

**Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship**

**2023/24 – 2025/26
Service Plan**

February 2023



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship 2023/24 – 2025/26 Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Cullen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Nathan Cullen
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
February 08, 2023

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Strategic Direction

In 2023/24, the Government of British Columbia will continue our work to make life better for people in B.C., improve the services we all rely on, and ensure a sustainable province for future generations. Government will focus on building a secure, clean, and fair economy, and a province where everyone can find a good home – whether in a rural area, in a city, or in an Indigenous community. B.C. will continue working toward true and meaningful reconciliation by supporting opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to be full partners in an inclusive and sustainable province. The policies, programs and projects developed over the course of this service plan period will focus on results that people can see and feel in four key areas: attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean and fair economy that can withstand global economic headwinds.

This 2023/24 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship will support the government's priorities including the foundational principles listed above and selected action items identified in the December 2022 Minister's [Mandate Letter](#).

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (the Ministry) works with other natural resource sector ministries to achieve British Columbia's goals of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

The Ministry is directly responsible for the effective development of water, land and marine use policy and planning as well as biodiversity and ecosystem health, including species at risk policy and program management. The Ministry is also responsible for developing a new vision for water, land and resource management with First Nations that will embrace shared decision-making as part of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in B.C. In addition, the Ministry will direct work across natural resource ministries to develop solutions to sector-wide challenges and to advance dedicated sector-wide policy, including managing for cumulative effects, improving permitting and authorizations, as well as providing dedicated secretariat support for effective governance of the natural resource sector.

To do this work the Ministry is accountable for all or key parts of the [Environment and Land Use Act](#), [Flathead Watershed Area Conservation Act](#), [Forest and Range Practices Act](#), [Land Act](#), [Ministry of Environment Act](#), [Ministry of Forests and Range Act](#), [Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act](#), [Skagit Environmental Enhancement Act](#), [Water Protection Act](#), [Water Sustainability Act](#), and [Wildlife Act](#).

Operating Environment

B.C. is one of the most biologically diverse areas in Canada. Many species are found nowhere else in Canada, and several are found nowhere else in the world. Natural resource stewardship activities are confronted by challenges that include the intensification of environmental and social pressures, increasing global competition, regulatory uncertainty, the impacts of climate change to natural resources, and public distrust. Resource management is also undergoing

changes in response to growing jurisdictional complexity, complex permitting processes, recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Province's commitment to reconciliation.

B.C.'s land and ecosystems provide essential "services" that people rely on: clean water and air, food and fibre production, waste treatment, climate regulation, protection from flooding and erosion, and many other functions, as well as economic opportunities. Human activities have degraded, fragmented, and even eliminated some ecosystems in B.C., making it more important than ever to establish and manage protected areas and manage development activities.

Water is the foundation of life. It sustains all living things—the plants, forests and animals that form our biosphere—and it sustains human communities, economies and cultures. For Indigenous Peoples, water cannot be separated from the interconnected nature of our world. Healthy watersheds are at the forefront of climate resiliency and are the foundation of all social, environmental, and economic systems. However, B.C.'s watersheds are becoming less resilient over time due to threats from the cumulative effects of development, unsustainable land use practices, invasive species, and population growth. Climate change will amplify each of these problems, making ecosystems and communities more vulnerable to acute disasters like the recent floods and wildfires, and chronic stressors, like drought and water scarcity.

The Ministry was created on April 1, 2022 and has a broad mandate to work in partnership with other natural resource ministries and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to achieve British Columbia's goals of reconciliation, a strong economy, and effective stewardship of the environment. This means playing a policy leadership and support role in key areas such as: in the provision of operational guidance to all Natural Resource Ministries, particularly in respect of reconciliation; working to achieve the goal of conserving 30% of the province by 2030; and working to co-develop a vision for a co-managed land and resource regime with First Nations.

Initiatives such as modernizing land use planning (LUP), collaborative Indigenous stewardship forums, watershed and coastal marine planning, the evolution of a cumulative effects framework and shifts in the Province's permitting and authorizations framework support ongoing stewardship of the land, water and ecosystems that people rely on.

These initiatives extend through to the activities of the other natural resource ministries, and will require a closely-coordinated approach between organizations. This will ensure shared activities are aligned with the intended stewardship outcomes and avoids conflicting or redundant policy development. The Ministry continues to develop and improve governance models to ensure coordination, support the implementation of mandates for the Ministry and other natural resource ministries, and achieve expected outcomes.

Despite best efforts to integrate decision making, drive transformation of the natural resource sector, provide the right data to better manage cumulative impacts, and introduce a "one-window approach" to permitting and authorizations across the Natural Resource Ministries (NRMs), these concepts have never been fully realized. Permitting and authorizations continue to challenge the natural resource management system, leading to dissatisfaction in First Nations, industry, local governments and other stakeholders.

Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and affirmed in B.C. through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act work to advance Ministry mandates must be undertaken in consultation and cooperation of First Nations. In addition, all existing core public service business and new mandates require the active involvement and partnership with Indigenous nations to ensure meaningful and lasting reconciliation can be advanced through this work. Approaches will need to be developed in partnership with First Nations, in recognition of their rights and title interests.

Ministry staff and programs are embedded across B.C. to deliver regional operations in a more integrated and coordinated manner across the sector, a governance structure called Regional Management Committees is being re-energized to support the integrated nature of resource management. Regional Management Committees require focus from all natural resource ministries and are intended to improve the implementation of programs and initiatives across the natural resource sector, including land and resource agreements with Indigenous governments.

The Ministry provides Natural Resource Information and Digital Services to all natural resource ministries. These centralized accountabilities include the maintenance of current information technology applications, data and infrastructure as well as the development of new applications and infrastructure. Ongoing investment in existing and future applications and infrastructure is an essential component to all natural resource ministries' ability to deliver on their respective mandates.

Economic Statement

B.C.'s economy has been resilient to pandemic, geopolitical and climate-related disruptions. However, higher interest rates are expected to weigh on the economy in the coming years. Following a rapid recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation led to successive interest rate increases from the Bank of Canada in 2022. The impact of higher interest rates has been evident in housing markets and there is uncertainty over its transmission to the rest of the economy in B.C. and among our trading partners. B.C. is heading into this challenging period in relatively strong position, with a low unemployment rate. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP expanded by 3.0 per cent in 2022 and expects growth of 0.5 per cent in 2023 and 1.6 per cent in 2024. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC estimates growth of 3.4 per cent in 2022 and projects national real GDP growth of 0.5 per cent in 2023 and 1.5 per cent in 2024. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to be broadly in line with the national average in the coming years. The risks to B.C.'s economic outlook center around interest rates and inflation, such as the risk of further inflationary supply chain disruptions, the potential for more interest rate increases than expected, and uncertainty around the depth and timing of the impact on housing markets. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies, the emergence of further COVID-19 variants of concern and lower commodity prices.

Performance Planning

The Ministry was formed on April 1, 2022, and since then continues to refine and update its performance planning practices. As a result, this service plan may reflect changes to goals, objectives and performance measures from the previous service plan. The Ministry will continue to make improvements to this plan as we work with our First Nations partners to fully understand what measuring success will look like now and into the future.

Goal 1: First Nations and the provincial government are partners in effective stewardship of water, land and natural resources.

The Ministry will work with First Nations to build a vision for co-management on the land base that embraces shared decision-making and builds an approach for co-management of land and natural resources that will ensure effective management now and in the future.

Objective 1.1: Strengthen Partnerships and Advance Engagement with First Nations in the Stewardship of B.C.s Natural Resource Values.

The Ministry will develop a path forward with First Nations, through partnerships, and engagement, which includes the continued development of sector strategies and plans, the alignment of natural resource sector laws and the development of tools and supports.

Key Strategies

- Co-develop with First Nations, options for policies, programs, legislation, decision-making models and agreements that advance a co-managed water, land, and resource management regime, in a manner consistent with the UN Declaration.
- Work with First Nations to co-develop a vision for stewardship including natural resources co-management and shared decision-making to protect environmental and cultural values and to provide for a balance of economic opportunities.
- Continue working with First Nations to co-develop an integrated approach that supports Indigenous stewardship and guardian activities, including training and expanding the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework.
- Implement the Together for Wildlife Strategy to advance wildlife stewardship in partnership with First Nations.
- Advance policy, legislation and business processes that better position the Ministry and First Nations, working together, to manage the cumulative impacts of industrial development and ensure British Columbia's lands and waters are managed sustainably for generations to come.
- Work with First Nations to co-develop performance measures for the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework.

Discussion

The Ministry is guided by its mandate and important reconciliation commitments and obligations to meaningfully transform its relationship with Indigenous peoples. These commitments include the ongoing implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (including its associated [Action Plan](#), [annual reporting](#) and commitment to ensure provincial laws are consistent with the UN Declaration – all of which must be done in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples); the guidance from the Declaration Act Secretariat’s Interim Approach to Implementing the Requirements of Section 3 of the Declaration Act (Interim Approach); the 2018 B.C. and First Nation Leadership Council’s Concrete Actions, and the Draft 10 Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples. The Ministry and First Nations are creating space to co-develop a new vision for natural resource stewardship that will embrace shared decision-making on the land base as part of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. This will likely involve a mix of existing/ongoing approaches such as land and resource management planning, managing for cumulative effects, supporting guardians, Forums for decision-making, as well as any new approaches, strategies, programs, and legal instruments that are identified as essential to realise a co-developed vision.

Since 2011, the Province has been partnering with over 124 First Nations, covering approximately eighty percent (80%) of the land base across B.C., on collaborative stewardship through the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP), the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) initiative, the Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) and the Collaborative Stewardship Framework (CSF). Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums under MaPP, GBR, ESI and CSF are developing high-quality, accessible and trusted environmental information to inform shared stewardship of land and natural resources and decisions on the land-base. In 2021, Cabinet directed ESI and CSF Forums to develop long-term recommendations for collaborative stewardship in B.C. These recommendations and a long-term mandate for Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums were endorsed by Cabinet in October 2022.

Working collaboratively with other natural resources ministries, the Ministry is developing a new conservation financing mechanism to support protection of biodiverse areas. A primary objective of the mechanism is to secure philanthropic or other private funding to support the implementation of new measures that help the province meet its goals to conserve 30% of B.C. by 2030.

Objective 1.2: Advance and modernize Land Use Planning (LUP) for sustainable natural resource management.

Land use planning sets the strategic direction to guide sustainable resource stewardship and management of provincial public land and waters that meet economic, environmental, social, and cultural objectives. Modernized land use planning is led by the B.C. government in partnership with Indigenous governments and includes the engagement of communities, local governments, industry, and other stakeholders.

Key Strategies

- Continue to modernize and advance development of the land use planning program and policies in partnership with First Nations that ensures a transparent process and engages and involves local government, industry, and the public.
- The Ministry will continue to partner with First Nations governments to develop modern plans that set long term land use objectives and direction for stewardship, advance reconciliation, co-management and shared decision making with First Nations, and create increased predictability for economic activities.
- Coordinate land use planning priorities with other land and water stewardship initiatives to maximize data, information, and opportunities to identify strategic direction that is responsive to climate change, species-at-risk management, wildfires, floods, and drought.

Discussion

Developing modernized land use plans is an important component of natural resource stewardship that ensures environmental stewardship and creates increased predictability for resource economies. It supports government-to-government partnerships at a strategic level and plays a key role in building trust with First Nations partners, advancing a collaborative management approach on the land, and implementing reconciliation through the *Declaration Act* Action plan. For this reason, the approach to implementing LUP strategies will be linked to the provincial approach to co-management led by the Ministry's Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy division.

LUP also requires a coordinated approach with other natural resource sector strategies (Together for Wildlife Strategy, Old Growth Strategic Review, Climate Action Plan, Watershed Security Strategy, Wild Salmon Strategy, Coastal Marine Strategy, Forest Landscape Planning, Agricultural Land Reserve) and benefits from finding efficiencies and applying (or piloting) new information and process developed through these initiatives at land use planning tables. Land use planning is reliant on other ministries' expertise and data to support socio-economic and environmental analysis of planning values and outcomes. The Ministry will build coordinated reporting on land and water planning initiatives across British Columbia.

Goal 1 Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target
1.1 Number of Forum partnerships that support trusted integrated resource management ¹	12	16	N/A	N/A

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹ Future target will be developed in partnership with Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums.

Discussion

At the regional level, the Province works jointly with First Nations representatives to provide oversight to Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums (Forums) through a Governance Working Group Executive (GWGE). The GWGE is committed to discussing the onboarding of new regional forums including the number of forums, where they are located, funding allocation and membership on the GWGE. Furthermore, the Province is committed to jointly developing with First Nation partners, clear and comprehensive performance measures and targets to accurately assess success of the Forums in a collaborative and ongoing manner.

In recognition of the commitment made to Forums to co-develop performance measures for the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Frameworks, the Province will work with Forum Partner Nations and will reflect these co-developed performance measures in future Ministry service plans. This work will consider Indigenous metrics including but not limited to, knowledge transfer, culture, language, joint decision-making, economic justice, ecological restoration, and anti-racism advancements.

Performance Measure	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target
1.2 Number of land use plans (LUP) underway	12 LUP processes	14 LUP processes	17 LUP processes	20 LUP processes

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Discussion

The initiation of a new LUP process indicates that provincial and First Nations governments (the partners) are coming together to resolve modern resource management challenges. More specifically, a new LUP process means the partners will be co-developing strategic direction to guide sustainable resource stewardship and management of the public land and waters within a given plan area. The inclusive and transparent nature of a LUP process ensures the strategic direction set by the partners is also informed by input from local governments, stakeholders, and the public. As such, the initiation of a new LUP process results in the following outcomes:

1. Advancement of reconciliation with First Nations through the implementation of a co-management approach.
2. New opportunities to unify communities around shared stewardship values.
3. Increased predictability and certainty for resource economies.
4. Support related mandates including achieving 30% protected and conserved areas, including Indigenous protected and Conserved Areas, by 2030.

The number of new projects initiated over time will be largely dependent whether LUP is the appropriate tool to solve a given land-based management issue, and whether a new project would support provincial priorities like reconciliation and the economy. The number of new projects initiated over time is also subject to Cabinet approval and funding.

Goal 2: British Columbia is a global leader in stewarding water, land and natural resources.

Modernized land use planning, undertaken with First Nations, will help to identify areas where environmental values are affirmed through protection and sustainable economic opportunities. The Ministry is providing leadership in the co-development of a Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity as part of implementing the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, implementing Together for Wildlife, and improving species at risk recovery. Various planning partnerships with First Nations are delivering measurable outcomes on that ground that will lead to B.C.'s commitment to the international target of effectively protecting 30% of the province by 2030. The Ministry is also focussing on strengthening monitoring efforts and ensuring that land and water plans reflect current conditions and consider the changing climate.

Objective 2.1: Improve Stewardship of Land and Water to Enhance Wildlife Management & Biodiversity

The Ministry identifies opportunities to conserve, manage and protect land and water to improve the health of provincial ecosystems. These efforts result in improved habitat for wildlife and fish, while also realizing additional co-benefits including the restoration of forests impacted by wildfire and pests, and increased carbon sequestration to name a few. This measure highlights the effectiveness of Ministry management activity to conserve, maintain and restore wildlife and fish populations and habitat. The Ministry will collaborate with internal and external partners to develop and improve relationships, agreements, and strategies that enhance wildlife stewardship and biodiversity outcomes.

Key Strategies

- Work in partnership with First Nations and the federal government to develop and implement a Collaborative Framework Agreement for Nature Conservation that will reinforce the shared commitment to advance conservation and stewardship in a way that supports reconciliation and economic opportunities.
- With the advice of the [Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council](#), work with the [First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Stewardship and Habitat Conservation Forum](#), wildlife stakeholders and organizations, First Nations, rural communities, natural resource development industry stakeholders, neighbouring jurisdictions and the public, to implement the [Together for Wildlife Strategy](#).
- Together with First Nations, stakeholders, and other B.C. ministries, plan and deliver key actions to stabilize, recover and/or maintain identified woodland caribou herds in B.C.
- Work together with stakeholders to advance the Watershed Security, Coastal Marine and Wild Salmon Strategies.

- Connect the systems, tools and people to the transformative work taking place across the natural resource sector and increase the Province's ability to manage for cumulative effects through integrated, science-based land, aquatic, resource, and geographic data.

Discussion

In 2022 at the international biodiversity conference in Montreal (COP 15), a resolution was passed as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to ensure at least 30% of terrestrial areas and inland waters and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed. Canada, and British Columbia, have committed to this resolution.

The Ministry will lead efforts through mechanisms such as modernized land use planning to achieve these targets. This includes identifying new areas and strengthening conservation in other areas that meet international standards for contributing to the targets.

The Ministry identifies opportunities to manage and protect Crown land to improve the health of the provincial land base. These efforts result in improved habitats for wildlife and fish, while also realizing additional co-benefits including the restoration of forests impacted by wildfire and pests, and increased carbon sequestration. These actions highlight the commitment of Ministry management activity to enhance, conserve and restore wildlife and fish habitat.

Objective 2.2: Improve Water Stewardship from Source to Tap

British Columbians depend on water for drinking, washing, cooking, growing our food, and recreation. Small businesses and industries rely on water to support economic opportunities and growth. Water is essential for aquatic life and sustaining our fisheries. Importantly, water has vital sustenance, cultural, and spiritual significance for Indigenous Peoples that are enshrined in Indigenous laws. The Ministry works with Indigenous governments, stakeholders, and partners to develop strategies and policies, plan, set objectives and invest in accessible information and digital services that guide water stewardship.

Key Strategies

- Develop a Watershed Security Strategy and Fund in collaboration with Indigenous Nations that will build on current internal and external work to help ensure British Columbia's watersheds are healthy.
- Lead the development of a Source to Tap Strategy to protect drinking water and define clear source drinking water protection accountabilities. Support this strategy with strong surface and groundwater risk assessments and clear pathways to solutions.
- Implement a water planning program in collaboration with Indigenous Nations, by advancing watershed planning, governance and objective setting that is supported by strong technical assessments and policy development.
- Support the implementation of the Water Sustainability Act to manage surface water and groundwater by developing policies, guidance and supporting science and digital services.

Discussion

Improving water stewardship from source to tap continues to be a priority area for the Ministry. Support for the implementation of the *Water Sustainability Act* is one of the Ministry's core functions. Through policy and guidance development and new water science, the Ministry supports water management in coordination with the statutory decision makers in the Ministry of Forests. Watershed planning and the development of the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund remain a strategic focus for the Ministry and are also supported by the development of policy, guidance and new science. The Ministry also provides strategic policy and science support across a range of statutes that influence water stewardship to ensure alignment with this Objective.

Additionally, the Ministry will lead the development of a Source to Tap strategy to protect drinking water. This is a new mandate for the Ministry, and it will continue to work with the Ministry of Health and the Office of the Public Health Officer to further define accountabilities for drinking water among the provincial agencies and determine a framework for source water risk assessments.

Consistent throughout this work is a focus on collaboration with Indigenous Nations. Progress towards improving water stewardship in British Columbia is monitored by tracking the development and future implementation of major strategies and key policies that support water stewardship.

Objective 2.3: Advance Permitting Solutions that Increases Predictability, Transparency and Public Trust in the Permitting Regime

Government permits and authorizations are critical components to the use of land and water, natural resource management, and resource stewardship and provide opportunities to gather data and mitigate risks. Working through priority projects to address provincial priorities such as housing, connectivity and aggregate will allow the Ministry to address important needs while applying the learnings and momentum to implementing longer-term solutions in the natural resource sector.

Key Strategies

- Focus on Housing-related permits as a priority project to deliver short-term results, while continuing to build scalable policy frameworks and solutions that advance towards substantive, long-term changes for all natural resource authorizations.
- Develop strategic shifts across the land base to impact authorization processes, including potential changes to reporting analytics, policy, process, legislation, and provincial decision-making models.
- Adapt IT systems to reflect changes across legislation, policy and process.

Discussion

The Ministry will work with First Nations, other ministries, and industry to advance key areas to transform the permitting regime in the province. Through these consultations and partnerships,

the Ministry will lead a solutions framework for permitting and authorizations that addresses priority projects through strategic shifts to policy, process, legislation, and systems to help address competing interests on the land base, climate change, Indigenous Rights and Title and changing industries. These strategic shifts include enhanced stewardship, improving technology systems and data, and reducing administrative burden. The work will be grounded in the priorities of reconciliation, environmental sustainability, and economic development.

Goal 2 Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2021/2022 Baseline	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target
2.1 Increase the amount of effective area-based conservation of lands, inland waters, and marine areas that contribute to 30% of international conservation target by 2030.	19.5%	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Data Source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Discussion

Analysis led by the International Union on the Conservation of Nature shows that 30% is a minimum target for land, sea, and freshwater to protect and conserve key biodiversity values, including species at risk, high-biodiversity areas, key migration sites, spawning areas, and ecologically intact areas which protect large-scale ecological processes.” These conservation targets were recently adopted by Canada at COP 15 in Montreal.

The Province anticipates achieving the target of 30% by 2030, in partnership with First Nations through a range of conservation approaches, including new protected areas established through parks, modernized land use planning, Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, and “other effective area-based conservation measures”.

Modernized land use planning is the preferred approach to considering new conserved areas because it is conducted in full partnership with First Nations rights and title holders and includes engaging with industry, stakeholders and local communities. It also considers environmental, economic and reconciliation outcomes, as opposed to single, one-off conservation proposals.

Some First Nations have identified their long-term stewardship interests through Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) proposals or other Indigenous land use proposals or plans. IPCAs provide valuable understanding of Indigenous perspectives for the management of lands and waters. The Province will work with Nations through strategic and operational government-to-government initiatives such as modernized land use planning, Forest Landscape Planning, Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums, and Indigenous Guardians programs.

Performance Measure	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target
2.2 Improve watershed security and health throughout the province by developing and implementing the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund (WSS+F)	WSS+F intention paper released	WSS released	Fund established	WSS + F being implemented

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, manually compiled.

Discussion

The Ministry will make develop, release and implement the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund, building on current internal and external work to help ensure B.C.'s watersheds are secure and healthy. Reconciliation and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples is central to its development and implementation, and engagement through the B.C.-First Nations Water Table as well as one-on-one engagement with First Nations, the Metis Nation of B.C. and Modern Treaty Nations is key. The Strategy will explore watershed governance, climate change, drinking water, community and economic stability, and education and knowledge. Targets were developed using the mandated timelines for the completion of the Strategy and will be manually tracked. Once the strategy is complete and actions to ensure B.C.'s watersheds are secure and healthy have been identified, the Ministry will track its implementation and the outcomes of the identified actions.

Performance Measure	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target
2.3 Permitting efficiencies for priority Housing projects ¹	Dashboard established to track authorizations (i.e. # of permits in queue)	Baseline metrics established (e.g., processing times, volume of units and/or completion rates)	TBD	TBD

Data Source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹Permitting related to NR Ministries and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

Discussion

Housing is a priority for the province and the Ministry is leading the initiative to streamline the permitting process related to housing applications. The Ministry will develop a one-stop shop approach to provincial housing-related permitting, helping to speed up housing approvals. To reduce the timelines for approval and to address the backlog of applications, the ministry is leading a Housing Action Task Force. This Task Force will bring the ministry and the partner

ministries focus on moving forward housing-related authorization and permit applications and advancing priority projects such as Indigenous-led projects, BC Housing applications and multiple unit applications.

Currently, there are thousands of permits in the queue related to housing with varying wait times. The turn-around times depend on the nature and complexity of the request, as well as the quality and completeness of applications. The Ministry is working to build out an Application Analytics and Insights tool which will feature a dashboard to determine an accurate number of authorization and permit applications in the system, which will inform the approach the ministry takes to accelerate reviews and decisions.

The current process for a housing application requires applicants to apply to different ministries within government, such authorizations include but are not limited to: Authorization and permit applications for water licences, contaminated sites, right of way access and subdivision approval. A single window will enable a coordinated approach, speed-up the process, and eliminate the need for multiple applications across ministries.

The Ministry is in the analysis phase and is determining the current applications across multiple ministries which are pending decision and concurrently setting up a system-based approach to accept new applications. The analysis will help establish a dashboard which will enable identification of key areas for improvements, create an action plan to implement efficiencies (in terms of timelines and quality of authorizations), and establish future performance targets.

Goal 3: B.C. is a global leader in the stewardship of marine and coastal values for environmental protection, economic development and reconciliation.

This goal addresses the Ministry's role in working with Indigenous Nations and partners to ensure sustainable use of our coastal and marine spaces, marine fisheries, and production in the aquaculture sector as part of the government's broader goals on economic recovery, rural and coastal community growth, and food security. Supporting these efforts requires investing in the conservation and restoration of species and their habitats, infrastructure, and programs addressing healthy fish populations and sustainable harvests.

Objective 3.1: Address Fish Species Declines

Wild Pacific Salmon are iconic in British Columbia due to their importance to our culture, ecology and economy. However, over the past few years many species have become increasingly threatened. The Ministry will work to reinvigorate provincial programs that address wild salmon and other fish species declines, as well as coastal fisheries economies. Investments will align with recommendations from B.C.'s Wild Salmon Advisory Council and other fisheries reviews and work to leverage funds where viable.

Key Strategies

- Work with the federal government, First Nations leadership, and stakeholders to continue to implement strategies for wild salmon recovery and revitalization in B.C.
- Explore ways to continue investment in high value projects through the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF), a contribution program funded jointly by the federal and provincial governments.
- Explore options for unlocking under-utilized salmon habitat rendered impassable by natural or human causes.
- Explore policies to prioritize wild salmon and other fish species recovery in provincial natural resource programs.

Discussion

As of April 1, 2022, most of the provincial fisheries, aquaculture and wild salmon files have been moved under the Ministry for a focused and dedicated approach. The Ministry is committed to collaborating with federal, First Nations and local governments to protect fish and fish habitats. This change will advance meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, grow the economy and ensure a sustainable environment. The Province will monitor this work through the implementation of programs such as the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) and direct outcomes such as the area of aquatic habitat restored.

Objective 3.2: Develop a Coastal Marine Strategy to Promote Healthy Marine Ecosystems and Coastal Communities

The Province has committed to develop a new coastal marine strategy, in cooperation with the federal government, Indigenous Peoples, and coastal communities, to provide a blueprint for future stewardship, economic resilience and management of our coastal waters. This complements work on a network of Marine Protected Areas in the Northern Shelf Bioregion and continued implementation of the integrated marine plans developed under the Marine Plan Partnership.

Key Strategies

- Support the implementation of agreements and shared initiatives including the Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast and the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement.
- Working with First Nations, federal and local governments, and other natural resource ministries, complete the first Provincial Coastal Marine Strategy that includes actions to better protect coastal habitat while supporting coastal economies.
- In partnership with First Nations and the federal government, begin to implement the first-ever Marine Protected Area Network in Canada.

- Continue to work with Marine Plan Partnership First Nations partners to advance shared priorities, initiate the plan’s amendment process and secure a durable and stable implementation financing model.
- Work to develop a long-term vision of dedicated ongoing cleanup of B.C.’s coasts.

Discussion

This objective has been revised to address two key elements of strategy development – the importance of completing this work collaboratively with First Nations, federal agencies, and coastal communities, and the need for the Province’s new strategy to be comprehensive in addressing the range of issues and desired outcomes for the coast. In assessing progress, the Ministry will look both at the level of collaboration achieved as well as the breadth and scope of resulting strategies and actions. Successfully delivering on this objective will require the active engagement of multiple parties and the effective, efficient use of new and existing committees and governance mechanisms. Although completing this work in partnership with others takes time, the results are expected to be more durable, equitable across interest groups, and feasible for implementation.

Goal 3 Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target
3.1 Aquatic Habitat restored or enhanced through Ministry activities	1, 167,160 square meters	1,705,503 square meters	5% increase from previous year	7% increase from previous year	9% increase previous year

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Discussion

Increasing the number of square meters of aquatic habitat restored or enhanced through Ministry activities will increase the area where fish can thrive and grow their populations. Increasing aquatic habitat will work toward ensuring that fish have clean flowing water which is at the right temperature for their developmental needs. Additionally, it provides a complex natural environment for them to grow and return to, which will provide the shelter, nutrition and required conditions for all stages of life. By supporting aquatic habitat restoration, the Province is also investing in job creation and training for British Columbians, and in the case of salmon, helping a keystone species that has far-reaching environmental impacts. Wild Pacific salmon are also vitally important for food and cultural purposes of many Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia.

The data being used to support this metric will be provided to B.C. from the BCSRIF, which is operated by the Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The source data is being provided by BCSRIF recipients. Targeted increases are based on potential restoration work completion within different projects and may be influenced by extraneous influences such as extreme weather events or staffing shortages. The Ministry will work towards targets that are based on the

anticipated results from projects funded by the Province and other measures. Increasing wild salmon and other fish habitat is considered an important means to ensuring these resources for future British Columbians and safeguarding species of particular concern including some wild salmon.

Performance Measure	2022/23 Forecast	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target
3.2 Provincial Coastal Marine Strategy developed.	Complete and release Intentions Paper for public engagement	Engage with public, stakeholder, local and federal government. Complete the draft Coastal Marine Strategy	Complete and release the final Coastal Marine Strategy	Implementation Priorities: 6 intentions from Coastal Marine Strategy identified for action

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Discussion

This performance measure tracks the predicted progress of the development of the Coastal Marine Strategy. After the release of the Intentions Paper in late 2022 for public engagement, the Ministry will co-develop a draft Coastal Marine Strategy with First Nations. During this time, the Ministry will also engage with the public, stakeholders, and federal and local governments before obtaining final Provincial approval for release in 2024. The Coastal Marine Strategy will articulate priority actions for the coastal marine environment, and by 2025, the Province will commit to implementing six of these priorities for action. This will demonstrate the Ministry's commitment and drive towards improving stewardship, advancing reconciliation, and fostering community resilience. These targets also reflect the development processes for other natural resource management strategies (e.g., Watershed Security Strategy and Wild Salmon Strategy), and will allow the Ministry to take a holistic and integrated approach towards priorities of ecosystem health, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and economic opportunities for British Columbians on both the land and water.

Financial Summary

Core Business	2022/23 Restated Estimates¹	2023/24 Estimates	2024/25 Plan	2025/26 Plan
Operating Expenses (\$000)				
Land Use Policy and Planning Ecosystems	55,032	57,465	58,069	58,073
Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning	7,917	10,355	10,541	10,538
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	19,731	26,225	27,900	27,893
Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy	1,835	3,254	3,465	3,467
Natural Resource Sector Secretariat	4,396	6,953	7,286	7,290
Executive and Support Services	14,836	19,757	20,373	20,373
Total	103,747	124,009	127,634	127,634
Capital Expenditures (\$000)				
Executive and Support Services	245	3	3	3
Total	245	3	3	3

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2022/23 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2023/24 Estimates.

* Further information on program funding and vote recoveries is available in the [Estimates and Supplement to the Estimates](#).

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of December 7, 2022 the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

Mackenzie River Basin Board

Established to implement the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement (between the Government of Canada, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories), which is non-binding, process focused and publishes State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) for the Mackenzie River Basin.

Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board

Created through legislation (*Muskwa-Kechika Management Act* and regulation), the M-KAB provides advice and feedback on emerging Government policies that may impact the M-KMA and on potential management activities in the area. The M-KAB reports out to the Premier and the public annually as well as monitoring activities, including resource development activities.

Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission

Created through legislation (*Skagit Environmental Enhancement Act*) the Commission administers the Skagit Environmental Endowment Fund. The Commission reviews, selects and funds projects which provide or maintain environmental values and recreational facilities in the Skagit watershed south of Hope, B.C.

Wildlife Advisory Council

Formed in 2020, the mandate is to work together to support the implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy, as well as advising Ministers on province-wide wildlife and habitat issues on an ongoing basis.