

Natural Resources Conservation Board

Business Plan 2016-19

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) is an independent, quasi-judicial and regulatory agency of the Government of Alberta. It is accountable to the Minister of Environment and Parks and is responsible for reviews of natural resource projects under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*, and regulating Alberta's confined feeding industry under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

The *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* is the responsibility of Environment and Parks.

The *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* is the responsibility of Agriculture and Forestry. A 2006 memorandum of understanding between the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Chair, and the Chief Executive Officer of the NRCB describes the purpose of the act, and governance and mandate responsibilities.

The NRCB meets its responsibilities efficiently and effectively. It values teamwork and internal communication, and ensures its staff has the expertise, technical resources and ongoing training to provide excellent service. The NRCB also takes pride in meeting high standards of public accountability through its financial reporting, and compliance with the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act* (APAGA) and the Public Agencies Governance Framework.

<i>Vision</i>	To be a respected decision-maker, exemplifying integrity and foresight in the best interests of Alberta.
<i>Mission</i>	As a quasi-judicial agency, the NRCB makes impartial and knowledge-based decisions across two distinct mandates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the <i>Natural Resources Conservation Board Act</i>, the NRCB decides if natural resource projects are in the public interest, considering social, environmental and economic effects, and • Under the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i>, the NRCB fulfills application and compliance responsibilities, administers and advances policies, and conducts board reviews for confined feeding operations
<i>Values</i>	In achieving our mission, we honour the NRCB's core values of integrity, fairness, respect, excellence and service.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Natural Resources Conservation Board has identified the following strategic priorities for 2016-19:

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| <p>1. Cross government initiatives
Linkage: goals one and two</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support priority Government of Alberta initiatives such as Water for Life, the Clean Air Strategy and the Land-use Framework. |
| <p>2. Consistent delivery of the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i>
Linkage: goal two</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to coordinate with government and stakeholders to develop operational policy and technical guidelines to support consistent delivery of the act. |
| <p>3. Risk based approach to regulating confined feeding operations
Linkage: goal two</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to use an environmental risk based approach for compliance activities at confined feeding operations and for reviewing permit applications for new or expanding operations. |

4. Board procedures and public information

Linkage: goal one

- Complete the update of board regulations and information documents.

CORE BUSINESSES: GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Core Business One: Board reviews and appeals under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* and the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

Goal one

Natural Resources Conservation Board reviews and hearings are conducted in a manner that is effective, fair, transparent and timely.

What it means

The Board conducts reviews of proposed natural resource projects under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* to determine whether the projects are in the public interest, having regard for their environmental, social and economic impact. Reviews are mandatory for metallic and industrial mineral, forestry, water management, and recreation projects for which an environmental impact assessment is required under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*. Projects may also be referred to the Board by Order in Council.

Under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*, the Board must determine whether to grant a request for a review of a permitting or compliance decision. Should the Board grant a review, it may be oral, electronic or written. The Board may also recommend mediation.

- Strategies**
- 1.a Complete the update of the Board Administrative Procedures Regulation in consultation with NRCB staff and stakeholders.
 - 1.b Proactively provide opportunities for all participants to understand NRCBA and AOPA review and hearing processes through guides; public information sessions; and prompt, accurate responses to direct inquiries.
 - 1.c Identify critical issues related to applications under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*, to ensure that all relevant information is included in the review process.

Performance measures

Efficiency of review processes	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Percentage of Natural Resources Conservation Board decisions issued within 80 working days of the conclusion of reviews under the <i>Natural Resources Conservation Board Act</i>	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of Natural Resources Conservation Board decisions issued within 30 working days of the conclusion of reviews under the <i>Agricultural Operation Practices Act</i>	100%	100%	100%

Core Business Two: Regulation under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*

Goal two

Effective and efficient permitting and compliance processes for confined feeding operations and manure management.

What it means

The NRCB regulates Alberta's confined feeding operations and the management of manure under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. It consults with the multi-stakeholder Policy Advisory Group on priority issues and operational policy to ensure consistent and effective delivery of the act.

Confined feeding operations must comply with the requirements of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. The operations divisions deliver a risk based approach to regulating confined feeding operations, ensure that operations are compliant with their permits, and investigate and respond to complaints. Permitting decisions consider consistency with existing regional land use plans. The NRCB makes timely, focused communication with confined feeding operators and other stakeholders an ongoing priority.

Strategies

- 2.a Continue to develop operational policies in consultation with the Policy Advisory Group, including the updated compliance and enforcement policy, and finalized policy for responding to requests for permission to apply manure to frozen or snow covered land.
- 2.b Support other departments and agencies studying the effects of manure collection and storage facilities on groundwater quality.
- 2.c Complete the design of and implement a program to review all water well monitoring conditions in *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* permits.
- 2.d Use information on surface water conditions at confined feeding operations to inform policy development for permitting, and complaint response.
- 2.e Continue to audit results from environmental risk screenings to maintain quality and ensure consistent risk determinations.
- 2.f Continue upgrades to the confined feeding operation database to improve the efficiency of data entry and retrieval. Use quarterly exception reports to monitor the management and entry of compliance data.
- 2.g Support efficiency of field work with clients by ensuring all field staff are provided with and trained in the use of current data management technology.
- 2.h Continue to work with the Technical Advisory Group to develop guidelines that support delivery of the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*.

Performance measures

Efficiency of permitting process	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Percentage of decisions issued within 65 working days from the date the application is determined to be complete	85%	85%	85%
Complaint resolution	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Percentage of complaint files resolved or requiring no further action, within 90 days	95%	95%	95%

BUDGET INFORMATION

The 2016-19 budget is based on the strategic priorities and strategies identified in the business plan.

EXPENSE BY CORE BUSINESS

	Comparable			2016-17 Estimate	2017-18 Target	2018-19 Target
	2014-15 Actual	2015-16 Budget	2015-16 Forecast			
AOPA and NRCBA Mandates						
Board Reviews & Hearings	\$1,302,575	\$1,361,360	\$1,361,360	\$1,356,000	\$1,356,000	\$1,356,000
Regulating Confined Feeding Operations	5,022,067	5,194,640	5,194,640	5,162,000	5,162,000	5,162,000
Total Expenses	\$6,324,642¹	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Comparable			2016-17 Estimate	2017-18 Target	2018-19 Target
	2014-15 Actual	2015-16 Budget	2015-16 Forecast			
Revenues						
Transfer from Environment & Parks	\$5,920,000	\$6,512,000	\$6,512,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000	\$6,474,000
Miscellaneous Investment & Other Revenue	54,588	40,000	40,000	44,000	44,000	44,000
Total Revenues	\$5,974,588	\$6,552,000	\$6,552,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000
Expenses						
Salaries, Wages & Employee Benefits	4,883,661	5,479,470	5,479,470	5,464,500	5,464,500	5,464,500
Supplies and Services	948,598	1,046,530	1,046,530	1,038,500	1,038,500	1,038,500
Amortization	20,773	30,000	30,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Total Expenses	\$5,853,032	\$6,556,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000	\$6,518,000
Annual Operating Surplus (Deficit)	\$121,556	(\$4,000)	(\$4,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0

¹ Includes \$471,610 leased cost for office space paid by Alberta Infrastructure. This amount is not included in the Statement of Operations.