

DEVELOPMENT NEAR STORMWATER DITCHES

The Rules

Within the District of Squamish, protective setbacks from ditches are managed under Development Permit Area 1 (DPA 1) which protects the natural environment. The federal *Fisheries Act* also applies to ditches.

If Your Project is... a residential, commercial or industrial activity **within 30 m** of a ditch **AND you are planning ANY of the following:**

- Altering vegetation
- Disturbing soils
- Constructing buildings and structures
- Creating hard surfaces, such as driveways,
- Installing a driveway culvert, or
- Subdividing land

... a Ditch Assessment Report, conducted by a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP), and a municipal Development Permit may be required. Works performed below the high water mark of a ditch may require review by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). This legislation helps you conduct your activities responsibly to avoid degrading valuable stormwater functions, thereby protecting downstream fish habitat.

Ditch Classification + Setbacks

Under DPA 1, ditches are colour-coded and assigned setbacks based on their contributions to fish habitat. Squamish's ditch classifications are as follows:

- Green (isolated)
No setback required
- Yellow (minimally productive)
2 m setback
- Orange (moderately productive)
5 m setback
- Red (highly productive, may contain salmon)
10 m setback

Exemptions

Some activities may be exempt. For example, maintaining existing uses such as mowing a lawn, renovations on an existing footprint, or removal of hazard trees and invasive species under the guidance of a QEP.

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

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Why do we care about ditches?

Under natural conditions, rain soaks into the ground through a process called infiltration. Infiltration filters the water, recharges drinking water sources, and provides a constant flow to streams and waterways.

Under developed conditions, rain lands on hard surfaces, like roofs and driveways, and flows rapidly into underground storm mains.

It is a common misconception that when water enters the storm sewer, or 'grate' in the road, it gets cleaned at a treatment facility before being released into fish bearing watercourses. The truth is, Squamish's stormwater does not get cleaned and eventually all of our stormwater makes its way to fish habitat, picking up sediment, heavy metals, road salt and other contaminants along the way.

Ditches play a crucial role in Squamish's stormwater management system, slowing the flow and allowing for infiltration. Vegetation in and near ditches absorb a significant portion of this stormwater. The plants biofilter the water and provide shade to keep water cool, while their root systems prevent erosion.

