

Registration Number: 1913
File Number: 2.21313.03.01

Buffer Zone Plan
Cottage Lot Development
Sandy Point Exploits River

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1.0 Background

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment released the Project, Sandy Point Cottage Lot Development (Registration# 1913, File# 2.21313.03.01), from Environmental Assessment with the following conditions:

- the proponent is required to develop a Buffer Zone Plan for this proposed development in relation to the Exploits River, which will include and outline of the proposed lots sizes and proposed construction within 50 metres of the Exploits River, for approval prior to the commencement of construction activities; and
- the proponent must maintain a minimum 30 metre undisturbed naturally vegetated buffer along all waterbodies and wetlands to protect sensitive riparian and aquatic species, and their habitat”.

This Buffer Zone Plan has been prepared to meet the release conditions as per the Environmental Assessment Regulations, under the *Environment Protection Act, 2003*.

2.0 Proposed Project Description

The proposed development area is approximately 8.6 hectares in size, which will be divided into 16 cottage lots. The project will be carried out in 3 phases of 5-6 cottage lots per phase with initial lots being prepared for sale and development in 2020.

To adequately prepare for this cottage development area, approximately 1.4km of road will be constructed and approximately 600-900 metres of power line will be accessed from adjacent property owners as determined by Newfoundland Power.

The road construction will consist of 3 phases of about 400-500 metres of road construction in each of the years 2020, 2021 and 2022. It is anticipated that electrical power to the initial phase will be in place by 2020. As identified on the attached maps, the proposed development is located along the Exploits River and is situated approximately 2.0km east of the community of Bishop’s Falls and 14km west of the community of Norris Arm.

During the construction of the power line, road and cottages, all conditions associated with the *Environmental Protection Act, Forestry Act* and other relevant legislation will be strictly followed. There will be no fuels stored on site and environmental awareness and proper operating procedures will be delivered to all associated cottage lot owners and contractors involved in various activities such as: timber clearing, road construction, power line installation, culvert installation and emergency response.

Water supply for the cottage lots will be done by a professional company specializing in artesian well establishment. Each lot will have its own source of water.

Septic systems for the structures will be designed by a Government approved designer in accordance with all provincial legislation and guidelines. It will be installed according to the approved design for that particular structure, soil conditions and topography. The system will be inspected by Service NL personnel during installation and prior to use.

3.0 Buffer Zone and Cottage Lot Development

A riparian buffer zone is the section of the land closest to the shoreline of a river, lake or waterbody, in this case the Exploits River. Trees, shrubs and grasses along the Exploits River shoreline act as a natural barrier to help filter contaminants and minimize the amount entering the water.

The vegetation in the buffer zone of the Sandy Point Cottage Lot Development mainly consists of black spruce, balsam fir, white birch and some alders/willows type of brush.

The Exploits River is 120 kilometres long from its start where it empties out of Red Indian Lake to the point where it enters the ocean in the Bay of Exploits. The 120 kilometre river has the potential for 240 kilometers of buffer (allowing for a buffer on both sides of the river). From our estimation, in excess of 90% of the Exploits River or 216 kilometres is adequately buffered. Buffers are compromised only in the areas where communities or cottage lot developments exist.

The proponent fully understands the importance and necessity of buffering waterways and the positive effects they have on protecting water quality, fish and wildlife habitat.

The Sandy Point Cottage Lot Development Proposal is no different from any other cottage lot development. Its intent is to provide individuals the opportunity to experience life in a rural or wilderness setting while at the same time preserving as much as possible the environmental and wildlife components of its ecosystem. It should be noted, however, that cottage lot owners near water generally want to be able to see the water and have access to it.

The proponent of the Sandy Point Cottage Lot Development has developed and will implement this buffer zone plan to accomplish both the environmental protection necessary in such a development while at the same time providing residents an opportunity to experience life in a wilderness setting.

The proponent is proposing the following to meet the requirements of ecosystem protection:

Zone 1 – Riverside Zone (30 metres)

The function of this zone is to protect physical and ecological integrity of the riverside. Zone 1 will begin at the high water mark of the active shoreline and extend 30m. As per the condition of release from Environmental Assessment, a minimum 30 metre undisturbed naturally vegetated buffer must be maintained along all waterbodies and wetlands to protect sensitive riparian and aquatic species, and their habitat. The minimal removal of underbrush and mature trees will be permitted in this zone for the purposes of providing access to the water (e.g. boat launch etc.) and minimal thinning for resident viewscape; however, the integrity of the riparian buffer must be maintained at all times and appropriate regulatory permits must be obtained prior to any removal of vegetation in this zone.

Zone 2 – Re-Vegetation Zone (50 metres)

The recommended re-vegetation & construction zone falls between the high tide river mark to 50m into the land. The only disturbance in the 30m to 50m zone area will be in relation to the septic systems. A detailed plan of septic systems is currently being formulated and will be subsequently reviewed and approved by Service NL before any septic systems will be built. The cottage owner will need to ensure that no other construction or permanent features are to be built in this zone. The area between the 30 metre mark and 50 metre mark is to be revegetated with native species to minimize the impacts from construction on aquatic species and their habitats.

Zone 3 – Construction Zone (50 metres to the road)

The construction zone begins at the 50m mark and will end where the road will be constructed. During the construction period, all cottage owners will be made aware not to disturb the area up to the 50m mark. Laying out building materials, parking vehicles or equipment are all activities that are not to occur in this area to ensure disturbance is minimized. Please refer to the attached survey outlining the plots & buffer zone.

Given the proposed timelines we are operating under we do not believe Migratory Bird nesting will be a major issue. Given that our land falls in the D3-4 zone, any road construction that occurs between April 15th and August 15 appropriate mitigating measures will be utilized to ensure the safety and security of any nests that could be potentially found or disturbed.

Measures taken are:

- Conduct surveys the day before construction starts on the site(s) undergoing construction activities to observe if there are any nests or potential nests.
- Instruct our operators to be aware of their surroundings and to be cognizant of potential nests and nesting behaviours.

- If a nest is found, an appropriate vegetated buffer zone will be created surrounding the nest to ensure it will not be disturbed until nesting is complete and the young have naturally fledged from the area.

4. Cottage Lot Development Conditions, Management and Maintenance

The following is the plan for maintaining the Buffer Zone and ensuring compliance with the regulatory requirements:

- Eliminate potential pollutants by being careful with gas and oil around the cottage and avoiding the use of harmful fertilizers and pesticides. Regular pump-outs of the septic tank system along with proactively avoiding an overload of the septic system with too much water.
- As per the condition of release from Environmental Assessment, maintain a minimum 30 metre undisturbed naturally vegetated buffer along all waterbodies and wetlands to protect sensitive riparian and aquatic species, and their habitat. The minimal removal of underbrush and mature trees will be permitted in this zone for the purposes of providing access to the water (e.g. boat launch etc.) and minimal thinning for resident viewscape; however, the integrity of the riparian buffer must be maintained at all times and appropriate regulatory permits must be obtained prior to any removal of vegetation in this zone.
- The only disturbance permitted in the 30m to 50m zone area is for the installation of septic systems. The cottage owner will need to ensure that no other construction or permanent features are to be built in this zone. The area between the 30 metre mark and 50 metre mark is to be revegetated with native species to minimize the impacts from septic system construction on aquatic species and their habitats.
- The approved Buffer Zone Plan will be included in purchase agreements to ensure that all land owners are aware of the regulatory buffer zone requirements, under the *Environmental Protection Act*, related to this project.
- Prior to any construction, all land owners are required to obtain applicable permits.

