

TERMS OF REFERENCE – Nova Scotia Biodiversity Council

1. BACKGROUND

The Provincial Government and Lands and Forestry are entering a new phase in the implementation of an ecosystem approach to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. A Nova Scotia Biodiversity Council will provide independent advice on science, research and policy with a focus on biodiversity conservation and use. The Council will recommend new actions that promote biodiversity, support reporting on the status of our biodiversity, and will help identify, prioritize, and recommend needs and problems that can be addressed through regulations under the proposed Biodiversity Act. The overall purpose of the Council is to support government in improving both the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Nova Scotia.

2. GOALS

- Identify strategic priorities for work, including specific regulations under the Biodiversity Act,
- Identify knowledge gaps and provide advice on using the ecosystem approach to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use,
- Advise on approaches and priorities for research, data gathering, and management,
- Make recommendations to the Minister on emerging and evolving biodiversity issues.

3. OBJECTIVES

- Undertake a current state assessment of legislation and policy as it pertains to the goals of the proposed Biodiversity Act;
- Identify priorities for the development of existing knowledge, policy, requirements for the Act, and the development of tools enabled by the Act or in fulfillment of its goals;
- Attend to the implementation of the Act and related tools to support an adaptive management approach of continuous improvement.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CONTEXT

- The Council recognizes the current requirements and strategic direction of existing regulations and policy at Lands and Forestry (the Department) and other resource departments;
- The Council's work will complement existing scientific and policy expertise and advice within the Department and other departments by adding additional perspective and expertise;
- Communication and knowledge sharing will be encouraged between Council

members and experts within the Department and other departments. Council members will respect confidentiality around draft documents, data and analysis not yet released to the public;

- All Council members have the same duty to serve the best interests of the Council and to assist it in fulfilling its mandate. This means making recommendations based upon an objective assessment of all the information presented, and respecting confidentiality of discussions. In general, discussions at meetings should be treated as confidential in order to foster open communications and should strive for consensus;
- In case the Council is asked to conduct or support public consultations, some degree of disclosure may be required. The members of the Council shall in collaboration with the Department determine in advance what may and may not be disclosed for purposes of consultation.

5. MEMBERSHIP

The Council members will be drawn from the appropriate disciplines necessary to achieve the goals identified above. Expressions of interest may be invited by the Minister.

The Council should collectively have experience and expertise in the following areas:

- biodiversity, ecosystem science, ecology, conservation biology, other related sciences;
- biodiversity resource management and utilization;
- Mi'kmaq traditional ecological knowledge;
- socio-economic dimensions of environmental and/or biodiversity management, conservation, and resource management and use;
- environmental planning, policy analysis, and development.

Competencies and qualifications must include specialist knowledge and broad scientific understanding to provide advice on biodiversity in Nova Scotia.

Membership will include a Wildlife Division representative. This member will serve as a Co-Chair. The Department will provide administrative support for the Council.

Council members will be appointed by the Minister. Appointments shall normally be for 2-year terms and subject to renewal with the agreement of the Minister and incumbent(s).

6. GOVERNANCE AND MEETINGS

Leadership of the Council shall be provided by two Co-chairs, one selected from the Council membership and one representing the Department.

The Co-Chairs shall be responsible for calling Council meetings, setting agendas, facilitating discussions and shall act as the spokespersons for the Council.

The Council will meet at least quarterly for the first year and at least semi-annually afterwards.

Additional members may be appointed by the Minister or ad-hoc experts engaged as dictated by the known priorities and associated experience required. This may include staff from other Nova Scotia Government departments.

The Department will reimburse for travel expenses incurred to attend meetings according to established government rates and may consider additional remuneration on a case-by-case basis.

Meeting minutes will be taken and provided to Council members and the Department.

Ongoing communication and advice between the Council and the Department will be coordinated by the Executive Director of Renewable Resources Branch and the Co-Chairs of the Committee.

The Council will provide periodic advice and updates directly to the Minister. The Council will report to the Minister at least annually or more frequently as needed.

Approved on 13 August, 2018

On behalf of the Department:



Julie Towers, Deputy Minister, Lands and Forestry



Jon Porter, Executive Director, Renewable Resources