

Natural Resources Conservation Board

Business Plan 2014-2017

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 Sustainable Resource Development 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 Sustainable Resource Development.

The *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* is the responsibility of Agriculture and Rural Development. 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 2014-17:

- 1. Cross government initiatives**
Linkage: goals one and two

 - Continue to support priority Government of Alberta initiatives such as Water for Life, the Water Council, the Clean Air Strategy and the Land-use Framework.
- 2. Consistent delivery of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act***
Linkage: goal two

 - 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*.
- 3. Risk based approach to assist in regulating confined feeding operations**
Linkage: goal two

 - 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.
- 4. Improved knowledge and IT processes**
Linkage: Operational capacity

 - 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.

- 5. **NRCB confined feeding operation database upgrades**
Linkage: goal two
 - 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.
- 6. **Work with ARD and ESRD to determine how best to regulate biodigesters**
Linkage: goal two
 - Develop new approach for regulating facilities where manure, compost and other constituents are mixed.

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 *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*, 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 scientific and technical issues raised in applications under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* to determine relevant information needed to ensure that reviews are effective, fair, transparent and timely.
 - 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	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
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 approval 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, and addresses 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 Enhance direct communication with confined feeding operators and key stakeholders on priority NRCB initiatives, policies and programs that directly affect them.
 - Develop NRCB Field Services articles on hot topics for confined feeding operators and stakeholders. Post the articles on the NRCB website and provide them to stakeholder organizations for inclusion in their newsletters.
 - Develop and implement an NRCB Field Services newsletter for CFO operators who are listed in the NRCB database, and industry associations. Key topics to include: seasonal feeding and bedding sites versus confined feeding operation guideline, and new NRCB operational policies.
 - 2.b 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 *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.
 - 2.c Continue to support other departments and agencies studying the effects of manure collection and storage facilities on water quality.
 - 2.d Develop and implement a three-year program to review all water well monitoring requirements when they are included in AOPA permits.
 - 2.e Continue with the NRCB Water Data Management Process for Confined Feeding Operations internal directive to improve and standardize how water information is collected, and ensure that appropriate follow-up action is taken.
 - 2.f Maintain quality control initiatives for uses of the environmental risk screening tool (ERST) in compliance and permitting activities.
 - 2.g Use the surface water implementation plan and results from surface water data collection to inform future compliance actions for managing surface water issues.

Performance measures

Efficiency of permitting process	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Percentage of decisions issued within 65 working days from the date the application is determined to be complete	85%	85%	85%
Complaint resolution	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
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 Continue to provide appropriate funding and opportunities for staff education and training in areas of required knowledge.
 - Management will review training requirements on a divisional basis in 2014/15.
 - 3.b 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.
 - 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.

Performance measures

NRCB employee satisfaction	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Per cent of staff who express satisfaction on survey results	75%	75 %	75 %
NRCB employees have appropriate training	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Per cent of staff who participate in training programs	90%	90%	90%

BUDGET INFORMATION

The 2014-17 budget is based on the strategic priorities and strategies identified in the business plan.

EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

	Comparable			2014-15 Estimate	2015-16 Target	2016-17 Target
	2012-13 Actual	2013-14 Budget	2013-14 Forecast			
AOPA and NRCBA Mandates						
Board Reviews & Hearings	\$1,302,814	\$1,345,162	\$1,345,162	\$1,383,785	\$1,383,785	\$1,383,785
Regulating Confined Feeding Operations	5,234,242	5,132,838	5,132,838	5,280,215	5,280,215	5,280,215
Total Expenses	\$6,537,056¹	\$6,478,000	\$6,478,000	\$6,664,000	\$6,664,000	\$6,664,000

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Comparable			2014-15 Estimate	2015-16 Target	2016-17 Target
	2012-13 Actual	2013-14 Budget	2013-14 Forecast			
Revenues						
Transfer from ESRD	\$6,105,000	\$6,434,000	\$6,434,000	\$6,620,000	\$6,620,000	\$6,620,000
Miscellaneous Investment & Other Revenue	53,833	37,000	37,000	39,000	39,000	39,000
Total Revenues	\$6,158,833	\$6,471,000	\$6,471,000	\$6,659,000	\$6,659,000	\$6,659,000
Expenses						
Salaries, Wages & Employee Benefits	5,107,200	5,358,800	5,358,800	5,402,650	5,402,650	5,402,650
Supplies and Services	942,043	1,089,200	1,080,125	1,231,350	1,231,350	1,231,350
Amortization	34,058	30,000	39,075	30,000	30,000	30,000
Total Expenses	\$6,083,301	\$6,478,000	\$6,478,000	\$6,664,000	\$6,664,000	\$6,664,000
Annual Operating Surplus (Deficit)	\$75,532	(\$7,000)	(\$7,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)

¹ Includes \$453,755 leased cost for office space paid by Alberta Infrastructure. This amount is not included in the Statement of Operations.