

Statement of Mandate 2015–2016



Natural Resources



NOVA SCOTIA

Department of Natural Resources

Statement of Mandate

2015-2016

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Message from the Minister and the Deputy Minister

The Department of Natural Resources is committed to a long-term transformation and to a province that balances the economic, environmental, and social benefits of Nova Scotia's natural resources.

In 2015-16 we will make further progress on the development of programs, policies, legislation and initiatives which support that objective.

We will continue to take new and innovative approaches to managing our forests and biodiversity. We will implement methods that give us the flexibility to consider complementary uses of Crown lands, and that involve private landowners in the shared stewardship required to ensure the sustainability of our natural resources.

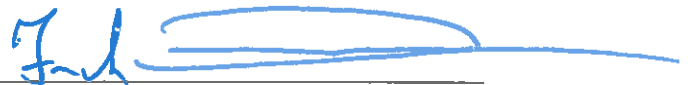
We will work to implement a modern and effective Mineral Resources Act that improves Nova Scotia's competitive position while also adopting the principles of sustainability, and we will continue efforts to help ensure sustainable parks and protected areas for current and future generations.

Traditional practices are changing. Nova Scotians have sometimes conflicting notions about the rights and responsibilities associated with management of our natural resources.

Through practices like website harvest maps, the Department has taken steps towards greater openness and transparency. In the coming year we will continue with efforts that build trust by expanding our approach to public engagement. We will implement an ecosystem approach that will guide our joint responsibilities for balanced development and conservation of Nova Scotia's natural resources.



Honourable Zach Churchill
Minister, Natural Resources



Frank Dunn
Deputy Minister, Natural Resources

Mandate

The Department of Natural Resources has broad responsibilities relative to the development, management, conservation and protection of forest, mineral, parks, and wildlife resources and the administration of the province's Crown land.

The Department of Natural Resources was formed in 1991 from the former Department of Mines and Energy and the Department of Lands and Forests. Services are offered and delivered through four branches - Land Services, Geoscience and Mines, Regional Services, and Renewable Resources. In addition, the Department has a central planning and administrative support group called Policy, Planning and Support Services. Human resources, financial, and information technology functions are provided through the Resources Corporate Services Unit.

Mission

To work with Nova Scotians to build a better future through sustainable natural resource management.

Vision

In 2020 and beyond...

- Nova Scotia is rich in natural resources – including biodiversity, forests, geological resources, provincial parks and the land we manage.
- Individuals and groups interested in our natural resources work with government to manage these resources wisely.
- All Nova Scotians benefit from the natural health and wealth of the province.

Strategic Outcomes

The Department of Natural Resources has broad responsibilities for the management, development, conservation and protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forests, geological and park resources, and for the administration of the province's Crown land.

In August 2011, the province released "The Path We Share, A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia, 2011-2020." The Strategy outlines the vision, goals, and actions that are required by government, industry, non-profit groups, academics, and other concerned citizens to ensure the survival and good health of Nova Scotia's natural resources for this and future generations.

The Strategy's overarching goals, developed after extensive consultation with the public, are the lynch pins that inform the programs, policies, and activities undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources.

In 2015-2016, our primary strategic outcome, therefore, is:

- **Sustainable resource development** (Nova Scotia's natural resources are managed in a way that balances economic, environmental, and social demands for current and future generations of Nova Scotians).

Our supporting outcomes are:

- **Collaborative leadership** (A culture of collaboration, innovation, and mutual accountability that guides stewardship of the province's natural resources);
- **Research and knowledge sharing** (Government and interested groups share research capacity and knowledge and are well informed about issues affecting our natural resources), and;
- **Good governance** (Laws and policies are clear and effective tools that oversee the economic, environmental and social supports for shared stewardship of our natural resources).

In 2015-2016, work will continue on longer-term activities that help transform the way Nova Scotians balance the sometimes conflicting demands on our natural resources.

There will also be tangible progress through short-term goals.

Collaborative leadership initiatives, for example, will focus on project, programs, and initiatives that place an increased emphasis on an ecosystem approach. The Department will target innovations that improve resource planning and development, and that build a sustainable future for Nova Scotia's natural and cultural heritage. The Department will:

- provide opportunities for Nova Scotians to learn more about biodiversity and to commit themselves to its stewardship;
- work to guide the operation of a sustainable provincial park system;
- work collaboratively with the Department of Environment to complete the survey, research and land administration tasks related to designation of at least 12 per cent of the land mass by the end of 2015;
- collaborate with organizations to provide information and support to owners of small private woodlots;

- consult with the Mi'kmaq on issues of shared stewardship; and
- develop and share best practices to engage with citizens and interested groups in the stewardship of natural resources.

With the input of other government groups, community organizations, and resource-sector industries, sustainable resource development will focus on:

- supporting healthy forests;
- continuing to revise the way forest resources on provincial Crown land are allocated and managed in order to improve the economic, environmental and social benefits to Nova Scotians;
- exploring complementary ways to use the province's Crown land; and
- helping develop systems that protect biodiversity and that apply an ecosystem approach.

Research and knowledge sharing will further help to provide critical information which governments and interested groups can use to make informed decisions about:

- biodiversity;
- forest management;
- the balanced use of Crown land; and
- the geoscience based activities that address challenges like coastal erosion, and geohazards like radon.

Good governance efforts will focus on:

- review and renewal of the Mineral Resources Act;
- streamlining processes associated with the administration of Crown lands through changes to the Ministerial Land Transaction Regulations and the Crown Lands Act
- development of policy direction and legislation affecting sustainable natural resources;
- development of improved departmental tools for managing risk, improving internal processes, managing workflow and for sharing data and information within the department and with the public;
- consultation with Mi'kmaq; and
- development of public participation methods that help communities and other interested parties better understand the scope of issues, the range of solutions and the impact of decisions and actions relating to the shared stewardship of the province's natural resources.

Government Priorities

Government has committed to lead, support or work with Nova Scotians to advance the shared goals and recommendations of the One Nova Scotia Commission's report on Building Our New Economy, released in February 2014. This work is further guided by commitments in the September 2014 Speech from the Throne that identified four priorities: fiscal sustainability, the economy, demographics and people, and education and skills training.

Much of the work undertaken by the Department in response to the Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia, 2011-2020, supports the principles outlined in the fiscal and economy portions of those commitments.

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY:

Government is committed to balancing the budget by 2017-2018 and achieving ongoing, fiscal sustainability.

To support this work in 2015-2016, the Department of Natural Resources will:

- implement a process improvement framework that incorporates the principles of Lean Six Sigma and change management to reduce complexity, duplication and wasted steps;
- continue to streamline service delivery through the development and implementation of the Crown land Information Network Computing (CrownLINC) system that supports work related to the administration of Crown land;
- continue to improve level of service to the public by allowing businesses and individuals to apply online for use or sale of Crown land through the Nova Scotia Online initiative;
- use a standardized risk management framework that proactively minimizes risk to the health of Nova Scotians and to the province's natural resources while ensuring that departmental resources are appropriately directed at areas of concern; and
- support Government's efforts to streamline service delivery.

ECONOMY:

Government recognizes that creating good, sustainable jobs for Nova Scotians is the role of the private sector and social enterprises. The role of government is to create a climate that fosters private sector and social enterprise economic growth.

To support this work in 2015-2016, the Department will:

- review and improve laws and policies related to Nova Scotia's natural resources;
- continue to explore complementary ways to use the province's Crown land through DNR's proactive land asset management initiative; and

- strengthen data sharing through DNR's multi-year Provincial Land and Resource Management Initiative. This cross-government project links land related data so it can be more readily used for decision making by communities, developers, industries and others.

EDUCATION:

Government's focus includes efforts to continually improve opportunities for skills development and knowledge through post-secondary education, training and apprenticeship.

In 2015-2016, the Department of Natural Resources will:

- work with the Nova Scotia Community College to better tie outcomes of the forest technicians' program with departmental needs and with the Nova Scotia government's current economic, environmental and social accountabilities.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND PEOPLE:

Government has committed to increase net interprovincial in-migration and international immigration levels and to enhance wellness and health initiatives. The commitment also includes promises to enhance workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities; and enhance communities and social well-being.

In 2015-2016, the Department of Natural Resources will:

- use a newly developed departmental workforce plan to identify and begin removing any barriers to workforce diversity, and to identify the key skills, knowledge and abilities for future employees; and
- work with communities and other partners to ensure a sustainable provincial park system.

Budget Context:

Natural Resources			
	2014-2015	2014-2015	2015-2016
	Estimate	Forecast	Estimate
Program & Service Area	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	521	728	758
Corporate Services Unit	3,938	3,844	1,157
Renewable Resources	20,363	20,388	18,689
Geoscience and Mines	4,607	4,505	4,312
Regional Services	50,680	50,013	48,613
Policy, Planning and Support Services	4,937	4,933	4,844
Land Services	4,196	4,060	4,610
Total Gross Departmental Expenses	89,242	88,471	82,983
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	11,209	13,444	12,835
Fees and Other Charges	1,791	1,854	1,855
Ordinary Recoveries	399	895	463
TCA Purchase Requirements	4,840	5,070	3,300
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	778.2	733.7	706.0

Note:

Estimates/Forecasts: All estimates/forecasts should be rounded to the nearest thousand.

FTEs for Departments: Rounding should follow what appears in 1.1 of the Estimates book.

FTEs for PSO's: In accordance with what appears in the Nova Scotia Estimates Supplementary Detail, all FTE information should be rounded to the nearest tenth.

Performance Measures 2015-16:

Work on the Natural Resources Strategy is ongoing and various measures of success are being tracked within the department as we move toward the goals set for 2020. These performance measures are samples of the assessments being made as we work toward achieving our strategic goals and government priorities. These tools help us understand, manage, and improve what we do.

Sustainable Natural Resources

Outcome	Better ecosystem planning for forestry- and biodiversity-related decision making on Crown land.
Measure	Demonstrated use of environmental, economic and social values in calculation of wood supply coming from Crown land
Why this measure?	Traditional forestry models considered indicators relevant largely to wood supply. A new provincial resource analysis includes more emphasis on additional values (like protection of Old Forests, Aboriginal interests, wildlife landscaping, and habitat buffers) to facilitate a more balanced approach to resource analysis on Crown land.
Target	Base year data to be compiled: metrics regarding Crown forest lands dedicated to values other than wood supply
Strategic Actions to Achieve Target	Collection of landscape level assessments that include various economic, environmental and social values.

Collaborative Leadership

Outcome	Industry and interested groups become better stewards and strengthen their understanding of decisions about mineral resource development and how it affects communities.
Measures	i) Number of unique downloads of “Community Consultation: A Guide for Prospectors and Mineral Exploration Companies working in Nova Scotia” from the Geosciences and Mines branch website. ii) Minister receives fewer letters from the public, industry and other stakeholder groups expressing concerns about exploration and mining.
Target	Base year data to be compiled for 2015-2016
Strategic Actions to Achieve Target	In collaboration with other government departments, industry associations and NGOs, DNR publishes guidelines for industry engagement with communities and tools for communities to better understand the activities of the exploration and mining industries.

Research and Knowledge Sharing

Outcome	Government and interested groups share knowledge to help make informed decisions about issues affecting our natural resources.
Measure	Improved accessibility to information regarding various natural resources
Target	Qualitative evidence of more interactive programming and information sharing via the DNR website, education outreach programs, and community/engagement events.
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of Western Crown land to be harvested is mapped and presented to the public for review before harvest • A map to help the public identify areas with the highest potential risk of Radon exposure • A web-based tool (NovaROC) that provides the online viewing and printing of maps showing the location/information of mineral tenure throughout the province of Nova Scotia • A web-based tool for sharing Ecological Land Classification and forestry information.
Strategic Actions to Achieve Target	Policy and guidelines for public participation and stakeholder engagement. Data knowledge transfer.

Good governance

Outcome #1	Governments, industries, and individuals receive the information they need to help with land-use planning and decision making.
Measure	Average number of days to complete renewal/re-issue of Crown land lease (from date of application to decision)
Target	For 10 year lease renewals: 2 months from date of application to decision by 2017 For 20-year reissue of lease: 4 months from date of application to decision by 2017
Data	For 10 year renewals: an average of 1.1. years For 20 year re-issue of lease: an average of 5.3 years
Strategic Actions to Achieve Target	Implementation of new CrownLINC system, redesign of internal workflow processes, better monitoring of workflow and results, establishment of metrics

Good governance

Outcome #2	Laws and policies are clear and effective.						
Measure	Percentage of laws and regulations that have been reviewed and, where appropriate, repealed, revised or updated						
About this measure	A multi-year legislative review has been launched by the department and work has been prioritized.						
Target	50 per cent of DNR's statutes are reviewed by 2020						
Data	<p>Statutes that have been Reviewed</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Statutes that have been Reviewed Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2014-15</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target (2020)</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Percentage	2014-15	11%	Target (2020)	50%
Year	Percentage						
2014-15	11%						
Target (2020)	50%						
Strategic Actions to Achieve Target	Mineral Resources Act and associated regulations are reviewed and renewed. Ongoing progress toward review and resolution of other legislation						