



# DEVELOPMENT NEAR RIPARIAN AREAS

## What is a Riparian Area?

Riparian areas are the lands beside streams, lakes and wetlands that link aquatic and terrestrial habitats. They are the most biologically diverse zones in the world and are a crucial part of salmon habitat. Trees within riparian areas provide shade that keeps water cool for fish. Overhanging vegetation drops leaves and insects which become food for fish and provide nutrients to the stream. Overhanging branches and woody debris within the stream provide refuge (hiding places) for juvenile salmon. Riparian areas also filter pollution and play an important role in flood protection and bank stability.

## What you need to know...

Within the District of Squamish, lands within 30 m of a watercourse (i.e. a stream, wetland, lake, ravine or ditch) are protected by municipal Development Permit Area 1 (Environmental Protection) and the provincial *Riparian Areas Protection Regulation*. “Development” within 30 m of a watercourse may require a Riparian Assessment, even if the watercourse is not on your property.

“**Development**” means...the addition, removal or alteration of soil, vegetation or a building or other structure, or subdivision of land. Examples include removing shrubs or constructing a coach house, deck, driveway, trail or drainage system.

**Riparian Assessments** are conducted by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) and are used to reduce the width of a stream setback while providing adequate protection to the watercourse. The reduced setback is referred to as a Streamside Protection and Enhancement Areas (SPEA). Setback widths are based on several factors such as the width and gradient of the stream or the proximity of existing developments.

## Exemptions

There are several exemptions that you should be aware of. For example, you can...

- Maintain existing uses such as mowing your lawn or repairing your fence,
- Remove hazard trees and invasive species under the guidance of a QEP, or
- Reconstruct an existing building or perform renovations on an existing footprint.

Exemptions are numerous and nuanced but we can help you determine if your activity is exempt.

**Have a question?** Contact Karlene Loudon, QEP, RPBio, Principal Consultant + Biologist, CoastRange Environmental Ltd., Squamish, BC at 604-815-3639 or [kloudon@coastrangeenvironmental.ca](mailto:kloudon@coastrangeenvironmental.ca)