

**Ministry of Environment
Including
Environmental Assessment Office**

**REVISED 2011/12 – 2013/14
SERVICE PLAN**

May 2011



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Published by the Ministry of Environment

Message from the Minister and Accountability Statement



I am pleased to present the *Revised 2011/12 – 2013/14 Service Plan* for the Ministry of Environment and the Environmental Assessment Office.

The prosperity of our province and the health of our families depend on leadership in ensuring our natural legacy for future generations and supporting positive economic outcomes for B.C. The Ministry provides environmental leadership through developing policy, building knowledge, developing partnerships, encouraging innovation and providing environmental services. We focus on policy development related to water, air, ecosystems and species protection and conservation priorities. We continue to build a knowledge base of robust scientific information and ecological knowledge related to parks, wilderness and protected areas. Government, industry, individuals and communities are working together to promote, support and engage in environmental stewardship. We also provide environmental assessment and enforcement, and environmental monitoring, reporting and emergency response services. All this work is done so that British Columbia's families can continue to live in a healthy, sustainable environment now and in the future.

The Parks 100 celebration, which marks the 100th birthday of BC Parks in 2011, will be held in parks across the province throughout 2011. The celebrations will engage rural and urban communities, First Nations, youth and sectors such as arts, heritage and tourism, and promote a variety of conservation projects. The Parks 100 celebration showcases the Ministry's ongoing initiatives related to conservation, outdoor recreation, education and scientific study; all important to the health and welfare of our families.

Climate change continues to be a key priority for British Columbia. The Ministry of Environment leads climate change initiatives through the Climate Action Secretariat with a goal of achieving a 33 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050. B.C. has put in place the most comprehensive carbon price in North America through the revenue neutral carbon tax, was host to a carbon neutral Olympics, and this year the province becomes a Carbon Neutral Government. B.C. has demonstrated leadership in ways that others are now following. For example, B.C.'s early commitment to California-level tailpipe standards for greenhouse gases has now been adopted by the federal government as a Canada-wide standard. The Climate Action Secretariat is working across government and with industry, communities, other governments and stakeholders to develop and implement actions that will reduce greenhouse gases, adapt to the impacts of climate change, and promote new low carbon economic opportunities. The Globe Foundation in a recent report indicates that B.C. can further leverage its many current low carbon advantages, such as its hydroelectricity and natural gas resources, its high tech industrial clusters, its quality of life, its Pacific Gateway location, and particularly its strong climate and clean energy policies to produce a vibrant, high growth economy with good value-added jobs.

More progress to protect species at risk is anticipated with the recent delivery of the British Columbia Species at Risk Task Force recommendations. The recommendations will help government update its vision for the conservation of species and ecosystems at risk and ensure British Columbia remains a leader in environmental sustainability.

Working with external partners and other ministries to deliver B.C.'s comprehensive Living Water Smart Plan also remains a top priority. We are moving forward with a positive agenda that includes modernizing the *Water Act*. This critical piece of legislation is essential for responding to current challenges such as population growth and climate change. The Ministry will continue to lead the policy development vital to modernizing the Act, while working closely with the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations, which is responsible for the Act's administration.

Waste management and recycling continue to be priorities over the next three years. The Ministry will be working with its partners to expand the recycling program in an effort to further reduce the number of items entering the solid waste stream.

Ensuring compliance with and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations remain key Ministry responsibilities. The work of Ministry staff is focused on preventing environmental, human health and safety issues before they occur and aims at deterring the violation of environmental laws.

We remain committed to working with stewardship organizations, communities, industry, the federal government and other Ministry partners to ensure the continued health of B.C.'s marine ecosystems and their ability to support a strong, diverse economy and thriving communities. By signing on to the Pacific Coast Collaborative, we have agreed to join our neighbouring states in taking action to address issues of shared concern in our ocean and coastal areas, including invasive species, marine debris, input of toxins to marine environments and fisheries sustainability.

In all of these areas, the Ministry of Environment is committed to be open with its clients, industry and stakeholders so they have the information they need to make decisions and track the progress of our work.

The demand for comprehensive and timely environmental assessment of major economic development projects in British Columbia by the Environmental Assessment Office continues. The potential capital investment for projects currently in the environmental assessment process is estimated to be \$27 billion. Environmental assessment evaluates proposed major projects for potential adverse environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects, and develops mitigation for those effects in the form of changes to project scope, design, construction and/or operation. Only those projects that can be undertaken in a sustainable manner, considering project benefits as well as potential adverse effects after mitigation, will be certified to proceed. Consultation with First Nations and engagement with the public and other interested parties are key elements in the process.

A significant number of proposed projects require assessment under both provincial and federal law. The Environmental Assessment Office works closely with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, and other federal agencies, to conduct comprehensive reviews in a timely manner, while minimizing duplication and maximizing efficiencies. For example, the federal government has delegated, for the first time, federal review responsibilities to the Environmental Assessment Office for the environmental assessment of the proposed Northwest Transmission Line and Line Creek Operations Phase II projects. In addition, the Environmental Assessment Office continues to pursue equivalency with the federal government as a means to achieving the goal of one project – one review.

This is an exciting time for British Columbians – we have a new Premier and a new commitment to families, jobs and open government, and the Ministry of Environment is determined to contribute to the success of these priorities.

The *Ministry of Environment including the Environmental Assessment Office Revised 2011/12 – 2013/14 Service Plan* was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Lake", is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Honourable Terry Lake
Minister of Environment
May 2, 2011

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Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry supports government goals and initiatives by:

- Managing and delivering a wide range of programs and services that support the Province's environmental, economic and societal goals.
- Leading the world in sustainable environmental management by ensuring clean and safe water, land and air, and healthy and diverse native species and ecosystems.
- Leading implementation of the Climate Action Plan through the Climate Action Secretariat.
- Promoting outdoor recreational opportunities, such as exploring B.C.'s parks.

The Ministry promotes stewardship and sustainability by:

- Encouraging environmental stewardship, engaging stakeholders and the public, and actively promoting the sustainable use of B.C.'s environmental resources.
- Enhancing environmental protection and stewardship by monitoring air and water quality, reducing and removing wastes and toxins from the environment, promoting and supporting voluntary compliance activities, and using enforcement options where appropriate.
- Promoting and supporting conservation initiatives and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities in parks and protected areas.
- Leading the natural resource sector in the development of environmental policy for application in integrated area-based resource management.

The Ministry serves its clients in a responsible way by:

- Providing unique outdoor experiences in B.C.'s parks system to support healthy communities, tourism and the B.C. economy.
- Providing programs and services to British Columbians in their communities, businesses and workplaces, and to national and international organizations. Clients are served by skilled and experienced staff in over 50 communities, by parks service providers and through effective partnerships with other governments, First Nations, industry, communities and environmental groups.
- Working collaboratively with all provincial ministries involved in the management of Crown land and natural resources to ensure environmental standards are met and environmental sustainability is achieved, while supporting economic development and community resilience.

The Ministry develops innovative partnerships by:

- Participating in cross-government initiatives and working to establish collaborative relationships with First Nations, non-governmental organizations, communities and industry.

- Advancing the Province’s climate action agenda through leadership roles in the Western Climate Initiative, International Carbon Action Partnership and The Climate Registry.
- Supporting the provision of programs and services through third-party partners who help to fulfill the Ministry’s mandate and fund local programs. Partners include organizations such as the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Bear Aware, the BC Lung Association and BC Hydro, and individuals such as park facility operators.
- Acquiring, interpreting and sharing environmental information.

The Ministry administers legislation and sets standards by:

- Providing strategic planning, policy and legislative research and coordination for the development of Ministry statutes and regulations.
- Negotiating Memorandums of Understanding, protocol agreements and environmental cooperation agreements with neighbouring governments, and actively participating in the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, Council of the Federation Water Stewardship Council, National Advisory Committee under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, Union of British Columbia Municipalities and other organizations.
- Promoting and verifying voluntary compliance with regulatory requirements through education, compliance strategies and public reporting. Where necessary, Ministry staff undertake activities to enforce the Province’s environmental and public safety legislation.



*Shannon Falls
Provincial Park*

Strategic Context

Economy

The Economic Forecast Council estimates that British Columbia's real GDP grew by 3.3 per cent in 2010. The Council projects this rate of growth to slow in 2011, with real GDP expected to increase by 2.6 per cent on the year. The Council then expects B.C.'s real GDP to expand by 3.0 per cent in 2012. Risks to British Columbia's economic outlook include continued economic weakness in the U.S.; the sovereign debt crisis in some European countries threatening the stability of global financial markets; a sudden weakening of the U.S. dollar resulting in significant disruptions to global commodity and financial markets; slower than anticipated global demand resulting in reduced demand for B.C.'s exports; and greater than anticipated moderation in the Canadian housing market.

Coordinated Resource Management

The Ministry is working collaboratively with the ministries of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation; Agriculture; Energy and Mines; Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations; and Jobs, Tourism and Innovation to promote integrated and timely delivery of services to clients in all regions across B.C. Such collaboration is designed to support the competitiveness of natural resource enterprises and reinforce sustainable environmental management. Collaborative efforts offer the opportunity for alignment of government resources to advance economic development and community resiliency. Improving the efficiency of service delivery will also help address the budget realities and demographic challenges facing the Province.



Garry oak meadow

Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

The following sections provide an overview of the Ministry's key goals and their supporting objectives, strategies and performance measures.

Goal 1: Effective action on climate change

Climate change has broad global, regional and local significance. Changes in climate drive changes in natural systems that affect economic, environmental and social interests. The current rapid rate of change is of serious concern and is linked to the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities that release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Population growth is also contributing to the impact. How we respond to climate change will shape our economy, our society, our communities and our way of life.

The government has made an aggressive commitment to tackle climate change by addressing its causes (mitigation) and preparing the province for the unavoidable consequences of climate change (adaptation). The Ministry of Environment leads government's cross-ministry climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives through the important work of the Climate Action Secretariat.

Objective 1.1: Reduced provincial greenhouse gas emissions

Reducing the amount of greenhouse gases that are released into the atmosphere is an important step in addressing the causes of climate change and minimizing its impacts on generations to come.



Bear Glacier Provincial Park

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- coordinating the development and implementation of a public outreach and engagement program to mobilize citizens and partners to reduce provincial greenhouse gas emissions;
- developing climate action policy and providing advice, research and planning documents as directed;
- guiding the successful delivery of the Climate Action Plan across government;
- developing, and assisting other ministries in developing, policy, legislation and/or regulations, as needed;
- leading and coordinating provincial and local government initiatives;
- reporting on greenhouse gas emissions at the provincial and local government levels;
- working with international, national and regional partners to advance B.C.'s climate action agenda; and
- collaborating with other governments on a market-based approach to develop and facilitate the implementation of a cap-and-trade system¹ and standardized offsets program.²

Performance Measure 1: Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

Performance Measure	2010 Forecast ²	2011 Target	2012 Target	2013 Target
Annual level of greenhouse gas emissions in British Columbia relative to 2007 levels ¹	6% reduction by 2012 (63.9 megatonnes)	6% reduction by 2012 (63.9 megatonnes)	6% reduction by 2012 (63.9 megatonnes)	18% reduction by 2016 (55.8 megatonnes)

Data Source: Ministry of Environment

¹ Emissions levels for 2007 and 2008 were 68.0 and 68.7 megatonnes, respectively. Greenhouse gases are measured in units of tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. See the *British Columbia Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2008*, pages 4-5, for details at www.env.gov.bc.ca/cas/mitigation/ghg_inventory/index.html.

² Data collection, target setting and progress are on a calendar-year basis.

Discussion

The *Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act*, brought into effect on January 1, 2008, puts into law B.C.'s target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 33 per cent below 2007 levels by 2020, and by at least 80 per cent below 2007 levels by 2050. Interim targets have been set for 2012 and 2016 and are reflected in the table above. The Ministry is legally mandated to report on greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere from activities in B.C., including those resulting from transportation, heating, industry, landfills, agriculture and net deforestation.

¹ A cap-and-trade program is one method of pricing carbon to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon pricing applies a market price on greenhouse gas emissions to reflect the value or cost of achieving a greenhouse gas reduction target. The program works by setting an overall cap on the total amount of emissions that are allowed, and then lowering the cap over time to reduce overall emissions. See also www.env.gov.bc.ca/cas/mitigation/cap_trade.html.

² Offsets are a key component of a cap-and-trade program and help to reduce the compliance costs for regulated operations, while ensuring this market-based approach achieves real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Government's Climate Action Plan, released in June 2008, details a suite of climate action policies projected to achieve 73 per cent of B.C.'s greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2020. The Climate Action Secretariat coordinates Climate Action Plan initiatives across government and communicates about climate change to the broader public, communities and businesses.

The data for this performance measure are taken from the *British Columbia Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2008*. This report in turn is based on Environment Canada's *National Inventory Report: Greenhouse Gases and Sinks in Canada*,³ which is prepared every year to meet Canada's obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Baseline data also may be revised due to methodological improvements.

Objective 1.2: Preparing for unavoidable climate change and its impacts

Taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions now will reduce the impacts of future climate change and provide human and natural systems more time to adjust. However, the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere mean that some ongoing climate change and impacts are unavoidable. A comprehensive climate change action plan, therefore, includes preparing for such impacts, or "adapting." Adaptation will help maximize the opportunities and reduce the risks related to climate change and its impacts on society and the natural environment.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- leading the implementation of government's climate change Adaptation Strategy by:⁴
 - building a strong foundation of knowledge and tools to help decision makers across B.C. prepare for a changing climate, for example, through supporting and collaborating with research institutions and organizations;
 - ensuring that climate change is considered in planning and decision making across government; and
 - collaborating with Ministry partners, including federal agencies, local governments, First Nations, industry and non-governmental organizations in preparing for climate change and its impacts;
- integrating adaptation into the Ministry's own business areas, including developing policy, setting standards, and managing land, air, water, species, ecosystems and parks and protected areas by:
 - developing new approaches to water management that address the impacts from a changing water cycle;
 - maintaining robust observation networks that contribute to increased understanding of the direction and pace of climate change in B.C.; and

³ The report is available at www.ec.gc.ca/Publications/default.asp?lang=En&xml=492D914C-2EAB-47AB-A045-C62B2CDACC29.

⁴ For more information on the climate change Adaptation Strategy, please go to www.livesmartbc.ca/attachments/Adaptation_Strategy.pdf.

- planning for species, ecosystem and landscape conservation and restoration in a way that maximizes resilience to changing conditions.

Performance Measure 2: Number of provincial ministries that include actions on climate change adaptation in their Service Plans

Performance Measure	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Number of provincial ministries that include actions on climate change adaptation in their Service Plans	6 ¹	8 ²	All ministries where relevant	All ministries where relevant

Data Source: Ministry of Environment

¹ Ministries of Agriculture and Lands; Community and Rural Development; Forests and Range; Environment; Housing and Social Development; and Transportation and Infrastructure.

² Ministries of Agriculture; Community, Sport and Cultural Development; Education; Environment; Forests, Mines and Lands; Natural Resource Operations; Public Safety and Solicitor General; and Transportation and Infrastructure.

Discussion

This performance measure is intended to support government’s increased focus on identifying and addressing key vulnerabilities related to climate change.

A core deliverable of integrating adaptation into government business is the consideration of climate change impacts by ministries and the incorporation of adaptation strategies into their Service Plans and business planning, where relevant. This year, all ministries are required to either: a) describe adaptation initiatives in their Service Plans; or b) commit to determining the relevance of adaptation to their business. All ministries have included a commitment to support implementation of the Adaptation Strategy in their 2011/12 Service Plans. In addition, eight ministries have described adaptation strategies or actions specific to their business. Further discussion on the results will take place in the ministry’s Annual Service Plan Report.



*Botanical Beach,
Juan de Fuca Provincial Park*

Goal 2: Clean and safe water, land and air

Objective 2.1: Enhanced protection and stewardship of our water resources

A safe and sustainable supply of high-quality water is vital to our communities, economy and environment. Achievement of this objective through effective legislation, innovative approaches to water governance and coordinated watershed-based planning is critical to the environment.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- motivating shared water stewardship by leading and coordinating the implementation of the actions and commitments in *Living Water Smart: British Columbia's Water Plan*;
- working with the Ministry of Health Services to protect sources of drinking water;
- modernizing our water laws by developing a new *Water Sustainability Act* in consultation with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, other resource ministries, local and senior governments, other stakeholders and First Nations; and
- recognizing water flow requirements for ecosystems and species.

Living Water Smart: British Columbia's Water Plan

Living Water Smart is government's vision and plan to keep our water healthy and secure for the future. The plan uses a variety of measures, such as planning, regulatory change, education and incentives, to ensure that the province's water resources are protected and sustainable.



*Kinuseo Falls,
Monkman Falls Provincial Park*

Performance Measure 3: Water quality trends monitored under the Canada – B.C. Water Quality Monitoring Agreement

Performance Measure	2010/11 Forecast	2011/12 Target	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Percentage of water bodies monitored under the Canada – B.C. Water Quality Monitoring Agreement with stable or improving water quality trends	96%	96% or greater	96% or greater	96% or greater

Data Source: Ministry of Environment

Discussion

Under the Canada – B.C. Water Quality Monitoring Agreement, 32 provincially significant rivers and streams, including the Fraser, Columbia and Peace, are monitored in B.C. This performance measure relies on data collected from 42 monitoring stations to determine whether water quality is stable or improving in each of these key water bodies.

By measuring the concentration of variables, such as metals, nutrients, pH, temperature and dissolved oxygen, the Ministry is able to identify trends in overall water quality. The results of this measure provide a good indication of the outcomes of water protection efforts and stewardship of the province’s water resources. In addition, the information helps inform authorizations for water use and helps establish further water monitoring requirements.

In 2010, the Federal-Provincial Surface Water Monitoring Group conducted a network review in order to rationalize and optimize the network. A network framework was established to ensure that proposed and current stations are consistent with network objectives, and includes logistical and data considerations. This framework will continually be used to optimize the network, specifically for station assessments, and will ensure that the network is operating in the most efficient manner possible.

Through the Federal-Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Group, federal-provincial stations have been proposed for northeast B.C. to monitor oil and gas development, and logistical, site and sampling details are under examination to ensure a station can be operated in the long term.

Data collected from the Federal-Provincial Surface Water Monitoring Program are used in a variety of reports, including the Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators’ annual Water Quality Index report.⁵

Objective 2.2: Reduced contamination from toxins and waste

By reducing contamination from toxins and wastes efficiently and effectively, the Ministry will minimize impacts to water, land and air.

⁵ This report is available at www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=En&n=68DE8F72-1.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- continuing to work with industry to develop, implement and continuously improve industry-led product stewardship programs for household hazardous waste;⁶
- supporting the Brownfield⁷ Renewal Strategy for British Columbia;
- promoting the development and adoption of integrated pest management practices; and
- promoting increased accountability for hazardous waste management.

Objective 2.3: Enhanced protection and stewardship of our air

By encouraging the use of clean technologies and supporting the establishment of effective emissions standards, the Ministry strives to reduce the impacts of air pollution on human health and the environment. Reducing emissions of some pollutants has benefits for both air quality and climate change.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- leading the implementation of initiatives aimed at continuing to reduce emissions from industry, transportation, urban growth, ports and marine vessels;
- maintaining the coverage of the air quality monitoring network to ensure that it meets or exceeds National Air Pollution Surveillance standards;⁸
- introducing policies that support the use of the cleanest available practices and technologies in all new or expanding industrial facilities;
- continuing to introduce tools, guidance materials and other resources to support the development and implementation of airshed plans; and
- developing ambient air quality objectives, standards and guidelines to support airshed planning and decision making in the permitting and environmental assessment processes.

Improving Air Quality

One of the government's Great Goals is to lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none. The Ministry is working in collaboration with industry, communities and other levels of government to implement clean air initiatives that champion clean transportation, clean industry and clean communities.

⁶ As per the Canada-Wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility (www.ccme.ca/assets/pdf/epr_cap.pdf). See also Objective 4.3.

⁷ Brownfields are abandoned, vacant, derelict or underutilized commercial or industrial properties where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination, and where there is active potential for redevelopment.

⁸ The standards are available at www.ec.gc.ca/rnsps-naps/Default.asp?lang=En&n=5C0D33CF-1.

Performance Measure 4: Clean air standards for industry

Performance Measure	2010/11 Forecast	2011/12 Target	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Number of air emission standards incorporating current Best Achievable Technology practices	5	6	7	8

Data Source: Ministry of Environment

Note: Targets are cumulative.



Airborne particulate monitoring instruments near the T'it'q'et First Nation in Lillooet (left) and the Mobile Air Monitoring Laboratory (right)

Discussion

The government will continue to work with industry to ensure that business practices support British Columbians’ environmental and health priorities, while ensuring economic sustainability. The Best Achievable Technology approach encourages new and expanding industry to use the cleanest available practices and technologies. The standards for air emissions are set through guidelines, policies, codes of practice and regulations, and support the government’s goal to protect air quality and human health. Standards for the slaughter and poultry processing industries;⁹ biomass-fired electrical power generation;¹⁰ wood-burning boilers used in agricultural operations;¹¹ pellet plant manufacturing operations;¹² and waste-to-energy from municipal solid waste¹³ have been developed over the past several years.

⁹ More information on the code of practice for the slaughter and poultry processing industries is available at www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/industrial/regs/codes/slaughter/index.htm.

¹⁰ More information about emissions standards is available at www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/industrial/pulp_paper_lumber/wood_fired.htm.

¹¹ More information on the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation (Part 6–Agricultural Emissions) is available at http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/10_131_92.

¹² Internal guidelines are complete.

¹³ Guidelines are being finalized.

Objective 2.4: Effective management of environmental risks

Events such as oil spills and catastrophic fires can present risks to public health and safety, property and the environment. Although not all environmental risks are avoidable, effective management can help to reduce the impact of these risks. The Ministry anticipates, responds to and manages the consequences of risks to the environment.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- responding effectively to high-risk environmental emergencies;
- reducing the risk to public health and safety and the environment through effective management and response programs, and compliance and enforcement strategies and actions;
- collaborating with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to manage the environmental risks of human-wildlife interactions through proactive and reactive strategies;
- managing the remediation of high-risk contaminated sites and regulating the remediation of all contaminated sites; and
- managing fire interface and fuel loading in parks and protected areas, especially near communities and other infrastructures.



Oil spill cleanup

Goal 3: Healthy and diverse native species and ecosystems

Objective 3.1: Well-managed, integrated and accessible information on species and ecosystems

The collection, storage, management and distribution of scientific information on native species and ecosystems provide for effective research and contribute to the understanding of the status of native species and ecosystems.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- employing the Conservation Framework to collect, assess and distribute information on species and ecosystems, including their conservation status, associated threats, priority ranking and progress against recommended management activities;
- assessing the conservation status of plants, animals and ecosystems and related risks and threats throughout B.C., including parks and protected areas; and
- providing guidelines and standards for the protection and conservation of species and ecosystems, including inventory, monitoring and reporting on achievements.

Conservation Framework

The Conservation Framework uses clearly defined scientific criteria to determine priorities and the most appropriate management actions for species and ecosystems of conservation concern. The tools within the Conservation Framework use the best available data from provincial, federal and global databases to assess species and ecosystems for conservation action. Developed by scientists from universities, conservation organizations and government, the approach used by the Conservation Framework has been endorsed by internationally renowned conservation scientists. See www.env.gov.bc.ca/conservationframework/.

Objective 3.2: Well-managed parks and protected areas

Parks and protected areas help to ensure the protection of native species and ecosystems, provide outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities, and contribute to meeting our environmental, social and economic goals. Our world-class parks system provides a legacy for future generations.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- providing high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences;
- addressing high-priority habitat and ecosystem management issues;



Amanita muscaria

- collaborating with First Nations and communities in protected areas planning and management to ensure long-term protection of natural, cultural and recreational assets;
- collaborating with the federal government and other partners to establish a network of marine protected areas;
- strengthening the role parks and protected areas play in climate change adaptation; and
- increasing and promoting partnerships to expand the opportunities and involvement in stewardship initiatives.

Objective 3.3: Conserved, maintained and enhanced native species and ecosystems

Many Ministry programs support the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance and enhancement of native ecosystems to achieve a balance between the needs of wildlife and the needs of people. The Ministry encourages and supports others to accept a greater role in environmental stewardship, and facilitates community initiatives to protect and restore native species and ecosystems.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- leading the implementation of the Conservation Framework to set priorities for species and ecosystem recovery and management action;
- developing and testing a decision support framework and tools for integrated, area-based natural resource decision making in relation to cumulative effects;
- continuing to work with and expand partnerships, including those with First Nations, to identify, protect and restore species and ecosystems;
- continuing to develop and implement guidelines, policies, standards and legislation for the protection, conservation and management of species and ecosystems; and
- providing leadership in provincial species at risk status ranking and legal designation, and preparing and implementing recovery plans.

Performance Measure 5: Changes in the conservation status of native species

Performance Measure	2010/11 Forecast (mammals)	2011/12 Target (vascular plants) ¹	2012/13 Target (fishes/reptiles/amphibians)	2013/14 Target (invertebrates)	2014/15 Target (breeding birds)
Changes in the status of five groups of species over five years	Improved: 10 Declined: 12 Status quo: 141	No decline	No decline	No decline	No decline

Data Source: Ministry of Environment

¹ Vascular plants are plants with specialized conductive tissues that transport water from the roots to the leaves and nutrients to all parts of the plant. This group excludes mosses, lichens and liverworts. Currently, there are insufficient data to report on these lesser-known groups.

Discussion

Changes in the status of native species of plants and animals in B.C. is an important indicator of the Ministry's efforts to protect biodiversity and conserve native species. The year 2010 was declared the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations, and the above performance measure coincides with indicators and targets set by the World Conservation Union to reduce the current rate of global biodiversity loss.

Every species in the province has a conservation status ranking, which is a measure of its risk of becoming extinct in B.C. Status rankings are assigned on a scale of one to five: 1) critically imperilled; 2) imperilled; 3) vulnerable; 4) apparently secure; or 5) secure. Rankings are assigned by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre based on science-based criteria and factors such as rarity, trends in populations or habitat, and threats. These status rankings are foundational to the Conservation Framework, which prioritizes species and ecosystems for conservation and recommends conservation actions. The B.C. Conservation Data Centre reassesses each species on a five-year cycle, and each year reviews the rankings for different groups of species. This performance measure follows a similar cycle, reporting on a different group of species each year over a five-year period (e.g., breeding birds one year; mammals the next year).

Species status changes slowly and this measure may require time to show a response to environmental change or management actions. Furthermore, the role of the Ministry is to establish effective management frameworks that facilitate shared stewardship of the province's biodiversity. The trend in this measure reflects the work of the Ministry in the context of shared stewardship with other governments, First Nations, industry and others. Factors outside of B.C., such as those that affect the status of migratory birds, also influence the biodiversity within the province's borders.



Canada lynx in Kentucky-Alleyne Provincial Park, ranked "apparently secure"

Goal 4: British Columbians share responsibility for the environment

Objective 4.1: British Columbians understand the effect of their actions on the environment

In order to foster an environmentally conscious society, people must understand the relationship between their actions and their health, as well as how their actions affect the health of other people, species and ecosystems. As British Columbians continue to make the connection between their activities and environmental impacts, they are much more likely to set a higher environmental standard for their actions and those of others.



Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- continuing to work with stewardship organizations to increase environmental awareness;
- promoting outdoor activities to foster a connection to and an appreciation for the natural environment; and
- developing and delivering information on critical issues like climate change and water stewardship to targeted audiences, using different communication tools, such as social media.

*Tide pool survey, Botanical Beach,
Juan de Fuca Provincial Park*

Objective 4.2: Shared environmental stewardship is a priority for all British Columbians

The Ministry recognizes that in order for shared stewardship to be successful, it is necessary to work in partnership with First Nations, industry, communities, environmental groups and other government bodies.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- recognizing, promoting and enhancing shared stewardship through communication, consultative processes and volunteer initiatives that engage stakeholders, clients and partners;

- enhancing and promoting shared stewardship through effective and timely communication of compliance activities to protect the environment;
- leading engagement with industry on planning and regulatory development that supports and encourages the transition to a low-carbon economy, and ensures international partners are apprised of B.C.'s progress;
- promoting sustainable natural resource management through collaborative management;
- increasing the use of social media to connect with British Columbians, for example, using the Living Water Smart blog (<http://livingwatersmart.ca/>) to promote shared water stewardship;
- fostering collaboration between engaged stakeholders to take climate action through online resources, such as www.livesmartbc.ca;
- maintaining the Our Environment website to inform, engage and support clients, partners and staff in environmental stewardship initiatives (www.env.gov.bc.ca/OurEnvironment/); and
- maintaining and enhancing the BC Air Quality website (<http://bcairquality.ca>) as the provincial government portal for all air quality data, information, resources and tools.¹⁴

Objective 4.3: Industry and client groups implement best environmental management practices

Sustainable environmental management practices not only protect the environment, they reduce costs by using resources and energy more efficiently, and lay the foundation for good corporate citizenship.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- continuing to work with industry to develop, implement and continuously improve industry-led product stewardship programs for household hazardous waste;¹⁵
- continuing to research and collaborate with key stakeholders on product categories suitable for inclusion in the B.C. Recycling Regulation;
- encouraging compliance by reporting those in non-compliance with Ministry environmental standards and regulatory requirements; and



Electronics recycling

¹⁴ Including access to real-time air quality data and an interactive map-based interface for the Air Quality Health Index and the BlueSky Western Canada Smoke Forecasting System.

¹⁵ As per the Canada-Wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility (www.ccme.ca/assets/pdf/epr_cap.pdf). See also Objective 2.2.

- continuing to explore opportunities to reduce regulatory burden¹⁶ through changes such as implementing codes of practice to replace permit-based authorization frameworks, while promoting best environmental management practices and maintaining stringent environmental standards.

Performance Measure 6: Industry-led product stewardship programs

Performance Measure	2010/11 Forecast	2011/12 Target ²	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Number of product categories with industry-led product stewardship programs ¹	11	11	11	13

Data Source: Ministry of Environment

¹ Product categories can include a large number of different products. For example, the electronic and electrical product category includes computers, small appliances, power tools and cell phones.

² Target figures are cumulative. The target is two new categories every three years.

Discussion

In October 2009, the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment endorsed the Canada-wide Action Plan¹⁷ for Extended Producer Responsibility. Industry-led product stewardship requires producers (manufacturers, distributors and retailers) to be responsible for the life cycle management of their products, including collection and recycling. This places the responsibility for end-of-life product management on the producers and consumers of a product and not on the general taxpayer or local government. B.C. is a participant in the Canada-Wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility¹⁸ and is the North American leader in developing producer responsibility programs, having more programs and covering more products than any other jurisdiction. The website www.recycling.gov.bc.ca has the complete list of products with industry-led stewardship programs in B.C.

For this performance measure, the Ministry is counting the number of product categories for which B.C. has industry-led product stewardship programs. The target for this measure is to add two new product categories with industry-led product stewardship programs every three years¹⁹. In 2011/12 and the years following, candidate product categories to be added in B.C. include packaging and printed materials, household hazardous waste, or automotive products. The intention is to have comprehensive coverage of the products in these categories in order to fulfill commitments in the Canada-Wide Action Plan.

¹⁶ British Columbia continues to make regulatory reform a priority across government, making it easier for businesses to operate and succeed in B.C., while still preserving regulations that protect public health, safety and the environment. Regulatory reform has been, and will continue to be, undertaken throughout the Ministry as the organization pursues its move to a results-based regulatory approach. Since 2001, the Ministry has reduced its regulatory requirements by 42 per cent, while continuing to maintain stringent environmental standards.

¹⁷ The plan is available at www.ccme.ca/assets/pdf/epr_cap.pdf.

¹⁸ Phase one includes recommended programs to be in place by 2015: packaging and printed materials; electronics and electrical products; mercury-containing products (including lamps); household hazardous and special wastes; and automotive products. Phase two includes recommended programs to be in place by 2017: construction and demolition materials; furniture, textiles and carpet; and appliances.

¹⁹ The target can be met in a variety of ways, such as two or more product categories being regulated in a single year during the target time period, or a product category being regulated every year to eighteen months.

Goal 5: Sustainable use of British Columbia’s environmental resources

Objective 5.1: Wise management and continued benefits of water and air

British Columbia’s water and air resources sustain a full range of economic, community and ecosystem needs. The Ministry seeks to ensure that all British Columbians will continue to benefit from the wise and prudent management of these resources.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- developing new legislation and policy to modernize our water laws to protect aquatic environments, instream water flows, stream health, and to enable more efficient water usage;
- developing legislation to regulate ground water use in priority areas and for large water withdrawals;
- operating the hydrometric network²⁰ to obtain information to support water management;
- acquiring, interpreting and sharing environmental information;
- working with the natural resource sector in developing integrated environmental policies;
- supporting communities engaged in multi-stakeholder watershed management plans;
- promoting and facilitating multi-stakeholder watershed management plans;
- continuing to support local air quality projects; and
- promoting increased community and stakeholder involvement at the local level.

Objective 5.2: Optimize outdoor and economic opportunities from British Columbia’s parks, fish and wildlife

British Columbia’s parks, fish and wildlife provide a variety of unique outdoor opportunities for residents and visitors in the form of recreation, camping, marine and freshwater angling, hunting and wildlife viewing. Engaging in these activities promotes an appreciation of B.C.’s landscape, native species, ecosystems and the environment as a whole.



Dune Za Keyih Provincial Park and Protected Area

²⁰ The B.C. hydrometric network is an environmental monitoring system that collects river and lake level data from over 450 locations in British Columbia. The data are essential to good planning for hydroelectric power production, dams, dikes, roads, bridges, floodplain areas and pipeline crossings.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- collaborating with the federal government on establishing new parks;
- promoting awareness of contributions to the Park Enhancement Fund;
- developing strategic plans for parks, fish and wildlife management that promote exceptional outdoor opportunities, while ensuring long-term protection of natural resources;
- developing and implementing marketing strategies to promote active living through park visitation;
- offering the public increased opportunities for park recreation;
- working with the Ministry of Agriculture to coordinate the provincial regulatory, social and economic support needed for new recreational fishing opportunities, as identified and initiated by B.C. municipalities and the federal government; and
- optimizing stewardship and economic opportunities with First Nations, local communities, non-profit groups, private land owners and others.

Performance Measure 7: Park visitation and visitor satisfaction

Performance Measure	2010/11	2011/12 Target	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Number of recorded park visits and visitor satisfaction level:				
• Park visits	19.8 million (forecast)	20.1 million	20.5 million	20.5 million
• Park visitor satisfaction	80% (actual)	Maintain or improve (from 80%)	Maintain or improve (from 80%)	Maintain or improve (from 80%)

Data Source: Ministry of Environment

Note: The satisfaction rating is based on a satisfaction survey that is completed by users of campgrounds around the province. In summer 2010, more than 2,500 people responded to the survey.

Discussion

The parks and protected areas system covers approximately 13 million hectares (or 14.3 per cent of the province). Provincial parks provide protection for representative landscapes and habitat for native species. Parks also provide recreational services and opportunities that contribute to local economies, promote active living and support an appreciation for the environment. B.C.'s parks system is the single largest recreation enterprise in the province. The number of visitors to provincial parks is used to measure the contribution of parks to the government's priorities of healthy communities, tourism and the economy. These data are intended to provide a reasonable indication of the trend in the level of use of public outdoor recreation opportunities available in B.C.'s parks.

Since 1985, the Ministry has monitored the effectiveness of services provided in provincial park campgrounds and day-use areas by conducting an annual satisfaction survey with a random sample of

park visitors. The results of this survey are used by Ministry staff and park facility operators to assess and improve park services. In 2009, the Ministry employed a new methodology consisting of an online survey that increased cost-effectiveness and reduced the use of paper. The change in methodology may result in targets being revised once data from the 2010 survey have been compiled and analyzed.

The Ministry has targeted an approximate 800,000 visitor increase in park attendance between 2009/10 and 2012/13. However, there are many factors outside of the Ministry's control that influence park visitation: weather conditions; major construction projects; natural events (such as forest fires); and economic issues such as the high Canadian dollar. The extent that these factors influence attendance levels may cause park use to fluctuate by as much as 10 per cent annually. The Ministry recommends that the park visitation performance measure be assessed over a three-year term to account for any significant annual fluctuations. To increase park use, work is continuing under the 2006 Parks for People Strategy to ensure that services and programs are responsive to visitor needs and demographic trends.

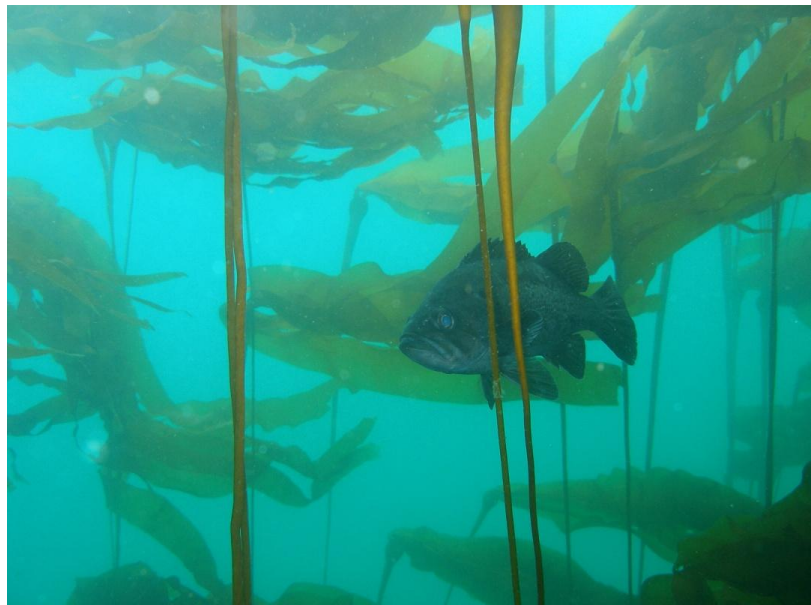
Objective 5.3: Collaborative management and use of marine and ocean resources

British Columbia's ocean resources provide great economic and social benefits to the citizens of the province. The Ministry works with provincial, federal, First Nations and local government partners and stakeholders on oceans-related issues and activities, such as coastal planning and habitat conservation.

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- developing a cross-government approach to managing B.C.'s ocean and coast;
- promoting stewardship and restoration of critical marine habitats;
- representing B.C.'s interests in the federal decision-making process to ensure a fair share of federal and cross-government programs and sustainable management of B.C.'s ocean and marine resources;
- collaborating with neighbouring jurisdictions to enhance the value and success of ocean conservation actions; and
- working with partners to establish a network of marine protected areas.



Black rockfish in bull kelp, Juan de Fuca Strait

Resource Summary

Ministry of Environment Resource Summary Table

Core Business Area	2010/11 Restated Estimates ¹	2011/12 Estimates	2012/13 Plan	2013/14 Plan
Operating Expenses (\$000)				
Environmental Protection	6,261	7,054	7,054	7,054
Environmental Sustainability	20,393	19,367	19,367	19,367
Parks and Protected Areas	30,641	29,979	29,979	29,979
Conservation Officer Service	17,144	16,736	16,714	16,714
Climate Action Secretariat	5,800	5,123	5,123	5,123
Executive and Support Services ²	24,444	22,224	22,224	22,224
Sub Total	104,683	100,483	100,461	100,461
Park Enhancement Fund	500	500	500	500
Sustainable Environment Fund	22,555	20,305	20,305	20,305
Total	127,738	121,288	121,266	121,266

Core Business Area	2010/11 Restated Estimates ¹	2011/12 Estimates	2012/13 Plan	2013/14 Plan
Ministry Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) (\$000)				
Executive and Support Services³	12,779	11,939	12,678	12,683
Park Enhancement Fund	400	400	400	400
Total	13,179	12,339	13,078	13,083

¹ The amounts have been restated, for comparative purposes only, to be consistent with Schedule A of the 2011/12 Revised *Estimates*. The 2010/11 restated estimates reflect a change in funding model for corporately provided operations support such as accommodation, most information technology, freedom of information, corporate accounting services, payroll, and corporate sustainability. Funds previously held in ministries for these activities were centralized into Shared Services BC, the existing delivery body for these services.

² These amounts include the offices of the Minister and the Deputy Minister, as well as the budget for the Ministry's corporate services, which include overhead, Strategic Policy and Corporate Services Divisions.

³ Capital expenditures identified under Executive and Support Services include \$10.98 million for land improvements in parks and protected areas.

Environmental Assessment Office

Purpose of the Office

The Province of British Columbia is committed to sustainable development. British Columbia's environmental assessment process ensures that proposed major projects meet the goals of environmental, economic and social sustainability, and that the issues and concerns of the public, First Nations, stakeholders and government agencies are considered. The process ultimately results in a decision by the responsible ministers regarding whether to issue an environmental assessment certificate, which allows the project to proceed. Comprehensive and efficient environmental assessments result in well-informed and timely decision making that supports sustainable development.

The Environmental Assessment Office was established in 1995 to administer the *Environmental Assessment Act* and its regulations. The Act gives power to the Environmental Assessment Office to evaluate proposed major projects that are reviewable under the Act for potential adverse environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects that may occur during the life of the project, and to monitor and enforce compliance with the conditions of environmental assessment certificates.



Manson Canal tidal wetland fish compensation site for the South Fraser Perimeter Road Project, Lower Mainland

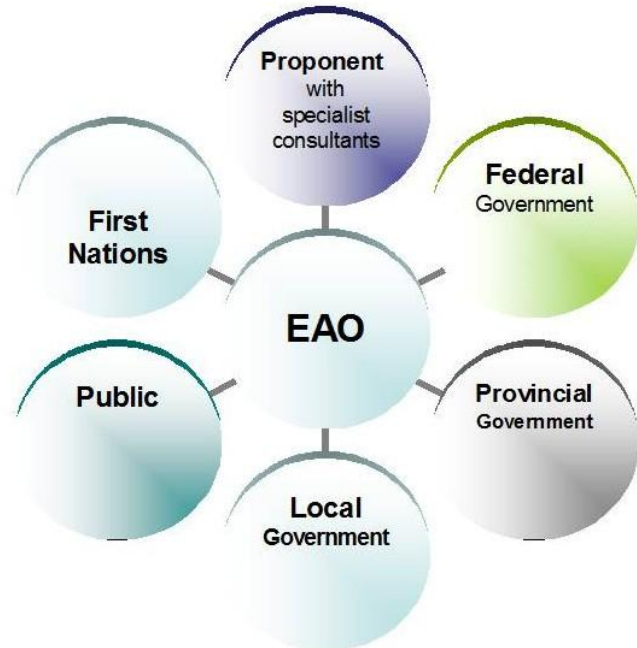
A broad range of proposed projects are reviewable if they meet certain thresholds,²¹ such as production or area of disturbance. There are thresholds for industrial, mining, energy, water management, waste disposal, food processing, transportation and tourist destination resort projects. Proposed projects that exceed these thresholds are generally those with a higher potential for environmental impacts.

The Minister of Environment can designate the project as a reviewable project if it has not been substantially started, and the Minister is satisfied that the project may have a significant adverse effect and that the designation would be in the public interest. A proponent can apply to the Environmental Assessment Office to opt in to the environmental assessment process.

²¹ For example, the threshold for a new coal mine is a production capacity of $\geq 250,000$ tonnes of coal per year. If a proposed coal mine is projected to produce $\geq 250,000$ tonnes of coal per year, it would be automatically reviewable.

Environmental assessment is an iterative process. The Environmental Assessment Office and a technical working group of local, provincial and federal government agencies and First Nations work with the proponent. The potential effects of the proposed project, including cumulative effects from prior development, existing activities and reasonably foreseeable future development, are identified along with practical and effective avoidance and mitigation strategies. Opportunities are also provided for stakeholders and the public to participate. The intent is to effectively address all issues so that there are no residual significant adverse impacts and that only those projects that can be undertaken in a sustainable manner are certified to proceed.

During an environmental assessment, the Environmental Assessment Office ensures that the information required for a comprehensive environmental assessment is provided by the proponent, and that the environmental assessment process is fair and transparent with timely access to key assessment information. The Environmental Assessment Office also carries out the Province's legal duty to consult with First Nations and, where appropriate, accommodate potential effects on established or asserted Aboriginal rights and on treaty rights.



At the conclusion of an environmental assessment, the Environmental Assessment Office prepares a comprehensive assessment report, which identifies the potential environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects associated with the proposed project, and evaluates the extent to which any adverse effects would be avoided or mitigated through the project design and the proponent's commitments for impact avoidance and mitigation measures. The assessment report is provided to the responsible ministers, along with a recommendations document that provides advice, with reasons, on whether an environmental assessment certificate should be issued. If the ministers issue a certificate, the proponent's commitments and additional requirements of the Environmental Assessment Office, which include compliance reporting requirements, become conditions of the certificate.

Strategic Context

Environmental Assessment Activity

The demand for environmental assessment of proposed major projects is anticipated to remain strong. In 2011/12, it is expected that the estimated potential capital investment for projects in the environmental assessment process will exceed \$30 billion. Of the projects currently under review by the Environmental Assessment Office, 50 per cent are energy projects, primarily hydroelectric and wind power, and one-third are metal, coal and aggregate mining projects. Oil and gas, destination resorts and waste disposal projects comprise the remainder.

Evolving Practice of Environmental Assessment

The practice of environmental assessment is evolving as scientific knowledge increases and societal standards and government regulations change. To keep abreast of current practices and emerging trends in environmental assessment, the Environmental Assessment Office engages with the broader community of practitioners including, for example, federal-provincial government Environment Assessment Administrators, the International Association for Impact Assessment and the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee.

Outreach

It is important that industry, private sector professionals and educational institutions understand British Columbia's environmental assessment process. The Environmental Assessment Office engages in outreach activities with professional and industry groups, and with universities and colleges to increase awareness and knowledge of environmental assessment.

First Nations

The Environmental Assessment Office is guided by evolving case law and government policy related to the obligations of the Crown to consult with First Nations. Among other things, the Environmental Assessment Office seeks First Nations' input on its project-scoping decisions and procedural orders, encourages and helps fund First Nations' participation in technical working groups, and makes provisions for First Nations' discussions outside of working groups where necessary, including government-to-government consultation. The Environmental Assessment Office also actively encourages proponents to meet with First Nations at their earliest opportunity to learn about First Nations' communities and First Nations' interests and concerns. The Environmental Assessment Office provides First Nations the opportunity to include their own submissions in the materials provided to ministers to support their decision making with respect to a proposed project.



Construction of the new Port Mann Bridge as part of the Port Mann/Highway 1 Project, Lower Mainland

Federal Provincial Coordination

Approximately 65 per cent of proposed major projects require assessment under both provincial and federal legislation. In these circumstances, the Environmental Assessment Office works closely with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to minimize duplication and maximize efficiencies wherever possible. Considerable progress has been achieved and more remains to be done. Examples of enhanced cooperation between the federal and provincial governments include the use of delegation agreements, the coordination of First Nations' consultation and sharing of First Nations' information, and increased harmonization of the provincial environmental assessment process with the new federal comprehensive study review process.

Climate Change Adaptation

The Environmental Assessment Office supports the implementation of the provincial climate change Adaptation Strategy, which requires government agencies to consider climate change and its impacts, where relevant, in planning, projects, policies, legislation, regulations and approvals. In the environmental assessment process, climate change impacts are considered, and adaptation actions are implemented through:

- assessment of cumulative effects and impacts to the environment;
- evaluation of the potential greenhouse gas emissions;
- identification of project alternatives and project design alternatives;
- adoption of mitigation measures based on best management practices, policies and regulations; and
- monitoring and adaptive management strategies.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

Goal 1: The environmental assessment process is effective, efficient and valued

The environmental assessment process is an integrated and iterative process in which the Environmental Assessment Office works with the proponent, government agencies, First Nations, stakeholders and the public to ensure that the potential environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects of a proposed major project are identified and addressed, so that if the project is to proceed, it will do so in a sustainable manner.

Due to its comprehensive nature, the environmental assessment process requires a significant investment of time and resources by all participants, and it is essential to ensure that the process is effective and efficient. While the Environmental Assessment Office has a strong national reputation in this regard, it is important to preserve and build upon that success.

In addition to being effective and efficient, environmental assessments should also be valued by all participants, including proponents, government regulatory agencies, First Nations, stakeholders and the public. Value to participants is achieved by ensuring that the environmental assessment process is transparent and conducted to meet current, accepted standards, and that the full range of issues and interests is considered. Ministers are duly informed when deciding about both the benefits and potential adverse effects of a proposed project and making their decision on whether to issue an environmental assessment certificate. This is particularly important for large-scale projects for which there are often divergent points of view and considerable public interest.

Objective 1.1: Demonstrate that all interests and perspectives are considered

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- ensuring that all assessment reports consider the potential environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects of a project, as required by the *Environmental Assessment Act*;
- meeting on a regular basis with the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee;²²
- soliciting feedback from the public, First Nations, stakeholders and project proponents regarding opportunities for enhancement of the environmental assessment process;
- following current practices and emerging trends in environmental assessment to ensure that British Columbia's process is up to date.

²² The committee includes representatives from groups outside government, and provides a forum to discuss non-project specific issues relating to environmental assessment.

Discussion

As part of the Environmental Assessment Office's process of continuous improvement, feedback is solicited on an ongoing basis from interested participants in the environmental assessment process, in particular, the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee. The Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee is co-chaired by the Environmental Assessment Office and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, and includes representatives from environmental, industry and other stakeholder groups, as well as representatives from the First Nations Environmental Assessment Technical Working Group. This committee currently meets bi-annually and provides a forum for discussion of issues of common interest relating to environmental assessment, in particular, refinements to policy and means of enhancing public and stakeholder participation in the environmental assessment process. To keep informed of the practices and trends in environmental assessment, the Environmental Assessment Office engages with the broader community of environmental assessment practitioners by participating in environmental assessment workshops and conferences hosted by organizations such as the Western and Northern Canada Affiliate of the International Association for Impact Assessment.

Objective 1.2: Ensure that First Nations are engaged in environmental assessments

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- ensuring early communication and consultation with all First Nations potentially affected by a proposed project, and building respectful relationships;
- acknowledging that First Nations have rights regarding consultation and accommodation that are different from other participants in the environmental assessment process;
- providing First Nations with capacity funding to assist with participation in the environmental assessment process;
- providing First Nations with the opportunity for government-to-government dialogue (outside the technical working groups);
- giving each First Nation the opportunity to provide a separate submission where a First Nation and the Environmental Assessment Office have different perspectives on the potential effects of a proposed project or on the adequacy of consultation and accommodation that has occurred;²³
- supporting the First Nations Environmental Assessment Technical Working Group; and
- enhancing coordination of First Nations consultation with the federal government through joint initiatives, including staff training workshops, information sharing, and improvement of procedures and tools.

²³ The submission will be provided to the responsible ministers, along with the Environmental Assessment Office's assessment report and recommendations document, to assist the ministers in making their decision on whether an environmental assessment certificate should be issued.

Performance Measure 1: Percentage of potentially affected First Nations engaged in the environmental assessment process

Performance Measure	2010/11 Forecast	2011/12 Target	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Percentage of potentially affected First Nations:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the opportunity to engage in the environmental assessment process 	100%	100%	100%	100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged in the environmental assessment process¹ 	90%	80%	80%	80%

Data Source: Environmental Assessment Office

¹ The Environmental Assessment Office strives to engage all potentially affected First Nations in the environmental assessment process, but it is the decision of the First Nations whether or not to participate. The target for First Nations engagement is based, in part, on historical engagement levels. The forecast for 2010/11 exceeds the target due to a combination of factors, which include the location of the proposed projects undergoing environmental assessment and the efforts of the Environmental Assessment Office and project proponents.

Discussion

All proposed projects that enter the environmental assessment process trigger the Crown’s duty to consult with potentially affected First Nations about potential impacts to Aboriginal rights and title interests, and, if appropriate, to accommodate those interests. The environmental assessment process and related discussions afford a manner and degree of consultation that is at the high end of the consultation “spectrum.” The Environmental Assessment Office takes numerous steps to facilitate First Nations’ engagement. At the outset of the assessment process, the Environmental Assessment Office consults potentially affected First Nations, and discusses the manner and degree of consultation to be undertaken. Capacity funding is offered, as well as the opportunity to participate in technical working groups, comment on key documents, and engage in government-to-government dialogue. The Environmental Assessment Office facilitates modifications to a proposed project and to the proponent’s commitments where needed to avoid or mitigate impacts on asserted or established Aboriginal rights or treaty rights. At the end of the environmental assessment process, First Nations are given the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment Office’s draft First Nations’ consultation analysis. First Nations also have the opportunity to present their views on the project (in their own words) in the materials that the Environmental Assessment Office provides to assist ministers in making their decision on whether to issue an environmental assessment certificate.

Throughout the environmental assessment process, the Environmental Assessment Office engages in respectful relationship building with First Nations by following the principles and service standards set out in the Environmental Assessment Office’s Fairness and Service Code.

Objective 1.3: Ensure the process has clear service standards and is easy to understand

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- maintaining clear service standards and commitments to proponents, First Nations and the public, as articulated in the Environmental Assessment Office’s Fairness and Service Code;
- ensuring that information on projects and the environmental assessment process is made widely available through the electronic Project Information Centre (e-PIC) on the Environmental Assessment Office’s website (www.eao.gov.bc.ca), and through consultation activities such as public open houses; and
- ensuring that environmental assessment decisions occur in a predictable and timely regulatory framework. A major part of this strategy is the ongoing effort to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental assessments, particularly those reviews that involve the federal government. In this regard, British Columbia is viewed as a leader in a movement toward “one project, one review.” Key elements of this strategy include:
 - working closely with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and other government agencies to develop new and innovative project management tools, such as joint work plans, team charters and a new collaborative approach to First Nations’ consultations. These tools will further enhance federal/provincial coordination on reviews that involve both levels of government by avoiding duplication and overlap and by clarifying respective roles in an harmonized review;
 - using legislative tools, such as the ability to enter into delegation or equivalency agreements, when appropriate, to eliminate environmental assessments being conducted by both levels of government on the same proposed project; and
 - working with other provincial agencies to coordinate all necessary authorizations for a proposed project to provide better service to clients and to improve the natural resources sector’s internal administration efficiency.

Performance Measure 2: Application reviews in the B.C. environmental assessment process are completed within 180 days

Performance Measure	2010/11 Forecast	2011/12 Target	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Percentage of application reviews in the B.C. environmental process completed within 180 days:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.C. process only • Joint B.C./Canada process 	100%	100%	100%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Data Source: Environmental Assessment Office

Discussion

The Environmental Assessment Office continues to work toward making the assessment process more efficient and effective. Within this context, the Environmental Assessment Office’s Fairness and Service Code sets out a number of commitments that the Environmental Assessment Office makes to proponents, First Nations and the public. It also sets out service delivery standards and principles that will guide the Environmental Assessment Office. This document is available on the Environmental Assessment Office’s website at www.eao.gov.bc.ca.

Approximately 65 per cent of proposed projects undergoing a provincial review also require a federal environmental assessment. Significant progress has been made with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency on a range of initiatives designed to minimize duplication and enhance collaboration, all of which will help ensure that the maximum 180-day performance measure is met.

Key examples of collaboration and coordination initiatives with the federal government include:

- The Environmental Assessment Office has entered into an agreement with the National Energy Board to accept National Energy Board assessments under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* as equivalent to provincial reviews, thereby avoiding the need for a provincial environmental assessment certificate. The equivalency agreement was entered into under the authority of section 27 of the *Environmental Assessment Act*.



Geotechnical core sampling for the Quality Wind Project, near Tumbler Ridge

- The Environmental Assessment Office and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency have entered into agreements regarding the federal review responsibilities for the proposed

Northwest Transmission Line and Line Creek Operations Phase II projects. The environmental assessments of these proposed projects have been delegated to the Province, with each government having authority to make final decisions.

- The Environmental Assessment Office, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Natural Resources Canada have signed the following commitment: Federal – Provincial Coordination on Aboriginal Engagement and Consultation in the Environmental Assessment Process. This commitment is designed to increase federal and provincial collaboration and information sharing with regard to First Nations consultation, and will result in a more integrated approach to First Nations' consultation by the Crown.
- The Environmental Assessment Office and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency continue to work together, through workshops and staff exchanges, to find points of collaboration that support effective and efficient environmental assessment and Aboriginal consultation where a proposed project requires both provincial and federal review. Recent discussions have focused on the changes to the federal assessment process for comprehensive studies.

On July 12, 2010, the federal government amended the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. The amendments focused primarily on changes to the comprehensive study process to increase cooperation and alignment with the provinces, including the Environmental Assessment Office. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and Environmental Assessment Office are working together to ensure that the amendments will lead to more effective and coordinated environmental assessments.

Objective 1.4: Ensure that the benefits of environmental assessment are recognized

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- demonstrating transparency in decision making and clarity of process;
- engaging in outreach with the public, First Nations and stakeholders regarding the benefits of the environmental assessment process; and
- developing a method to track the beneficial changes to proposed projects that have been achieved through the environmental assessment process.

Performance Measure 3: Requests to opt in²⁴ to the environmental assessment process

Performance Measure	2010/11 Forecast	2011/12 Target	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target
Number of requests to opt in to the environmental assessment process	1	2 or more	2 or more	2 or more

Data Source: Environmental Assessment Office

Discussion

This performance measure is based on the premise that proponents will seek to opt in to the environmental assessment process if they feel that it will provide value through:

- enhanced sustainability of the project, which is achieved through changes to project design and modification, and through expansion of impact avoidance and mitigation measures;
- increased public support or acceptance due to the transparency of the process, access to key information and public consultation;
- confidence that the Crown’s duty to consult and accommodate asserted and established First Nations has been discharged; and
- coordination of the other regulatory agencies (federal and provincial).

Objective 1.5: Ensure a high level of confidence in the environmental assessment process and its results

Strategies

Key strategies for this objective include:

- developing a quality assurance program to evaluate the effectiveness of the environmental assessment process, and provide feedback to assist with continuous improvement of policies and practices; and
- developing a compliance and enforcement program to monitor, evaluate and enforce proponents’ fulfilment of certificate conditions and commitments.

Discussion

The Environmental Assessment Office strives for continual improvement of the environmental assessment process, and works with provincial government agencies to ensure that the legally binding conditions and commitments in an Environmental Assessment Certificate are met after a project is

²⁴ A proponent may seek to opt in to the environmental assessment process where a project is not automatically reviewable under the *Environmental Assessment Act*.

certified. With the development of a quality assurance program and a compliance and enforcement program, the Environmental Assessment Office will:

- enhance post-certification monitoring of projects;
- ensure the effectiveness of the environmental assessment process;
- continuously improve internal and external policies and practices; and
- provide better service to stakeholders involved in the environmental assessment process.

The Environmental Assessment Office will develop a performance measure to determine the effectiveness of the quality assurance program and compliance and enforcement program for the *2012/13 – 2014/15 Service Plan*.

Resource Summary

Environmental Assessment Office Resource Summary Table

Core Business Area	2010/11 Estimates ¹	2011/12 Plan	2012/13 Plan	2013/14 Plan
Operating Expenses (\$000)				
Environmental Assessment Office	8,816	8,754	8,754	8,754
Total	8,816	8,754	8,754	8,754

¹ These amounts have been restated, for comparative purposes only, to be consistent with Schedule A of the 2011/12 *Revised Estimates*. The 2010/11 restated estimates reflect a change in funding model for corporately provided operations support such as accommodation, most information technology, freedom of information, corporate accounting services, payroll, and corporate sustainability. Funds previously held in ministries for these activities were centralized into Shared Services BC, the existing delivery body for these services.

Appendix

Contact Information

Ministry of Environment Contact Information

Headquarters

Victoria
Telephone: 250 387-1161
Fax: 250 387-5669
Website: www.gov.bc.ca/env/

Regional Offices

Coast Region

West Coast

Nanaimo Office:
Telephone: 250 751-3100
Fax: 250 751-3103
Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/van-island/
Other offices: Bella Coola/Hagensborg, Black Creek, Duncan, Goldstream Park, Queen Charlotte City, Parksville, Port Alberni, Port Hardy, Ucluelet

South Coast

Surrey Office:
Telephone: 604 582-5200
Fax: 604 930-7119
Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/lower-mainland/
Other offices: Brackendale (Squamish), Cultus Lake, Maple Ridge, North Vancouver, Sechelt, Powell River

Southern Interior Region

Cariboo/Thompson

Kamloops Office:
Telephone: 250 371-6200
Fax: 250 828-4000
Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/thompson/

Cariboo/Thompson (continued)

Williams Lake Office:

Telephone: 250 398-4530

Fax: 250 398-4214

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/cariboo/

Other offices: Clearwater, Lillooet, Merritt, Kelowna, Oliver, Princeton, Vernon, 100 Mile House, Quesnel

Kootenay/Okanagan

Nelson Office:

Telephone: 250 354-6333

Fax: 250 354-6332

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/kootenay/

Other offices: Castlegar, Creston/West Creston, Fernie, Grand Forks, Invermere, Golden, Revelstoke

Penticton Office:

Telephone: 250 490-8200

Fax: 250 490-2231

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/okanagan/

Cranbrook Office:

Telephone: 250 489-8540

Fax: 250 489-8506

Northern Region

Skeena

Smithers Office:

Telephone: 250 847-7260

Fax: 250 847-7728

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/skeena/

Other offices: Atlin, Burns Lake, Dease Lake, Terrace/Lakelse Lake

Omineca

Environmental Protection Division

Conservation Officer Service

Prince George Office:

Telephone: 250 565-6135

Fax: 250 565-6629

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/omineca/

Other offices: Vanderhoof, Mackenzie, Mount Robson, Fort St. James

Environmental Sustainability

Parks and Protected Areas Division

Prince George Office:

Telephone: 250 565-6135

Fax: 250 565-6940

Peace

Fort St. John Office:

Telephone: 250 787-3411

Fax: 250 787-3490

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/peace/

Other offices: Chetwynd/Moberly Lake Park, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson/Liard Hotsprings

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