

WAWA CLIENT NOTIFICATION

Please be advised the Department of the Environment and Local Government has recently amended by policy its working definition of a watercourse.

The Clean Water Act defines a watercourse as “watercourse means the full width and length, including the bed, banks, sides and shoreline, or any part, of a river, creek, stream, spring, brook, lake, pond, reservoir, canal, ditch or other natural or artificial channel open to the atmosphere, the primary function of which is the conveyance or containment of water whether the flow be continuous or not”.

For administrative reasons when the program was first implemented, the Surface Water Protection Section adopted a policy that a watercourse and wetland alteration (WAWA) permit would be required for any work carried out in or within 30 metres of a watercourse that is depicted on a 1:10,000 scale orthophoto. However, due to the accuracy of this mapping, significant watercourses visible in the field are not mapped or their location is not accurately depicted and other watercourse that are depicted on this mapping are not discernible in the field.

Furthermore, the Department of Natural Resources manages watercourse alterations on Crown Land when the drainage area upstream of the alteration site is 600 hectares or less using the criterion of whether or not they are less than 0.5 metres in width.

In order to address these issues and bring a level of consistency with respect to regulating the alteration of watercourses in the province, the new working definition outlined below now applies to the administration of the WAWA Regulation.

A feature, the primary function of which is the conveyance or containment of water, described as being:

- a) the bed, banks and sides of any watercourse that is depicted on the New Brunswick Hydrographic Network layer (available on GeoNB Map Viewer);**
- b) the bed, banks and sides of any incised channel greater than 0.5 metres in width that displays a rock or soil (mineral or organic) bed, that is not depicted on New Brunswick Hydrographic Network layer (available on GeoNB Map Viewer); water/flow does not have to be continuous and may be absent during any time of year; or**
- c) a natural or man-made basin (i.e. lakes and ponds).**

The recently released online WAWA application process incorporates both a mapping function and a series of questions with respect to the presence of watercourse features based on the description above. Based on your responses to these questions the system will aide in determining whether a WAWA permit is required or not.

Should you have any questions with respect to the application of the new policy, please do not hesitate to contact the Surface Water Protection Section at 506-457-4850 or visit the online application process at <https://www.elgeql.gnb.ca/WAWAG/en/Home/Site>.