

Chance Find Protocol for Fossil Discoveries—Example Document

Insert Proponent/Company or Operator Name

Date

Why are fossil discoveries important?

British Columbia is home to many globally significant fossil sites. Fossils are essential to the understanding of BC's natural history and geology, provide opportunities for scientific discovery and education, and help locate mineral, oil and gas deposits. Fossils constitute a valuable resource which is administered under the Land Act by the BC Fossil Management Office, Heritage Branch. All fossils on Crown Land are property of the province and may not be sold or removed from the province. Collection of fossils is prohibited without a permit, with the exception of recreational collecting of some common fossil types. Developers are asked to report any fossils unearthed on their site to the BC Fossil Management Office (Heritage Branch) or Royal British Columbia Museum.

What kinds of fossils occur in British Columbia?

Fossils are preserved remains of organisms such as bones, teeth and shells or impressions of organisms in the rock such as a plant leaf. Trace fossils are preserved biological activity such as dinosaur footprints or tracks and burrows. Fossils range from thousands of years old to hundreds of millions of years old and are often the remains of extinct species. Fossils are the historical record of the evolution and development of life on earth. They are important globally as well as in British Columbia for their scientific, heritage, educational and economic value.

Fossils are primarily found in sedimentary rocks from ancient marine and lake basins in the province. Volcanic rocks, such as ash, also may preserve fossils. The distribution of fossil resources remains poorly understood within British Columbia so there is always a chance that new fossil sites will be encountered. Known fossil site concentrations are found on Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii, in the Princeton-Merritt-Kamloops area, in southeastern and northeastern British Columbia and the Central Interior Plateau.

What should you do if you discover fossils?

If any fossil sites or fossil remains are encountered or unearthed during development or industrial activity, the following steps must be taken:

1. Suspend work and all forms of ground disturbance in the immediate vicinity of the find and leave all possible fossil material in place.
2. Establish a protective buffer of at least 30 metres, around the extent of the find area. Demarcate the buffer in a highly visible way (e.g., with “No Work Zone” flagging).
3. Work at that location may not resume until the measures below are implemented.
4. Report your discovery to the site supervisor (*Insert name and contact phone number of Site Manager or Project Geologist or qualified Lead Paleontologist*).
5. Site supervisor will photograph the site and fossils using a scale, record the GPS location of where the fossils were found, and note how fossils were found. They then relay this information to the qualified Lead Paleontologist or the Fossil Management Office (Fossil.Management@gov.bc.ca).
6. Depending on the nature of the find, the qualified Lead Paleontologist will assess the find and may:
 - a. Document the site fully and relay the information (photographs, fossil information, stratigraphy, site locality information) to the BC Fossil Management Office and to (*Insert name of repository if this has been arranged*).
 - b. If the qualified Lead Paleontologist determines the fossil or the site is significant, they will contact the BC Fossil Management Office and (*Insert name of repository if this has been arranged*). Work must not resume at the location until approved by the BC Fossil Management Office.
 - c. The qualified Lead Paleontologist will develop a mitigation plan in consultation with the BC Fossil Management Office.
7. All images, data and samples collected will be reported to the BC Fossil Management Office.

What kinds of fossils may occur on-site?

Proponent should add photos here of the types of fossils expected to occur within the geological units being impacted by ground disturbance [Optional, but recommended].

Contact the BC Fossil Management Office for assistance.