

DRAFT B.C. BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM HEALTH FRAMEWORK

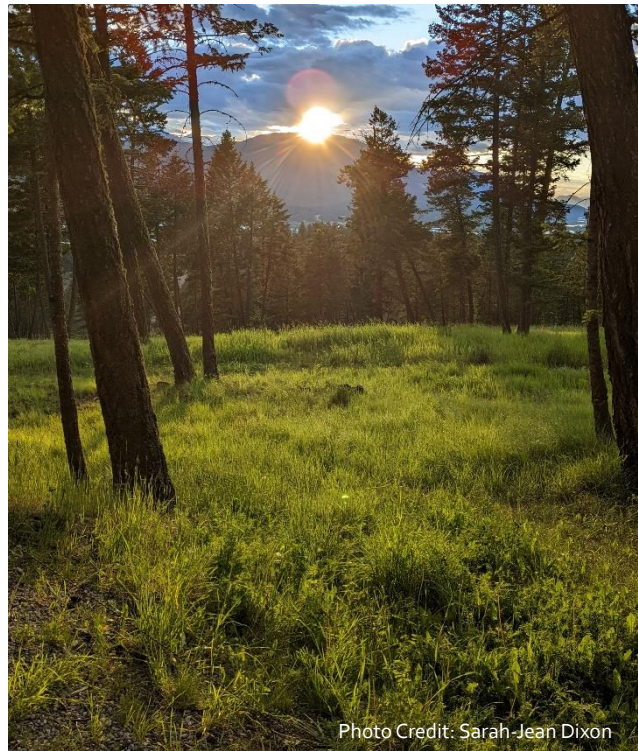


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Ministry of
Water, Land and
Resource Stewardship

Message from the Minister

British Columbia (B.C.) is known for the diversity of the land and water and is the most biodiverse province in Canada. However, the province's biodiversity and ecosystems are under threat. Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity are not only essential for our individual health and wellbeing, but they also ensure that ecosystems, economies, and communities throughout B.C. can flourish. Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity are vital for climate change resiliency and reducing the impacts and costs related to floods, droughts and wildfires brought on by changing climate and extreme weather events.

We are seeing the urgent need for unprecedented shifts in land and water management to ensure biodiversity and ecosystem resilience for generations to come at international, national, and local scales. Internationally, the Global Biodiversity Framework was signed in 2022. Nationally, Canada has committed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and formally recognizes that every Canadian has a right to a healthy environment.

A collaborative stewardship approach that prioritizes the conservation and management of biodiversity and ecosystem health is needed in B.C. to address emerging environmental issues as well as support true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

B.C.'s Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (the Framework) is an important step towards the provincial government's commitment to prioritize the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity, including the conservation and recovery of species at risk, which will align all existing related initiatives and set the path for co-development and implementation of new policies, legislation, and strategies.

In early 2023, we initiated engagement and the collaborative development of a draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework with First Nations, local governments, interest groups and industry, in response to Recommendation 2 of the Old Growth Strategic Review. I want to thank everyone for their participation in the engagement and collaboration sessions, and the thoughtful input that was provided and incorporated in this draft Framework.

Through this draft Framework, we are committing to a collaborative stepwise approach to prioritizing healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and to take a holistic approach to stewarding B.C.'s land and water resources, ensuring that they are healthy and resilient for the long term.

Sincerely,

Nathan Cullen

Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Foreword

B.C. is the most biodiverse province in Canada. However, the province's biodiversity and ecosystems are under threat from habitat loss and fragmentation, climate change, pollution, unsustainable use, and invasive species. B.C. has experienced impacts from climate change such as wildfires, flooding, landslides, water shortages and heatwaves which have resulted in negative impacts (such as loss of life, infrastructure, property, revenue, and habitat for species). These negative impacts are expected to become more frequent with more significant impact unless action is taken.

The climate change and biodiversity crises are inextricably linked – climate change is threatening biodiversity in B.C. Conserving and restoring ecosystems is fundamental to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Our long-term economic prosperity depends on resilient biodiversity and ecological integrity.

B.C. has many examples of collaborative stewardship initiatives, in addition to provincial strategies which have been, and are being, developed to concurrently manage for ecological integrity and human well-being through ecosystem-based and adaptive management approaches. These approaches are helping to shift the ways land and water are managed across the province.

While all these initiatives are underway, the province would greatly benefit from a common vision related to biodiversity and ecosystem health that we can all work towards. The B.C. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (the Framework) is proposing a vision and a cohesive, collaborative, and transparent provincial approach that will build off, align, and integrate ongoing work, and that is adaptable to diverse ecosystems, cultures, and ways of approaching stewardship across the province.

The Framework promotes an inclusive, partnership-based approach - founded on upholding Title and Rights of First Nations and advancing reconciliation. Through networks, governance structures, partnerships, planning tables, forums, agreements and co-operation and various means of collaboration we can continue work together in concert, strengthening the relationships we have with one another and with the land, water, and all living things.

While much work is underway, the aim is to achieve the transformative change needed through the clarity of prioritizing ecosystem health and resilience. There is an incredible opportunity to seize this moment to show the world how working together with First Nations, local communities, industry, civil society, and others can help maintain biodiversity and ecosystem health and ensure healthy communities and prosperous resource-based economies for current and future generations, inspiring hope, and optimism for us all.

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Statement of Intent

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ECOSYSTEM HEALTH AND BIODIVERSITY AS AN OVERARCHING PRIORITY AND WILL FORMALIZE THIS PRIORITY THROUGH LEGISLATION AND OTHER ENABLING TOOLS THAT APPLY TO, AND CAN BE ACCESSED BY, ALL SECTORS¹.

The Framework is built on the foundation of upholding and enabling the articles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the requirements of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act). This foundation supports three pillars:

1. Taking a whole-of-government approach that demonstrates vision, leadership, and integration: including setting ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards that apply across sectors, and integrating and aligning provincial government decision-making, policies, processes, and legislation that affect ecosystems.
2. Fostering and supporting a broader whole-of-society approach that facilitates actions and initiatives by individuals, organizations, private sector, governments, and communities to conserve and manage ecosystem health and biodiversity and to advance sustainable communities and economies.
3. Adopting an open and transparent process through evaluation, reporting, continuous collective learning, and adaptive management.

The core drivers of success are working together to maintain and enhance biodiversity, ecological integrity, and their overall resilience to ensure the coexistence of healthy ecosystems and human communities and economies in B.C. for current and future generations.

¹The intention is that this priority applies to sectors (within provincial jurisdiction) that impact ecosystems, including forestry, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, energy and mines, oil and gas, tourism, recreation, transportation, and housing. The Framework is also inclusive of other sectors that benefit from biodiversity or play a role in supporting outcomes of this Framework, including health, finance, education, research, training, and innovation.

1. Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity in B.C.

B.C. is home to the greatest biodiversity of any province or territory in Canada, bordered by the arctic-alpine tundra on the north, the fringes of the prairies on the northeast, the Rocky Mountains along the length of the eastern boundary the arid valleys on the south and the rich waters of the Pacific Ocean on the west. The diverse climate and topography in B.C. contribute to complex and varied ecosystems, including mountains, plateaus, valleys and coastal plains and their associated forests, grasslands, wetlands, alpine, oceanic, and aquatic ecosystems^{iv}.

The health of an ecosystem can be evaluated by the degree to which it maintains biodiversity and other ecosystem benefits. Healthy ecosystems have the structures, functions, composition, and processes that maintain and support native biodiversity. This includes energy and nutrient cycling, natural disturbance processes, hydrologic cycles, and complex interactions among systems, both terrestrial and aquatic, above and below ground, forested and non-forested, biotic, and abiotic, at community and individual scales, and with humans and our surroundings.

Healthy ecosystems are dynamic and resilient. They are adapted to natural disturbances at scales that vary based on ecosystem attributes such as climate, species, topography, and soils. Healthy ecosystems also have a high degree of ecological integrity; they contain native species and communities, natural landscapes, and ecological functions that are characteristic of the region and ecosystem they occur within^v.

Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity provide a range of environmental, social, cultural and health benefits to British Columbians that are the foundation of our well-being. These benefits include providing clean air and water, supporting spaces for social activities and spiritual practices, provision of medicine (including social and psychological wellness), water security, flood and disease prevention, and food and nutritional security (particularly for Indigenous traditional ways of life). Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity underpin B.C.'s economy and are critical for key economic sectors, including tourism and recreation, forestry, agriculture and fisheries, and innovation for medical and pharmaceutical industries. They provide nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation and are a source of innovation via many types of social and environmental research.

Biodiversity and cultural diversity are inextricably linked. Evidence shows that human cultural diversity is associated with the remaining high concentrations of biodiversity, demonstrating the critical role Indigenous Peoples play in conserving biodiversity and ecosystems^{vi}. These unique relationships are embodied in the values, beliefs, worldviews, livelihoods, and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. In B.C., there are more than 200 distinct First Nations, each with their own unique traditions and history, and each of which are closely tied to and shaped by their relationship to their lands and their inherent stewardship responsibility to those lands.

The need for unprecedented shifts in land and water management to ensure ecosystem health and biodiversity for future generations is being addressed on international, national, and local scales. Internationally, the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was signed in 2022. Canada will revise the National Biodiversity strategy to align with GBF goals and targets and formally recognizes that every Canadian has a right to a healthy environment. Different levels of co-operation and alignment can lead to combined support and actions in B.C. for example, the

Marine Protected Area Network Action Plan for the Northern Shelf Bioregion was jointly endorsed with 15 First Nations, the B.C. Government, and the Government of Canada^{vii}.

Key terms are defined below to help guide the interpretation of the Framework.

Ecosystem Health – a concept or metaphor that describes environmental conditions in relation to natural/historical benchmarks for biodiversity and ecosystem structures, functions, and processes. Unhealthy ecosystems are degraded by human/industrial use.

Biodiversity (short for biological diversity) - the diversity of plants, animals, and other living organisms in all their forms and levels of organization, and includes the diversity of genes, species and ecosystems, as well as the evolutionary and functional processes that link them.

Ecological Integrity - ecosystems that contain native species and communities, natural landscapes, and ecological functions that are characteristic of the region and ecosystem they occur within.

Ecological Resilience - the ability of ecosystems to absorb the effects of combined human and natural disturbance events by resisting and recovering from the disturbance, while still maintaining ecosystem composition, structures, functions, and processes.

Human Well-Being – the overall quality of life and satisfaction that individuals and communities experience. It encompasses various physical, psychological, social, and economic factors that contribute to a sense of contentment, fulfillment, and happiness.

Conservation – the protection, care, management and maintenance of ecosystems, habitats, wildlife species and populations, within or outside of their natural environments, to safeguard the natural conditions for their long-term permanence.

Ecosystem-Based Management - an adaptive approach to managing human activities that seeks to ensure the coexistence of healthy, fully functioning ecosystems and human communities. The intent is to maintain those spatial and temporal characteristics of ecosystems such that component species and ecological processes can be sustained, and human well-being supported and improved.

Adaptive Management – is a rigorous approach for designing and implementing management actions to maximize learning about critical uncertainties that affect recurrent decisions while simultaneously striving to meet multiple management objectives.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Framework is to provide strategic direction that sets the course for changes in legislation and current practices that aligns the Province's commitment to UNDRIP with specific goals that are intended to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecological integrity, protect and conserve priority areas, restore degraded ecosystems, and ensure healthy communities and economies for generations to come. It sets out desired outcomes, principles, and broad directions on which we can build the next steps required to deliver legislation, detailed policies, and actions necessary - jointly with First Nations and with involvement from all British Columbians. It will facilitate short-term shifts towards transformational changes.

Recognizing the many initiatives and programs that are already underway in B.C. that support healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, the Framework aims to create a coordinated and cohesive approach as well as fill gaps. It aims to strengthen and accelerate these existing initiatives, building on successes and wise practices that can be scaled and applied more broadly, while supporting a collective culture of learning and growth.

The Framework is living and flexible recognizing that many actions and ideas contained in this document are based on the current state and will continue to change as we progress reconciliation and adapt to a changing environment.

What does Prioritizing the Conservation and Management of Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity mean?

The Framework sets the stage for the desired transformational shift from a land management system that prioritizes resource extraction (subject to constraints) to a future that is proactive, prioritizes the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity, and is implemented jointly with title and rights holders (a paradigm shift). This shift recognizes that strong, stable, and prosperous communities and economies rely on healthy ecosystems.

This means that policies, decisions, and actions would first consider what ecosystems need to sustain themselves and the benefits they provide² across spatial scales (e.g., local, watershed, regional) through time, and then consider how they may be sustainably used to support communities and economies.

Ecosystem-based management (EBM) will be an important management approach to achieve this which looks to concurrently manage for ecological integrity and human well-being. Implementation of EBM will look different across B.C. (spatially and temporally) given the diversity and continuum of change in ecosystems, local communities, and Indigenous cultures and stewardship practices. It is expected that there will continue to be areas of more intensive development to accommodate population growth and increasing demands for food, fiber, and energy as well as areas of the landscape where there will be greater emphasis on ecosystem health, including protection of priority areas and restoration of degraded ones. It will require a

² Ecosystem benefits include, but are not limited to, clean air, water quality, species diversity, soil productivity, predatory-prey interactions, pollination, carbon sequestration and storage, flood and disease prevention, and provision of medicine, food, and fiber.

complementary transition toward a long-term view of economic health and community prosperity.

Prioritizing the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity includes^{viii}:

Shift from	Shift to
Individual species	Continue to advance holistic multi-species / ecosystems and threats-based approach*
Small spatial scale	Multiple scales
Short-term perspective	Long-term perspective
Humans independent of ecosystems	Humans as integral parts of ecosystems
Management separate from research	Adaptive management
Managing commodities	Enhanced production potential for ecosystem goods and services

* While managing for vulnerable individual species may always be needed, shifting to a multi-species / ecosystems focused approach can result in greater benefits across multiple species and reduce overall costs and effort on single species management.

Creating Conditions for Change

Managing for ecosystem health and biodiversity is a considerable shift, and it will be challenging to do. Success will require that:

- the right sets of laws, policies, and practices are in place;
- people have the necessary tools and support to work effectively;
- all voices are heard, valued, and considered in decision-making;
- all of society understands the change and why;
- full expression to the standards in UNDRIP is provided for;
- the transition is a just one that does not unfairly impact certain sectors or communities;
- there is a well-aligned vision of land use, stewardship and governance between First Nations and the Province.

The Framework is designed to help get this in place, and as part of its strategic direction fill policy gaps while working towards longer term legislation.

Desired Outcomes

The desired outcomes from implementing the Framework include:

- **Healthy ecosystems:** achieve a level of stewardship that maintains and enhances biodiversity, ecological integrity, and ecological resilience across the province.
- **Advances reconciliation:** implementation of the standards of UNDRIP; First Nations have the space and capacity to play an integral role in conserving ecosystems and biodiversity in their territories; and there are increased opportunities to exercise Indigenous rights and responsibilities, including right to harvest, and the responsibility to care for and respect lands and waters.

- **Effective stewardship:** approach is broadly understood, supported by, and meaningfully involves the broader public; there are respectful relationships; and holistic learning and knowledge sharing.
- **Resilient communities and economies:** achieves social and economic benefits for all; supports diverse and ecologically sustainable local, regional, and provincial economies; and fosters and attracts necessary skills, innovation and training with communities benefiting from secure, innovative jobs for generations to come.

The vision is that healthy and biodiverse ecosystems will be thriving, productive and resilient – and sustain community, social, economic, and environmental well-being in all ways for generations to come.

3. Principles to Guide Our Shared Path Forward

The following principles are intended to guide actions, decisions, and policy development to support implementation of the Framework, such as informing the co-development of legislation and guiding considerations for statutory decision-makers. These principles are in addition to, and designed to complement, existing principles that are related to the Framework. For example, the [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#) will guide the Province-Indigenous relationship that is based on respect and recognition of inherent rights when implementing the Framework.

Shared Responsibility and Accountability	We are all responsible for managing and caring for the land and water together. We all have actions that we can commit to that will make a difference. Aligning levels of government and individual goals will amplify our success.
Respectful relationships	Success relies on respectful relationships with each other and the land and water. Partnerships and collaboration among governments and all British Columbians that embraces a diverse range of values and perspectives, and a spirit of learning and adapting will be key.
Sustainable and Inclusive Economies	Recognize that long-term stable jobs, and resilient and competitive economies, are only possible with a healthy environment.
Interconnectedness	Recognize that the connection between land, water and people are inseparable when it comes to stewardship and conservation.
Community/ Place-Based Decisions and Actions	Accounts for regional differences by emphasizing community empowerment and informed decision-making and supporting flexible local approaches (rather than top-down, one-size-fits all approaches).
Multi-generational	Ensure that decisions made today are sustainable for future generations and provide for intergenerational equity.

4. Foundation

The Framework is built on the foundation of upholding and implementing the articles set out the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the requirements of the Declaration Act

First Nations in B.C. have stewarded their territories for millennia and have specific rights, interests, and connections. The uniqueness of each First Nation in B.C. is expressed, in part, through knowledge systems, cultural identities, and laws which are inextricably linked to the lands and waters in their respective territories. The Province recognizes and supports the fact that ecosystem health and biodiversity are core to inherent title and rights of First Nations in B.C.

Indigenous world views, cultural and economic practices have demonstrated success in maintaining ecosystem health and biodiversity. Sharing knowledge (Indigenous, scientific, expert, local) and learning together will strengthen the adaptive approach necessary to address the complex challenges we are collectively facing.

Implementation of the Framework will involve a distinctions-based approach to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of Indigenous Peoples in B.C. are acknowledged, affirmed, and respected; that respects First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples as distinct, with unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments; and, which requires Canada and B.C.'s relationship and engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to include different approaches or actions with different outcomes; therefore this Framework involves First Nations as the Indigenous Peoples who hold title and rights to territory in B.C. through agreed upon governance structures and the exercise of First Nations rights to self-determination and self-government.

Commitments related to new biodiversity and ecosystem health legislation as well as amendments to existing land and water related provincial legislation to give effect to the Framework would be co-developed with First Nations. The Province is also committed to working in partnership with First Nations to advance territorial planning, which includes land use planning, to inform land use decisions that can support healthy ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Province recognizes that consistent capacity funding for Indigenous communities, governments and organizations will be needed to support readiness in the implementation of the Framework. Implementation of the Framework will entail working with Indigenous knowledge holders to uphold and support Indigenous knowledge meaningfully and respectfully.

5. Actions

Pillar 1: Taking a whole-of-government approach that demonstrates vision, leadership, and integration: including setting ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards that apply across sectors, and integrating and aligning provincial government decision-making, policies, processes, and legislation that affect ecosystems.

A whole-of-government approach is essential to shift to mainstreaming concepts of ecosystem health and biodiversity across all relevant sectors including health, agriculture, forestry, mining, infrastructure, and finance. Changing our ways to maintain and enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity is complex and challenging and requires all government bodies at all levels to be actively involved to ensure government actions are complementary and not working at cross-purposes. It requires shared goals, backbone capacity and governance, and structural enablement through law and policy – all of which enables collective action and impact across sectors. B.C. will:

1. Establish an Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health within the B.C. Public Service with the necessary powers and authorities to lead a coordinated and collaborative approach across government and in partnership with First Nations to implement the framework including:
 - a) Improving the collection, coordination and sharing of information on the status of ecosystem health, including biodiversity, and supporting informed decisions and continuous improvement.
 - b) Leading the development of ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards for key ecosystems (e.g., forests, wetlands, grasslands) supported by guidance for all sectors, based in science and local and Indigenous knowledge, to account for multiple values, that can then be recognized in legislation.
 - c) Championing policies and approaches; and ensuring accountability to meet ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards across government.
2. Co-develop with First Nations new legislation and amendments to existing land and water related provincial legislation to give effect to the Framework, including affirming First Nation jurisdiction, governance, and stewardship practices.
3. Integrate and align decision-making processes, policies, programs, with the priority of conserving and managing ecosystem health and biodiversity.
4. Incorporate ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards (see 1 b) in all planning activities (e.g., Land Use Planning, Forest Landscape Planning, Watershed Planning), in a manner that enables First Nations and the Province to work together in an inclusive and transparent way to adjust the objectives and standards to meet the goals for specific areas. Planning activities will be based on ecosystem-based management principles to ensure:
 - a) Ecosystems are managed in a way that minimizes biodiversity risk and ensures ecological integrity is maintained.

- b) That cumulative effects of natural and human-caused disturbances are managed for the desired future conditions, informed by the range of natural/historic variability and the need to manage for resiliency to future climate conditions.
- c) Protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures are established to protect, connect, recover, and maintain important habitat, riparian areas, and wildlife features.
- d) Restoration is included as part of planning activities and is used strategically to improve landscape condition.
- e) Ecosystems are managed to promote and enable sustainable economies and resilient communities.

Pillar 2: Fostering and supporting a broader whole-of-society approach that facilitates individuals, organizations, private sector, governments, and communities to conserve and manage ecosystem health and biodiversity and to advance sustainable communities and economies.

While many British Columbians are working hard to conserve ecosystem health and biodiversity, the value of this Framework is in connecting and unifying efforts and people to maximize long-term impact. Supporting connections between people and nature, with enabling mechanisms in place for all to actively contribute to protection, restoration, and sustainable use (e.g., governance, information sharing, and investment in skills, knowledge, capability, and capacity), are proven to have measured benefits on physical, spiritual, and mental health and well-being^x. B.C. will:

1. Support and connect societal initiatives and actions that are working towards achieving healthy ecosystems and biodiversity in B.C., address barriers and gaps, and evaluate these three supports.
2. Provide education and publicly available, accessible, and credible data and information on ecosystem health and biodiversity, while supporting Indigenous data sovereignty, to help enable informed local participation in decision-making.
3. Create or use financing mechanisms (e.g., conservation finance, tools and sustained long-term funds) to enhance stewardship capacity.
4. Create pathways (including fostering innovation, skills, and training) to achieve environmental, social, and economic benefits for all, this includes supporting sustainable and stable natural resource sectors that continue to be a source of good jobs and economic security for communities and creating new opportunities and benefits which accelerates diverse streams of revenues.

Pillar 3: Adopting an open and transparent process through evaluation, reporting, continuous collective learning, and adaptive management.

Our collective success depends on making sure we are on the right path to maintaining and enhancing ecosystem health and biodiversity. This requires a foundation of science and local knowledge, improved understanding of biodiversity, ecosystem health and related cumulative impacts, and enhancement of monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive learning. Tracking, reporting

on and celebrating progress will be important for maintaining momentum towards this transformational shift. B.C. will:

1. Develop an implementation plan to operationalize the Framework that identifies the necessary resources which will accelerate and integrate related initiatives and fill gaps.
2. As part of the implementation plan implement interim measures to ensure action is taken quickly and options are retained for long-term decisions.
3. Enhance oversight through compliance and enforcement such as by involving others (e.g., First Nations Guardian programs) and provide improved ability to tailor to region-specific needs.
4. Regularly and transparently report publicly on the state of ecosystem health and biodiversity and progress in implementing the Framework (including how we are tracking against ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards), and adjust response where needed based on the results of monitoring and evaluation.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps

The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework sets out an important provincial commitment: “the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity as an overarching priority and formalizing this priority through legislation and other enabling tools that apply to, and can be accessed by, all sectors.” While the Framework provides the strategic direction and creates the structure for understanding and action, each of the commitments will have to be further designed, with analysis and policy choices made.

Along with that commitment, the Framework facilitates the short-term shifts towards transformational changes that are needed. It provides strategic direction, setting the course for changes in legislation and current practices that are grounded in the Provincial commitment to UNDRIP. With guiding principles, desired outcomes, and specific actions, it lays out a pathway to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecological integrity, protect and conserve priority areas, restore degraded ecosystems, and ensure healthy communities and economies for generations to come.

The Framework is living and flexible, recognizing that many actions and ideas contained within it are based on the current state and will continue to change as we progress reconciliation and adapt to a changing environment. Our collective efforts, through co-operation and integration, will ensure we are learning, building, and implementing the transformational changes needed to build our shared future. This includes reviewing and renewing the Framework with opportunities for involvement in its evolution.

In the intervening time, once engagement on the draft Framework has drawn to a close, all feedback will be considered and used to inform the final Framework.

In addition, recognizing that the Framework sets out a pathways approach, the next steps will be to develop an implementation plan that identifies interim measures and the expected timelines for all measures, whether short, medium, or long term.

Appendix A: Background Information

The following information provides additional context on the various concepts introduced in this document.

Nature's value

- B.C. has the greatest diversity of species, ecosystems, and habitats of any province or territory in Canada.
- Healthy ecosystems support healthy environments that provide stable cultural, social, and economic benefits to people and communities throughout B.C.
- Ecosystem benefits include, but are not limited to, clean air, water quality, species diversity, soil productivity, predatory-prey interactions, pollination, carbon sequestration and storage, flood and disease prevention, and provision of medicine, food, and fiber.
- There is increasing recognition for the need and value of natural asset management, i.e., to ensure clean drinking water, healthy fisheries and waterways, and mitigation of floods, landslides, wildfires, and other risks.
- The economy is not separate and apart from nature but embedded within it: our prosperity is dependent on the dynamics in nature.
- There is a wealth of knowledge and case studies on the economic benefits of biodiversity from local economic studies, from other jurisdictions and internationally. Taking the full value of nature into account can lead to different types of opportunities, benefits and a more pragmatic assessment of decisions, unintended consequences, and their costs.

Our shared future: managing for different risks and uncertainty

- The climate change and biodiversity crises are inextricably linked – climate change is threatening biodiversity in B.C. Conserving and restoring ecosystems are fundamental to mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- Building healthy ecosystems is part of disaster risk reduction. For example, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction^x includes recommendations to: “strengthen the sustainable use and management of ecosystems” and “... preserve ecosystem functions that help to reduce risks.”
- Managing for uncertainty will require us to coordinate our collective efforts and action, build from the collective wisdom that incorporates different views and knowledge systems information, and to strengthen decision making and collaborative processes, through better communications.

Meaning of prioritization of ecosystem health and resilience

- Prioritization of the conservation and management of biodiversity and ecosystem health means to consider the restoration and maintenance of the natural range of variability of ecosystem characteristics across scales (local to regional) to promote ecosystem resilience and sustainable delivery of economic and social services.
- Conservation and management of biodiversity and ecosystem health is proposed to be based on an ecosystem approach, which includes ecosystem-based management. In some cases, where an ecosystem is severely degraded or at risk: that ecosystem may need protection, restoration, or enhancement efforts.
- As part of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and decisions made under it, sustainable use has been recognized as a management objective as it is a way to promote conservation of biodiversity, providing incentives for conservation and restoration because of the social, cultural, and economic benefits that people derive from that use. It also means that sustainable use is connected to effective conservation measures^{xi}.
- Ecosystem-based management looks at long-term viability, ecosystem services benefits, functions, and use, and makes decisions in the context of people's relationships to those ecosystems. For example, for an ecosystem in a watershed, the erosion of soil and the water filtration function will be critical benefits that need to be considered along with other factors in deciding the use of that ecosystem. Management decisions will also entail consideration of the cumulative impact of activities on species or ecosystems in management decisions related to the species or ecosystem.
- Adaptive management works to deal with uncertainty, given that ecosystems are dynamic, complex and that decisions in relation to an ecosystem are not static. Adaptive management allows for learning from previous results. The Framework will facilitate learning from wise practices, cross-sector learnings, different knowledge systems including Indigenous knowledge and increased monitoring to strengthen adaptive management.
- There is a need to create a broader understanding on what conservation and management entails: a common assumption is that it is only preservation, but the actions are broader and can be tailored for a given situation and different ecosystem types in terms of protection, care, maintenance, or restoration.
- Many of the actions that span the scope of conservation and sustainable use are already underway in B.C., for example, consideration of the ecosystem and adaptive management. Having a cohesive and consistent approach may enable enhanced practices and procedures and provide broader certainty and clarity.
- The goal is to ensure that existing initiatives can be amplified and promoted, creating knowledge networks and exchanges, with learnings shared between sectors, reducing duplication of efforts.

Designing for Economic Resilience

The Framework is expected to:

- add to existing efforts in the StrongerBC Economic Plan to strengthen community resilience in the context of climate change nurturing talent, promoting investment, strengthening infrastructure, and fostering innovation in both traditional and new industries.
- strengthen and or create pathways towards inclusive and sustainable economic opportunities that can diversify revenue streams for local communities and explore opportunities to avoid additional costs and impacts on vulnerable and/or marginalized populations.
- enable the exploration and adoption of financial mechanisms to support outcomes and create initiatives that support early adopters and industry leaders in addressing biodiversity loss.
- support existing efforts to sustain sectors and jobs into the long-term based on the recovery and productivity of ecosystems.
- create the support and awareness for nature-based assets that could help communities to avoid costly local infrastructure spending, building more resilient local economies.
- bolster existing efforts designed to increase productivity by enhancing biodiversity, for example, strengthening food security through changes to soil health and advancing forest climate change strategies.
- build and prepare for the full range of future skills and training that will be needed to support the actions needed to maintain, restore, and enhance biodiversity.

Implementation

- The Framework will be implemented in various ways: from communications, to updates to existing policies, to increasing partnerships, agreements, and participation in existing processes in the short term. Many of the short-term activities entail increasing awareness, strengthening knowledge networks, and building relationships as preparation for dialogue and design of broader structural changes that are needed.
- Through a consultation and co-operation plan, further work will be outlined to co-develop the longer-term policy and legislative changes needed.
- The Framework will be implemented and supported through various initiatives already underway or in place that would further the outcomes in place, such as land use planning, protected area targets, other effective conservation measures, protected areas, watershed security strategy, the coastal marine strategy, to name just a few examples.

- The Framework would create a common frame of reference for all the related initiatives, enabling identification of shared goals and purpose, understanding where alignments are needed, improving communications, and identifying support needed.
- The Framework can catalyze the broader conditions (structural, relational, and transformational) that are needed to support a shared understanding and greater awareness, that will result in proactive measures, thus reducing the risk of costly reactive responses.
- Having a structured approach with clear outcomes and direction prepares and equips everyone better to deal with complex, dynamic environments that will require a broad range of appropriate responses.

ⁱ Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/>

ⁱⁱ Canada's 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy, 2023: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/biodiversity/national-biodiversity-strategy.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Parliament of Canada, 2023: <https://www.parl.ca/legisinfo/en/bill/44-1/s-5>

^{iv} UBC, Biodiversity of BC: <https://linnet.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/>

^v Government of Canada, 2023, Ecological integrity of national parks: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/ecological-integrity-national-parks.html>

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^{vii} MPANetwork, BC Northern Shelf: <http://www.mpanetwork.ca/nap/>

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^{ix} Parks Prescriptions: <https://www.parkprescriptions.ca/>

^x Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

^{xi} UNEP, CBD, April 2004: [cop-07-dec-12-en \(cbd.int\)](http://www.cbd.int/cop-07-dec-12-en)