

From Data to Policy – Informing Ecological Connectivity in Rocky View County’s Municipal Development Plan

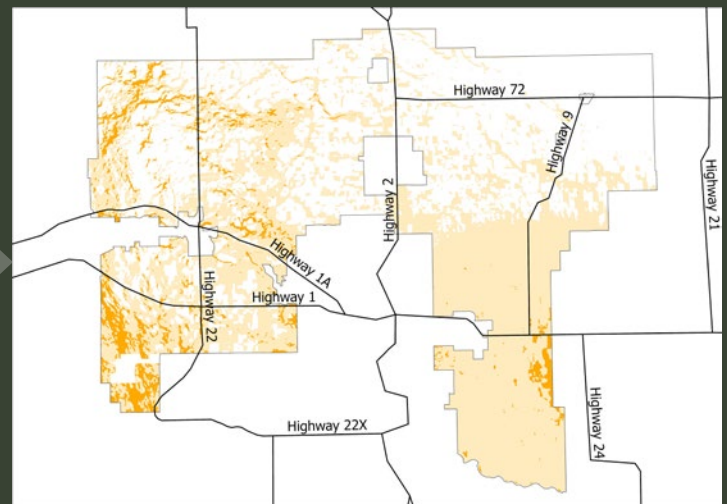
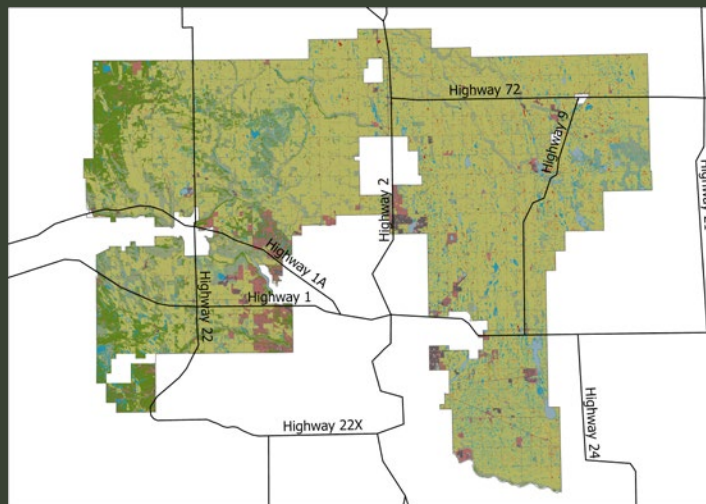


In 2024, Rocky View County worked with the Nature’s Network project, a regional effort to identify key natural areas and ecological corridors to keep wildlife moving. The result was a mapped ecological network to support local municipal planning.

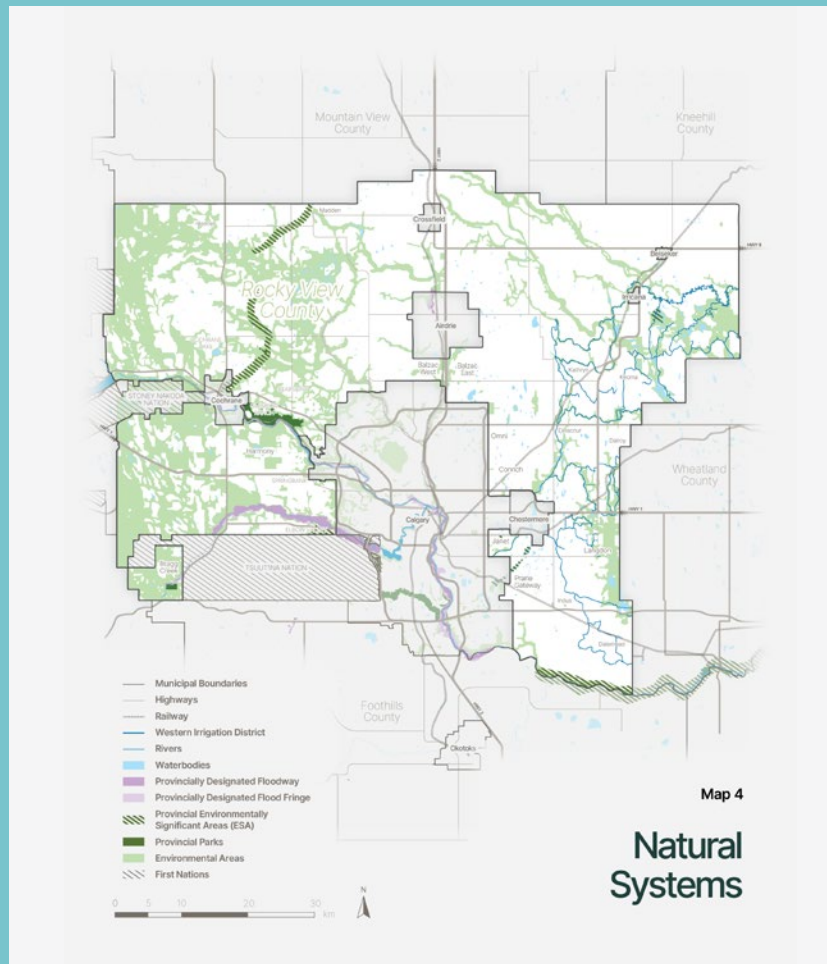
The Bow River Regional Wetlands Datasets (the datasets) were foundational in building the ecological network. The land cover data (top, right) was used to model how several wildlife species – mule deer, moose, bobcat, and cougar – use the landscape.

For example, the map (bottom, right) shows areas of high ecological connectivity for moose, displayed as orange gradient where darker orange indicates higher potential for moose movement.

These species models, combined with other tools (e.g., circuit theory and habitat network analysis) supported the creation of an ecological network of core areas and corridors (pathways where animals move between core areas).



The draft ecological network was refined at a workshop with municipal planners from Rocky View County who offered local insights to ensure the resulting network would be fit for use in the municipal planning process. This work led to the integration of the ecological network in **Rocky View County's updated Municipal Development Plan (MDP) in 2025** with plans to also incorporate it into intermunicipal development plans with neighbouring municipalities in the coming years.



Rocky View County's map of natural systems including the ecological network, as seen in their MDP.

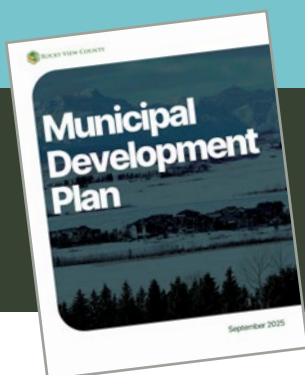
In Fall 2025, Rocky View County's Council adopted their new MDP to guide the growth of the county for the next 20 years. The MDP's environmental policies emphasize that the environment is an integral part of their community that must be evaluated during the development process to mitigate impacts.

The MDP states: "Development in the County should minimize land disturbance, preserve Environmental Areas, limit development in riparian areas, retain ecological networks, and ensure construction best practices are followed."

A delineated ecological network in the MDP supports County planning and agricultural staff by ensuring development proposals are reviewed from a broader County-wide ecological perspective.

"As the County continues to grow, it is important to take a county-wide, data-driven approach to identifying and protecting our natural systems. Incorporating an ecological network into the MDP helps mitigate development impacts to wildlife movement, habitat connectivity, and environmental resilience, supporting a balanced approach to growth. We look forward to working with our intermunicipal neighbours on ecological networks across our shared municipal boundaries as part of our Intermunicipal Development Plan work."

Devin LaFleche, Manager
Regional Planning, Rocky View County



To view the full **Rocky View County Municipal Development Plan (2025)** please visit the County's website at engage.rockyview.ca/municipal-development-plan

For more information on the wetlands datasets, please visit www.bowregionwetlands.ca

FUNDERS AND PARTNERS



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