

BCSLA DIGITAL SEAL POLICY

This policy was first drafted by the BCSLA in October 2017. It contains guidance and establishes professional standards on the use of digital certificate technology to sign, seal, and deliver documents electronically pursuant to the *BCSLA Bylaws and Standards of Professional Conduct and Practice*.

Prior to this policy, the BCSLA had not sanctioned the application of a digital image of a landscape architect's professional seal to documents requiring a signature and seal. The society's concerns related to public protection, regulatory requirements of the Architects (Landscape) Act, security of the seal, and document integrity. As a result, any document requiring a landscape architect's seal had to be physically printed out and then dated, signed and hand-sealed.

Modern legislation (the *Electronic Transactions Act*) is in place in British Columbia that makes electronic documents as enforceable as printed documents, and allows for digital production and electronic delivery of landscape architectural instruments of service. These modern concepts related to electronic documents and transactions can be applied, allowing "electronic signature, seal and delivery", as long as adequate measures are in place to ensure:

- the security and verification of electronic documents; and
- the regulation of use and revocation of a landscape architect's seal.

The reference to documents in this policy includes paper and electronic versions.

Any document to which a landscape architect's seal must be applied and which is to be transmitted electronically must be signed, sealed and dated with a digital certificate as described in this policy. No other means of sealing an electronically transmitted document which must be sealed is acceptable.

Terminology

- Digital signature/ Digital signing certificate

Cryptographically protected information in which the veracity of the certificate details is certified by a Certificate Authority.

- Digital Seal

Digital signatures that includes additional information regarding the professional affiliation of the Registered Landscape Architect which is cryptographically asserted and controlled by BCSLA.

- Electronic impression, Electronic Seal or image of a stamp

The visual reproduction of a physical seal resulting from scanning an imprint of the seal that may also contain the visual image of the hand-written signature of a landscape architect, the date and the time.

Use of a BCSLA Digital Seal

If a Registered Landscape Architect chooses to finalize a document electronically, they shall use the BCSLA Digital Seal (Digital Signature provided by BCSLA).

Electronic impressions and seals shall not be used for the purpose of authenticating original documents. They shall not be confused with digital signatures or digital seals.

An image alone of a seal is not secure, and any such document is vulnerable to being seamlessly modified and used by others without the issuing landscape architect's knowledge or authorization. It is fundamentally important to the

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protection of the public that the seal applied by a Registered Landscape Architect is reliable, i.e. that it can be relied upon as being accurate and not having been tampered with. Hence, the Digital Seal is required for documents that are authenticated electronically. The digital seal confirms that the document was signed by a BCSLA Registered Landscape Architect and that the content of the document has not changed since it was signed.

BCSLA Registered Landscape Architect shall ensure that their digital seal remains under their control to prevent unauthorized use and to maintain trust in the BCSLA Digital Seal. Also, the BCSLA Registered Landscape Architect must always retain exclusive control of the use of the digital seal. Authority to use one's digital seal shall not be delegated to anyone nor shall the personal security codes enabling use of the digital seal be shared.

Although the security of the digitally signed and sealed document is verified through the digital certificate, an image of the landscape architect's seal (exact replica of the stamp after being scanned) and the digital signature may be applied to the document as part of the digital signing and sealing process. The digital certificate can also be applied to an image of a Registered Landscape Architect's signature or initials.

Obtaining your BCSLA Digital Seal

Registered Landscape Architects who wish to send sealed documents electronically must purchase a licence to use their BCSLA Digital Seal, controlled through the use of a secure password and possession of a digital certificate. To apply for a digital certificate, visit the BCSLA section on the Notarius website at: <https://notarius.com/bcsla>.

The Member must abide by all Use of Stamp matters as detailed in the BCSLA Bylaws. At the time that the physical stamp is returned to the society, the Member must also destroy the digital stamp file.

Please see the attached BCSLA Bylaws Excerpt. A complete copy of the Bylaws is available at www.bcsla.org.

Excerpts From the BCSLA Bylaws:

Use of Title and Stamp: Registered Landscape Architect

- 2.4** *Every person who is a Registered Member in good standing of the Society is entitled to use the designation “Registered Landscape Architect”; no person who is not a Member in good standing of the Society may assume or use that designation in any manner or represent that he or she is entitled to do so.*
- 2.5** *A Landscape Architect must apply to the Board to use the title “Registered Landscape Architect” or “Landscape Architect” or; “Landscape Architects” or “Landscape Architecture” in a firm or company name registered in British Columbia for a landscape architecture practice employing one or more Landscape Architects. The Board may allow such use of the title, subject to a written agreement of terms and conditions set by the Board, and duly entered into by the Landscape Architect. Use of the title by the subject firm or company may continue only on strict compliance with the terms and conditions of such agreement.*
- 2.6** *The Registrar will provide each Registered Landscape Architect with a professional stamp or seal, the impression of which will contain,*
- (a) the name of the Registered Landscape Architect;*
 - (b) the designation “Registered Member, British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects”, and;*
 - (c) the registration number of the Registered Landscape Architect, from the Registrar of Members.*
- 2.7** *The Registered Landscape Architect will use an original impression of the stamp or seal, together with the Registered Landscape Architect’s signature and date, on all original drawings and specifications from his or her practice for use in the Province as documents of record, appeal permit or construction, or to evidence professional review or opinion, and as otherwise required or deemed prudent by the Registered Landscape Architect; no Registered Landscape Architect shall affix his or her stamp or seal, or sign, any drawings or specifications that:*
- (a) the Registered Landscape Architect has not prepared; or*
 - (b) the Registered Landscape Architect’s staff, contractors or consultants have not prepared under the Registered Landscape Architect’s supervision.*
- 2.8** *All stamps issued by the Registrar remain property of the Society; and must be returned to the Registrar by registered mail when a Registered Landscape Architect ceases to be a Member of the Society.*
- and**
- 2.15** *A Member approved for Landscape Architect status will not represent himself or herself as a Registered Landscape Architect. A Landscape Architect will not use a stamp or seal of the profession*
- and**
- 2.19** *A Member approved for retired status will represent himself or herself as a Retired Landscape Architect. A Retired Landscape Architect will not use a stamp or seal of the profession.*
- and**
- 2.45** *A person shall cease to be a Member of the Society:*
- (a) on resigning by written notice to the Registrar and returning his/her stamp by registered mail to the address of the Society;*