



### **What is an Environmental Reserve (ER)?**

An Environmental Reserve (ER) is land designated for protection due to its environmental significance. In Alberta, it is typically established under the **Alberta Municipal Government Act (MGA)** to safeguard areas that provide important ecological functions, such as wetlands, riverbanks, and steep slopes. ERs are generally intended to conserve natural landscapes and wildlife habitats while preventing development in these vulnerable areas.

### **What is the purpose of Environmental Reserves?**

The primary purpose of Environmental Reserves is to:

- **Protect water bodies:** ERs often encompass land near lakes, rivers, streams, or wetlands to preserve water quality, prevent erosion, and maintain natural habitats.
- **Prevent development in environmentally sensitive areas:** ERs help avoid placing structures or infrastructure in locations prone to flooding, erosion, or other environmental risks.
- **Preserve biodiversity:** They protect wildlife habitats and plant species that are important for maintaining ecological balance.
- **Manage environmental risks:** ERs help mitigate the risks of natural disasters, such as flooding, by providing natural buffers against these events.

### **Why are Environmental Reserves important for landowners?**

While landowners may have certain restrictions on land use within ER areas, there are important benefits:

- **Increased Property Value:** Being located near protected environmental areas can enhance the value of neighboring properties by maintaining scenic views, promoting outdoor recreation, and reducing flood risks.
- **Natural Buffer Zones:** ERs often serve as natural barriers that protect land from environmental damage, such as erosion or flooding, reducing long-term property maintenance costs.

### **How does an Environmental Reserve benefit the community?**

- **Flood Control:** ERs often act as flood buffers, reducing the risk of flood damage in neighboring areas and providing more stability for surrounding communities.
- **Enhancement of Ecosystems:** By preserving natural habitats, ERs contribute to the biodiversity of the region, supporting native wildlife and plant life.

- **Recreation and Education:** ERs can be used for non-intrusive recreational activities such as hiking, birdwatching, etc., which provides a valuable connection to nature for community members.

### **Can I use my land in an Environmental Reserve for development or construction?**

No, Environmental Reserves are generally protected from development. However, landowners may still use their properties for non-invasive activities such as:

- Recreational purposes (e.g., walking trails or picnic areas).
- Conservation or educational projects.

*The City of Cold Lake allows for lakefront property owners to apply for a License of Occupation for specific uses or improvements within an Environmental Reserve. Please see the [Environmental Reserve Lands Policy](#) for further information.*

### **Where can I get more information on Environmental Reserves?**

- City of Cold Lake - [Environmental Reserve Lands Policy](#)
- City of Cold Lake - [Parks and Public Facilities Bylaw](#)
- [Stepping Back from the Water](#)
- [Municipal Government Act: Section 664\(1\) Environmental Reserve](#)