

Best Management Practices – Culvert Replacements in Municipal Drains

This document describes the conditions on which one may proceed with a culvert replacement in a municipal drain without DFO approval/notification. All municipal, provincial, or federal legislation that applies to the work being proposed must be respected. If the conditions/requirements below cannot be met, please complete the drain notification form and submit it to the Fisheries Protection Program form review at: FisheriesProtection@dfo-mpo.gc.ca.

Potential Impacts to Fish Habitat

- Infilling fish habitat by encroachment of the water crossing footprint or channel realignment to accommodate culvert
- Harmful substrate alteration of fish habitat (e.g. blockage of groundwater upwellings, critical SAR habitat, spawning areas)
- Removal of riparian vegetation and cover along the banks of the municipal drain
- Removal of edge habitat (e.g. undercut bank, shallower areas with lower velocity, aquatic vegetation) creation of barriers to fish movement (e.g. perched crossings, velocity barriers, alteration of the natural stream gradient)
- Alteration of channel flow velocity and/or depth (e.g. oversized culvert resulting in insufficient depth for fish passage at low flow or undersized culvert resulting in a flow velocity barrier at high flow)
- Alteration of channel morphology and sediment transport processes caused by the physical structure of the crossing resulting in upstream and downstream sediment aggradation/erosion
- Re-entry of sediment that was removed/stockpiled into the watercourse
- Erosion downstream from sudden release of water due to the failure of site isolation
- Stranding of fish in isolated ponds following de-watering of the site
- Impingement or entrainment of fish when de-watering pumps are used
- Short term or chronic transport of deleterious substances, including sediment, into fish habitat from construction or road drainage

Requirements

The following requirements must be met:

- There are no aquatic Species at Risk present in the work zone or impact zone. To confirm there are no aquatic Species at Risk present, refer to the document, [A Guide for Interpreting Fish and Mussel Species at Risk Maps in Ontario](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/356763.pdf) which can be found at: <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/356763.pdf>. Links for Ontario Conservation Area specific fish and mussel maps that include critical habitat extents and a list of aquatic Species at Risk found within the conversation authority boundary can be found on Page 5 of [A Guide for Interpreting Fish and Mussel Species at Risk Maps in Ontario](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/356763.pdf).
- The culvert is embedded into the streambed and must allow for the free passage of fish.
- The work involves like-for-like replacements of existing road or private access culverts on all drain types without SAR.
- On C and F Drains only, this can also include replacements with extensions and end walls for the purposes of providing the property or road with safe access, but the project permanent footprint will not increase more than 250 m² below the high water mark.
- The project does not involve replacing a bridge or arch with one or more culverts installed in parallel or a larger-diameter culvert with more than one culvert installed in parallel.

- The project does not involve building more than one culvert installed in parallel on a single watercourse crossing site (e.g. twin culvert).
- The project does not involve temporarily narrowing the watercourse to an extent or for a duration that is likely to cause erosion, structural instability or fish passage problems.
- The municipal drain has no flow/low flow or is frozen to the bottom at the time of the replacement.
- In-water work is scheduled to respect timing windows (Tables 1 and 2) to protect fish, including their eggs, juveniles, spawning adults, and/or the organisms upon which they feed.
- The work can be conducted using the Culvert Removal Method described below and Standard Measures to Avoid Causing *Serious Harm to Fish* will be implemented when required.

Note: If your project must be conducted without delay in response to an emergency (e.g. the project is required to address an emergency that poses a risk to public health or safety or to the environment or property), you may apply for an Emergency Authorization (<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/asp/forceDownload.asp?FilePath=/pnw-ppe/reviews-revues/Emergency-Authorizations-Autorisations-Urgences-eng.pdf>).

Culvert Removal Methodology

- Plan/manage the work site in a manner that prevents sediment from entering the municipal drain by installing sediment and erosion control materials where required. Ensure that a sediment and erosion control plan is developed and modified as necessary for the site.
- Where required, install effective erosion and sediment control measures before starting work to prevent sediment from entering the municipal drain.
- Implement site isolation measures when in-water work is required.
 - Install an impervious barrier upstream of the work area (Figure 1). If possible, install a secondary barrier upstream of the work area for added protection.
 - Attempt to drive out the fish from the work area and then install the impervious barrier downstream of the work area. This may reduce or eliminate the need for a fish salvage.
 - When the drain is flowing, maintain downstream flows (e.g. bypass water around the work site using pumps or flume pipes; Figure 2). Provide temporary energy dissipation measures (e.g. rip-rap) at discharge point of the hose or temporary outlet pipe when required. Routinely inspect bypass pump and hose or pipe to ensure proper operation. Inspect discharge point for erosion and reposition hose/pipe or install additional temporary energy dissipation material as needed.
 - Dewater the isolated work area. The hose for a pump may discharge along the top of the bank into existing vegetation; however, the area should be monitored for signs of erosion. Reposition the hose or install additional temporary energy dissipation material as needed.
 - A fish screen with openings no larger than 2.54 mm (0.10 inches) should be equipped on any pump used during the operation. Note: Additional information regarding fish screens can be found in the DFO Freshwater Intake End-of-Pipe Fish Screen Guideline document (<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/Library/223669.pdf>).
 - Collect any fish present in the isolated work area and relocate them downstream.
 - Fish salvage operations must be conducted under a license issued by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF). The MNRF should be contacted well in advance of any work to obtain the required fish collection license.
- Install the culvert so that it is embedded into the streambed; ensure the culvert remains passable (e.g. does not become perched) by fish and wildlife.

- Decommission the site isolation in a manner that minimizes the introduction of sediment. The downstream isolation barrier shall gradually be removed first, to equalize water levels inside and outside of the isolated area and to allow suspended sediments to settle.
- Stabilize and remove waste from the site.
- Where required, maintain effective erosion and sediment control measures until complete re-vegetation of disturbed areas is achieved.



Figure 2. Isolation of Site

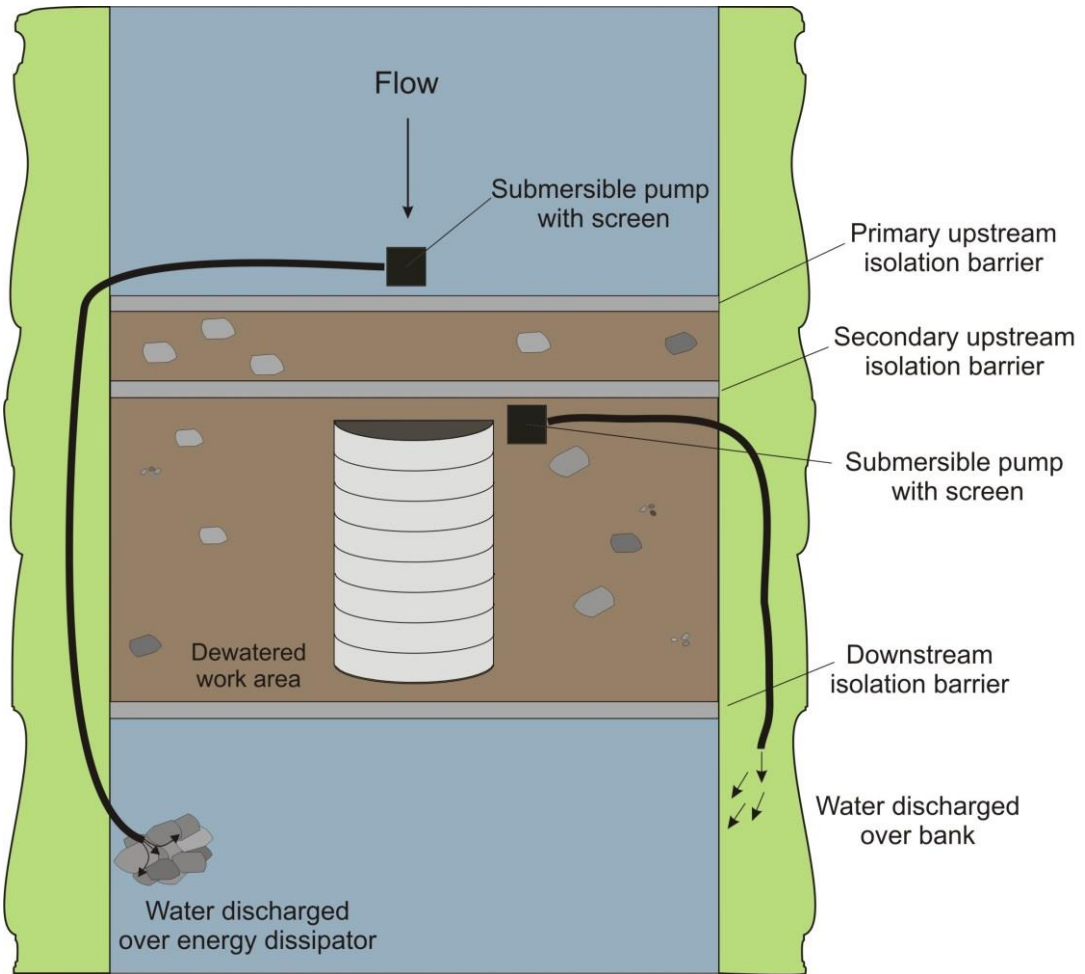


Figure 3. Isolation and Bypass Diversion when Working In-Water

Timing Windows

Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2 can be used to determine the Restricted Activity period for the drain based on its classification. Note: Timing windows identified on [Conservation Authority](#) permits or [Ministry of Natural Resources](#) (Government of Ontario) work permits may differ and take precedence.



Figure 1. Ontario's Northern and Southern Region boundaries for determining application of restricted activity timing windows.

Table 1. Restricted Activity timing windows for the protection of spawning fish and developing eggs and fry in the Northern Region. Dates represent when work should be avoided.

DRAIN TYPE	RESTRICTED ACTIVITY PERIOD
A	SEPTEMBER 1 TO JULY 15
B	SEPTEMBER 1 TO JULY 15
C	APRIL 1 TO JULY 15
D	SEPTEMBER 1 TO JULY 15
E	APRIL 1 TO JULY 15

Table 2. Restricted Activity timing windows for the protection of spawning fish and developing eggs and fry in the Southern Region. Dates represent when work should be avoided.

DRAIN TYPE	RESTRICTED ACTIVITY PERIOD
A	SEPTEMBER 15 TO JULY 15
B	MARCH 15 TO JULY 15
C	MARCH 15 TO JULY 15
D	OCTOBER 1 TO JULY 15
E	MARCH 15 TO JULY 15

Standard Measures to Avoid Causing *Serious Harm to Fish*

When implementing a culvert removal project in a municipal drain, the *Fisheries Act* still requires an individual/company to ensure they avoid causing *serious harm to fish* during any activities in or near water. The following advice will help one avoid causing harm and comply with the *Act* (for additional information see <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pnw-ppe/measures-mesures/measures-mesures-eng.html>).

1. Schedule work to avoid wet, windy and rainy periods that may increase erosion and sedimentation.
2. Whenever possible, operate machinery on land above the high water mark or on ice and in a manner that minimizes disturbance to the banks and bed of the municipal drain.
 - Ensure that machinery arrives on site in a clean condition and is maintained free of fluid leaks.
 - Limit machinery fording of the municipal drain to a one-time event (i.e., over and back), and only if no alternative crossing method is available. If repeated crossings of the municipal drain are required, construct a temporary crossing structure.
 - Wash, refuel and service machinery and store fuel and other materials for the machinery in such a way as to prevent any deleterious substances from entering the water.
 - Keep an emergency spill kit on site in case of fluid leaks or spills from machinery.
3. Install effective sediment and erosion control measures before starting work to prevent sediment from entering the municipal drain. Inspect them regularly during the course of construction and make all necessary repairs if any damage occurs.
4. Erosion and sediment control measures should be maintained until all disturbed ground has been permanently stabilized, suspended sediment has resettled to the bed of the municipal drain and runoff water is clear.
5. Undertake all in-water activities in isolation of open or flowing water while maintaining the natural flow of water downstream and avoid introducing sediment into the municipal drain.
6. Ensure applicable permits for relocating fish are obtained and relocate any fish that become trapped in isolated pools or stranded in newly flooded areas to the main channel of the watercourse.
7. Ensure that the water that is being pumped/diverted from the site is filtered (sediment remove) prior to being released (e.g. pumping/diversion of water to a vegetated area).
8. Implement measures for containing and stabilizing waste material (e.g. dredging spoils, construction waste and materials, commercial logging waste, uprooted or cut aquatic plants, accumulated debris) above the high water mark of nearby waterbodies to prevent re-entry.
9. Stabilize shoreline or banks disturbed by any activity associated with the project to prevent erosion and/or sedimentation, preferably through re-vegetation with native species suitable for the site.
10. If replacement rock reinforcement/armouring is required to stabilize eroding or exposed areas, then ensure that appropriately-sized, clean rock is used; and that rock is installed at a similar slope to maintain a uniform bank/shoreline and natural stream/shoreline alignment.
11. Remove all construction materials from site upon project completion.