



Cumulative Effects Framework

Assessing and Managing Cumulative Effects in British Columbia

Phased Implementation of the Cumulative Effects Framework Begins

The Province has been developing a new approach and tools for assessing and managing cumulative effects in B.C.—known as the *Cumulative Effects Framework*. Under the joint leadership of the Ministries of Environment and Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, the framework approach was defined, tested in regional demonstration projects and evaluated to assess the implications of provincial implementation. Phased implementation of the framework will begin in Spring 2014.

What is the Cumulative Effects Framework?

The Framework includes policy, procedures and tools that will enable *periodic assessment of cumulative effects at a broad, strategic scale*—rather than on a project-by-project basis. Cumulative effects assessments indicate the current condition and trend of a select set of environmental, social and economic values in relation to existing management objectives. Resulting maps and reports provide a consistent foundation for natural resource clients and decision-makers to ensure new resource development proposals are aligned with government’s objectives.

The framework supports the management of cumulative effects by establishing inter-agency accountability for reviewing the assessments and identifying mitigation actions to address emerging risks.

Cumulative effects are changes to economic, environmental and social values on the landscape caused by the combined effect of present, past and reasonably foreseeable human actions or natural events.

Why the Province Wants a Cumulative Effects Framework

The Cumulative Effects Framework is a key component of the province’s vision for integrated resource management and decision-making. The framework provides a balanced approach where cumulative effects are assessed and managed and supports the province’s goals to develop B.C.’s land and resources in a sustainable manner.

By providing clients with ‘up front’ access to better information on the baseline condition of key values and clear expectations for project assessment and mitigation, individual resource development project reviews will cost less and can be completed faster. By assessing values of interest to First Nations, the Framework can provide better information regarding potential impacts to Aboriginal and treaty rights and make consultation processes more effective.

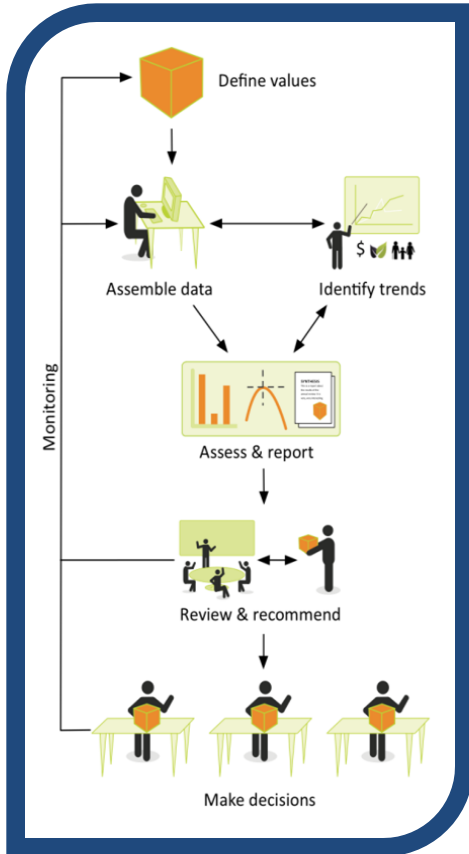
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CEF 101: Procedures for Assessment and Management

The Cumulative Effects Framework identifies consistent procedures for assessing and managing cumulative effects in each assessment area. They are as follows:



1. Define Values

A strategic set of values are defined (see list below), existing management objectives for each value are identified and methods for assessment are confirmed and documented.

2. Assemble Data

Data related to all natural resource uses are assembled to assess the current condition of the identified values. Information is updated regularly and shared with government staff, First Nations, communities, and industry stakeholders.

3. Identify Trends

Important economic, social and environmental trends are identified, including the likely future impacts on values.

4. Assess & Report

A cumulative effects assessment of all identified values is completed using the best available data and trends information. The assessment compares the condition of each value to existing management objectives both now and in the foreseeable future. Government is taking a lead in the assessment and will solicit input from First Nations, communities and industry stakeholders.

5. Review & Recommend

An interagency team reviews the cumulative effects assessment report and may develop recommendations for mitigating emerging risks at the operational level (e.g. permit conditions) or strategic level (e.g. further analysis, strategic planning, revise or set new objectives). Assessment reports and mitigation strategies are provided to statutory decision makers and clients to provide a consistent foundation for decision making on resource development projects.

Initial Values for Cumulative Effects Assessment

An initial set of provincially consistent values for cumulative effects assessment have been identified based on insights from demonstration projects. Key criteria guiding the selection of values included existing legal or policy management objectives, relevance for Aboriginal and treaty rights, and data availability. Fish and wildlife species will continue to be confirmed for each region, with priority given to species with legal management objectives and recovery strategies, and species that are important for supporting Aboriginal and treaty rights, such as hunting, fishing and trapping.

- Forest Ecosystem Biodiversity
- Riparian Condition
- Water Quality and Quantity
- Air Quality

- Visual Quality
- Cultural Heritage
- Fish and Wildlife

- Economic Wellbeing
- Community Wellbeing
- Resource Capability (e.g. Timber)



A Focus on Broad Scale Assessment

The Cumulative Effects Framework proposes broad scale assessment units that are largely aligned with strategic land use planning areas as the basis for periodic assessment, reporting, and management of cumulative effects.

Government, industry and academia agree that cumulative effects are most effectively addressed at a broad, sub-regional scale. Impacts from development and natural processes interact in complex ways and, over time, seemingly marginal and localized effects can accumulate and have unintended consequences at a landscape level. Understanding the condition and trend of values more broadly is vital to determine the significance of site-level impacts, and to support effective management.

Broad-scale assessment makes good business sense as well. By proactively assessing cumulative effects at a broad scale, better information on baseline conditions and expectations for project assessment and mitigation can be provided up front to all clients, reducing the time spent reviewing individual projects.



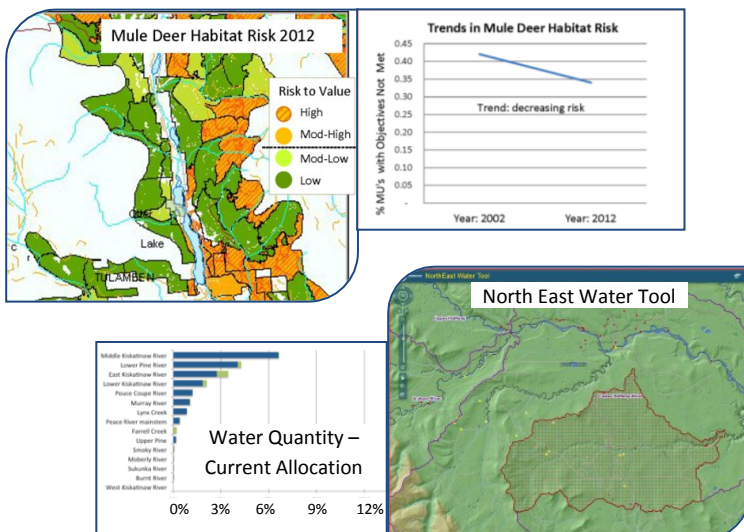
“Our view is that the main focus of Cumulative Impact Assessment should be regional, with efforts directed to how best to deal with risk and uncertainty using clearly articulated and measurable objectives.”

BC Business Council, Environment and Energy Bulletin, Vol. 4, #6, Nov 2012

Open Access to Cumulative Effects Information

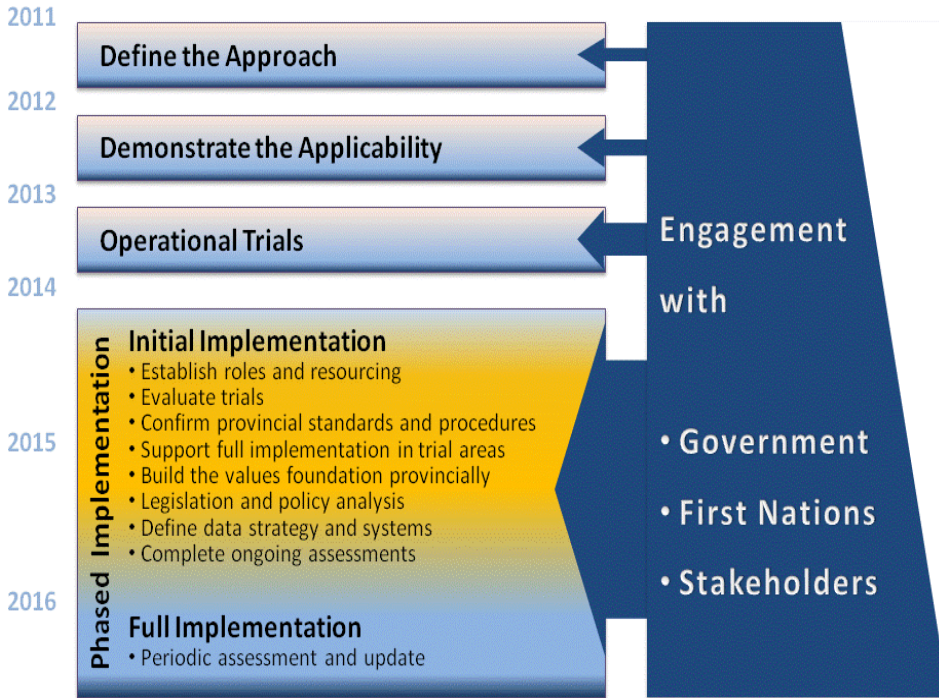
Access to information on the condition and trend of values will be provided in cumulative effects assessment reports, maps for each value and spatial data linked to client interfaces such as FrontCounter BC.

The NorthEast Water Tool (NEWT) is a good example of a tool that gives public access to up-to-date information on the condition of one value – water quantity. For more details visit <http://geoweb.bcogc.ca/apps/newt>





Phased Project Approach



A Roadmap for the Phased Implementation

When it is fully implemented, the framework will allow assessment and management of cumulative effects as a regular part of business for government’s natural resource sector agencies. Implementation will take a few years to re-align resources and develop the organizational capacity, policy and analytical tools required to become fully effective.

A phased approach is necessary to balance the need for short-term implementation focused on values and areas of highest priority, with the need for collaboration to develop provincial standards, policy and tools for consistent and effective implementation over the long-term.

Teaming up to Address Cumulative Effects

An initial priority for the Cumulative Effects Framework implementation is to establish the roles and responsibilities across government’s natural resource sector agencies. This will make assessing and managing cumulative effects a regular part of government’s business procedures supporting integrated decision-making.

Equally important is the need for effective engagement with First Nations and stakeholders — who have indicated strong support for the need for a cumulative effects framework. Engagement will be a key part of trial evaluation and developing provincial standards and tools and in the periodic assessment of each broad scale area. The Ministries of Environment and Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations are exploring partnership opportunities — particularly for collaborating in monitoring and data collection.

Coming up

CEF Implementation Plans

Work is currently underway to confirm plans for provincial and regional implementation starting in 2014/15. More information will be shared soon.

Communications and Engagement

Further information and opportunities for input and engagement will be confirmed soon.

This is the first in a series of regular updates on implementing the cumulative effects framework. How did we do?

We welcome your feedback.

Please email us at

CumulativeEffects@gov.bc.ca