

Developing Near . . . Riparian Areas



RIPARIAN AREAS are the areas adjacent to streams, lakes and wetlands. These areas support many plants and animals, provide important refuges and migration routes for birds and wildlife, and, most critically, provide fish habitat.

These ecosystems are extremely sensitive to disturbances and development. Even modest changes in water flow may result in significant changes to the physical and biological functioning of these ecosystems.

In addition, riparian areas play a key role in maintaining the natural hydrologic cycle of a watershed by stabilizing stream channels, reducing erosion, filtering sediment, capturing runoff and precipitation, and recharging aquifers that store groundwater.

The Development Permit Process

If you are undertaking a development activity (*as defined on reverse*) within the Development Permit Area (*as illustrated on map on reverse*), you will be required to submit a development permit application. This will require that you hire a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) who will assess the potential impact of your proposed activity on the riparian area and determine the size of a Streamside Protection Enhancement Area (SPEA). The QEP's report assessing the project's adherence to the regulation will be submitted as part of the application. Your application will then be assessed against the proposed Development Permit Area guidelines. The permit must be issued if it meets the development permit guidelines.

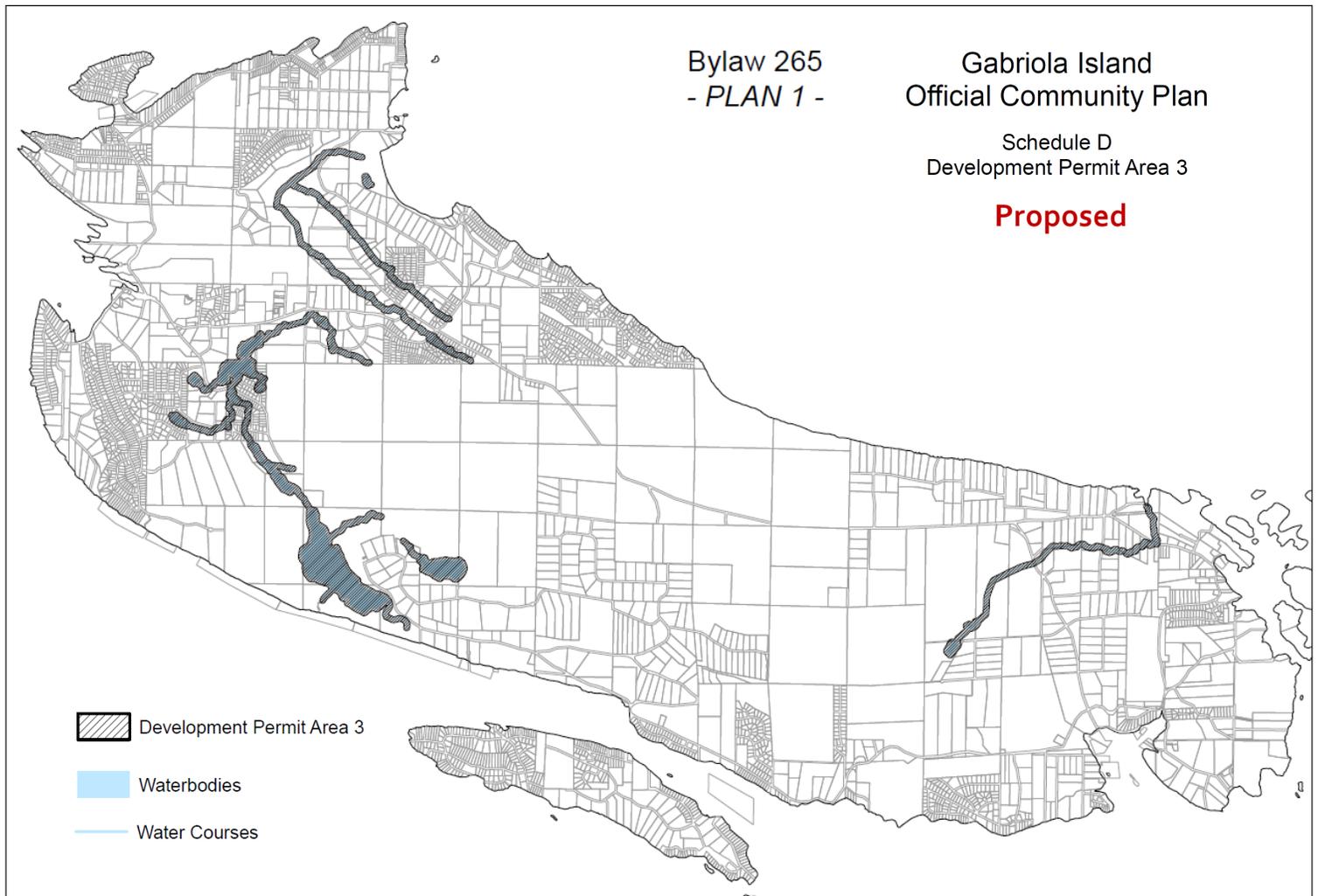
PROPOSED BYLAWS 265 and 266 establish a Development Permit Area (DPA) to protect Gabriola Island's Riparian Areas. Bylaw 265 sets out amendments to Gabriola Island's Official Community Plan (OCP), which provides a context and rationale for protection, while Bylaw 266 defines the operational framework of the Development Permit Area within the Land Use Bylaw (LUB).

The following activities in the Riparian Assessment Area REQUIRE a Development Permit:

- Subdivision of property.
- Construction of, addition to, or alteration of a building or structure.
- Removal, alteration, or destruction of vegetation.
- Disturbance of soils.
- Creation of non-structural or semi-impervious surfaces.
- Development as defined under the provincial Riparian Areas Regulation.

The following activities in the Riparian Assessment Area DO NOT REQUIRE a Development Permit:

- Renovations that do not change the footprint of a building.
- The removal of trees that pose a risk to life or property.
- Gardening and landscaping of a pre-existing landscaped area.
- Pruning of not more than 2 trees.
- Ecological restoration or enhancement projects authorized by a public body.
- Emergency actions to prevent flooding.
- Farming activities.



RIPARIAN AREAS ARE NECESSARY FOR STREAM & WATERSHED HEALTH

The disturbance of riparian areas is one of the leading causes of poor stream and watershed health. Without the protective qualities of a riparian corridor, water courses respond rapidly to the pressures of development, quickly becoming degraded and unable to support aquatic life. To preserve fish stocks and protect the ecological values of riparian areas, we must understand the functioning of these systems, anticipate how they will react to development and, ultimately, ensure they continue to function well into the future.

