
FACTSHEET

July 30, 2013

Environmental Assessment Office

Valued Component Guideline

The British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office's (EAO) new policy document, [*Guideline for the Selection of Valued Components and Assessment of Potential Effects*](#), presents best practices for the selection of valued components and the assessment of potential effects. It has been prepared to inform the understanding and application of appropriate, standardized methods for conducting environmental assessments to meet the requirements of the BC *Environmental Assessment Act* ([SBC 2002, c.43](#)). It builds upon existing practices to improve the clarity, consistency, and overall quality of Applications for an Environmental Assessment Certificate prepared by proponents, as well as assessments prepared by EAO staff.

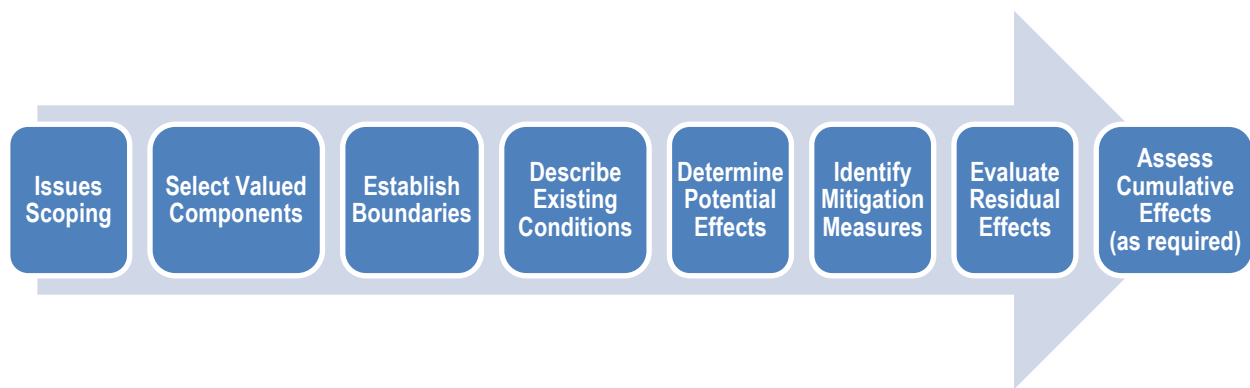
Valued components provide the foundation of environmental assessments in British Columbia and many other jurisdictions. In British Columbia, valued components are defined as aspects of the natural and human environment that are considered to have scientific, ecological, economic, social, cultural, archaeological, historical or other importance. Examples of some valued components that are frequently included in environmental assessments are fish and fish habitat, water quality, species at risk, communities and infrastructure, archaeological resources, and noise. The valued components that are selected for a proposed project become the primary focus of its environmental assessment.

The *Guideline* provides guidance on the typical steps in an environmental assessment, from the scoping of issues through the evaluation (including significance determination) of residual effects (*i.e.*, those effects remaining after the implementation of all mitigation measures).

The *Guideline*:

- Defines and explains the use of valued components to focus environmental assessments on those aspects of the natural and human environment that are of greatest importance to society.
- Explains how the use of valued components improves the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment, in part by facilitating the selection of appropriate study methods and focusing analysis on key interactions between a proposed project and valued components.
- Describes best practice in issues scoping to inform the selection of appropriate valued components, including the need for careful documentation of valued component selection methods, criteria, and rationale.
- Explains the role of assessment boundaries in defining the scope or limits of the assessment.
- Outlines the need to describe existing conditions in sufficient detail to enable potential interactions between a proposed project and valued components and effects, including cumulative effects, to be identified, understood, and assessed.

- Provides tools to facilitate the identification and evaluation of potential interactions between a proposed project and valued components to support an assessment that focusses on those interactions of greatest consequence.
- Defines various types of mitigation and explains how these should be considered to avoid or reduce potential adverse residual effects to an acceptable level.
- Clarifies the steps in evaluating the residual effects remaining after the implementation of mitigation, including characterization of each residual effect using defined criteria (context, magnitude, extent, duration, reversibility, and frequency), definition and determination of significance, determination of likelihood, and statement of the level of confidence.
- Describes factors to consider when determining the need for cumulative effects assessment.



The use of the *Guideline* will assist proponents and EAO staff to undertake the analysis required for an environmental assessment of a reviewable project in BC. The *Guideline* is not prescriptive, and the details regarding the application of the methods described within it will be determined by EAO for each individual proposed project. However, the application of the principles articulated in this *Guideline* will improve the clarity, consistency, and overall quality of environmental assessments conducted in BC.

For proposed projects already in the environmental assessment process, EAO will be phasing in the implementation of the *Guideline*. For proposed projects that have not already commenced a public comment period on their draft Application Information Requirements (draft AIR) EAO will fully implement the approach in the *Guideline*. For proposed projects that have already commenced public consultation on their draft AIR EAO Project Leads will consider whether aspects of the *Guideline* should be implemented, given the status of the proposed project and the expected issues in its environmental assessment.

EAO will be organizing several information sessions in fall 2013 to support implementation of the *Guideline* and to answer any questions. In the meantime, if you have questions about the *Guideline* or its application, please contact [Lisa O'Connor](#). Or, if your questions are specific to the application of the *Guideline* to a particular proposed project, please contact the relevant Project Lead.