

MEEWASIN VALLEY AUTHORITY

Policy: Land
Policy No.: 1.7
Date: July 8, 2016

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A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Land Policy is:

- to provide a framework for defining the land to be included in the Meewasin Valley;
- to provide policy guidance for determining the jurisdictional boundaries of the Meewasin Valley, and;
- to determine the criteria for accepting Meewasin-held conservation easements.

The intent is to provide a criteria-based framework for evaluating whether or not land should be part of the Meewasin Valley and/or accepted as a conservation easement. It is not intended to prescribe specific land to be unilaterally incorporated into the Meewasin Valley but, rather, to identify the types of land that Meewasin should seek, consider or accept for inclusion in the Meewasin Valley, based on its mandate. In this way Meewasin can pursue its interests based on policy should compelling rationale and/or opportunities emerge to add land to the jurisdiction or to pursue a conservation easement. These opportunities may come through a request from a landowner or participating party; a municipal boundary alteration; the dedication of municipal, public or environmental reserves; the offering of land for sale; or other mechanisms.

B. MISSION AND PRINCIPLES

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Meewasin Valley Authority exists to ensure a healthy and vibrant river valley, with a balance between human use and conservation by:

- Providing leadership in the management of its resources;
- Promoting understanding, conservation and beneficial use of the Valley; and
- Undertaking programs and projects in river valley development and conservation

for the benefit of present and future generations.

2. PLANNING PRINCIPLES

This Policy will incorporate Meewasin's fundamental planning principles:

- Valley's resources are accessible to everyone;
- Conserve natural and heritage resources;
- Recreation and development balanced with conservation;
- Diverse activities for a varied and changing demographic; and
- Public participation in decision making.

3. LAND BASE PRINCIPLES

The following principles should govern policy, planning and decision-making with regard to the land base of the Meewasin Valley:

- The natural system of the South Saskatchewan River valley, with its interconnected land forms, hydrology, ecosystems; cultural heritage and human activity is the basis of the Meewasin Valley.
- The changes in the river valley system, spatially and geomorphologically over time, both past and future, are taken into consideration.
- The Meewasin Valley includes those areas:
 - with direct (physical) or indirect (e.g. visual, aural, olfactory) impact on the South Saskatchewan River valley within the City of Saskatoon and R.M. of Corman Park, or
 - that are directly or indirectly impacted by the South Saskatchewan River valley within the City of Saskatoon and R.M. of Corman Park.
- The land base should support a balance of conservation, development, recreation, and education/interpretation uses.
- Opportunities for public use of and access to the river valley should be expanded and reinforced.
- Opportunities for research on natural and cultural heritage should be supported.

C. DEFINITIONS

Act, The: means *The Meewasin Valley Authority Act*, Chapter M-11.1, S.S. 1979, as amended.

Authority: see Meewasin Valley Authority.

Biodiversity: means the variety of life in all its forms, levels, and combinations, including the different plants, animals, microorganisms, the genes they contain, and the ecosystems they form in a process that has evolved over hundreds, thousands, and even millions of years.

Built Form: means the composite of man-made structures and landscapes, including buildings, utility and transportation infrastructure, and public gathering spaces.

Conservation: means the application of scientific knowledge to the protection and management of natural and cultural resources that include plant and animal biodiversity, habitats, ecosystems, man-made artifacts, and built-structures.

Conservation Easement: means an easement held under *The Conservation Easements Amended Act (2010)*.

Conservation Zone: means the lands described in Schedule A of *The Meewasin Valley Authority Act*.

Cultural Heritage Resource: means the legacy of physical artifacts, historical, archeological, and palaeontological and intangible attributes, including evidence of customs or behaviors, of a group or species that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Artifacts may include a building, a parcel of land together with any structures thereon, or an historical route of travel, which is deemed to be representative of the social, cultural, economic, military or political history of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan or Canada.

Cultural Heritage Value: means the presence of a recognized:

- aesthetic (i.e. style, materials, functional design);
- historical theme or association;
- societal attachment to place;
- cultural symbol or group identity; and/or
- spirituality (i.e. religion, belief system, myth, ceremony).

Development: means the improvement of land and/or construction involving land, buildings, structures, service facilities, landscape construction, or infrastructure.

Development Review: means the process of considering an application for an improvement for the purposes of determining whether to approve, approve with conditions, or deny with reasons, an application.

Easement: means land held by one party with certain rights and responsibilities held by another party.

Ecological Integrity: means remaining in a natural state with ecological processes such as energy flows and water cycles conserved.

Education: means the process of creating and facilitating opportunities for learning, through the acquisition of knowledge, skill, values, beliefs and habits and the creation of opportunities for all to learn in, for and about the natural and cultural heritage of the Meewasin Valley, and about the history, mandate and initiatives of the Meewasin Valley Authority.

It may take place in a formal or an informal setting and provides the opportunity to learn at all levels of complexity: including awareness, knowledge, understanding and commitment; through an array of methodologies including interpretive programming, communication, signage and involvement; any experience that has a formative effect on the way one things, feels or acts is educational.

Flood Plain: means land lying below the 1:500 year flood level, as defined by the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency.

Improvement: means a building, structure or service facility constructed, or landscape construction, within the Meewasin Valley, or any alteration thereof or addition thereto but does not include the ordinary care, maintenance or repair of a building, structure or service facility or of landscape construction (*Act*, 2(l)).

Meewasin: means reference to either the organization or administration, but not the Board of Directors acting in their regulatory role.

Meewasin Valley: means:

- (a) the areas described in Schedules A and B of *The Act* subject to any alterations made to those schedules pursuant to section 13 of *The Act*;
- (b) the lands in and under the waters of the South Saskatchewan River bounded:
 - (i) on the north by the projection eastward of the north boundary of Section 10, Township 40, in Range 3, West of the Third Meridian; and
 - (ii) on the south by the projection eastward of the south boundary of that portion of Section 4 in Township 35, in Range 6, West of the Third Meridian, lying west of the river; and,
- (c) the shores of the South Saskatchewan River adjacent to the lands described in sub-clause (b).

Meewasin Valley Authority (Authority): the Board of Directors acting in their regulatory role.

Natural Heritage: means the legacy of geology, biology, ecology, or similar environmental or scientific significance detectable in existing soil conditions, flora and/or fauna, hydrological function, or archaeological and palaeontological evidence at a site.

Natural Heritage Resources: means land, vegetation, wildlife and water (surface and groundwater) which have value and importance in the environmental life cycle of the Saskatoon region, and which contribute to the region's quality of life.

Nature Experience Land: means lands on which people can experience and learn about the natural and human history of the South Saskatchewan River valley, and enjoy its natural beauty; it may be, but is not necessarily dominated by native vegetation ecology.

Northeast Quadrant: means the area:

- north of College Drive and east of the South Saskatchewan River, and
- from 14th Street to College Drive, between Cumberland Avenue and Circle Drive.

Participating Party: means the City of Saskatoon, University of Saskatchewan, or the Government of Saskatchewan.

Public Land: means land within Meewasin Valley owned by or leased to the City of Saskatoon, Government of Saskatchewan, University of Saskatchewan or the Meewasin Valley Authority; and includes the verge (*The Meewasin Valley Authority Act*, s. 2[w]).

River Valley System: means the riverbed, shoreline, bank, flood plain, wetlands, swales, ravines, coulees, creeks and those areas:

- with a direct or indirect impact these features; or
- that are directly or indirectly impacted by these features.

Riverbank: means the elevations of land rising above the shoreline.

Riverbank Zone: means land:

- in South Downtown, within 60 meters;
- in the Northeast Quadrant within 150 meters; and,
- elsewhere, within 92 meters

of the shoreline or on any part of the slope leading down to the shoreline where the gradient is in excess of 20 percent, whichever extends the greatest distance measured horizontally from the shoreline.

Riverbed: means the land covered by water as to wrest it from vegetation or as to mark distinct character upon the vegetation and upon the soil itself where the vegetation extends into the water.

Shoreline: means the line dividing the riverbank and the riverbed where vegetation ceases or where the character of the vegetation and soil changes.

Stewardship: means taking responsibility for the natural and cultural resources of the Meewasin Valley through careful and responsible management to ensure the health of ecosystems for present and future generations.

Verge: means all lands lying between the boundary of Meewasin Valley where it abuts upon a street, road or land and the nearest part of the street, road or lane that is intended for the use of vehicles.

Watershed: means the drainage basin, or extent of land where water from rain or snow melt runs by gravity to the South Saskatchewan River.

D. LAND BASE CONSIDERATIONS

The Meewasin Valley includes land that fulfills Meewasin's mandate of conservation, development, and education. Meewasin-held conservation easements should meet the same criteria. The land base should have a connection with the river valley system; it is not related to ownership.

Land within the Meewasin Valley should meet one or more of the following:

- Conservation and protection of natural and/or cultural heritage resources;
- Helping to ensure high quality appropriate development occurs within and adjacent to the river valley system;

- Provision of four-season, land and water-based outdoor recreation opportunities, programs and infrastructure;
- Educational and interpretive potential on the natural and cultural heritage of the Meewasin Valley, including ecology and pre and post-settlement periods;
- Provision of areas for the enjoyment of nature experience and cultural heritage;
- Provision of physical and visual public access to the South Saskatchewan River.

E. OBJECTIVE AND POLICIES

1. GENERAL

1.1. Level of Interest

1.1.1. Objective

To exercise an appropriate level of interest and management based on the impacts of and on the river valley system.

1.1.2. Policy Statements

- a) Meewasin may utilize one or more mechanisms to exercise the appropriate level of interest including land purchase, the addition or removal of land from the Conservation Zone, bylaw exemptions, voluntary agreements or any other appropriate approaches.
- b) There should be a greater level of involvement in those lands that directly impact or are directly impacted by the river and a lesser degree of involvement over those lands that impact or are impacted by the river in an indirect manner.
- c) Land with no direct or indirect impact on the river may be released from the Meewasin Valley.
- d) For legal land parcels containing both land meeting the criteria for inclusion in the Meewasin Valley and land that does not meet the criteria, the Authority may exempt from its development review process, by bylaw, the portion of the parcel not meeting the criteria.
- e) Notwithstanding sub-section c) above, land that forms a physical or visual access linkage between portions of the Meewasin Valley may be part of the Valley in order to create continuity and/or minimize fragmentation. The level of interest in these lands should reflect the access and fragmentation aspects.

1.2. Land Base Extents

1.2.1. Objective

To define the extents of Meewasin's land base.

1.2.2. Policy Statements

- a) The Meewasin Valley shall only include land located within the City of Saskatoon and R.M. of Corman Park, pursuant to section 13(1) of *The Act*.
- b) The Authority may hold conservation easements outside of the City of Saskatoon and R.M. of Corman Park if the conservation easement meets the requirements of section 1.3 of this policy.
- c) The Meewasin Valley need not be physically contiguous, nor do conservation easements need to be contiguous with the Meewasin Valley.

1.3. Defining Characteristics

1.3.1. Objective

To define the landform, hydrologic, ecologic and heritage characteristics of the Meewasin Valley.

1.3.2. Policy Statements

- a) Notwithstanding section E.1.1.2, at a minimum, the Meewasin Valley should consist of the following land owned by the Authority, a Participating Party, or a person requesting their land be added to the Meewasin Valley:
 - i. Land in and under the South Saskatchewan River;
 - ii. The riverbank, including slumps;
 - iii. Flood plains;
 - iv. Ravines, coulees, creeks, swales and wetlands which connect directly through surface topography or sub-surface hydrology to the South Saskatchewan River valley;
 - v. A minimum 30-meter setback, measured horizontally, from the top of the riverbank and the features included in subsections iii and iv above;
 - vi. Land adjacent to, or directly connected to, the river valley containing:
 - Remnant native plant communities,
 - endangered or threatened species, and/or
 - Habitat for endangered or threatened species;
 - vii. Land suitable for both passive and active recreation in a natural heritage or nature experience setting in or adjacent to the river valley system;
 - viii. Land containing known cultural heritage resources and/or with a high possibility of containing cultural heritage resources located fully or partly within the river valley system;
 - ix. Urban parks and public spaces wholly or partially within and connected to the river valley system;
 - x. Land with documented slope stability and drainage concerns located fully

- or partly within the river valley system;
- xi. Land that provides safe and legal physical and visual access to the river for recreational, educational and interpretive use; and
- xii. Land which will meet one or more of the above characteristics within a 100 year¹ time horizon, based on the meandering action of the South Saskatchewan River.

1.4. Land Owned or Regulated by a Participating Party

1.4.1. Objective

To include parcels of land that are part of, or adjacent to, the river valley system that are owned by a Participating Party and/or are within the City of Saskatoon, that do not yet have a development concept plan approved by the Authority.

1.4.2. Policy Statements

- a) Meewasin will work with its Participating Parties to proactively identify land they own within the R.M. of Corman Park which meets the criteria of section 1.3 and to add it to the Meewasin Valley.
- b) As the City of Saskatoon plans its future growth beyond the existing corporate limits, Meewasin will work with the City of Saskatoon to identify land meeting the criteria of section 1.3, for inclusion in the Meewasin Valley.
- c) As the City of Saskatoon incorporates land that, as legally described, contains all or some land meeting the criteria of section 1.3, all of that legal parcel should be included in the Meewasin Valley.
- d) Those portions of a parcel of land that do not meet the Authority's mandate may be exempted from development review requirements by bylaw.
- e) At such time as land as described in section c) above is subdivided. Those lands meeting the requirements of section 1.3 of this policy should remain within the Meewasin Valley and those lands not meeting the requirements of section 1.3 and/or section 5 may be removed from the Meewasin Valley.
- f) Meewasin will work with its Participating Parties and private land developers to delineate Municipal Reserves, Public Reserves, and Environmental Reserves to maximize the opportunities for public land in the river valley system and incorporate them into the Meewasin Valley

¹ 100-year time horizon is meant to be a rolling timeframe rather than a fixed date.

2. CONSERVATION

2.1. Natural Heritage Resources

2.1.1. Objective

To protect, conserve, and manage lands with and/or with the potential, through resource management, to have high ecological integrity that are part of, or connect with the river valley system.

2.1.2. Policy Statements

a) The Meewasin Valley includes:

- i. Natural heritage resources with direct or indirect connectivity with the river valley system;
- ii. Land with strong potential for restoration to a biodiverse, native plant dominated vegetation cover based on adjacent land use, topography, hydrology or other site factors;
- iii. Those portions of the watershed within the City of Saskatoon and the R.M. of Corman Park directly entering the South Saskatchewan River; and
- iv. Corridors that provide direct and functional links for wildlife and support biodiversity.

2.2. Cultural Heritage Resources

2.2.1. Objective

To protect, conserve, and manage lands with cultural heritage resources and value that are part of, or connect with the river valley system.

2.2.2. Policy Statements

The Meewasin Valley includes cultural heritage resources with direct or indirect connectivity with the river valley system.

3. DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Development Constraints

3.1.1. Objective

To include land that has river valley system-based development constraints which may compromise ecological health, human safety, and the built form from phenomena such as ground movement, surface and sub-surface water, and/or contamination.

3.1.2. Policy Statements

- a) The Conservation Zone should include those lands that:
 - i. Are subject to slope instability;
 - ii. Have a groundwater regime relating to the river valley system that would be negatively impacted by sub-surface disturbance; and/or
 - iii. Have a site use history that creates the potential for contamination of the South Saskatchewan River.

3.2. Amenity Development and Recreation

3.2.1. Objective

To include land that is capable of withstanding the impact of high-volume public access and usage of the river valley system and land that provides low-volume, passive recreation opportunities.

3.2.2. Policy Statements

- a) The Meewasin Valley and Meewasin-held conservation easements should include those lands that:
 - i. Are public, as defined by *The Act*, and with direct or indirect physical and/or visual connectivity to the South Saskatchewan River and the river valley system;
 - ii. Provide public gathering spaces, which provide opportunity for a sense of community and enjoyment of the river valley setting;
 - iii. Create connectivity for trails and trail amenities; and/or
 - iv. Provide physical public access to the South Saskatchewan River.

4. EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

4.1. Education Opportunities

4.1.1. Objective

To provide a land basis for education and outreach activities relating to the natural and cultural heritage resources directly and indirectly related to the river valley system.

4.1.2. Policy Statements

- a) The Meewasin Valley and Meewasin-held conservation easements should include those lands within or adjacent to the river valley system that:
 - i. Contain natural and cultural heritage resources that may be at risk from inappropriate development;
 - ii. Contain either unique or representative natural and cultural heritage

- resources; and/or
- iii. Provide physical evidence of the interaction between human activity, including pre-settlement and settlement history, and the river valley system.

4.2. Research

4.2.1. Objective

To have a land base that supports and facilitates research that contributes to a deeper or broader understanding of the natural and/or cultural heritage of the river valley system and to retain these opportunities into the future.

4.2.2. Policy Statements

- a) Include within the Meewasin Valley, land that contains unique or examples of typical natural heritage resources, including flora, fauna, and/or ecosystems that is partially or wholly part of or adjacent to the river valley system.
- b) Include within the Meewasin Valley, land that contains unique or examples of typical cultural heritage resources, including buildings, landscapes, and other built features.
- c) Recognizing the dynamic nature of the South Saskatchewan River, include within the Meewasin Valley, land which was part of the river valley system in the past and which will be part of it in the future.

5. OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST

5.1. Adjacent Land

5.1.1. Objective

To create an appropriate interface and transition between the river valley system, natural and cultural heritage resources and public parks and the balance of the City of Saskatoon and the R.M. of Corman Park.

5.1.2. Policy Statements

- a) Work with the Participating Parties, private land owners and the R.M. of Corman Park to formalize an agreement on land adjacent to the Meewasin Valley so as to help ensure roadways and other linear infrastructure, including traffic and pedestrian circulation are effectively, responsively and sympathetically integrated with the Meewasin Valley.
- b) Work with the Participating Parties, private land owners and the R.M. of Corman Park to formalize an agreement on land adjacent to the Meewasin Valley to help ensure land uses are compatible with the Meewasin Valley.

5.2. Connectivity

5.2.1. Objective

To provide connectivity between lands identified in sections 1 through 4.

5.2.2. Policy Statements

- a) Land that provides linkages between lands meeting the Meewasin's mandate should be part of the Meewasin Valley, regardless of whether or not they intrinsically meet the mandate.
- b) Land which facilitates improved pedestrian, cyclist or wildlife access to and/or along the river valley system should be part of the Meewasin Valley.