

Summary of B.C.'s draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework

Biodiversity refers to the variety of living species on earth, including plants, animals, bacteria and fungi.

British Columbia is home to the greatest biodiversity of any province or territory in Canada. Our diverse climate and topography contribute to biodiversity and to complex and varied ecosystems that include mountains, plateaus and valleys, as well as coastal plains, forests, grasslands, wetlands and aquatic ecosystems.

Globally, biodiversity and ecosystem health are declining at a rate that is threatening ecosystem stability, economies, and many other services like food security, clean air and clean water. Threats include habitat loss and land conversion, pollution, invasive species, overexploitation of resources and climate change among many other interconnected factors. As the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt in British Columbia - including severe drought and water shortages, record-breaking wildfires, atmospheric rivers, major flooding events, heatwaves and landslides – we must work together to address these threats. Our province's future resilience depends on thoughtful, integrated and inclusive stewardship of the air, land, water and all living things, to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem health and ensure a prosperous future.

The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework ("the framework") lays a foundation for that kind of inclusive and enhanced stewardship. It represents a new way of looking at the natural world around us that puts the needs of the natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystem health at the centre of our land and water stewardship practices in B.C.

The draft framework recognizes that biodiversity and healthy ecosystems provide a range of environmental, social, cultural, health and economic benefits for communities. They include clean air and water, settings for spiritual practices and food sustainability. They also help preserve traditional Indigenous ways of life, which in turn enhance reconciliation efforts in B.C.

Based on a common vision for the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity, the draft framework outlines the B.C. government's intentions, principles and planned actions. It will also guide and inform the future development of legislation and policies to help transform land and water stewardship throughout the province, in collaboration with First Nations and all people living in British Columbia. This more holistic approach will help to see ecosystems that are self-sustaining and nurture a wide variety of species. Ultimately, one of the goals of the framework is to support the long-term social and economic well-being of communities throughout the province for generations to come.

The draft framework was developed through a collaborative engagement process in 2023-24 with First Nations and other parties, including industry, non-governmental organizations, local communities, municipal leaders and academia. Research and experiences with this type of approach elsewhere in Canada and other parts of the world have also helped inform the draft and the innovative ideas within it.