

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

**2025/26
Annual Service Plan Report**

August 2026



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Published by the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship 2025/26 Annual Service Plan Report compares the Ministry's actual results to the expected results identified in the 2025/26 – 2027/28 Service Plan published in 2025. I am accountable for those results as reported.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randene Neill', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
July 24, 2026

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Letter from the Minister

I am pleased to present the 2025/26 Annual Service Plan Report for the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

This report reflects meaningful progress in strengthening how land, water and natural resources are stewarded, grounded in partnership with First Nations, improved decision-making and measurable results for communities and ecosystems. Over the past year the Ministry advanced key commitments across its core performance areas, delivering outcomes that support reconciliation, environmental stewardship and sustainable economic development.

The Ministry expanded the Collaborative Stewardship Framework with First Nations and partners across the province, increasing the number and maturity of stewardship forums supporting integrated land and resource management. These forums are improving how decisions are made by incorporating Indigenous knowledge, supporting better coordination and building relationships that enable long-term stewardship outcomes.

At the same time the Ministry progressed land-based reconciliation by accelerating the transfer of land and advancing agreements that enable First Nations like [Lyackson](#) and Cowichan Tribes, [Snuneymuxw](#), and We Wai Kai First Nations to take a greater role in stewardship and the economy, in their territories.

Land use planning also moved from development into implementation in key regions, for example on the [Gwa'ni project](#). Work with First Nations and partners resulted in new or updated land use objectives and decisions that provide greater certainty for industry while protecting biodiversity, cultural values and ecosystems.

The Ministry continued to make progress toward its conservation commitments, including the goal of protecting 30% of lands and waters by 2030. This includes advancing area-based conservation, strengthening protection of species at risk, and supporting landscape-level planning that balances environmental, social and economic priorities. Actions were taken to protect key ecosystems and species through habitat protection measures, for example to [support caribou in northeastern B.C.](#), and land use decisions that support long-term ecological health.

Progress was made in improving water management and security through measurable actions. This includes advancing water sustainability planning efforts, such as the work in the [Nicola watershed](#). The Ministry also improved the information available to support water decisions through province-wide tools, including mapping and datasets that improve understanding of [drinking water sources](#). In areas facing long-standing challenges, such as the [Hullcar/Cicah Valley](#), Ministry continued to advance scientific assessment and coordinated responses that support public health and long-term watershed protection.

The Ministry made important progress improving permitting processes to support housing, infrastructure and economic development. [Regulatory changes](#) and process improvements are

helping reduce delays and streamline approvals. This work is increasing predictability while maintaining strong environmental standards and commitments to reconciliation.

The Ministry continues to strengthen its response to natural hazards, including floods and drought, by improving coordination, advancing planning tools and supporting communities with better data and guidance. Work to support [drought preparedness and response](#), including collaborative monitoring and mitigation projects and engagement with water users, is helping communities better manage water scarcity and protect ecosystems. Work advanced on restoring, enhancing and protecting aquatic and riparian habitats that are critical to fish, wildlife and ecosystems. These efforts support healthier watersheds, sustain fish populations, support biodiversity and protect values that are central to First Nations, communities and the provincial economy.

In coastal areas, the Ministry has moved from developing to implementing the Coastal Marine Strategy. Working in collaboration with First Nations, other governments, and stakeholders, this work supports marine ecosystem health, sustainable coastal economies and improved marine governance. Key actions include establishing new protected areas and advancing collaborative management approaches aligned with shared priorities for healthy coastal ecosystems and communities.

The progress achieved this year reflects the strength of our partnerships and dedication of staff, First Nations and communities across British Columbia. By focusing on results, improving how decisions are made, strengthening stewardship, and delivering measurable outcomes, we are building a more sustainable and resilient future for all people living in British Columbia.

Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
July 24, 2026

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 2024 and Minister Randene Neill's 2025 [Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship [2025/26 – 2027/28 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](#).

Economic Statement

Economic activity in British Columbia advanced in 2025, after modest growth in 2024, despite facing notable headwinds. Last year, homebuilding activity in the province continued at a steady pace, and lower interest rates and easing inflation supported household spending. Meanwhile, high uncertainty around the impacts of U.S. tariffs and significantly lower population growth tempered economic activity in B.C., and across many provinces. Overall, B.C.'s real GDP rose by 2.0 per cent in 2025, up from 1.2 per cent growth in 2024. B.C. was one of only two provinces that saw an increase in the rate of real GDP growth from 2024 to 2025. On an industry basis, B.C.'s economic growth in 2025 was led by real estate, rental and leasing; health care and social assistance services; mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; and construction.

B.C.'s labour market moderated in 2025, amid slower population growth and trade-related economic uncertainty. Total employment rose by 1.1 percent (+32,200 jobs), while wages and salaries rose by 3.1 percent. The unemployment rate averaged 6.2 percent in 2025, up from 5.6 percent in 2024, as labour force growth outpaced job creation. Despite rising last year, B.C.'s unemployment rate remained below the national average of 6.8 percent. B.C. housing starts totalled 44,193 units in 2025, down 3.6 percent from 2024, but remained above the 10-year historical average. Meanwhile, B.C. home sales activity declined by 5.7 percent compared to 2024, with muted demand contributing to a 2.9 percent decrease in the average home price. Inflationary pressures continued to moderate in 2025, reflecting slower price growth for services and subdued inflation for goods. Shelter inflation was the largest contributor to headline inflation last year but slowed substantially for both rented and owned accommodation compared to recent years. Lower gasoline prices, partly due to the removal of the B.C. consumer carbon tax, also helped ease headline inflation. Overall, B.C.'s consumer price inflation averaged 2.1 percent in 2025, down from 2.6 percent in 2024. Lower inflation and easing interest rates supported robust retail sales, which grew by 6.4 percent in 2025. On the trade front, B.C.'s merchandise exports remained relatively flat as markets adjusted to shifting global trade conditions. Overall, the value of B.C.'s goods exports edged down 0.1 percent compared to 2024 as increased exports to non-U.S. destinations were offset by a continued decline in goods exports to the U.S.

Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results

The following goals, objectives and performance measures have been restated from the 2025/26 – 2027/28 service plan. For forward-looking planning information, including current and future performance targets, please see the [latest service plan](#).

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

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

Key results

- Supported 13 Collaborative Stewardship Forums (Forums) via the Collaborative Stewardship Framework (CSF), allocating funds to First Nations Guardians for stewardship activities.
- Funded \$3.810M under the First Nations [Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative](#) (GSTI), administrated by the [New Relationship Trust](#) (NRT), to support Guardian training and capacity building in First Nations communities across B.C.
- Continued to work with the First Nations Leadership Council on implementing the [Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation](#)
- Continued work with the [First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Stewardship and Habitat Conservation Forum](#) on [Together for Wildlife](#) Strategy implementation

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

In 2025/26, the Ministry continued to strengthen partnerships with First Nations through the Collaborative Stewardship Framework (CSF), a regional, partnership-based approach to natural resource stewardship involving approximately 150 First Nations in regional partnerships with the province. This work continued to support government-to-government relationships and shared evidence grounded in Indigenous knowledge and western science, helping to inform stewardship, planning and natural resource decision-making across British Columbia.

Through regional stewardship forums, the Ministry and First Nations advanced a broad range of place-based work tailored to regional priorities. Forum activities in 2025/26 included wildlife stewardship and recovery, cumulative effects assessment, water governance, land use and forest landscape planning support, marine and estuarine stewardship, cultural values integration, data systems development, and Guardians programs. Collectively, this work

continued to provide trusted information and practical decision support across much of the provincial land base.

A major area of progress was the continued use of collaborative forums to build and apply cumulative effects information in strategic, tactical and operational land and resource management. Forum partners advanced assessments, monitoring programs, indicators, decision tools and data-sharing approaches that support land use, forest landscape, and watershed planning and project-specific decision support. New and emerging forums, including work in the Saanich Inlet and with Treaty 8 Nations in northeast B.C., helped extend the CSF model to additional regions and stewardship priorities.

In 2025/26, the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative supported training for approximately 88 First Nation Guardians, helping them to access specialized training and certifications such as first aid, wildlife monitoring, small vessel operation, ATV safety and swift water rescue. This training has helped Guardians partner with B.C. in managing lands, water, and resources through activities such as data collection, monitoring, restoration, emergency response, and compliance activities. Guardians' collaborative efforts with provincial staff have greatly contributed to shared resource stewardship goals and decisions and are a critical to helping B.C. and First Nations balance economic growth with conservation and stewardship.

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

Key results

- Implemented the [Gwa'ni land-use planning project](#) Land Use Objectives Orders (LUO) under the *Land Act* creating and updating new land-use zones and advancing the Gwa'ni Project on northern Vancouver Island.
- Partnered with the Tahltan, Taku River Tlingit, Kaska Dena, Gitanyow, Nisga'a, Blueberry and Doig River Nations to engage with industry, communities, and other partners to develop land use plans that will provide greater certainty for First Nations, communities and industry.
- Advanced discussions with First Nation governments on targeted conservation planning interests and opportunities for natural resource and economic development.
- Published three factsheets to advance development of the modernized land use planning program and share information with the public: [A Primer on Socio-Economic and Environmental Assessment](#); [Land Use Planning in British Columbia: What You Can Expect](#); [Land Use Planning in British Columbia: Mineral Exploration and Mining](#)
- Coordinated 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.

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

Modernized land use planning provides updated land and resource management direction that reflects current environmental, economic, and cultural interests. The Ministry utilizes land use planning to help advance government's commitment to protect at least 30 percent of terrestrial areas in B.C. by 2030.

The [Gwa'ni Project](#) is a significant land use planning initiative that has advanced reconciliation with the 'Namgis First Nation. The project has now shifted from plan development and approval to implementation. Four Land Use Objectives Orders (LUOs) under the Land Act took effect in January 2026 to support the new land use direction, including the establishment of new Special Management Zones intended to increase the amount and distribution of mature and old forests along salmon-bearing waterways. The Ministry in partnership with the Tahltan, Taku River Tlingit, Kaska Dena, Gitanyow, Nisga'a, Blueberry and Doig River Nations initiated land-use planning and the process is helping to advance the three pillars of economic growth, reconciliation and conservation in B.C., and advancing the [Northwest Strategy](#).

Building on a [Land Use Planning Agreement](#) signed in 2007 between the Government of B.C. and the Squamish Nation, the [2025 agreement](#) aims to establish 33 Siyamin ta Skwxwú7mesh cultural sites as well as six Special Cultural Management Areas (SCMAs) that recognize areas of historical and cultural importance. These areas will be guided by enhanced forest stewardship and cultural management, helping to create economic opportunities and increase predictability on the land base for the forestry sector while protecting important cultural values. The Ministry continued to advance land use planning policy and guidance and building public awareness about the program and its initiatives. Efforts to build public awareness and share information with the public about the land use planning program included publishing three factsheets on the [Modernized Land Use Planning website](#).

Objective 1.3: Achieve meaningful and tangible reconciliation through the transfer of agreed-upon land.

Key results

- Completed twenty land transfers under various agreements including Treaty Land Entitlement, Incremental Treaty Agreements, Settlement Agreements, and Reconciliation Agreements.
- Transferred six parcels through Treaty Land Entitlement resulting in four First Nations in the Northeast adding committed parcels to their reserves.
- Completed the transfer of Mount Benson North to the [Snuneymuxw First Nation](#) to support forestry operations.
- Transferred the Tsaa Nuna 3 parcel to Halfway River First Nations, concluding the implementation of the Halfway Site C agreement.
- Completed the transfer of two parcels to [Stswecem'c Xget'tem](#) and two parcels to [Tsqéscen First Nation](#) under Incremental Treaty Agreements.

- Concluded the transfer of a 312-hectare acquired parcel at Skutz Creek to Lyackson and Cowichan Tribes for housing and cultural purposes ([BC Gov News](#)).

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

This year, the Ministry accelerated the implementation of signed land agreements together with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) and First Nations.

Lands that have been recently transferred to First Nations are contributing in significant ways to B.C.'s economy. The [South Kaien Logistics Park](#), British Columbia's first Indigenous-led port logistics facility is currently being developed in partnership with the Prince Rupert Port Authority on land previously transferred to Metlakatla First Nation. First Nations including Snuneymuxw First Nation, Lake Babine Nation, We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum are using lands returned to increase their involvement in the forestry sector.

Implementation approaches continue to be reviewed to ensure that agreed-upon lands are transferred efficiently. This includes reviewing policies that may impact land transfers; First Nations ownership options for land-based reconciliation; transforming the transfer of land through process changes. The Ministry is also developing innovative technology solutions such as a web-based platform to support expedited land returns.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Actual
1.1 Number of Forum partnerships that support trusted integrated resource management ^{1,2}	13	18	18

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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

²PM [1.1] targets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were stated in the 2025/26 service plan as 20 and 20, respectively.

The CSF model is now comprised of 18 regional Forums with approximately 150 B.C. First Nations involved. There are 6 Forums in the North Area, 5 Forums in the South Area and 2 Forums in the Coast Area as well as 5 Forums connected to the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) and Great Bear Rainforest (GBR). In 2025-26 the Ministry was able to continue to increase the number of First Nations participation (onboard) in existing Forum partnerships. New and emerging forums, including work in the Saanich Inlet and with Treaty 8 Nations in northeast B.C., helped extend this model to additional regions and stewardship priorities such as coastal marine value assessment and restoration. CISF continues to collaborate with First Nations to establish new Forums where there is willingness to partner and need for regional co-management.

Performance Measure	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Actual
1.2 Land parcels transferred ²	104	179	124

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [1.2] targets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were stated in the 2025/26 service plan as 222 and 272, respectively.

²Land parcels transferred are reflected as cumulative figure

Committed agreements, including land transfer commitments, are posted [online](#). Land transfer metrics are tracked cumulatively and are forecasted based on First Nations priorities under committed agreements, as well as land transfer and agreement readiness. In 2025/2026, the Ministry concluded the transfer of 20 parcels, relative to an initial forecast of 75 parcels. These lands were transferred to First Nations in fee simple or as transfers to Canada for addition to reserve according to agreement commitments. The Ministry leads the implementation of land-based reconciliation commitments, which includes conclusion and confirmation of agreement conditions and prior to transferring land. The Ministry works closely with other ministries, First Nations, and other signatories to conclude requirements for transferring land.

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

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

Key results

- Advanced healthy habitats through land securement, adaptive management, and restoration to support B.C.'s wildlife, including species at risk
- Worked in collaboration with [First Nations Leadership Council](#) to identify resource stewardship priorities
- 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
- Developed new [guidelines](#) to support applicants in assessing sites and developing plans where wetlands may be impacted.

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

The Ministry is committed to stewarding B.C.'s living natural resources to maintain and enhance benefits and opportunities for present and future generations. This work is supported through initiatives such as the [Conservation Lands Strategic Plan](#), the [Together for Wildlife Strategy](#), [government-to-government agreements advancing caribou recovery](#), [habitat improvement efforts](#), cumulative effects decision support tools and current condition reports, and collaborative approaches like the [Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation](#). The second annual report on the implementation of the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation highlights continued progress in advancing collaborative, First Nations-led conservation across British Columbia through strengthened partnerships,

joint governance, and expanded landscape-level planning. This includes progress toward conserving 30% of B.C.'s land and inland waters by 2030. Approximately 20% is currently protected, including ~4% recognized as other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), reflecting incremental gains through coordinated conservation efforts. Habitat protection for caribou included 1.4M hectares for boreal caribou, and 50,160 hectares for Northern Mountain caribou. B.C. also contributed to major initiatives of its partners including the purchase of Hamilton Marsh and the Kootenay Forest Lands.

B.C.'s focus on species at risk spans a number of important populations from Garry Oak to Oregon Spotted Frog. A key focus over the past year was the release of the 2026 [Implementation Plan for the Recovery of Spotted Owl in British Columbia](#) and the earlier [Caribou Recovery Strategy](#) (2024) which identify B.C.'s commitments to recovery, and the [2023 Caribou Recovery Program Report](#) (released in 2026) which documents the recovery successes to stabilize and recover B.C.'s caribou herds since the launch of the program in 2017. In support of broader conservation and biodiversity, the Ministry, in partnership with the [Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation](#), continues to annually provide Together for Wildlife scholarships, investing in academic research focused on resilient ecosystems that enrich and sustain biodiversity and nature.

Regular reviews and updates to hunting and angling regulations, along with wildlife inventory and monitoring, help ensure sustainable use, respect for First Nations treaty and affirmed rights, and social and economic benefits for individuals and communities. This year, freshwater fishing licenses were moved into the online WILD system, streamlining licensing processes, improving data accessibility and data quality, as well as making it easier for British Columbians to use their BC Services ID to access their Fish and Wildlife ID.

Objective 2.2 Improve water stewardship and security.

Key results

- Increased the collective understanding of drinking water system locations and associated sources by developing and publicly publishing a [provincial source drinking water dataset and interactive map](#).
- Shared [learnings](#) on long-term impacts of forestry and climate change on watershed hydrology, processes and salmon.
- Raised the profile and accessibility of provincial groundwater resources by publishing the Groundwater, Wells and Aquifers in [BC story map](#).
- Designated the Nicola watershed for the purpose of developing a Water Sustainability Plan [M208](#). The plan is an important step towards local water security, which will be developed collaboration with the [Nicola Watershed Governance Partnership](#) and stakeholders.

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

Understanding surface and groundwater underpins our ability to steward these resources. The Ministry, in collaboration with its partners, published eight technical reports available

through the [Water Science Series](#), published the annual [Compendium of Provincial Groundwater Science and Monitoring Projects](#), held a groundwater science symposium that was attended by 485 attendees across multiple levels of government, industry and NGOs, and contributed to the [BC Groundwater](#) Associations quarterly newsletters. Annual maintenance of the provincial GWELLS groundwater wells and aquifer application and management of the data was completed to ensure critical access to groundwater well and aquifer information for effective stewardship and permitting.

Additionally, updated cobalt and manganese [Water Quality Guidelines](#) were published and significant advancements made in developing Water Quality Guidelines for Iron, Specific Conductivity, and Petroleum Hydrocarbons. Water quality guidelines are used to protect key water values - such as aquatic life, wildlife, drinking water sources, agriculture, and recreation - while informing assessments, supporting resource management decisions, providing the basis for water quality objectives, reporting on water conditions, and promoting water stewardship.

The Ministry continued to support the B.C.- First Nations Water Table as a place to work together on water and watershed issues of shared concern. Local watershed collaborations have continued, including advancing development of the [Xwulqw'selu \(Koksilah\) Watershed and Water Sustainability Plan](#) and engagement with the community. The 2025 Assessment of [Human Health Risk of Nitrates in Drinking Water](#) in the Hullcar/Cicah Valley was released in June 2025 in collaboration with the Splatsin. Additionally, agreement was reached to work with the Regional District of Central Kootenays and Yakan Nukiy to recommend a water management solution for the Goat River watershed.

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

Key results

- Advanced four [regulatory amendments](#) targeted to reduce permitting backlogs across the natural resource sector through legislative, policy and systems changes.
- Continued focus on reducing backlog and improving permitting timelines resulting in faster turnaround times for land and water applications for electrification.
- Cleared the provincial housing backlog and reduced the average permitting timelines for new housing-related applications and connectivity projects.
- 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 2025/26

The Ministry is focusing on business process improvements and utilization of artificial intelligence to support the public more effectively have resulted in simpler, faster processes which improve client service, improve data reliability, and reduced processing times.

In 2025/26, the Ministry advanced the development of regulatory and legislative amendments to the *Water Sustainability Act and Regulation*, the *Riparian Areas Protection Act and Regulation*, and the *Forest Act* through extensive consultation with the public and First Nations. This work improves regulatory clarity and supports the modernization and streamlining of legislative and regulatory processes. In February 2026 four regulatory amendments to the Water Sustainability Regulation and the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation were completed. Legislative and further regulatory changes have been advanced and if enacted, could reduce the number of applications required under the *Water Sustainability Act* by an estimated 10%.

The Ministry also continued to address the backlog of Existing Use Groundwater applications, focusing on applications received in 2022 or earlier. Work completed in 2025/26 advanced the review of these applications and supported progress toward the objective of completing the backlog review by July 1, 2027.

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

Key results

- Advanced an Interim Concept Plan toward completion of the [Sumas River Watershed Flood Management Plan](#) and continued to work with partners in Washington State on the [Transboundary Flood Initiative](#).
- Completed phase 1 of the [Flood Hazard Identification Mapping Program](#) (FHIMP); providing detailed flood hazard maps for 71 communities in B.C. to help communities better communicate the flood hazard and improve public understanding of flood risks in their communities.
- Initiated a pilot project to monitor and communicate local [water scarcity risks](#) to water users based on local knowledge, values and priorities. The new water scarcity level system helps to strengthen situational awareness at the watershed scale and supports coordinated, collaborative and voluntary local actions before and during drought.
- [Educated](#) dam owners and dam safety professional and raised awareness about dam safety requirements.
- Monitored dam owner compliance with the [Dam Safety Regulation](#) by conducting periodic audits of dam safety management systems and the review of dam owner required submissions to ensure consistency with provincial requirements and meet industry recognized best practices (these include Dam Emergency Plans, Operation, Maintenance and Surveillance manuals, Dam safety reviews, Invasive investigation plans, Engineering design & construction plans, Dam decommissioning plans).

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

To reduce flood hazards and associated risks, the Ministry worked to update the [Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines](#) (FHALUMG) used by local governments and First

Nations to make informed choices when considering development in flood prone areas. Engagement sessions with local governments and First Nations on nature-based flood infrastructure guidelines were conducted, advancing work to lead a shift to working with water on floodplains and coastal areas. Also, the [Sumas River Watershed Flood Mitigation Planning](#) initiative advanced a collaborative approach to mitigating flood risk and improving habitat that will continue to guide work to address hazards from a Nooksack River overflow event, like those experienced in November 2021 and December 2025. To increase community resilience to drought, a dataset for "[drinking water source areas](#)" was published to provide early visibility into drought and water scarcity risks affecting community water supplies. This helps identify vulnerable water sources and prioritize at-risk communities. Voluntary surveys of water suppliers are ongoing during the drought season to better understand local risks and challenges, supporting more targeted government response. In addition, public [drought and water scarcity bulletins](#) have been enhanced to reach a wider audience and expand content on local risks.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion -

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Target	2025/26 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	19.5%	19.9%	TBD	20.0%

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

²PM [2.1] targets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were stated in the 2025/26 service plan as TBD.

In 2022, the international [Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) was endorsed to address and support global efforts to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. The framework includes the nature conservation target of protecting 30 per cent of earth's lands and oceans by 2030. B.C. has committed to achieving this target. Conserving biodiversity and ecosystem health is important for community well-being, economic stability, and climate change mitigation.

As of 2026, 20% of B.C. lands and waters are conserved, including 15.9% of B.C. in parks and protected areas, and 4.1% is in other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs, as defined in national and international guidance). The most recent increase is due to the addition of numerous parcels of municipal and private land that qualify for this indicator.

The Ministry continues to advance government's commitment under the [Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation](#) to protect at least 30 percent of terrestrial areas in B.C. by 2030, including through modernized land use planning initiatives where areas of high biodiversity importance that are candidates for protection or other effective conservation measures can be identified in collaboration with other ministries, such as the Ministry of Environment and Parks.

In terms of scale, a 1% change in this indicator is equivalent to roughly one million new hectares conserved. Data and results for this indicator are tabulated annually in November through the CPCAD, the [Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/nature-conservation/services/data/cpcad/)

Performance Measure	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Actual
2.2 Complete strategies, agreements, orders, risk assessments and water sustainability plans with First Nations and other watershed interests to improve watershed security and health ³	New measure	3	3

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

²PM [2.2] targets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were stated in the 2025/26 service plan as 3 and TBD, respectively.

³ This performance measure was introduced in the 2025/26 service plan.

In 2025/26 the Ministry designated the Nicola Watershed for the development of a water sustainability plan through ministerial order [M208](#), published the [2025 Assessment of Human Health Risk of Nitrates in Drinking Water in the Hullcar/Cleah Valley](#), and developed and published the provincial Source drinking water dataset to support drinking water risk assessments.

Performance Measure	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Actual
2.3 Streamline permitting to reduce the backlog of natural resource applications ¹ Note: permitting targets will be set for individual sectors (e.g. housing, mining and clean energy)	New measure	TBD	N/A

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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

²PM [2.3] targets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were stated in the 2025/26 service plan as “TBD” and “TBD”, respectively.

This performance measure was introduced in the 2025/26 Service Plan to reflect government’s focus on improving permitting timeliness and reducing natural resource application backlogs. During the reporting year, the Ministry advanced permitting improvements in priority areas, including housing, connectivity and electrification; however, a finalized ministry-wide methodology and baseline were not in place to support reporting an annual result for this measure. In the 2026/27 Service Plan, the Ministry shifted to a more specific Existing Use Groundwater measure, which provides a clearer and more measurable indicator of progress in reducing a defined permitting backlog.

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

Objective 3.1: Address Fish Species Declines.

Key results

- Worked with the federal government, First Nations leadership, and key parties to continue to implement strategies for wild salmon recovery and revitalization in B.C. through tools such as the [Trilateral Accord](#) to address the decline of Wild Pacific Salmon.
- Restored or opened access to aquatic and riparian habitat through [British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund](#) (BCSRIF), a contribution program funded by the federal and provincial governments. Explored ways to continue investment in high value projects.
- Provided over \$12.000M in BCSRIF funds to projects that specifically unlocked underutilized salmon habitat rendered impassable by natural or human causes.
- Explored policies to prioritize wild salmon and other fish species recovery in provincial natural resource programs and further integrate wild salmon values within provincial strategies.
- Supported the implementation of Goal 2 “Abundant Wild Salmon,” and Action 4 “Improve Salmon Survival” within B.C.’s Coastal Marine Strategy.
- Continued to participate in the [Pacific Salmon Commission](#) and support preparation for the [Pacific Salmon Treaty](#) renewal in 2028 through our B.C. commissioner.

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

The Province has restored portions of 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 First Nations, Indigenous groups and non-profit organizations, and other levels of governments. A governance framework has been developed for the Trilateral Salmon Accord with the Federal Government, Province of B.C. and the First Nations Fisheries Council of B.C. Work is currently underway to finalize the terms of reference for the group and to develop priorities to guide future actions. The overarching aim for this agreement is to facilitate urgent action to safeguard and revitalize wild Pacific salmon populations 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.

Objective 3.2: Promote healthy marine ecosystems and coastal communities.

Key results

- Completed engagement with Coastal First Nations to confirm shared priorities for near-term implementation of the Strategy.
- Advanced implementation of eight priority actions under the [Coastal Marine Strategy](#), in collaboration with 23 First Nations governments and organizations and several stakeholders. Twenty distinct projects helped to tackle marine pollution, restore wild salmon habitat, build climate change resilience, support food security, monitor coastal health, and enhance respectful public access to marine recreation sites and trails.
- Supported the implementation of agreements that advance the [Marine Protected Area Network Action Plan](#) with Canada and partner First Nations. Government is on track to complete Phase I of the network by 2030.
- Completed negotiations on a final establishment agreement for the [Mia-yaltwa Ha'lidzogm hoon National Marine Conservation Area Reserve](#) in the Central Coast, which will protect over 6,700 km² of coastal marine habitat in the Great Bear Sea.
- Established [Wildlife Management Areas](#) in [Kishkosh and Kitkiata Inlets](#) in collaboration with First Nations. These new protected areas will help safeguard important estuarine and nearshore ecosystems.
- Continued work with [Marine Plan Partnership](#) First Nations partners to advance shared priorities, including updates to marine plans for each sub-region, completion of a feasibility assessment for geoduck aquaculture in the Central Coast, and reconfirmation of partners' commitment with updated collaborative governance structures.

Summary of progress made in 2025/26

Implementation of the Coastal Marine Strategy is delivering measurable progress on the ground and in coastal waters, with tangible benefits that are shared across ecosystems and communities. Stewardship initiatives are restoring degraded habitats, reducing marine pollution, and improving the health of nearshore environments that support biodiversity and key species such as kelp and wild salmon. These efforts are also enhancing the quality and accessibility of coastal areas for those who live, work, and spend time along the coast, while expanded monitoring with new technologies are strengthening the ability to understand and respond to changing conditions.

At a broader scale, advances in marine protection and planning are helping to secure ecologically and culturally important areas for future generations. Progress on the Marine Protected Area Network and the establishment of new protected and conserved areas are contributing to a more connected and resilient coastal system. These actions are not only safeguarding biodiversity, but also providing lasting benefits such as healthier fisheries,

greater climate resilience, and more certainty for communities, industries, and recreational users who depend on well-managed marine spaces.

These outcomes are closely tied to stronger, more resilient coastal communities. Indigenous-led stewardship and ongoing collaboration through partnerships such as the Marine Plan Partnership are supporting local employment, skills development, and the revitalization of traditional food systems. At the same time, these efforts are creating broader social and economic benefits—supporting sustainable livelihoods, improving food security, and fostering shared responsibility for protecting the coast. By aligning conservation with community and economic priorities, implementation of the strategy is helping ensure that the benefits of healthy marine ecosystems are widely felt.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Actual
3.1 Aquatic and riparian habitat restored, enhanced, or open access to through ministry activities	1, 167,160 square meters	398,992 Square meters	7% increase from previous year	372,794 Square meters

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [3.1] targets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were stated in the 2025/26 service plan as TBD and TBD, respectively.

[British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund](#) (BCSRIF) and other provincial programs contributed to aquatic and riparian habitat restoration, enhancement and opened access for salmon. In 2025/2026 BCSRIF contributed towards the restoration and opening of 372,794 m² and supported the development of 22 watershed recovery plans. This was done with partners including local First Nations and non-government organizations and the federal government.

Reported restoration figures are currently below initial projections. This is believed to be a result of a combination of inflationary pressures including funding being stretched further to cover wages, equipment, transport and equipment, and external factors, such as climate impacts and severe weather.

The data supporting this metric is provided through the 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. BCSRIF as a program sunset on March 31, 2026.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Baseline	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Actual
3.2 Coastal Marine Strategy priorities are identified and actioned, including related actions for the Marine Plan Partnership and Marine Protected Area Network Action Plan	Complete co-development of Coastal Marine Strategy with First Nations	Released the final Coastal Marine Strategy publicly	Negotiate governance structures and implementation approach with First Nations	Implementation approach negotiated

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [3.2] targets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were stated in the 2025/26 service plan as “Negotiate governance structures and implementation approach with First Nations” and “Initiate 6 implementation priorities,” respectively.

Progress toward negotiating governance structures and an implementation approach with First Nations in 2025–26 was steady but uneven, reflecting the complexity of this work. Efforts focused on clarifying priorities for near-term implementation of the Coastal Marine Strategy, resulting in a more defined set of actions to move forward collaboratively. This created greater alignment on immediate priorities and helped shift implementation forward, even as broader questions about how to organize and sustain that work across the coast remain in development.

More concrete progress on governance occurred through existing partnerships, particularly in the Northern Shelf Bioregion. Work with First Nations through the Marine Plan Partnership and Marine Protected Area Network initiatives strengthened governance in practical ways, including reconfirming shared commitments through an updated Regional Memorandum of Understanding and onboarding policy. Partners also established a Bioregional Advisory Committee to engage interest holders and incorporate their advice into network-level implementation. While a coordinated, coast-wide governance model is still in development, these steps represent meaningful progress in negotiating and strengthening how partners work together to support strategy implementation.

Financial Report

Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Operating Expenses					
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	39,917	51,744	91,661	77,024	(14,637)
Resource Stewardship	37,761	(600)	37,161	47,876	10,715
Water, Fisheries and Coast	22,608	16,784	39,392	39,392	0
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	30,134	(2,500)	27,634	26,429	(1,204)
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	14,964	70,504	85,468	92,791	7,323
Permitting Transformations	44,913	3,636	48,549	48,549	0
Executive and Support Services	30,521	(6,692)	23,829	21,632	(2,197)
Statutory					
Crown Land Special Account	500	0	500	0	0
Sub-total	221,318	132,875	354,193	354,193	0
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual ²	0	0	0	(10)	(10)
Total	221,318	132,875	354,193	354,183	(10)
Ministry Capital Expenditures					
Executive Support Services	333	0	333	318	(15)
Total	333	0	333	318	(15)
Other Financing Transactions					
Crown Land Administration					
Receipts	0	0	0	0	0
Disbursements	6,382	0	6,382	282	(6,100)
Net Cash Requirements (Source)	6,382	0	6,382	282	(6,100)
Habitat Conservations Trust					
Receipts	(6,500)	0	(6,500)	(7,150)	(650)
Disbursements	6,500	650	7,150	7,150	0

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Net Cash Requirements (Source)	0	650	650	0	(650)
Summary					
Total Receipts	(6,500)	0	(6,500)	(7,150)	(650)
Total Disbursements	12,882	650	13,532	7,432	(6,100)
Total Net Cash Requirements (Source)	6,382	650	7,032	282	(6,750)

¹ "Other Authorizations" include Supplementary Estimates, Statutory Appropriations, Contingencies and Government Reorganizations. Supplementary Estimates and Government Reorganization amounts in this column are included in the "estimated amount" under sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act for ministerial accountability for operating expenses under the Act.

² The Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual of \$0.010 million is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of July 31, 2026, 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, Canada. Their mandate, "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 to the CVWMA work, 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 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.

[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 Randene Neill's 2025 Mandate Letter.

2025 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2026
Support cross-government work in partnership with First Nations to improve timing and transparency of permitting processes to support sustainable economic growth, housing, and infrastructure while maintaining our world-leading environmental standards	Refer to objective 2.3
Where opportunities are available to reach large-scale agreements on land use and critical metal and mineral development with First Nations in a manner that expedites permits, protects the environment, offers investor security, and increases prosperity for British Columbians, prioritize your Ministry's role in this work to ensure timely implementation.	Refer to objective 1.2
Work with communities affected by drought, or expected to face water shortages, to support community-based priority setting between industrial, agricultural, residential, and environmental uses for water. Ensure better coordination between water regulators and local communities in advance of drought to support effective response during an emergency	Refer to objective 2.2 and objective 2.4
Work with your ministerial colleagues across government to balance land use that advances conservation measures and supports a diversified economic strategy, supporting a wide range of industries, including energy, technology, tourism, and resource development	Refer to objective 1.1 and objective 1.2
Continue land use planning with First Nations, industry, and local communities	Refer to objective 1.1 and objective 1.2

2025 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2026
Work with the Minister of Mining and Critical Minerals to enable mining exploration and development in British Columbia's northwest in partnership with First Nations in a manner that helps achieve our Provincial commitment to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030 and creates economic growth and opportunity in the region	Refer to objective 2.1
Work collaboratively to protect critical ecosystems alongside First Nations, communities, workers, industry, organizations, and the public in a way that upholds rights and title claims, and contributes to long term, inclusive economic growth that benefits all British Columbians	Refer to objective 2.1 and objective 1.3
Continue our work to restore estuaries, inter-tidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats	Refer to objective 3.1 and objective 3.2