

FAQs: Planning and Regulations

How do I determine if my property is regulated?

If you live close to a lake, stream, river, valley, wetland (including ponds and lowland areas), or watercourse of any kind, you may require a permit from MVCA for various [activities](#). As an initial guide, please refer to MVCA's [Regulations Mapping](#) to determine if your property is regulated. Please be advised that MVCA's mapping is provided as a general guideline and may not identify a regulated feature. Therefore, you are also advised to [contact](#) MVCA if any of the aforementioned features exist on your property, for further assessment.

Please be advised that regulated features such as [flood plain](#), [wetlands](#) and [watercourses](#) are text-based and may need to be confirmed by site specific plans and studies (e.g. topographic survey, wetland boundary assessment, etc.) prior to development.

What activities require a permit?

A conservation authority permit is required for any proposed development, interference to wetlands, or alterations to shorelines or watercourses. Applying for a permit ensures that the natural hazard or wetland, on or adjacent to your property, is effectively protected and managed, and that all legal and legislative policy requirements, are being met. The following requires a permit within a regulated area:

- new construction, reconstruction, and additions or alteration to existing buildings or structures;
- site grading including placing, dumping or removal of fill or other material;
- the straightening, changing or diverting or interfering with an existing channel of a river, creek, stream, watercourse, or shoreline;
- changing or interfering with a wetland and adjacent lands; or
- new or replacement septic systems.

For a full list of activities that require a permit, or for more information on our regulations, see our [Regulation Policies](#) document.

What are the types of regulated features?

Flood Plain

- Development within the flood plain and its 15 m [Regulation Limit](#) requires written permission from MVCA prior to the initiation of development (which includes construction, site grading and the placement or removal of fill) and is subject to Section 6 of our [Regulation Policies](#).
- The [Regulation Limit](#) is intended to maintain access to the river, and to ensure that the works do not impact the flood plain and drainage patterns are maintained.

Watercourse and Shoreline

- Written permission is required from the MVCA prior to straightening, changing, diverting or interfering in any way with the existing channel or the shoreline of a lake or watercourse. See Section 10 of MVCA's [Regulation Policies](#).

Wetlands

- MVCA's regulations apply to all wetlands that are hydrologically connected and over 0.5 ha in size. They also apply to lands located within 30 meters of the wetland. Development and/or interference is typically not permitted within a wetland and permission is required for any proposed development within 30 m of the wetland. See Section 9 of MVCA's [Regulation Policies](#).

Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW)

- Development or interference in any way is not permitted within the boundaries of a Provincially Significant Wetland. Typically, new development is not permitted within 30 m of a PSW. See Section 9 of MVCA's [Regulation Policies](#).

Erosion Hazard (Stable Slope)

- New development and lot grading are generally not permitted within, or in close proximity to, a slope that has been deemed potentially unstable due to its height and steepness. However, if it is not possible to direct development outside of the erosion hazard, there is an option to have a Slope Stability Analysis conducted at the proponent's expense. The analysis would have to conclude that the proposed development (including septic system) could proceed safely without compromising the stability of the slope in its current configuration (i.e. the slope cannot be engineered). See Section 7 of MVCA's [Regulation Policies](#).

Erosion Hazard (Meander Belt)

- The Meander Belt is area of land in which a watercourse channel moves or is likely to move over a period of time. The extent of the meander belt allowance is determined by a technical report using accepted scientific and engineering principles. Any development within the meander belt must meet the [Regulation Policies](#) within Section 8.

Regulation Limit

- In addition to the regulated feature itself, MVCA regulates activities within an associated limit of each feature, referred to as the Regulation Limit. A permit is also required for various [activities](#) within this area.

Does my property meet safe access standards?

The Provincial Policy Statement and associated technical guideline, identify safe access as a primary consideration for flood plain development. The availability of safe access is directly related to flood depth and water velocity. Vehicular and pedestrian access routes are considered unsafe if the depth of flooding on the travelled surface exceeds 0.3 m and 1.0 m/s velocity, during a regulatory (1:100-year) flood event.

What is the order of approvals?

1. Planning Act approval (e.g. site plan, minor variance, etc.), if required, must be obtained from the municipality prior to applying for an MVCA permit.
2. MVCA Permit
3. Building Permit from the Municipality and Septic Office (where relevant)

Does building a shed require a permit?

Regulation Policies allow for the construction of non-habitable accessory structures with a gross floor area less than 15 square metres, within a regulated area, without the need for a permit. We encourage that these structures be set back a minimum of 15 metres from the channel bank of any watercourse.

How do I apply for a permit?

1. Pre-consult with staff by filling out the [Inquiry Form](#) to provide preliminary details about your project.
2. If you require permission for your proposal, contact MVCA Environmental Planner at (613) 253-0006 to provide specific location information so that we can provide advice on the project.
3. Fill out the [permit application](#) and obtain all necessary drawings.
4. Submit your application to MVCA, who will review your plans in consideration of provincial regulations. Please note the application can be filled out, signed digitally and emailed to MVCA (planning@mvc.on.ca) using Microsoft Explorer or Adobe Acrobat Pro version 8 or newer. If you are using Adobe Acrobat Reader or DC, you can download the file and fill it manually, and then scan and email or mail.
5. Payment is required before a permit can be issued. Payment can be made via cheque, or by credit card over the phone by calling (613) 253-0006. You can also e-transfer to mvcapayments@mvc.on.ca. Please reference the file number when payment is made.

Permit applications require 30 days to process; take this into account when you are planning your project's timeline. Incomplete applications can extend the permit processing timeline.

How much does a permit cost?

Permit costs vary depending on the scope of the project. The fees are determined by the type of permit for which you apply. Please refer to the current [fee schedule](#) for a detailed breakdown of permit costs. Note that MVCA permits are valid up to a maximum of two years from the date of issuance.

Who regulates septic systems?

A permit from the MVCA is required for the installation of septic systems that are located with MVCA's Regulation Limit. The principal authority for septic systems varies across the watershed. Below is a list of the principal authority for each area of the watershed.

City of Ottawa

- Contact information for the Ottawa Septic System Office (Rideau Valley Conservation Authority) can be found at <https://www.ottawasepticsystemoffice.ca/>

Beckwith, Carleton Place, Lanark Highlands, Mississippi Mills and Tay Valley

- Contact Mississippi Rideau Septic System Office (MRSSO) at <https://www.rvca.ca/septic-approvals>

North Frontenac, Central Frontenac, and Addington Highlands

- Contact township office

What if I witness a Concern?

Should you wish to report a concern to assist the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) regarding a possible infraction under Section 28 of Ontario Regulation 41/24, you must complete the online [Report a Concern Form](#). Please be advised that all complaints are confidential until such time as the complainant may be asked to testify in support of the complaint.

What is a permit to take water?

Water taking is regulated by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). Permit requirements depend on the volume of water to be taken. Please contact Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks 1-877-344-2011 for more information. Installation of a pump or intake unit may be considered a [shoreline](#) alteration which would require written approval from the MVCA.

How is drainage regulated?

Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) typically use drainage swales on residential lots in flood prone areas to direct excess water away from adjacent properties and towards the waterbody. Where natural swales do not exist, grassed swales must be designed to meet a set of minimum standards. These standards are listed in Appendix C.6 of the [Regulations Policies](#) document.

Am I allowed to remove vegetation?

Wetland vegetation may not be removed without MVCA permission. MVCA does not regulate removing shoreline vegetation, unless by doing so, it may alter the shoreline. Some municipalities have by-laws regarding the maintenance of shoreline vegetation. Please contact your local municipal office to determine if there is an applicable by-law. Removing aquatic vegetation is regulated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Please contact them at 1-800-667-1940 or by visiting <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry> or <https://www.ontario.ca/page/remove-native-aquatic-plants>

What if I witness a spill and/or pollution?

Spills and pollution are to be reported to the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks. For public pollution, contact the public pollution reporting hotline at 1-866-663-8477. For reporting regulatory spills, call 1-800-268-6060. More information on spills and pollution can be found at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/report-pollution-and-spills>. *Algae Blooms*: For more information on algae blooms please refer to the Lanark Leeds and Grenville Health Unit website: <https://healthunit.org/health-information/recreational-water/blue-green-algae/> or the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/blue-green-algae> To report a bloom please contact the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks Spill Action Hotline.

Who else should you call?

- the building department of your local municipality;
- your local office of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry if you are proposing to do work in the water or close to the shore.
- the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for any in water works <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pnw-ppe/index-eng.html>

Be aware that approval from the Conservation Authority does not replace building permits or any other permits issued through municipal offices or other levels of government.