



## Policy Title: Mulching Road Allowances

<b>Policy Area:</b> Transportation Services	<b>Effective Date:</b> April 28, 2021
<b>Policy Section:</b> Mulching Road Allowances	<b>Updated: September 27, 2023</b> Changed mulching timeframe from “October 15 to March 15” to “August 31 to March 15, as per September 26, 2023 email from Ecological Advisor, with additional considerations for certain conditions/ locations.
<b>Supersedes Policy:</b> 430/23 Changed mulching timeframe from “August 15 to March 15” to “October 15 to March 15”, as per March 3, 2023 email from Ecological Advisor, 562/22 Approved November 8, 2022, 227/21 Approved April 28, 2021, #519/19 approved December 11, 2019	<b>Approved on: September 27, 2023</b> <b>Resolution: 523/23</b> <b>Next Review Date:</b> This Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years or earlier, in the event of major changes to legislation or related policies and procedures, or if deemed necessary by the Chief Administrative Officer and/or Operations Manager

### **Policy Statement:**

The Rural Municipality of Britannia No. 502 understands the importance of proper sight lines at intersections and around curves, providing visible warning signs, and in ensuring the safety and integrity of the road structure with both surfaced and gravel roads.

### **Purpose & Rationale:**

Safety is a main concern on municipal roads. Safety cannot be achieved without a good maintenance program, and part of the program is ongoing review of roads to identify hazards. One potential hazard is vegetation. Trees close to the road can present a fixed object hazard, brush and tree limbs can obscure or limit a drivers view of traffic, approaching vehicles and wildlife, as well as the visibility of warning signs. Controlling vegetation helps reduce crashes and injuries. Removal of trees close to the roadway could eliminate a severe crash if hit.

Vegetation in municipal ditches can impede water flow resulting in improper drainage. Improper drainage can lead to standing water, which over time, may undermine the strength of the road. When vegetation (particularly evergreens) cast shadows on the road, freeze thaw cycles may create isolated patches on the road (particularly hard surfaced roads). These patches may not be expected



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by drivers and can easily cause loss-of-control crashes. Vegetation can also trap snow and can prevent road surfaces from drying by blocking the sun and wind, resulting in a wet and muddy road.

Removal of vegetation from municipal ditches can increase snow storage space. Vegetation removal may also be necessary to help facilitate road construction. To prevent any harm to migratory birds during their nesting period, all mulching work will be performed between August 31 and March 15. This time frame is generally accepted as the appropriate period for mulching in this region, as communicated by the Sask Environment District 8 Ecological Advisor.

The RM may need to mulch outside the road allowance if sightlines still pose a hazard, or for other reasons. No work will take place on private property until a written agreement is in place with the landowner, as well as other permits or approvals that may be required.

Municipal road allowances are under the control of the RM, and as such, the RM is not required to consult with, nor gain approval from, the abutting landowner or lessee when doing works within the road allowance. Notwithstanding, the RM will make every effort to consult with an abutting landowner or lessee to ensure that, if at all possible, homes and livestock confinement areas that utilize the roadside trees and brush for shelter, are not negatively impacted.

### **Definitions:**

Hard surface road: means a road with a surface covering of either chip seal or hot mix asphalt

Hazard: means any source of potential damage or harm to something.

Mulching: means the mechanical use of a machine to shred trees and brush into mulch chips that are left to naturally decompose over time.

Municipal Ditch: means the area of municipal right of way owned or managed by the R.M. of Britannia No. 502, starting from the edge of the travelled road surface to the edge of the adjacent property line (which may or may not have a fence line). The primary purpose of this land is for drainage, snow storage, information signage and for roadside infrastructure (telecommunications and gas utility corridor).

RM: means the Rural Municipality of Britannia No. 502

Road allowance: means a road allowance as defined within *The Municipalities Act*.

Spotter: means a person who looks for or observes for something



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Vegetation: means all plants, shrubs, brush and trees growing within an area

### **Responsibilities:**

The Chief Administrative Officer, in consultation with the Operations Manager, is responsible for maintaining and updating this policy

The Operations Manager is responsible for:

- a) Ensuring the appropriate resources (manpower and equipment) are trained, operational and available to perform this activity, when seasonal conditions are appropriate.
- b) Reviewing municipal road allowances to determine if there are any areas where vegetation is an issue.
- c) Planning the mulching program each year by creating a list of mulching areas, with specifics on what work is to be done at each site, along with any abutting landowner concerns, including a list of hazards such as fence lines, utilities, utility markers, and/or rock piles. If at all possible, the potential mulching areas are to be reviewed during the summer months, in order to properly recognize hazards that may exist, especially fence lines or rock piles. Planning also includes notation on which roads can be closed during the mulching process and which roads must remain open. As well, and, if necessary, a notation on the requirement for a spotter at a particular location.
- d) Keeping an updated listing of areas mulched and determining, if mowing isn't possible, areas which may be in need of chemical spraying.
- e) Communicating with the adjacent landowner if it appears that there may be a reduction or elimination of a possible shelterbelt.
- f) Communicating with the adjacent landowner where mulching is to take place, to determine if they would like the fence line mulched, at no cost to them, while the RM equipment is at this site. Provisions to this work would be on the condition that the RM is not responsible to remove or replace the fence once mulching is complete and any residual mulch, twigs or branches is acceptable to the landowner. The Operations Manager will ensure that a written agreement to this effect has been secured, prior to any work taking place.



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- g) Acquiring written agreements with landowners, if mulching works are to be done outside the road allowance.
- h) Contacting utility companies to obtain permission, if mulching works will be done in close proximity to overhead power lines, or other above ground utilities.
- i) Reviewing upcoming construction and maintenance programs to ensure any mulching works needed for these projects have been completed prior to these projects taking place, while taking into account the regional mulching period of August 31 to March 15.
- j) Review of the area mulched to ensure there is no debris left on the road surface which could pose a hazard to the travelling public.
- k) Reviewing areas mulched the following spring and in subsequent months, to ensure that mulched product hasn't plugged any downstream culverts.

The Public Works Staff and/or any contractor hired under agreement, are responsible to be aware of, and follow, the R.M. of Britannia No. 502 Ditch Mowing policy, and are further responsible for:

- a) Understanding that mulching works may only take place between August 31 and March 15.
- b) Following the mulching program developed and set out by the Operations Manager.
- c) Reviewing each mulching site prior to starting work, to familiarize themselves with the area and any existing hazards or concerns, and if possible, marking the hazards so that they are easily seen when operating the mulching equipment. If a hazard exists that wasn't previously identified, determining the best course of action to take, and advising the Operations Manager of the hazard and the action, if any, to be taken.
- d) Ensuring proper signage is used and placed properly, as well as being removed at the end of each workday.
- e) Using a spotter if the area to mulched has heavy traffic and is not able to be closed. Or, if the area to be mulched has limited sightline and traffic will need to be warned that work is taking place.



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- f) Watching to ensure that debris from mulching isn't inadvertently ending up on the road, and if it is, recognizing this as a potential hazard and contacting the appropriate person and/or Operations Manager to ensure the debris is disposed of promptly.
- g) If a fence within the mulching area has been inadvertently damaged, contacting the appropriate person and/or the Operations Manager to report the damage.
- h) Operating the equipment in a safe manner being mindful of the possibility of traffic and if able, stopping mulching until the vehicle has passed.

### **Policy:**

#### **1 General**

- (1) The R.M. of Britannia No. 502 will make an effort to use their equipment and manpower to mulch areas in need of vegetation removal and will be respectful of regionally appropriate mulching period of August 31 to March 15.
  - (a) A contractor will be employed if RM manpower and equipment isn't available.
- (2) Mulching activities will take place under dry or frozen conditions and wetlands will be avoided where practical.
  - (a) Hand clearing of wetlands and riparian boundaries is generally required.
  - (b) If equipment needs to work within any wetlands, an Aquatic Habitat Protection Permit is required.

#### **2 Areas to be Mulched**

- (1) The top priority for mulching is safety, which includes intersections, access points, signage visibility, curves, and any other locations within the road allowance deemed to be a hazard to the travelling public.
- (2) Other areas to be mulched are:
  - (a) Construction or maintenance areas where the RM will be doing work and vegetation needs to be removed;
  - (b) Winter maintenance – insufficient areas for snow windrows on roadside (areas that have snow drifting problems);
  - (c) Summer maintenance – areas that are heavily treed and do not dry out quickly;
  - (d) Accessibility of agricultural equipment (brushing road allowances to allow for the passage of larger, wider farm implements) – these areas are usually received in the form of a request from a landowner for this service.



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- (i) Unless these areas are already on the Operations Managers list, these requests will be submitted to Council for their review and approval, prior to any work being done.
- (e) Private fence lines in areas where mulching is to take place, provided the landowner is in favour and signs a written agreement allowing the RM to do this work, and that the RM is not responsible to remove or replace the fence once mulching is complete, nor is responsible for any residual mulch, twigs or debris left behind.

### 3 Spraying Mulched Locations

- (1) By April 1 of each year, the previous year's brushing locations, where mowing isn't possible, will be forwarded to the RM's spraying operator in order to have these locations added to the areas to be sprayed in the current year.

APPROVED