

SUMMER VILLAGE OF WHITE SANDS

Prepared by: Administration

Number: P&R 4.6

Adopted by: White Sands Council

Date: February 17, 2026

Amended:

Resolution# 26:02:04

TITLE: P&R 4.6: Dead Standing Tree Management on Municipal Reserve and Recreation Lease Lands

1. Policy Statement

The Summer Village of White Sands will manage dead standing trees on Municipal Reserve (MR), Environmental Reserve (ER), and recreation lease lands in a manner that protects public safety, preserves shoreline integrity, mitigates fire risk, and respects municipal resource constraints.

This policy applies solely to municipally owned and managed lands and does not authorize or govern any work on privately owned property. Private property owners are solely responsible for managing trees located on their own lands.

The Summer Village recognizes that dead or fallen trees provide important habitat for wildlife and play a natural role in the forest ecosystem. In most cases, these trees should be left where they are. However, if a dead standing tree becomes a safety risk to people or property, , including a reasonable risk to adjacent private property, the Village may take steps to remove or reduce the hazard.

2. Purpose

To establish transparent procedures for identifying, approving, and removing dead standing trees on municipally owned or leased lands while minimizing ecological disturbance, ensuring resident safety, and limiting municipal liability.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- 3.1. All Municipal Reserve (MR), Environmental Reserve (ER) and other Reserve (R) lands.
- 3.2. Public lands or drainage rights-of-way leased to the municipality for recreational use.
- 3.3. Activities carried out by municipal staff, municipal contractors or approved residents.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Dead Standing Tree** means a tree that is lifeless, lacking live foliage, brittle, and structurally unstable along its entire height, such that failure is reasonably foreseeable.
- 4.2. **Emergent** means a situation or issue that arises suddenly and requires immediate attention or action.
- 4.3. **Lower Groundcover Vegetation** means native shrubs, seedlings, and grasses growing under tree canopies that stabilize soil and shoreline.
- 4.4. **Recreation Lease Lands** means public lands leased by the municipality from the province for recreation purposes.
- 4.5. **Municipal Reserve / Environmental Reserve Lands / Reserve** means lands set aside under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) for public or environmental purposes.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. **Council:** Approves and amends this policy.
- 5.2. **Chief Administrative Officer (CAO):** Oversees implementation, administration, and enforcement of this policy.
- 5.3. **Municipal Maintenance Staff:**
 - 5.3.1. Conduct shoreline and reserve inspections as needed or when directed.
 - 5.3.2. Review and Process tree removal application forms.
 - 5.3.3. Coordinate and record approved municipal removals within budget and staffing capacity.
 - 5.3.4. Assess reported concerns and determine whether municipal action is required based on risk, location, and policy criteria.
- 5.4. **Residents:**
 - 5.4.1. Reporting Concerns: Residents who observe a dead or hazardous tree on municipal lands that may pose a public safety concern may report it to the Village Office using the Tree Concern Reporting Form (Appendix A).
 - 5.4.2. Submission of a report does not obligate the municipality to remove the tree. Municipal Staff will inspect and determine whether action is warranted under this policy and available resources.
 - 5.4.3. Requesting Permission to Remove: Residents wishing to remove or undertake work on a suspected hazardous or dead standing tree located on municipal lands must first submit a Tree Removal Application Form (Appendix B) for review and written approval.
 - 5.4.4. If an application is denied, or if additional verification is required, the applicant may engage a registered arborist at their own expense to provide a professional assessment.
 - 5.4.5. All costs associated with private removals or arborist assessments are the sole responsibility of the applicant.
 - 5.4.6. Approved removals must include full cleanup and proper removal of all debris.

6. Municipal Removal Criteria & Procedures

A dead standing tree qualifies for municipal removal if it:

1. Poses an imminent hazard to municipal constructed roads, trails, or public access;
2. Threatens municipal infrastructure or shoreline stability; or
3. Obstructs municipal maintenance activities; or
4. Has a reasonable fall path that threatens adjacent private property where failure is foreseeable; or
5. Appropriate application for adjacent property owner is obtained.
6. Tree removal work will be scheduled based on available staffing and budget.
7. Public notices may be issued for tree removals that affect public areas but are not required for routine maintenance or minor removals.
8. Records will be kept for each tree removal, including location, removal date, and disposal method.

Tree removal is NOT permitted for view enhancement, creation of private trails or storage areas, or any other purpose not approved under this policy.

If the municipality determines that the tree is not going to be removed by the municipality, a resident may apply for removal at their cost.

7. Resident Removal Criteria & Requirements

Approved removals must:

1. Minimize disturbance to lower groundcover vegetation.
2. Felled trees may rest where they land and not be removed
3. Any salvaged firewood must be moved to private property and not stacked on the Municipal Reserve (MR)/Environmental Reserve Lands/Reserve.
4. Pass both pre-inspection and post-inspection by municipal staff.
5. Be completed within the timeframe specified in the approval. Where private property access is impractical, limited access through the shoreline or frozen ground (fall/winter period) may be approved to reduce disturbance and comply with environmental regulations.

8. Application and Approval Process

1. A Tree Removal Application is required for all requests to remove dead standing trees.
2. The application must include a location map clearly marking the property boundary and tree location(s).
3. Applicants must flag or visibly mark each tree in question for onsite review by municipal staff.
4. **Boundary Verification:** If there is uncertainty regarding whether the tree is on private or municipal land, the applicant may be required to provide a legal survey plan or Real Property Report confirming the tree location prior to approval.

5. Municipal staff will inspect the site within 14 days of receiving the completed application.
6. If tree condition is unclear, the applicant may be required to provide a certified arborist report at their expense.
7. A written decision will be issued within 21 days after submission of a complete application.

10. Timing and Access Restrictions

- 10.1 Shoreline areas and recreation lease lands:
 - 10.1.1 Vehicle access is not permitted during thaw periods or when conditions are soft, unstable or could cause rutting or shoreline damage.
 - 10.1.2 All cleanup and removal work must comply with Alberta Environment lease requirements and conditions.
- 10.2 Internal reserve Lands:
 - 10.2.1 Tree removals may occur at any time, following safe work and environmental practices, and seasonal access restrictions may be considered.
- 10.3 Emergency Removal:
 - 10.3.1 May occur at any time if necessary for safety or risk mitigation.

Reporting a concern does not guarantee municipal removal. The Village will determine appropriate action based on location, public safety risk, environmental considerations and available resources.

11. Fire Risk Mitigation

- 11.1. The municipality may issue annual advisories during poplar pollen season and dry conditions to inform residents of increased fire risks.
- 11.2. During high fire-risk periods, no tree removal permits will be issued to reduce the use of chainsaws and other spark producing tools.
- 11.3. The municipality will work with the Local Fire Department to monitor conditions, reduce fire risk and ensure compliance with local fire advisories.

12. Liability and Resource Limitations

- 12.1. The municipality limits its liability following inspections and authorized removals.
- 12.2. Continuous monitoring of all MR/ER lands is not guaranteed.
- 12.3. Resident participation is essential due to limited municipal staffing and budget constraints.
- 12.4. Unauthorized removals are subject to enforcement under municipal bylaws and applicable legislation.

Disclaimer: This policy governs trees located on municipally owned or leased lands only. The Summer Village bears no responsibility for trees on private property.

13. References

- 13.1. Municipal Government Act (RSA 2000, c. M-26)
- 13.2. Recreation Lease Agreement with Alberta Environment and Parks
- 13.3. Summer Village of White Sands Bylaws and Environmental Policies
- 13.4. Use of Public Lands Bylaw No. 198-23

14. Attachments

- 14.1. Attachment A – Tree Concern Reporting Form
 - For reporting suspected hazardous or dead standing trees on municipal lands.
- 14.2. Attachment B – Tree Removal Application Form
 - For requesting approval to remove a dead standing tree on municipal lands.
- 14.3. Attachment C – Municipal Tree Removal Record Form
 - Used by staff or internal documentation of inspections and removals.

Appendix A: Tree Concern Reporting Form

(For public reporting only – not a removal request)

Purpose:

This form allows residents to report a suspected hazardous or dead standing tree on municipal lands (Municipal Reserve, Environmental Reserve, or other municipal property). The report will assist staff in assessing potential public safety risks.

1. Reporter Information

- **Name:** _____
 - **Phone:** _____
 - **Email:** _____
 - **Mailing Address:** _____
-

2. Tree Location

- **Approximate Address or Legal Description:** _____
 - **Nearest Landmark (e.g., path, lot number, or lake access):** _____
-

3. Description of Concern

- Dead tree
- Structurally unstable tree
- Fallen tree creating hazard
- Other (please describe): _____

Describe the concern:

4. Photos (optional)

Attach or email photos showing the tree and surrounding area if available.

5. Signature

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For Office Use Only

- **Date Received:** _____
- **Inspected By:** _____
- **Inspection Date:** _____
- **Action Required:** Yes No
- **Notes / Follow-Up:** _____

Appendix B Tree Removal Application Form – Municipal Reserve and Recreation Lease Lands

For Dead Standing Trees on Municipal Reserve or Recreation Lease Lands

Applicant Information

NAME:	
MAILING ADDRESS:	
PHONE NUMBER:	
EMAIL ADDRESS:	

Property and Tree Location

CIVIC ADDRESS/LOT NUMBER ADJACENT TO TREE:	
LEGAL DESCRIPTION (if known):	
APPROXIMATE TREE LOCATION: (Check all that may apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjacent to my Property <input type="checkbox"/> Along municipal trail <input type="checkbox"/> Within shoreline recreation lease area

Attach a map or photo showing tree location.

Tree Information

NUMBER OF TREES REQUESTED FOR REMOVAL:	
DESCRIPTION (SPECIES, CONDITION, ESTIMATED HEIGHT):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tree appears dead <input type="checkbox"/> Tree poses hazard <input type="checkbox"/> Arborist Report Attached	
If more than one tree, provide additional details on a separate page.	

Access and Removal Plan

Describe how access and removal will be completed without causing damage to municipal lands:

Will debris be removed to private property? Yes No

Applicant Acknowledgment

I understand that:

- No work may begin until written approval is received from the Summer Village.
- Removal for view enhancement or private use is not permitted.
- All work and cleanup must be completed within the approved timeframe.
- Any required arborist assessments and all removal costs are the sole responsibility of the applicant
- The Municipality may inspect before- and after removal to confirm compliance.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Municipal Use Only

Date Received: _____ Inspection Date: _____

Inspection Completed: Approved Denied Inspection Completed by: _____

Inspection Notes:

Arborist Report Required: Yes No

Approval Date: _____

Completion Deadline: _____

Approved By: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Tree Removal Approval Letter Template

Date: _____

To: [Applicant Name]
[Mailing Address or Email]

Subject: Approval – Tree Removal Application on Municipal Reserve / Recreation Lease Lands

Dear [Applicant Name],

The Summer Village of White Sands has reviewed your Tree Removal Application dated [Application Date] for the identified dead standing tree(s) located adjacent to [Property Description].

Your request has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Removal is limited to the approved dead standing tree(s).
2. Minimize disturbance to lower groundcover vegetation.
3. Coordinate with the Local Fire Department during dry conditions.
4. Feld trees may rest where they land and not be removed
5. Any salvaged firewood must be moved to private property and not stacked on the Municipal Reserve (MR)/Environmental Reserve Lands/Reserve.
6. Notify the Summer Village Office for post-removal inspection.
7. Be completed within the timeframe specified in the approval. Where private property access is impractical, limited access through the shoreline or frozen ground (fall/winter period) may be approved to reduce disturbance and comply with environmental regulations. All work must be completed by [Deadline Date].

Unauthorized removal or disturbance remains prohibited and may result in enforcement action.

Sincerely,

[Name]
Chief Administrative Officer
Summer Village of White Sands

2a. The applicant is required to clearly map and flag the dead standing tree(s) in question before inspection to assist municipal staff in accurate identification.

Municipal Tree Removal Record Form

For Municipal Use – Documentation of Tree Removal Activity

Tree Location: _____

Inspection Date: _____

Removal Date: _____

Disposal Method: _____

Staff Name: _____

Notes: _____