

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

**2024/25  
Annual Service Plan Report**

**August 2025**



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## Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship 2024/25 Annual Service Plan Report compares the Ministry's actual results to the expected results identified in the 2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan published in 2024. I am accountable for those results as reported.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randene Neill', written in a cursive style.

Honourable Randene Neill  
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship  
August 10, 2025

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## Letter from the Minister

I am pleased to present the 2024/25 Annual Service Plan Report for the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

This year's report reflects the Ministry's continued commitment to reconciliation, environmental stewardship, and sustainable economic development. Building on the foundations laid, the Ministry has made significant progress in strengthening partnerships with First Nations, modernizing land use planning, and improving the stewardship of B.C.'s water, land, and natural resources.

In 2024/25, the Ministry expanded the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework to include 13 active Forums, supporting First Nation-led stewardship and guardianship across the province. The Ministry launched the BC Conservation Fund and advanced key land use planning initiatives, including the Gwa'ni Project in partnership with First Nations. These efforts reflect the shared commitment to co-developing durable, inclusive, and climate-informed land use plans.

The Ministry also continued to lead biodiversity and ecosystem health. Through the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, the Ministry protected over 315,000 hectares of Wildlife Habitat Areas and expanded Klinse-za Park to support caribou recovery. The work under the Together for Wildlife Strategy and in the ongoing co-development of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework is helping to restore critical habitats and improve outcomes for species at risk. These actions support food security and recreational opportunities that responsibly connect people with nature.

Water stewardship continues to be a priority. The Ministry has initiated several key activities, including collaborative watershed planning and the development of enhanced drought preparedness measures. Additionally, the Ministry has published new water quality guidelines and advanced digital tools to support source-to-tap water protection.

On permitting, the Ministry cleared the 2022/23 housing-related application backlog to reduce processing times. The Ministry expanded the use of data dashboards and tracking systems to improve transparency and predictability for applicants and the public.

Finally, the Ministry launched B.C.'s first Coastal Marine Strategy—developed in partnership with First Nations and coastal communities—which sets a 20-year vision for healthy marine ecosystems and resilient coastal economies.

These achievements are the result of strong collaboration across government, with First Nations, and with communities across B.C. I am proud of the work we've done together and remain committed to building a future where nature, people, and the economy thrive in balance.



Honourable Randene Neill  
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship  
August 10, 2025

## Purpose of the Annual Service Plan Report

This annual service plan report has been developed to meet the requirements of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act (BTAA), which sets out the legislative framework for planning, reporting and accountability for Government organizations. Under the BTAA, the Minister is required to report on the actual results of the Ministry's performance related to the forecasted targets stated in the service plan for the reported year.

## Strategic Direction

The strategic direction set by Government in 2020 and Minister Nathan Cullen's 2022 [Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship [2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan](#) and the actual results reported on in this annual report.

## Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship works with other natural resource sector ministries to achieve British Columbia's goals of reconciliation, 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, species-at-risk policy and program management and developing a new vision for water, land and resource management with First Nations. The Ministry is responsible for the administration of water, lands, fish and wildlife while also directing work across natural resource ministries to develop solutions to sector-wide challenges in permitting, policy, data and technology and improving the management of cumulative effects. The Ministry is the lead on flood, drought, landslide and dams and dikes.

To do this work the Ministry is accountable for all or key parts of the [Creston Valley Wildlife Act](#), [Dike Maintenance Act](#), [Drainage Ditch and Dike Act](#), [Drinking Water Protection Act](#), [Environment and Land Use Act](#), [Fish and Seafood Act](#), [Flathead Watershed Area Conservation Act](#), [Forest and Range Practices Act](#), [Land Act](#), [Land Survey Act](#), [Land Surveyors Act](#), [Land Title Act](#), [Libby Dam Reservoir Act](#), [Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing Act](#), [Ministry of Environment Act](#), [Ministry of Forests and Range Act](#), [Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act](#), [Riparian Areas Protection Act](#), [Skagit Environmental Enhancement Act](#), [Water Protection Act](#), [Water Sustainability Act](#), [Water Users' Communities Act](#), [Water Utility Act](#) and [Wildlife Act](#).

## Operating Environment

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) operates within a dynamic and evolving landscape shaped by a range of internal and external factors. These influences affect the Ministry's ability to deliver on its mandate and lead the natural resource stewardship in British Columbia. Since assuming full statutory responsibility for water, lands, fish, and wildlife in October 2023, the Ministry has strengthened its leadership role and requires adaptive, collaborative, and transparent approaches to natural resource stewardship across the province.

The Ministry's work is impacted by First Nations rights and title and the resulting First Nation governance structures. The Ministry must navigate these evolving relationships and ensure alignment with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA). Climate change and natural hazards also remain significant external drivers of the Ministry's work. Intensifying droughts, floods, and other natural hazards place increasing pressure on people, water, land, wildlife and fish. These conditions necessitate proactive, risk-informed management strategies and early engagement with First Nations and regional partners to mitigate impacts and build resilience. Resource stewardship through conserved and managed areas helps mitigate impacts of climate change by harnessing nature's services.

Economic and geopolitical shifts are also shaping the Ministry's priorities. Trade tensions and the global demand for critical minerals have prompted the Province to accelerate permitting and land use planning for clean energy and resource development. These pressures require the Ministry to balance environmental protection, economic development, and reconciliation objectives.

Growing pressures from the tourism and recreation sectors increase the demand for access and use of backcountry and wilderness areas, resulting in environmental degradation, land use conflicts, and heightened demand for planning and enforcement. Pressure on continued and expanded use of shorelines, and waterways raises concerns about shoreline habitat and cumulative impacts. Increased usage of land and water increases the probability of introduction of invasive species and diseases. Tourism and recreation often operate in areas with overlapping interests and these dynamics underscore the need for integrated stewardship approaches that balance public access, environmental protection and cultural values.

As the Ministry continues to mature, it remains focused on building durable governance models, fostering collaboration across sectors, and ensuring that stewardship decisions are informed by science, Indigenous knowledge, and public input.

## Economic Statement

After several years of strong growth, economic activity in British Columbia moderated in 2024 amid high interest rates, persistent price pressures, and ongoing global economic uncertainty. B.C.'s real GDP increased by 1.2 percent in 2024 and ranked 8th (tied with Ontario) among the provinces following growth of 2.4 percent in 2023. Last year, economic growth was driven by B.C.'s service-producing industries such as real estate, rental and leasing; health care and social assistance services; transportation and warehousing; public administration; and educational services. Output for goods-producing industries declined in 2024 due to lower construction and manufacturing activity, which was partly offset by growth in the mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction; utilities; and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sectors.

B.C.'s labour market continued to expand in 2024. Employment in B.C. increased by 66,100 jobs (+2.3 percent), supported by high immigration, and wages and salaries rose by 6.3 percent. B.C.'s unemployment rate averaged 5.6 percent in 2024, up from 5.2 percent in 2023 as strong population and labour force growth outpaced job gains. Elevated interest rates, rising construction costs, and ongoing labour shortages weighed on the construction sector last year. Housing starts totaled 45,828 units in 2024, down 9.2 percent from the record high in 2023, but remained above the ten-year historical average. B.C. home sales increased by 2.1 percent and the average home sale price increased by 1.0 percent compared to 2023. Price pressures in B.C. continued to broadly moderate last year, but shelter price growth remained elevated. Overall, B.C.'s inflation rate averaged 2.6 percent in 2024, down from 3.9 percent in 2023. Despite strong population growth, nominal retail sales increased by just 0.6 percent in 2024, following a 0.1 percent decline in 2023. On the trade front, weak global demand and lower commodity prices (primarily natural gas and coal prices) last year contributed to a 2.7 percent decline in B.C.'s merchandise exports relative to 2023 despite increased exports to non-U.S. destinations including China, South Korea, and Australia.



## Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results

The following goals, objectives and performance measures have been restated from the 2024/25 – 2026/27 service plan. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2025/26 – 2026/27, please see the [Current Service Plan](#).

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

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.

#### **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 results**

- Initiated implementation of the [Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation](#) through establishment of sub-committees
- Continued work with the [First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Stewardship and Habitat Conservation Forum](#) on [Together for Wildlife Strategy implementation](#), including the creation of a new strategic plan to guide the work of the Forum
- Funded over \$3.000M under the [Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative](#) administered by the [New Relationship Trust](#)
- Supported 13 Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums (Forums) via the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF), allocating funds to First Nations Guardians for stewardship activities

#### **Summary of progress made in 2024/25**

The [Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework](#) (CISF) program expanded in 2024/25, involving about 150 First Nations in regional partnerships with the province. Its focus is integrating Indigenous knowledge into resource management and developing trusted cumulative effects assessments, guided by the [Cumulative Effects Framework](#)

(CEF), to inform natural resource decisions. Forums are central, supporting First Nations' guardianship, training, and knowledge exchange across land, marine, forest, and water planning, as well as early-stage project permitting. Forums also lead conservation efforts like moose stewardship, biodiversity zones, ungulate winter ranges, and estuary protections, providing data for prescribed burns and habitat recovery initiatives.

Funding for First Nation positions increased significantly, with more trained fish and wildlife technicians, guardians, and specialists. Through CISF collaborations, these Forums have expanded professional land and resource management within First Nations, advancing co-management efforts.

The [BC Conservation Fund](#) was launched in 2024 to support the long-term conservation of priority biodiverse areas across British Columbia. Project funding supports conserving areas important for biodiversity through durable designations supported by the Province and First Nations. The Fund is also supporting school districts across B.C. to create biodiversity on their school grounds.

## **Objective 1.2: Advance and modernize Land Use Planning 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 First Nations and includes the engagement of communities, local governments, industry, and other parties.

### **Key results**

- Implemented [Gwa'ni land-use planning recommendations](#) and advanced the Gwa'ni Project on northern Vancouver Island
- Advanced engagement with First Nations and mining sector organizations in northwestern B.C. to build trust and partnerships essential for land use planning
- Published the [Land Use Planning Principles](#), developed in collaboration with First Nations and with feedback from other interested parties, to guide individuals and planning teams
- Continued to modernize and advance development of the land use planning program and policies in partnership with First Nations to ensure processes are transparent and engaging local government, industry, and the public

### **Summary of progress made in 2024/25**

Modernizing land use planning provides updated land and resource management direction that reflects current environmental, economic and cultural interests. The Gwa'ni Project is a significant milestone that advanced reconciliation with 'Namgis First Nation through a partnership-led processes. They set updated strategic direction for responsible resource stewardship and provide clarity for industry and for the people who rely on resource industry jobs in those plan areas. The collaborative conversations between the Ministry, First Nations in

northwestern B.C. and the mining sector were foundational to advancing land use planning processes through the scoping stage in the northwest.

The Ministry continued to advance land use planning policy and guidance for planning tables. This approach includes partnerships and collaboration with First Nations and other interested parties to ensure direction provided is durable and considers the interests of all involved in land use planning. Publication of the [Land Use Planning Principles](#) was a milestone for the Ministry following years of collaboration with First Nations and other interested parties on the foundational components to a planning process in B.C. Other key policies drafted include integrating climate change in land use planning process, and guidance on understanding a co-governance approach in planning.

### Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
1.1 Number of Forum partnerships that support trusted integrated resource management <sup>1,2</sup>	13	16	13

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

<sup>1</sup> Future target will be developed in partnership with Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums.

<sup>2</sup>PM [1.1] targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were stated in the 2024/25 service plan as 18 and TBD, respectively.

The CISF program has 13 active Forums across the province, reflecting regional shared stewardship. While the Ministry fell short of its target, it was able to increase the number of First Nations participation in existing Forum partnerships, and the Ministry advanced discussions with potential new First Nations and strengthened Guardian programs. CISF continues to collaborate with First Nations to establish new Forums where there is willingness and need for regional co-management. Forums have been established with the Secwepemc Nations, Treaty 8 Nations in the northeast, and in the Cariboo. The Treaty 8 Stewardship Forum was re-initiated in Spring 2025.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
1.2 Number of land use plans (LUP) underway <sup>1</sup>	14 LUP processes	15 LUP processes	15 LUP processes

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

<sup>1</sup>PM [1.2] targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were stated in the 2024/25 service plan as TBD.

A land use planning process can be separated into [four broad stages](#) of planning: initiate, develop, approve, and implement. Projects in the initiating stage are scoping the issues that need to be addressed and getting the foundational pieces in place before they start planning. They often include sensitive government-to-government conversations with First Nations and are typically not announced or advertised to the public while the parties confirm their commitment to a planning process. Processes in the development stage will look different throughout B.C. based on the unique issues and desired outcomes of communities in the province.

The Ministry met its target of 15 land use planning processes in 2024/25. Processes range from initiating stage to implementation. Information on public-facing planning processes can be found at [www.planninginpartnership.ca](http://www.planninginpartnership.ca)

## **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 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework as part of implementing the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, implementing the Together for Wildlife Strategy, and improving species at risk recovery. B.C. has committed to the international target of effectively protecting 30% of the province by 2030. The Ministry is also focusing 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 and 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 objective 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 results**

- Advanced healthy habitats through securement, adaptive management, and restoration to support B.C.'s wildlife, including species at risk, through collaboration with [First Nations Leadership Council](#), the [Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council](#), and the [First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Stewardship and Habitat Forum](#)
- Increased habitat protections and other effective area-based conservation measures as part of [the B.C. government's commitment to 30 percent of lands protected by 2030](#)
- Improved diversity, resiliency, and functionality of habitat through enhancements and restoration
- Improved outcomes for B.C.'s wildlife and species at risk populations

#### **Summary of progress made in 2024/25**

The Ministry is committed to stewarding B.C.'s living natural resources to retain and enhance benefits and opportunities for all generations, guided by the draft [Biodiversity and Ecosystem](#)

[Health Framework](#). This commitment is achieved through the [Conservation Lands Strategic Plan](#), [Together for Wildlife Strategy](#), [government-to-government agreements to advance caribou recovery](#), [habitat improvements](#) through Together for Wildlife and cumulative effects decision support tools and current condition reports, and improved outcomes through collaboration such as the [First Nations-BC Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council](#) and [Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation](#). Regular review and updates of hunting and angling regulations ensure that use is sustainable, First Nations treaty and affirmed rights are respected and provides social and economic benefits for individuals and communities.

The [first annual report](#) on the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation highlighted achievements realized through an integrated and collaborative landscape-based approach to ecosystem health and biodiversity conservation. Key results include protecting 315,000 ha of Wildlife Habitat Areas for species like marbled murrelet and bull trout, and 218,000 ha of Ungulate Winter Range for moose. The Klinse-za Park expansion (168,000 ha) supports caribou, while 10 conservancies (76,306 ha) promote reconciliation. Conservation efforts preserve old-growth forests, ecosystems, and 1,400 ha of Wildlife Management Areas for salmon spawning and grizzly bear feeding. Habitat restoration spans 1,059,000 ha via the Together For Wildlife Strategy, with 67,000 trees planted through the Two Billion Trees program, and ecological corridors like [Reconnecting the Rockies](#) improve safety and connectivity along Highway 3. Species at risk initiatives include relocating [15 gray wolves](#) to Colorado and achieving a record of 86 wild-born marmot pups on Vancouver Island.

As part of the [Wildlife Act review](#), an amendment made on May 17, 2024 (known as “pull the plug”) requires boaters and watercraft operators to remove their drain plugs before transporting their vessels over land, to prevent the spread of invasive species and diseases.

The Ministry, through [Together for Wildlife scholarships](#), invests in citizens conducting research for resilient ecosystems to enrich and sustain biodiversity, nature, communities and economies.

## **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 partners with First Nations and other interested parties to develop strategies, policies and plans, to set objectives and to invest in accessible information and digital services that guide water stewardship.

### **Key results**

- Worked with the B.C.-First Nations Water Table on the co-development of a Watershed Security Strategy

- Enhanced accountability across government agencies in preparing for and protecting against hazards to drinking water sources, supported by an enhanced survey of water suppliers, targeted [water science studies](#), development of internal digital service tools, and application of evidence-based policies and pathways to solutions
- Developed internal guidance documents to support initiation of new water sustainability plans and created a groundwater-surface water model to support the development of the [Xwulqw'selu \(Koksilah\) Watershed Plan](#)

## Summary of progress made in 2024/25

The B.C.-First Nations Water Table worked on co-development of a Watershed Security Strategy (WSS) based on extensive public engagement. Concurrently, early work to implement some of the actions identified by the WSS is ongoing. Examples include continued work at the B.C.-First Nations Water Table and progress on collaborative water planning and governance projects ([Nicola Watershed Governance Partnership](#), the [Xwulqw'selu \(Koksilah\) Watershed Plan](#), and the [Clcahl/Hulcar Aquifer](#) collaboration).

Further supporting WSS, the Ministry collaborated with the ministries of Emergency Management and Climate Resilience (EMCR) and Environment and Climate Solutions (ECS) on the Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment (DCRRA) project. The assessment identified water scarcity from drought as a key hazard affecting drinking water, informing risk management and regional assessments under the Emergency and Disaster Management Act and will be [posted](#).

The Ministry developed and began implementing a Provincial Source Drinking Water Risk Assessment Framework. This four-step process identifies risks and resilience strategies, supported by tools such as the Drinking Water Supply Dashboard for tracking drought-related risks. Continued development of hazard assessment tools and spatial datasets will strengthen our multi-barrier approach from source to tap. Agencies' progress on protecting drinking water is reported annually to [BC's Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts](#) through the Annual Follow-up Report: Performance Audit Recommendations compiled by the [Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia](#).

[Provincial Water Quality Guidelines](#) (WQGs) were published in the 2024/25 period for 6ppd-quinone, nickel, silver, lead, as well as updates to the [B.C. working water quality guidelines](#) for 174 pesticides and several other new substances of concern. The guidelines represent safe levels of substances that protect different water uses, including drinking water, recreation, aquatic life, wildlife and agriculture, and provide guidance to those making decisions affecting water quality.

Several scientific reports, guidance materials, and aquifer mapping results were completed and published in the public Water Science Series, accessible on the government [website](#).

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

Government-issued permits are critical components to advancing government priorities, including a sustainable clean economy. The Ministry is responsible for water, land, fish and wildlife permits, all of which support opportunities to gather data and mitigate risks in the management of these resources. This work aligns to strategic work the Ministry is leading across priority projects to address provincial priorities such as housing, connectivity, electrification, critical mineral extraction, and positions the Ministry to scale these solutions across other priorities, sectors and processes, while maintaining high environmental standards.

### **Key results**

- Improved processing efficiency and resolved the backlog of natural resource housing-related applications. Cleared 100 percent of the 2022/23 provincial housing application backlog as of January 2025
- Implemented new tracking measures for connectivity projects that reduced turnaround times for applications exceeding 180 days
- Identified regulatory and legislative changes necessary to improve permitting timelines and outcomes across several statutes and regulations and developed a coordinated cross-Ministry plan to advance changes. Opportunities include clarifying development related to wetlands, protecting riparian areas, expanding water use exemptions to expedite projects, and reducing authorization requirements for low volume water use
- Supported legislation development and led strategies to transition applications and authorizations for renewable energy projects, and prescribed transmission projects to the BC Energy Regulator
- Advanced data standards in permitting and moving towards systems interoperability, which will support connected services. These changes will reduce data errors, remove manual calculations and improve ability to identify and address permitting challenges

### **Summary of progress made in 2024/25**

The Ministry advanced cross-Ministry efforts to improve natural resource permitting in a manner that upholds environmental protection standards and supports economic growth by taking a holistic approach across policy, process, people and technology functions. Key achievements include reducing application backlog, eliminating housing application delays, increasing connectivity project decisions by 62 percent and supporting timely BC Hydro reviews.

The Ministry coordinated efforts across natural resource ministries and agencies to enhance the efficiency of advancing legislative and regulatory changes and developed a coordinated plan to advance possible changes in areas such as wetlands, riparian protection, water use exemptions and authorizations for low volume water use. The Ministry also supported



legislation development and strategies to transition renewable energy projects and prescribed transmission projects to the BC Energy Regulator.

The Ministry worked towards enhancing advanced data standards in permitting and moving towards systems interoperability, which will support the establishment of connected services. These changes will reduce data errors, remove manual calculations and improve ability to identify and address permitting challenges. To further enhance predictability, transparency, and public trust in permitting, the Ministry has expanded the use of activity based Natural Resource Ministry Dashboards to provide a comprehensive analysis and insights into application backlogs within the natural resource ministries, providing visibility into current and future government priorities. This reliable cross-Ministry permitting data and analytics will facilitate the Ministry to foster trust and predictability for everyone involved in the permitting process. The Ministry is working towards making the data and dashboard publicly accessible in the future.

## **Objective 2.4: Advance actions that reduce risk and increase community resiliency in response to increasing natural hazards.**

The Province constantly strives to reduce the risk of natural hazards impacting the lives of British Columbians. With the diverse range of geography and climate in B.C., water availability differs throughout the province and varies throughout the seasons. Natural hazards, such as floods or drought, pose risks to the health of the environment, communities and the economy. There are about 1,900 regulated dams that provide electricity, irrigation, drinking water, and flood control for the people of B.C. Also, failures of dams can be disastrous for people, the environment and property. The Ministry works in partnership with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR), other natural resource ministries, First Nations, and local authorities, to ensure there is a collaborative approach on the actions to mitigate the risk for all people in British Columbia.

### **Key results**

- Released the [B.C. Flood Strategy](#), a comprehensive framework that now guides modern, coordinated flood risk management across the province
- Implemented projects aligned with the actions under the B.C. Flood Strategy toward Understanding Flood Risk and Strengthening Flood Risk Governance
- Engaged with 70 local governments and First Nations toward finalizing regulatory quality floodplain mapping in seven higher-flood-risk areas of the province
- Launched the Flood Study Explorer on [ClimateReadyBC](#); a platform to share available floodplain maps with communities, professionals and the public
- Implemented a whole-of-government approach to delivering earlier education, communications and outreach on drought and water scarcity preparedness, response and management to water users across different sectors



- Released the Province's new [Guidelines for Dam Design and Construction](#) that provide information on the regulatory requirements to construct, alter, improve, or replace a dam licensed under British Columbia's *Water Sustainability Act*

### Summary of progress made in 2024/25

The B.C. Flood Strategy provides the vision, four pathways and 25 actions to shift from flood risk to resilience towards 2035. The Ministry advanced several key projects in support of these actions. The Ministry produced six educational videos ([River Forecast Centre - Province of British Columbia](#) and [B.C. Flood Strategy - Province of British Columbia](#)) to boost public understanding of flood issues. In the Sumas River Watershed, over [75 planning objectives](#) were co-developed, and a shared data agreement was established to protect Indigenous knowledge, fostering inclusive flood management. The Transboundary Flood Initiative created the first cross-border hydrological model of the Sumas and Nooksack watersheds and improved binational flood warning systems, strengthening regional preparedness and collaboration. A comprehensive review of flood legislation and land use policies led to updated guidelines based on B.C.'s [Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management](#) standards, better aligned with current risks and values. Flood management tools and guidelines were revised in partnership with First Nations and local governments, supported by workshops and research, enhancing resources on governance, community-led managed retreat, and integrated flood planning.

Collaboration between provincial, federal, and local governments and First Nations continued to advance regulatory quality floodplain mapping work under the federal [Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program](#) (FHIMP), with provincial cost-sharing. Provincial floodplain mapping guidelines were drafted and are being applied to FHIMP projects to ensure consistent products as the foundation for effective flood preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.

Drought hazard and water scarcity were addressed with early communications through community-based workshops, letters, flyers, surveys and conversations at technical and strategic tables involving cross-Ministry representatives, First Nations, local governments, industry representatives and federal agencies. Also, collaborative drought mitigation projects and response actions were coordinated with partners to protect aquatic ecosystems and limit the potential impacts and risk to water users.

### Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
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	19.7%	TBD	19.9%

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

<sup>2</sup>PM [2.1] targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were stated in the 2024/25 service plan as TBD.

B.C. follows International Union for Conservation of Nature standards and criteria for protected areas and apply Canadian criteria for other effective area-based conservation measures. Data on these areas are counted in Environment and Climate Change Canada's "Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database."

The increase in the amount of effective area is attributed to a number of new protections including: the Klinse-za Park expansion (168,000 ha) for caribou, 10 conservancies (76,306 ha) to support reconciliation, and securement of private lands for conservation outcomes.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
2.2 Improve watershed security and health throughout the province by implementing the Watershed Security Strategy <sup>3</sup>	WSS developed pending an implementation plan	WSS actions implemented	WSS not yet released but early actions underway

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

<sup>1</sup> Future target will be developed in partnership with Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums.

<sup>2</sup>PM [2.2] targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were stated in the 2024/25 service plan as "WSS actions implemented and tracking of outcomes initiated" and "TBD" respectively.

<sup>3</sup> This performance measure was replaced by a new measure in the latest service plan.

The B.C.-First Nations Water Table has co-developed a Watershed Security Strategy based on extensive public engagement. Early implementation of some actions occurred throughout development and in the last year. Examples include the continued development of the [Xwulqw'selu \(Koksilah\) Watershed Plan](#), collaborative action on [drought](#), implementation of the B.C. Flood Strategy, and improving the timing and transparency of permitting processes.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
2.3 Streamline permitting to build efficiencies so that processing time <sup>1</sup> for applications received for housing permits across the natural resource ministries is reduced <sup>2</sup>	111 days	111 days	116 days

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

<sup>1</sup>Median processing time for permitting related to natural resource ministries and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

<sup>2</sup>PM [2.3] targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were stated in the 2024/25 service plan as "TBD" and "TBD", respectively.

Efforts in 2024/25 were focused on prioritizing new housing applications as well as eliminating an older backlog of more complex applications. The median processing time for housing-related permits across the natural resource ministries experienced a small increase from 111 days to 116 days due to the higher percentage of older and more complex applications requiring reviews.

Applications received between April 2024 and March 2025 with a decision had an average turnaround time of 56 days. Additionally, 60 percent of identified housing-related applications

submitted since April 2024 across the natural resource ministries have reached decisions, with the potential to create approximately 73,234 new housing units.

## **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 First 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 integral to British Columbia's culture, ecology and economy. However, many populations are currently experiencing unprecedented declines. The Ministry is working to integrate provincial programs that address wild salmon and other fish species declines, as well as supporting coastal fisheries economies. Investments are aligning with recommendations from B.C.'s Wild Salmon Advisory Council and other fisheries reviews and work to leverage funds where viable.

#### **Key results**

- Partnered with the federal government, First Nations leadership, and key parties to implement the [Trilateral Salmon Accord](#) to safeguard the species
- Restored or opened access to aquatic and riparian habitat through [British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund](#) (BCSRIF), a contribution program funded jointly by the federal and provincial governments
- Provided over \$12.000 M in BCSRIF funds to projects that specifically unlocked under-utilized salmon habitat rendered impassable by natural or human causes
- Integrated wild salmon values and benefits for coastal communities within provincial strategies including the Coastal Marine Strategy
- Proclaimed and declared June 1, 2024 and 2025 as [Wild Salmon Day](#) in British Columbia

#### **Summary of progress made in 2024/25**

The Province has restored estuaries, intertidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats to protect and restore B.C.'s iconic wild salmon through policy initiatives and work in the field. To maximize these efforts, the B.C. government has partnered with Indigenous and First Nation groups, non-profit organizations and other levels of governments.

A governance framework is currently being developed for the Trilateral Salmon Accord with the Federal Government, Province of B.C. and the First Nations Fisheries Council of B.C. This work will facilitate urgent action to safeguard the species for future generations.

The Province remains actively engaged at international tables for salmon, including the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC), to ensure British Columbians interests are represented. Additionally, wild salmon restoration and conservation has been incorporated into provincial strategies including the Coastal Marine Strategy through Goal 2 “Abundant Wild Salmon,” and Action 4 “Improve Salmon Survival.” Lastly, in addition to BCSRIF successfully helping to protect and restore wild salmon, it has also created 2,773 jobs, thereby contributing to the creation of a B.C. salmon recovery economy.

### **Objective 3.2: Launch a Coastal Marine Strategy to Promote Healthy Marine Ecosystems and Coastal Communities.**

The Province launched its first ever Coastal Marine Strategy (Strategy), in cooperation with the federal government, First Nations, and coastal communities. The Strategy provides a blueprint for future stewardship, economic resilience and management of our coastal waters over the next 20 years. This complements the Province’s work with First Nations and the federal government 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 results**

- Completed the development phase of the Strategy and publicly launched it on July 11, 2024
- Completed internal engagement with the involved ministries regarding the strategy's objectives and corresponding actions to ensure effective interministerial coordination during implementation and to maintain ongoing cross-Ministry coordination throughout the execution of the strategy
- Completed initial engagement workshops, via a distinctions-based approach, with coastal First Nations on a list of shared priorities for near-term (next three years) implementation of the Strategy
- Signed an initial establishment agreement for the Mia-yaltwa Ha'lidzogm hoon National Marine Conservation Area Reserve in the Central Coast, in partnership with Parks Canada and six First Nations, to achieve our goal of protecting 30% of our oceans by 2030

#### **Summary of progress made in 2024/25**

The Province successfully launched its first ever comprehensive policy on marine stewardship that provides direction to staff, stakeholders, and the public, on the shared vision and actions to achieve it. The strategy aims to address cumulative impacts, enhance marine biodiversity, and support sustainable coastal economies, and its release marks a foundational step toward integrated, ecosystem-based management of marine areas, along with the province’s work on the Marine Protected Area Network and the Marine Plan Partnership in the Province’s Northern Shelf Bioregion.

Implementation of the Strategy is being carried out with existing staff, internal resources and, where available, external supports and partnerships. To maximize these efforts, the Province is focusing on implementing near term (three years) actions that create a solid foundation to ensure continued success of the Strategy.

The Province's approach to strategy implementation is using the successful 'Distinctions Based Approach' to engagement with First Nations applied during the development phase.

### Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
3.1 Aquatic Habitat restored or enhanced through Ministry activities <sup>1</sup>	888,639 square meters	5% increase from previous year	398,992 Square meters

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

<sup>1</sup>PM [3.1] targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were stated in the 2024/25 service plan as "7% increase from previous year" and "9% increase from previous year," respectively.

Reported restoration figures are currently below initial projections. This is primarily due to administrative timelines associated with launching new projects, as well as the time required to implement activities and assess results. External factors such as severe weather conditions, and increased costs for specialized equipment and labor have also contributed to these delays.

The data supporting this metric is provided through the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF), operated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Source data is collected from BCSRIF recipients and managed by DFO, which, due to the partnership structure, can result in a delay of up to one year in obtaining detailed habitat information. Preliminary figures, based on available data and consultations with DFO and project leaders, are used to estimate the number of square meters of habitat restored or enhanced through activities supported by the Ministry. This information helps to evaluate the impact of provincial funding and programs on ecosystems and watersheds across the province.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
3.2 Provincial Coastal Marine Strategy launched <sup>1</sup>	Engaged with public, stakeholder, local and federal government Draft Coastal Marine Strategy prepared	Release the final Coastal Marine Strategy publicly	Released the Coastal Marine Strategy

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

<sup>1</sup>PM [3.2] targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 were stated in the 2024/25 service plan as "Negotiate governance structures and implementation approach with First Nations" and "Initiate 6 implementation priorities," respectively.

The [Coastal Marine Strategy](#) was launched publicly on July 11, 2024. It was developed by bringing together perspectives of different interests, such as provincial ministries, First Nations, federal, and local governments, First Nation communities, environmental groups, industries and interested parties, business owners and associates, and residents and coastal communities. This work shaped our shared vision toward a coastal marine environment that is healthy and resilient to climate change and can support community well-being and a sustainable ocean economy into the future.

# Financial Report

## Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations <sup>1</sup> (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
<b>Operating Expenses</b>					
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	58,428	50,773	109,201	96,710	(12,491)
Resource Stewardship	41,365	5,400	46,765	32,242	(14,523)
Water, Fisheries and Coast	14,244	30,582	44,826	52,372	7,546
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	28,803	9,796	38,599	39,544	945
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	11,610	29,549	41,159	40,442	(717)
Permitting Transformations	29,516	6,427	35,943	52,563	16,620
Executive and Support Services	29,801	1,742	31,543	34,163	2,620
<b>Statutory</b>					
Crown Land Special Account	500	0	500	500	0
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>214,267</b>	<b>134,269</b>	<b>348,536</b>	<b>348,536</b>	<b>0</b>
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0	(916)	(916)
<b>Total</b>	<b>214,267</b>	<b>134,269</b>	<b>348,536</b>	<b>347,620</b>	<b>(916)</b>
<b>Ministry Capital Expenditures</b>					
Executive Support Services	3	0	3	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations <sup>1</sup> (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
<b>Other Financing Transactions</b>					
<b>Crown Land Special Account</b>					
Receipts	0	0	0	0	0
Disbursements	6,382	0	6,382	334	(6,048)
Net Cash Requirements (Source)	6,382	0	6,382	334	(6,048)
<b>Habitat Conservation Trust</b>					
Receipts	(6,500)	0	(6,500)	(6,750)	(250)
Disbursements	6,500	250	6,750	6,750	0
Net Cash Requirements (Source)	0	250	250	0	(250)
<b>Summary</b>					
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>(6,500)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(6,500)</b>	<b>(6,750)</b>	<b>(250)</b>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>12,882</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>13,132</b>	<b>7,084</b>	<b>(6,048)</b>
<b>Total Net Cash Requirements (Source)</b>	<b>6,382</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>6,632</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>(6,298)</b>

<sup>1</sup> "Other Authorizations" include Supplementary Estimates, Statutory Appropriations, Contingencies and Government Reorganization.

<sup>2</sup> The Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual of \$0.916 million is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.



## Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of August 10, 2025 the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

### **Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors**

Created by legislative authority Land Surveyors Act, s. 6 (9), as a self-governing body charged with the responsibility of setting educational requirements, examining for admission, and regulating professional land surveyors to perform legal surveys within British Columbia. Their mandate is to protect the public interest and the integrity of the survey systems in B.C. by regulating and governing the practice of land surveying in the province.

[Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors \(abcls.ca\)](http://abcls.ca)

### **Creston Valley Wildlife Management Authority (CVWMA)**

Created through legislation, *Creston Valley Wildlife Act*, s. 16., the operational board is charged with managing the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area. The CVWMA is currently in place to ensure funding provided by BC Hydro is spent on approved projects and activities. The Board provides oversight and ensures the same accountability from delivery partners receiving a portion of the same funding, and holds fiduciary responsibility.

[Home - Creston Valley \(crestonwildlife.ca\)](http://crestonwildlife.ca)

### **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.

[Home • Mackenzie River Basin Board \(mrbb.ca\)](http://mrbb.ca)

### **Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board**

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

[Home | Muskwa-Kechika Management Area](#)

### **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.

[Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission – A transboundary watershed in Washington State, USA and British Columbia, Canada \(skagiteec.org\)](http://skagiteec.org)

### **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.

## Appendix B: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities

The following is a summary of progress made on priorities as stated in Minister Nathan Cullen's 2022 Mandate Letter.

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2025
Lead cross-government work to improve timing and transparency of permitting processes to support sustainable economic development, housing and infrastructure while maintaining high levels of environmental protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to <a href="#">objective 2.3</a></li> </ul>
Continue to transform the management and stewardship of our waters, lands and resources, together with First Nations, and work toward modern land use plans and permitting processes rooted in science and Indigenous knowledge that consider new and cumulative impacts to the land base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to <a href="#">objective 1.2</a></li> </ul>
Lead B.C.'s work on water, watersheds, and our coast, including work to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-develop, complete, and launch the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund and the Coastal Marine Strategy, and continue implementation of the Wild Salmon Strategy; and</li> <li>Develop and deliver a long-term vision for the Clean Coast, Clean Waters program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to <a href="#">objective 2.2</a> and <a href="#">objective 3.2</a></li> </ul>

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2025
<p>Protect wildlife and species at risk, and work collaboratively with First Nations, other ministries, and the federal government to protect and enhance B.C.'s biodiversity through implementing recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, and the Together for Wildlife Strategy.</p> <p>Partnering with the federal government, industry, and communities, and working with Indigenous Peoples, lead the work to achieve the Nature Agreement's goals of 30% protection of B.C.'s land base by 2030, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.</p> <p>Support the Minister of Forests to work together with First Nations to complete work to improve the protection and stewardship of forest resources, habitats, biodiversity, and cultural heritage in the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to <a href="#">objective 2.1</a></li> </ul>
<p>With support from the Ministers of Forests and Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, develop a new conservation financing mechanism to support protection of biodiverse areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to <a href="#">objective 1.1</a></li> </ul>
<p>Lead cross-government work to improve timing and transparency of permitting processes to support sustainable economic development, housing and infrastructure while maintaining high levels of environmental protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to <a href="#">objective 2.3</a></li> </ul>
<p>Continue to transform the management and stewardship of our waters, lands and resources, together with First Nations, and work toward modern land use plans and permitting processes rooted in science and Indigenous knowledge that consider new and cumulative impacts to the land base.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to <a href="#">objective 1.2</a></li> </ul>