



Business Plan

2020–21

Department of Lands and Forestry

**NOVA SCOTIA**

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2020

Budget 2020–21: Business Plan
Finance and Treasury Board
February 2020

ISBN: 978-1-989654-97-2

Department of Lands and Forestry 2020-21 Annual Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister	Page 1
Ministerial Mandate	Page 2
Vision & Strategic Priorities	Page 2
Fast Facts	Page 2
Priorities/Activities/Initiatives for 2020-21	
• Forestry Sector Support and Transition	Page 3
• Implementation of the <i>Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices</i>	Page 3
• Biodiversity Act and Regulations	Page 5
• Review of <i>Crown Lands Act</i> and Departmental Business Practices	Page 6
• Small-Scale Wood Energy Projects	Page 6
• Potentially Contaminated Abandoned Mines Sites on Crown Lands	Page 7
• Nova Scotia Provincial Parks System Improvements	Page 7
• Land Titles Initiative	Page 7
Lands and Forestry Expenses Summary	Page 8

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

On behalf of the Department of Lands and Forestry, we are pleased to present the 2020-21 Business Plan that outlines our strategic direction for the year ahead.

This is a time of great transition for the forestry sector in Nova Scotia. A major shift in the timber product supply chain has had far reaching effects across the province. Government is working with industry to aid businesses and individuals navigate this new situation and look to the future to help keep skilled individuals working here in Nova Scotia. This will also help move the province towards the ecological forestry model proposed by Professor William Lahey in his *Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* report.

The Department remains committed to adopting ecological forestry and the three pillars of the triad model as the path to a sustainable forest and forestry sector. This work is underway through a variety of consultations on several interconnected initiatives and programs in the Department. Examples of this include the new Forest Management Guide and the criteria for High Production Forestry, which are being developed in close consultation with stakeholders and the public. The Department is also moving forward with the small-scale wood energy project and will be finalizing sites, with the goal of installation and operation before the next heating season.

In other areas, work continues to finalize and implement the province's first Biodiversity Act. Staff have also continued work on a renewed Species at Risk Program with a focus on increased engagement from experts in the field and the public. Our Provincial Parks continue to attract more visitors each year, with improvements being made to help enhance the experience for the public. And, as the administrators of the province's Crown land, our Department processes over 2000 requests annually for access, use, acquiring, and disposing of Crown lands.

Our province's Crown land and natural resources belong to all Nova Scotians. Government's role is balancing the ecological and economic values they hold. We will continue to be transparent on how and why decisions related to our forests and natural habitats are made.

Original signed by

Honourable Iain Rankin
Minister of Lands and Forestry

Original signed by

Julie Towers
Deputy Minister, Lands and Forestry

Ministerial Mandate:

The Department of Lands and Forestry (the Department) has broad responsibilities relative to the stewardship, management, development, conservation and protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forest, and park resources, as well as the administration of the province's Crown lands. In addition to our core operations and obligations, the Department delivered on the following actions identified as priorities in the Minister's 2017 Mandate Letter:

- Introduced a Biodiversity Act
- Created a new Nova Scotia Biodiversity Council
- Appointed an independent expert to review forestry practices
- Expanded trail access across Nova Scotia

Our Vision & Strategic Priorities:

Lands and Forestry's vision is for Nova Scotians to understand, value and benefit from the province's natural resources, including biodiversity and the land we manage. Guiding our work towards this vision are the Department's four strategic priorities:

- **People:** Cultivate an engaged, effective, empowered and diverse workforce
- **Public:** Strengthen public trust in the stewardship of our natural resources
- **Services:** Deliver services collaboratively, efficiently and effectively
- **Natural Resources:** Provide stewardship of our natural resources for public benefits

Fast Facts:

- In 2019 Government launched the province's first multi-year, multi-department trails strategy. A Trail Strategy Coordinating Group has been formed to help implement the Strategy which aims to provide a sustainable trail experience for both residents and visitors to Nova Scotia. Towards this goal, the Department is supporting municipalities and community groups in Western Nova Scotia to complete the western loop of the Trans Canada Trail.
- Lands and Forestry staff have incident management expertise to support coordinated response to emergency events. Staff were critical to support the Province's response to Hurricane Dorian in September 2019. In 2020, our staff members joined the Canadian team in Australia helping to battle ongoing wildfires.
- The Department filled new positions for two Species at Risk biologists and a position dedicated to stakeholder relations to support the Department's communications and engagement with stakeholders and the public.
- The Department manages the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park where, for over 60 years, an average of 100,000 people each year have come to tour the Park's 40 hectares, visit our 26 mammal species and 27 bird species, and experience a unique educational experience from our wildlife park experts.

- Our outreach team delivers 12 different natural resource programs to youth reaching over 10,000 students – from primary to grade 12 – annually.

Key Initiatives for 2020-21

Forestry Sector Support and Transition

The forestry sector is in a period of transition following the January 2020 closure of Northern Pulp Nova Scotia Corporation (Northern Pulp). Lands and Forestry will play a key role in supporting this transition through the delivery of our programs and by continuing to advance the implementation of ecological forestry for the province, as recommended by Professor William Lahey's report: *An Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* (the Lahey Report). Lands and Forestry is also on the transition team with other representatives from government and industry to support workers, contractors and others impacted by the closure. The team is advising Government on short-term actions that can help affected workers and businesses, on potential areas to invest a \$50 million transition fund, and on longer-term approaches to support the sector's transition to an ecologically sustainable and competitive industry. Some examples of Lands and Forestry programs related to the transition include:

- Expanding the Department's private and Crown silviculture and roads programs using funding from the Transition fund;
- Continuing work on the Small Scale Wood Energy initiative (see page 6).

🔗 [For more information on the forestry transition and the role of Lands and Forestry, visit: https://novascotia.ca/forestry-sector-support.](https://novascotia.ca/forestry-sector-support)

Implementation of the *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*

Building on progress made in the first year (2019-2020), the Department will continue to implement the priority actions identified in the *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* (the Response). This work is foundational to achieving ecological forestry in Nova Scotia.

The Government has committed that Nova Scotia will protect and enhance ecosystems and biodiversity as an overarching policy priority. As a result, the Department will first consider the protection and enhancement of ecosystems and biodiversity when making decisions on how Nova Scotia's Crown forests are managed. As acknowledged in the Response, many initiatives will be phased-in over time.

Did you know?

- In August 2018, Professor Lahey completed his 70-page report: *An Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*.
- Professor Lahey worked with a team of expert advisors to conduct 80 meetings with 160 attendees and read 250 written submissions.
- The Lahey report has 45 recommendations and 163 conclusions.
- The Government accepted the Lahey Report and issued its response on December 3, 2018.

The following are the priority actions the Department will undertake for 2020-21 in response to Professor Lahey's recommendations:

- Finalize and implement the *Silviculture Guide for the Ecological Matrix* – a new Forest Management Guide – which places more emphasis on ecological values This Guide outlines the silviculture and harvesting practices that can be used on Crown lands. Implementation of the new Guide will result in a further reduction in clear cutting on Crown lands, particularly where multi-aged and mixed-species forests in which late successional species would naturally occur. Planning for implementation will involve external expert advisors and input from stakeholders.
- Continue to advance areas of research underpinning the shift to ecological forestry through collaboration with industry and peer-reviewed published scientists. The Department's research priorities supporting the implementation of ecological forestry for 2020-21 include research on forest birds, wildlife clumps, and watercourse buffers.
- Continue to advance research related to Natural Disturbance Regimes mapping and methodology. This work will help align forestry practices with naturally occurring elements that affect forests such as fire, wind, and insects.
- Continue to develop, and then roll out, a process to identify appropriate areas on Crown lands for high production forestry. Identified high production areas will be managed to maximize timber production but will still be subject to environmental protections for things such as watercourses and Species at Risk. High production forestry is a key component of the triad model of ecological forestry which requires the following three elements – conservation lands, areas of high production forestry, and the remainder for mixed use where conservation and forestry objectives are blended.
- Continue to develop an independent process for environmental reviews of proposed forestry management plans that will include public input.
- Continue to implement the renewed Species at Risk Program to ensure the protection of Species at Risk. The Department is collaborating with partners who are experts and practitioners in the field. 12 Recovery Teams have been appointed and are active. They will continue their work, including involving a broad array of stakeholders and citizen science through Species at Risk Recovery Action Forums.

Did you know?

In Nova Scotia there are 63 species that are at risk of disappearing from the province. These species include plants, birds, mammals, invertebrates, lichens, reptiles, and fish species. Some species are responsible for important ecological functions that we depend upon. Once a species is gone, so are the benefits it once provided. The conservation of biodiversity and recovery of Species at Risk is a shared responsibility that is important to everyone. To learn more about biodiversity and Nova Scotia's Species at Risk programming, see: <https://novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/>

- Begin a review of both private and Crown land silviculture programs to ensure these programs are aligned with ecological forestry outcomes.
- The Department and the Medway Community Forest Cooperative, a Crown land licensee, will continue to strengthen our innovative partnership that is helping to drive the shift toward ecological forestry.
- Foster innovation in the forestry sector by working with organizations promoting the use of wood such as Atlantic WoodWorks and FP Innovations.
- Ongoing support and engagement as a founding member of the Nova Scotia Innovation Hub, including through annual support of research and initiatives to advance Nova Scotia's low carbon, bio-circular economy, including new uses of wood fibre.

Did you know?

The Nova Scotia Innovation Hub promotes the virtues of renewable resources and facilitates access to new markets with efficient supply chains. It is committed to building a clean economy that is sustainable, responsible, profitable, and exportable. The Innovation Hub works with businesses in the bioresource industry, including the forestry sector, who are interested in establishing or growing their operations in Nova Scotia to build strong rural communities and clean-economy solutions. For additional information, visit: <http://novascotiainnovationhub.com/>

The Department will continue its work to improve and demonstrate a culture of openness, transparency and accountability. This includes:

- Supporting the Ministerial Advisory Committee established to provide advice to the Minister on the policies and priorities related to implementing Professor Lahey's *Independent Review of Forestry Practices in Nova Scotia*. The Committee includes 14 members from environmental non-government organizations, industry, the Mi'kmaq and academia.
- Keeping stakeholders and the public informed and involved in the process of implementing priority actions in the Response.
- Continuing our commitment to report on our progress towards implementing the ecological forestry model. This includes integrating the evaluation framework that Professor Lahey is developing to track the Department's progress.

🔗 **For more information on implementation of ecological forestry in Nova Scotia, see:** <https://novascotia.ca/ecological-forestry/>

Biodiversity Act and Regulations

The Department will continue work to pass and implement a Biodiversity Act for Nova Scotia to address important and emerging challenges and opportunities facing biodiversity. The Department will build on progress made in 2019-2020, which included the introduction of the Bill for Biodiversity legislation in the Nova Scotia Legislature and conducting additional stakeholder consultations.

The implementation of the Act will continue to be supported by the Biodiversity Council, which was established in May 2018 with the appointment of independent experts. The Council will collaborate with the Mi'kmaw people and stakeholders in helping to craft new regulations, starting with invasive species, and recommend new actions that promote biodiversity in Nova Scotia. The Department will continue to provide outreach and education on the Biodiversity Act to support its effective implementation.

Review of the Crown Lands Act and Departmental Business Processes

The *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* made a commitment to undertake a review of the *Crown Lands Act*. Building on project planning and research initiated in 2019-2020, the Department will continue to develop recommendations for targeted amendments to the Act.

These targeted amendments will help lead to a more efficient and effective Act. Legislative changes for the management and administration of the province's Crown lands are to be in the best interest of the public and long-term stewardship of our natural resources.

The Department will continue to build on a business process improvement framework established in 2019-2020. This framework will serve as a map for multi-year work to be undertaken in 2020-2021. Review of processes, like the application for use of Crown lands, will support the objectives of ensuring consistent operational decision-making and service excellence.

Small Scale Wood Energy Initiative

The Small Scale Wood Energy initiative is a multi-year partnership to demonstrate efficient, low carbon, renewable heating solutions for medium to large scale public buildings utilizing wood chips, and to serve as a model for private businesses. It is an economically viable wood heating model for commercial buildings in Nova Scotia. This initiative involves multiple provincial departments, federal and municipal governments, schools, regional organizations, and industry stakeholders and supports the principles of ecological forestry as committed in the *Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia*. This project is also part of the Government's forestry sector transition work. Design, construction and operation of new, efficient wood chip heating systems that use wood chips from private woodlots will be completed for six public buildings. The wood heat systems at these sites are expected to be operating by the end of November, in time for the high demand heating season. Additional sites will be assessed and added in the future.

Did you know?

There are many benefits to converting to wood heat. Wood chip heat systems:

- utilize locally sourced wood;
- generate local employment;
- strengthen the forest supply chain and provide new markets for lower grade wood;
- facilitate ecological forestry on private lands;
- replace higher carbon imported fossil fuels;
- provide fuel price stability; and
- lengthen the lifespan of existing old boilers used as back up for peak demand.

Potentially Contaminated Abandoned Mines Sites on Crown Lands

The Department will continue to lead implementation of a plan to evaluate potential contamination of historic mine sites on Crown land, which will ensure environmental sustainability and healthy communities. In partnership with Nova Scotia Lands, the Department will implement a risk assessment process as the basis for prioritizing environmental site assessments and potential remediation activities on these abandoned mine sites.

Nova Scotia Provincial Parks System Improvements

The Department will continue to advance its multi-year plan by identifying initiatives for park system improvements that reflect current operational needs and renewing aging infrastructure.

The Department will also continue to promote and support accessibility, inclusiveness and sustainable public use of our parks in support of the province's Access by Design 2030 Strategy.

🔗 [To learn more about our provincial parks, and how to visit them see: https://parks.novascotia.ca/](https://parks.novascotia.ca/)

🔗 [To learn more about accessible beaches, visit: https://parks.novascotia.ca/content/accessible-beaches-and-adaptive-equipment](https://parks.novascotia.ca/content/accessible-beaches-and-adaptive-equipment)

Did you know?

- There are 20 camping parks and more than 130 day-use and beach parks in Nova Scotia
- Camper nights at provincial parks continue to be on the rise – increasing about 30% in the past five years. The 2019 season totalled nearly 80,000 camper nights and more than 220,000 visitors.
- The Department is continuing its work to purchase or partner with municipalities to install accessible beach mats (Mobi-mat®) at beaches in all regions of the Province.

Land Titles Initiative

The Land Titles Initiative is a Government-led commitment to help residents in the communities of North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook/Lake Loon, Lincolnville and Sunnyville get clear title to their land. Clarifying land title can be an expensive legal process. Under the Land Titles Initiative, most fees are covered at no cost. The long-term goal of this initiative is to foster economic prosperity in these five communities.

Working collaboratively across government under the leadership of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, and in partnership with Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Lands and Forestry will continue to support the implementation of this initiative by providing eligible survey services by a dedicated survey team and processing applications under the *Land Titles Clarification Act*.

🔗 [For additional information see: https://ansa.novascotia.ca/landtitles](https://ansa.novascotia.ca/landtitles)

Departmental Expenses Summary

Lands and Forestry Expenses Summary			
(\$ thousands)			
	2019-2020	2019-2020	2020-2021
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Forecast</u>	<u>Estimate</u>
Senior Management	522	549	542
Renewable Resources	26,551	28,612	27,688
Regional Services	40,897	41,614	41,060
Policy, Planning & Support Services	4,761	5,205	5,183
Land Services	4,019	3,210	3,742
Total - Departmental Expenses	76,750	79,190	78,215
Ordinary Recoveries	1,214	1,312	1,242
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	591.2	562.4	591.2
Notes:			
<u>2019-20 Expenses Forecast:</u>			
Expenses exceeded Budget due to additional funding for Forestry Transition initiatives (\$2M), and additional Forestry Review costs, Hurricane Dorian damage, and recoverable out of province fire suppression expenses			
<u>2020-2021 Estimate:</u>			
For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2 For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1			