



## WHY DOES ONTARIO NEED THE SERA STANDARDS?

For years the licensing of aggregate operations in Ontario has been characterized by conflicts that contribute to a regulatory process that is lengthy, expensive and highly contentious. SERA is a groundbreaking new not-for-profit that aims to reduce years of conflict by developing a world-class certification system that recognizes responsibly sourced aggregates.

*In the opinion of BuildGreen Solutions, the SERA Standards are "the most rigorous and comprehensive standards related to aggregate extraction we were able to find" – BuildGreen Solutions\**

In an online comparison of similar standards BuildGreen Solutions found the *Draft* SERA Standards to be "the most rigorous and comprehensive standards related to aggregate extraction we were able to find." The Standards provide a new path forward, satisfying demand for responsibly sourced building materials by certifying aggregate sites that:

- Provide a reliable long-term supply of responsibly sourced aggregate materials;
- Protect our landscape's most ecologically and hydrologically important natural areas;
- Meaningfully engage local communities and First Nations groups before extraction begins and throughout the lifecycle of operations;
- Define time limits for extraction and require site-specific phasing plans that incorporate communities' interests;
- Offer aggregate purchasers the ability to leverage their purchasing power and request responsibly sourced aggregate materials.

### WHAT ARE AGGREGATES?

Aggregate is a term used to describe the stone, sand and gravel essential to the construction of highways, dams and airports as well as homes, schools, hospitals and hundreds of other structures that benefit our communities.

Ontario's municipalities consumed an average of 55 Million tonnes of aggregate each year from 1996 - 2008. They are essential to our society's way of life.

#### Resource Management Standards

Other resource management standards have been extremely successful in reducing conflict and improving best practices without increasing cost or government regulation.

Examples of other successful resource standards include:

- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
- FairTrade

Unfortunately, aggregate extractions often come hand-in-hand with community concerns over environmental, wildlife and hydrogeological impact, noise, air pollution, truck traffic, perceived reductions in property values, and – in some instances – a legacy of abandoned pits and quarries. In Ontario, these concerns are aggravated by unique geographic challenges that create further considerations for siting and operating aggregate sites.

*\*SERA staff commissioned BuildGreen Solutions to conduct an online review of existing aggregate standards compared with SERA's Draft Standards. BuildGreen Solutions is one of Canada's leading sustainable consulting services and has been integral in the planning and development of many LEED certified projects.*



## What do the SERA Standards offer our natural environment?

### Fixed term licenses:

- Under current licenses aggregate operations have no fixed end date, meaning they could continue operating forever. The *Draft* SERA Standards require aggregate operations to specify a defined period of time of extraction and a phasing plan that involves input from a Public Advisory Committee.

### Commitment to efficient resource use:

- Aggregate operators who are SERA certified will commit to the efficient use and conservation of aggregates and other resources. This is achieved by using fewer materials, reusing materials, and employing recycled content whenever possible. Certified operators will also pursue optimal use of existing sites and transportation networks.

### Best operational practices:

- The *Draft* SERA Standards reinforces new best practices for the operation of aggregate sites. Included in these best practices are mitigation of noise, protection of air quality (vehicle emissions and dust), safeguarding of water quality and quantity, and minimization of Green House Gas emissions and other pollutants.

### Meaningful community engagement:

- The *Draft* SERA Standards require aggregate sites to undergo meaningful consultation with local communities and other stakeholders by creating and resourcing a Public Advisory Committee before aggregate extraction begins and lasting throughout the operation's life cycle.

### Protection of priority natural areas from aggregate siting:

- SERA proposes setting aside vast areas that will not be eligible for certification. Under existing regulatory statutes 410,000 hectares are off limits to aggregate extraction. SERA would more than double that amount. In addition, the *Draft* Standards include "Maybe" and "Go Carefully" areas where special consideration must be given and specified requirements undertaken before aggregate extraction may occur.

### Net-gain replacement increases of protected spaces:

- The *Draft* SERA Standards require that when aggregate operations occupy areas of ecological and hydrological importance the features, functions and linkages are replaced at a higher ratio elsewhere on the site or offsite in the same ecological region. Temporal limits are also required. This major step forward will result in large new areas being turned over to public ownership.

One of the more contentious land use planning issues in Ontario is deciding where aggregate operations may be located and under what conditions –

*Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Building Resilience, ECO Annual Report, 2008-09*

## What will SERA certification mean for the aggregate industry?

### Improved processes:

- Currently, the licensing of an aggregate operation is an extremely lengthy and expensive process with uncertain outcomes in Ontario. The *Draft* SERA Standards offer a reliable tool for determining which aggregate sites meet or exceed best management practices by offering independent certification. This tool should help to reduce historically confrontational situations.

### Improved community relations:

- Establishing Public Advisory Committees before aggregate extraction begins, as proposed in the *Draft* SERA Standards, allows aggregate operators to better understand and meet the needs of local communities from the beginning. Through this process, there should be increased collaboration between industry and community groups.

### Clear direction to secure Ontario's natural legacy:

- The *Draft* SERA Standards offer protection of Ontario's natural environment for future generations by providing clear and auditable requirements that demonstrate a site's efforts to address environmental concerns. The Net Gain approach allows operators to reduce impacts to the Natural Heritage System.

### The ability to satisfy purchaser needs:

- SERA certification will offer purchasers access to a reliable and traceable source of responsibly extracted aggregate materials.

