

Service Delivery for Permit Review - Summary (2013-2018)

One of Grand River Conservation Authority's main priorities as a watershed agency is to prevent the loss of life and damage to property from flooding and erosion. Development proposed within a regulated area - in or near watercourses, floodplains, river and stream valleys or wetlands - requires a permit from Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA). Examples of projects that require a permit include: construction of houses, sheds, bridges, installation of culverts, grading and placement of fill. By requiring permits for these sorts of projects in regulated areas, GRCA can ensure that flooding and erosion impacts are minimized.

Service Delivery Guidelines for Permit Review

In 2010, permit review guidelines for service delivery were developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) along with conservation authorities, Conservation Ontario, municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ontario Home Builders Association and the Building Industry and Land Development Association. The guidelines apply timelines for conservation authorities to review permit applications. If a pre-consultation meeting is held before an application is sent to the GRCA, the permit application requirements should be confirmed within 21 days. After receiving the permit application, GRCA has 21 days to determine if the application is complete and contact the applicant if it is not. The timelines for decisions on permit approvals are different for the two types of applications: minor permits and major permits.

Minor permit applications:

A minor permit application is usually for small-scale projects and there is a low risk of impact on regulated features. These permits are often for projects in the area near a regulated feature. No technical reports are required with this type of application. Examples might include applications for the construction of a shed near a wetland or a pool next to a floodplain.

A decision for a minor permit application should be made by GRCA within 30 days of receiving a complete application.

Major permit applications:

A major permit application is for larger-scale projects where there is a risk of impact on a regulated feature. One or more plans or studies are required to be submitted along with the permit application. For example, an environmental impact study or stormwater management report. Examples might include the construction of a bridge over a river or a residential subdivision near a wetland.

A decision for a major permit application should be made by GRCA within 90 days of receiving a complete application.

Permit approval reporting:

The GRCA reports permit approval numbers to the development industry at the Home Builder’s and GRCA Liaison Committee meetings held four times a year. In the past, the committee created checklists and guidelines that help permit applicants understand what information needs to be included with their application at the beginning of the process. This encourages complete submissions and a quicker review by GRCA staff. This effort to address complete applications has resulted in the GRCA achieving a very high compliance rate with the MNRF guidelines for permit processing. A summary of GRCA permits approved within MNRF timelines from 2013 to 2018 is provided below.

Although the GRCA is able to achieve success in meeting the guidelines, there are always opportunities to improve the complete application process and the quality of permit submissions and achieve more efficient approvals. This includes updating technical guidelines and checklists.

Between 2013 and 2018, the GRCA was able to make 4752 permit decisions. The majority of permits received were approved within MNRF guideline timelines (April 2019).

Figure 1: Number of Permits Received Versus Number Approved Within MNRF Timelines

