

Presentation to
Parkland County Council



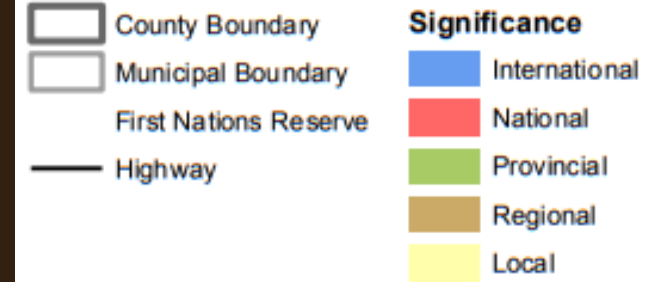
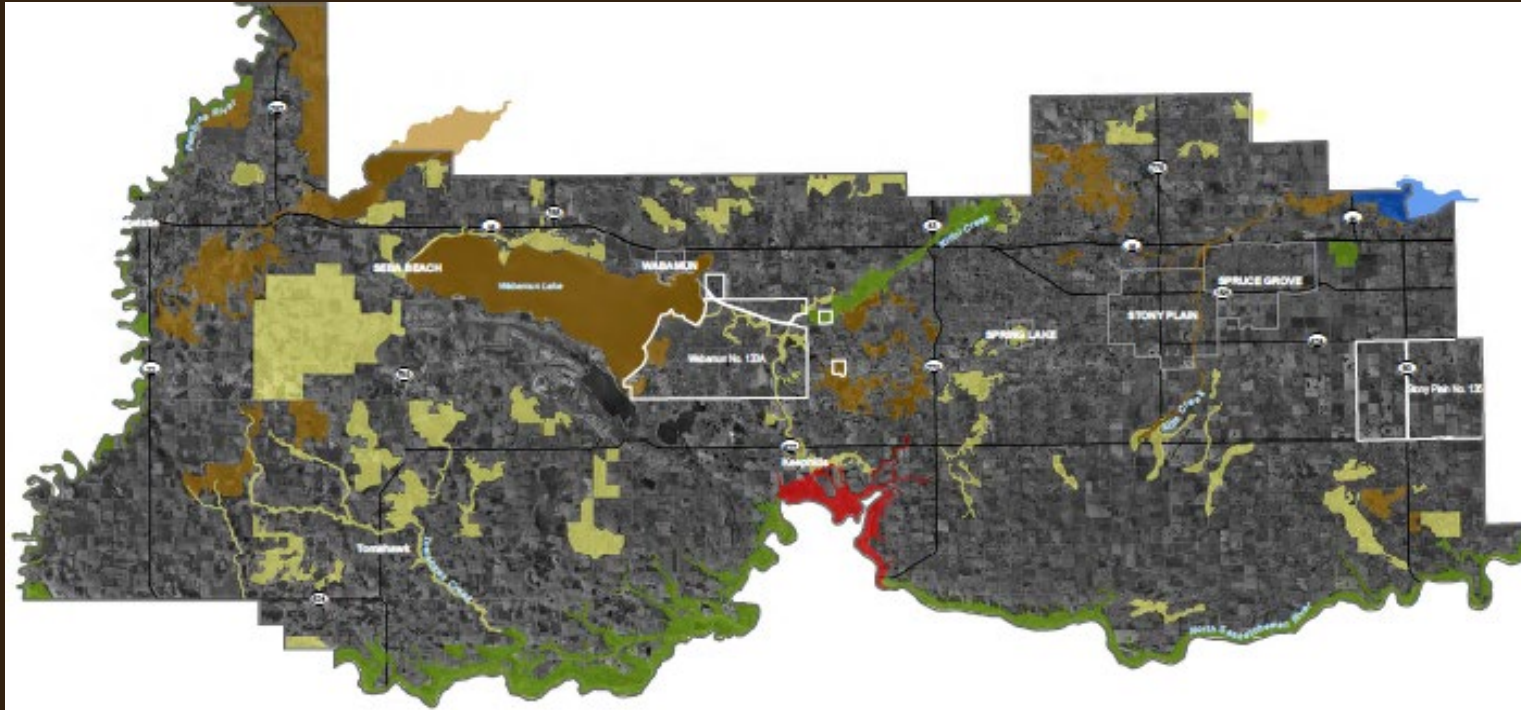
Nature Policy Framework

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June 10, 2025

Valuing Environmentally Significant Areas



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

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

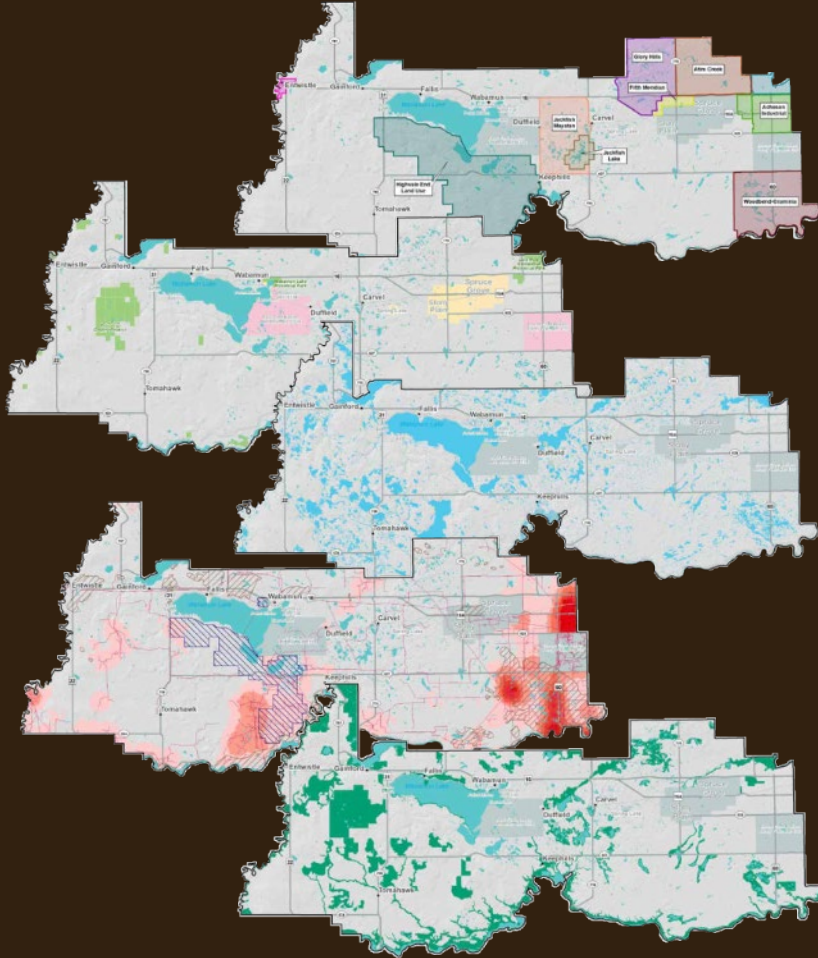
The Overarching Goal

Greater protection for nature

Increased flexibility for proponents

Clarity for all interest holders

Developing Policy for Nature



- Protect ESAs
 - Move from identification to conservation
 - ‘Systems’ not ‘pieces’
- Implement MDP & Support LUB
 - Define nature-positive
 - Clarify high-level policy
- Provide protection & flexibility
 - Focus on function
 - Restriction, guideline and innovation

CONTRIBUTORY

HARM REDUCTION

Becoming 'Nature Positive'

ENVIRONMENT

Add to / protect the flow
of ecosystem services



Limit the amount of
nature we destroy



KEY CONCEPTS

NATURAL FEATURE

The “things”, the “parts”

IN THE ESA

WETLAND

FUNCTION

What it does even if
people are not around

MANAGEMENT FOCUS

- Retains stormwater
- Provides aquatic habitat provision
- 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

Saying 'No'

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

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

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'.

Current Policy and Regulations

Parkland County **Municipal Development Plan**

Your Community Commitment

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.

Current Restrictions and Constraints



MDP & LUB DO create restriction

Required in general:

- Protect and enhance nature function
- Be nature-positive

Required in ESAs:

- A Conceptual Scheme
- A Biophysical Assessment
- Maintain wildlife corridors and connectivity

May be required in ESAs:

- Conservation reserve and/or conservation easements
- Referral to external agencies at development

Not allowed in ESAs:

- Major Energy Development
- Heavy Industrial Development

Should limit disturbance of ESAs:

- Roads
- Trails & OHVs

Setback and Buffer requirements for ESAs:

- Development may be required to setback

Development that must consider ESAs:

- Excavation, cannabis cultivation, gravel pits, renewable energy generation, shooting ranges, and indoor storage



MDP & LUB DO NOT create flexibility or clarity

- Innovative Conservation Approaches
- Standardization & modifications to setbacks & buffers
- Options for mitigation and offsetting
- Defining protection

DIRECTION

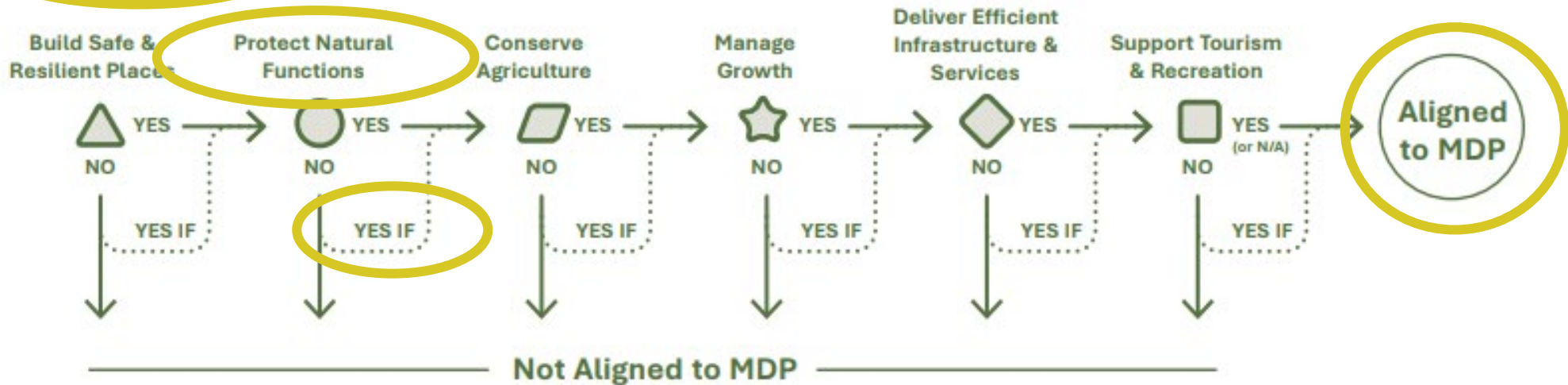
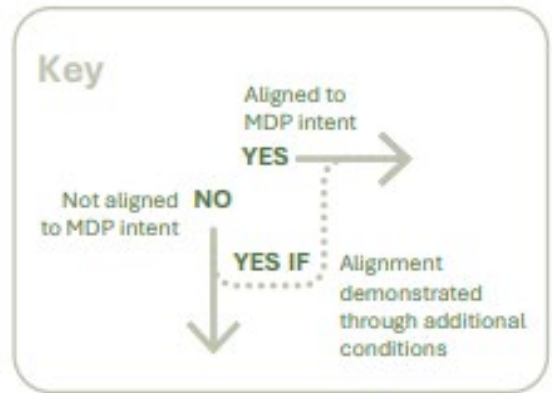
Inherited Responsibilities

Treaty Rights
Federal and Provincial Legislation
Regional Coordination



Shared Responsibilities

Does the development...



So... How Do We?

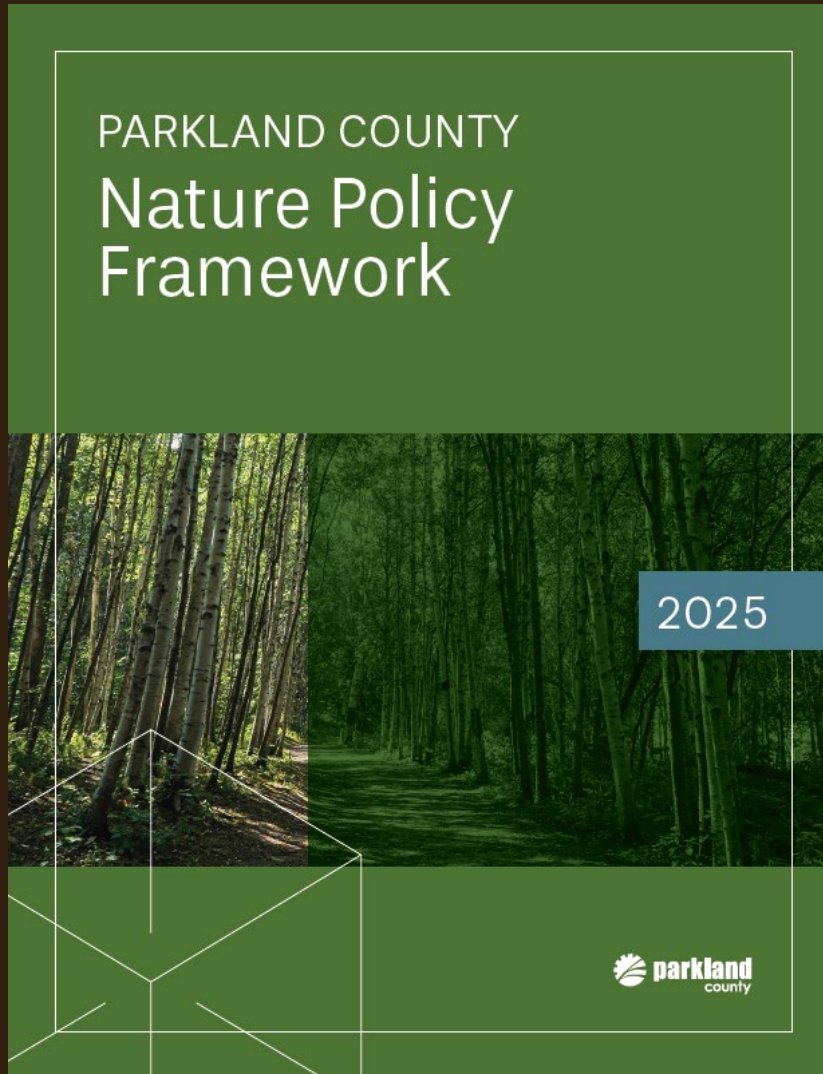
Implement high-level MDP direction?

Create protection and opportunity?


Be efficient, transparent, and clear?

NATURE POLICY FRAMEWORK & ENABLING POLICIES

Approach



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

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The Nature Policy Framework

The Work

Framework Development

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

Policy Drafting

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

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

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

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.

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.

Council Policies

Phased Approach

Phase 1: Overarching Policies

- Achieve Council's goal of improved protection of our ESAs
- Improve flexibility for development
- Imperative to guide MDP implementation
- No additional restrictions
- Encourage County leadership
- Enable Innovation
- Direct proactive conservation
- Enables conservation funding

Phase 2: Natural Feature-Specific Policies

- Protect natural asset valued at \$4 billion
- Improve flexibility and clarity for development
- Sets targets for conservation
- Standardizes setbacks & buffers, including allowances for modification
- Provides options for mitigation and offsetting

ENABLING POLICIES- OVERARCHING CONCEPTS

Environmentally Significant Areas

MDP & LUB Direction:

Development must protect and enhance natural features and their functions using nature-positive options. It also sets out restrictions for major energy development, heavy industrial development, roads and trails. Development permits for excavation, cannabis cultivation, gravel pits, renewable energy generation, shooting ranges, and indoor storage will consider ESAs.

- Required in ESAs:
 - A Conceptual Scheme
 - A Biophysical Assessment
 - Maintain wildlife corridors and connectivity
- May be required in ESAs:
 - Conservation reserve and/or conservation easements
 - Referral to external agencies at development
- Not allowed in ESAs:
 - Major Energy Development
 - Heavy Industrial Development
- Should limit disturbance of ESAs:
 - Roads
 - Trails & OHVs
- Setback and Buffer requirements for ESAs:
 - Development may be required to setback

Purpose:

- 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.
- That protection of Environmentally Significant Areas is integrated into nature-positive planning, subdivision and development.
- That development proponents have clarity on the limitations, requirements and opportunities associated with development within or adjacent to Environmentally Significant Areas.

ENABLING POLICIES- OVERARCHING CONCEPTS

Protected Natural Areas

MDP Direction:

Allows for requirement of dedication of PNAs for land with environmental significance or high value features. Directs the County to consider Environmental Reserve, Environmental Reserve Easements, Conservation Reserve and Conservation Easements as PNAs but does not define policy for the management of these areas.

Purpose:

- Identify the County, provincial, federal, and private designations that constitute a Protected Natural Area (PNA) in Parkland County.
- Provide clarity by creating a single descriptor (Protected Natural Area) for all areas of this type.
- Direct how County-initiated Protected Natural Areas are to be chosen, designated, and managed.

ENABLING POLICIES- OVERARCHING CONCEPTS

Innovative Conservation Approaches

MDP Direction:

Directs that development must protect and enhance natural features and their functions using nature-positive options but does not provide policy for acceptable options. Directs the County to implement tools to protect, mitigate, and offset impacts to natural function.

Purpose:

Enable and articulate voluntary, innovative options for Nature Positive development which the County has deemed to be acceptable mechanisms for securing approval for subdivision or development proposals that might otherwise be deemed unacceptable by the County.

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- OVERARCHING CONCEPTS

Local Conservation Fund

MDP Direction:

Directs the County to establish a Local Conservation Fund for the acquisition of Conservation Reserve, incentivizing conservation easements and conserving and restoring high-value natural features.

Purpose:

To enable the County to acquire and devote financial resources for:

- The proactive conservation of Environmentally Significant Areas and high value Natural Assets; and
- Education, outreach and research to support nature conservation in Parkland County.

Next Steps



PROPOSED MOTIONS

Phase 1: Overarching Policies

- Proposed to accept as information:
 - Nature Policy Framework
- Proposed for approval:
 - Environmentally Significant Areas Policy
 - Protected Natural Areas Policy
 - Innovative Conservation Approaches Policy
 - Local Conservation Fund Policy

Phase 2: Natural Feature-Specific Policies

- Drafts for discussion end of 2025:
 - Wetlands, Ground & Surface Water, County Forest, Riparian Areas, Wildlife Habitat & Biodiversity