



Ministry of
Environment

PROTOCOL 20 ***FOR CONTAMINATED SITES***

Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Requirements

Version 1.0

Prepared pursuant to Section 64 of the
Environmental Management Act

Approved:

Director of Waste Management

Date

Effective date: April 1, 2013

1.0 Definitions

The following words, acronyms and expressions used in this protocol are defined in ministry Procedure 8, "[Definitions and Acronyms for Contaminated Sites](#)":

Approved Professional	preliminary site investigation (PSI)
contaminated sites legal instrument	receptor
Director	Regulation
conceptual model	remediation
detailed site investigation (DSI)	risk-based standards
ecological risk assessment	screening risk assessment (SLRA)
exposure pathway	sediment
high risk site	Summary of Site Condition (SoSC)
ministry	toxicity reference value (TRV)
monitoring plan	weight-of-evidence
potential contaminant of concern	

In addition, under this protocol, ecological risk assessment is considered equivalent to environmental risk assessment under the Contaminated Sites Regulation.

2.0 Introduction

This protocol identifies components of, and requirements for, the completion of a detailed ecological risk assessment (DERA) as described under the Contaminated Sites Regulation (the Regulation).

Any DERA completed for regulatory purposes is expected to follow the risk assessment methodology, procedures and guidance in Technical Guidance 7, "[Supplemental Guidance for Risk Assessments.](#)" In the case that Technical Guidance 7 methods, procedures or guidance is not followed, the deviation and a rationale justifying the deviation, must be fully documented in the risk assessment report.

3.0 Detailed ecological risk assessment checklist

Appendix 1 of this protocol contains a checklist listing the key elements of any DERA submitted in support of a recommendation to issue a contaminated sites legal instrument based on compliance with the Regulation's risk-based standards.

Section IV of the checklist takes the form of a four column table, which presents key DERA elements in the following subsections keyed to DERA methodology:

- 1) General Requirements,
- 2) Problem formulation,
- 3) Exposure assessment,
- 4) Effects assessment,
- 5) Risk characterization, and
- 6) Uncertainty Assessment.

For each subsection, Column I of Section IV lists the relevant DERA Checklist elements. A response to the question in Column I is required if “Mandatory” is listed beside that element in Column II. In Column III, the applicant’s response to the checklist element must be recorded as either “yes” or “no.” Column IV provides the applicant with an opportunity to include comments related to the answer provided in Column III.

A negative response to a mandatory checklist element may jeopardize a recommendation to issue a contaminated site legal instrument. In the case that a negative response is provided to a mandatory item in column III, a rationale justifying deviation from the mandatory element must be provided in Column IV. For example, if no operative ecological pathways exist now or in the future at a site, this lack of operative pathways would justify a “no” answer to exposure related mandatory elements in the checklist.

Checklist elements identified as “Optional” in Column I of Section IV of the checklist may or may not be answered at the discretion of the risk assessor. These optional elements involve general good DERA practice, which, while recommended, are not considered by the ministry to be critical to completion of detailed ecological risk assessments under the Regulation.

The risk assessor(s) responsible for the DERA must complete and sign Part 3 of the checklist. Note that all signatories to Part 3 are jointly and equally responsible for all risk assessment aspects of the Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment.

The checklist is designed to provide an opportunity for the risk assessor(s) to demonstrate that the risk assessment includes all required elements of a detailed ecological risk assessment. Determining if a particular required element of the risk assessment has been adequately addressed is the responsibility of the risk assessment reviewer (i.e., the ministry risk assessor or the risk assessment Approved Professional) for the site.

4.0 Reporting

A completed DERA Checklist must be provided with any DERA report submitted in support of a recommendation to issue a contaminated sites legal instrument based on compliance with the risk-based standards of the Regulation.

For sites with operable pathways, the detailed ecological risk assessment report must be structured as a formal framework of related objectives, assessment endpoints and measurement endpoints. The report must summarize the pertinent information from site investigation and ecological risk assessment performed for the site.

In particular the DERA must:

- a) provide context for the source of site contamination and the environmental fate and effect of contamination on ecological receptors at the site;
- b) describe and evaluate: pertinent physical, chemical and biological processes which influence the effects of contaminants on ecological receptors at the site;
- c) describe the process by which contaminants of concern and critical ecological receptors were selected for the site;
- d) provide a conceptual model which includes potential contaminants of concern, lists all potential contaminant exposure pathways, and identifies operative (i.e. open) pathways for the site;
- e) provide sufficient methodological detail to allow risk equations and calculated risk estimates to be independently reproduced and validated;
- f) provide a final conclusion on the acceptability of the level of ecological risk determined in the DERA completed for the site;
- g) provide a comprehensive uncertainty analysis for all aspects of the DERA which contribute to the conclusion related to the acceptability of the level of ecological risk determined in the DERA completed for the site; and
- h) in the case that weight-of-evidence based arguments or considerations are used to determine the level of ecological risk for the site, provide clear and preferably quantifiable, *a priori* weightings assigned with specific corresponding underlying rationale and an associated uncertainty assessment for all weighted aspects of the DERA which contribute to the level of ecological risk determined for the site.

For more information contact the Environmental Management Branch at site@gov.bc.ca

Appendix 1

Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist



Ministry of
Environment

DETAILED ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Land Remediation Section
PO Box 9342 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria B.C. V8W 9M1
Telephone: (250) 387-4441
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Submission of this checklist is required by Protocol 20, "Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist" under the *Environmental Management Act*.

Part 1. Land, owner and risk assessor information

Section I Land Description				
Site ID Number (if known)				
PID		or		PIN
Legal Description				
Latitude	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
Longitude	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
Site Civic Address	Street			
	City	Postal Code		
Section II Property Owner and/or Operator (if applicable)				
Name				
Address	Street			
	City	Province/State		
	Country	Postal/Zip Code		
Phone	Fax	E-Mail		

Section III Risk Assessor(s)

Name(s)

Organization(s)

Address:

Street

City, Province/State

Country, Postal/Zip Code

Phone

Fax

E-Mail

Part 2. Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist**Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist**

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments

Subsection 1.0 General Requirements

1.1 Does the DERA identify who the major participants are in the risk assessment and state their qualifications?	Mandatory		
1.2 Does the DERA describe how the method(s) of assessment and the findings of any previous investigation(s) were used to design and carry out the current assessment?	Mandatory		
1.3 Does the DERA describe the extent to which any previous assessment(s) were/were not relied upon?	Mandatory		
1.4 If ministry preapprovals apply to the DERA, has all required preapproval documentation been provided with the risk assessment?	Mandatory		

Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments
1.5 Does the report make it clear what conditions are required (if any) for the instrument being applied for (e.g., Schedule B conditions for a Certificate of Compliance)?	Mandatory		
1.6 Has field data relevant to the ecological risk assessment been provided?	Mandatory		
1.7 Has laboratory data relevant to the ecological risk assessment been provided?	Mandatory		

Subsection 2.0 Problem Formulation

2.1 Have the objectives of the ecological risk assessment been documented ¹ ?	Mandatory		
2.2 Were assessment and measurement endpoints for operative exposure pathways warranting further assessment defined ¹ ?	Mandatory		
2.3 Were assessment and measurement endpoints linked to the risk assessment objectives ¹ ?	Mandatory		
2.4 Were all current and reasonable potential future land, water and sediment uses identified in the problem formulation and considered in screening for chemical exceedances?	Mandatory		
2.5 Were assumptions associated with current and future land use documented and rationale provided (e.g., development scenario)?	Mandatory		
2.6 Were potential contaminants of concern identified?	Mandatory		
2.7 Was a conceptual model included?	Mandatory		
2.8 Were all relevant exposure pathways (direct and indirect) identified and considered?	Mandatory		

Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments
2.9 If the site was previously assessed using screening level risk assessment (SLRA) and if exposure pathways excluded under the SLRA were not considered in the DERA; were the assumptions upon which the pathways were excluded in the SLRA confirmed in the DERA ² ?	Mandatory		
2.10 If statistics were used in the DERA, was a rationale provided for the statistical methods used?	Mandatory		
2.11 Was a rationale provided for any exclusion of contaminants that exceed applicable standards, criteria, or guidelines ³ ?	Mandatory		
2.12 Did a qualified biologist visit and assess the site?	Mandatory		
2.13 Were receptors of potential concern identified based on commonly accepted risk assessment practice, including consideration of: ecological relevance, social importance, exposure potential and contaminant sensitivity ⁴ ?	Mandatory		
2.14 Was the site assessed for likely use by red and blue listed species?	Mandatory		
2.15 Were contaminant-pathway-receptor combinations that warranted further assessment clearly identified?	Mandatory		
2.16 If contaminant-pathway-receptor combinations were excluded from further assessment, was a rationale for the exclusion provided?	Mandatory		
2.17 If bioassays were used, was detailed rationale provided for the selection of the toxicity tests used, (e.g., consideration of: sensitivity of the organism to the potential contaminants of concern; potential confounding factors; taxonomic diversity, etc.)?	Mandatory		

Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments
2.18 If the assessment of risk was based on several lines of evidence, was the approach used to evaluate individual lines of evidence and to integrate findings across lines of evidence documented ⁵ ?	Mandatory		
2.19 Were future contaminant concentrations and potential contaminant degradation products considered?	Optional		

Subsection 3.0 Exposure Assessment

3.1 Was each contaminant-pathway-receptor combination identified for further assessment evaluated?	Mandatory		
3.2 Was each applicable land use scenario (current and future) evaluated?	Mandatory		
3.3 Was supporting rationale provided for methods used to estimate exposure point contaminant concentration(s)?	Mandatory		
3.4 If a fate and transport model or other exposure model was used, were model equations provided and referenced?	Mandatory		
3.5 If an exposure model was used, were equations and the input data provided to support an independent quality assurance check for each exposure route in the risk assessment?	Mandatory		
3.6 Were all exposure model parameters defined and was rationale provided for all exposure model parameter values (with references where applicable)?	Mandatory		

Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments
3.7 If an exposure model was used, was uncertainty regarding both: (a) the structure of the exposure model and (b) the parameter values used in the exposure model, considered in any interpretation of the results of the exposure modelling?	Mandatory		
3.8 If an exposure model was used, were the model's results compared to, or calibrated to, empirical (i.e., measured data) to determine if the model adequately represents reality?	Optional		
3.9 For any models used, was a sensitivity analysis or a rationale for the absence of a sensitivity analysis provided?	Optional		
3.10 Were data quality objectives established for field parameters used in the risk assessment?	Optional		

Subsection 4.0 Effects Assessment

4.1 If ecological surveys (e.g., plant, soil invertebrate, bird, fish, or benthic communities) were conducted, was the survey methodology used (including sampling locations and seasons) documented?	Mandatory		
4.2 If toxicity reference values (TRVs) were used, was a rationale for the selection and/or development of the TRVs provided?	Mandatory		
4.3 If TRVs were used, was the source of the TRVs referenced? If TRVs were developed <i>de novo</i> , was their derivation documented?	Mandatory		
4.4 If TRVs were used, was the toxicity endpoint associated with each TRV identified?	Mandatory		
4.5 Did the level of protection used in the DERA comply with the level specified in the ministry ecological risk assessment policy summary ⁶ for the applicable land use or media?	Mandatory		

Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments
4.6 If risks were evaluated relative to: a reference site(s) or reference condition(s), was rationale for the selection of the reference site(s) or reference condition(s) provided? Were confounding variables (e.g., soil: texture, pH, grain size, depth etc.) addressed and considered in the evaluation?	Mandatory		
4.7 If site-specific toxicity testing was conducted, did the test method(s) used meet the quality standards of Environment Canada ⁷ , ASTM ⁸ or another recognized government agency?	Mandatory		
4.8 If site-specific toxicity tests were conducted, did the tests include samples from the most contaminated area of the site?	Mandatory		
4.9 Were potential toxicological interactions (e.g., synergistic or antagonistic effects) between potential contaminants of concern discussed?	Optional		
4.10 Were up to date toxicity profiles provided for each potential contaminant of concern?	Optional		

Subsection 5.0 Risk Characterization

5.1 Was sufficient detail provided for equations used to calculate numeric risk estimates so that it is clear how the estimates were derived?	Mandatory		
5.2 Was preference given to the use of hazard quotients in expressing numeric risk estimates?	Mandatory		
5.3 If hazard quotients were calculated, were they documented for each complete contaminant-receptor-pathway combination (as identified in the Problem Formulation)?	Mandatory		

Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments
5.4 If hazard quotients were not calculated, was rationale provided for using a different approach (e.g., site observations or plotting exposure with dose-response data)?	Mandatory		
5.5 If an ecological hazard quotient exceeded unity, but the level of risk was considered acceptable, was a rationale provided?	Mandatory		
5.6 Were risks for all operative contaminant-receptor-pathways detailed in the problem formulation assessed and categorized as acceptable or unacceptable?	Mandatory		
5.7 Were the conclusions (i.e., risk characterization) consistent with the assessment endpoints?	Mandatory		
5.8 Does the risk assessment provide an explicit risk conclusion in regard to the significance of the ecological risk posed by the contamination at the site?	Mandatory		

Subsection 6.0 Uncertainty Assessment

6.1 Were uncertainties (e.g., measurement uncertainty, random variations, conceptual uncertainty and ignorance) explicitly evaluated and stated, including their implications on risk conclusions?	Mandatory		
6.2 If a weight-of-evidence approach was used, was preference given to assigning quantifiable, <i>a priori</i> weightings to weighted aspects of the DERA?	Mandatory		
6.3 If a weight-of-evidence approach was used, were the weight-of-evidence conclusions determined in a manner consistent with the approach laid out in the problem formulation?	Mandatory		

Section IV Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist

Column I	Column II	Column III	Column IV
DERA Checklist Element	Response Requirement	Response (Yes or No)	Comments
6.4 If a weight-of-evidence approach was used, were uncertainties associated with the use of the assigned weightings explicitly evaluated and stated, including their implications on risk conclusions?	Mandatory		

Footnotes

1. Ecological risk assessment objectives and assessment and measurement endpoints are described in Science Advisory Board for Contaminated Sites in British Columbia, [Report on: Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment \(DERA\) in British Columbia Technical Guidance](#), September, 2008.
2. Where both SLRA and DRA are applied at a site, pathways screened using SLRA should be re-evaluated in the problem formulation stage of the DRA to confirm that the assumptions and conditions inherent in SLRA are satisfied at the site.
3. Province of British Columbia. *Environmental Management Act. BC Reg 375/96* [Contaminated Sites Regulation](#) Section 59 (2).
4. Guidance on selecting receptors of potential concern can be found in Science Advisory Board for Contaminated Sites in British Columbia, [Report on: Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment \(DERA\) in British Columbia Technical Guidance](#), September, 2008.
5. Guidance on the use of weight-of-evidence evaluation under DERA can be found in Science Advisory Board for Contaminated Sites in British Columbia, [Report on: Guidance for a Weight of Evidence Approach in Conducting Detailed Ecological Risk Assessments \(DERA\) in British Columbia](#), October, 2010.
6. Ministry of Environment, lands and Parks. [Tier 1 Ecological Risk Assessment Policy Decision Summary](#). Victoria, British Columbia. 1999.
7. Environment Canada toxicity test protocols are available from the [Environment Canada Biological Test Method Series](#) website. Environment Canada. Ottawa, Ontario.
8. ASTM toxicity testing protocols can be purchased through the [ASTM Committee E47 on Biological Effects and Environmental Fate](#) website. American Society for Testing and Materials International. Technical Committee E47 on Biological Effects and Environmental Fate.

Part 3. Professional Statements and Signatures

Section V Professional Statements and Signatures – To be completed by the Risk Assessor or Risk Assessment Specialist

In accordance with Section 63 of the Contaminated Sites Regulation, I confirm that:

- 1) the detailed ecological risk assessment for which this checklist is submitted has been performed in accordance with Ministry of Environment approved methods, procedures, guidance and standards of professional practice;
- 2) the responses provided in this Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment Checklist are true and accurate based on current knowledge as of the date completed; and
- 3) I have demonstrable experience in conducting ecological risk assessments and in conducting investigations of the type used to prepare the detailed ecological risk assessment for which this checklist is submitted.

Print Name

Signature

Date completed (yy-mm-dd)

If multiple signatories add additional Part 3 forms as needed.

NOTE: All signatories to Part 3 are jointly and equally responsible for all risk assessment aspects of the Detailed Ecological Risk Assessment



Apply professional society stamp (if applicable)