



SOUTH NATION
CONSERVATION
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Annual Report on Review Timelines

March 2023



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Executive Summary

The annual report on timelines and service standards for Section 28 permits (under the *Conservation Authorities Act*) is provided to SNC's Board of Directors, posted on SNC's website, and submitted to Conservation Ontario.

1.0 Introduction

In April 2019, Conservation Ontario (CO) Council endorsed the CO Client Service and Streamlining Initiative. This initiative identifies actions to be taken by CAs to help the province achieve its objective of increasing housing supply while protecting public health and safety, and the environment.

These actions include:

- a) Improve Client Service and Accountability;
- b) Increase Speed of Approvals; and
- c) Reduce Red Tape and Regulatory Burden.

This initiative includes annual reporting on timelines and service standards for permits issued under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*. The reports are provided to SNC's Board of Directors, posted on SNC's website, and submitted to Conservation Ontario.

The 2022 Annual Report identifies the number of Section 28 applications, categorized as major and minor, which were completed within the timelines established by the Province of Ontario and the enhanced timelines established by Conservation Ontario (CO).

This 2022 Final Report provides an annual summary on review timelines and was provided to CO in February 2023.

1.1 Organization Background

South Nation Conservation

South Nation Conservation (SNC) has a strong history in watershed management, natural hazard regulation, and sustainable development. As an agency established under the *Conservation Authorities Act of Ontario* in 1947, SNC has decades of practical experience in protecting our environment and engaging communities.

Permission Under the Conservation Authorities Act

The CA issues permissions (permits) under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*. Section 28 allows the CA to regulate development and activities in or adjacent to river or stream valleys, shorelines of the St. Lawrence River system and inland lakes, watercourses, hazardous lands (e.g., unstable soil, bedrock, and slopes), wetlands and other areas around wetlands.

Development taking place on these lands may require permission from the CA to confirm that the control of flooding, erosion, pollution, or the conservation of land are not affected.

The CA also regulates the straightening, changing, diverting, or interfering in any way with the existing channel of a river, creek, stream, and watercourse or for changing or interfering in any way with a wetland.

2.0 Timeline Reporting

2.1 Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR Service Standard

MNR Reporting Standards, Policies and Procedures for Conservation Authority Plan Review and Permitting Activities (2010 Service Standards are 30 (calendar days for minor applications and 90 days for major applications from the date the application is deemed complete.

Major applications are defined as highly complex, requiring full technical review, and need to be supported by comprehensive analysis or those that do not conform to existing CA Board approved Section 28 policies.

Within MNR Timeline		Outside MNR Timeline	
Major	Minor	Major	Minor
5	178	0	39

2.2 Conservation Ontario (CO) Service Standard

The CO timelines are based on the new *Client Service Standards for Conservation Authority Plan and Permit Review Standard*.

CO service standards are 21 days for minor applications, 28 days for major applications, and 14 days for routine applications. Additional time is provided for resubmissions.

Within CO Timeline			Outside CO Timeline		
Major	Minor	Routine	Major	Minor	Routine
4	112	42	1	47	16

3.0 Discussion

SNC continues to see higher application volumes, partially due to a jurisdiction expansion along the Ottawa River in 2020 and additional wetland regulations passed in 2022. Staffing resource challenges and increased complaints and occurrences also contributed to some delay for files between April-September 2022.

SNC is exploring database improvements to include the ability to pause files to improve timeline reporting. Longer timelines are often due to requests from applicants and multiple technical reviews of studies, including waiting periods for applicants to provide necessary information.

SNC implemented several improvements to streamline permit reviews:

- Hired, trained, and appointed additional staff, including CA Planners, to support issuing permits.
- Updated regulations policies to clarify permit requirements.
- Updated wetland mapping to improve client service.
- Developing a Risk Based Process for permits to be implemented in 2023.
- Issued simplified Clearance Letters for development in a Plan of Subdivision where wetland impacts were previously assessed.
- Engaged stakeholders who submit a large number of permits (i.e., municipal roads staff, linear infrastructure) to streamline and pre-approve projects during quieter months.

4.0 Conclusion

Staff will continue to monitor and track timelines to support preparation of the annual report on timelines and service standards for Section 28 permits (under the *Conservation Authorities Act*).

The reports are provided to SNC's Board of Directors, posted on SNC's website, and submitted to Conservation Ontario in February of the following year.