

Natural Resources Conservation Board

Business Plan 2019-22

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* (NRCBA) and for regulating Alberta’s confined feeding industry under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA).

The NRCBA is the responsibility of Environment and Parks. 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 AOPA, 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 2019-22:

1. Improve the efficiency of the review of AOPA permit applications and compliance response by engaging with government review agencies and stakeholders, including municipalities, about the requirements of AOPA and NRCB policy.
2. Implement call to action 57 of the federal Truth and Reconciliation Committee report, endorsed by the Government of Alberta for all Alberta public servants, by providing training for NRCB staff and Board members on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Treaties and Aboriginal rights as outlined in the report.
3. Enhance the management of NRCB records through continued development of internal records management processes.
4. Verify the content and improve the functionality of the NRCB’s confined feeding operation database to ensure that NRCB staff have access to accurate records and that information requests can be effectively addressed.

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 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 AOPA, 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 Streamline review processes with other provincial and federal review agencies for project applications under the NRCBA.
 - 1.b Identify critical issues related to applications under the NRCBA, including participating in developing the terms of reference for environmental impact assessments, to ensure that all relevant information is included in the review process.
 - 1.c 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.d Provide access to the complete public record for public interest reviews under the NRCBA reviews and AOPA hearings.

Performance measures

Efficiency of review processes	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
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 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 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 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 Continue to meet with municipalities to inform them about AOPA's permitting requirements and how these requirements may affect municipal land use planning considerations; explain how land use provisions in municipal development plans are considered in NRCB decisions; and explain the NRCB's compliance and enforcement processes.
 - 2.b Continue consultation and engagement with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Environment and Parks to clarify roles and improve the efficiency of review procedures for applications and compliance response under AOPA.
 - 2.c Continue to develop and review operational policies for the delivery of AOPA with advice from the Policy Advisory Group.
 - 2.d Develop operational guidelines as required and participate in the development of technical guidelines by the Technical Advisory Group when the need for them has been determined.
 - 2.e Continue to coordinate with industry associations to educate CFO operators about unauthorized construction, AOPA requirements for the application of manure on frozen or snow covered land, and record keeping.
 - 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 tools used by the NRCB in its regulation of CFOs under AOPA.
 - 2.g Verify the status of confined feeding operations listed by name and land location in the NRCB's database that do not have facility, livestock, or permit records and have not been visited by NRCB staff.

Performance measures

Efficiency of permitting process	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Percentage of decisions issued within 65 working days from the date the application is determined to be complete	85%	85%	85%
Complaint resolution	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Percentage of complaint files resolved or requiring no further action, within 90 days	95%	95%	95%

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

NRCB staff and Board members work with diverse technical issues and are highly trained, competent, and motivated to deliver high standards of service. The NRCB is committed to providing ongoing opportunities for training to maintain a high level of expertise and to provide the technical resources required to support the work of its staff and Board.

The NRCB is also committed to achieving excellence in its financial accountability, its provision of clear internal policy and procedures, and its support for a positive work environment.

- Strategies**
- A. Provide in-house training and support external training opportunities in areas of required professional development, including education and training on Aboriginal issues as required by call to action 57 of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report.
 - B. Update existing policy to address driver fatigue and substance use.
 - C. Continue to develop a records retention and disposition schedule and determine next steps for improving the management of NRCB records.
 - D. Maintain and continuously improve essential infrastructure:
 - Improve the functionality of the confined feeding operation database for data entry by field staff.
 - Update computers and other electronic devices issued to staff in accordance with the NRCB's commitment to information technology evergreening.
 - Research and select an integrated phone system that would enhance NRCB communications capabilities, and replace the expiring contract.

BUDGET INFORMATION

The 2019-22 budget is based on the strategic priorities and strategies identified in the business plan.

EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

	Comparable			2019-20 Estimate	2020-21 Target	2021-22 Target
	2017-18 Actual	2018-19 Budget	2018-19 Forecast			
AOPA and NRCBA Mandates						
Board Reviews & Hearings	\$1,191,697	\$1,344,000	\$1,344,000	\$1,151,000	\$1,151,000	\$1,151,000
Regulating Confined Feeding Operations	4,813,212	5,118,000	5,118,000	4,287,000	4,287,000	4,287,000
Total Expenses	\$6,004,909¹	\$6,462,000	\$6,462,000	\$5,438,000	\$5,438,000	\$5,438,000

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Comparable			2019-20 Estimate	2020-21 Target	2021-22 Target
	2017-18 Actual	2018-19 Budget	2018-19 Forecast			
Revenues						
Transfer from Environment & Parks	\$5,574,000	\$6,433,000	\$6,433,000	\$5,397,000	\$5,397,000	\$5,397,000
Miscellaneous Investment & Other Revenue	60,578	41,000	41,000	71,000	71,000	71,000
Total Revenues	\$5,634,578	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000	\$5,468,000	\$5,468,000	\$5,468,000
Expenses						
Salaries, Wages, & Employee Benefits	4,573,652	5,270,492	5,270,492	4,618,861	4,618,861	4,618,861
Supplies and Services	896,120	1,161,508	1,148,288	778,739	799,759	802,999
Amortization	34,836	30,000	43,220	40,400	19,380	16,140
Total Expenses	\$5,504,608	\$6,462,000	\$6,462,000	\$5,438,000	\$5,438,000	\$5,438,000
Annual Operating Surplus (Deficit)	\$129,970	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000

1. Includes \$500,301 leased cost for office space paid by Alberta Infrastructure. This amount is not included in the Statement of Operations.