MUNICIPALITY
OF PICTOU COUNTY

MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY

Municipality of Pictou County Municipal Planning Strategy

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List of Amendments

Reference Number	General Description of Amendments	Date of First Reading	Date of Second Reading	Effective Date
2025-01	Updated preamble for agriculture and added policies to create the Agriculture Potential (A1) Zone, limit subdivision on agricultural lands, and establish a decision-making framework to guide future amendments to agricultural mapping.	2026.06.01	2026.07.06	2026.10.26

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Introduction and Context

1.1 Introduction

How land is used, how and where growth and development happen, and how and where buildings are built are fundamental components of land use planning. Such planning influences how people interact with the environment, lays out the types of housing that can be developed and built, and guides how investments in infrastructure are made. It also helps communities prepare for changes to the economy, demographics, and the environment. It can help protect and promote key components of a municipality's culture and character, protect naturally sensitive and significant environments, and prevent development in areas that are potentially hazardous.

This Municipal Planning Strategy and the accompanying Land Use Bylaw establish for the first time comprehensive land use planning in the Municipality of Pictou County. Prior to the adoption of these documents the Municipality only had planning policies and regulations for wind turbines.

Until 2018, land use planning in Nova Scotia was not a requirement and municipalities were able to choose to implement planning or not. In some cases, municipalities would apply land use planning tools to specific areas but not to the entirety of a jurisdiction. Changes made to the *Municipal Government Act* in 2018 made it mandatory for municipalities to implement comprehensive land use planning across all their land area.

As a community with limited history in land use planning, the Municipality was in a unique position to form land use policy and regulations with a clean slate. The community was able to set a vision that, while informed by community history, is not bound to past sets of regulations. This document—the Municipal Planning Strategy—establishes the long-term vision and policies for growth and development in the Municipality of Pictou County. The vision and policies contained within this Municipal Planning Strategy are based on the community and stakeholder engagement conducted as part of this process and respond to contemporary issues and challenges, ideas, and perspectives identified in the Municipality of Pictou County.

1.2 Municipality of Pictou County Context

1.2.1 Geographic Context

The Municipality of Pictou County is located on the northern shore of mainland Nova Scotia, along the Northumberland Strait. The municipality encompasses an area of approximately 2,795 square kilometres. The area is bounded on the east by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, the Municipality of Colchester on the west, and on the south by the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.

Surrounded by the Municipality of Pictou County are the Towns of Pictou, New Glasgow, Trenton, Westville, and Stellarton, as well as five Reserves under the jurisdiction of the Pictou Landing First Nation. Together with the Municipality, these communities make up Pictou County. For clarity, when this Municipal Planning Strategy refers to "Pictou County" (without "the Municipality of") it is referring to the whole of Pictou County, including the Towns and Pictou Landing First Nation.

1.2.2 A Brief History of Pictou County

Indigenous History

The Mi'kmaq have a long and rich history in the region that is now known as Pictou County. They have lived in the region for thousands of years, and relied on fishing, hunting, and gathering for sustenance. The Mi'kmaq have a deep connection to the land, rivers, and coastlines of the region, and their communities were historically dispersed throughout the county.

Puksaqte'kne'katik (Pictou Landing) was historically a significant Mi'kmaw settlement. Pictou Landing is located on the shores of Pictou Harbour, and it remains an important community for the Mi'kmaq to this day. The Mi'kmaq have a presence in the Merigomish area, which includes Merigomish Harbour and the surrounding lands. The Mi'kmaw name for Merigomish is Maliko'mijk meaning "diversified by many coves". The West River area, including West River Station, was also home to Mi'kmaw communities. West River, known as "Waqmitkuk" in Mi'kmaw, flows through the region and provided important resources for the Mi'kmaw people. The Mi'kmaq had a presence in the River John area, which is situated along the Northumberland Strait.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, European explorers such as French fishermen and, later, British traders began making contact with the Mi'kmaq in the area. The Mi'kmaq engaged in trade relationships with the Europeans, exchanging furs, such as beaver and other pelts, for European goods like metal tools and weapons. European settlement expanded in Pictou County in the 18th century and the arrival of the settlers had a significant impact on the Mi'kmaw communities. The encroachment of settlers on traditional Mi'kmaw lands and the introduction of European systems of governance, land ownership, and economy

disrupted Mi'kmaw societies. The loss of land, violent conflict, cultural changes, and the spread of diseases had a profound impact on the Mi'kmaw way of life.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, treaties were negotiated between the Mi'kmaq and the British Crown. These treaties, such as the Peace and Friendship Treaties, recognized the rights of the Mi'kmaq to their traditional lands and resources. As a result, in 1867, the Pictou Landing First Nation was established with the designation of a reserve, known as Fisher's Grant 24, for the Mi'kmaw community.

The history of the Mi'kmaq and Europeans in Pictou County is complex and multifaceted. It involves both cooperative interactions and conflicts, with significant impacts on the Mi'kmaw communities. Today, the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County and across Nova Scotia actively work to preserve and revitalize their language, art, storytelling, ceremonies, and traditional practices. They play an essential role in the cultural fabric of the region. The history of the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County is an integral part of the county's heritage, and their contributions to the region continue to be acknowledged and celebrated today.

Black Nova Scotians

The history of Black Nova Scotians in Pictou County dates back at least as far as the 1770s, with documented evidence of slaves brought up from New England.

A major piece of the history of Black Nova Scotians in Pictou County is intertwined with the larger context of the Black Loyalist experience in Nova Scotia. During the American War of Independence (1776-1784), thousands of enslaved and free Black individuals in the Thirteen Colonies faced the difficult decision of choosing sides. The British Crown promised freedom to enslaved individuals who joined their cause, leading many to join the British forces. These individuals became known as Black Loyalists. After the war, in 1783, the British transported thousands of Black Loyalists to various British colonies, including Pictou County.

Upon arrival, the Black Loyalists faced numerous challenges, including limited access to land, limited employment opportunities, and racial discrimination. In Pictou County, some of the Loyalists settled in communities such as Pictou Landing and settlements along the East River. They established their own farms and engaged in various trades. However, the lack of resources and opportunities often made it difficult for them to prosper economically and, over time, many migrated to other areas in the province or to Sierra Leone.

As Pictou County industrialized, the Black community once again began to grow, with many finding work in the coal and steel industry, manufacturing, forestry, and fishing. However, the community continued to face discrimination and members were often prevented from finding housing near to their places of work. In 1946, Viola Desmond challenged racial segregation by sitting in the whites-only area of a theatre in New Glasgow, and helped start the modern civil rights movement in Canada.

European Settlement

The history of Scottish settlers in Pictou County is significant and forms an essential part of the region's identity. The arrival of Scottish settlers in Pictou County dates back to the late 18th century. In 1773, the Ship Hector landed in Pictou Harbour, marking the beginning of a large-scale Scottish migration to the region with 189 Scottish settlers on board. The settlers were seeking opportunities for land ownership and agricultural pursuit. They cleared land, cultivated crops and raised livestock to sustain their families and communities. The fertile soils of the region supported the growth of crops such as wheat, oats, barley, and potatoes.

European settlers in Pictou County primarily settled in several key areas within the region. The town of Pictou, situated on Pictou Harbour, was one of the earliest and most significant settlement areas in the county. Located west of Pictou, the West River area was another important settlement area for Scottish immigrants. It became a hub for agriculture and farming, with settlers cultivating the fertile land along the river. Situated on the northern coast of Pictou County, Merigomish was settled by Scottish immigrants who sought farming and fishing opportunities. Abercrombie, situated on the eastern side of Pictou Harbour, was home to a thriving shipbuilding industry in the 19th century. European settlers, particularly Scottish and English, settled in Abercrombie and contributed to the growth of the shipbuilding trade. Additionally, the Towns of Stellarton, New Glasgow, and Trenton all attracted Scottish and other European settlers who sought employment in the booming coal industry.

The European settlers, primarily of Scottish descent, established vibrant communities with their own distinct cultural identity. They built churches, schools, and other community institutions, fostering a sense of community and identity. The Scottish influence can still be seen in various aspects of Pictou County's culture, including music, language, and traditions. The Town of Pictou is recognized as the "Birthplace of New Scotland" due to its early Scottish settlement.

1.2.3 Economy & Industry

The region's economic history is closely tied to its rich natural resources and geographic context as a coastal community. The interplay between inland resources, coastal resources, and transportation has helped to define the community's economic context. Over the years, Pictou County has been home to various industries that have shaped its economy and played a significant role in its development. In the 19th century, Pictou County experienced significant industrialization and resource extraction. The discovery of extensive coal deposits in the area led to the development of coal mines and coal mining communities. The coal industry became a major economic driver in the region, attracting workers and contributing to the growth of towns such as New Glasgow and Stellarton.

The abundant timber resources in Pictou County, combined with its proximity to the coast, made shipbuilding a significant industry. Shipyards were established along the coastline, and Pictou County became known for its skilled shipbuilders. Shipbuilding thrived in the 19th century, with numerous vessels, including wooden schooners and steamships, constructed in the county. As with many other Nova Scotian communities with prominent shipbuilding sectors, when the era of wooden shipbuilding came to an end the industry declined.

Pictou County has a long history of fishing and seafood processing. Fishing communities along the coast engaged in commercial fishing, particularly for cod, haddock, lobster, and other fish species. Fish processing plants were established to preserve and process the catch for domestic and international markets. While the fishing industry faced challenges such as declining fish stocks, it remains an important sector in the county.

The history of industry in Pictou County reflects the utilization of its natural resources, the skills of its workforce, and the challenges faced by traditional industries. The county continues to adapt and evolve, seeking new opportunities for economic growth and sustainable development. In recent years, Pictou County has seen the growth of various manufacturing industries including textile mills, furniture manufacturing, steel fabrication, and food processing. Additionally, there has been a focus on diversifying the economy and encouraging innovation. This includes supporting growth of sectors such as renewable energy, clean technologies, healthcare, and education.

1.2.4 Population Trends

The Municipality of Pictou County has been subject to shifting demographics over the years. The recent past—the last 25 years—are largely characterised by a declining overall population and a shift towards smaller households. This trend is consistent with both nearby communities and the province as a whole outside of major urban centres. However, the very recent past has seen a slowing in the rate at which the population is decreasing. The cumulative decline in population between 1996 and 2021 was roughly 9% for the Municipality of Pictou County, while over the most recent available census period, 2016 to 2021, the rate of decline was only 0.08%.

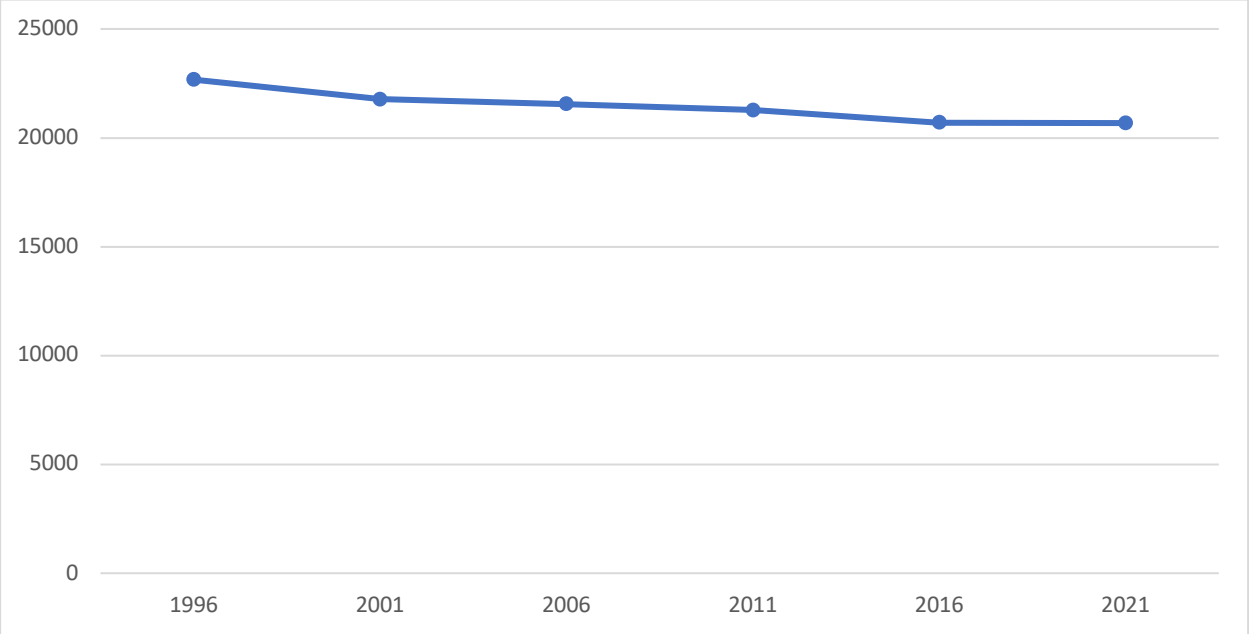

Figure 1. Municipality of Pictou County Population – 1996 to 2021 Statistics Canada Census

It is important to note that the 2021 Census does not fully capture the impact of relocations to the province in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Anecdotal evidence and interim population counts suggest there has been a substantial influx of new residents to Nova Scotia, including the Municipality of Pictou County. Whether this trend remains for the long term remains to be seen. It is also important to acknowledge that census data is based on place of primary residence, and does not count seasonal residents, temporary workers, or post-secondary students who are from elsewhere. As an area that has been historically attractive for recreational and seasonal residences the municipality will have needs in terms of housing, commercial services, and more that are not perfectly reflected in census population data alone.

1.2.5 Governance in The Municipality of Pictou County

Municipal Responsibilities

All municipal units in Nova Scotia are given powers and responsibilities through provincial legislation in the form of the *Municipal Government Act*, apart from Halifax Regional Municipality, which is empowered by the *Halifax Charter*. The *Municipal Government Act* or "Act", details what municipalities can and must do to fulfill their roles. The aspects of development and land use that municipalities can and must regulate, along with minimum standards for planning, are determined by the Act and by regulations made under the Act.

The Municipality of the County of Pictou, through Council, provides numerous important services to the residents and businesses. These include critical infrastructure items like roads, sewer, and water; fire protection services; recreation; building inspection; and bylaw enforcement and land use planning services.

Municipal Council and Committees

Municipal Council is the elected body that undertakes the duties and responsibilities given to the Municipality, including setting annual budgets and making decisions on land use planning matters. Council consists of 12 elected representatives, holding four-year terms. The Council utilizes a Warden system, not a mayoral system. The Warden and Deputy Warden are selected by a vote of Council from among its members.

Several standing committees support Municipal Council in its decision making, including the Climate Change Advisory Committee, Police Advisory Committee, and the Planning Advisory Committee. The Planning Advisory Committee is responsible for advising Council on planning matters generally, including the preparation or amendment of planning documents.

1.3 Statements of Provincial Interest

The Province of Nova Scotia has established five Statements of Provincial Interest, which are intended to support sustainable development across the province. While land use planning is an activity that is largely undertaken by municipalities, the Province, through legislation, can help to ensure municipalities operate under the same planning framework and to protect interests and values held across the province. The Statements of Provincial Interest are one way of doing so and deal with five topics that are relevant to the Municipality of Pictou County:

- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Drinking Water
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Flood Risk Areas
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Infrastructure
- Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing

Each Statement of Provincial Interest includes a set of provisions that must be identified in land use planning documents. This Municipal Planning Strategy, and accompanying Land Use Bylaw, address the Statements of Provincial Interest as outlined below.

1.3.1 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Drinking Water

GOAL: To protect the quality of drinking water within municipal water supply watersheds.

The Municipality does not directly manage any of its public drinking water supplies, instead gaining its water from various sources managed by the Towns of New Glasgow, Trenton, and Stellarton. However, the watersheds and recharge areas for these sources, as well as for the Town of Pictou and for Antigonish County, are partially or wholly within the land area of the Municipality. Therefore, decisions about land use made by the Municipality have the potential to impact the quality of drinking water for residents of the Municipality, the Towns, and Antigonish County. This Plan identifies the source water areas on Schedule 'B' and includes a prohibition on high-risk uses in these areas. The Land Use Bylaw also implements stricter zoning on public wellfields and on the primary watershed of Forbes Lake, which is the source water for the Town of New Glasgow. This Plan implements a development buffer from all watercourses and increases this buffer around Forbes Lake. Finally, this Plan includes policy for working with the other municipalities to ensure proposals zoning map amendments or development agreements are carefully reviewed for any potential risk to public drinking water supplies.

Applicable policies: 3-9, 3-10, 3-11, 3-12, 3-37

1.3.2 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Flood Risk Areas

GOAL: To protect public safety and property and to reduce the requirement for flood control works and flood damage restoration in floodplains.

Pictou County is home to East River, one of the five rivers mapped under the Canada-Nova Scotia Flood Reduction Program. This Statement of Provincial Interest has specific requirements for these mapped rivers, which are included in this Plan. This includes prohibiting deposition of soil and most development in the floodway (1:20 storm), and prohibiting vulnerable institutional developments in the floodway fringe (1:100 storm).

The Province of Nova Scotia has also undertaken to complete flood mapping for other waterbodies across the province. To-date, River John has been completed and is recognized as such in this Plan. Because the remainder mapping was not complete at the initial writing of this Plan, it includes a policy recognizing this work and the need for future efforts to include planning provisions related to this flood mapping.

Applicable policies: 3-2, 3-3, 3-40, 3-41, 3-42, 3-43

1.3.3 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land

GOAL: To protect agricultural land for the development of a viable and sustainable agriculture and food industry.

Pictou County has extensive agricultural soils and a long history of agricultural activity. These planning documents help to promote continued agricultural activity and protect agricultural soils by:

- **Establishing an "Agriculture Potential" Zone to prioritize agricultural activities in areas of good agricultural land.**
- **Limiting subdivision activity on Class 2 soils and actively farmed lands.**
- Permitting agriculture-related uses and agritourism on the majority of the land area in the municipality.
- Providing for animal agriculture in most areas of the municipality, at a scale tailored to the context.
- Identifying good agricultural soils.
- Prohibiting the removal of topsoil in areas of good agricultural soils.

Applicable policies: 3-2, 3-27A, 3-27B, 3-28, 3-29, 3-29A, 3-29B

[amendment 2025-01]

1.3.4 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Infrastructure

GOAL: To make efficient use of municipal water supply and municipal wastewater.

The Municipality has multiple water and wastewater systems. These planning documents recognize the investment the Municipality has made into these systems, and promotes efficient use of the systems by:

- Enabling and encouraging higher densities of development in areas that are serviced.
- Establishing clear guidance for the conditions under which servicing extensions should be considered.

Applicable policies: 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 3-7, 3-8, 3-27

1.3.5 Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing

GOAL: To provide housing opportunities to meet the needs of all Nova Scotians.

These planning documents enable and accommodate flexibility and diversity in housing options. More specifically, these documents:

- Include a wide range of zones that permit residential uses, with the number of dwelling units permitted on a lot tailored to the intent of the zone. Most zones that permit residential uses allow at least four dwelling units per lot, with the one exception being the Shoreline Zone, which permits two units per lot.
- Enable higher densities and unit counts in serviced communities.
- Treat small options homes and residential care facilities in the same manner as other dwellings of a similar size.
- Include manufactured housing, modular homes, and mini homes within the definition of a “dwelling”.

Applicable policies: 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-6

1.4 How to Use this Municipal Planning Strategy

This Municipal Planning Strategy ("Plan") establishes a set of policies that will guide and direct growth in the Municipality of Pictou County over a ten-year planning period. These policies are accompanied by and implemented through the Land Use Bylaw, a document that contains standards and regulations for development.

1.4.1 Document Organization

This Municipal Planning Strategy is divided into five chapters:

1. The Introduction and Context chapter provides contextual information about the Municipality of Pictou County, how it is governed, and establishes the purpose, role and scope of the Municipal Planning Strategy.

2. Plan Process outlines how this Municipal Planning Strategy was developed, including summary documentation of the public engagement undertaken to inform its development.

3. Chapter 3, comprising the bulk of this Municipal Planning Strategy, sets out the context and policies for shaping the development of the community the Municipality of Pictou County. This includes establishing land use designations and zones, and policies for topic-specific issues such as signage, renewable energy, and industrial development.

4. Plan Implementation provides the framework for the Municipality to implement this Municipal Planning Strategy. The plan must be feasible from a land use, administrative and legal perspective. This section also includes the framework for monitoring and reviewing the Municipal Planning Strategy.

5. Chapter 5 includes any of the schedules necessary to implement this Municipal Planning Strategy, including the Future Land Use Map, which broadly guides how land is intended to be used over the life of this Plan.

1.4.2 Interpretation

In this Plan, where:

- "may" is used in policies, the Municipality may, but is not obliged to undertake future action; and

- "shall" is used in policies related to land use, the policy is mandatory and will typically be implemented through the Land Use Bylaw or Subdivision By-law.

Diagrams, sketches or photos in this Plan are provided for illustrative purposes only. Schedules form part of this Plan.

2 Plan Process

2.1 Plan Inception and Plan Development

The creation of the Municipality of the County of Pictou's Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw, a project called "Imagine MOPC", was initiated by the Municipality in January of 2023. Imagine MOPC resulted in an interactive engagement process with ample public consultation, background research, and policy and regulatory development. Background research involved conducting demographic, socio-economic, and spatial analysis to understand how the municipality has changed and what the current state of land use was. The project was led by the Municipality's Planning Advisory Committee, Director of Public Works and Development, and Chief Administrative Officer. Imagine MOPC originated from legislative changes by the Province of Nova Scotia that required all land in the province to be the subject of land use controls.

2.2 Public Engagement

2.2.1 Initial Engagement

Gathering input from municipal staff, residents, and stakeholders is critical to identify the key issues and opportunities of a community. Recognizing this, the project began with an Engagement Strategy Meeting followed by an extensive formative engagement process. The project team hosted a series of engagement activities between September and December of 2023. Participants were invited to share their perspectives and insights on land use and their vision for the future of Pictou County.

To ensure that the findings represent the diverse population of Pictou County, multiple methods of engagement were used, including:

- The project website
- Stakeholder engagement
- Municipal Council and Planning Advisory Committee engagement
- In-person community meetings in six communities
- Online community meeting
- Interactive mapping activity
- Public survey

These activities were promoted through the following channels:

- The Municipality's website and social media
- The project website
- The Municipality's newsletter, which is mailed to civic addresses throughout the municipality
- Direct emails and phone calls to identified stakeholders and those who requested project updates

The results from the initial phase of engagement were summarized into a brief "What We Heard" document. The summary included a qualitative analysis of the responses received from community members and stakeholders during the initial round of engagement.

The project team then held a policy direction workshop with Council and the Planning Advisory Committee to establish preliminary approaches for tackling the different policy issues raised during the initial engagement phase.

2.2.2 Draft Plan Engagement

Once drafts of the documents were created the project team returned to the public in the fall of 2024 to educate residents on what the documents contained and to hear feedback about what the documents did right and, perhaps more importantly, what needed to change. The draft engagements occurred via several methods, including:

- Six in-person community meetings throughout the municipality
- An online community meeting
- An online interactive zoning map
- An online feedback form
- Email and phone follow-up with interested community members

The results of this engagement were summarized in the "Engagement Summary & Policy Direction Report". The project team then met with the Planning Advisory Committee to review the draft feedback and to set a direction for the final draft documents.

2.3 Key Issues

Throughout the initial phase of engagement, community members and stakeholders shared their ideas, opinions, and insights regarding the growth and development of the municipality. While the results covered a wide range of diverse topics, there were a few key issues that arose again and again. This Municipal Planning Strategy fundamentally seeks to address these Key Issues.

2.3.1 Community Character and Cohesion

Two consistent themes that emerged through engagement were the municipality's "rural atmosphere" and "small-town atmosphere". Participants consistently emphasized the importance of preserving the region's unique character while promoting forward-thinking and appropriate development. Participants reiterated the importance of adopting a balanced approach that achieves vibrancy without compromising the rural charm and lifestyle that define their community.

Residents also stress the importance of ensuring that, as the county develops, activities associated with rural living, such as the spreading of manure or the use of off-road vehicles, remain protected and free from regulation. Participants expressed concern that new residents may harbour unrealistic expectations about rural living, potentially leading to conflict between neighbors. Consequently, there is a shared desire to see more proactive efforts directed toward addressing this challenge.

While the municipality was viewed by many as a desirable place to live, there was an indication that a more profound and thoughtful approach is required to make it an inclusive community for everyone. Participants believed that a municipality characterized by strong community cohesion is one that fosters a welcoming and progressive atmosphere while celebrating diversity.

2.3.2 Agriculture

Agriculture was raised across engagement methods as a vitally important part of the fabric of the municipality. From cattle to soybeans, dairy products to lavender, the municipality was described as a strong farming community. However, there were also concerns about a decline in the number of active farms.

Farming has a long history in the area, but there are concerns from some working in the agricultural sector about encroaching development and a lack of protection for agricultural lands. With many people migrating out of cities and into rural areas in recent years, there has been a rise in land use conflicts in some rural communities. Some of this is caused by people moving to rural communities in search of "peace and quiet" without considering some of the other aspects of rural life, such as noise and smells from agricultural or other resource-based industries. This can result in disputes between neighbours and can have negative impacts on the quality of life for everyone involved.

When asked what they would like to see in terms of protection for agricultural land, participants indicated a desire to have some level of protection in place. There was a recognition that agricultural land is not a "renewable resource" and that when it is lost it can have long lasting consequences on a community's ability to sustain itself. However, participants also suggested this need for protection also needs to be tempered with the ability of farmers to sustain themselves and their families. For many farmers, their land is their greatest asset, and some have plans to subdivide or sell lots to finance retirement or supplement income when they experience a hard year.

Farmers also suggested that they do not want regulations that impact their ability to make their own decisions about their farms and what they need - for example, if they require another barn or shed to be built, they want to be able to build that without having to undergo a long or arduous process. They noted that farming is a challenging industry, and they do not want land use planning regulations that make it even more difficult for their operations.

2.3.3 Housing

Across engagement methods it became clear that residents and stakeholders in the municipality are grappling with a multitude of concerns related to housing. It was reported that rental options are limited, and the acquisition of housing poses challenges. Issues with homeownership appear to be disproportionately affecting young people entering the housing market, as well as seniors looking to transition into housing options that accommodate their changing needs.

2.3.4 Economic Development

Across engagement methods, participants voiced a range of concerns related to economic development, highlighting mixed sentiments about the potential in the municipality. Recurring themes include a shortage of skilled trades and a desire for more diverse job opportunities, reflecting the community's aspirations for a well-rounded workforce. Additionally, there was a consensus on the importance of attracting and retaining young people to ensure the area's vitality. Striking a balance between industry and sustainable growth was emphasized, with calls for better support for small businesses echoing throughout. Notably, tourism emerged as a key aspect of economic development, with a collective desire for family-friendly attractions to enhance the region's appeal and contribute to its economic prosperity.

2.3.5 The Environment

Participants conveyed a collective desire for an environmentally friendly and sustainable community. While opinions varied on the prioritization of environmental issues in relation to overall community well-being, there was a strong advocacy for the protection of nature, particularly emphasizing beaches and sensitive environments. Coastal issues were frequently discussed during engagement sessions, with many participants expressing a desire for a proactive approach. Additionally, the importance of environmentally friendly industries, development projects, and tourism initiatives was highlighted. The prevailing sentiment was a desire for a balanced approach that effectively addresses environmental concerns while safeguarding the health and prosperity of individuals and the community as a whole.

2.3.6 Implications of New Planning Rules

The Municipality of Pictou County has historically had little in the way of land use planning. As a result, the implications of implementing planning were a key point of discussion. Although the vast majority of residents who engaged with the process could see the benefits of planning, a number of residents expressed resistance to the introduction of planning. Their concerns were primarily focused on the retention of rights on private property and the feeling that government should not be able to tell private landowners what do on their property. Some were open to the introduction of regulations that protect them from incompatible land uses in their community and were supportive of common-sense, defensible regulations, while others held fast to their belief that no rules should exist for private landowners.

3 Community Development

3.1 Community Structure and Designations

From River John to Garden of Eden, the Municipality of Pictou County has a varied landscape, with each community holding its own unique identity, scale, and character. However, from a planning perspective there are two main types of communities, which are differentiated based on one key factor: municipal sewer servicing. In areas where municipal sewers are present it is possible for higher densities of development, while areas without sewer require larger lots due to the need to accommodate on-site sewage disposal – typically in the form of septic fields. Sewer-serviced areas are also more often characterized by the presence of other municipal infrastructure, such as sidewalks and central water supplies.

As an extension to these two types of communities, there are also a special type of land in the Municipality of Pictou County: conservation lands. These lands, due to their sensitive nature, require special identification and protection. Discussion of conservation lands is explored in more detail in Sections 0.

Taken together, these three categories make up the "future land use designations" for the Municipality of Pictou County. These designations indicate the high-level intent for the development (or protection) of each piece of land in the municipality and help provide structure for where other policies of this Plan apply.

Policy 3-1: Council shall, on Schedule 'A', the Future Land Use Map, establish and apply the following land use designations:

(a) the Conservation Designation, which shall apply to beaches and lands within Wilderness Areas;

(b) the Serviced Community Designation, which shall apply to lands in areas with municipal sewer services; and

(c) the General Designation, which shall apply to all other lands.

3.2 Zones

The Land Use Bylaw includes a "Zoning Map" that further divides land in the municipality into a variety of "zones". These zones identify the types of uses that are permitted on a piece of land, as well as other standards such as lot size and road frontage, to help carry out the intent of this Municipal Planning Strategy.

Council has established the following scheme of zones to regulate land use and development in the Municipality of Pictou County, outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Zones

Zone Name	Zone Purpose
Agriculture Potential Zone (A1)	**This zone is intended to recognize and preserve agricultural lands as described in Section 3.6, as well as the general rural nature of these areas. This zone is also intended to prioritize agricultural activities. The Agriculture Potential Zone shall permit a wide range of agriculturally related uses, as well as other resource-based uses, small-scale residential development, community and intuitional uses suited to a rural context, and a very limited range of commercial uses that could complement agricultural activities. Light industrial and other similar uses shall also be permitted due the equipment, warehousing, processing, and trucking needs of the agriculture industry. However, hazardous and heavy industrial uses, as well as other land uses that could cause long-term contamination or irreversible development of agricultural land shall not be permitted.** **[amendment 2025-01]**
Commercial Recreation (P2)	This zone is intended to recognize and accommodate commercial recreation operations such as golf courses, campgrounds, drive-in theatres, and resorts. Supporting commercial and residential uses shall also be permitted.
Community Core (CC)	This zone is intended to accommodate and encourage mixed-use development in sewer-serviced communities, especially within community cores or "main street" areas. This zone shall permit a range of residential and commercial uses, except for larger commercial uses (e.g. display courts) and commercial uses that could detract from the "downtown" nature of serviced communities due to their form (e.g. self-storage facilities). A range of community and institutional uses, as well as light industry, shall also be permitted.

Zone Name	Zone Purpose
Residential Community (RC)	This zone is intended to identify and encourage sewer-serviced communities that are predominantly residential in nature and where non-residential land uses are generally discouraged in order to avoid conflicts with residential uses. Permitted uses shall be limited to dwellings, as well as supportive community and institutional uses, such as parks, places of worship, and cultural facilities.
Comprehensive Development District (CDD)	This zone is intended to enable and manage developments in a comprehensive manner on lots larger than 1.0 hectares in size. Developments permitted as-of-right within this zone shall be limited to existing dwellings and existing agriculture-related uses. All other uses shall be considered through the development agreement process, as enabled by Policy 3-27.
Conservation (O1)	This zone is intended to identify protected lands that are not otherwise captured by other protective zoning, such as provincial Wilderness Areas and beaches. Permitted uses shall be limited to government uses, conservation uses, and low-impact public recreation uses.
Floodway (F1)	This zone is intended to limit development within the 1:20 floodplain. The only permitted uses shall be a limited range of recreational uses that do not require main buildings, as well as parking lots. The placement of fill originating from outside the Floodway Zone shall be prohibited.
General Commercial (C1)	This zone is intended to accommodate a wide range of commercial uses serving both local and regional markets. This zone shall permit a wide range of commercial uses, as well as community and institutional uses, and light industrial uses. Existing dwellings of all scales shall be considered conforming and shall be permitted to expand. However, the only new dwellings permitted in this zone shall be those that exceed eight units per lot.
Highway Commercial (C2)	This zone is intended to set aside land at highway interchanges for land uses that serve the traveling public or benefit strongly from close access to highway infrastructure. Permitted uses shall include commercial uses serving the travelling public, such as accommodations, gas stations, and restaurants, as well uses such as warehousing, transportation and logistics, and emergency services.

Zone Name	Zone Purpose
Industrial (M1)	This zone is intended to identify and accommodate industrial properties. This zone shall permit a wide range of resource and industrial uses, including heavy industrial uses, scrap yards, and solid waste disposal. However, hazardous industries shall only be considered via development agreement in this zone. A limited range of heavier commercial uses (e.g. auto body shops) as well as institutional uses that may need to be situated in an industrial area shall also be permitted.
Institutional (I1)	This zone is intended to identify institutional properties where the long-term use of the property is expected to remain institutional, such as fire stations. This zone shall permit a wide range of institutional uses, as well as related public recreation uses. Residential intuitions will also be permitted.
Parks and Open Space (P1)	This zone is intended to identify and protect provincial and municipal parks and open space properties. Uses permitted in this zone shall be limited to recreational, community, and open space uses consistent with the intent of public parks.
Rural Commercial (C3)	This zone is intended to expand on the commercial and residential uses available within the Rural General Zone. This zone shall permit all the same uses as the Rural General Zone, with the exception of livestock operations, and shall additionally permit a wider range of commercial uses, hospitals, and up to eight dwelling units on a lot. More than eight dwelling units may be permitted on large lots.
Rural General (G1)	This zone is intended to reflect the mixed-use nature of the rural areas of the municipality. This zone shall permit a wide range of uses suited to a rural context, including lower density residential uses, community uses, resource-related uses, light industrial uses, and a range of commercial uses appropriate to the rural context.
Rural Mixed Use (G2) Zone	This zone is intended to provide a transition between rural areas and serviced areas. This zone shall permit a similar but more limited range of uses as the Rural General (G1) Zone. Intensive uses, such as industrial activities or mineral-related uses shall not be permitted; however, livestock operations shall be permitted. In some instances, this zone shall be applied to areas that have sewer services but are still relatively rural in nature.

Zone Name	Zone Purpose
Shoreline (S1)	This zone is intended to provide for limited recreational and residential development along bodies of water. Initially, this zone will not be applied except to source water areas as noted below. However, this zone is available for future use around watercourses, including coastal areas, rivers, and areas within approximately 300 metres of lakes that are potentially susceptible to development. This zone will initially be applied to the primary watershed of Forbes Lake and to the wellfields for the Town of Pictou and Town of Trenton to help protect the quality of these potable water sources. Development standards for lot sizes and frontage in this zone shall be more restrictive than typical for other rural zones in order to maintain a lower level of development density around waterbodies.

Each of the land use designations (established in Section 3.1) may permit a range of zones, depending on the intent of the designation. Table 2 outlines which zones are permitted to be considered for lands within each land use designation.

Table 2: Zones Considered in Each Land Use Designation

Zone Name	Conservation Designation	Serviced Community Designation	General Designation
Agriculture Potential	**-**	**-**	**P**
Commercial Recreation	-	P	P
Community Core	-	P	-
Residential Community	-	P	-
Comprehensive Development	-	P	P
Conservation	P	P	P
Floodway	P	P	P
General Commercial	-	P	P
Highway Commercial	-	-	P
Industrial	-	P	P
Institutional	-	P	P
Parks and Open Space	P	P	P
Rural Commercial	-	-	P
Rural General	-	-	P
Rural Mixed Use	-	P	P
Shoreline	-	-	P

[amendment 2025-01]

Policy 3-2: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, establish the zones identified in Table 1 and apply them to the Zoning Map of the Land Use Bylaw in consistency with the purpose of each zone.

Policy 3-3: Council shall, when considering proposals for amendments to the Zoning Map of the Land Use Bylaw, utilize Table 2 to determine the zones permitted to be considered within each designation of the Future Land Use Map.

3.3 Housing

3.3.1 Introduction

Housing is one of the necessities of life. Access to affordable, appropriate, and safe housing is a need for every person living and wanting to live in the Municipality of Pictou County. However, a 2023 assessment of the municipality[1] identified a gap of approximately 115 housing units and—perhaps more importantly—a 61% increase in median home prices over the three years from 2019 to 2022. Changing demographics, such as an aging population, also mean a shift in the types of housing that are needed.

3.3.2 Large-scale Housing Development

This Municipal Plan, and the accompanying Land Use Bylaw, take a flexible approach to housing and dwellings at a variety of scales are widely permitted throughout most areas of the municipality. However, as housing pressures increase and the types of housing in demand shift there is the possibility the municipality will start to see larger-scale forms of housing such as large multi-unit dwellings or grouped dwellings. The latter often takes the form of bare land condominiums.

Such larger housing developments often have a wider range of considerations in terms of servicing, safe driveway access, integration into the fabric of the community, and—in some areas such as shorelines—environmental considerations. Council will, therefore, consider such larger developments through the development agreement process, with the scale dependent on the intent of the applicable land use zone.

Policy 3-4: Council shall consider by development agreement proposals for:

(a) dwellings with more than eight units on a lot in the Commercial Recreation Zone and Residential Community Zone;
(b) dwellings with more than two units on a lot in the Shoreline Zone;
(c) dwellings with more than eight units on a lot at a density higher than what is permitted in the Land Use Bylaw in the Rural Mixed Use Zone, Community Core Zone, and Rural Commercial Zone; and
(d) residential care facilities in each of the above zones.

[1] Turner Drake and Partners et al. (2023). Municipality of the County of Pictou Municipal Housing Needs Report

Policy 3-5: Council shall, in considering proposals enabled under Policy 3-4, ensure:

(a) the development agreement contains provisions to require the long-term maintenance and operation of any shared amenities, such as recreation space or shared sewage systems, and reduce the risk that such responsibilities will fall to the Municipality in the future;

(b) the proposed development is arranged and designed to minimize impacts on environmentally-sensitive areas of the site, especially when the proposed development is located within the Shoreline Zone; and

(c) the proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

3.3.3 Residential Facilities and Small Options Homes

Meeting the diverse housing needs of residents of the Municipality of Pictou County relies on a spectrum of housing options beyond the typical owner-occupied, single detached home. For some residents, housing must also include residential care or other forms of support to varying degrees. The spectrum of supportive housing can range from residential facilities offering 24/7 care for residents to small options homes where adults share a living arrangement supplemented by support workers. Council strongly believes in meeting the housing needs of all the municipality's residents and will therefor ensure such supportive housing options are treated with the same approach as other dwellings of a similar scale.

Policy 3-6: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit supportive housing options, such as small options homes and residential care facilities, in all land use zones that permit residential uses of a similar scale.

3.4 Servicing and Transportation

3.4.1 Central Sewer

Sewage collection and treatment systems are among key services provided by the Municipality to its residents. Under the *Environment Act* and its related regulations, small lots for development generally cannot be subdivided unless there is a central sewage system in place. Sewage collection systems are essential to public health and safety where development densities exceed a threshold beyond the capacity of the local soils to treat the effluent from septic systems.

The Municipality owns and operates three wastewater treatment plants for the treatment of sanitary waste from residents. These plants are located in Hopewell, River John, and Thornburn. The Municipality has also partnered with the Town of Pictou to provide wastewater services to residents in the Lyon's Brook and Scotsburn area. In addition, wastewater services in the Alma/Greenhill, Hillside, Priestville, and Westville Road areas are provided in partnership with the Pictou County Shared Services Authority at the East River Environmental Control Centre in New Glasgow.

As of 2024, the Municipality also operates 39 lift stations which pump wastewater from a lower elevation to a higher elevation. These facilities are an essential part of the wastewater collection system.

Centralized sewage systems are a very expensive asset to maintain and operate and take up significant portions of the municipal budget. Good utilization of central sewage systems should therefore be promoted through infill development while extensions of the network should only be considered if a clear need is demonstrated (*i.e.* a community need that goes beyond the benefit of individual property owners).

Policy 3-7: It is the intention of Council to consider expansions to the existing sewer systems only to locations where a clear need is demonstrated which goes beyond the gain of individual property owners benefitting from such extension. Such need may include, but is not limited to, treating an environmental problem, enabling the development of a major economic initiative, or continuing a development pattern that is of sufficient density to sustainably finance the ongoing maintenance and capital costs of the system.

3.4.2 Central Water

The Department of Public Works and Development at the Municipality of Pictou County is responsible for operating and maintaining a system that, as of 2024, provides potable water services to over 600 residences.

The supply for the Municipality's water system is purchased from and originates from several neighboring jurisdictions. New Glasgow is the source of supply for Alma, Greenhill, Plymouth, Priestville, and Westville Road while Riverton is supplied by Stellarton and Hillside by Trenton.

The water supplies for New Glasgow and Stellarton are drawn from surface sources, at Forbes Lake (located in the Municipality of Pictou County) and East River, respectively. Trenton sources its water from a series of drilled wells. In 2003 the watershed for Forbes Lake became a Protected Watershed Area under the *Environment Act*. The Town of Pictou does not supply water to the Municipality, but the recharge areas for its wells cross into the Municipality of Pictou County.

Additionally, as part of the water system, the Municipality maintains a network of over 70 fire hydrants. These hydrants are located in the communities of Alma, Greenhill, Hillside, Plymouth, Priestville, Riverton and Westville Road.

Like sewer systems, the infrastructure associated with providing municipal water is expensive to build and maintain. Therefore, any expansions of the system must be carefully considered to ensure the benefits to landowners outweigh the upfront and ongoing costs to the Municipality.

Policy 3-8: It is the intention of Council to consider expansions to the existing municipal water supply networks only when a clear need is demonstrated which goes beyond the gain of individual property owners benefitting from such extension. Such need may include, but is not limited to, treating a public health problem, enabling the development of a major economic initiative, or continuing a development pattern that is of sufficient density to sustainably finance the ongoing maintenance and capital costs of the system.

3.4.3 Source Water Protection

The Municipality has an interest in, and obligation to, protect the public source water areas that fall within its geographical jurisdiction. The Municipality's large geographic area encompasses the source water areas—or portions of—for the Town of New Glasgow, Town of Pictou, Town of Stellarton, Town of Trenton, and Antigonish County (supplying both the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and Town of Antigonish).

Source water areas fall into two primary categories: surface water and groundwater. The Town of Pictou and Town of Trenton use groundwater wells for their public drinking water sources. The recharge areas for these wells extend into the Municipality of Pictou County. Conversely, the Town of New Glasgow draws its water from Forbes Lake, the Town of Stellarton draws its water from the East River, and Antigonish County draws some of its water from James River. The latter is located within Antigonish County, but its watershed extends into the Municipality of Pictou County.

The Forbes Lake watershed and James River watershed are provided some protections at a provincial level since they are designated Protected Water Areas in regulations made under the *Environment Act*. These regulations control potentially risky activities, such as forestry operations, boating, and watercourse alteration. Approximately one third of the land area of the James River watershed within the Municipality of Pictou County is also protected by nature of its location within the Eigg Mountain – James River Wilderness Area and related Conservation (O1) Zoning applied to those lands under the Land Use Bylaw.

Regardless of the source of water supply, there are some land uses that Council believes to be fundamentally risky to the long-term safety of the public water supply. These include hazardous industry and uses where the risk of leaching or spills of petroleum or other impactful chemicals is high. These uses will be prohibited despite the uses permitted by the underlying zoning.

Beyond this broad prohibition, municipal planning for source water protection is not a one-size-fits-all tool. As noted in the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Drinking Water:

> *"Existing land uses and the location, size and soil conditions of a municipal water supply watershed will determine the land-use controls that should be applied. Large surface watersheds, for example, may be able to sustain more development than a small groundwater recharge area."*

For the wellfield areas and for the primary watershed of Forbes Lake, source water protection will be achieved through the application of the Shoreline (S1) Zone. This zone limits the range of permitted uses and has a larger minimum lot size that limits the density of development that is possible. Additionally, the Town of New Glasgow has requested that the minimum buffer for development around a watercourse be increased

for Forbes Lake, and that no reduction of this buffer be considered. Adjustments to the boundary of the Shoreline (S1) Zone will not be considered without an amendment to this Municipal Planning Strategy except to align with updated mapping of the source water areas provided by the applicable municipality.

For the larger areas covered by the James River and East River watersheds, as well as the secondary watershed of Forbes Lake, protection will primarily take the form of the prohibition on high-risk uses, as described above. However, Council will also refer applications for zoning map amendments and for development agreements enabled by the underlying zoning to the applicable municipality for review and comment. Through this approach any potential risks to the public water supply arising from the proposal can be identified and appropriate action taken by Council. For example, nursing homes can be considered by development agreement in some rural zones. Through the terms of the development agreement Council could prohibit the use of fuel oil as a heating source and therefore remove a risk to drinking water.

Finally, Council intends to continue working collaboratively with neighbouring municipalities and with landowners in source water areas to protect public drinking water. Historically, the fact that the Municipality did not have comprehensive land use planning meant that that the Towns were reluctant to pursue municipal land use regulation as a method of protecting their source water areas that fell within the Municipality. Now, with this Plan implementing comprehensive planning, the Towns may be interested in revisiting this approach. Council will participate in such processes and may consider updating this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use Bylaw in response to the recommendations arising from any updated source water protection plan.

Policy 3-9: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw and despite the uses permitted or considered by underlying zoning, prohibit the development of uses that present a high risk to public drinking water supplies, such as, but not limited to, hazardous industry, heavy industry, mineral-related uses, and uses that involve the processing or storage of large amounts of petroleum or other chemicals that pose a risk to drinking water.

Policy 3-10: Council shall, on the Zoning Map of the Land Use Bylaw, apply the Shoreline (S1) Zone to the wellfields for the Town of Pictou and Town of Trenton and to the primary watershed of Forbes Lake to limit the uses and density of development that is permitted or considered in these areas. Council shall not consider amending the Zoning Map of the Land Use Bylaw for these areas without an amendment to this Plan except in conformance with updated source water mapping provided by the applicable municipality.

Policy 3-11: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, increase the minimum watercourse buffer around Forbes Lake to 75 metres and shall not permit the buffer to be reduced by on-site study.

Policy 3-12: Council shall, where such applications are enabled by other policies of this Plan, refer applications to amend the Zoning Map or enter into a development agreement within areas identified on Schedule 'B' to the applicable municipality for review and comment. Council shall take appropriate action in response to any comments received under this policy and such action may include establishing conditions within the development agreement to manage risks to public drinking water or the denial of the request for a development agreement or Zoning Map amendment.

3.4.4 On-site Services

The vast majority of the land area in the Municipality of Pictou County is not serviced by municipal sewer. Consequentially, residents in much of the municipality must deal with their sewage on-site.

Development lots that are not serviced by municipal wastewater collection must be subdivided in accordance with the Nova Scotia On-site Sewage Disposal Systems Regulations, made under the *Environment Act*. These regulations set minimum lot sizes depending on prevalent soil conditions on the lot.

The provincial regulations under the *Environment Act* supersede any municipal lot size requirements, unless they are more stringent than the provincial requirement. Consequently, the development officer shall administer provincial on-site sewage disposal regulations when endorsing subdivision files for approval.

Policy 3-13: Council shall defer to the Provincial *Environment Act* and its regulations for rules on installation of on-site sewage disposal systems.

3.4.5 Public Roads

Public roads are roads owned by the Municipality or the Province. They provide the primary transportation links between communities in the municipality, and often also serve as the roads within neighbourhoods. As of 2024, the Municipality owns and maintains 12 roads totaling over 5 kilometres in length.

Since 1995, any new public road created through the process of subdivision becomes the responsibility of the Municipality. This creates a need for the Municipality to maintain these roads and to replace them when they reach end-of-life. It is in the Municipality's interest to ensure these roads are clustered within limited areas, where ongoing maintenance (such as snow clearing) is efficient and financially sustainable. Council, therefore, intends to explore the possibility of prohibiting new public roads outside of sewer-serviced communities.

Policy 3-14: Council may amend the Subdivision By-law to prohibit the creation of new public subdivision roads except in sewer-serviced communities.

3.4.6 Private Roads

Private roads are roads that are not owned by the Municipality or Province. They enable development in areas where it would not be financially feasible to build roads to a public standard due to the low density of development. However, private roads can also come with challenges such as differences in maintenance expectations when they are shared by multiple people. As a result, Council believes that private roads should only be used in areas where there are few other feasible options.

Council also believes that private roads should be built to a basic minimum standard to ensure property owners can expect reasonable maintenance requirements and safe roadway widths to accommodate emergency vehicles and heavy equipment, such as construction material deliveries.

Policy 3-15: Council shall, through the Subdivision By-law, prohibit the creation of new private roads in sewer-serviced communities.

Policy 3-16: Council may, through the Subdivision By-law, implement minimum standards for private roads, and such standards may include, but are not limited to:

(a) the requirement for private roads to be on their own lot;
(b) minimum widths for the private road right-of-way and for the road surface;
(c) the design of drainage systems; and
(d) minimum standards for the appropriate materials and thicknesses for private road roadbeds.

3.4.7 Active Transportation

Active transportation refers to transportation by human-powered means, and includes activities such as walking, running, cycling, wheelchairing, skateboarding, and cross-country skiing.

There are approximately 200 kilometres of formal trails in the Municipality of Pictou County. The Jitney Trail is a section of the Trans Canada Trail that extends 40 kilometres across the municipality from River John to the Town of Pictou. Another highlighted trail in the Municipality is the Fitzpatrick Mountain Trail which is a destination for beginner and intermediate mountain bikers. There are also numerous short hiking, running, and walking trails spread throughout the municipality.

As part of Nova Scotia's Provincial Cycling Network (the "Blue Route"), there is a 56-kilometre signed bike route that connects the Town of Pictou to the East Mountain in Bible Hill. This section follows the provincial road network (Route 376 and Trunk 4) and a small section of the Jitney Trail. Additionally, there is a proposed road route that extends across the northern portion of the municipality along the Northumberland Shore. If developed, this section would add to the 3,000-kilometre bike friendly route proposed for the province.

As of 2024, the Municipality maintains 5.7 kilometres of sidewalks in various communities.

The easiest time to develop an effective active transportation network is at the outset of development. This allows for thoughtful connections to areas beyond the development, as well as reduced construction costs compared to later retrofit installations.

Policy 3-17: Council may, through the Subdivision By-law, require sidewalks on new public roads in the Serviced Centre Designation.

Policy 3-18: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit trails as a land use in all zones.

3.5 Economic Development

3.5.1 Resource Industries

Pictou County has a long and continuing history of resource-based activities. Mining, forestry, fishing, and agriculture (discussed in detail in Section 3.6) have long been mainstays of the community's economy and culture. While these industries have gone through cycles of growth and contraction, they continue to remain foundational to the prosperity of the region.

Municipal land use planning does not regulate the actual act of resource extraction, such as fishing, mining, or harvesting trees. However, related buildings and uses do fall within the realm of municipal planning. This includes things such as permanent sawmills, maple sugaring operations, tree nurseries, fish plants, equipment storage, concrete plants, and bulk mineral storage. Given the importance of these related industries to the resource-based activities in the municipality, Council intendeds to be relatively flexible in allowing these uses in rural areas of the municipality.

Policy 3-19: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit all resource-related uses in the Industrial Zone, and shall otherwise tailor resource-related uses to the intent of each zone.

Policy 3-20: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit storage of equipment related to the fishing industry, such as lobster traps and nets, as an accessory use in all zones.

Policy 3-21: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit and exempt from the requirement for a development permit the small-scale sale of farm, fish, and forestry products by those engaged in their harvesting.

3.5.2 Commercial Development

The municipality and the towns of Pictou County are integrated in many ways, not the least of which is commercial services. The municipality and each of the towns have commercial areas used not only by their own residents, but also by those of the neighbouring municipalities and wider region. Indeed, some of the major commercial areas in Pictou County, such as Westville Road, cross municipal boundaries. While Council recognizes that many commercial services will continue to locate within the towns, close to dense populations, there is also an opportunity for the municipality to host larger-format commercial developments that depend on regional populations. Highway 104 also has eight interchanges within the municipality, providing locations to host commercial services that serve the travelling public.

In addition to regional commercial opportunities, the many communities within the municipality have commercial areas that serve to meet the needs of residents in the surrounding area. From the commercial "main street" of River John, to local service centres in communities like Scotsburn, to rural gas and convenience stores in Lower Barneys River, the scale and availability of commercial services varies to meet the context of the surrounding area.

The varying scales and types of commercial activities within the Municipality of Pictou County are recognized and encouraged in the Land Use Bylaw through the various applications of the General Commercial Zone, Rural Commercial Zone, Community Core Zone, Rural General Zone, and Rural Mixed Use Zone.

3.5.3 Industrial Uses

Building on its natural resources and central location, the residents of Pictou County developed one of Nova Scotia's industrial heartlands. Indeed, the provincial Museum of Industry is located within the Town of Stellarton.

In recent decades globalization and other factors have shifted the nature of industry in North America, and some industries have closed or downsized. However, the municipality continues to have a strong industrial base, including tire manufacturing, resource processing, logistics, and fabrication.

Council recognizes the importance of industrial uses to the region's economy and will continue to accommodate and encourage them through a relatively flexible approach in the uses permitted in each land use zone.

However, Council also believes that residents deserve to know if a heavy industrial use is slated to be located nearby, and will therefore require industrial zoning for such uses or the use of a development agreement—which includes a public process and the ability to manage potential conflicts—in rural zones.

Hazardous industrial uses will only be considered via the development agreement process.

Policy 3-22: Council shall consider proposals for heavy industrial uses in the Rural General and Rural Commercial Zones by development agreement. When considering entering into a development agreement for proposals, Council shall ensure:

(a) the development agreement contains controls as necessary to mitigate the potential for land use conflicts with surrounding uses; and
(b) the proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

Policy 3-23: Council shall consider proposals for hazardous industrial uses in the Industrial Zone, Rural General Zone, and Rural Commercial Zone by development agreement. When considering entering into a development agreement for proposals, Council shall ensure:

(a) the proponent provides appropriate studies, prepared by a suitably qualified professional, identifying the risks to public health and safety and identifying proposed mitigative measures;
(b) the development agreement contains controls as necessary to mitigate risks to public health and safety and to mitigate the potential for land use conflicts with surrounding uses; and
(c) the proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

3.5.4 Scrap Yards

Scrap yards provide a necessary function of collecting, processing, and potentially recycling vehicles, appliances, and other pieces of equipment that are worn out or obsolete. However, they often take up a large amount of land and can have a visual impact on the surrounding community. Scrap yards will be permitted in the Industrial Zone, but in rural areas outside of that zone—where there is a higher potential for land use conflicts—they will only be considered via development agreement.

Policy 3-24: Council shall consider proposals for scrap yard uses in the Rural General and Rural Commercial Zones by development agreement. When considering entering into a development agreement for such proposals, Council shall ensure:

(a) the development agreement contains controls as necessary to mitigate the potential for visual impacts and any other land use conflicts with surrounding uses; and

(b) the proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

3.5.5 Home-based Businesses

The Municipality of Pictou County has a long history of people running home-based businesses. The large land area of the municipality and low population densities mean that standalone commercial services are not always viable in some of the municipality's communities. However, the entrepreneurial residents of the municipality have frequently filled the need for community-scale commercial uses through home-based businesses.

Such home-based businesses offer homeowners and tenants the opportunity to develop and grow small-scale businesses while also helping provide their communities and neighbourhoods with many of the necessary day-to-day services like childcare and personal services. Home-based businesses also provide the venue for artisans to perfect their craft and build a customer base.

Council recognizes and supports home-based businesses and the benefits they bring to the community but is aware that some home-based businesses can create challenges for neighboring uses. As such, Council supports establishing a two-tiered approach to home-based businesses:

- Small, limited home-based businesses, such as personal service shops or art galleries, for zones where the risk of land use conflict is higher.
- Larger home-based businesses providing a wider range of services appropriate to a rural context, such as small automobile repair garages, for zones where the risk of land use conflict is lower.

Policy 3-25: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit a limited range of home-based businesses in the Community Residential Zone, Institutional Zone, and Shoreline Zone, and a wider range of home-based businesses in all other zones that permit residential uses.

Policy 3-26: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, regulate the maximum floor area, outdoor storage and display, retail sales, and signage associated with home-based businesses.

3.5.6 Comprehensive Development

In some instances, planning cannot be effectively applied on a property-by-property basis, but instead requires a holistic approach for the redevelopment of an entire section of a community. These situations typically occur when large, abandoned properties are redeveloped or when greenfield land is being developed and new services are required.

Typical reasons for undertaking a comprehensive development may include careful planning of services and infrastructure, as well as implementing mechanisms for allocating the costs of such infrastructure; planning for viewscapes; providing for environmental remediation; allocating an appropriate mix of land uses, such in cases of mixed residential and commercial neighbourhoods; and/or reallocating density within a site to meet certain goals, such as preserving agricultural land or unique landscapes.

A notable example in Pictou County is the area surrounding Boat Harbour, or A'se'k. This site was formerly used as the effluent treatment and storage site for the former kraft pulp mill in Abercrombie. Pictou Landing First Nation campaigned to have the site closed after a long history of environmental contamination and impact on the Nation's way of life. In 2015 the Government of Nova Scotia passed the *Boat Harbour Act, 2015* and set a sunset date of January 31, 2020 for effluent discharge to the site. As of early 2025, the approach to cleanup of the site and its eventual future are still being determined. However, what is clear is that future development here, if any, must be done comprehensively and in collaboration with the community—especially Pictou Landing First Nation—and be mindful of the environmental and cultural implications of the industrial history of this site.

Policy 3-27: New development within the Comprehensive Development District Zone shall only be considered by development agreement. When considering entering into a development agreement for proposals in the Comprehensive Development District Zone, Council shall ensure:

(a) The planned district provides a mix of land uses as appropriate to the location of the site. Where appropriate, this should include a variety of residential types and densities and a mix of commercial and community uses. Uses and densities beyond what is otherwise permitted in surrounding zoning may be considered.

(b) The adequacy of existing and proposed active transportation and automobile distribution networks within and adjacent to the site, including the manner in which proposed roadways within the development are linked with streets of adjacent developments to provide for a cohesive, grid-like network of local and collector streets and active transportation infrastructure.

(c) The development does not create the potential to landlock or reduce the ability to subdivide adjacent parcels.

(d) The development provides for efficient pedestrian movement into, out of, and within the development, especially between commercial and residential neighbourhoods.

(e) The adequacy of surface area of park land, which is to be transferred to the municipality through the subdivision process.

(f) Appropriate phasing of the development relative to the distribution of the specific land uses and infrastructure within all or a portion of the site.

(g) The development agreement contains appropriate architectural controls, site controls, and stormwater controls which create relative comfort and design of streets and buildings promoting a development conducive to active transportation, human-scaled developments, visual variety and interest for active transportation users.

(h) The proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

3.6 Agriculture

With good soils and a mild climate, Pictou County has a long history of extensive agricultural activities. As an example, the series of publications titled "Farms and Farmers of Pictou County" by R.H. Ward includes 426 pages accounting the agricultural operations in the county in the late 1910s and early 1920s.

Today, Pictou County accounts for approximately 9 percent of the province's active agricultural lands (by area) and 3.1 percent of the province's farm operating revenues[2], with the bulk of this activity located in the Municipality of Pictou County. Key agricultural industries include cattle and dairy, blueberry farming, and haying, as well as smaller numbers of other crop and animal farms.

In Nova Scotia, the Municipal Government Act requires municipalities to identify and protect high-value agricultural soils, which are defined as Class 2, Class 3, and actively-farmed Class 4 soils as identified by the Canada Land Inventory (Nova Scotia has no Class 1 soils), as well as specialty crops (e.g. blueberries) and dykelands suitable for commercial agriculture. Pictou County has a substantial amount of high-value agricultural soils, with 50.8 percent of the county's land area within Class 2, 3, and 4 soils. Much of these soils are clustered in the northern half of the county. Conversely, the southern portion of the county features a high number of blueberry farms, which thrive on "poor" soils. Appendix 'A' illustrates the municipality's agricultural lands as defined by the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land.

3.6.1 Agricultural Zoning

Agricultural operations in Nova Scotia are facing challenges, including many operators nearing retirement age, land use conflicts with other forms of development (e.g. complaints about odours), and the fragmentation and loss of agriculture land to other forms of development. Council wishes to support agricultural activities and preserve agricultural land within the municipality and has therefore established the Agriculture Potential Zone in Section 3.2. This zone prioritizes agriculture, agricultural-related industries, and other rural land uses. It also allows other limited forms of development that support rural communities and have a lower risk of land use conflicts with agriculture or of permanently removing the potential of lands to be used for agriculture.

The Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Agricultural Land recognizes that not all areas of agricultural land can be protected, due to factors such as existing development, existing sewer and water services, or the small size of some areas of good soil. In this vein, the Agricultural Potential Zone has only been applied to agricultural lands that would otherwise be zoned Rural General. In addition, small areas

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[2] Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. Pictou County Agricultural Profile 2021

of agricultural land (lots smaller than 5 acres) have been omitted due to the challenges of farming them. Finally, some coastal areas that have historically seen high levels of development have also been omitted due to the nature of existing development in these areas and the potential to offer a "release valve" for rural development pressures that would otherwise impact the remaining agricultural lands.

3.6.2 Other Agricultural Protections

Beyond land use there are other key planning considerations when it comes to preserving agricultural land: topsoil removal and subdivision.

Topsoil is, on human timescales, essentially a non-renewable resource. Once good soils are damaged or removed it can take hundreds or thousands of years for them to regenerate to a level where they are suitable for agriculture. The Land Use Bylaw will, therefore, prohibit the removal of topsoils from agricultural lands as defined by the Statement of Provincial Interest, with exceptions for the limited extent of existing topsoil businesses.

Subdivision activity can also have significant impacts on agriculture. The creation of new lots—and in particular residential lots—can fragment agricultural land and encourage the development of incompatible land uses next to agricultural operations. However, it is also reasonable to allow some level of subdivision activity to provide limited opportunities for rural housing, especially when such housing is associated with the farm (e.g. to create homes for the children of the farmer). In order to preserve the best agricultural areas while still enabling appropriate rural housing options, subdivision will be limited to one lot per year on actively farmed land and on Class 2 soils. This will prevent "subdivision development" in these areas, as well as provide an opportunity for the Municipality to monitor development trends in these areas over time. If even this limited level of subdivision proves to threaten agricultural activities, Council may revisit the matter through future amendments to this Plan.

Policy 3-27A: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, establish a Topsoil Overlay to identify high-value agricultural soils, as defined in the Municipal Government Act, and shall prohibit the removal of topsoil on these lands except for existing operations and removal incidental to an approved development.

Policy 3-27B: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, establish a Limited Subdivision Overlay to apply to lands within the Agriculture Potential Zone that are actively farmed or are on Class 2 soils. Subdivision of lands within the Limited Subdivision Overlay shall be limited one (1) lot per year from an area of land as it existed on August 28th, 2025, with exceptions for boundary adjustments, consolidations, and lots large enough to be intended for resource purposes.

3.6.3 Supporting and Promoting Agriculture

In areas outside the Agriculture Potential Zone, Council intends to be permissive of agriculture-related land uses and development, such as barns, feed mills, and agritourism activities. Council also recognizes the importance of animal-based agriculture in the municipality and will widely permit commercial livestock operations in the Agriculture Potential Zone, Rural General Zone, and Rural Mixed Use Zone, as well as smaller-scale ("hobby") livestock operations anywhere dwellings are permitted.

While this Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use Bylaw focus on land use and development regulation—the main tools related to agriculture available to municipalities—Council also recognizes that there are many factors outside of municipal control that affect the viability of farming, such as the aging demographics of farmers and shifting financial supports for activities such as land clearing. There are also many tools that the agricultural community is exploring to help ensure farming remains sustainable, such as agricultural land trusts.

[amendment 2025-01]

Policy 3-28: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, widely permit agritourism and agriculture-related uses except in zones intended to implement more restrictive land use controls for a specific purpose, such as the Conservation Zone or the Residential Community Zone.

Policy 3-29: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit livestock operations in the Rural General Zone and Rural Mixed Use Zone and shall permit hobby livestock farms in all zones that permit single-unit dwellings.

Policy 3-30: [deleted – amendment 2025-01]

Policy 3-30A: [deleted – amendment 2025-01]

Policy 3-30B: [deleted – amendment 2025-01]

3.6.4 Map Amendments (Rezoning) and Development Agreements

The mapping of agricultural soils in Nova Scotia is currently done at a relatively large (and therefore somewhat imprecise) scale. There are also areas where soils are good, but other factors such as topography or access mean the land is unlikely to ever be farmed. It is therefore reasonable to consider proposals to amend the maps related to agricultural regulations or consider development agreements on the basis of site-specific context and study.

Policy 3-31B: Council shall consider proposals to amend the boundaries of the Agriculture Potential Zone, Topsoil Overlay, and/or Limited Subdivision Overlay, and/or enter into development agreements, provided:

(a) the proposed areas are limited in size as much as practical and are located in a manner that minimizes the impact on surrounding agricultural activities;

(b) the proposal is supported by an investigation of on-site soil conditions and/or a thorough rationale for why the lands will never be suitable for agriculture;

(c) the nature of the uses or activities proposed for the lands is unlikely to impact surrounding agricultural activities; and

(d) the proposal complies with all other policies of this Plan applicable to amending the Land Use Bylaw and/or entering into a development agreement.

[amendment 2025-01]

3.7 Institutions

3.7.1 Institutional Uses

The Municipality of Pictou County is supported by a strong foundation of institutional and community uses. Uses such as schools, hospitals, fire halls, government offices, and municipal recreation centres all serve a specific role in the ongoing function of the municipality and the day-to-day lives of residents and community members. Most institutions are small enough in scale and impact to be compatible with other uses in a community. Given their importance to the health and vibrancy of the community, Council will generally permit a range of institutional uses in a variety of zones.

However, larger institutions may have a larger impact or require more thought and will be limited in the zones in which they are permitted, such as the Institutional Zone.

3.7.2 Nursing Homes

Between the 2016 and 2021 Census the median age in Pictou County increased from 48.4 to 50.0, a trend seen in many communities in Atlantic Canada. As the population ages, there will be an increase in the need for living arrangements and wrap-around care services that meet the needs of seniors with a spectrum of independence and mobility. Nursing homes are an important option for meeting this need and will be widely considered throughout various communities in the municipality, whether through the application of the Institutional Zone or via development agreement in many other zones that permit residential uses. However, in considering such developments Council is aware of the advantages of integrating them into the wider fabric of the community, rather than creating isolated developments where residents are cut off from the world and where staff have challenges finding housing and other services.

Policy 3-31: Council shall consider by development agreement proposals for nursing homes in the Commercial Recreation Zone, Community Core Zone, Residential Community Zone, Rural Mixed Use, Rural Commercial Zone, and Shoreline Zone. In considering such proposals, Council shall be satisfied:

(a) the proposed site is located close to supporting assets such as housing options for staff, recreational opportunities or scenic vistas for residents, or a wider community;

(b) the site plan sites the main building(s) on the lot close to surrounding developed area of the community, rather than isolating them;

(c) the main building(s) are connected to neighbouring streets and active transportation networks by sidewalks or pedestrian trails; and

(d) the proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

3.7.3 Adaptive Reuse of Former Institutional Buildings

The Municipality of Pictou County is home to a wide range of institutional buildings that were built for various purposes, such as schools, churches, and community centres. As communities go through periods of change, these institutions sometimes close and the buildings become surplus to their original purpose. These buildings often present an opportunity for adaptive reuse as unique housing, community spaces, or businesses. Such an approach means these buildings, which are often landmarks in their community, will continue to have a purpose instead of being demolished.

However, they also often require creative renovation to make them functional for the proposed use. For example, many small rural churches lack indoor plumbing, and many former schools have large building dimensions that need to be carefully adapted to enable other uses in them. Furthermore, the wide range of uses that could be suitable for a former institutional building cannot always be easily accommodate by a standard list of uses permitted in the applicable zone.

Council will encourage the adaptive reuse of former institutional buildings by providing owners the option of going through a flexible development agreement process to enable and regulate their proposed use.

Policy 3-32: Council shall consider by development agreement proposals to repurpose vacant institutional buildings for uses not otherwise permitted in the zone. In considering such proposals, Council shall be satisfied:

(a) the proposal respects and enhances the history of the building;

(b) the use and any structural additions are appropriate to the surrounding context and the zone in which they are located, either by their nature or by the conditions placed upon them in the development agreement;

(c) that any adjacent uses are not unduly impacted as a result of the development agreement by such things including, but not limited to, traffic generation, noise, hours of operation, and parking requirements;

(d) the proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3; and

(e) that any use substantially complies with all other applicable policies of this Municipal Planning Strategy.

3.8 Parks and Recreation

3.8.1 Parks and Recreation Uses

The residents of the Municipality of Pictou County greatly value recreational opportunities. During initial engagement for this Municipal Planning Strategy, 76% of respondents identified “access to nature” as a key factor in making the municipality a great place to live, while 50% included “parks and open space” in their list of key factors.

The municipality is home to a wide variety of parks and recreation opportunities – from small picnic parks to large Provincial Parks, and from passive trails to a comprehensive suite of active recreation facilities at the Pictou County Wellness Centre.

Recreation opportunities can also come in the form of private businesses. This may include outdoor facilities, such as golf courses and tennis clubs, or indoor facilities like private gyms.

Council recognizes the value that residents place on parks and on recreation opportunities, and in establishing the uses of land permitted in the various zones of the Land Use Bylaw will ensure that a spectrum of parks and recreation uses—both public and private—are permitted depending on the intent of each zone.

3.8.2 Parkland Dedication

The *Municipal Government Act* enables municipalities to require land for public purposes (parkland), or cash-in-lieu, as part of the subdivision process.

The Municipality of Pictou County is a rural municipality with ample recreation opportunities available through beaches, Crown lands, provincial parks, existing municipal parks, and private lands. Recognizing this, Council is not currently interested in having the Municipality own and manage the small parcels of parkland that would be created through this process. Similarly, Council has concerns about the financial burden that would be placed on subdividers if the Municipality were to utilize the cash-in-lieu provisions of the Act. The Municipality will not require parkland dedication at this time but may revisit this topic in the future.

3.8.3 Racetracks and Outdoor Shooting Ranges

While most recreational uses can be reasonably addressed through the selective application of land use zones, there are a few where the potential for impacts on the wider community—and the need for mitigative measures—requires a more involved approach. In particular, racetracks and outdoor shooting ranges have the potential for noise. When carefully developed, these uses can be valuable community assets, but when poorly sited or designed can lead to land use conflict. Therefore, Council will only consider these uses via the development agreement process.

Policy 3-33: Council shall only consider proposals for racetracks by development agreement in the **Agriculture Potential Zone,** Commercial Recreation Zone, Highway Commercial Zone, Rural Commercial Zone, and Rural General Zone.

[amendment 2025-01]

Policy 3-34: Council shall only consider proposals for outdoor shooting ranges by development agreement in the **Agriculture Potential Zone,** Commercial Recreation Zone, Rural Commercial Zone, and Rural General Zone.

[amendment 2025-01]

Policy 3-35: Council shall, in considering proposals enabled under Policy 3-33 or Policy 3-34, ensure:

(a) the development agreement contains provisions to mitigate potential land use conflicts, with special considerations regarding noise emissions; and

(b) the proposal meets the development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

3.9 Environmental Protection

3.9.1 Conservation Uses

With a varied landscape and an abundance of water bodies, the municipality is home to a diverse array of valuable natural habitats. Consequentially, approximately 14,000 hectares of land in the municipality are protected or pending protection - almost 5% of the municipality. These protected areas include Wilderness Areas, Nature Reserves, Provincial Parks, and land trusts or conservation easements.

However, important natural landscapes can be found in other areas, including private land and other types of public land. In recognition of this, Council intends to widely permit conservation uses.

Policy 3-36: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit conservation uses in all land use zones.

3.9.2 Watercourse and Shoreline Buffers

Daily life in the Municipality of Pictou County is closely tied to water; with a substantial shoreline on the Northumberland Straight, and numerous lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands, water is never far away. These watercourses contribute to the local economy and are common places for recreation and relaxation. However, watercourses and the interfaces between water and land (the riparian zone, coastal dunes, estuaries, and the intertidal zone) are also some of the most sensitive environments in the municipality. Unchecked development in or near to these areas can degrade important animal habitat, increase erosion, increase surface water runoff into the watercourse, and impact species-at-risk. In some cases, the impacts to the watercourse reduce or destroy the very value that initially drew people to develop there.

Council intends to reduce the potential for development to impact the municipality's watercourses and the sensitive environments along their edges, and to reduce the risks of coastal erosion, by requiring minimum buffer distances for development in the vicinity of watercourses. However, Council also recognizes that there may be some existing lots that were subdivided and purchase with the good-faith expectation of the ability to develop. In such cases, Council intends to provide some flexibility to enable a limited amount of development.

Policy 3-37: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, implement a minimum horizontal buffer between development and the ordinary high water mark of inland watercourses. Exceptions shall be made for uses and structures that functionally depend on access to the water, and for the relocation of existing structures within the buffer provided such relocation does not reduce the buffer size.

Policy 3-38: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, provide for a reduction of the minimum watercourse buffer, except around Forbes Lake and subject to a minimum vertical elevation and site-specific study that determines there is no increased risk of erosion or seasonal flooding.

Policy 3-39: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, enable the Development Officer to reduce zone standards for setbacks to enable development of a small structure on existing lots that are otherwise made undevelopable by the minimum watercourse buffer.

3.10 Floodplains

Starting in 1976, the Government of Canada worked with communities across the country to map floodplains under the Flood Damage Reduction Program. In Nova Scotia, the program resulted in mapping for five rivers. One of these, the East River, is partially located in the Municipality of Pictou County. Under the *Municipal Government Act*, municipalities are required to prohibit the placement of fill and prohibit most forms of development in the 1-in-20-year floodplain (the "floodway"). Municipalities must also require floodproofing measures and prohibit the development of sensitive institutional uses (hospitals *etc.*) in the 1-in-100-year floodplain (the "floodway fringe"). This Plan implements the required restrictions in the floodway through the application of the Floodway Zone (F1), described in Table 1. For the floodway fringe areas this Plan implements an "overlay" zone that layers floodproofing requirements on top of the other permissions or restrictions that are otherwise implemented by standard zoning.

Of course, the five rivers identified by the Flood Damage Reduction Program are not the only watercourses in the province that experience seasonal flooding. As a result, the Province has begun the process of mapping other watercourses through the Municipal Flood Line Mapping Project. River John was mapped as an early test case in this program, and the floodplains for this river have similarly been identified in the Land Use Bylaw through the application of the Floodway Fringe Overlay. However, mapping of the remaining watercourses has not been completed at the time of the initial writing of this Plan. As a result, Council will revisit the zoning around other watercourses once the Municipal Flood Line Mapping Project is complete and will make any changes necessary to align with the results of that project.

Policy 3-40: Council shall, through the zoning maps of the Land Use Bylaw, apply the Floodway Zone to the 1:20 floodplain as identified in flood mapping for East River.

Policy 3-41: Council shall, through the overlay maps of the Land Use Bylaw, apply the Floodway Fringe Overlay to the 1:20 floodplain for River John and the 1:100 floodplain as identified in flood mapping for East River and River John. Despite underlying zoning, development on lands in this overlay shall be required to undertake floodproofing measures and developments involving sensitive institutional uses, such as hospitals and nursing homes, shall be prohibited.

Policy 3-42: Council shall not amend the Land Use Bylaw to change the boundaries of the Floodway Zone or the Floodway Fringe Overlay except in compliance with updated mapping for the 1:20 and 1:100 floodplains for the applicable watercourse.

Policy 3-43: Council shall, following the completion of the Municipal Flood Line Mapping Project within the Municipality of Pictou County, amend this Plan and the Land Use Bylaw as necessary to align with the results of the Project and with the Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Flood Risk Areas.

3.11 Coastal Development

For many residents of Pictou County life is tied to the coast, whether as a source of employment or simply as a source of enjoyment. As such, residents are well aware of the risks present in coastal development, such as erosion along the soft sandstone cliffs of the North Shore and increasing flooding as a result of sea level rise. Much of the North Shore is sandstone or poorly consolidated soils and is easily erodible. In major storm events, such as Hurricane Fiona in 2022, multiple metres of shoreline can be eroded in a single day. Many landowners along the coast have lost a substantial portion of their property to the ocean and must resort to armour rock to provide protection. While this approach can slow the rate of erosion, it can also have unintended consequences, such as increasing erosion on neighbouring properties. Development in such areas must be mindful of these risks, and must be sited and designed so that human health, capital investments, and the coastal environment are not placed at risk.

Initially, this Plan and the Land Use Bylaw will establish a basic tool to reduce the risks presented by coastal erosion. This will take the form of a minimum horizontal buffer from the top of the bank, which can be reduced via a site-specific analysis of the geological conditions. However, in early 2024 the Province of Nova Scotia released *The Future of Nova Scotia's Coastlines* (the "Coastal Action Plan), a series of 15 actions to help municipalities and property owners make informed decisions about coastal issues. One such action is the release of example policies and Land Use Bylaw provisions that municipalities can adapt into their planning documents. At the time of writing of this Plan, these example policies are not yet available. However, Council may revisit this topic in the near future to have a fulsome discussion with residents about coastal policy and potentially incorporate some of the approaches suggested through the work of the Coastal Action Plan.

Policy 3-44: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, increase the watercourse buffer along the marine coastline and shall measure it from the top of the bank, rather than the ordinary high water mark, to account for coastal erosion risk.

3.12 Energy

3.12.1 Introduction

Pictou County is home to the Trenton Generating Station, within the Town of Trenton. As of 2024, this facility has two coal-fired units with a combined generating capacity of 311 megawatts. This facility was built starting in the 1950s to capitalize on the region's historic involvement in the coal mining industry. Today, Nova Scotia is required to eliminate coal from its energy generation mix by 2030, so the future of this facility is up in the air. As of 2024, proposals include converting the units to burn heavy fuel oil.

However, with the political, economic, and ecological pressure to lessen dependence on fossil fuels for energy supply, communities throughout Atlantic Canada are looking at alternative sources of energy. The Government of Nova Scotia's Renewable Energy Regulations require that by 2030, 80 percent of the province's electricity will come from renewable sources, including wind, biomass, tidal, and solar power.

With a large landmass and proximity to energy transmission infrastructure, the Municipality of Pictou County can build on its history of involvement in the energy industry in new, modern ways.

3.12.2 Solar Collectors

Solar collectors convert the energy of the sun to useable energy either in the form of electricity (solar photovoltaics) or heat (solar hot water or space heating). Their popularity is growing in Nova Scotia as a means for residents to produce renewable energy. The scalable nature of installations makes it possible to design systems well-tailored to the energy needs and financial means of a potential owner. In 2023, the Municipality implemented a program, titled "Switch MOPC", that provides financing and guidance to help assist residents in developing solar installations on their property. The program was later expanded to also support energy efficiency measures and heat pump installations.

Solar collectors are also increasingly installed as community or commercial projects. These feed into the grid and are intended to provide an income source for the community (such as a municipality or First Nation) or business. Pictou Landing First Nation developed an 88 kilowatt solar collector system in 2021, and as of the end of 2023 is exploring the potential for a 10 megawatt (10,000 kilowatts) "solar park" on land within the Municipality of Pictou County, in close proximity to Pictou Landing.

Solar collectors typically have no moving parts and can be installed on existing structures, so are relatively unobtrusive beyond aesthetic preferences. Council wishes to support residents in providing renewable energy, so will widely permit solar collectors as an accessory use. Council also supports commercial-scale projects, but is aware of the potential for these projects to use large areas of land. In serviced areas this can result in the inefficient use of the valuable sewer or water services in the ground.

Policy 3-45: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit solar collectors as an accessory use in all zones and shall provide an exemption from building height limits to enable solar collectors to be installed on top of buildings.

Policy 3-46: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit solar collectors as a main use except in zones in the Serviced Community Designation, Source Water Protection Zone, Floodway Zone, and Conservation Zone.

3.12.3 Wind Turbines

As a renewable resource, wind energy is becoming an important viable alternative to reliance on fossil fuels. In the past twenty years a number of wind turbines have been constructed in various areas of Nova Scotia. These facilities range from a single turbine to "wind farms" consisting of many turbines. As of 2024, Pictou County is home to multiple wind turbine installations, including major wind farms at Dalhousie Mountain and Glen Dhu.

The Municipality first started the process of regulating wind energy developments in 2007 in response to a proposal from a local wind developer who believed the development of regulations for wind turbines would be beneficial in protecting the interests of both the community and the wind energy business. The result was the creation of the Municipality's very first Municipal Planning Strategy and related Land Use Bylaw. Over the course of time several amendments were made to the Land Use Bylaw, mainly dealing with the setback requirements of Utility Scale Turbines. Further amendments were made in 2021 to separate domestic wind turbines in the regulations, to clarify terms, and to establish public engagement requirements.

The Municipal Planning Strategy Regarding Wind Energy Development remains in effect today. Under the structure established by the *Municipal Government Act* that Planning Strategy will become a Secondary Plan.

Policy 3-47: Notwithstanding this Municipal Planning Strategy and its associated Land Use Bylaw, wind turbine development in the Municipality of Pictou County shall be regulated by *the Municipal Planning Strategy Regarding Wind Energy Development* and the *Wind Energy By-law for the Municipality of the County of Pictou*.

3.12.4 Other Energy Systems

Solar and wind are currently the main growth technologies for electrical energy in Nova Scotia. However, there are other technologies that are in development, such as tidal power, and existing technologies that may see new installations under certain site conditions, such as hydroelectricity. It is important for the Municipality to have a tool to consider other energy systems when such proposals arise. This policy is intentionally broad to enable consideration of technologies that may not yet be mature, or even invented yet. However, Council intends to take a close look at any such proposals through the development agreement process to ensure they are appropriate for the context in which they are proposed.

Policy 3-48: Council shall in all zones consider entering into a development agreement to enable proposals for energy systems other than wind turbines and solar collectors. When considering such developments, special considerations shall be given to the following:

(a) the proposal is consistent with the intent of the land use zone in which it is proposed; and

(b) the proposal complies with the general development agreement policies of Section 4.3.

3.13 Development Control

3.13.1 Regulation of Buildings and Lots

Land use planning can have a significant impact on the look and feel of a community, and fundamental to land use planning is the establishment of rules and regulations that influence the location and size of buildings on a lot and the size of new lots. In areas where lot sizes and buildings are smaller and where buildings are closer to each other, this helps to foster characteristics of an urban or "village" setting. In these areas, residential and commercial densities are often higher, enabling greater access to services and amenities. Conversely, in areas where lot sizes are large and buildings are spaced out from one another, this is more suited for rural and lower-density areas of the municipality.

Lot size is also strongly correlated with the availability of central services such as municipal sewer and water. In these areas, it is particularly advantageous to smaller lot sizes to utilize municipal services most efficiently.

Policy 3-49: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, regulate the size, location, and number of buildings on a lot in order to carry out the intent of each land use designation and land use zone.

Policy 3-50: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw and Subdivision By-law, regulate the size of newly created lots to be consistent with the intent of each land use designation and land use zone.

Policy 3-51: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, relax lot area and frontage requirements for lots that existed as of the effective date of the Bylaw and shall permit development of irregular lots created through provisions of the *Municipal Government Act* or Subdivision By-law enabling such lots.

3.13.2 Flag Lots

"Flag lots" are lots that connect the main body of the lot to the road frontage using a long, narrow prolongation. A common configuration of such lots often looks like a flag on a pole, giving rise to the name. While this approach is used to subdivide deep lots while meeting the technical frontage requirements of the Land Use Bylaw, it often results in situations where the actual driveway access to the flag lot(s) is from a separate location and requires an easement over other properties. This can lead to future property disputes and can also lead to challenges with emergency access and garbage collection. As a result, flag lots should be used sparingly or not at all. Future updates to the Subdivision By-law may implement such limitations.

Policy 3-52: Council may, through the Subdivision By-law, limit or prohibit the creation of flag lots in the municipality.

3.13.3 Non-conforming Uses and Structures

When land use planning policy and regulations change, uses or structures that were once permitted may no longer be allowed under the new planning documents. This may create a scenario where a use or structure, which was legally developed in good faith, may no longer be permitted. Prior to this Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw, the Municipality of Pictou County only regulated wind turbine development. The implementation of new rules, therefore, has the very real possibility of creating such non-conforming uses or structures.

The *Municipal Government Act* guarantees certain protections for non-conforming uses and structures that were legally developed to ensure they can continue to operate and function. One of the provisions for non-conforming uses, however, is that once a use has ceased to operate for a period of six months, it must then conform to the new planning rules. Similarly, the Act does not permit certain non-conforming structures to expand. The Act also enables municipalities to relax these regulations. Council does not wish to establish undue hardships on property owners who developed in good faith and intends to implement relaxations as provided for by the Act.

Policy 3-53: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, extend the period before a non-conforming use is considered discontinued to 12 months, as enabled by the Municipal Government Act.

Policy 3-54: Council shall, through the Land Use Bylaw, permit the expansion of a non-conforming structure provided the expansion does not increase the non-conformity of the structure.

3.13.4 Parking

A common aspect of development regulated by municipalities is the minimum number of required parking spaces. However, recent years have seen a trend of municipalities reducing or eliminating parking requirements. The philosophy behind this is that parking minimums can lead to added costs that act as a barrier to development and can also lead to the "overprovision" of parking in a manner that makes communities unattractive and less supportive of other forms of transportation, such as walking and biking. For example, walkable main streets such as in River John are difficult to establish if each building must have a large parking lot.

The Municipality of Pictou County represents a good experiment regarding parking minimums in a rural or semi-rural context. Until 2024, the Municipality had minimal land use regulations. While there may have been localized issues of parking overflow, in general landowners have established parking spaces that meet their needs without the oversight of regulation. Council has elected to continue this hands-off approach to parking provision. However, if future development leads to unacceptable parking overflow Council may revisit this position and implement parking minimums to a degree necessary to alleviate additional issues.

Policy 3-55: Council may amend the Land Use Bylaw to establish minimum parking space requirements in some or all zones or specific areas of the municipality if future development contexts warrant such an approach to alleviate parking issues.

3.13.5 Islands

Except for Pictou Island, true islands (*i.e.* fully disconnected from the mainland) are relatively rare within the municipality, limited to a few small islands along the Northumberland Shore and in the municipality's many inland lakes.

Because islands may have a unique shape or orientation and lack roads, standard development rules established in the Land Use Bylaw may inadvertently preclude these areas from development. Council will relax development standards for islands to enable their use and development. Pictou Island is an exception since it is large and contains a public road that provides appropriate access to lands on the island.

Policy 3-56: Council shall, through the Subdivision By-law and Land Use Bylaw, relax frontage standards for islands that do not contain a public road.

4 Implementation

4.1 Administration

The effectiveness of a plan is measured by its ability to reach its goals. The goals and intended outcomes can only be achieved through thoughtful implementation, making plan administration one of the most critical elements of land use planning. In the Municipality of Pictou County, planning is implemented and administered by the Municipality's development staff who are responsible for providing planning, subdivision, and building inspection services.

Municipal staff are also responsible for interpreting and providing recommendations to Council and the Planning Advisory Committee regarding land use policy and regulations to achieve the vision and policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy and to manage the municipality's growth and development.

This Municipal Planning Strategy and accompanying Land Use Bylaw were developed in conformity with the *Municipal Government Act*, as amended.

4.1.1 Statements of Policy

The policies within this Municipal Planning Strategy establish Council's intention with respect to the management of land use and development in the Municipality. Statements of policy are denoted by the text "**Policy #-#**", where the numbers are replaced by the chapter number and appropriate sequential policy number, respectively.

In addition to the statements of policy, this Municipal Planning Strategy contains preamble, or descriptive text, before each set of policies. This preamble is used to help interpreted the intent of statements of policy, but it does not form part of the policy.

Policy 4-1: Policy statements of Council shall be denoted in this Plan with the text "**Policy #-#**", with the number signs (hash) replaced by the appropriate chapter number and sequential policy number, respectively.

Policy 4-2: Written content of this Municipal Planning Strategy not contained within a Policy statement of Council shall be considered preamble. Preamble may be considered to interpret the intent of Policy statements of Council but does not form a part of the Policy statement.

4.1.2 Effective Date

Policy 4-3: This Municipal Planning Strategy and implementing Land Use Bylaw shall come into effect on the date that a notice is published in a newspaper, circulating in the municipality, informing the public that the planning documents are in effect.

4.1.3 Regional Cooperation

The policies of this plan and the regulations of the Land Use Bylaw apply only to the Municipality of the County of Pictou. However, as the largest municipal entity in Pictou County, both in terms of population and geographic area, the land use decisions of the Municipality have implications reaching beyond its jurisdictional boundaries. Implications may include direct impacts like traffic and noise generation, or indirect such as market and environmental impacts. Conversely, decisions made within other entities can impact the Municipality of Pictou County as well. To address these broader implications this Municipal Planning Strategy was developed in consultation with the incorporated towns of Pictou, Trenton, New Glasgow, Westville, and Stellarton, as well as the neighbouring municipalities of Antigonish, Cumberland Colchester, and St. Mary's.

While not a municipal entity, another important community the Municipality must look to collaborate with and notify regarding planning decisions is the Pictou Landing First Nation, whose territory includes five reserves with a combined land area of approximately 530 hectares. Of these, Fisher's Grant Reserve, located at the mouth of Pictou Harbour and adjacent to Boat Harbour, is home to a permanent population.

Since future planning decisions made in the Municipality can impact adjacent communities, it is important the Municipality continue to support a cooperative approach where land use decisions could potentially impact adjacent municipalities and First Nations communities. Council supports efforts to notify and consult neighbouring municipalities and First Nations communities when considering amendments to this Municipal Planning Strategy and when adopting new municipal planning strategies in the future.

Policy 4-4: Council shall notify and engage with the Municipalities of the District of Antigonish, Colchester, Cumberland, and St. Mary's, as well as the Towns of Trenton, New Glasgow, Pictou, Westville and/or Stellarton when:

(a) adopting a new municipal planning strategy to replace this one; or

(b) considering amendments to this Municipal Planning Strategy which would affect lands that share a common boundary with the neighbouring municipality.

Policy 4-5: Council shall establish an Engagement Program to guide any consultation undertaken through Policy 4-4. The Engagement Program shall, at a minimum, establish requirements for the Municipality to:

(a) invite comment on matters of municipal interest;

(b) invite comment in relation to Statements of Provincial Interest;

(c) consider any comment at Council or the Planning Advisory Committee as its designate as part of the body of feedback received on the proposed amendment or new Municipal Planning Strategy; and

(d) complete such consultation prior to Council publishing its first notice for a Public Hearing on the proposed amendment or new Municipal Planning Strategy.

Policy 4-6: Council shall notify and engage with the Pictou Landing First Nation within 14 days of initiation of any non-housekeeping amendment to the Municipal Planning Strategy and initiation of any process to adopt a new municipal planning strategy.

4.2 Land Use Bylaw and Subdivision By-law

4.2.1 Land Use Bylaw

The land use policies in this Municipal Planning Strategy are primarily implemented through a Land Use Bylaw. The Land Use Bylaw serves as the main administrative document translating the higher-level policies into tangible and concrete actions. This Bylaw sets out zones, the permitted uses for each zone, development standards for each zone and/or for certain types of uses, and the uses and circumstances considered via development agreement. In doing this, the Bylaw reflects the policies of the Municipal Planning Strategy. Council approves the Land Use Bylaw at the same time this Plan is approved.

Policy 4-7: Council shall adopt a Land Use Bylaw consistent with the intent of this Municipal Planning Strategy.

4.2.2 Subdivision By-law

The Subdivision By-law is another key tool used by Council to implement this Plan. The Subdivision By-law sets out the requirements and processes for such things as subdividing land, creating streets, and developing sewer and water services.

Policy 4-8: Council shall adopt a Subdivision By-law consistent with the intent of this Municipal Planning Strategy.

Policy 4-9: The Subdivision By-law shall:

(a) apply to the whole of the Municipality;

(b) ensure that any subdivision, with the exception of lots created using the variance provisions of Part 9 of the *Municipal Government Act*, conforms with the lot requirements contained in the Land Use Bylaw;

(c) establish locations and standards for the development of public and private roads, central services, and other publicly owned infrastructure;

(d) contain provisions intended to ensure that lots are suitable for onsite sewage disposal where there is no central sewer system, as required per provincial regulations under the *Environment Act*, and

(e) contain any other provisions needed to fulfill the intent of this Plan.

4.2.3 Implementation of the Land Use and Subdivision By-law

The Land Use Bylaw and Subdivision By-law are administered by a Development Officer appointed by the Municipality of Pictou County. The Development Officer is responsible for issuing development permits in accordance with the Bylaws.

Policy 4-10: Council shall appoint one or more Development Officers to administer the Land Use Bylaw and the Subdivision By-law and to issue, deny, amend, and revoke permits under the terms of these Bylaws.

4.2.4 Amending the Land Use Bylaw

While this Plan and its supporting bylaws were designed to be comprehensive, Council recognizes it cannot foresee all possible types of development that might be acceptable in the municipality in general, or on a specific piece of land. As such, there will be times when the Land Use Bylaw needs to be amended to accommodate a new development trend or specific development proposal.

Council also recognizes that it is possible to inadvertently make mapping errors in preparing the maps that accompany this Plan and the Land Use Bylaw. Such errors do not reflect the policies in this Plan and thus will be corrected via Bylaw amendments.

Policy 4-11: Council shall amend the text of the Land Use Bylaw if the proposed amendment meets the general criteria set out in Policy 4-19.

Policy 4-12: Council shall consider amendments to the maps of the Land Use Bylaw when the proposed zoning change is not specifically prohibited within this Plan and at least one of the following three conditions is true:

(a) the proposed zone is enabled by this Plan for use within the same designation, as identified in Table 2;

(b) a non-conforming use appears to have been created by an inadvertent administrative oversight in the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw preparation process, resulting in a property being zoned inconsistent with stated policies in this Plan; or,

(c) notwithstanding the zones permitted within a designation, the land to be rezoned is under 1.0 hectares in area and is adjacent to a designation that permits the proposed zone. For clarity, land that abuts a right-of-way, such as a street, is considered to be adjacent to the designation on the other side of the right-of-way.

Policy 4-13: Council shall not amend the maps of the Land Use Bylaw if the lot and existing buildings do not meet the requirements of the proposed zone.

Policy 4-14: Council shall not amend the maps of the Land Use Bylaw unless Council is satisfied that:

(a) the proposed placement meets the zone purpose applicable to the proposed zone, as set out in Table 1; and

(b) the proposed zone and the uses it permits meet the general criteria set out in Policy 4-19.

4.2.5 Variances

Section 235 of the *Municipal Government Act* gives the Development Officer the power to grant "variances" from the requirements of the Land Use Bylaw. This is intended to alleviate hardships where an irregular set of circumstances on a lot makes it unreasonable to comply with the requirements of the Bylaw. The Act sets out the circumstances when such variances may be granted, the Land Use Bylaw provisions for which variances may be granted, and the process for granting such variances. For greater clarity, the horizontal watercourse buffer is not considered a setback and is not intended to be reduced via the variance provisions.

Policy 4-15: Council shall, in accordance with Section 235 of the *Municipal Government Act*, permit the Development Officer to vary:

(a) the percentage of land that may be built upon;

(b) the size or other requirements relating to setbacks;

(c) lot frontage;

(d) lot area;

(e) location and number of parking spaces and loading spaces required;

(f) ground area of a structure;

(g) height of a structure; and/or

(h) floor area occupied by a home-based business.

4.3 Development Agreements

4.3.1 Development Agreements

Development agreements are planning tools, enabled by the *Municipal Government Act*, that give Municipal Council a finer level of control or management over a proposed development. Development agreements may be a desirable tool when proposals have a strong level of public interest or there is a specific need for additional levels of engagement or for proposals that are unique in nature and the standard permitting process does not quite satisfy the level of oversight required for the complexity of the proposal. They are written legal documents between Council and the property owner and are registered upon the title of the land (the agreement does not cease if the land is sold or if the property owner dies).

Development agreements are intended to enable staff, Council, and the public to give input on aspects of a development that would otherwise not be permitted through the standards in the Land Use Bylaw. This allows the Municipality to holistically evaluate a proposal and implement measures to mitigate potential impacts that may arise.

Policy 4-16: Where enabled by the policies within this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall consider entering into a development agreement with an applicant to enable a proposed development.

Policy 4-17: A development agreement that has been approved by Council shall:

(a) specify the development, expansion, alteration, or change permitted;

(b) specify the conditions under which the development may, or may not, occur;

(c) set terms and conditions by which Council may amend or terminate and discharge the agreement.

Policy 4-18: Council may specify conditions in the development agreement to bring the proposal into alignment with the enabling policy and general criteria set out in Policy 4-19. Such conditions may include, but are not limited to:

(a) servicing;
(b) the type, location, and orientation of structures;
(c) the architectural design of structures, including, but not limited to, bulk, scale, height, roof shape, building and cladding materials, and the shape and size and placement of doors and windows;
(d) the provision of open space and amenities;
(e) the type, size, and location of signage;
(f) the type and orientation of exterior lighting;
(g) management of solid waste, compost, and recycling;
(h) pedestrian, bicycle, public transit, and vehicular circulation;
(i) connections to existing or planned pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular networks;
(j) the location and number of bicycle and vehicular parking and loading spaces;
(k) access for emergency vehicles;
(l) the location and type of landscaping, including fences and other forms of screening;
(m) stormwater management;
(n) grading and erosion control;
(o) the emission of noise, odour, light, liquids, gases, and dust;
(p) the type of materials stored and/or sold on site;
(q) hours of operation;
(r) the phasing of development;
(s) financial bonding for the construction and maintenance of components of the development, including, but not limited to, roads and landscaping;
(t) mitigation measures for construction impacts;
(u) time limits for the initiation and/or completion of development; and
(v) all other matters enabled in Section 227 of the *Municipal Government Act*.

4.4 General Criteria

4.4.1 Evaluating Land Use Bylaw Amendments and Development Agreements

Amendments to the Land Use Bylaw and the adoption of development agreements are processes that require careful thought. As such, Council has established a set of general criteria to consider when evaluating all Land Use Bylaw amendments and development agreement proposals.

Policy 4-19: Council shall not amend the Land Use Bylaw or enter into a development agreement unless Council is satisfied the proposal:

(a) is consistent with the intent of this Municipal Planning Strategy;

(b) does not conflict with any Municipal or Provincial programs, bylaws, or regulations in effect in the municipality;

(c) is not premature or inappropriate due to:

i. the ability of the Municipality to absorb public costs related to the proposal;

ii. impacts on existing drinking water supplies, both private and public;

iii. the adequacy of central water and sewage services or, where such services are not available, the suitability of the site to accommodate on-site water and sewage services;

iv. the creation of excessive traffic hazards or congestion on road, cycling, and pedestrian networks within, adjacent to, or leading to the proposal;

v. the adequacy of fire protection services and equipment;

vi. the adequacy and proximity of schools and other community facilities;

vii. the creation of a new, or worsening of a known, pollution problem in the area, including, but not limited to, soil erosion and siltation of watercourses;

viii. its impact on nearby watercourses wetlands, or watercourse and/or wetland alteration as regulated by the *Environment Act*;

ix. site-specific climate change risks such as threats of flooding;

x. the potential to create flooding or serious drainage issues, including within the proposal site and in nearby areas;

xi. impacts on known habitat for species at risk;

xii. light pollution and impacts on dark sky views; and

xiii. the suitability of the site in terms of grades, soil and geological conditions, the location of watercourses and wetlands, and proximity to utility rights-of-way.

Policy 4-20: Council may, in addition to any other required information, require any or all of the following information, prepared by an appropriate qualified professional at the applicant's cost, and at a level sufficiently detailed to evaluate whether the criteria for amending the Land Use Bylaw or entering into a development agreement have been met:

(a) a detailed site plan showing features such as, but not limited to:

i. topography;

ii. location and dimensions of existing and proposed property and/or unit lines;

iii. location of zoning boundaries;

iv. use, location, and dimensions of existing and proposed structures;

v. existing and proposed watercourses and wetlands;

vi. location of minimum coastal elevation;

vii. location and dimensions of existing and proposed road, bicycle, and pedestrian networks;

viii. location and dimensions of driveways, parking lots, and parking spaces;

ix. type and amount of site clearing required, if any;

x. location of buffers;

xi. location and dimensions of existing and proposed parks and recreation lands, whether public or private;

xii. location of utilities;

xiii. development densities;

(b) elevation drawings of existing and proposed structures including, but not limited to, dimensions and exterior materials;

(c) a site grading plan;

(d) a landscaping plan;

(e) a drainage and stormwater management plan;

(f) a hydrological assessment to determine groundwater resource volumes, availability, quality, and sustainability pre- and post-development;

(g) a traffic impact assessment that evaluates the ability of existing road, bicycle, and pedestrian networks to accommodate traffic generated by the proposed development;

(h) a geotechnical study;

(i) environmental studies, including, but not limited to, studies addressing Species at Risk, climate change, and environmental contamination;

(j) a shadow study;

(k) a wind study;

(l) a vibration study; and

(m) a noise study.

4.5 Notification

Policy 4-21: Where Council has given notice of its intention to adopt an amendment to the Land Use Bylaw or enter into a development agreement, notification of the amendment or development agreement shall be served upon all assessed property owners within 50.0 metres of the subject site.

Policy 4-22: Notification of a development agreement or amendment to the Land Use Bylaw shall:

(a) outline the proposed amendment or development agreement;

(b) identify the property(s) subject to the proposed amendment or development agreement; and

(c) state the time, date, and place of a public hearing regarding the proposed amendment or development agreement.

4.6 Monitoring, Reviewing, and Updating this Plan

Municipal Planning Strategies are not set in stone. They are meant to be flexible, 'living' documents that can adapt and change as circumstances change. To accomplish this the Municipal Planning Strategy will be monitored and periodically reviewed and updated to remain effective.

4.6.1 Municipal Planning Strategy Reviews

Policy 4-23: Within two years of the adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall initiate a 'housekeeping' review to identify errors, omissions, or ways to improve or streamline the Plan.

Policy 4-24: Within five years of the adoption of this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall complete an interim review. The intent of this review is to identify emerging policy issues and gaps in the Municipal Planning Strategy and adopt new or modified policies to address these issues and gaps.

Policy 4-25: Within ten years of adopting this Municipal Planning Strategy, Council shall complete a comprehensive review to conduct extensive public consultation and review the overall direction of the Plan. The Municipal Planning Strategy shall be updated, and components replaced as necessary, to support the updated direction.

4.6.2 Amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy

This Municipal Planning Strategy may be amended from time to time; it is not necessary to wait for a formal review. The amendment process involves public participation, notification of adjacent municipalities and First Nations, newspaper notices of the intention to amend, a public hearing, and the approval of the Province. The specific process is laid out in the *Municipal Government Act*.

Council may initiate an amendment arising from an internally-identified need, or from a request from a member of the public. However, Council is under no obligation to consider or approve a plan amendment unless the current Plan conflicts with the *Municipal Government Act*.

Policy 4-26: Council shall consider an amendment to this Municipal Planning Strategy when:

(a) any policy intent is to be changed;
(b) an amendment to the Land Use Bylaw would conflict with any portion of the Municipal Planning Strategy;
(c) an amendment to the Subdivision By-law would conflict with any portion of the Municipal Planning Strategy; or
(d) when this Municipal Planning Strategy is inconsistent with any Statements of Provincial Interest.

Policy 4-27: Council shall establish a Public Participation Program that is designed to inform nearby residents and other stakeholders of proposed Municipal Planning Strategy amendments and provide interested parties with an opportunity to have their opinions or concerns considered as part of the application process.

5 Schedules

Schedule ‘A’ – Future Land Use Map

Schedule ‘B’ – Source Water Protection Areas Maps

Appendix ‘A’ – Pictou County Agricultural Lands

MPS Schedule 'B'
Source Water Protection Areas

Legend

Source Water Protection Area

Other

Town

First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:40,000

0 1 km

Date

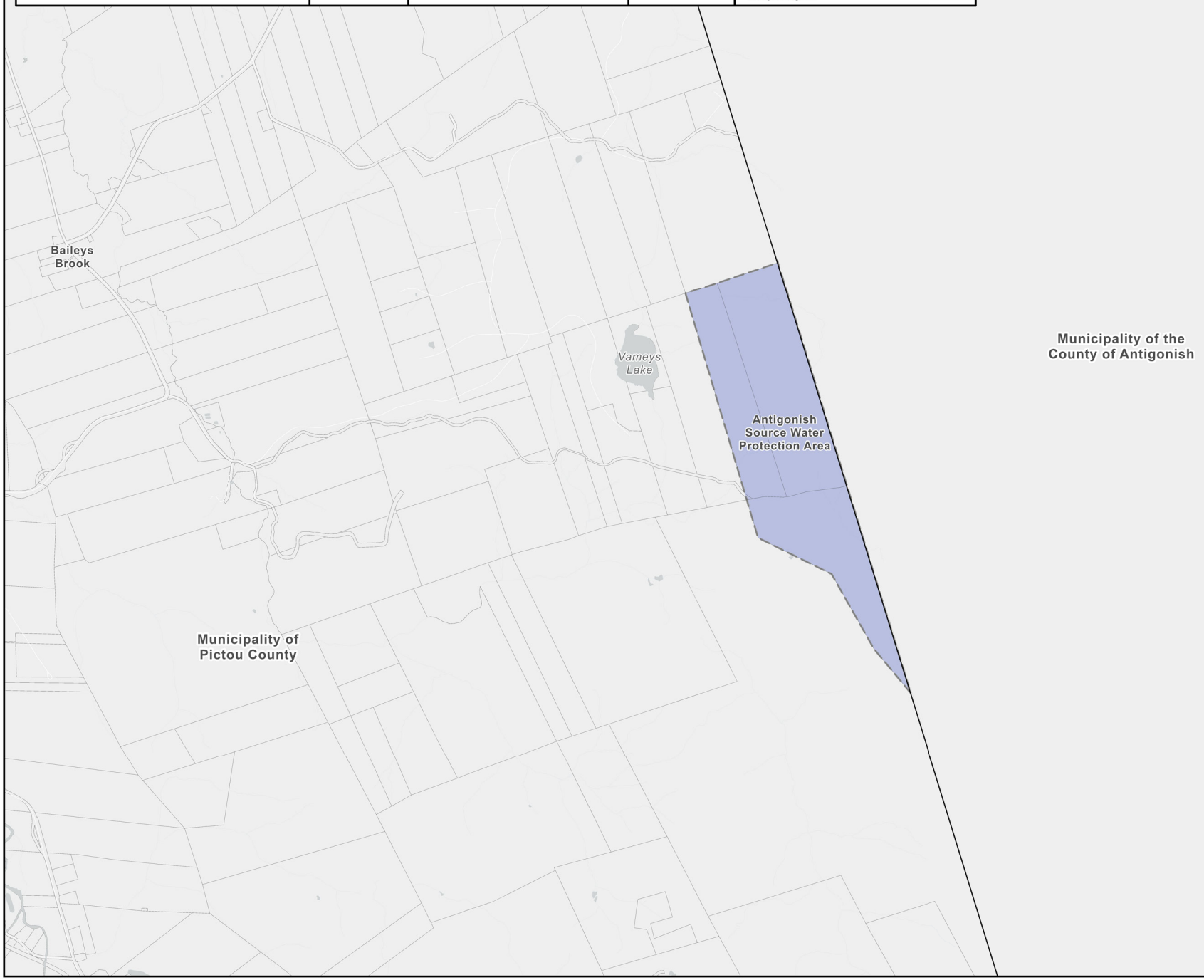
Last Updated:
2024.05.05

UPLAND
PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Source Water Protection Areas: Municipality of the County of Antigonish



MPS Schedule 'B'
Source Water Protection Areas

Legend

Source Water Protection Area

Other

Town

First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:50,000

0 1 km

Date

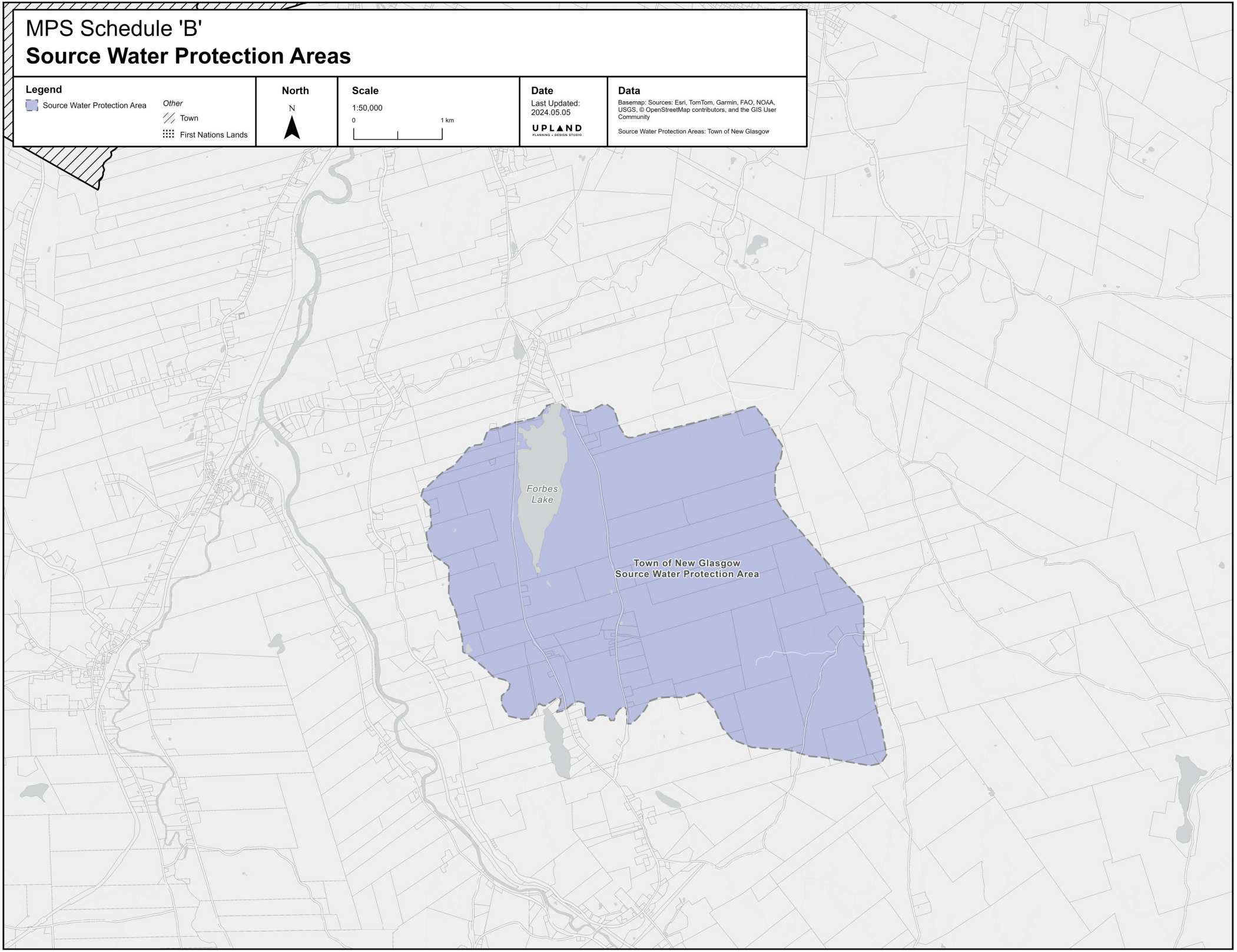
Last Updated:
2024.05.05

UPLAND
PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Source Water Protection Areas: Town of New Glasgow



MPS Schedule 'B'
Source Water Protection Areas

Legend

Source Water Protection Area

Other

Town

First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:30,000

0 1 km

Date

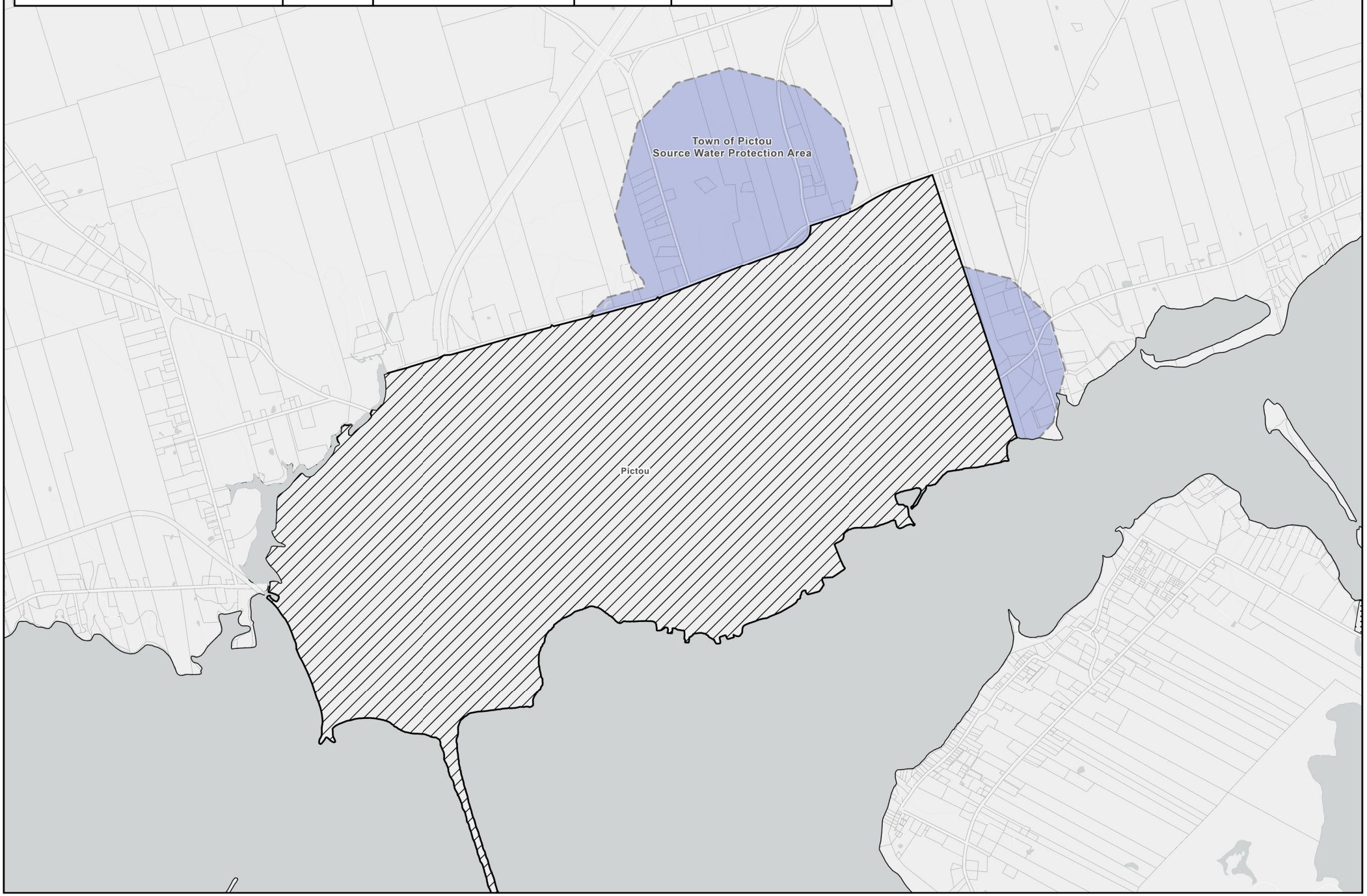
Last Updated:
2024.05.05

UPLAND
PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Source Water Protection Areas: Town of Pictou



MPS Schedule 'B'
Source Water Protection Areas

Legend

Source Water Protection Area

Other

Town

First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:150,000

0 1 2 km

Date

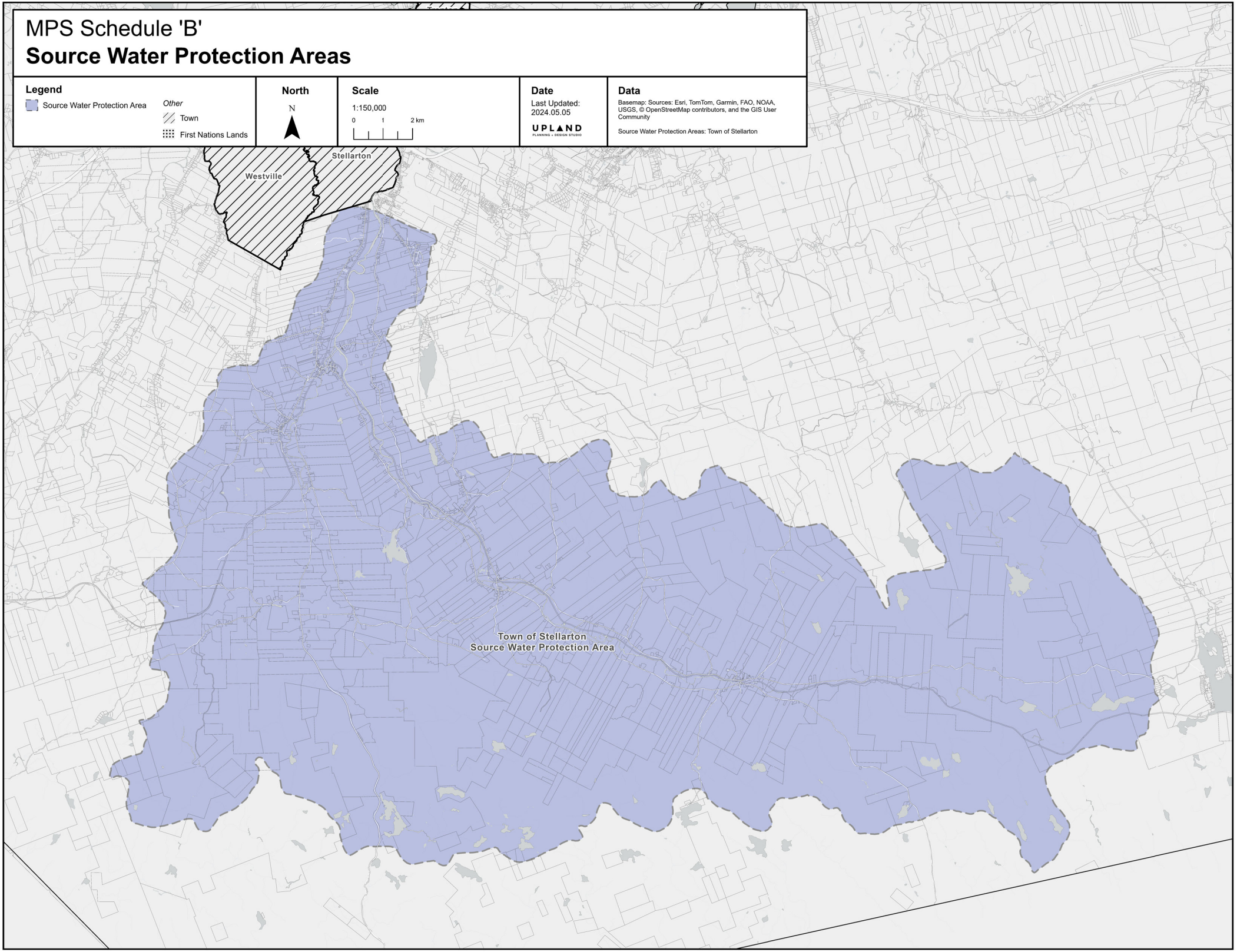
Last Updated:
2024.05.05

UPLAND
PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Source Water Protection Areas: Town of Stellarton



MPS Schedule 'B'
Source Water Protection Areas

Legend

Source Water Protection Area

Other

Town

First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:30,000

0 — 1 km

Date

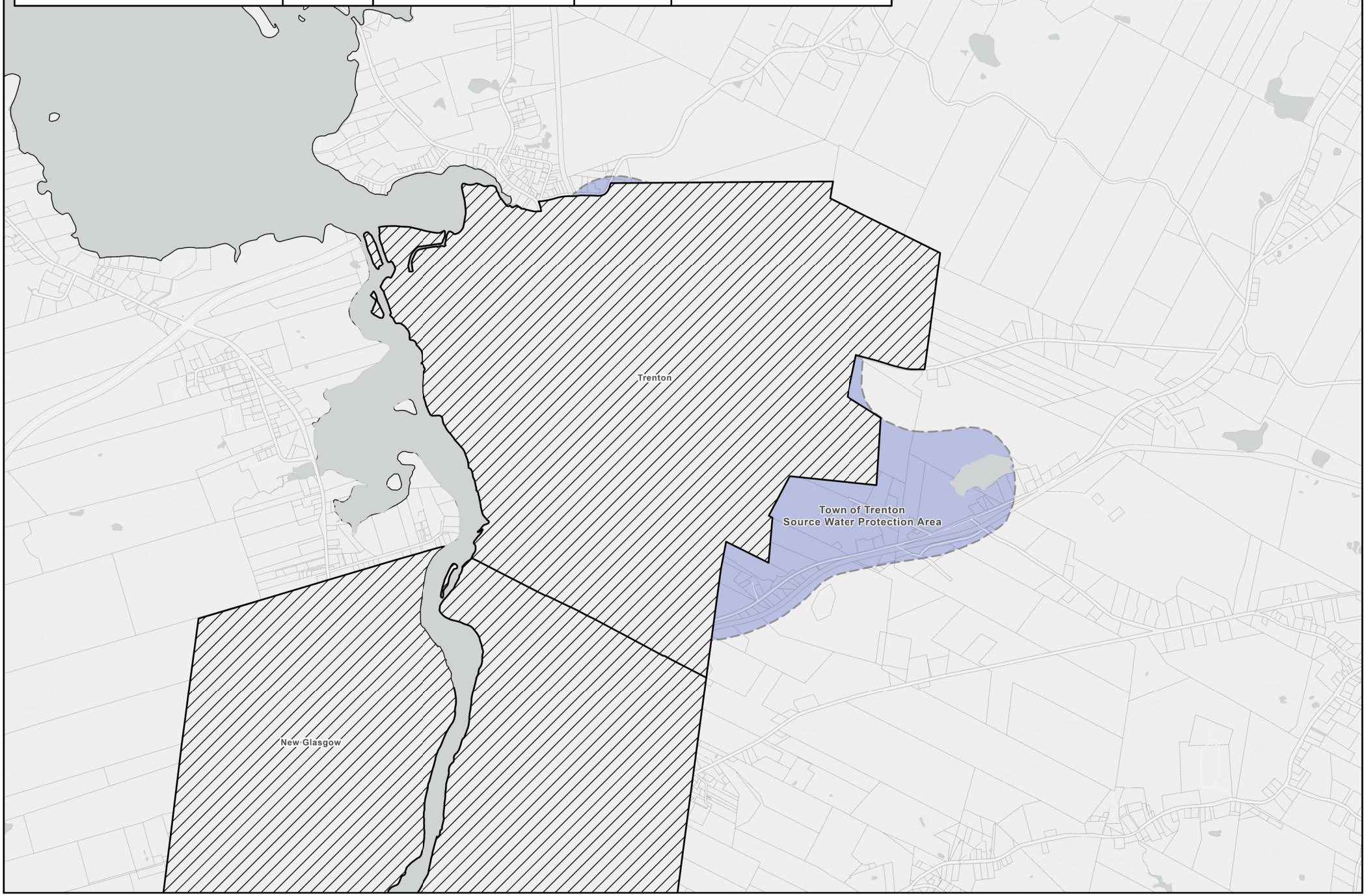
Last Updated:
2024.05.05

UPLAND
PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Source Water Protection Areas: Town of Trenton



MPS Appendix 'A'

Pictou County Agricultural Lands

Legend

- Class 2 Soil - Moderate Limitations
- Class 3 Soil - Moderately Severe Limitations
- Class 4 Soil - Severe Limitations

Other

- Town
- First Nations Lands

North

N

Scale

1:350,000

0 5 10 km

Date

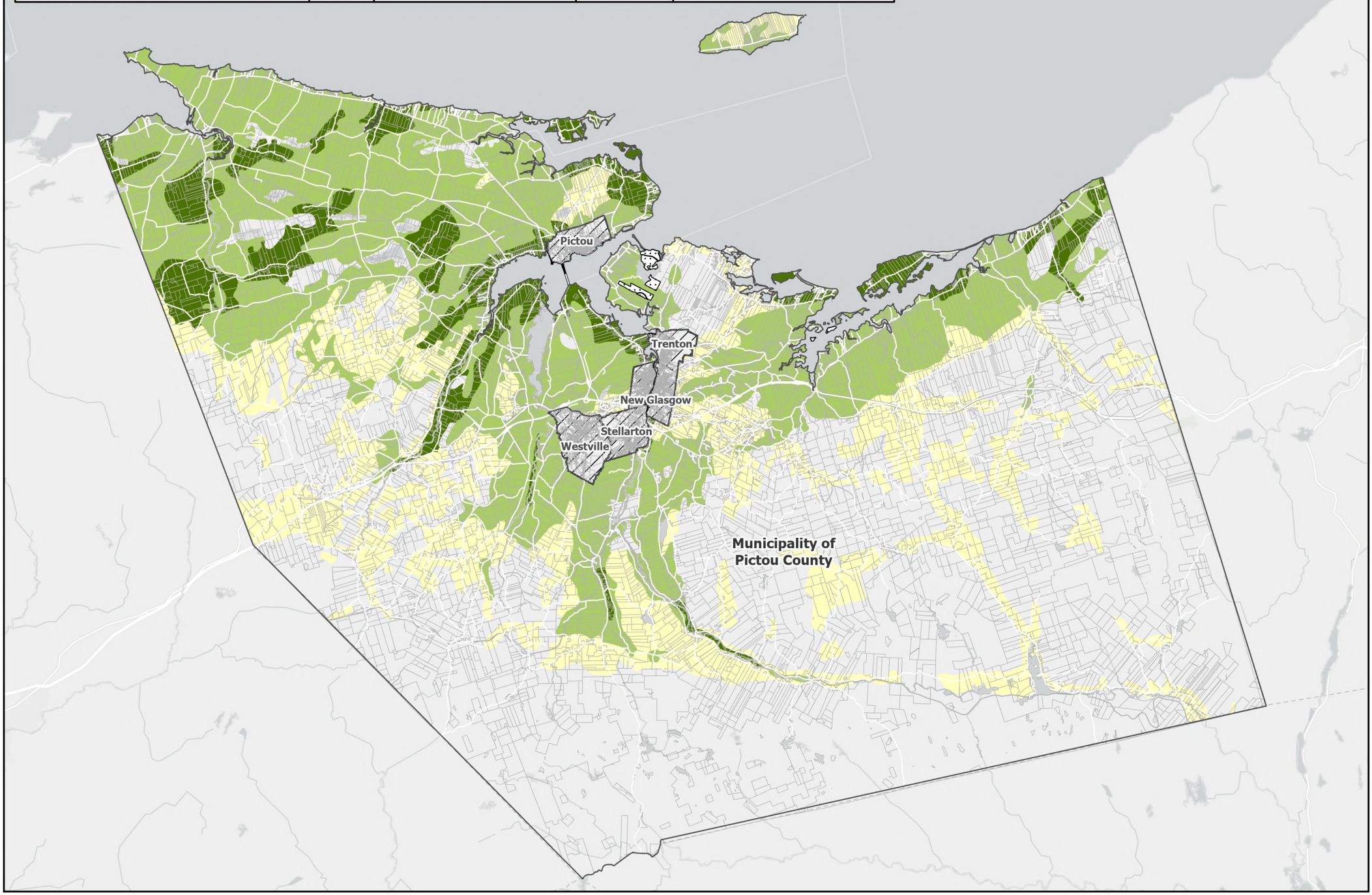
Last Updated: 2026.05.14

UPLAND PLANNING + DESIGN STUDIO

Data

Basemap: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Agricultural Soils: Government of Canada



MUNICIPALITY PICTOU COUNTY
INCORPD AD. 1879
NOVA SCOTIA