

Watercourse Alteration Certified Installers:

A New Training Program

The Opportunity

Nova Scotia is noted around the world for the many pristine lakes, brooks, streams and rivers. Protection of all these watercourses is ensured by the *Environment Act*.

Many kinds of businesses and organizations sometimes need to alter watercourses as part of their work. For instance, forestry contractors and companies that need to move harvesting equipment over watercourses often install temporary or permanent bridges or culverts to protect natural water features and ecosystems. Road builders often do the same to gain access and create routes as part of highway construction projects. Municipalities, construction companies and not-for-profit organizations often alter bodies of water for new development, to improve fish habitats or for many other reasons.

All of these activities are considered alterations under the Activities Designation Regulations, and require the approval of the Environmental Monitoring and Compliance Division of the Department of Environment and Labour. Under the *Environment Act*, the department has been designated as the lead agency to protect all watercourses within the jurisdiction of the Province.

In the past five years, the Department has received over 6,000 applications for watercourse alterations. With increased road-building, forestry, construction and other development activity in the province, plus increased habitat protection work, the number of applications is rising steadily each year.

Without certification, an individual or company wishing to carry out multiple watercourse alterations in a year is always required to apply for a separate approval for each one, and to pay a separate application fee for each.

The Response

To make this approval process more efficient and protective, the department has developed the Watercourse Alteration Certification Training Course. A good example of partnership in action, the course was developed with the collaborative expertise of New Brunswick department of Environment & Local Government, the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and the Maritime College of Forestry Technology. People who successfully complete the training course become eligible to apply for a Blanket Watercourse Alteration Approval. Under the Blanket Watercourse Alteration Approvals Process, certified individuals can now apply to do multiple alterations of the same type, with just one Approval for sites across the Province. Certification saves time and money – one application, one fee per application – regardless of how many alterations are required.

In order to become certified, individuals need to successfully complete a four-day course. Until recently, there was no such course available in Nova Scotia. Individuals who wanted training for watercourse alteration were forced to take a course that is tailored to New Brunswick, where it was offered, rather than one that addresses Nova Scotia's laws.

The new Watercourse Alteration Certification course helps participants learn to alter watercourses in an environmentally responsible way that continues to protect our natural features and ecosystems. It is open to anyone who plans, sizes, installs and/or supervises watercourse alterations such as single span bridges, culverts and temporary bridges.



Technical experts from Environment and Labour and DFO adapted the existing New Brunswick manual to address Nova Scotia standards. Other Environment and Labour personnel helped develop the full program. Staff from the Maritime College of Forest Technology deliver the course to participants at cost.

Topics covered in the course include standards for bridges, culverts and temporary bridges. It will soon expand to include: erosion protection as well as other alteration activities which have been deemed low risk by NSEL and DFO; environmental regulations and standards; impacts of watercourse alterations; planning the watercourse alteration; drainage control; structure maintenance; and how to avoid, or contain, petroleum or lubricant spills.

Six courses were offered in Nova Scotia in 2006. Demand for future courses is already growing.

Improving Competitiveness and Compliance

By making fewer applications and paying fewer fees, people holding the certificate can save companies and clients time and money. Equally important, all alterations performed under a blanket approval are done by certified individuals, which means that the environment is better protected.

In particular, the high calibre of training for watercourse installers has been praised by conservation and habitat enhancement stakeholders.

These changes support the goals of Environment and Labour's Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative. Our watercourses are better protected by certifying experts who will work and train in this Province. At the same time, unnecessary administrative costs of time and money for business are reduced. In addition, departmental staff spend less time doing paper work and more time in the field conducting audits of the watercourse alterations, which further protects the environment.

Staff working in any job that requires watercourse alteration are also assured that their training helps them comply with all Nova Scotia environmental legislation.

By allowing people to get valuable training in this field in Nova Scotia, Environment and Labour is giving a boost to the many enterprises who carry out or require watercourse alterations in the province. At the same time, the department does its duty; ensuring that our watercourses stay clean and pristine for future generations.

Where can I get information on the Watercourse Alteration Certification Program?

For information on future courses, contact Environmental Monitoring and Compliance Division at (902) 424-5300. You can also e-mail: emc@gov.ns.ca or contact your local EMC office. You can also find information about the course at the Maritime College of Forest Technology's website at: www.mcft.ca/for_sch.htm

About CCI

This initiative supports the goals of Environment and Labour's Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI). The CCI is a key part of *Better Regulation – Everyone's Business*, the Government of Nova Scotia's far-reaching plan for improving regulation in the province.

Environment and Labour is one of the main regulatory departments in Nova Scotia, and is changing the way laws are designed, communicated and enforced in Nova Scotia. Through the CCI, the department is taking a multi-year and systematic approach to making sure that our regulatory programs meet the needs of Nova Scotians. The Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative is working to make a brighter future for our people, economy, environment and communities.

Where can I get more information on the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative?

Find out more at: www.gov.ns.ca/enla/cci or call 902-424-3081



Environment and Labour