



NRCB | Natural Resources
Conservation Board



Natural Resources Conservation Board
ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

Vision, Mission and Values

Our vision: To be a respected decision-maker, exemplifying integrity and foresight in the best interests of Alberta.

Our mission: As a quasi-judicial and regulatory agency, the NRCB makes impartial and knowledge-based decisions across two distinct mandates:

- Under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*, the NRCB decides if natural resource projects are in the public interest, considering social, environmental and economic effects, and
- Under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*, the NRCB fulfills applications and compliance responsibilities, administers and advances policies, and conducts board reviews for confined feeding operations.

Our values: In achieving our mission, we honour the NRCB's core values of integrity, fairness, respect, excellence and service.



Accountability Statement

The Natural Resources Conservation Board is accountable to the Minister of Environment and Parks. The *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* is the responsibility of Environment and Parks.

The *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* is the responsibility of Agriculture and Forestry. A 2006 memorandum of understanding between Environment and Parks, and Agriculture and Forestry (in 2006, named Sustainable Resource Development and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development), and the Natural Resources Conservation Board describes the purpose of the act, and governance and mandate responsibilities.

The 2014-15 financial reports of the Natural Resources Conservation Board are provided in *Environment and Sustainable Resource Development Annual Report 2014-2015*.

All references in this report to Environment and Parks and Agriculture and Forestry are inclusive of the former ministries of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and Agriculture and Rural Development.

Governance

The chair and board members of the Natural Resources Conservation Board provide strategic direction and are responsible for the overall governance of the organization and its financial reporting. The chief executive officer is responsible for corporate services, the delivery of the approvals and compliance functions of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* and development of policy to support those functions. The chief executive officer is accountable to the chair and board members for the general operation of the corporation.

The Natural Resources Conservation Board complies with the requirements of the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act* and the *Public Agencies Governance Framework*. Its mandate and roles, code of conduct, expense disclosures and board member competency framework are publicly available at www.nrcb.ca.



Message from the Chair

It is a great pleasure to chair the Natural Resources Conservation Board. I am extremely proud to work with my board colleagues and all of our co-workers within the Natural Resources Conservation Board, and to provide Albertans with confidence in our decisions regarding major, non-fossil fuel projects and the responsible development of confined feeding operations.

It is a privilege to work on a daily basis with outstanding colleagues who are dedicated to bringing their best to our work under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* and the *Agricultural Operations Practices Act*. Board members Jim Turner, Donna Tingley and Jay Nagendran (currently on leave to lead the Alberta Environmental Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting Agency) bring diverse environmental, socio-economic and fiscal perspectives and expertise to our review processes under both acts, ensuring that Albertans are provided with fair and balanced decisions that are in the public interest.

The chair and board members provide an arms-length, quasi-judicial review process that is independent of the Government of Alberta. This process extends to reviews of major non-energy projects, as well as other projects referred to us by order in council, and appeals of decisions made by approval officers and inspectors under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. Responsibilities of the chair and board include the governance of the Natural Resources Conservation Board.

The board reports through the chair to the Honourable Shannon Phillips, Minister, Environment and Parks. The Natural Resources Conservation Board is also responsible to the Honourable Oneil Carlier, Minister, Agriculture and Forestry for permitting and regulating confined feeding operations under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. In addition, we maintain shared services agreements with the Alberta Energy Regulator and the Alberta Utilities Commission, and assist the Surface Rights Board, the Land Compensation Board and other agencies as required.

We rely on and always appreciate the commitment and competence of our board staff. Our manager of board reviews and general counsel continue to provide a high level of service for all participants in reviews and hearings. We also rely greatly on the expertise of science and technology division staff, who participate in reviews of environmental impact assessments and provide assistance under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*. We regretfully said goodbye this year to our manager of board reviews, Susan Whittaker, who retired in January 2015 after 20 years of tremendous service to the board. We thank Susan for her many contributions and wish her all the best in her retirement.

Peter Woloshyn provides exceptional leadership as chief executive officer, working closely with our science and technology, field and corporate services divisions. Through his leadership and the work of our staff in all six offices, we continue to build a strong and effective organization dedicated to continuous improvement and excellence.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Vern Hartwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vern Hartwell
Chair



Message from the CEO

I am privileged to work with a talented team of staff and board members. Over the past year, our chair, board and operations divisions continued to deliver solid decisions, provide expert advice, resolve complex compliance issues and ensure sound fiscal management of the organization. Our strong management team led the development of new operational policies in consultation with stakeholders through the Policy Advisory Group, and new communications vehicles were put in place to help us communicate directly with operators.

Consultation with stakeholders remains a key commitment of the Natural Resources Conservation Board. The open, frank discussions at Policy Advisory Group meetings are essential and help ensure that our policies and procedures are the best they can be. I appreciate the commitment of Policy Advisory Group members to attend these important meetings.

In 2014-15, we signed a memorandum of understanding with Environment and Parks and Agriculture and Forestry to co-regulate biodigesters that use manure as a feedstock. This emerging area of energy production is exciting and raises new challenges to consider for regulating on-farm storage and land application of digestate. The Auditor General's office reviewed our surface water data management system, and concluded in its final report that all of their recommendations are now fully implemented. This positive report reflects the hard work of staff in our operations divisions.

Social licence for the livestock industry was a focus of discussion at Policy Advisory Group meetings and other agricultural events. I believe that the regulatory framework we deliver plays a role in these discussions. The data we are collecting through the surface water documentation initiative, and the proactive work being accomplished with producers under the risk based compliance program, demonstrate that most producers are committed to environmental protection. In addition, the complaints record since 2002 shows that the number of complaints has dramatically declined. Clearly, the work accomplished by our operations staff under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* is having a positive impact.

I am proud of the excellent service approval officers and inspectors deliver to operators, affected parties and municipalities, and extend my congratulations for the ratings they received on the most recent Ipsos Reid survey of operators and complainants. Survey respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction with their interactions with approval officers and inspectors. Suggestions for more information and timelines for processing applications will be looked at in 2015-16.

If there is one trend that never goes away, it is that change is constant. A number of highly regarded employees retired last year, leaving some big shoes to fill. At the same time, we were fortunate to welcome new staff who will equally contribute to the success of the organization. I would like to extend my thanks to the board and operations staff who served the organization so well for many years, and welcome the people who have recently joined us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Woloshyn". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Peter Woloshyn
Chief Executive Officer



Strategic Priorities 2014-15

1. Cross government initiatives: *Continue to support priority Government of Alberta initiatives such as Water for Life, the Clean Air Strategic Alliance and the Land-use Framework.*

Continued to participate in Water for Life cross ministry meetings, and the Odour Management team of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA). Of note, staff participated in the development of provincial non-point source contamination and riparian studies.
2. Consistent delivery of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act: Coordinate with government ministries and stakeholders on the development of operational policy and technical guidelines to ensure consistent delivery of the Agricultural Operation Practices Act.*

Consulted closely with the Policy Advisory Group, Agriculture and Forestry, and Environment and Parks on operational policy, and contributed to the development of technical guidelines.
3. Risk based approach to assist in regulating confined feeding operations: *Continue to use an environmental risk based approach for compliance activities at confined feeding operations and to review permit applications for new or expanding operations. The NRCB will also increase its emphasis on documenting surface water issues associated with confined feeding operations.*

The Environmental Risk Screening Tool continued to be used by inspectors for the Risk Based Compliance Program, to respond to complaints, where relevant, and by approval officers for screening old and new manure storage and collection facilities in all new applications. Surface water documentation was introduced in spring 2014 and remains an ongoing priority.
4. Improved knowledge and IT processes: *Expand the corporate information management system to include a records management system, and enhance the use of information technology in the NRCB's accounting processes.*

Records requirements under the Administrative Records Disposition Authority (ARDA) were confirmed and project terms of reference were drafted. Further work was deferred pending available budget and resources. Excel-based systems were introduced to improve the efficiency of expense reporting and data entry.
5. Confined feeding operation database upgrades: *Complete the update of the confined feeding operation software and programming to streamline how compliance and permitting information is stored and accessed, and enhance the capability to generate data reports.*

The majority of the updates were completed. Tablets that are linked to the database were introduced for field staff, enabling staff to immediately update records from the field.
6. Work with Agriculture and Forestry and Environment and Parks to determine how best to regulate biodigesters: *Develop new approach for regulating facilities where manure, compost and other constituents are mixed.*

A memorandum of understanding with Environment and Parks and Agriculture and Forestry was signed in February 2015. It confers responsibility to the NRCB for the storage and land application of digestate for facilities that use a feedstock that is at least 50 per cent manure, with the remaining per cent comprised of organic feedstock.



Left to right: Donna Tingley, Jim Turner, Vern Hartwell (chair), Jay Nagendran



The Board

Board members are Vern Hartwell (chair), Donna Tingley, Jim Turner and Jay Nagendran (on leave as of October 1, 2014). The chair and board members are responsible for overall governance of the Natural Resources Conservation Board, conduct public interest reviews under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*, and are the appeal body for decisions made by approval officers and inspectors under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

The board provides an arms-length review function for proposed natural resource projects. Projects are referred to the board under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*

if a project requires an environmental impact assessment, or if Cabinet deems that a board review to determine the public interest of a project is desirable.

The board delivers a quasi-judicial appeal function under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*, providing operators and directly affected parties, including municipalities and neighbours, with an avenue for a fair and objective review of decisions that affect them. The board considers each request received and will conduct a review if the appeal has sufficient merit.

Board Staff

Board staff are Bill Kennedy, General Counsel, and Tim Riordan, Manager, Board Reviews. General counsel provides legal advice to the board for reviews under both acts, while the manager of board reviews is responsible for coordinating hearings, liaising with interested parties, and maintaining the record of proceedings.



Board Reviews

Agricultural Operation Practices Act

The board considers every request for review and issues a written decision for the file to explain why each request for review will be granted or denied. If a request is granted, the board conducts a written or oral hearing and issues a decision report. In 2014-15 the board received 17 requests for review concerning four approval officer decisions. It agreed to review three of the files but determined that the request to review the fourth file lacked sufficient merit. The board conducted two written hearings and one oral hearing.

2014-15

Number of requests for review received	17
Number of files for which a review was requested	4
Number of written decisions on requests for review	4
Number of hearings conducted	3
Number of decisions issued following a hearing	3

Spruce Lane Dairies (Board Decision 2014-02/RA14003)—the issue before the board was whether to approve an expansion located within a confined feeding operation exclusion zone set out in the municipal development plan. The board conducted the review without an oral hearing and the decision was issued June 25, 2014, directing the approval officer to issue an approval.

Folsom Dairy Ltd. (Board Decision 2015-01/LA13018)—the issues before the board included: whether the municipal development plan incorporated setbacks for confined

feeding operations described in the county’s land use bylaws; impact on the community and appropriate use of land; neighbours’ concerns; and risk to surface water. Following a two day hearing, the board decision was issued January 14, 2015, directing the approval officer to issue an approval.

William and Audrey Trenchuk (Board Decision 2015- 02/BA13006 and BA14002)—the issue before the board related to the minimum distance separation calculations. The board decision was issued March 3, 2015, directing the approval officer to issue an approval.

Natural Resources Conservation Board Act

Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project—the proposed flood mitigation project requires an environmental impact assessment (EIA) and is automatically reviewed under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*. The board finalized its requirements for the application by including needed information in the terms of reference for the EIA developed by Environment and Parks.

Parsons Creek Aggregates, Limestone Quarry Project—the board’s public interest decision was issued February 25, 2014. Standing was denied to JH Drilling Inc., which filed for leave to appeal to the Alberta Court of Appeal. The court dismissed the application in November 2014. In January 2015, JH Drilling filed for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. The board provided documentation required by the courts for both applications. The Supreme Court denied the leave application on May 7, 2015.

Performance

Performance Goals

Strategy	Result achieved
1a Update the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i> , Board Administrative Procedures Regulation in consultation with NRCB staff and stakeholders.	Prepared draft updates and consultation plan for implementation pending approval from the minister, Agriculture and Forestry.
1b Proactively provide opportunities for all participants to understand NRCB review and hearing processes through guides, public information sessions, and prompt, accurate responses to direct inquiries.	Reviewed and updated website content. Briefed the Springbank proponent on the board public review process and attended consultations. Responded to public inquiries about NRCBA and AOPA reviews.
1c Identify critical scientific and technical issues raised in applications under the <i>Natural Resources Conservation Board Act</i> to determine relevant information needed to ensure that reviews are effective, fair, transparent and timely.	Assisted Environment and Parks with developing the terms of reference for the environmental impact assessment for the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project.
1d Ensure that natural resource projects and confined feeding operation permit application reviews are consistent with regional land use plans under the <i>Alberta Land Stewardship Act</i> .	Thresholds are established by regional plans and were not relevant to reviews conducted in 2014-15.

Core Business One:

Board reviews and appeals under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* and the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*

Performance Measure and Results

Efficiency of review process	Result achieved		
Target: 100%	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15*
Percentage of Natural Resources Conservation Board decisions issued within 80 working days of the conclusion of reviews under the <i>Natural Resources Conservation Board Act</i> and within 30 working days of the conclusion of hearings under the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i>	N/A No reviews completed	100%	100%

* Performance result reporting for 2014-15 has been adjusted to provide a more accurate measure of board reviews conducted under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. For prior years, including 2013-2014, "hearings" meant and were reported for any oral hearing. Effective 2014-2015, "hearings" means any board deliberation(s) resulting in a request for review (RFR) decision, and any oral or written hearing.



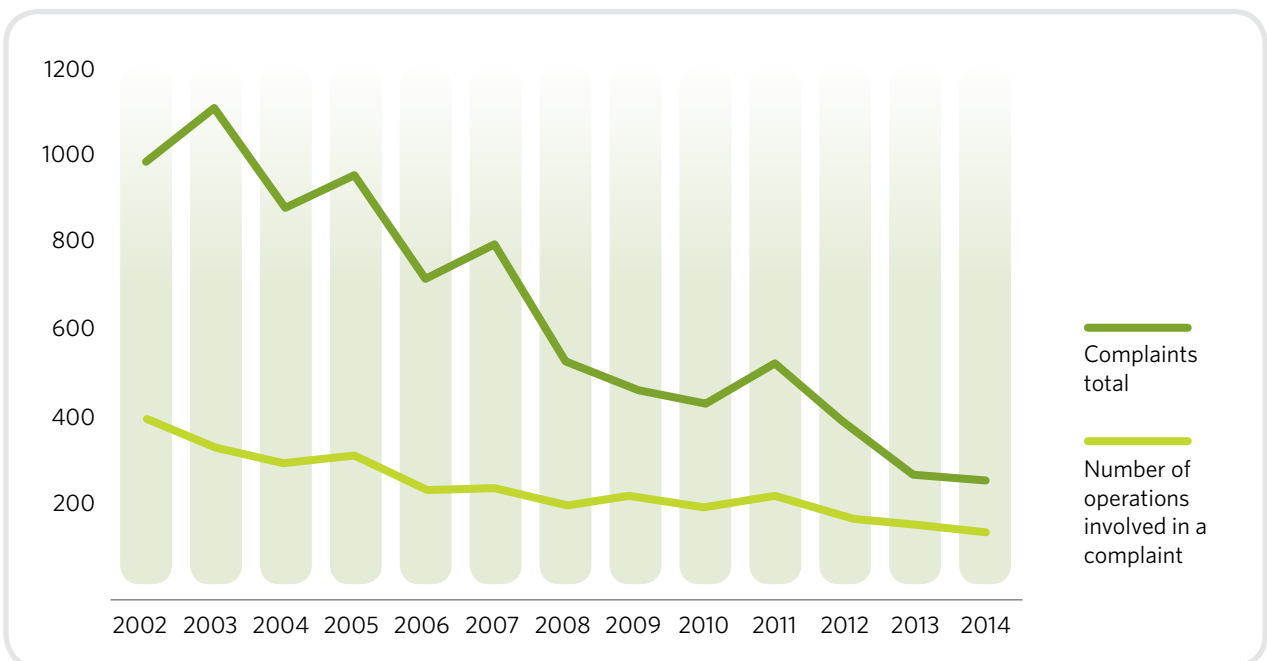
Operations

Regulation Under the Agricultural Operation Practices Act

Alberta's livestock operations are regulated under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) is committed to accuracy, fairness and consistency when it reviews applications or responds to a compliance issue. Its partnerships with government ministries, livestock producers and associations, municipalities, and environmental non-government associations are an important part of making sure the NRCB meets those objectives. Consulting with the

multi-stakeholder Policy Advisory Group on operational policy, and listening to stakeholders through third-party surveys, helps the NRCB assess where it is on track and where it may need to put new emphasis. Outcomes of both processes are provided on page 12.

Since 2002, the Natural Resources Conservation Board has issued more than 1200 permits and responded to nearly 8000 complaints. The number of applications for permits has remained relatively steady each year since 2002, but complaints have declined significantly, suggesting that compliance with the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* is having a positive effect on the environment and communities.





Applications—Overview

The overall number of applications received and permits issued remained consistent with recent years. Most applications to expand existing operations or build new operations were submitted from the southern region of the

province. Most applications to construct a facility without increasing livestock numbers were received from central Alberta. The poultry sector, followed by cattle and dairy, showed the most growth in the number of applications to increase livestock.

Number of applications received and permits issued 2014-15¹

Region	Applications received			Permits issued		
	Approvals	Registrations	Authorizations	Approvals	Registrations	Authorizations
Peace	1	0	1	1	0	0
North Central	5	0	3	5	0	3
Central	9	3	30	10	3	29
Southern	24	2	8	25	1	10
Total	39	5	42	41	4	42

Livestock category	Applications received			Permits issued		
	Approvals	Registrations	Authorizations	Approvals	Registrations	Authorizations
Cattle	8	0	2	8	0	2
Dairy	7	2	29	10	2	29
Other ²	3	2	1	2	1	0
Poultry	17	1	3	17	1	4
Swine	4	0	7	4	0	7
Total	39	5	42	41	4	42

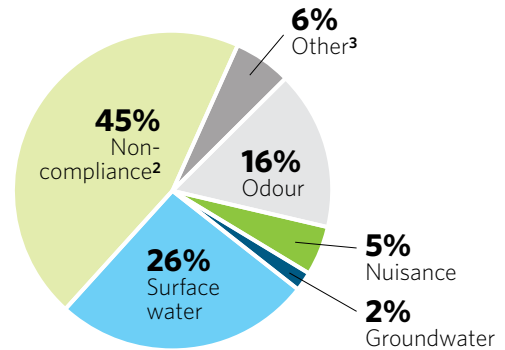
1. Approvals and registrations are for new construction or an expansion, in both cases, involving an increase in livestock. Authorizations are for minor structural improvements and modifications and do not involve an increase in livestock.
2. Includes bison, goats, horses and sheep.

Compliance—Overview

Overall, complaints remained relatively consistent with 2013-14. Most complaints involved non-compliance and surface water concerns. Non-compliance issues were related primarily to manure spreading without incorporation, winter spreading of manure and manure storage. Surface water issues were related primarily to manure land spreading activities and run-off from operations.

Cattle confined feeding operations, mainly in the south region, received the highest number of complaints (largely about surface water and non-compliance). Complaints that involved hog operations declined from the previous year, from 31 to 24. Most of these complaints were about odour and non-compliance concerns.

Type of complaint¹



1. Calculated by the number of operations that are involved in a type of complaint.
2. *Non-compliance* includes manure spreading infractions, set backs, etc.
3. *Other* includes dead animal disposal, nutrient loading and issues that do not fall under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

Number of operations involved in complaints by region 2014-15

Peace	North Central	Central	Southern
6	24	44	72

Number of operations involved in complaints by livestock category¹

Cattle	Cow/calf ²	Dairy	Mixed	Other ³	Poultry	Swine
45	27	24	10	20	4	24

1. An operation may be counted more than once in a single category as a result of multiple inspections, or may be counted in more than one category.
2. Cow/calf do not require a permit under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* but must comply with the manure management requirements of the act.
3. Includes bison, goats, horses and sheep.

Enforcement and emergency orders issued 2014-15¹

Enforcement	Emergency
3	1

1. Enforcement and emergency orders are posted on the Natural Resources Conservation Board website until their requirements are met.

Environmental Risk Screenings

Inspectors and approval officers use the environmental risk screening tool to conduct science-based screening for risks to groundwater and surface water at confined feeding operations. The tool is used for all permit applications, the risk based compliance program and complaint response, where appropriate, to identify site-specific risks. Any remedial action required to address moderate or high risks is tailored for the specific facility.

Risk Based Compliance Program

The risk based compliance program began in 2010. The program assesses risk to groundwater and surface water at confined feeding operations that have an earthen liquid manure storage facility constructed before 2002, and are located in areas with potentially vulnerable groundwater. In 2010, a total of 172 operations were identified for the program, many with more than one manure storage or collection facility. As of March 31, 2015, only 27 operations remain to be screened.

The environmental risk screening tool (ERST) is used to screen every manure storage and collection facility at

each operation in the program. The ERST scoring ranks the potential risk as low, moderate or high. The majority of operations that have moderate or high risk facilities have leak detection monitoring systems, and NRCB inspectors work with the operators to mitigate the risks. If a monitoring system is not in place, inspectors may require leak detection or use other techniques, such as terrain conductivity surveys, to assess the impact on groundwater. High risk facilities may also require management changes or modification of existing facilities, depending on the scope of the impact. Of the facilities screened to date, 153 are ranked low risk, 22 are ranked moderate risk and seven are ranked high risk.

Risk based compliance program as of 2014-15

Confined feeding operations (CFOs)	Number of CFOs identified at start of program in 2010	Number of CFOs no longer operating or not meeting criteria	Number of CFOs screened since start of program
	172	80	145
Facilities ¹	Number of facilities ranked low potential risk to groundwater	Number of facilities ranked moderate potential risk to groundwater	Number of facilities ranked high potential risk to groundwater
	153	22	7

1. A confined feeding operation often has more than one facility.

Surface Water Data Collection

The NRCB began to collect data on surface water conditions at confined feeding operations in spring 2013. As of March 31, 2015, NRCB staff had completed a total of 695 inspection reports. During 2014-15, NRCB staff completed 370 reports and identified serious surface water issues at 12 confined feeding operations. Seven of these operations had preventable issues. (A serious issue is defined as manure contaminated water entering a surface water body.) NRCB inspectors ensure that appropriate action is taken to address any impact on surface water.

Recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General were fully implemented and signed off by the Auditor General in his public report of October 2014. The NRCB introduced quarterly exception reports in 2014 to ensure that staff record and report surface water data consistently. In early 2015, the NRCB provided the Office of the Auditor General with a demonstration of the effectiveness of its exception reports. The NRCB has now fulfilled all of its commitments to the Office of the Auditor General.

Surface water data collection program 2014-15

Number of inspection reports completed	Number of CFOs where data was collected	Number of CFOs where surface water issues identified	Number of CFOs with serious surface water issues requiring action
370	211	40	12



New memorandums of understanding

A memorandum of understanding with Environment and Parks and Agriculture and Forestry establishes shared responsibilities for regulating biogas digesters that use a manure-based feedstock.

A memorandum of understanding with Agriculture and Forestry for disposal of dead livestock clarifies that the ministry will respond to the majority of complaints under the *Animal Health Act*. If the operation has a pre-2002 municipal permit with conditions that differ from the act, the Natural Resources Conservation Board will enforce the conditions.

Policy Advisory Group highlights

—meetings were held October 23, 2014 and March 10, 2015. Discussions addressed approval officer amendments, minor amendments and amending municipal permits; guidelines for distinguishing seasonal feeding and bedding sites from confined feeding operations; and processing permits when the approval officer and applicant disagree about the completeness of the information.

Draft policies on construction deadlines and waivers were also consulted on and finalized. In consultation with the Policy Advisory Group, a waiver form and fact sheet were prepared and posted on the NRCB website to assist operators and neighbours. Use of the form will help ensure that neighbours are knowledgeable about what they are signing, and should provide operators with greater certainty that the waiver has been signed with good intent. The form and fact sheet also provide clarity on how the NRCB will handle revocation of waivers.

CFO client satisfaction survey—in early 2015, Ipsos Reid surveyed operators who submitted an application in 2014 or were involved in a compliance issue, and parties that filed a complaint, to assess their satisfaction with NRCB processes. Most operators and complainants indicated they were treated with courtesy and respect. Some applicants would like faster turn around on permit decisions. Complainants would like more information. The NRCB will review its application processes in 2015-16 and provide more information on its website for complainants.

Policy Advisory Group Members (March 2015)

Government sector

Natural Resources Conservation Board	Peter Woloshyn (CEO; PAG co-chair); Jim Turner (NRCB Board)
Agriculture & Forestry	Dave Burdek (ADM, Policy & Environment); Sean Royer (Environmental Stewardship; PAG co-chair)
Environment & Parks	Andy Ridge (Water Policy)

Livestock sectors

Beef	Stuart Thiessen & Rich Smith (Alberta Beef Producers); Bryan Walton (Alberta Cattle Feeders Association)
Dairy	Martin Van Dieman & Gert Schrijver (Alberta Milk)
Pork	Darcy Fitzgerald & Will Kingma (Alberta Pork)
Poultry	Erna Ference (Alberta Egg Producers); David Hyink (Alberta Chicken Producers)
Intensive Livestock Working Group	Martin Zuidhof (Alberta Cattle Feeders Association); Ron Axelson (Intensive Livestock Working Group)

Municipal & environment non-government sectors

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties	John Whaley & Al Kemmere (AAMDC)
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association	Jenelle Saskiw (AUMA)
Environment non-government sector	Ann Baran & Wayne Ungstad (Alberta Environmental Network)

Public access to information—all applications and public notices under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* are now posted on the public website during the statement of concern response period. Improvements were made to the decision search engine and search results.

Performance

Performance Goals

Strategy	Result achieved
2a Enhance direct communication with confined feeding operators and key stakeholders on priority NRCB initiatives, policies and programs that directly affect them.	Two issues of a newsletter were produced for operators. Three articles were produced for industry publications. Coordination continued with Agriculture and Forestry on Call of the Land topics.
2b Continue to develop new and update existing operational policies, including an updated approval policy, in consultation with the Policy Advisory Group to support consistent delivery of the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i> .	Continued priority. Two policies were completed. Four policies were consulted on and are nearly complete. An update of the 2010 compliance policy was initiated. Substantial draft revisions were made to the 2008 approval policy (scheduled for completion in 2015-16).
2c Continue to support other departments and agencies studying the effects of manure collection and storage facilities on water quality.	Field and technical support were provided for an Agriculture and Forestry project on the effect of manure on groundwater.
2d Develop and implement a three-year program to review all water well monitoring requirements when they are included in AOPA permits.	The design of the program was initiated in 2014-15 and will be completed in 2015-16. The program is targeted for completion in 2017.
2e Continue the <i>NRCB Water Data Management Process for Confined Feeding Operations</i> internal directive to improve and standardize how water information is collected, and ensure that appropriate follow-up action is taken.	The protocol for data collection was introduced in spring 2014. Quarterly exception reports are used to confirm that data is correctly collected and uploaded on the database.
2f Maintain quality control initiatives for uses of the environmental risk screening tool (ERST) in compliance and permitting activities.	A review team is responsible for auditing the scoring and interpretation of results for each use of the ERST, to ensure that the results are interpreted and applied correctly and consistently.
2g Use the surface water implementation plan and results from surface water data collection to inform future compliance actions for managing surface water issues.	The surface water data collected to date indicates no significant contribution to surface water contamination from facilities or manure application.

Core Business Two: Regulation under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*

Performance Measure and Results

Efficiency of permitting process	Result achieved		
Target: 85%	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Percentage of decisions issued within 65 working days from the date the application is determined to be complete	88%	77%*	90%

Complaint resolution	Result achieved		
Target: 95%	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Percentage of complaint files resolved or requiring no further action, within 90 days**	99%	100%	99%

* Several decisions were delayed at the request of the operator or to facilitate municipal involvement.

** Files forwarded for enforcement action are categorized as a closed complaint file.



Organizational Capacity

The Natural Resources Conservation Board is a small organization that relies on the expertise, strong work ethic and flexibility of its staff. It recognizes that its success depends on ensuring that staff have the professional training, equipment and resources they need to do their jobs. To that end, the Natural Resources Conservation Board is committed to providing a healthy work environment and to ensuring that all staff have the resources they need to be effective and efficient.

In-house training and professional development opportunities continued to be provided in 2014-15. An annual retreat was held in September and a two-day joint training session was held in March, allowing staff who work in different regions of the province to meet face to face. Video conferencing continued to be well used to support internal communication and division meetings. The internal intranet site was expanded, including the addition of an image bank.

Corporate policies and resources were communicated to staff. The disaster recovery plan was tested in 2013 using the Calgary floods, and was revised and updated in 2014-15. Whistleblower protection procedures and a reporting form were developed and shared with staff. Corporate Services personnel met with staff to ensure they were aware of available resources. The chief executive officer held a one on one meeting with each employee in the operations divisions.

Several staff changes occurred as a result of retirements and internal re-assignments. Approval officer Scott Cunningham was the successful candidate for the position of environmental technical specialist, filling a vacancy in the science and technology division. Ben Hsu was promoted to the position of manager, corporate services, filling the vacancy created by the retirement of Jacinta Rodrigues. The Natural Resources Conservation Board thanks retirees Jacinta Rodrigues, Jim Fujikawa, Orin Kenzie and Susan Whittaker for their many years with the board and their important contributions to its work. It also extends its welcome to staff that joined the board in 2014-15.

Retirements:

- **Orin Kenzie**, Approval Officer, Lethbridge office (retired September 2014)
- **Jacinta Rodrigues**, Director, Corporate Services, Edmonton office (retired October 2014)
- **Jim Fujikawa**, Senior Soils Specialist, Science and Technology, Lethbridge office (retired November 2014)
- **Susan Whittaker**, Manager, Board Reviews, Edmonton office (retired January 2015)

Positions filled:

- **Denny Puszkur**, Inspector, Lethbridge office (November 2014)
- **Tim Riordan**, Manager, Board Reviews, Edmonton office (January 2015)
- **Jean Olynyk**, Senior Communications Specialist, Calgary office (February 2015)
- **Stephanie Fleck**, Approval Officer, Lethbridge office (March 2015)
- **Jeff Froese**, Approval Officer, Red Deer office (May 2015)

Performance

Performance Goals

Strategy	Result achieved
<p>3a Continue to provide appropriate funding and opportunities for staff education and training in areas of required knowledge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management will review training requirements on a divisional basis in 2014-15. 	<p>In place. NRCB continued to provide in-house training. Critical external training was also provided, consistent with the spending guidelines of the Government of Alberta.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training requirements were reviewed by directors as part of their one on one performance and planning meetings with staff.
<p>3b Maintain and continuously improve internal information technology tools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the strategies and costs of a records management system for the NRCB's print and electronic records. Automate accounting functions where appropriate through IT system improvements and new software enhancements. Complete a pilot study involving NRCB field staff to assess the effectiveness of using computer tablets to improve the quality and timeliness of field data collection associated with compliance and permitting activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions with Service Alberta were held to confirm requirements under the Administrative Records Disposition Authority. Project terms of reference were drafted. New software was purchased and implemented to support automated reporting and data entry. The study was completed, and demonstrated that the tablets provide improved efficiency and client service. Tablets were purchased for approval officers and inspectors.

Performance Measures and Results

NRCB employee satisfaction ¹	Result achieved		
Target: 75%	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Per cent of staff who express satisfaction on survey results	Result not available	88%	80%

NRCB employees have appropriate training	Result achieved		
Target: 90%	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Per cent of staff who participate in training programs	85%	70%	74%

1. Performance results for this measure were based on staff satisfaction survey questions in the annual Government of Alberta survey until 2012-13, when the survey was no longer run. The question was included in the NRCB-run staff survey for 2013-14 and 2014-15. Board staff do not participate in the survey.

Statement of Disclosures Under the Public Interest (Whistleblower Protection) Act

Policy and procedures for disclosures under the *Public Interest (Whistleblower Protection) Act* (PIDA) were developed in 2014 and communicated to staff in January 2015. The policy and procedures, and accompanying form, were posted for staff access on the internal intranet site.

No disclosures were initiated in 2014-15.



Where We Were

Communicating with stakeholders is a priority for the Natural Resources Conservation Board. In 2014-15, staff and board members participated in meetings, trade shows and conferences to provide information about board programs, policies and processes. Staff gave presentations to 20 municipal councils and a number of stakeholder sessions.

Municipalities

Rocky View County, Calgary, April 1, 2014
Mountain View County, Mountain View, April 2, 2014
Lacombe County, Lacombe, April 10, 2014
Newell County, Brooks, April 10, 2014
Leduc County, Leduc, April 14, 2014
Saddle Hills County, Spirit River, April 15, 2014
Wetaskiwin County, Wetaskiwin, April 15, 2014
Wheatland County, Strathmore, April 15, 2014
Westlock County, Westlock, April 22, 2014
Paintearth County, Paintearth, April 23, 2014
Red Deer County, Red Deer, April 29, 2014
Smoky Lake County, Smoky Lake, April 29, 2014
Cypress County, Medicine Hat, May 6, 2014
Lamont County, Lamont, May 7, 2014
Mackenzie County, Fort Vermilion, May 12, 2014
Willow Creek MD, Claresholm, May 14, 2014
Hill Spring Town, Hill Spring, June 3, 2014
Bighorn MD, Exshaw, June 10, 2014
Northern Sunrise County, Peace River, June 10, 2014
Spirit River MD, Spirit River, June 10, 2014
Vulcan County, Vulcan, June 20, 2014
Foothills MD, High River, July 3, 2014
Special Areas #3, Oyen, July 18, 2014
Newell County, Brooks, August 19, 2014
Ponoka County, Ponoka, September 22, 2014
Wheatland County, Strathmore, October 27, 2014

Stakeholder meetings & events

Alberta Institute of Agrologists Conference, Banff, April 1-3, 2014
Alberta Milk Spring Producer Meeting, Red Deer, April 9, 2014
Air and Waste Management Association Conference, Edmonton, April 11, 2014
Parkland Airshed Management Zone Technical Working Group, Red Deer, April 11, 2014
Energy Regulatory Forum, Calgary, May 14, 2014
Environmental Services Association of Alberta Regulatory Forum, Calgary, May 21-22, 2014
Canadian Bar Association Environmental Section National Summit, Ottawa, May 28, 2014
Alberta Pork Regional Producer Meetings, Red Deer, May 28; Grande Prairie, June 3, 2014
Alberta Beef Producer Meeting, Edmonton, June 10, 2014
North Saskatchewan Regional Planning Consultations, Leduc, June 12, 2014
University of Calgary Veterinary School Beef Cattle Conference, Calgary, June 19-20, 2014
Clean Air Strategic Alliance Odour Management Group, Edmonton, June 25, October 2, November 13, 2014
Calgary Stampede, Calgary, July 4-13, 2014
Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Northern Regional Meeting, Peace River, August 15, 2014
Alberta Biochar Initiative Workshop, Vegreville, August 27-28, 2014
Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association Conference & Trade Expo, Drumheller, September 3, 2014



Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties District 5, Clandonald, September 12, 2014

Regional Agricultural Service Board Conference, Rycroft, October 24, 2014

Alberta Beef Producers Regional Meeting, Cochrane, October 30, 2014

Agri-Trade, Red Deer, November 5-8, 2014

Alberta Pork Annual General Meeting, Calgary, November 6, 2014

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Fall Convention, Edmonton, November 17-20, 2014

Alberta Milk Annual General Meeting & Dairy Conference, Calgary, November 18-20, 2014

Canfax Cattle Market Forum, Calgary, November 19, 2014

Alberta Cattle Feeders Association, Nisku, November 26, 2014

Manure Management Conference, Lethbridge, January 19, 2015

Alberta Cattle Feeders Association, Lethbridge, January 21, 2015

Banff Pork Seminar, Banff, January 21-22, 2015

Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada Seminar, Olds, January 27, 2015

Alberta Beef Industry Conference, Red Deer, February 19-20, 2015

Ag Expo, Lethbridge, February 25-27, 2015

Canadian Western Dairy Seminar, Red Deer, March 12, 2015

Peace Country Classic Agri-Show, Grande Prairie, March 12-14, 2015

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Spring Convention, Edmonton, March 16, 2015

Photo credits

The Natural Resources Conservation Board gratefully acknowledges permission of Peter Woloshyn to use the photos on the front cover and pages 4, 5, 6, 14, 16 and 17. All other photos are board owned.



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Copies of the *Agricultural
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