

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

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 complex and varied ecosystems, including mountains, plateaus, valleys and coastal plains forests, grasslands, wetlands, as well as aquatic ecosystems.

At the same time, biodiversity and ecosystem health are under threat because our province is at the forefront of climate change. Severe drought and water shortages, record-breaking forest fires, atmospheric rivers and major flooding events, heatwaves and landslides are increasingly impacting all British Columbians. As a result, the future resilience of our province depends on the thoughtful, integrated and inclusive stewardship of the air, land water and all living things.

The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (the Framework) is that kind of inclusive stewardship. It's 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 in B.C.

The draft Framework recognizes that biodiversity and healthy ecosystems provide a range of environmental, social cultural, and health benefits for communities. These include clean air and water, spiritual practices, and food sustainability as well as preserving traditional Indigenous ways of life which in turn enhance our reconciliation efforts with First Nations in B.C.

Through a common vision for conservation and management of ecosystem, health and biodiversity the draft Framework outlines B.C.'s intent, principles and actions. It will also guide and inform the future development of legislation and policies to help transform land and water stewardship in collaboration with First Nations and all British Columbians. This is a more holistic approach to make sure ecosystems can sustain themselves and protect all species and all varieties of life. Ultimately, the goal is to help to ensure the long-term social and economic well-being of communities throughout the province for generations to come.

The draft Framework was developed through collaborative engagement throughout 2023 with First Nations and other parties including industry, non-governmental organizations, local communities, municipal leaders and academia. Research and examples from Canada and from other parts of the world have also helped to inform the draft and the innovative ideas within it.

The Province is now formally consulting with First Nations Rights and Title Holders, and engaging with multiple natural resource sectors and industry, as well as local governments, on the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework. Members of the public can access the draft Framework and provide comments by contacting biodiversity.ecosystemhealth@gov.bc.ca