



Business Plan

2019–20

Department of Lands and Forestry



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Department of Lands and Forestry 2019-20 Annual Plan

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Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

On behalf of the Department of Lands and Forestry, we are pleased to present the 2019-2020 Business Plan that outlines our strategic direction for the year ahead.

Implementing the Biodiversity Act in 2019-2020 addresses our needs for defining biodiversity, establishing leadership and governance, and managing emerging risks to nature. The Act supports the measures already undertaken by the *Parks and Protected Areas Plan* to conserve biodiversity by providing tools to address risks to biodiversity and the ecological integrity of these and other spaces. We will also increase our focus on wildlife and species at risk, and in 2019-20, will take actions including completing outstanding recovery plans and status reports.

We will address aging infrastructure within our provincial parks, and we will continue to promote and support accessible, inclusive and sustainable park use. This contributes to the government's priority of moving towards 13 percent protected land across the province while ensuring a balance so there is no negative recreational or economic effects.

We have begun work to implement the *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*. Changes to forest practices will mean increased ecological protection and biodiversity on Crown lands, and a sustainable forest sector. The changes required to implement ecological forestry will take time, but we are committed to implementing change. As a first step, we have already put in place interim tree retention guidelines to begin the shift to more ecological forestry practices on the ground.

In 2019-20, we will implement the triad model of ecological forestry, which includes conservation areas, high-production forest areas and a matrix when conservation and forestry objectives are blended. Specifically, we will initiate a public process to identify potential areas for high production forestry on Crown land. We will also initiate a peer review of the current approach to Natural Disturbance Regimes mapping and methodology to ensure alignment with ecological forestry.

Finally, this year, we will work with several provincial government departments to explore small-scale wood energy projects. This collaborative effort supports our ecological forestry commitment and will involve all levels of government, schools, industry and other stakeholders.

We are committed to improving openness, transparency and steps will be taken that will involve stakeholders, scientific expertise, and the public, and increase the amount of peer reviews and academic partnerships.

Original signed by

Honourable Iain Rankin

Minister of Lands and Forestry

Original signed by

Julie Towers

Deputy Minister, Lands and Forestry

Ministerial Mandate:

The Department of Lands and Forestry (the Department) has broad responsibilities relative to the management, development, conservation and protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forest, and park resources, as well as the administration of the province's Crown land. In addition to our core operations and obligations, the Department is delivering on the following actions identified as priorities in the Minister's 2017 Mandate Letter:

- Introduced a Biodiversity Act
- Created a new Nova Scotia Biodiversity Council
- Appointed an independent expert to review forestry practices
- Expanding trail access across Nova Scotia

Our Strategic Priorities:

Lands and Forestry will continue to be guided by four strategic priorities in 2019/2020:

- **Our People:** Cultivate an engaged, effective, and empowered workforce
- **The Public:** Strengthen public trust in the management of our natural resources
- **Our Services:** Deliver services collaboratively, efficiently and effectively
- **Our Natural Resources:** Manage our natural resources for public benefits

Fast Facts:

Did you know that:

- Lands and Forestry manages 230 park properties across our beautiful province, offering various services, including beaches, hiking trails, picnic parks, camping and hiking opportunities at 130 properties.
- The Department manages the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park where, for over 60 years, people have come to tour the Park's 40 hectares, visit our 29 species of mammals and 45 species of birds, and experience a unique educational experience from our wildlife park experts.
- Lands and Forestry's wildfire management program conducts wildfire prevention, detection and suppression activities, supported by four state-of-the-art helicopters, and helps other provinces in wildfire emergencies.
- Lands and Forestry is a science-based department that employs 629 professional staff, including biologists, forestry experts, park professionals, surveyors, and a variety of other experts.
- The Department administers the Province's Crown lands, representing approximately 30% of the Nova Scotia's total land area, and has a variety of tools available to the public for Crown land management.  **Available here:** <https://novascotia.ca/natr/land/>
- The Department has a public library with a collection of resources on land use, forestry, wildlife, Crown land, geoscience, mining and related topics. We serve government staff,

provincial and federal government personnel, mining and forestry industries, prospectors, scientists, consultants, educators, students and the general public.

🔗 **Visit our catalogue:** <https://novascotia.ca/natr/library/>

- The Crown Land Information Management Centre (CLIMC) has over 170 collections pertaining to land in Nova Scotia since the 1700's up to and including current Crown lands records. We serve the public including: lawyers, surveyors, title searchers, historians, archeologists and genealogists are frequent clients.
- Lands and Forestry has ongoing collaboration with other provinces and federal government departments on various Minister, Deputy Minister, scientific and operational committees to share best practices and foster inter-jurisdictional collaboration in support of departmental programs and operations. This includes representation on:
 - the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers and its related committees;
 - the Board of Directors of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, Inc.;
 - the Canadian Ministers responsible for Parks, Protected Areas, Conservation and Biodiversity; and,
 - the Canadian Parks Council.

Key Initiatives for 2019/20

Implementation of the *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices*

On December 3, 2018, the Government issued its response (the Response) to the recommendations made by Professor Lahey who was commissioned to conduct an *Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*. The Response acknowledges that many of the recommendations are interconnected, and their implementation will be phased-in over time.

As an overarching policy priority, and the foundation for other values, the Response commits that Nova Scotia will protect and enhance ecosystems and biodiversity. The Response identifies the following priority actions that are foundational to achieving ecological forestry in Nova Scotia:

- Revise the Department's Forest Management Guide to place more emphasis on ecological values. The Forest Management Guide outlines the forest practices that can be used on Crown land. Implementation of these revisions will result in a further reduction in clear cutting on Crown land, particularly where multi-aged and mixed-species forest in which late successional species would naturally occur. The revisions will involve external expert advisors and input from stakeholders.
- Initiate a peer review of the Department's current approach to Natural Disturbance Regimes mapping and methodology to ensure alignment with ecological forestry. This work will involve external scientific experts and input from stakeholders. Natural Disturbance Regimes are the historic patterns (i.e., frequency and extent) of natural processes such as fire, insects, wind, and mass movement that affect the ecosystems and landscapes in a particular area.

- Develop a process to identify appropriate areas on Crown land for high production forestry. Identified high production areas will be managed to maximize timber production but will still be subject to environmental protections for things such as watercourses and species at risk. These high production areas will be identified with input from stakeholders. This is in keeping with the triad model of ecological forestry which requires the following three elements – conservation lands, areas of high production forestry, and the remainder for mixed use. The Department and Nova Scotia Environment have completed much work on the conservation category of the triad model, through the designation of park lands, wilderness areas and nature reserves. These designations were completed in support of the government's goal to work towards 13 percent protected lands across the province.
- Identify and develop an independent process for environmental reviews of proposed forestry management plans that will include opportunities for public input.
- Place increasing focus on wildlife and species at risk by taking actions that encompass and address wildlife issues. One of the Department's priorities this year will be to complete outstanding recovery plans and status reports, as well as actions within the recovery plans. This will begin to address recommendations made in the *Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*, and those made by the Auditor General.

As part of the Response, the Department commits to improve and demonstrate a culture of openness, transparency and accountability, and to keep stakeholders and the public informed and involved in the process of implementing the above noted priority actions, among other activities outlined in the Response. As this work moves forward, the Department commits to report on our progress and has asked Professor Lahey to conduct an evaluation of the Government's progress after its first year implementing this multi-year initiative.

🔗 **For additional information, see:** https://novascotia.ca/natr/forestry/Forest_Review/

Biodiversity Act and Regulations

Implementing a new Biodiversity Act will provide a tool to address our needs for defining biodiversity, establishing leadership and governance, and managing emerging risks to nature. Generally, biodiversity is defined as the variety of life found on earth in the form of different ecosystems, species, and genes, and the systems and processes that link them together.

The Act formally acknowledges our commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity now and in the future, and creates an integrated legislative framework. Furthermore, the Act supports evidence-based decision making, reflects balanced and sustainable management practices, and strengthens public trust in the management and protection of our province's biodiversity assets.

Implementation of the Act will be supported by the Biodiversity Council comprised of external subject matter experts who will continue to provide advice on biodiversity priorities. The Council

will be given the responsibility to help craft new regulations, and recommend new actions that promote biodiversity in Nova Scotia. The Department will also provide outreach and education on the Biodiversity Act to support its effective implementation.

Review of the *Crown Lands Act* and Department Business Processes

The Department will initiate a review of the *Crown Lands Act*, as committed to in the *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*. This review will strive to ensure Crown lands continue to be managed in the best interest of the public and to reflect the environmental, economic and social values of Nova Scotians.

The Department will also undertake a review of our business processes as they relate to the management and administration of Crown lands. This review will strive to ensure our business practices support consistent operational and service excellence and improve efficiencies in the administration of the province's Crown lands.

Small-Scale Wood Energy Projects

The Department is exploring small-scale wood energy projects as an opportunity to create a low-carbon, renewable heating solution for medium to large scale public buildings and serve as a model for private businesses. This is a collaborative, multi-year effort involving nine provincial departments, federal and municipal governments, schools, regional organizations, and industry stakeholders that supports the principles of ecological forestry as committed in the *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*.

Nova Scotia Provincial Park System Improvements

The Department is committed to promoting and supporting accessible, inclusive and sustainable public use and enjoyment of our parks across the province. The Department will address the need to renew aging infrastructure within the parks, identify initiatives for park system improvements and review the *Provincial Parks Regulations* to update and modernize to reflect the current operational needs of the Province's provincial parks.

 [To learn more about our provincial parks, and how to visit them see: https://parks.novascotia.ca/](https://parks.novascotia.ca/)

Land Titles Initiative

Lands and Forestry will continue working on the Land Titles Initiative, with the long-term goal of fostering economic prosperity in the five communities of North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook, Lincolnville and Sunnyville.

Working collaboratively across government under the leadership of Department of Communities Culture and Heritage, and in partnership with Nova Scotia Legal Aid, the Department will continue to support program implementation, including through the provision of eligible survey services by a dedicated survey team and processing applications under the *Land Titles Clarification Act*.

🔗 **For additional information see:** <https://ansa.novascotia.ca/landtitles>

Access by Design 2030: Achieving an Accessible Nova Scotia

Building on progress made in 2018-19, the Department will continue to advance work supporting the Government's implementation of the *Nova Scotia Accessibility Act*, the Access By Design 2030 Framework, and the Government of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Plan (2018-2021).

🔗 **For additional information see:** <https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/>

Our Department's commitments to the Government's Accessibility Plan include taking actions to make our provincial parks and beaches, as well as Department offices, more accessible to all Nova Scotians.

Departmental Expenses Summary

Lands and Forestry Expenses Summary			
(\$ thousands)			
	2018-2019	2018-2019	2019-2020
<u>Programs and Services</u>	Estimate	Forecast	Estimate
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Senior Management	521	538	522
Renewable Resources	24,748	25,634	26,551
Geoscience and Mines	4,704	4,597	0
Regional Services	40,659	41,767	40,897
Policy, Planning & Support Services	4,791	5,165	4,761
Land Services	4,178	4,300	4,019
Total - Departmental Expenses	<hr/> 79,601 <hr/>	<hr/> 82,001 <hr/>	<hr/> 76,750 <hr/>
Ordinary Recoveries	1,092	1,694	1,214
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	629.0	565.9	591.2
<u>Notes:</u>			
<u>2018-19 Expenses Forecast</u> – Expenses exceed budget due to implementation of the <i>Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices</i> ; a grant to the Nature Conservancy of Canada in support of the Halifax urban wilderness park; winter storm damage costs; and expenses relating to recoveries from provincial camping parks and out-of-province fire suppression activities.			
<u>2019-20 Expenses Budget</u> – Decrease is due to transfer of Geoscience and Mines to the Department of Energy and Mines, offset by increases relating to implementation of the <i>Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices</i> .			
<u>2019-20 Recoveries Budget</u> – Increase is due to recoveries from provincial camping parks.			

