

What is the Official Community Plan's (OCP) policy on wood burning stoves?

A1: Wood burning stoves are an important source of energy and heat for rural residents in the CVRD, particularly in remote areas. They are also significant contributors to pollution in the Cowichan airshed, causing health and environmental impacts.¹ The OCP recognizes this tension and includes two policies that encourage the transition away, where appropriate, from wood stoves as a means of reducing pollution and protecting the natural environment (the top priority we heard in [engagement results](#)).

This means, new construction is encouraged to use other heating and energy sources, if possible, and older, less efficient stoves should be replaced with cleaner models. In fact, the CVRD [provides rebates for replacing or removing old wood-burning appliances](#). You can also view an Air Quality map of the Cowichan airshed [here](#). There is no ban on wood stoves being proposed.

The first policy can be found in the OCP's [Schedule A](#), in the climate policy chapter:



CC.5 Where appropriate, transition away from woodstoves, which emit a number of pollutants including fine particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, carbon monoxide and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

The second is located in the Natural Assets policy chapter and is a carry over from the current OCP:



NA.28 Support the Cowichan Airshed Roundtable and associated work plan by:

- reducing the number of high-polluting wood burning fireplaces and old woodstoves, where appropriate, and encouraging low-polluting heating sources
- discouraging vehicle idling
- supporting car-sharing programs and low-emissions vehicles
- reducing open outdoor burning on lands, including forest and agricultural lands, within the plan area by supporting or developing a mulching and composting system
- supporting the elimination of pollution resulting from commercial shipping anchorages in Cowichan Bay and Saltair

¹ Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. (2024, December 13), *Smoke and Burning - Province of British Columbia*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-pollution/smoke-burning>

What is the OCP's policy on tree cutting?

A2: At engagement activities, we heard that protecting the natural environment was residents' most important priority. You can review the full engagement summary [here](#). A key action related to this is maintaining and enhancing the CVRD's tree canopy. Trees are also essential to protecting steep slopes from landslides and protecting floodplains and riverbanks against erosion. Currently, the only protection against tree cutting on private property are Development Permit Areas which require a permit prior to cutting or removal of vegetation in riparian areas or sensitive ecosystems.

The province permits regional districts to pass tree cutting bylaws in areas vulnerable to flooding, erosion, land slips, or avalanches ([Part 14, Division 10, Section 500 of the Local Government Act](#)).

The OCP includes one policy in the Natural Assets policy chapter related to tree cutting:



NA.18 Seek authority from the Province to establish a municipal-type tree cutting bylaw for protection of trees on private property.

This means the CVRD would like to explore the creation of a tree cutting bylaw to protect trees on private property, only where there is a public risk related to natural hazards. The bylaw could only be developed alongside technical studies proving the hazard and then enacted through a bylaw adoption process which would include its own public hearing.