

Natural Resources Conservation Board

Business Plan 2017-20

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* (NRCBA) is the responsibility of Environment and Parks.

The *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA) 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 NRCB describes the purpose of the act, and governance and mandate responsibilities.

The NRCB meets its responsibilities efficiently and effectively. It values teamwork and internal communication, and ensures its staff has the expertise, technical resources, and ongoing training to provide excellent service. The NRCB also takes pride in meeting high standards of public accountability through its financial reporting, and compliance with the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act* (APAGA) and the Public Agencies Governance Framework.

<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 and regulatory 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 emphasizes the following strategic priorities in delivering its responsibilities:

1. Consult with government and stakeholders to develop operational policy and technical guidelines that support delivery of AOPA. In 2017-18, special attention will be given to informing municipalities about the requirements of AOPA and how these requirements affect municipal land use planning.
2. Use an environmental risk based approach for compliance activities and for reviewing permit applications for new or expanding operations.
3. Support priority cross-government initiatives, ensuring consistency of NRCB-issued decisions with completed regional land use plans. In 2017-18, the NRCB will continue to participate in a cross-government initiative that is examining the potential for a streamlined regulatory process for biodigesters that use manure-based feedstock.
4. Complete the update of board regulations and information documents.

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 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* (NRCBA) to determine whether the projects are in the public interest, having regard for their environmental, social, and economic impact. Reviews are mandatory for metallic and industrial mineral, forestry, water management, and 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 Complete the update of the Board Administrative Procedures Regulation in consultation with NRCB staff and stakeholders.
 - 1.b Proactively provide opportunities for all participants to understand NRCBA and AOPA 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 all relevant information is included in the review process.

Performance measures

Efficiency of review processes	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
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>	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of Natural Resources Conservation Board decisions issued within 30 working days of the conclusion of reviews 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 NRCB regulates Alberta's confined feeding operations and the management of manure under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA). It consults with the multi-stakeholder Policy Advisory Group on priority issues and operational policy to ensure consistent and effective delivery of the act.

Confined feeding operations must comply with the requirements of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. The operations divisions deliver a risk based approach to regulating confined feeding operations, ensure that operations are compliant with their permits, and investigate and respond to complaints. Permitting decisions consider consistency with existing regional land use plans. The NRCB makes timely, focused communication with confined feeding operators and other stakeholders an ongoing priority.

- Strategies**
- 2.a Through workshops and one on one meetings, ensure municipalities are aware of AOPA's permitting requirements and understand how the requirements affect the NRCB's decision making process with respect to municipal land use plans. In addition, meet with specific municipalities about the potential to amend certain municipal permit conditions.

- 2.b Continue to develop operational policies in consultation with the Policy Advisory Group.
- 2.c Continue to work with Environment and Parks, Agriculture and Forestry, and the biogas industry to identify opportunities to streamline the regulation of manure-based biogas facilities.
- 2.d Review and update permit application forms and guides to improve the completeness of submitted applications. Evaluate and as appropriate revise permit decision document templates.
- 2.e Continue to prioritize communication and enforcement action on issues involving unauthorized construction and the application of manure on frozen or snow covered land.
- 2.f Continue to support other provincial ministries and agencies studying the potential effects of manure collection and storage facilities on groundwater quality, and use the results for ongoing improvements to the NRCB's risk screening model.
- 2.g Implement a program to review water well monitoring conditions in AOPA permits.
- 2.h Continue to use information about surface water conditions at confined feeding operations to inform policy for permitting and complaint response.
- 2.i Continue to audit results from environmental risk screenings to maintain quality and ensure consistent risk determinations.
- 2.j 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 applications and compliance data.
- 2.k Continue to work with the Technical Advisory Group to develop guidelines that support the delivery of AOPA.

Performance measures

Efficiency of permitting process	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of decisions issued within 65 working days from the date the application is determined to be complete	85%	85%	85%
Complaint resolution	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of complaint files resolved or requiring no further action, within 90 days	95%	95%	95%

BUDGET INFORMATION

The 2017-20 budget is based on the strategic priorities and strategies identified in the business plan.

EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

	Comparable			2017-18 Estimate	2018-19 Target	2019-20 Target
	2015-16 Actual	2016-17 Budget	2016-17 Forecast			
AOPA and NRCBA Mandates						
Board Reviews & Hearings	\$1,140,988	\$1,356,000	\$1,356,000	\$1,353,000	\$1,353,000	\$1,353,000
Regulating Confined Feeding Operations	4,775,919	5,162,000	5,162,000	5,150,000	5,150,000	5,150,000
Total Expenses	\$5,916,907¹	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,503,000	\$6,503,000	\$6,503,000

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Comparable			2017-18 Estimate	2018-19 Target	2019-20 Target
	2015-16 Actual	2016-17 Budget	2016-17 Forecast			
Revenues						
Transfer from Environment & Parks	\$5,537,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000
Miscellaneous Investment & Other Revenue	40,700	44,000	44,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Total Revenues	\$5,577,700	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,514,000	\$6,514,000	\$6,514,000
Expenses						
Salaries, Wages & Employee Benefits	4,833,813	5,464,500	5,464,500	5,351,520	5,351,520	5,351,520
Supplies and Services	588,658	1,023,500	1,038,500	1,117,230	1,117,230	1,117,230
Amortization	12,892	30,000	15,000	34,250	34,250	34,250
Total Expenses	\$5,435,363	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,503,000	\$6,503,000	\$6,503,000
Annual Operating Surplus (Deficit)	\$142,337	\$0	\$0	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$11,000

¹ Includes \$481,544 leased cost for office space paid by Alberta Infrastructure. This amount is not included in the Statement of Operations.