

Natural Burials in HRM

A Sustainable Alternative to the Modern Cemetery

Theresa Piorkowski | December 9, 2009 | Plan 6000

Natural burials are a means of returning the body to the earth in a manner that does not inhibit decomposition and allows the body to recycle naturally. It is intended as an environmentally sustainable alternative to existing burial practices.

Principles of Natural Burials

No Embalming, No Headstones, No Traditional Caskets,
No Fertilizers, No Greenhouse Gas Emissions,
Minimal Use of Land, Reuse of Land

Criteria For Siting Natural Burial Cemeteries

Temperature
Soil Moisture Content
Microorganisms and Soil Depth
Soil pH
Burial Practices
Accessibility
Distance to Watercourses

Recommended Additions to Policy Documents

Cemeteries Protection Act:

- "Natural Burial" definition that indicates natural burials do not need gravemarkers.
- Clause that permits reuse of burial plot after 100 years.

Cemeteries By-Law:

- A section in the by-law that concerns Natural Burial Cemeteries. The section should be written to incorporate principles of natural burials.
- Revise Schedule B- Costs, to include costs of natural burial.

"From my rotting body, flowers shall grow and I am in them and that is eternity."

~ Edvard Munch

Phase One Site Assessment for Natural Burial Cemetery Capability in the HRM

Location Address: 255 Bissett Road, Cole Harbour Name: Theresa Piorkowski
GPS Coordinates: 44 39'45 N, 63 28'10 W Date: October 31, 2009

Section 1: Required Criteria

Place a check mark (✓) beside each environmental criteria if it has been met. All criteria in this section must be satisfied before recommending the Phase Two Site Assessment. Add notes or comments to clarify the site assessment.

Criteria	Comments
Distance to water from edge of burial field: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> streams (min 30.5 metres) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> rivers (min 30.5 metres) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wetlands (min 30.5 metres) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> lakes (min 30.5 metres) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ocean (min 30.5 metres) <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ Distance to water wells from edge of burial field: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> drilled well (min 15.2 metres) <input type="checkbox"/> dug well (min 30.5 metres) <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Soil depth (min 2.0 metres) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Soil drainage (moderately-well to well drained) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Slope (maximum 8.3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the closest water body to the site is a stream, approximately 100 metres from the property edge. Bissett lake is immediately adjacent to the site; however, steep slopes can act as a buffer- no burial to take place here. • the closest drilled well is approximately 70 metres from the property edge. • no dug wells located nearby. • soil type is Wolfville (according to soil map). Wolfville soil and Surficial geology- Silty Till Plain (on surficial geology map) indicate that soil depth exceeds 2.0 metres. • Maximum slope is 7.00% on east facing slope, and is maximum 27% on west facing slope- this could be a buffer zone from the lake.

Section 2: Recommended Criteria

Place a check mark (✓) beside each social criteria if it has been met. Satisfying all criteria in this section is not mandatory; however, it is recommended that a minimum of 3 criteria be met in order to achieve some natural burial principles. Add notes or comments to clarify the site assessment.

Criteria	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scenic views from the site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreation trails at or nearby the site <input type="checkbox"/> Woodland setting Accessibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> near residential community <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> adjacent to major road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scenic views of Cole Harbour and Cole Harbour Heritage Park. Top of drumlin over-looks Bissett Lake. • Cole Harbour Heritage Park is across Bissett Road with 30+ trails for hiking • access from Bissett Road and nearby Cole Harbour Community.

Section 3: Recommendation

Comments: The site meets all required environmental criteria and four of five recommended criteria.
Phase two, detailed site assessment is recommended.

Select one of the following:

- Additional Phase One site assessment required
- Proceed with Phase Two site assessment
- Not recommended as natural burial cemetery