

Natural Resources Conservation Board

Business Plan 2018-21

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* 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 has identified the following strategic priorities for 2018-19:

1. Meet with, inform, and update government and stakeholders, including municipalities, about the requirements of AOPA and NRCB policy that support delivery of AOPA.
2. Finalize an NRCB emergency response plan for responding to manure contamination events that impact surface water quality. The plan will coordinate with the Alberta Support and Emergency Response Team (ASERT).
3. Implement a new public website to improve user access to information, decisions, and the public record under the NRCBA and AOPA.
4. Complete a records retention and disposition schedule and determine next steps for improving the management of NRCB records.

CORE BUSINESSES: GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Core Business One: Public interest reviews of proposed natural resource projects under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* and reviews of approval officer decisions under 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. Projects subject to review under the NRCBA include forest industry, recreation/tourism, metallic or industrial mineral, and water management projects. Projects may also be referred to the Board by Order in Council. Reviews consider the consistency of proposed projects with regional plans that have been completed and publicly released under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*.

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 conducted in person or may be conducted as a written review. The Board may also recommend mediation. The Board must have regard for the land use provisions of municipal development plans but is not bound by the provisions.

- Strategies**
- 1.a Improve website access to the complete public record for public interest reviews under the NRCBA reviews and AOPA hearings.
 - 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 NRCBA, to ensure that all relevant information is included in the review process.

Performance measures

Efficiency of review processes	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
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 AOPA.

Confined feeding operations must comply with the requirements of AOPA. The NRCB uses a risk based approach to the regulation of confined feeding operations, to ensure that operations are compliant with their permits, to investigate and respond to complaints, and to initiate enforcement action as required. Permitting decisions consider the consistency of applications with the land use provisions of municipal development plans, and consider their compliance with regional plans that have been completed and publicly released under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*. The NRCB makes timely, focused communication with confined feeding operators and other stakeholders an ongoing priority.

- Strategies**
- 2.a Complete an independent third party satisfaction survey of complainants and operators who interacted with NRCB staff on AOPA applications and compliance issues in the previous year, and report on the results.
 - 2.b Complete scheduled meetings with municipalities to inform them about AOPA’s permitting requirements and how these requirements may affect municipal land use planning considerations, and explain how land use provisions in municipal development plans are considered in NRCB decisions.
 - 2.c To support the delivery of AOPA, continue to develop operational policies in consultation with the Policy Advisory Group and to develop technical guidelines under the Technical Advisory Group.
 - 2.d Coordinate with industry associations to continue to educate CFO operators about unauthorized construction and AOPA requirements for the application of manure on frozen or snow covered land.
 - 2.e 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 tools used by the NRCB in its regulation of CFOs under AOPA.
 - 2.f Complete a records retention and disposition schedule and determine next steps for improving the management of NRCB records.
 - 2.g Implement a new NRCB website to improve user access to information, decisions and the public record for applications and decisions issued under AOPA.
 - 2.h Finalize an NRCB emergency response plan for responding to manure contamination events that impact surface water quality.

Performance measures

Efficiency of permitting process	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Percentage of decisions issued within 65 working days from the date the application is determined to be complete	85%	85%	85%
Complaint resolution	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Percentage of complaint files resolved or requiring no further action, within 90 days	95%	95%	95%

BUDGET INFORMATION

The 2018-21 budget is based on the strategic priorities and strategies identified in the business plan.

EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

	Comparable			2018-19 Estimate	2019-20 Target	2020-21 Target
	2016-17 Actual	2017-18 Budget	2017-18 Forecast			
AOPA and NRCBA Mandates						
Board Reviews & Hearings	\$1,090,450	\$1,353,000	\$1,353,000	\$1,344,000	\$1,344,000	\$1,344,000
Regulating Confined Feeding Operations	4,885,387	5,150,000	5,150,000	5,118,000	5,118,000	5,118,000
Total Expenses	\$5,975,837¹	\$6,503,000	\$6,503,000	\$6,462,000	\$6,462,000	\$6,462,000

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Comparable			2018-19 Estimate	2019-20 Target	2020-21 Target
	2016-17 Actual	2017-18 Budget	2017-18 Forecast			
Revenues						
Transfer from Environment & Parks	\$5,674,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,433,000	\$6,433,000	\$6,433,000
Miscellaneous Investment & Other Revenue	45,815	40,000	40,000	41,000	41,000	41,000
Total Revenues	\$5,719,815	\$6,514,000	\$6,514,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000
Expenses						
Salaries, Wages & Employee Benefits	4,782,424	5,351,520	5,351,520	5,270,492	5,270,492	5,270,492
Supplies and Services	698,764	1,121,480	1,117,230	1,148,288	1,145,638	1,166,523
Amortization	5,162	30,000	34,250	43,220	45,870	24,985
Total Expenses	\$5,486,350	\$6,503,000	\$6,503,000	\$6,462,000	\$6,462,000	\$6,462,000
Annual Operating Surplus (Deficit)	\$233,465	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000

1. Includes \$489,487 leased cost for office space paid by Alberta Infrastructure. This amount is not included in the Statement of Operations.