



# FLNR Climate Change Strategy 2015-2020

## Setting the Stage

**British Columbia's climate is changing:** Climatologists have documented significant temperature and precipitation changes over the past several decades. The impacts of climate change, such as the mountain pine beetle epidemic and 2015 droughts, are already been seen in B.C. In the decades ahead, temperatures are projected to be higher and precipitation patterns will be more variable causing major changes to both human and ecological systems.

**B.C.'s natural resources are both important to climate solutions and sensitive to change:**

Forests and oceans absorb carbon emissions from fossil fuels and land use changes. However, B.C.'s natural resources, and the communities and sectors that depend upon them, are sensitive to a changing climate and increasing variability:

- There is little doubt that the B.C. climate has warmed over the past century, but less evidence of a systemic change in precipitation;
- Average B.C. winter temperature in 2100 is expected to be 2.5-7 degrees Celsius warmer than in 2000, creating reduced snowpack levels in most areas;
- Maximum spring run-off will occur several weeks earlier than now, with summer river flow levels substantially decreased;
- There will likely be an average of 30-70 fewer frost free days for B.C. as a whole;
- Climate impacts on B.C.'s natural resources will be substantial, and will require adaptation even in the case of strong emissions mitigation

**B.C. and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR) have taken action:**

In 2015, the Province embarked on a new Climate Leadership Plan and, as part of the 2015/16 Ministry Mandate Letter process FLNR is required to report to cabinet on the impacts of climate change on natural resource values and strategies in order to protect those values from climate change.

**FLNR has been and continues to be a leader in response to climate change.** The Ministry's work on the [Future Forest Ecosystem Scientific Council](#), plus in-house research on forecasting climate change, it's effects and how to establish resilient forests have aided the adaptation of the forest and range management framework to climate change. Other [research into the management of forest carbon and forests products to store more carbon has](#) prepared us to leverage B.C.'s vast forest resources in the fight against a changing climate. Since 2013, FLNR has developed [heritage](#) and [forest carbon](#) initiatives, drafted climate action plans for regions and branches, including an update to the 2012 [Forest Stewardship Climate Action Plan](#).

**This strategy goes further:** The 2015-2020 FLNR Climate Change Strategy extends climate action across the Ministry by integrating climate change into program areas, operations, resource management decisions and actions. Adapting to, and mitigating climate change in the natural resource and heritage sectors requires an understanding of the potential long-term impacts of climate change, variability and



the significance of the actions we take or forego today. The way they are managed will have long-term implications for sustainability of resource values and communities.

## Vision

*“FLNR is a leader in adaptation and mitigation actions aimed at improving the resilience of B.C.’s natural, cultural and heritage resources and values in response to climate change.”*

## Goals

FLNR’s goals for effectively responding to the impacts of climate change over the next five years and beyond are as follows:

- 1. Manage climate change as a core part of FLNR’s business.**
  - This is already occurring—each business area is drafting or has completed its own climate action plan and for emissions mitigation FLNR is implementing British Columbia’s Forest Carbon Strategy
  - The climate is changing and will change further in the future. Decisions will be made in the context of the changed current and future climates
  - Take steps to increase the understanding of decision-makers and staff with respect to the issue of climate change and its potential implications (e.g. training, sharing successes and supporting communities of practice)
  - Encourage decision-makers and staff to view business decisions through a climate change adaptation and emissions mitigation lens
  
- 2. FLNR will increase the use of climate relevant science, data and knowledge to better understand the environmental, social and economic implications of climate change on core business.**
  - FLNR invests in B.C. specific climate change science, data and decision making tools
  - Climate information and tools are available and accessible to staff and the public
  - Potential social, economic and environmental impacts, risks, gaps and opportunities are assessed and used to prioritize actions
  
- 3. Climate change adaptation and mitigation is integrated into program areas, operations, resource management decisions, and actions.**
  - Leadership teams prioritize climate action
  - Climate change adaptation and mitigation is built into the decision making process
  - Branch and region climate change action plans are integrated and coordinated with their business plans
  - Performance measures, criteria and indicators are identified, monitored and communicated
  - Public, First Nations and stakeholders are confident that climate change is adequately considered in resource management decisions



## Objectives

The following objectives will guide the ministry's climate change adaptation and mitigation actions:

1. **Public Safety and Natural Disaster Management:** FLNR is prepared for extreme natural events such as wildfires, floods, insect outbreaks and invasive species affecting the natural and heritage resource sectors. All reasonable actions to maintain public safety and minimize ecological, economic and social impacts are taken, based on available information and principles of risk management.
2. **Climate Science:** The ministry retains internal climate change adaptation and mitigation science expertise to ensure that British Columbia is progressive and informed to the extent of other comparable jurisdictions and institutions in North America. British Columbia participates in forums, such as, the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative and the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative.
3. **Climate Knowledge:** Growth of climate change adaptation and mitigation knowledge among staff is resourced and supported. Knowledge is effectively communicated throughout the ministry and related sectors and integrated into ministry business.
4. **Collaboration:** Climate change actions taken by the ministry are planned and executed in the public interest. Collaboration with external partners, including First Nations, government agencies, industry, academia, related institutions and communities help to shape enduring project outcomes.
5. **Legislation, Policy and Procedures:** FLNR legislation, policy and procedures address climate change impacts and adaptation and mitigation opportunities.
6. **Management:** Natural and heritage resources are managed to account for and reduce the effects of climate change.
7. **Decision Making:** Statutory decisions, resource allocations, FLNR policy and operational decision processes take into account climate change impacts and opportunities, including emissions mitigation.
8. **Business Opportunities:** Business opportunities related to climate change, such as new to B.C. tree species, new products such as cellulosic filaments, and the forest carbon project, are explored, tested and implemented where feasible. Risks to natural resources operations and businesses due to the current and future changed climate will be assessed and managed.
9. **Monitoring Performance:** Climate actions and the effectiveness of legislation, policy, procedures, and management are monitored. Key indicators are determined and long term performance monitoring established to ensure actions being taken are effecting positive change.



## Next Steps

- All FLNR regions and branches will develop climate action plans to address these Goals and Objectives by March 31, 2016
- Implementation will be initiated on 80% of climate action plans by March 31, 2016 and 100% of plans by September 1, 2016
- The delivery of climate action will be integrated into daily activities of staff across the ministry by March 31, 2018. Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation will be considered or integrated:
  - In statutory decision making, work planning and field assessment frameworks
  - Into decision making models
  - With the cumulative effects framework
  - By implementing British Columbia's Forest Carbon Strategy
  - In a corporate approach to climate change science, long-term monitoring, extension and training that includes delegated decision makers
  - In performance measures that track both progress of implementation and success of actions to address climate change impacts
  - As part of Risk Assessment and Management Baselines for the Ministry
- An economic analysis on the cost of prevention versus reaction to climate impacts, to be used to help inform Ministry decision making will be completed by March 31, 2017
- Climate change risks and opportunities with regards to First Nations will be assessed by September 30, 2017
- FLNR mechanisms to quantify climate change risk, identify thresholds for action and share cost and risk appropriately will be developed by March 31, 2018

The Climate Change Steering Committee will oversee the process and Competitiveness and Innovation Branch will provide advice, guidance and tools to assist in delivery. Leadership teams across the Ministry will ensure delivery across divisions and regions. This strategy will again be updated in 2017.

**Contact:** James Sandland, Director, Competitiveness and Innovation Branch 250 953-3988; or Dennis Paradine, Manager, Climate Solutions 250 356-6230.