

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: How many kilometers of ditches does the City clean each year?**

**A:** The City has a goal to clean roughly 50kms per year but this amount varies depending on approvals, available resources and environmental windows.

**Q: What is the City's role in open drainage maintenance?**

**A:** The City inspects, prioritizes, and coordinates maintenance while complying with federal and provincial regulations.

**Q: Why can't the City clean ditches anytime?**

**A:** Regulatory Requirements and Permits:

- **Environmental Impact Assessments:** Some areas may require an environmental review or permit before cleaning can occur, especially if there's a risk of impacting protected species or habitats. In such cases, the City may be limited in how often they can conduct maintenance and cleaning.
- **Timing Restrictions:** There may be seasonal restrictions in place due to breeding seasons for wildlife (e.g., fish spawning). For example, cleaning certain ditches during the spring could disturb migrating fish or nesting birds, so the City might wait until a safer season to conduct maintenance.

**Q: What would happen if the City cleaned ditches without appropriate approval?**

### **A: 1. Violation of Environmental Regulations**

Many ditches in Chilliwack, especially those that are part of natural watercourses, are subject to **environmental protection laws**. For example, if a ditch is fish-bearing or near a sensitive ecosystem, any work (including cleaning) requires approval from government bodies such as the **Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)** or **BC Ministry of Environment**.

- **Fish Habitat:** If work is done during restricted times (like spawning season), it could disturb fish habitat, leading to legal consequences.
- **Riparian Zones:** Many ditches are part of riparian zones, which are protected under the **Riparian Areas Regulation**. Cleaning these ditches without approval might disturb wildlife habitats, potentially leading to fines or orders to restore the damage.

### **2. Fines and Penalties**

Failure to get proper approval before cleaning ditches could result in significant **fines or penalties** under both provincial and federal environmental laws. For example:

- The **Water Sustainability Act** in BC mandates that work around watercourses must be authorized if it affects water flow or quality.

- If approval is required and not obtained, the City could face enforcement actions, including legal suits from the province or federal government.

**Q: Does the City have to give notice to access open drainage that runs through my property?**

**A: When Notice is Required**

If the drainage system is part of a municipal easement or right-of-way, the City typically has the legal authority to access and maintain these systems without prior notice. In such cases, property owners are generally not entitled to advance notice.

However, if the City plans to undertake significant work that could impact your property, such as major repairs, upgrades, or construction activities, notice will be provided. This notice allows property owners to be informed about the scope of the work and any potential impacts.

**When Notice May Not Be Required**

In emergency situations, such as during a flood or other urgent drainage issues, the City may need to access drainage systems immediately to prevent damage or ensure public safety. In these cases, prior notice may not be feasible. However, the City is typically obligated to inform property owners as soon as possible after the emergency work has been completed.

**Q: What is classed as emergency work?**

**A:** Immediate risks to public safety, property, or the environment due to overland flooding from open drainage systems such as ditches, culverts, or watercourses.

**Q: When to call and when not to call**

**A: When Residents Should Report Drainage Concerns**

Residents are encouraged to **call in concerns about open drainage** when they involve:

- **Overland flooding** — water flowing over the ground, especially if it affects streets, properties, or public areas.
- **Blocked ditches or culverts** — if water isn't draining properly due to debris or structural failure.
- **Erosion or damage** — to public drainage infrastructure (e.g. collapsed ditches, exposed culverts).
- **Illegal dumping** — of materials into ditches or drainage channels.
- **Public safety hazards** — any condition that could pose a danger to pedestrians, vehicles, or property.

◇ **Always report overland flooding** — this indicates surface water is not draining properly and could lead to infrastructure damage or property loss.

### **When You Don't Need to Call**

You generally **do not need to report** if:

- The issue is related to **underground water table levels** (e.g. groundwater seepage into a basement).
- The drainage concern is **isolated to private property** and not affecting public infrastructure.
- There is minor standing water that does **not pose a safety or flooding risk**.

◇ **Basement leaks or groundwater seepage** are the responsibility of the property owner and are not considered a municipal drainage issue.