

Natural Resources Conservation Board

Business Plan 2015-2018

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) is an independent, quasi-judicial and regulatory agency of the Government of Alberta. It is accountable to the Minister of Environment and Parks and is responsible for reviews of natural resource projects under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*, and regulating Alberta’s confined feeding industry under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

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 the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Chair, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Natural Resources Conservation Board describes the purpose of the act, and governance and mandate responsibilities.

<i>Vision</i>	To be a respected decision-maker, exemplifying integrity and foresight in the best interests of Alberta.
<i>Mission</i>	As a quasi-judicial agency, the NRCB makes impartial and knowledge-based decisions across two distinct mandates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the <i>Natural Resources Conservation Board Act</i>, the NRCB decides if natural resource projects are in the public interest, considering social, environmental and economic effects, and • Under the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i>, the NRCB fulfills application and compliance responsibilities, administers and advances policies, and conducts board reviews for confined feeding operations
<i>Values</i>	In achieving our mission, we honour the NRCB’s core values of integrity, fairness, respect, excellence and service.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Natural Resources Conservation Board has identified the following strategic priorities for 2015-18:

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| <p>1. Cross government initiatives
Linkage: goals one and two</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support priority Government of Alberta initiatives such as Water for Life, the Clean Air Strategy and the Land-use Framework. |
| <p>2. Consistent delivery of the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i>
Linkage: goal two</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with government and stakeholders on operational policy and technical guidelines to support consistent delivery of the act. Operational policy will include a comprehensive update and amalgamation of relevant approval policies. |
| <p>3. Risk based approach to regulating confined feeding operations
Linkage: goal two</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to use an environmental risk based approach for compliance activities at confined feeding operations and for reviewing permit applications for new or expanding operations. |
| <p>4. Board procedures and public information
Linkage: goal one</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update board regulations and information documents in consultation with stakeholders. |

CORE BUSINESSES: GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Core Business One: Board reviews and appeals under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* and the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

Goal one

Natural Resources Conservation Board reviews and hearings result in balanced decisions and are conducted in a manner that is effective, fair, transparent and timely.

What it means

The Board conducts reviews of proposed natural resource projects under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* to determine whether the projects are in the public interest, having regard for their environmental, social and economic impact. Reviews are mandatory for non-energy mining, forestry, water management or recreation projects for which an environmental impact assessment is required under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*. Projects may also be referred to the board by Order in Council.

Under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*, the Board must determine whether to grant a request for a review of a permitting or compliance decision. Should the Board grant a review, it may be oral, electronic or written. The Board may also recommend mediation.

- Strategies**
- 1.a Update the Board Administrative Procedures Regulation in consultation with NRCB staff and stakeholders.
 - 1.b 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.
 - 1.c Identify critical issues related to applications under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*, to ensure that relevant information is included in the review process. This information is essential to ensuring that reviews are effective, fair and transparent.
 - 1.d Ensure that natural resource projects and confined feeding operation permit application reviews are consistent with regional land use plans under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*.

Performance measures

Efficiency of review process	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage of Natural Resources Conservation Board's 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>	100%	100%	100%

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

Goal two

Effective and efficient permitting and compliance processes for confined feeding operations and manure management.

What it means

The Natural Resources Conservation Board regulates confined feeding operations in Alberta under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. It consults with the multi-stakeholder Policy Advisory Group on priority issues and operational policy development. All permitting decisions address consistency with regional land use plans.

The board ensures that new and existing confined feeding operations meet the legislated requirements of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*, delivers a risk based compliance program, ensures that existing operations are compliant with the act and their permits, and investigates and responds to complaints.

- Strategies**
- 2.a Deliver timely communications for confined feeding operators and key stakeholders on NRCB initiatives, policies and programs.
 - 2.b Develop new and update existing operational policies in consultation with the Policy Advisory Group including policies on waivers, denying applications with incomplete information, and amendments of municipal permit conditions.
 - 2.c Consult with government and the Policy Advisory Group on key issues and policy for responding to requests for permission to apply manure to frozen or snow covered land.
 - 2.d Support other departments and agencies studying the effects of manure collection and storage facilities on groundwater quality.
 - 2.e Consult with Agriculture and Forestry and the Policy Advisory Group to finalize the parameters used to determine the status of a site as a seasonal feeding and bedding site or as a confined feeding operation.
 - 2.f Complete the design of and implement a three-year program to review all water well monitoring conditions in *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* permits.
 - 2.g Document surface water conditions at confined feeding operations. Use the data collected to inform future compliance response for surface water issues. Continue to standardize the collection of surface water information and ensure appropriate follow-up action.
 - 2.h Continue to audit results from environmental risk screenings to maintain quality and ensure consistent risk determinations.
 - 2.i Continue upgrades to the confined feeding operation database to improve the efficiency of data entry and retrieval. Use quarterly exception reports to monitor the management and entry of data on the database.
 - 2.j Work with the Technical Advisory Group to develop technical guidelines that support delivery of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.
 - 2.k Review internal permit review processes and timelines.
 - 2.l Ensure that confined feeding applications are consistent with regional land use plans under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*.

Performance measures

Efficiency of permitting process	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage of decisions issued within 65 working days from the date the application is determined to be complete	85%	85%	85%
Complaint resolution	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Percentage of complaint files resolved or requiring no further action, within 90 days	95%	95%	95%

Organizational capacity

Goal three

The Natural Resources Conservation Board has the expertise and technical resources required to fulfill its mandates under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*, and the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

What it means

Staff and Board members of the Natural Resources Conservation Board work with diverse issues requiring detailed technical knowledge. Staff and Board members are highly trained, competent and motivated to deliver high standards of service.

The Natural Resources Conservation Board is committed to effective internal communications to build teamwork and a shared understanding throughout the organization of its values and mandate.

- Strategies**
- 3.a Provide appropriate training in areas of required professional development.
 - Management will review critical training requirements on a divisional basis in 2015/16.
 - Identify opportunities for staff to lead in-house training for other employees.
 - 3.b Examine the opportunities, challenges and resource implications for expanded web-based public access to Board review and decision documents.
 - 3.c Conduct an in-house review of corporate records management needs.
 - 3.d Maintain and continuously improve internal information technology tools.
 - Investigate the strategies and costs of a records management system for the NRCB's print and electronic records.
 - Research the use of IT system improvements and new software to automate corporate services functions, where appropriate.
 - Expand the use and application of computer tablets by field staff to improve the quality and timeliness of field data collection associated with compliance and permitting activities.

Performance measures

NRCB employee satisfaction	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Per cent of staff who express satisfaction on survey results	75%	75 %	75 %
NRCB employees have appropriate training	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Per cent of staff who participate in training programs	90%	90%	90%

BUDGET INFORMATION

The 2015-18 budget is based on the strategic priorities and strategies identified in the business plan.

EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

	Comparable			2015-16 Estimate	2016-17 Target	2017-18 Target
	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Budget	2014-15 Forecast			
AOPA and NRCBA Mandates						
Board Reviews & Hearings	\$1,315,525	\$1,383,785	\$1,383,785	\$1,361,360	\$1,361,360	\$1,361,360
Regulating Confined Feeding Operations	5,072,901	5,280,215	5,280,215	5,194,640	5,194,640	5,194,640
Total Expenses	\$6,388,426¹	\$6,664,000	\$6,664,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Comparable			2015-16 Estimate	2016-17 Target	2017-18 Target
	2013-14 Actual	2014-15 Budget	2014-15 Forecast			
Revenues						
Transfer from ESRD	\$6,044,000	\$6,620,000	\$6,620,000	\$6,512,000	\$6,512,000	\$6,512,000
Miscellaneous Investment & Other Revenue	53,601	39,000	39,000	44,000	44,000	44,000
Total Revenues	\$6,097,601	\$6,659,000	\$6,659,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000
Expenses						
Salaries, Wages & Employee Benefits	5,012,488	5,402,650	5,402,650	5,479,470	5,479,470	5,479,470
Supplies and Services	878,118	1,231,350	1,231,350	1,046,530	1,061,530	1,061,530
Amortization	39,218	30,000	30,000	30,000	15,000	15,000
Total Expenses	\$5,929,824	\$6,664,000	\$6,664,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000
Annual Operating Surplus (Deficit)	\$167,777	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0

¹ Includes \$458,602 leased cost for office space paid by Alberta Infrastructure. This amount is not included in the Statement of Operations.