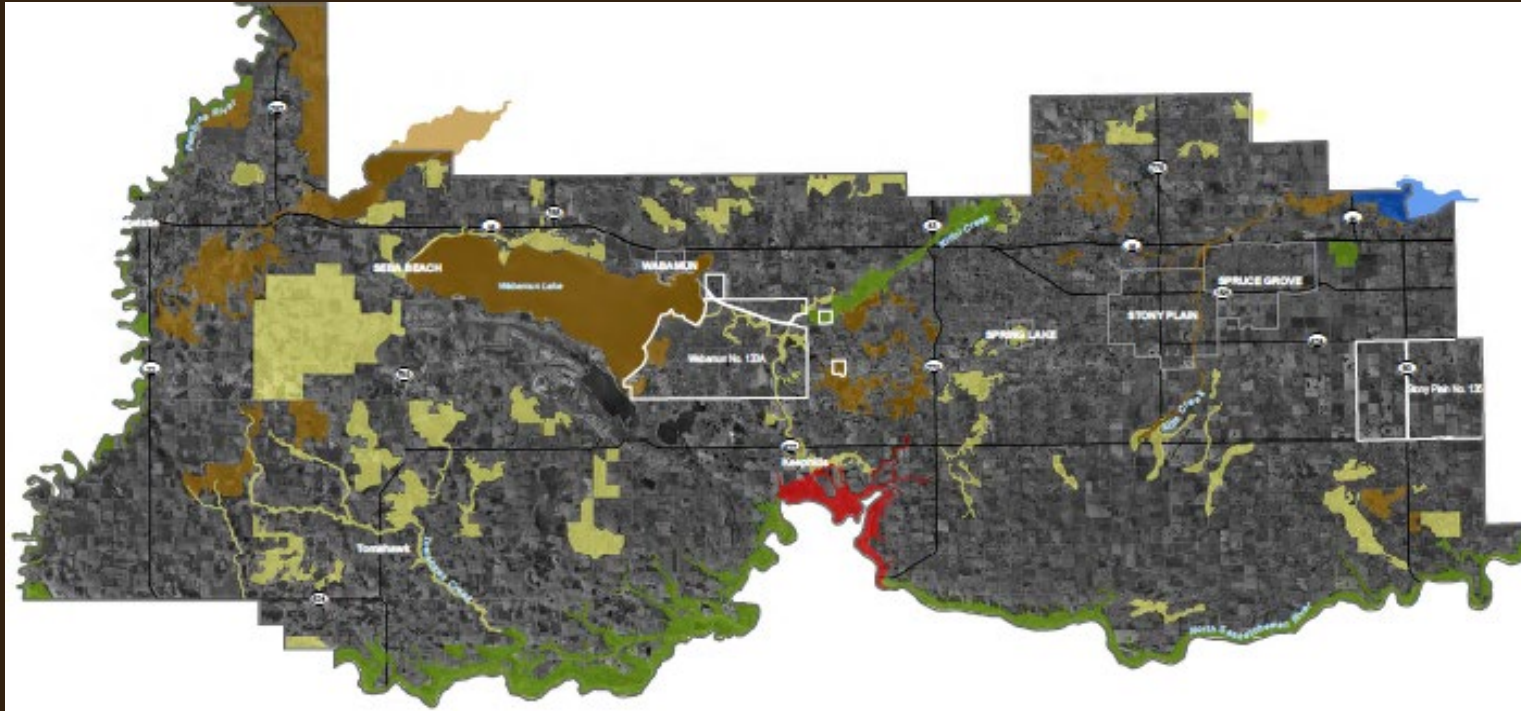









Process: Identify areas of significance, delineate boundaries, prioritize, recommend policies and BMPs



Preserve landscape features that account for ecological function and produce ecosystem services like water quality & biodiversity.

Valuing Environmentally Significant Areas



	County Boundary	Significance		International
	Municipal Boundary		National	
	First Nations Reserve		Provincial	
	Highway		Regional	
			Local	

- Classified by significance (uniqueness) and sensitivity of natural features present

Initial Parkland County Policy

Municipal Development Plan:

- Encourages the conservation of ESAs and high values wetlands using reserve dedication and other mechanisms
- Conservation By Design approach required
- Biophysical impact assessment required
- Road networks may be required to be as far away as possible
- Designated OHV trails and parks located a sufficient distance away

Biophysical Assessment Policy:

- May require development to avoid and setback from ESAs and high value wetlands

Dedication and Use of MR, ER, and ERE Policy:

- Requires the dedication of ER and ERE for environmentally sensitive lands as per the MGA unless land is required for stormwater management
- Suggests consideration of other conservation tools if land does not meet ER/ERE requirements

Environmental Policy & Procedures:

- Lists ESA protection as a management objective
- Only requires what is legislated at higher levels of government (ER) and encourages voluntary protection
- Some broad feature-specific statements (ie. Protect water quality)

Biodiversity on County Lands Policy:

- Prioritizes County land in ESAs for naturalization/restoration projects, as resources allow

Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan:

- Suggests use of conservation easements and designation of new Conservation Parks to protect ESAs

Policy Gaps

Policy Gaps

- Mostly suggestive wording –no teeth requires voluntary action
- The “no case” does not exist
- Soft language focused on harm reduction
- Little to no jurisdictional alignment
- Limited amount of high-level policy has been translated to bylaw
- Lack any policy for some sensitive features (i.e., tree clearing/biodiversity/wildlife corridors)
- No proactive tools in place to fund/prioritize conservation of ESAs
- No cohesive plan for maintaining landscape connectivity or key corridors

MOVING FROM ESA 'IDENTIFICATION' TO ESA 'CONSERVATION'

This is the overall coordinating framework for the workshops

IDENTIFICATION

- Note their importance
- Catalogue
- Map them



CONSERVATION

- Maintain their identified values
- Action-oriented
- Restrictions and requirements

Direction

Council Direction

Parkland County Strategic Plan 2022-2025



Parkland County Strategic Plan 2022-2025

GOAL C1

To develop a policy framework that ensures protection of environmentally significant areas

Parkland County Strategic Plan 2022-2025

GOAL C1

To develop a policy framework that ensures protection of environmentally significant areas



PRIORITY STRATEGY

Review and update the County's framework on environmentally significant areas to support responsible management of natural assets and amenities

Council Workshop One




Council Workshop One




- Theme: "Moving from *ESA Identification* to *ESA Conservation*"
- Conservation in the 21st Century
- Natural Features, Functions and Services

Council Workshop One



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- Types of tools County can use
 - Restriction, Guidelines, Innovation
 - Proactive, Reactive, Opportunistic
- Impact Assessment Defaults
- Approach: Refining Policy to support 'conservation'

Council Workshop Two




Council Workshop Two




- Recap of Workshop 1
- Reviewed development-in-ESA problems that have arisen
- Proposed and discussed goals
- Framework concept, contents
- Workshopped: "Providing clarity, means providing a stakeholder with ... [what?]"

Council Workshop Two



- Recap of Workshop 1
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- Details on key tools (based on council survey)
- Applying tools to dilemmas
- Workshopped: 'No's', Contributions, and Incentives
- Where the County should say 'no'
- Desired 'contributory' actions
- Nature-positive incentives

Framework Goals

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Framework Goals

1

Core areas of environmental significance are identified and conserved to anchor the water quality and conservation, disaster mitigation, habitat provision, natural rural character, recreational opportunities, and wildlife movement functions needed and desired by residents.

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2

The ability of the County's Wetlands to provide habitat, retain stormwater, filter pollution, promote soil wetness, and recharge/discharge groundwater is maintained or enhanced.

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2

The ability of the County's Wetlands to provide habitat, retain stormwater, filter pollution, promote soil wetness, and recharge/discharge groundwater is maintained or enhanced.

3

Groundwater aquifers, upwellings, and springs are able to provide potable water, wetland and lake recharge, soil wetness, and wildlife habitat for the County and its citizens.

Framework Goals

4

Lakes in the County are stewarded and enjoyed in such a way that runoff, access, and use do not impair their ability to provide clean and adequate water supplies, aquatic and riparian habitat, and natural rural character.

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5

The rivers and streams running through the County's watersheds are able to provide unimpaired potable water, aquatic habitat, natural rural character, and disaster mitigation services.

Framework Goals

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The rivers and streams running through the County's watersheds are able to provide unimpaired potable water, aquatic habitat, natural rural character, and disaster mitigation services.

6

Riparian areas in the County are able to perform their functions of soil stabilization, habitat provision, wildlife connectivity, flood mitigation, and pollution filtration.

Framework Goals

7

Forest canopy and vegetation cover across the County provides the natural rural character, wildlife habitat, and disaster mitigation services that citizens need and desire.

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8

Soils in the County remain healthy, productive, and capable of supporting both agriculture and natural ecosystems and climate change adaptation by sequestering carbon.

Framework Goals

7

Forest canopy and vegetation cover across the County provides the natural rural character, wildlife habitat, and disaster mitigation services that citizens need and desire.

8

Soils in the County remain healthy, productive, and capable of supporting both agriculture and natural ecosystems and climate change adaptation by sequestering carbon.

9

Wildlife species in the County are able to move in order to achieve their habitat access, migration, seasonal movement, and dispersal needs.

New Municipal Development Plan

Parkland County **Municipal Development Plan**

Engagement

- Preserve natural areas for ecological health and connection to nature
- Maintain character and support rural experience
- Prevent fragmentation by clustering development
- Balance clarity and flexibility in rules

Parkland County **Municipal Development Plan**

Vision and Values

Parkland County values:

- Natural systems that are protected from being degraded, destroyed, or fragmented.

Parkland County **Municipal Development Plan**

Shared Responsibilities

Parkland County has a responsibility to protect important natural systems that provide food, habitat, water, clean air, and other important functions.

Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

Shared Responsibilities

Parkland County has a responsibility to protect important natural systems that provide food, habitat, water, clean air, and other important functions.

Outcomes

- Parkland County's **natural systems** are healthy, connected, and functional.
- Parkland County's **surface and groundwater** quality and quantity is protected and improved.
- All new development is **Nature Positive**, minimizing impacts on natural function.

Parkland County **Municipal Development Plan**

Nature Positive Development

- 3.3.1 Development should protect and avoid impacts to natural features and functions. Where disturbance cannot be avoided, development must mitigate or offset impacts to natural features and functions by achieving nature-positive design.

Parkland County **Municipal Development Plan**

Nature Positive Development

- 3.3.1 Development should protect and avoid impacts to natural features and functions. Where disturbance cannot be avoided, development must mitigate or offset impacts to natural features and functions by achieving nature-positive design.

ESAs and HPLs

- 3.3.2 Development must protect and enhance **natural features** and their **functions** in **High Priority Landscapes** and **Environmentally Significant Areas** through incorporation of nature-positive operations.

Parkland County **Municipal Development Plan**

Nature Positive

means activities and developments that, on balance, protect, conserve, and/or enhance the beneficial functions of the natural features within Parkland County more than they impair, degrade, or nullify them. This includes actions that buffer or provide protection for natural features, and/or actions that offset or restore the beneficial functions of those features

Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

Reserves and Easements

- 3.3.3 Development must dedicate the following areas as ER ...
- Development must provide a min 30 metres of shoreline buffer ...
- Development may be required to provide Conservation Reserve or a Conservation Easement
- Development should be setback from ...

Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

Reserves and Easements

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- Development must provide a min 30 metres of shoreline buffer ...
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Others

- 3.3.4 Water Bodies
- 3.3.5 Wetlands
- 3.3.6 Ground and Surface Water

Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

Nature Policy Framework

- 4.2.1 Develop and maintain a ***Nature Policy Framework*** to guide conservation-based activities, decision-making and investment in the County, and provide options to achieve nature-positive development that maintains the functions of natural features.

Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

Nature Policy Framework

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Protecting Natural Landscapes

- 4.2.2 ***Implement tools*** to protect, mitigate, and offset impacts to natural features and their functions.
- Consider ER, ERE, Conservation Reserves, and perpetual Conservation Easements as ***protected natural areas***.

Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

Water Bodies and Wetlands

- 4.2.3 Protect, enhance and restore the water quality, water quantity, and aquatic ecosystems in the region by ...
- Encourage *net gain of wetlands* in the county through a wetland replacement program and tools to proactively conserve **high value wetlands**.

Parkland County Municipal Development Plan

Water Bodies and Wetlands

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Education & Incentives

- 4.2.5 Incentivize private land stewardship through education, grants, and by enabling third-party Conservation Easements.

DIRECTION

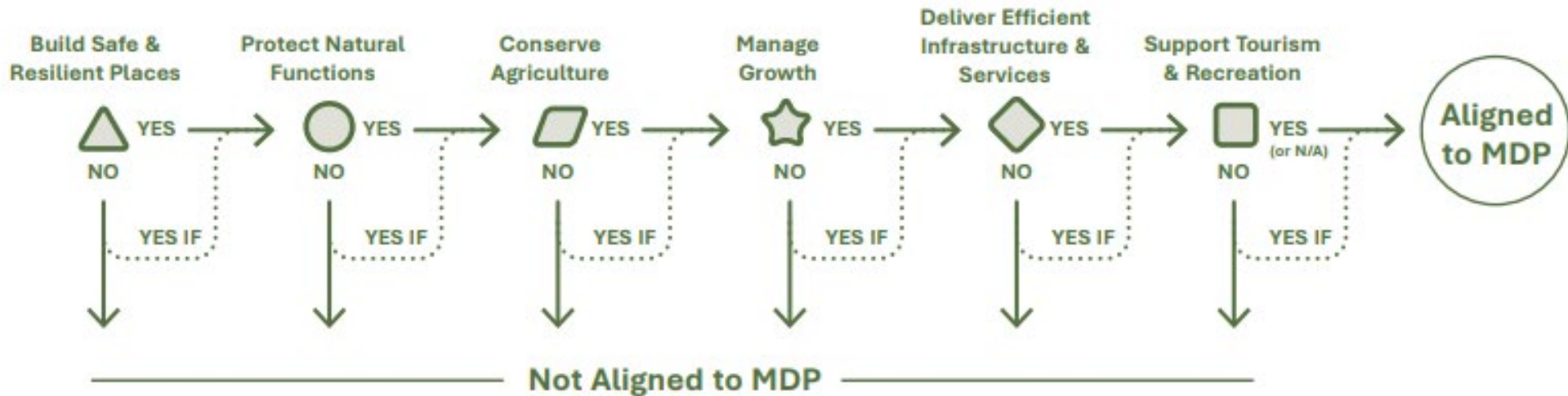
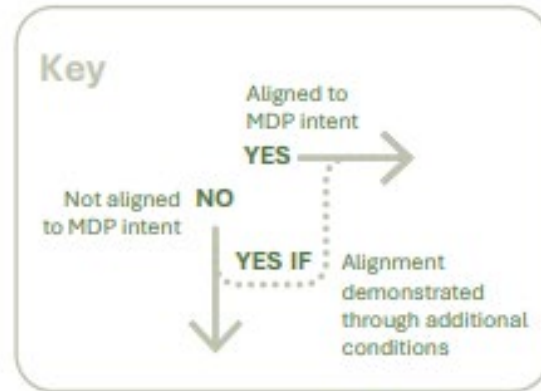
Inherited Responsibilities

Treaty Rights
Federal and Provincial Legislation
Regional Coordination



Shared Responsibilities

Does the development...



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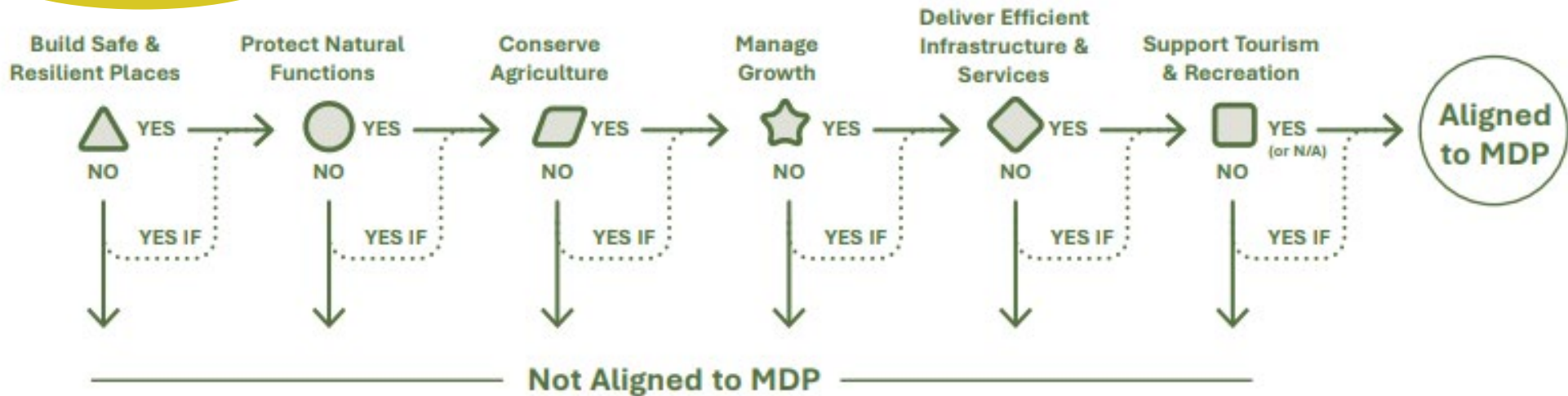
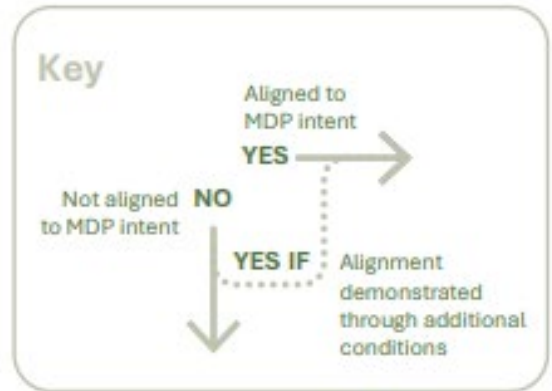
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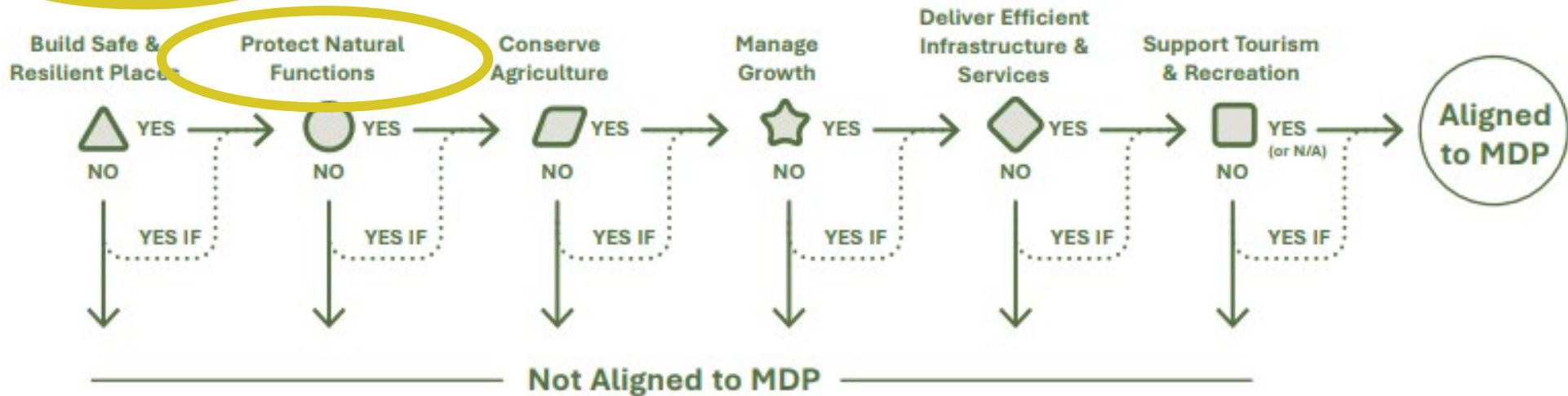
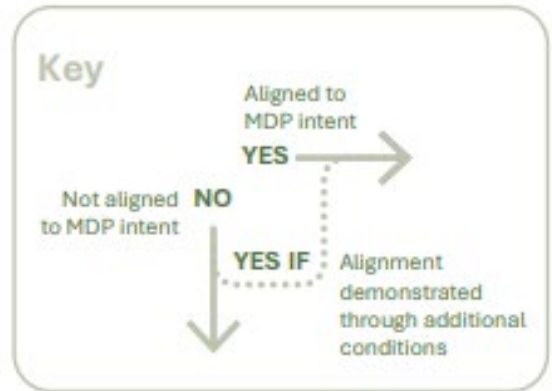
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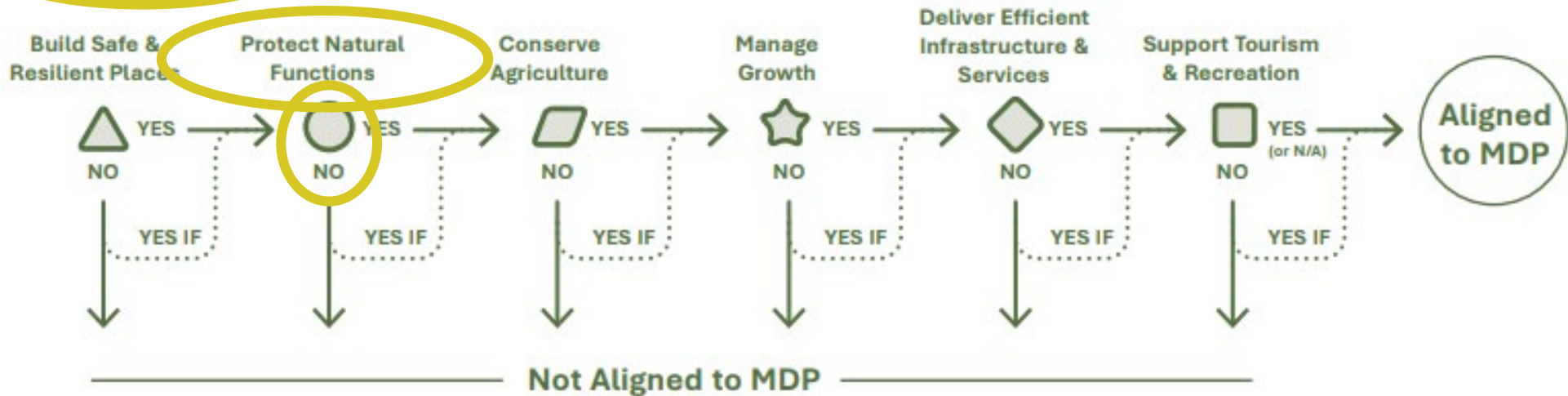
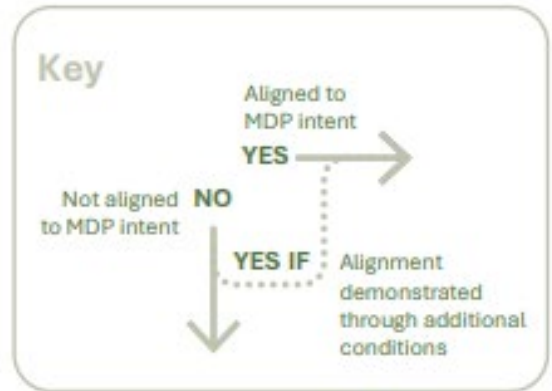
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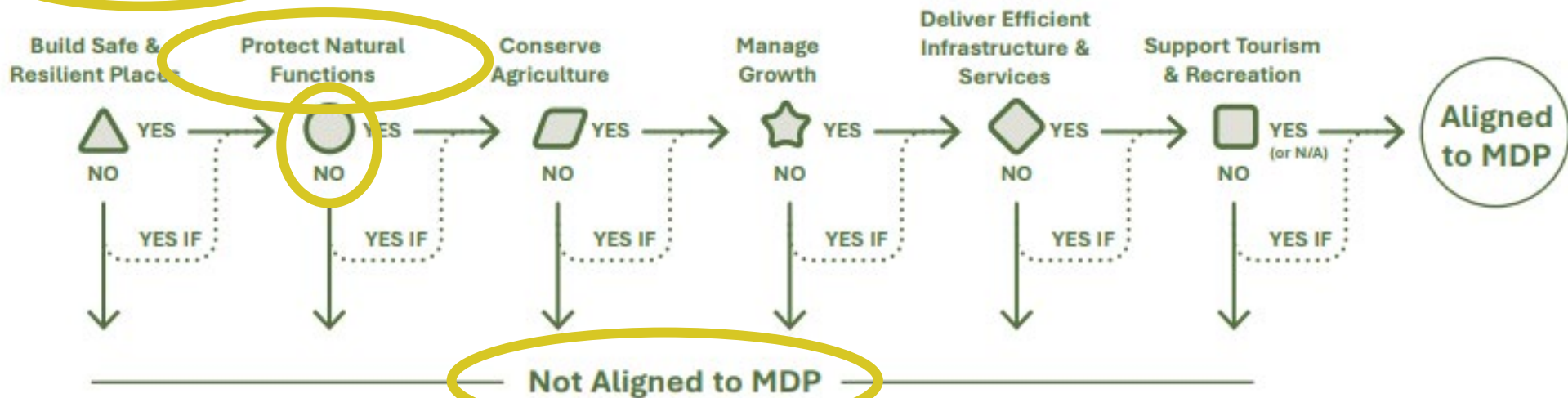
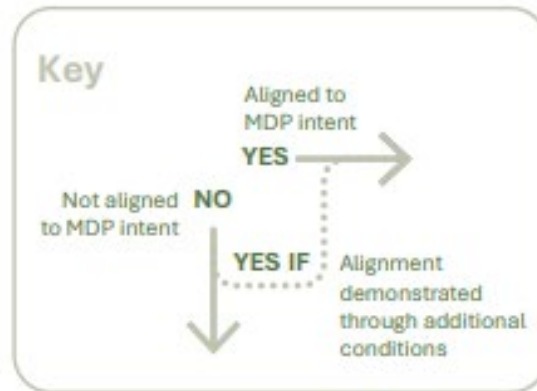
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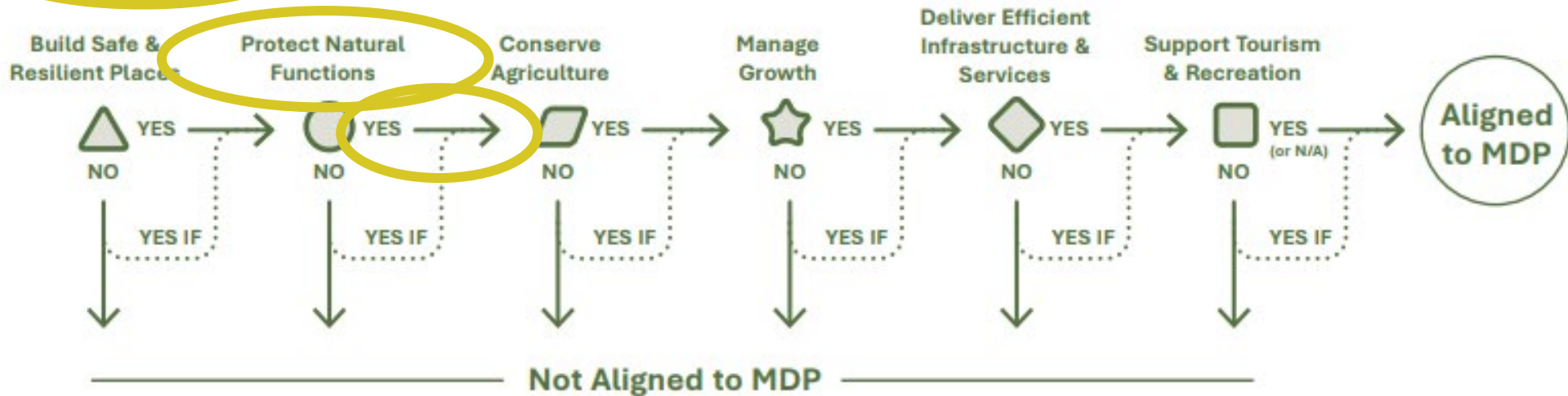
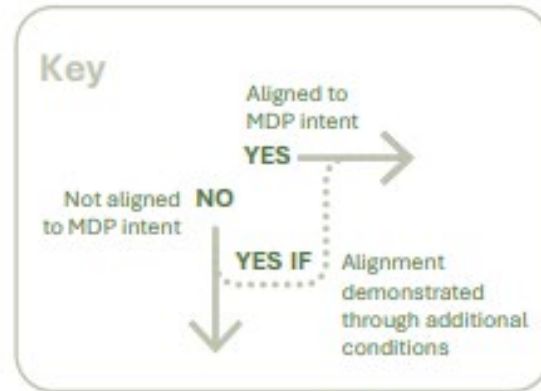
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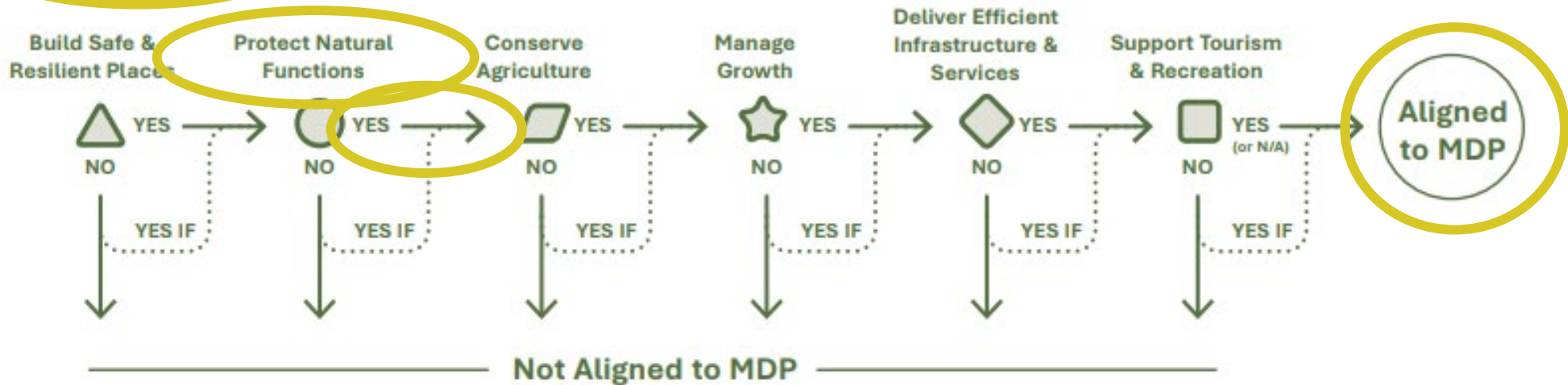
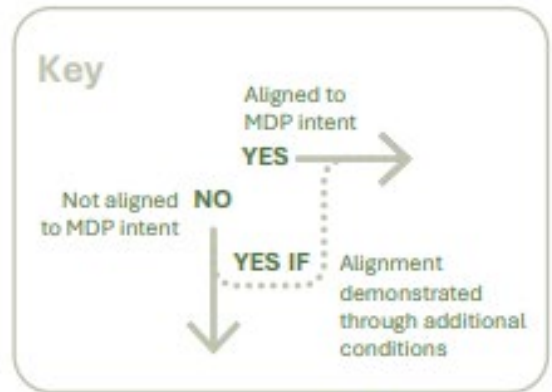
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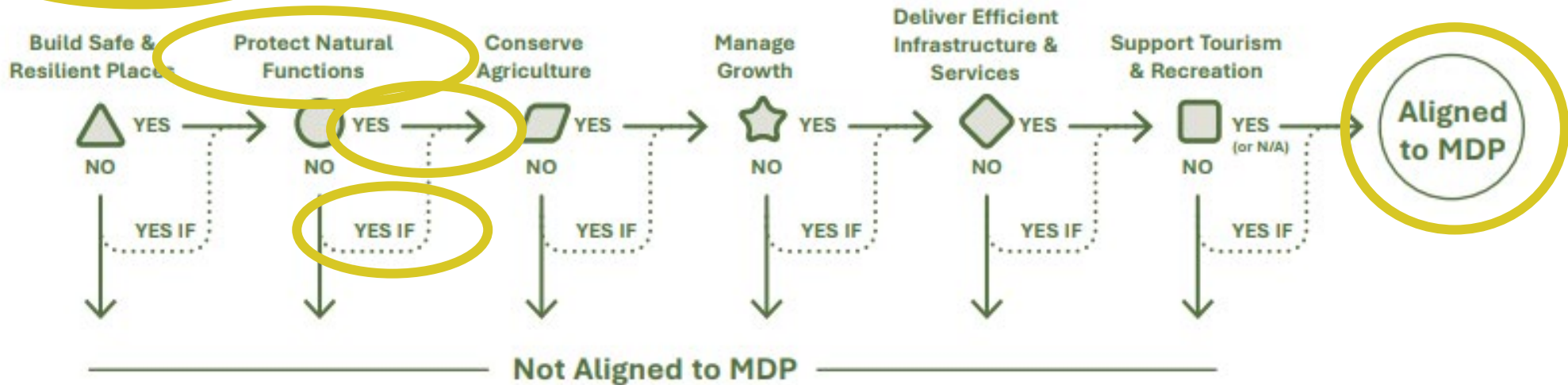
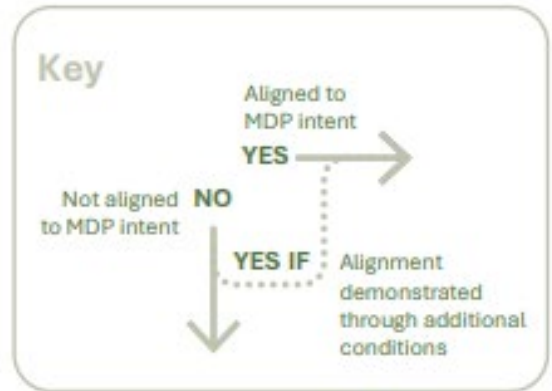
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Shared Responsibilities

Does the development...



Developing the Framework

The Overarching Goal

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Greater protection for nature

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Greater protection for nature

Increased flexibility for proponents

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Greater protection for nature

Increased flexibility for proponents

Clarity for all interest holders

The Work

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Framework Development

- Drafting coordinating document
- Context, definitions, strategy, 'road map'

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Policy Drafting

- Fewest policies; least detail
- Council-approved direction
- Reconcile conservation and development

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Engagement

- Council workshops
- Sustainability Committee
- Agricultural Services Board
- ALUS PAC

The Work

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- Context, definitions, strategy, 'road map'

Policy Drafting

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Engagement

- Council workshops
- Sustainability Committee
- Agricultural Services Board
- ALUS PAC

Coordination with MDP and LUB

- Working with MDP and LUB teams
- Following public engagement direction
- Major revisions

Strategy

Strategy

Vision

- Parkland County maintains its natural features, their functions, and the beneficial services they provide to the community, while offering innovative options to support development.

Strategy

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- Parkland County maintains its natural features, their functions, and the beneficial services they provide to the community, while offering innovative options to support development.

Guiding Principles

- Includes areas of nature, stewardship, decision-making & cumulative effects

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Guiding Principles

- Includes areas of nature, stewardship, decision-making & cumulative effects

Goals, Objectives & Indicators

- Covers key natural systems and features such as ESAs, wetlands, groundwater, lakes, watercourses, riparian areas, forests, soils and wildlife habitat.

Role of the Framework

Role of the Framework

Gives
DIRECTION

Goals

Policies

Scope

Objectives

Role of the Framework

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COORDINATION

Hierarchy

Policy links

Operational links

Role clarity

Role of the Framework

Gives DIRECTION	Ensures COORDINATION	Enables TOOLS
Goals	Hierarchy	Proactive
Policies	Policy links	Reactive
Scope	Operational links	Understood
Objectives	Role clarity	Resourced

Role of the Framework

Gives DIRECTION	Ensures COORDINATION	Enables TOOLS	Provides OPTIONS
Goals	Hierarchy	Proactive	“No, but ...”
Policies	Policy links	Reactive	Contributory
Scope	Operational links	Understood	Innovation
Objectives	Role clarity	Resourced	Incentives

Role of the Framework

Gives DIRECTION	Ensures COORDINATION	Enables TOOLS	Provides OPTIONS	Creates CLARITY
Goals	Hierarchy	Proactive	“No, but ...”	Requirements
Policies	Policy links	Reactive	Contributory	Consequences
Scope	Operational links	Understood	Innovation	Authorities
Objectives	Role clarity	Resourced	Incentives	Opportunities

Central Themes

Central Themes

- Nature-positive development
- Protected Natural Areas
- Innovative Conservation Approaches
- Natural Buffer and Development Setbacks
- Avoidance, Offsetting and Mitigation Measures
- Proactive vs Reactive Approaches
- Technical Reports and Studies

Conservation Tools

Conservation Tools

- **Direct Securement**
 - Environmental Reserve
 - Environmental Reserve Easements
 - Conservation Reserve
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- **Direct Securement**
 - Environmental Reserve
 - Environmental Reserve Easements
 - Conservation Reserve
 - Conservation Easements
- **Administrative**
 - Local Conservation Fund
 - Sustainability Committee

Conservation Tools

- **Direct Securement**

- Environmental Reserve
- Environmental Reserve Easements
- Conservation Reserve
- Conservation Easements

- **Administrative**

- Local Conservation Fund
- Sustainability Committee

- **Planning**

- Conservation Design/Cluster Development
- Conservation Offsets
- Transfer of Development Credits
- High-Ratio Wetland Replacement


Enabling Policies

Approach

Applying Tools to Dilemmas

Approach

- Clarity
- Simplicity
- Short as possible while still maintaining the above
- Connection

POLICY C-CSXX			
		COUNCIL POLICY C-CSXX	
Environmentally Significant Areas Policy			
PREPARED BY:	Agriculture & Environment Services	COUNCIL APPROVAL DATE:	MMM DD, YYYY
EFFECTIVE DATE:	MMM DD, YYYY		
REFERENCES:	Nature Policy Framework Environmental Conservation Master Plan Biophysical Assessment Policy – C-CS01	PREVIOUS REVISION DATE:	NEW
FUNCTION:	Agriculture & Environment Services	LS REVIEW DATE:	March 3, 2025

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the following:

- 1) That the natural features and functions within the County's Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) can continue to provide the Beneficial Ecosystem Services needed and desired by residents, businesses, and visitors.
- 2) That protection of Environmentally Significant Areas is integrated into nature-positive planning, subdivision and development.
- 3) That development proponents have clarity on the limitations, requirements and opportunities associated with development within or adjacent to Environmentally Significant Areas.

POLICY STATEMENT

Ensuring natural systems are protected from being degraded, destroyed, or fragmented is one of the County's core values. Maintaining and protecting the function of natural features and systems within Environmentally Significant Areas is key to achieving this core value. The County is committed to ensuring that growth and development of the community is nature-positive and does not impair Environmentally Significant Areas and the Beneficial Ecosystem Services they provide.

DEFINITIONS

The following terms as defined in the Nature Policy Framework apply in this policy:

1. Beneficial Ecosystem Services
2. Biophysical Assessment
3. Conservation Reserve
4. Environmental Conservation Master Plan
5. Environmental Reserve
6. Environmental Reserve Easement

Page 1 of 3

Addressing Policy Gaps

Environmentally Significant Areas

Policy Gap Addressed

- Lack of prioritization of ESAs for conservation, restoration and stewardship.
- No requirement for avoidance, mitigation and offsetting.
- No ability to utilize conservation tools and innovative approaches to maintain natural function.
- Difficult to address cumulative effects.

ENABLING POLICIES

Environmentally Significant Areas

Policy Gap Addressed

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Protected Natural Areas

Policy Gap Addressed

- A variety of mechanisms were being / could be used, but they were uncoordinated and their collective role was unclear
- No basis for prioritizing proactive County action
- Lack of direction on use and management.

ENABLING POLICIES

Environmentally Significant Areas

Policy Gap Addressed

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- No requirement for avoidance, mitigation and offsetting.
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Protected Natural Areas

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- Lack of direction on use and management.

Innovative Conservation Approaches

Policy Gap Addressed

- There was a County willingness to accept innovative conservation approaches to achieve approvals, but no direction for proponents, no enabling policy and no link to Council priorities

Wetland Conservation

Policy Gap Addressed

- Limited articulation of County wetland retention goals
- Alignment with Province unclear, especially where County wished to exceed Provincial goals
- Integration with planning and development and County activities was unclear

ENABLING POLICIES

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Surface and Groundwater Protection

Policy Gap Addressed

- Fragmented articulation of County water quality / quantity goals; limited to harm reduction direction in stormwater, infrastructure, transportation, grading, etc. policies
- Fragmented integration with planning; missing key direction for setbacks, water crossings, lakeshores

Wildlife Habitat and Connectivity

Policy Gap Addressed

- General references but no policy direction regarding identification, setbacks, planning and development, nor proactive County initiatives.

ENABLING POLICIES

Wildlife Habitat and Connectivity

Policy Gap Addressed

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County Forest Retention

Policy Gap Addressed

- Focus on limits to 'tree clearing' but no direction for tree retention in support of County goals or ESAs
- Confusion regarding treed areas requirements with lakeshores and FireSmart

ENABLING POLICIES

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Local Conservation Fund

Policy Gap Addressed

- No sustainable mechanism for funding County nature conservation priorities

Implementation

- Administrative Documents
 - Development of Directives, Procedures and Guidelines
- Business Planning
 - Future projects and program updates
 - Lifecycle for plans & studies
 - Monitoring and reporting
- Investment Planning
 - Local Conservation Fund
 - Sale, lease and licence of environmental land
 - Restricted Surplus Planning
- Stewardship and Conservation Programs
- Education, Outreach and Partnerships

Next Steps

Next Steps

- Present policies to Council - April 22nd
- All documents to Council for Approval - May or June

Proposed motions:

1. That the Committee accept the Nature Policy Framework update for information, as presented.
2. That the Committee direct administration to bring the final Nature Policy Framework to the June 10th, 2025 Council meeting for approval.

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Krista Quesnel



CORVUSCENTRE
for Conservation Policy



parkland
county