

## 13.0 Environment

### Goals

Protect sensitive and essential habitats and ecosystems.

Collaborate with the North Okanagan Regional District and neighbouring jurisdictions to protect air quality, green spaces, natural areas, passive and active parks.

Ensure ecosystem services are maintained and conserved, and integrated into neighbourhood planning.

### Guiding Principles Met

Protect and preserve green spaces and sensitive areas

Protect agricultural land

Create a culture of sustainability

### Context



Vernon is characterized by grasslands, orchards, rangelands, forested hillsides, lakes, rivers, ponds and wetlands. In this setting, protection of green spaces, agricultural lands, wildlife corridors and intact, functioning ecosystems are central to preserving the high quality of life enjoyed by this community. As Vernon continues to grow, additional pressures are placed on the land and seemingly innocuous activities begin to have more significant impacts.

To ensure that Vernon's quality of life keeps pace with community growth, the Environmental Management Areas Strategy was developed to address Vernon's environmental challenges as part of the Official Community Plan 2008 process. This strategy was adopted by Council at its Regular Meeting of May 26, 2008 and provides a clear and consistent approach to environmental management and protection throughout the city. It identifies key critical ecosystems and natural features essential to the quality of life and attractiveness of Vernon.

The Environmental Management Areas (EMAs) were identified to be consistent with the Development Permit Areas identified for land use decision making and intended to work in conjunction with other development guidelines and City procedures. This development permit area approach is intended to simplify the process

of identifying the areas which contain sensitive ecosystems and natural features and, in combination with the Habitat Assessment Terms of Reference, to clarify expectations for environmental surveys, habitat assessments and other requirements that are conducted as part of the development permit process for each Development Permit Area.

The EMA Strategy sets out guidelines and management strategies to achieve these goals in accordance with the Development Permit (DP) Areas set out in the OCP. These DP areas have been established to correspond with the three district areas which are identified in the land use plan.

The objectives for environmental management in Vernon identified in the EMA Strategy support and expand on the environmental policies found in this document. The objectives of the EMA Strategy are:

- Balance the demands of natural area protection and development opportunities through application of sensitive ecosystem inventory (SEI) mapping to identify moderate and high sensitivity ecosystems through consistently applied processes throughout the City of Vernon
- Protect sensitive ecosystem areas through the use of comprehensive environmental permitting requirements and environmental management guidelines
- Identify conservation, protection and enhancement areas in both greenfield and infill development areas
- Protect open spaces, environmentally sensitive areas and access to natural amenities which support and facilitate the high quality of life found in Vernon
- Support the reduction, prevention and mitigation of pollution and its sources in the air, water and soils of Vernon

While protection of critical areas is important to the quality of life in Vernon, allowing reasonable development potential is also important. Maintaining the livability of Vernon requires balancing the protection of sensitive and significant areas with the provision of appropriate development opportunities.

The EMA Strategy and accompanying Habitat Assessment Terms of Reference provide guidance on the required actions to be undertaken to protect sensitive ecosystems while balancing the demands of development, interests of residents and the promotion of a healthy, active community.

## Supporting Policies

- 13.1 Maintain a clear and consistent approach to environmental management and ecosystem protection throughout the city in accordance with the Environmental Management Areas Strategy.
- 13.2 Protect open spaces and access to natural amenities which support and facilitate the high quality of life found in Vernon.

- 13.3 Protect and conserve sensitive ecosystems throughout the city.
- 13.4 Protect and conserve essential habitats for all species in DPA 3, and for protected and endangered species in DPAs 1 and 2.
- 13.5 Ensure that seasonal limits are placed on the timing of site clearing, tree removal and site disturbance activities to avoid nesting, calving, rearing and migratory seasons in areas of essential habitat.
- 13.6 Collaborate with senior government and neighbouring jurisdictions to balance the interests of lakeshore, creekside and wetland habitat protection with development and recreation activities.
- 13.7 Support water quality and quantity protection through community outreach and education, promotion of integrated stormwater planning and promotion of pervious materials use as appropriate.
- 13.8 Work to enhance community access to lakeshore areas, hiking and walking paths and park space through the development process and in conjunction with municipal operations and other agencies, as appropriate.
- 13.9 Promote and encourage stewardship initiatives throughout the city.
- 13.10 Promote and encourage community sustainability initiatives.
- 13.11 Ensure ecosystem conservation, enhancement, mitigation and restoration are undertaken as opportunities arise or as required as part of the development process.
- 13.12 Ensure development practices avoid negative impacts on natural features and environmentally significant areas in the siting, servicing and establishment of new neighbourhoods.
- 13.13 Promote and protect resilience of ecosystems and ecosystem services throughout the city.
- 13.14 Support the reduction, prevention and mitigation of pollution and its sources in the air, water and soils of Vernon.
- 13.15 Collaborate with neighbouring jurisdictions to address issues of water, soil and air quality improvement, solid waste (including yard, green, food and recyclable waste streams), establishment of wildlife corridors, conservation areas and transjurisdictional habitat protection.