



SOUTH NATION
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Annual Report on Review Timelines

February 2024



Acknowledgements

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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 2023 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 2023 Final Report provides an annual summary on review timelines and was provided to CO in February 2024.

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
7	153	0	31

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
6	133	23	1	21	7

3.0 Discussion

SNC continues to see strong application volumes due to the recently announced Broadband Utility Expansion Project which includes our watershed. Staffing capacity for permit management has increased; all planning staff are now completing permits for challenging files.

The engineering and technical review team faced staffing challenges in 2023 due to departures and large project deliverables. We continue to improve processes for defining complete application requirements to improve turnaround time for technical reviews.

Staff are also making slight improvements to the file management database functionality, including the ability to pause files that are in multiple rounds of technical review or have delays in receiving payment.

SNC implemented several improvements to streamline permit reviews:

- Updated floodplain, erosion, and wetland mapping to improve client service.
- Implemented a Risk Based process for permits and compliance.
- Issuing Clearance Letters (one pager with reduced fee) for development in a Subdivision where wetland impacts were previously assessed.
- Engage 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.