



Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds

Parks and Recreation
Policy K18

Policy:	K18 – Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds
Policy Department(s):	Parks and Recreation
Adoption Date:	November 15, 2021
Adoption Reference:	CM20211115.004
Effective Date:	November 15, 2021
Last Amended:	November 14, 2022

Policy Purpose

To establish criteria for recreational uses of stormwater ponds and increase the public's overall awareness and understanding of recreational uses of stormwater ponds and to ensure stormwater ponds are used for recreation in a manner with the least amount of risk.

Policy Statement

To promote active living in the County by providing low-cost alternative recreation opportunities, while balancing safety concerns and resident expectations based on prior use of storm water ponds for recreation in County residential subdivisions.

Definitions

“Contact Person” shall mean the designated member of the Volunteer Group who is responsible for communicating on the group's behalf. An alternate Contact Person must also be identified on the application form as number “2” under this policy. The primary Contact Person will be responsible for communicating concerns of conditions to the County of Grande Prairie No. 1.

“Non-contact water activities” shall mean any recreational activities which restrict direct body contact with the stormwater in the pond.

“Special Events” shall mean an event held in or around the stormwater ponds, both in neighbourhoods as well as those ponds not typically located within a neighbourhood (i.e. Sportsplex stormwater pond), and which anticipate drawing a significant number of spectators and/or participants.

“Stormwater ponds” shall mean artificial bodies of water situated on municipal reserve land with the primary function of providing storm sewer overflow retention. For the purpose of this policy, stormwater ponds shall be limited to those ponds directly located within residential neighbourhood parks and/or readily identified as being used for recreational purposes by the public. Other bodies of water located in industrial areas, naturally occurring wetlands, private



Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds

Parks and Recreation
Policy K18

dugouts or any other unnoted body of water located in the county are not considered part of this policy.

“Volunteer Group” shall mean a formal neighbourhood association or an informal group of four or more people who voluntarily offer him/herself to perform a service willingly and without compensation. If any member of the Volunteer Group moves out of the neighbourhood, a replacement must be found to meet the minimum requirement of four people under this policy.

Policy Guidelines

1. The County will permit limited recreational use of stormwater ponds subject to conditions outlined in this policy. Approved stormwater ponds may be used for winter ice activities such as skating, broomball, and shinny, and non-direct contact water activities in the summer. These summer activities include non-motorized boating with boats propelled solely by human power such as paddle boats, kayaks or canoes.
2. Since stormwater ponds help control flooding during heavy rainstorms, water quality cannot be guaranteed because the ponds collect road and street runoff. The County of Grande of Prairie does not monitor the water quality in any County stormwater pond. Therefore, stormwater ponds are not recommended for use for activities such as swimming, wading, fishing, boardsailing, water skiing, scuba diving, and any use of inner tubes and small inflatable or any activities that may result in direct contact with the water.
3. This policy governs Stormwater Ponds in Residential Subdivisions.
4. The Parks & Recreation department will be responsible for determining on an annual basis, which stormwater ponds are approved for recreational use. This decision will be based on accessibility to the pond, immediate resident interest in accessing the pond, willingness of volunteer groups within the residential community, presence of additional stormwater ponds within the same subdivision,. Approved stormwater ponds for winter and/or summer use will be identified on the County of Grande Prairie website.
5. Visual Evaluation of Physical Properties of Stormwater Ponds:
Shall be carried out by the County during the summer season and will be conducted every two years to document any possible changes in the high-risk zones. Stormwater ponds that have not changed after two reviews and show no tendency to change will be put on a five-year cycle to review.
6. Restrictions for Summer Recreational Use on Approved Stormwater Ponds:
For public safety, any activity that may result in direct contact with water in stormwater ponds is not recommended. The County of Grande Prairie makes no representation on the quality of water in the stormwater pond. Any interested group or individual will be allowed to spontaneously use Stormwater ponds for non-direct contact activities at their own risk.



Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds

Parks and Recreation
Policy K18

Non-direct contact summer activities include boating activities with boats propelled by electric, wind or human power such as paddle boats, kayaks or canoes.

7. Ice Thickness Evaluation / Management:

Shall be carried out by the Volunteer Group following protocols recommend during the County provided training session and according to document Best Practices provided, during the onset of winter until sufficient ice thickness has been reached. Specifically, the ice must be 20 cm to allow people to recreate on it, and 25 cm to allow approved snow clearing equipment on it. If there are significant temperature fluctuations ice thickness evaluations may be required to be performed on a more frequent basis.

8. Restrictions for Winter Recreational Use on Approved Stormwater Ponds:

- 8.1. Users must obey posted signs and use at their own risk.
- 8.2. Ice thickness will be monitored on an ongoing basis by volunteers.
- 8.3. Any interested group or individual will be allowed to spontaneously use storm water ponds for winter activities at their own risk.
- 8.4. Only approved Motorized vehicles, Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) or lawn tractors are permitted on the ice.

9. Restrictions for Special Events on Approved Stormwater Ponds:

- 9.1. All persons are required to make an application to the Parks & Recreation department for permission to host the special event and receive approval to proceed.
- 9.2. Members of the group organizing the event are required to have the applicable insurance and indemnity agreements in place.

10. Special Consideration for Other Allowable Uses on Stormwater Ponds:

- 10.1. Administration recognizes there are also situations where it is advantageous to consider other allowable uses for the stormwater ponds. For all special consideration requests, the restrictions noted under “Restrictions for Special Events” above also apply.
- 10.2. The County may for any purpose, close or restrict access to an approved stormwater pond for any length of time as deemed necessary.

11. Volunteer Group Responsibilities for Approved Stormwater Ponds for Winter Use:

- 11.1. A volunteer group is required to complete a Stormwater Pond Volunteer Group application form for each stormwater pond they wish to commit to partnering with the County of Grande Prairie on.



Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds

Parks and Recreation
Policy K18

-
- 11.2. Volunteer groups will coordinate a minimum of four volunteers and designate one main contact person and one alternate.
 - 11.3. The volunteer group will be responsible for the ice testing and maintenance. The County of Grande Prairie is not responsible for any testing of the ice thickness, of maintenance of the storm ponds.
 - 11.4. The volunteer group is solely responsible for the snow clearing and reasonable maintenance of the ice surface
 - 11.5. The volunteer group, and general public as a whole, are responsible for immediately reporting any concerns regarding ice thickness or other safety issues regarding the stormwater pond, to the Parks & Recreation department (weekdays) or Regional Enforcement Services (evenings and weekends).
 - 11.6. The volunteer group will be required to ensure the ice surface does not interfere with the reasonable enjoyment of resident's use of Municipal Reserve or greenspace lands.
 - 11.7. The volunteer group will be required to ensure that emergency access routes are clear to the ice surface site at all times.
 - 11.8. Fire barrels or fire pits are not permitted on the stormwater pond ice surface under any circumstances.
 - 11.9. Volunteers that submitted an approved application must sign a release of liability for their personal involvement and any equipment they might operate.
 - 11.10. Volunteers are responsible to notify users if the ice conditions change and they determine that it is not safe for public access and post total pond closure.
 - 11.11. The volunteer group will be responsible for ensuring that fire barrels or fire pits are not permitted on the stormwater pond ice surface under any circumstances.
 - 11.12. The volunteer group is responsible for the removal of all items, equipment and debris at the end of the season (e.g. nets, garbage cans, benches etc.)
12. County Responsibilities

The County of Grande Prairie is not required to perform any ice testing or ice surface maintenance responsibilities under the terms of this policy.

- 12.1. The County is committed to the following responsibilities:
 - 12.1.1. Ensuring that volunteer group has applied for and has been assigned to a stormwater pond before it is used for winter recreation.
 - 12.1.2. Visual pre-site inspection upon receipt of an application from a volunteer group.



Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds

Parks and Recreation
Policy K18

- 12.1.3. Marking high-risk hazards associated with storm ponds such as inlets and outlets.
- 12.1.4. Installing signage to support this policy at each approved storm pond location.
- 12.1.5. Providing an opportunity for volunteers to be trained on ice safety and ice testing best practices by an industry expert.
- 12.1.6. Following the approved internal Safe Operating Procedure for Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds.
- 12.1.7. Providing one ice rescue kit per approved stormwater pond for emergency public use.
- 12.1.8. Emptying garbage cans and other standard greenspace maintenance.

12. Recognition of Risk:

Any advisories or signage regarding posted by the volunteer group or the County of Grande Prairie for recreational use on stormwater ponds are provided as information only is not a representation that the ice is safe to use for any purpose. Persons using the ice surface are advised to beware that the ice may become unstable at any time, and that ice thickness may change at any time for a variety of reasons, some of which are unpredictable. Anyone using the stormwater pond for any purpose, winter or summer, does so at their own risk. Signage stating Recognition of Risk will be posted at each stormwater pond approved for recreational use.

Attachments

Schedule A – General Rules for Recreation on Stormwater Ponds

References

Legal Authorities	N/A
Related Plans, Bylaws, Policies, Etc.	B1 – Policy Development
Other	Stormwater Pond Volunteer Group Application Form

Revision History

Review Date	Description
November 14, 2022	Reviewed and Amended – CM20221114.006
November 15, 2021	Adoption Date – CM20211115.004



Recreational Use of Stormwater Ponds

Parks and Recreation
Policy K18

Schedule A – General Rules for Recreation on Stormwater Ponds

1. Obey all notices and posted signs
2. No animals running at large
3. Quiet time is 10:00 PM to 7:00 AM daily
4. No person shall disturb the rest, peace or enjoyment of any other person at any time
5. Only permitted Off Highway Vehicles may be operated on the stormwater pond ice surface
6. No fire barrels or fire pits on the stormwater pond ice surface
7. Litter deposited in provided litter receptacles only
8. Discharge of fireworks is prohibited
9. Harassment of wildlife is prohibited (Wildlife Act)
10. Damaging, defacing or removing County property is prohibited (Criminal Code of Canada)
11. Adherence to all traffic safety laws is required (Alberta Traffic Safety Act)
12. Criminal breeches will not be tolerated (Criminal Code of Canada)
13. Nuisance behaviour will not be tolerated. This includes:
 - 13.1. Use of obscene, offensive or insulting language;
 - 13.2. Fighting or disorderly conduct;
 - 13.3. Excessively loud or disruptive noise or music at any time;
 - 13.4. Any conduct that takes place either within or outside of a greenspace stormwater pond area, which in the opinion of a Peace Officer infringes upon the peace, quiet and enjoyment of any other Person.

(Note: some or all of this information may be used to display at approved County stormwater ponds for recreational purposes.)