

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION TASK FORCE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose	To act as an advisory body to Council and Administration, identifying and prioritizing natural areas that should be preserved or restored to protect long-term ecological health, build community resilience, and protect the visual beauty of the community.
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two (2) Members of Council• Four (4) Public at Large Members• One (1) CEAC member
Quorum	Quorum consists of two (2) Public at Large Members and (1) Member of Council.
Definitions	<p><u>Natural Area</u>—Municipal lands designated as environmental reserve lands characterized by preserving native ecosystems and biodiversity. Natural areas prioritize the protection of natural habitats with minimal human intervention.</p> <p><u>Manicured Greenspace</u> – deliberately maintained park and open spaces designed for recreational purposes. These areas feature trimmed turf, flower beds and organized amenities such as playgrounds, sports amenities and picnic areas.</p>
Authority	<p>The Natural Environment Protection Task Force will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide recommendations on environmental sustainability issues and trends as they relate to Cochrane’s natural heritage.• Provide recommendations on municipal practices and programs related to natural area conservation.• Advise on long term planning for the stewardship and preservation of natural areas and assets.• Advise on enhancing the protection and growth of urban forested areas, creeks and streams within the community.• Identify ecological issues that impact the community’s natural areas.• Recommend opportunities for residents/visitors to learn about and enjoy the community’s natural areas.• Recommend programs and policies to protect the visual and scenic natural areas and corridors.• Advise on increasing public awareness, appreciation and stewardship of natural habitats and resources available in the community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on funding opportunities to protect and conserve important ecosystems. • Recommend positive contributions to Canada's 30x30 target to protect 30% of lands and water by 2030.
Meetings	Meetings are scheduled on a quarterly basis or as required. The Parks & Active Living/Planning support staff, in conjunction with the chair, determine when additional meetings are required.
Task Force Term	Two (2) Years commencing from the Initial Meeting Date.
Deliverables	<p>The Natural Environment Protection Task Force deliverables are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide recommendations and guidance on developing environmental education and stewardship programs in partnership with schools, community groups, and residents through volunteer-driven initiatives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: To foster environmental awareness and stewardship within the community by engaging diverse groups in educational programs. This will encourage long-term, grassroots participation in conservation efforts and inspire future generations to protect the environment. 2. Complete an environmental assessment study of Cochrane's natural areas and provide recommendations to Council on protected status, policy, or bylaw. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: To ensure informed decision-making regarding the protection and management of Cochrane's natural areas. The study will offer valuable insights into the current health of local ecosystems and guide policy to maintain and enhance biodiversity, natural resources, and ecological balance. 3. Provide advice on funding opportunities or partnerships to protect and conserve ecosystems within natural areas of Cochrane. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: To secure the financial and collaborative support necessary for long-term environmental protection efforts. By identifying funding sources and strategic partnerships, the task force will enable the implementation of conservation projects without overburdening local resources. 4. Complete an annual report to Council on the impact of deliverables, at which time an evaluation of the Task Force deliverables and impact will also take place.

- **Purpose:** To maintain transparency and accountability, providing Council with a clear understanding of the task force's achievements and challenges. This evaluation will help assess progress toward environmental goals and inform future adjustments or expansions of the task force's initiatives.

Funding

As authorized by Council during the annual budget cycle.

Approval Date

October 28, 2024 (RES # 215/10/24)