

Managing Cumulative Effects of Natural Resource Development in B.C.

May 2015



OFFICE OF THE
Auditor General
of British Columbia

Background

- B.C.'s environment and natural resources are key to our economy
- Government is responsible for economic development in an environmentally sustainable manner
- Sustainable natural resource development requires thoughtful cumulative effects management



Purpose of the audit

To determine whether the Government of B.C. and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations have established a sound basis for managing cumulative effects to the environment, so that B.C. lands and natural resources can provide long-term social, economic and environmental benefits.



Conclusion

- Government: not provided FLNRO with clear direction or powers necessary to manage cumulative effects when deciding on natural resource use
- FLNRO: not considering cumulative effects effectively in its decision-making



Conclusion

- FLNRO is developing an assessment framework to improve cumulative effects management
 - Phased in approach; full implementation 2021
- Government not resolved how it will use the framework to coordinate and make decisions across ministries and agencies



Recommendations

- Proposals to develop natural resources are increasing
- It's in the interest of British Columbians to address cumulative effects now
- Recommendations:
 - 4 for government
 - 5 for FLNRO

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA:

RECOMMENDATION 1: *assign the province's natural resource ministries and agencies clear roles and responsibilities for managing the cumulative effects of development activities on the land base.*

RECOMMENDATION 2: *introduce tools, such as legislation and policy, that will enable all of the province's natural resource sector ministries and agencies to coordinate cumulative effects management across all the sectors.*

RECOMMENDATION 5: *establish and/or update, as the foundation for cumulative effects management, values that are important for the province to sustain, and the acceptable conditions for those values.*

RECOMMENDATION 7: *establish how assessments resulting from the Cumulative Effects Framework will be used to inform and support natural resource development decisions by ministries in all resource sectors.*

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE MINISTRY OF FORESTS, LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCE OPERATIONS:

RECOMMENDATION 3: *provide its decision-makers with instruction and training on how to assess and manage cumulative effects when authorizing natural resource use.*

RECOMMENDATION 4: *consider cumulative effects when authorizing natural resource development, and document the rationale for its decisions.*

RECOMMENDATION 6: *monitor the condition of values and make that information available to decision-makers.*

RECOMMENDATION 8: *annually report to the Legislative Assembly on progress in implementing the Cumulative Effects Framework, and how risks are being managed to ensure its successful implementation.*

RECOMMENDATION 9: *assess options for accelerating full implementation of the Cumulative Effects Framework, and submit a proposal to Cabinet for decision.*

Approximately
160 proposed

MAJOR NATURAL RESOURCE PROJECTS

on B.C. land worth \$billions
(as of 2014)

Cumulative effects

CHANGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT

caused by the combined
impact of past, present
and potential future

HUMAN ACTIVITIES

Managing cumulative effects helps

BALANCE

economic development
with environmental
protection



Government should

PROVIDE DIRECTION AND TOOLS

to manage cumulative effects



Ministry (FLNRO) is

WORKING TO IMPROVE

how the province assesses
cumulative effects, but

MORE IS NEEDED



Managing
cumulative
effects is

CHALLENGING, but must BE A PRIORITY



9 RECOMMENDATIONS

4 to government

5 to Ministry
(FLNRO)

1.
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3.
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9.



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