

BC Ombudsperson Releases Report on Riparian Area Regulation (RAR)

ASTTBC was one of the professional regulatory bodies contacted last year by the Ombudsperson's Office as they conducted a review of the RAR. The final report has been issued: ['Striking a Balance: The Challenges of Using a Professional Reliance Model in Environmental Protection - British Columbia's Riparian Areas Regulation'](#).

The Executive Summary described the investigation,

"This investigation was initiated to examine how the provincial government has administered the Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR) since it was enacted in 2005. This report illustrates how a gap between commitment and action can lead to administrative unfairness."

The Report goes on to define Riparian Areas, *"Riparian areas include the trees and other vegetation that line the banks of streams. These areas are essential to maintaining the health of streams, and, in turn, the fish that live in them, such as salmon. The RAR, enacted under the Fish Protection Act, ensures that in the 15 regional districts where it applies, riparian areas are considered and protected in the development process."*

"The final Report seems balanced in terms of the roles of the professionals and the regulating professional associations," said ASTTBC CEO John Leech upon reviewing the Report. "AScTs are recognized as 'Qualified Environmental Professionals' (QEP) for the purposes of the RAR, a recognition that is in keeping with the competencies of some ASTTBC members and consistent with the thrust of the Government's Professional Reliance initiative."

The Report makes a number of recommendations regarding the oversight of the professionals as well as the current process for recognizing QEPs. ASTTBC encourages members to review the Report and stay tuned for possible changes to the manner in which QEPs are registered and recognized to carry out work within their competencies.

The Report also recommends that the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations review and amend some of its processes to assure greater oversight of the application of the Regulation and the professionals carrying out work under the RAR.