



Fact Sheet 4 Environment

The natural environment in the municipality is not only a significant part of the cultural identity, but it plays an important role in the ecological integrity and ecosystem services that make it a spectacular place to live and visit. These areas include beaches, wetlands, coastal habitats, nature reserves, among many others.



"Kayaking Cape Breton" image sourced from www.tourismns.ca

What We Heard

The environment was a major topic of discussion during the initial phase of engagement for Plan Richmond County. The Municipality of the County of Richmond is situated in a remarkably beautiful natural environment, and residents and community members are deeply connected to the landscape and environment.



Perhaps most significantly, access to and the quality of water were frequently cited as concerns during the initial phase of engagement.



Respondents noted their concern about development that could impact the quality of lakes, rivers, and streams in the municipality, with a particular note for the Bras d'Or Lakes.



Generally, respondents wished to see a balance between permitting development and providing controls that protected the natural environment.





Image source: www.tourismns.ca

What is Being Proposed

The proposed planning documents include policy support and regulations for the protection of the many natural assets present in the region.



Lakeshore Protection

Recognizing the impacts of human development on water quality and wildlife habitat, the proposed planning documents introduce the Lakeshore Zone to help mitigate the impacts of development on the surrounding environment. This zone takes a careful approach to development around lakes by introducing setbacks from the lake, limiting high-impact developments while permitting residential, recreational, and commercial uses; and requiring larger minimum lot sizes.



Wetland Protection

Wetlands provide or support a wide range of important ecological, social and economic functions and services in our watersheds that are beneficial to everyone. Wetlands from a provincial database have been mapped and assigned with the Conservation Zone to receive extra protection under the planning documents.



Coastal Protection

Coastal areas have historically been a popular and attractive place to develop, but they also pose a number of risks both to humans and the environment. With storm events intensifying and becoming more frequent, coupled with sea level rise, the development of coastal areas needs to be carefully considered. The Province passed the *Coastal Protection Act* in 2019 which provides legislation around coastal development. The Act has not yet been implemented through regulations, but it is expected to be in the near future, and is expected to include both a minimum vertical and horizontal setback from the coast for new development. The municipal planning documents will defer to the provincial regulations and will not draft separate regulations.



Water Source Protection

Shannon Lake Watershed Protection Zone is applied to private lands within the Shannon Lake watershed. It allows low-impact development, such as single dwellings and parks uses.

The Source Water Protection Zone is applied to public lands within the Shannon Lake Watershed, as well as to surround Beauvais Lake, which is the water supply for St. Peter's. This zone is very restrictive and limits development to public uses.