

6. ECOSYSTEM HEALTH



GOAL: *Protect the air, water and lands on which we all depend.*

The PRRD is the largest regional district in size, with a vast expanse of natural areas and host to many different types of ecosystems. The land cover includes young and old forests and many lakes, watercourses, wetlands, alpine meadows, mountain vistas, canyons and waterfalls. These valuable areas are critical as wildlife habitat, providing water supplies to our communities, and providing residents with diverse recreational opportunities across the seasons.

There are 49 provincial parks, protected areas and ecological reserves located within the PRRD, encompassing approximately ten percent of the total land area for the region. The sizes range from over 130,000 hectares (Kwadacha Wilderness Provincial Park) to less than three hectares (Taylor Landing Provincial Park).

1. Support regional environmental stewardship.

- a) Conserve and protect the region's natural resources for the benefit of existing and future generations.
- b) Work with environmental partners on continued coordination of conservation and stewardship initiatives.
- c) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to conserve, protect and steward watersheds, wetlands, riparian areas and open spaces.
- d) Promote local stewardship and develop options for increased community engagement and involvement in community-led conservation initiatives.
- e) Develop policies to protect the natural environment, including updated development permit areas in PRRD OCPs to protect sensitive ecosystems.

f) Collaborate with provincial agencies, member municipalities, First Nations, Northern Health and residents to explore the development of watershed management plans across the PRRD, incorporating a health lens to protect drinking water quality and community well-being.

g) Encourage best environmental management practices on farms.

2. Promote and enhance water conservation and sustainability.

- a) Protect and enhance the quality and quantity of the water in the region's lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater sources.
- b) Promote conservation and sustainability of watershed ecosystems, wetlands and riparian areas.
- c) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to maintain environmental flows that support ecological functions and groundwater recharge.
- d) Support the provision of adequate water resources for the agriculture sector.
- e) Address and improve permitting and management of water dugouts on agricultural properties.
- f) Collaborate with Northern Health to investigate and establish guidelines for new development that support incorporating non-potable water systems, such as purple pipe infrastructure, as an optional feature to enhance water sustainability.
- g) Encourage and support practices for more efficient and sustainable industrial water use, particularly for fracking.

- h) Ensure the updated PRRD Official Community Plans include lakeshore development guidelines that are consistent with relevant provincial regulations and guidelines (e.g., septic setbacks).

3. Expand and improve the regional park system.

- a) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to review and update the PRRD Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan.
- b) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to identify potential

future regional park sites and trail network opportunities.

- c) Develop a clear parkland classification system and establish transparent service levels for each classification.
- d) Consider linking parkland acquisition to regional biodiversity stewardship.
- e) Develop a PRRD parkland acquisition policy that is better aligned with parkland acquisition requirements in the LGA and to help ensure future park acquisitions are sustainable and adequately resourced.



MAP 7: Peace River Regional District – Parks and Protected Areas





