



Ministry of  
Forests

**2024/2025**

**SPRING LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

**FOR  
ESTIMATES BINDER**

**MINISTER BRUCE RALSTON**

**MARCH 2024**

Minister Ralston  
2024/25 Estimates Index  
Ministry of Forests



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# Ministry of Forests

## 2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan

February 2024



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## Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Forests 2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared.

Honourable Bruce Ralston

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Ralston".

Minister of Forests  
February 9, 2024

## Minister of State's Accountability Statement



I am the Minister of State for Sustainable Forestry Innovation and under the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act, I am accountable for achieving the following results for 2024/25:

- a) Meet with relevant officials within government, with forest industry representatives, with First Nations and with other stakeholders in order to develop an understanding of opportunities and risks respecting the stabilization and growth of fibre supply.
- b) Submit to Cabinet a report on the results referred to in paragraph (a) on or before March 31, 2024.
- c) Strengthen and improve the "Residual Fibre Utilization Policy", drawing on the support of the Minister of Forests.
- d) Work with the Minister of Forests and the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to expedite work that is currently underway with First Nations, the purpose of which is to reach constructive arrangements and government-to-government agreements respecting certainty of access to fibre.
- e) Work with the Minister of Forests to accelerate the implementation of forest landscape planning.
- f) submit to Cabinet a report on the results referred to in paragraphs (c) through (e) on or before March 31, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Mercier', written in a cursive style.

Honourable Andrew Mercier  
Minister of Sustainable Forestry Innovation  
February 12, 2024

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## Strategic Direction

In 2024/25, the Government of British Columbia will remain focused on providing the services and infrastructure that people depend on to build a good life. Government will continue delivering results that matter to British Columbians including helping people with costs, attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean and fair economy. Government will continue working collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples as it implements the Action Plan for the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and delivers initiatives that advance reconciliation in ways that make a difference in communities throughout the province.

This 2024/25 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Forests will support the government's priorities and selected action items identified in the January 2024 [Minister's Mandate Letter](#).

## Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Forests (the Ministry) supports resiliency of the province's land-base and economy by providing collaborative management of forest, range and archaeological resources, and leading the Province's wildfire response and mitigation. With a commitment to sustainable natural resource management, the Ministry is enhancing the role of forests and forest products as carbon sinks, managing forests to support healthy ecosystems, and working to ensure greater value for B.C. wood and high-value manufacturing. The Ministry is continually pursuing ways to strengthen partnerships, collaboration, and engagement with Indigenous Peoples, and to collaborate with other government ministries in conducting this work.

The Ministry also supports the Minister in his governance responsibilities for the [Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia](#). A complete list of Crown Agencies associated with the Ministry can be found in [Appendix A](#).

## Operating Environment

More than 90 percent of British Columbia's forest and rangelands are publicly owned and managed by the provincial government on behalf of the public, and B.C. strives to be a world leader in sustainable forest and range management. Managing such a broad and diverse area, however, is complex, and brings a number of factors that can impact the achievement of the Ministry's goals.

A vibrant and prosperous forest sector is vital to B.C.'s overall economic well-being, and is particularly important for rural communities. In 2022, the forest sector supported about 56,000 direct jobs in communities across B.C., generated \$6.4 billion in gross domestic product (GDP), and \$1.9 billion in government revenues (2022/23)<sup>1</sup>. Challenges such as a declining timber supply, ongoing trade disputes with the U.S., and strained market conditions, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada and BC Ministry of Forests

continue to face the B.C. forest sector. Economic conditions are also difficult for the secondary manufacturing sector, with temporary and permanent reductions in milling capacity being necessary. It is clear that B.C. must find new, innovative ways to support the forest sector to adapt and ensure it continues to thrive into the future.

The impacts of climate change continue to be increasingly felt by people and communities across B.C. Anticipating and addressing the long-term environmental consequences continues to be a key challenge at the provincial, national, and international levels. In the summer of 2023 the province experienced the most destructive wildfire season in B.C.'s history, with over two million hectares of forest and land burned, tens of thousands of people forced to evacuate, and hundreds of homes lost. Combined with the effects of an unprecedented drought, the ecological and economic damage is likely significant.

With climate change, forest health management has also become increasingly challenging as hotter and drier conditions lead to increased stress for B.C.'s ecosystems. In this context, forest resources help reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere by sequestering carbon dioxide through photosynthesis. The Ministry is supporting [CleanBC](#) by screening and planting trees that are more resistant to pests, diseases, and drought. Ministry researchers generate new and innovative scientific knowledge on climate change adaptation to support decision-making towards the successful management of B.C.'s forests.

Central to the Ministry's mandate are its commitments to meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and considerations of how diverse groups of British Columbians may experience Provincial policies and programs. The Ministry has a fiduciary responsibility to manage forest resources for public benefit, but decisions about forests and forest landscapes have disproportionate impacts on First Nations and their inherent rights. The Ministry is aligning programs, policies, and legislation with the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UN Declaration). The Ministry also has been working on developing a responsive, diverse workforce that has a strong mandate to work collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples to realize these changes together.

In October 2023 the responsibility for the *Land Act*, *Water Sustainability Act*, *Wildlife Act*, and a number of other authorities for the administration of land, water, fish and wildlife were transferred from the Ministry of Forests to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. As a result, there are some changes to this 2024/25 service plan. The Ministry has introduced a new goal and associated performance measures to demonstrate how the Ministry is advancing proactive and collaborative natural hazard management in B.C. In addition, some content has been reorganized to reflect the Ministry's ongoing priorities, including its focus on transforming the forest sector, supporting a resilient and sustainable land-base, and delivering Government's priorities and the Ministry's mandate in a way that supports meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

## Economic Statement

B.C.'s economy posted modest growth last year as interest rate increases weighed on the economy, and employment continued to expand, supported by immigration. Inflation in the province continued to ease and the Bank of Canada has not raised its policy interest rate since July 2023. The impact of higher rates on borrowing costs and elevated household debt led to lower consumer spending and reduced home sales. Lumber, natural gas and coal prices declined in 2023, reducing the value of the province's goods exports. Meanwhile, there was a record number of housing starts in the province in 2023. There is uncertainty over the transmission of high interest rates to the residential construction sector and the duration of slower growth for the rest of the economy in B.C. and among our trading partners. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP expanded by 0.9 per cent in 2023 and expects growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 2.1 per cent in 2025. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC estimates growth of 1.1 per cent in 2023 and projects national real GDP growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 1.9 per cent in 2025. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to be broadly in line with the national average in the coming years. The risks to B.C.'s economic outlook continue to center around interest rates and inflation, including the risk of price increases stemming from geopolitical conflicts, the potential for interest rates remaining higher for longer, and uncertainty around the depth and timing of the impact on housing markets. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies, lower commodity prices, climate change impacts and the volatility of immigration levels.

## Performance Planning

### **Goal 1: Economic Benefits and Resilience for All People in British Columbia**

The Ministry is committed to supporting a strong future for the forest industry in B.C. and is taking action to increase the value and resilience of forests and rangelands to achieve the highest economic returns possible for people in B.C. Through forest policy modernization and transformational initiatives, the Ministry is enabling greater planning certainty and diversified participation to respond to the present and emerging challenges and opportunities facing the forest sector, and is supporting good jobs for families and communities.

Some actions to support this goal have changed from previous service plans due to the transfer of responsibilities pertaining to land, water, fish and wildlife authorizations to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. The performance measure tracking Client Satisfaction with natural resource authorization services has also been removed as a result of this change.

### **Objective 1.1: Support a strong economy and strengthen forest policy to create the conditions for an innovative, diverse and sustainable forest sector**

This objective directs Ministry efforts towards creating the conditions that support a vibrant, innovative forest sector in B.C. Through specific policy changes and initiatives aimed towards modernizing forest policy, the Ministry is leading a forest sector transition to enhance stewardship and sustainability, as well as increase forest sector participation and economic development in the province.

#### **Key Strategies**

- [Modernize Forest Policy in British Columbia](#), and support ongoing transformation of B.C.'s forest sector through implementing policy, regulatory and legislative changes that benefit communities and Indigenous Peoples, maintain a competitive forest industry, and promote excellence in stewardship;
- Encourage forest industry diversification through initiatives that strengthen B.C.'s value-added manufacturing sector, including the new BC Timber Sales Value-Added Manufacturing Program that will provide a dedicated supply of fibre to the value-added sector;
- Facilitate the growth of B.C.'s bioeconomy through key partnerships that advance manufacturing of new and innovative forest products, supporting the Province's [CleanBC Roadmap to 2030](#);
- Represent B.C.'s interests in Canada-US litigation on the softwood lumber dispute and fight unwarranted softwood lumber duties by working with the federal government to challenge the duties through the [North American Free Trade Agreement](#), [the Canada –](#)

[U.S. – Mexico Agreement](#) and the World Trade Organization dispute settlement processes.

### **Discussion**

This objective addresses how the Ministry is supporting B.C.'s forest sector in an era of change. Changing needs and interests of Indigenous and local communities, a changing climate, as well as a decreasing timber supply are some of the influencing factors.

Through bold initiatives to strengthen the forest sector in B.C., the Ministry is leading a forest sector transition and finding new ways to manage B.C.'s forests. Together with Indigenous Peoples, other ministries, interested parties and communities, the Ministry is supporting forest sector diversification, as outlined in the Modernizing Forest Policy in British Columbia Intentions Paper. This work aims to provide more opportunities for communities and First Nations to participate in the forest economy, and to create the conditions that encourage a shift from a "high volume" to "high value" mindset through expanding opportunities for the value-added sector and B.C.'s bioeconomy.

The Ministry is exploring ways to accelerate supply of timber and fibre for manufacturing and value-added processing in B.C. Through the creation of the BC Timber Sales Value-Added Manufacturing Program, BC Timber Sales (BCTS) is providing harvest opportunities through competitive auction to Crown timber for non-tenured or minimally tenured timber processing facilities. In addition, the Ministry is leading the [Value-Added Accelerators](#) in partnership with the Value-added Wood Coalition, [First Nations Forestry Council](#) and [Council of Forest Industries](#). The Value-Added Accelerators will develop solutions to grow value-added manufacturing in B.C. as a critical element of an integrated, competitive forest industry. The Ministry is also working to strengthen and improve the [Residual Fibre Utilization Policy](#) to increase fibre security and to address the demand from secondary and value-added manufacturers for sustainable fibre supply.

The Ministry tracks progress towards this objective through performance measure 1.1, which demonstrates the success of economic diversification activities, including the promotion of value-added forest manufacturing. The Ministry is also working to ensure timely and strong representation of B.C.'s interests in the softwood lumber dispute.

### **Objective 1.2: Integrated, coordinated and timely delivery of authorizations services to citizens, clients and businesses**

This objective promotes effective management of service delivery processes in order to ensure that the Ministry is supporting a strong economy and providing public services that British Columbians can rely on.

### **Key Strategies**

- Deliver forest, range, and archaeology authorizations services and decisions in accordance with the requirements of service users and standards of the Ministry;
- Continue to monitor and improve the timeliness and ease of access of authorizations services;

- Provide focused compliance and enforcement services to ensure responsible natural resource stewardship.

**Discussion**

The Ministry is responsible for statutory decision-making for forests, range, and archaeology activities in B.C., receiving on average over 15,000 applications annually for forests and archaeology authorizations alone. These decisions are complex – the Ministry must consider multiple interests on the land-base to provide reliable, effective services that meet the needs of clients and businesses, support reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and achieve the Ministry’s stewardship objectives. Through its monitoring, compliance, and enforcement services the Ministry ensures that natural resource legislation and associated decisions are upheld, including Crown land tenures and trespass, dam safety, forestry and range practices, water use, and conservation of heritage resources.

Delivering durable, coordinated, and timely decisions is a priority for the Ministry, and concerted efforts are made in this area to ensure continuous improvement. Progress towards this objective is monitored through internal metrics on application workload, staff capacity and processing timelines.

**Performance Measures**

| Performance Measure   | 2023/24 Forecast       | 2024/25 Target         | 2025/26 Target         | 2026/27 Target         |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1.1 Annual BCTS timber volume auctioned, targeted at the value-add sector | 520,000 m <sup>3</sup> | 750,000 m <sup>3</sup> | 670,000 m <sup>3</sup> | 680,000 m <sup>3</sup> |

Data source: BC Timber Sales

**Discussion**

Under the direction of the Ministry, BC Timber Sales manages about 20 percent of the province’s allowable annual cut for Crown timber, operating in 33 communities, directly supporting over 8,000 jobs across B.C.

The value-added sector is primarily made up of small- to medium- sized companies that manufacture a diverse range of specialty products that maximize the value of B.C.’s forests. One of the contributing factors to the value-added sector’s ability to maintain capacity and create new and innovative products and processes is access to fibre (both logs and lumber); however, many value-added manufacturers do not hold replaceable Crown tenure and may source input materials through the open market. In order to support this vital sector of the forest industry, BCTS provides harvest opportunities through competitive auction to Crown timber for non-tenured or minimally tenured timber processing facilities.

This performance measure tracks how much timber is sold at auction to the value-added sector, providing critical data to the Ministry to guide decisions about how it can continue to better support the growth of this sector. Targets are set based on the amount of volume

apportioned to BCTS and may be adjusted annually based on market conditions and government direction.

## **Goal 2: Partnerships to Advance Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples**

Furthering Government's commitment to work toward true and lasting reconciliation, the Ministry is taking action to expand opportunities for First Nations to participate and collaborate in forest planning, share decision-making, and realize benefits from forestry and the forest economy.

### **Objective 2.1: Strengthen partnerships and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples in the management of the land base and forest resources in B.C.**

This objective is directed at improving the engagement activities that would result in economic development for Indigenous communities and Peoples. The Ministry is committed to the B.C. Government's plans to share the sustainable management of the province's natural resources with Indigenous Peoples.

#### **Key Strategies**

- Continue implementation of the UN Declaration through application of the [\*Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act\*](#) in alignment with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and other ministries;
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the Ministry of Finance, continue work with First Nations to co-develop a new fiscal framework and forestry revenue sharing model;
- Explore greater opportunities to promote partnerships through program-level operations and government-to-government mandates;
- In collaboration with First Nations and with support from the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, transform the [\*Heritage Conservation Act\*](#) in accordance with the [\*Declaration Act Action Plan\*](#);
- Continue to reform forest legislation, regulations and policy to reflect a shared strategic vision with First Nations that upholds the rights articulated in the UN Declaration.

#### **Discussion**

The Ministry has a key role in supporting genuine and enduring reconciliation with First Nations, and is focused on several priorities to advance reconciliation. This includes changing the approach to manage and make decisions around B.C.'s heritage resources by making long-sought changes to the *Heritage Conservation Act*; and implementing improvements to forest service roads to enhance access to remote First Nations communities. The Ministry is also continuing to work towards increasing the amount of replaceable forest tenure held by First

Nations, co-developing a new fiscal framework, and creating more tenure opportunities for First Nations.

The Ministry recognizes that these initiatives are just a start. The Ministry also has long-term reconciliation strategies, with critical work focused on the development of [Declaration Act Section 7](#) agreements to legalize co-management approaches and to share the benefits provided by B.C.'s forests. Through this work, the Ministry is taking action – as directed by the Declaration Act Action Plan – to create a more prosperous and inclusive future for all British Columbians, now and for generations to come.

**Objective 2.2:** In partnership with First Nations, implement a new vision for forest management that prioritizes B.C.'s ecosystem health and community resiliency

The Ministry recognizes and honours First Nations' rights and title on their traditional territories. To further our government's commitments in this respect, the Ministry continually seeks opportunities to partner with First Nations communities to ensure forest management practices benefit from Indigenous stewardship, values, and knowledge.

### Key Strategies

- In partnership with First Nations and other interested parties, continue to advance implementation of the recommendations from the [old growth strategic review](#), which will be guided by the Old Growth Action Plan and advanced in collaboration with partner ministries;
- Continue to work toward full partnership with First Nations in managing B.C.'s forest resources through collaborative management agreements, shared decision-making tables, and [forest landscape planning](#);
- Co-develop a [cultural and prescribed fire](#) program with First Nations and local governments to enable cultural and prescribed fire as an accessible, efficient land management tool that supports the integrated and expanded use of prescribed fire, and enables the use of cultural fire by Indigenous Peoples;
- Work collaboratively with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and First Nations governments to develop land-use objectives through [modernized land use planning](#), ensuring that sustainable natural resource management reflects shared social, cultural, economic, and environmental values.

### Discussion

The Ministry is committed to a new integrated approach to enhance forest ecosystem health and resiliency throughout the province, and is working to achieve full partnership with First Nations in the management of B.C.'s forests through a number of actions and strategies.

The Ministry is working with First Nations, interested parties, and others to continue implementation of the recommendations from the Old Growth Strategic Review. In 2024/25, the Ministry will continue to implement the strategic and operational commitments made



through the Old Growth Action Plan, which will guide the management of B.C.'s old forests into the future.

Cultural and prescribed fire supports land-based revitalization and forest health, and can be utilised as a restoration tool for improving community safety and well-being. Many First Nations in B.C. have a long history of utilizing fire to nurture ecosystems, and controlled burning can connect First Nations to traditional foods as well as spiritual resources. The Ministry is committed to adapting and updating policies and practices to increase cultural and prescribed fire across the province.

The Ministry monitors progress towards its objective through performance measure 2.1, which demonstrates progress towards building and implementing a cultural and prescribed burning program with First Nations.

### Performance Measures

| Performance Measure  | 2020/21 Baseline | 2023/24 Forecast | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target | 2026/27 Target |
|--|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2.1 Number of cultural and prescribed fire projects developed by or co-developed with First Nations <sup>1,2,3</sup> | 3                | 26               | 40             | 60             | 85             |

Data source: BCWS prescribed fire provincial project data tracking spreadsheet

<sup>1</sup>“Cultural and prescribed fire” is defined by the Wildfire Regulation as Resource Management Open Fire and includes the use of fire by government for purposes established in Section 18 of the *Wildfire Act*; “Developed by First Nations” is a BCWS-approved independently developed First Nations’ burn plan. “Co-developed with First Nations” is: a First Nation actively engaged in project development, a First Nation is a burn plan co-proponent, or where cultural burning is the primary objective.

<sup>2</sup>The reporting period for this performance measure is January 1 to December 31.

<sup>3</sup>This performance measure was tracked under Goal 1 in the 2023/24 – 2025/26 service plan.

### Discussion

Cultural fire is an Indigenous-led practice of using fire on the land as part of First Nations stewardship practices, informed by cultural knowledge and objectives. Prescribed fire is the planned and controlled application of fire to the landscape to achieve objectives, including fuel management (risk reduction), habitat enhancement, ecosystem restoration, climate adaption and resilience, and pest management. These two practices have their roots in different management systems, but each contributes to ecosystem health and resilience, as well as reducing the risk of large-scale wildfire.

Burn planning ensures the use of fire supports the revitalization of ecosystems and does not damage environmental and other values, and incorporates considerations including fuel types, weather, topography, fire intensity, rate of spread, smoke management, and various local values and objectives. Burn plans ensure the use of fire is undertaken in safe conditions, and protects public safety. Projects are often developed in collaboration by burn proponents, burn practitioners and professionals.

This performance measure reports on the number of approved burn plans developed by or co-developed with First Nations. Tracking partnership-based burn plans allows the Ministry to assess its performance in relationship development, partnership opportunities, and capacity development which are the foundation of program growth. Burns can only be successfully conducted under favourable seasonal weather conditions which can vary significantly from year-to-year, and burn plans, rather than burn completion, is considered a more reliable measure of performance. A baseline was defined from the 2020/21 program data. Following assessment in 2023, targets for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 were adjusted from the 2023/24 Service Plan to reflect anticipated program growth. Targets are cumulative, and will be assessed annually and adjusted accordingly.

## **Goal 3: Proactive and Collaborative Natural Hazard Management**

Through this new goal for 2024/25, the Ministry commits to delivering the very best wildfire mitigation, preparedness, response, and land-based recovery to support strong, healthy, and resilient forests and communities. Through collaborating with First Nations, other governments, and agencies, the Ministry continues to implement a year-round, all-hazards approach to address the threat of extreme fire and other climate change induced events.

### **Objective 3.1: Improve community resiliency and reduce wildfire risk**

This objective aims to reduce the risks and impacts of wildfires through the implementation of a risk-assessment based approach, including incorporation of Indigenous values, knowledge and practices.

#### **Key Strategies:**

- Reduce risk and increase community resiliency through the implementation of [Government's Action Plan - Responding to wildfire and flood risks](#) and the development of a Provincial Risk Reduction Strategy to reduce wildfire risk in B.C. through targeted fuel management activities in high wildfire risk landscapes;
- Support work in treating the [Wildland Urban Interface](#) through delivery of [FireSmart](#) activities, and strengthen capacity of local emergency authorities and Indigenous communities to prepare and respond to wildfire events;
- Continue to provide advice, support, and funding to local governments through programs such as the [Community Resiliency Investment program](#) and [FireSmart](#) to strengthen capacity, reduce risk to communities, and improve preparedness for wildfires and other natural hazard events.

#### **Discussion**

As extreme climate events increase in frequency, complexity and severity, the Ministry recognizes the need to improve landscape and community resiliency through natural hazard prevention, preparedness, response, and land-based recovery.

The Ministry is advancing key actions such as co-developing a scalable cultural and prescribed fire program with Indigenous Peoples, working to increase FireSmart activities in communities, and developing a wildfire risk reduction strategy. Through these actions, the Ministry aims to reduce wildfire risk and improve B.C.'s resilience to the impacts of natural hazard events.

The Ministry tracks progress towards this objective through performance measure 3.1, which monitors wildfire risk reduction activities taking place on Crown land, focusing on areas around communities and critical infrastructure.

### **Objective 3.2: Deliver excellence in natural hazard incident management and support strong, healthy land-based recovery**

This objective focuses on the Ministry's efforts to improve natural hazard incident management and wildfire land-based recovery, which includes preparing for and responding to wildfire and natural hazard incidents, and repairing the land-base affected by a wildfire.

#### **Key Strategies:**

- Advance the action-oriented recommendations of the Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies in 2024 and beyond;
- Continue to make strategic investments in predictive technologies and capabilities to strengthen the Ministry's ability to anticipate and rapidly respond to wildfire events;
- In collaboration with First Nations governments, partners and interested parties, continue the development and implementation of a [wildfire land-based recovery](#) strategy to enhance ecosystem resilience and reduce future negative impacts from wildfire.

#### **Discussion**

Since 2017, unprecedented natural hazards have caused significant damage and destruction in the province and resulted in severe consequences for many people in British Columbia. The difficult work of recovery continues and is a priority for the Province, local and First Nations governments, and all those living in affected areas.

In October 2023, the Province launched the Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies to develop action-oriented recommendations on enhancing natural hazard emergency mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery in B.C. The Ministry plays an important role in transforming the task force's advice into actions that address key priorities related to emergency management and wildfire management in advance of the 2024 hazard season.

The Ministry is also working to repair the land-base affected by wildfire and wildfire suppression activities, including restoration to an acceptable level or, when feasible, improving sustainability and resiliency of the landscape to reduce vulnerability and future negative impacts by wildfire.

In addition, the Ministry is taking steps to further evolve the BC Wildfire Service into a year-round multi-hazard preparedness and response organization. This includes working with

municipalities and First Nations to improve coordinated response through the development of a Wildfire Emergency Response Strategy for B.C. that improves the transparency of BC Wildfire policies, workflows, and procedures and strengthens a partnership-based approach to wildfire response.

The Ministry monitors progress towards this objective through performance measure 3.2, which tracks the Ministry’s obligation to recover the land-base affected by wildfire suppression activities.

**Performance Measures**

| Performance Measure   | 2020/21 Baseline | 2023/24 Forecast | 2024/25 Target <sup>1</sup> | 2025/26 Target <sup>1</sup> | 2026/27 Target <sup>1</sup> |
|---|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3.1 Area treated with the priority objective of reducing wildfire risk in and around communities and critical infrastructure (ha) | 3,000            | 4,500            | 5,000                       | 9,000                       | 9,000                       |

Data source: BC Wildfire Service

<sup>1</sup>Includes fuel management activities completed by the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC), as reported in the FESBC 2024/25-2026/27 Service Plan.

**Discussion**

With the ever-increasing frequency and severity of wildfires in B.C., proactively mitigating the effects of wildfire on public lands around communities is a priority for the Ministry.

Through the BC Wildfire Service, the Community Resiliency Investment Program funds wildfire risk reduction activities including cultural and prescribed fire, fuel management planning and treatments, and wildfire risk reduction activities targeting critical infrastructure such as government owned radio repeaters, weather stations, and airtanker bases. The BC Wildfire Service uses its Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk Class Framework to support and prioritize these wildfire risk reduction initiatives and improve public safety.

Performance measure 3.1 is new to the 2024/25 service plan, and reports the area of completed fuel management activities with a primary objective of reducing wildfire risk by modifying forest fuel attributes around communities. The targets are set using a trend-based analysis, and data is collected through various programs and initiatives such as BC Wildfire Service spatial databases.

In the short to medium-term, targets reflect the planning activities (Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans, WUI Wildfire Risk Reduction Plans and Fuel Management Prescriptions) needed before operational fuel management activities can take place. Over the longer term as the program evolves, a percentage of hectares treated will be maintenance (e.g. prescribed fire, brushing to manage surface fuel) of existing fuel breaks to ensure they maintain effectiveness.

| Performance Measure  | 2020/21 Baseline | 2023/24 Forecast | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target | 2026/27 Target |
|--|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 3.2 Rehabilitation plans created for wildfires that require rehabilitation treatment | 80%              | 85%              | 90%            | 95%            | 100%           |

Data source: BC Wildfire Service

### Discussion

Wildfire Land-Based Recovery was added as a new program to the BC Wildfire Service in 2023, as the fourth pillar of emergency management. Wildfire Land-Based Recovery is a phase of emergency management in which steps are taken to repair the land-base affected by a wildfire itself and wildfire suppression activities.

Government's Wildfire Land-Based Recovery process is intended to reduce the negative impacts of select wildfires. One of the areas of work is wildfire suppression rehabilitation, which is a form of deactivation, specific to fire suppression activities. The amount of fire suppression activities can range from 100 to 5,000 km of disturbances annually, and rehabilitation project completion is a year-round effort.

This performance measure is new to the 2024/25 service plan. It tracks the Ministry's creation of wildfire rehabilitation plans in areas affected by wildfire suppression activities, including creation of fireguards, modified roads, trails, and handguards constructed during a wildfire response. Targets are set based on an average fire season and are tracked closely by the BC Wildfire Service. Rehabilitation plans prescribe treatments to address detrimental impacts to the land during wildfire suppression while promoting ecosystem resiliency. The Ministry collaborates with First Nations communities, especially when it comes to planning and implementing rehabilitation works on Crown land.

## Goal 4: Sustainable Forest Stewardship for All Values

The Ministry is dedicated to ensuring that the economic benefits, recreational opportunities, and cultural significance associated with B.C.'s forests, rangelands, and heritage resources are responsibly managed and preserved for future generations.

Some strategies under this goal have changed from previous service plans due to the transfer of responsibilities pertaining to fish, wildlife, habitat, and species-at-risk to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. The previous performance measure reporting the timely completion and publication of Annual Regulation Cycle per category for fish and wildlife was also removed as a result of this change.

## **Objective 4.1:** Revitalize and protect B.C.'s forests, and strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation activities

The [Intergovernmental panel on climate change](#) recognizes that land management is critical for mitigating climate change and its impacts. In this context, strengthening B.C.'s ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change continues to be an important objective for the Ministry.

Through this objective, the Ministry is advancing towards its goal of sustainable natural resource management while taking steps to protect B.C.'s forests by fostering innovative management activities, modernizing forest policies to include Indigenous Peoples' perspectives, and strengthening the resiliency of B.C.'s forests to climate change.

### **Key Strategies**

- Invest in forest management activities that reduce emissions, enhance carbon sequestration, and rehabilitate and restore forests, such as reforestation, improving fibre utilization, planting higher densities, forest health treatments, and expanding fertilization;
- Continue to develop, update, and implement Climate Action Plans to incorporate climate adaptation and mitigation strategies into the Ministry's core businesses using the latest climate science, data, and Indigenous knowledge;
- Develop a Climate Adaptation Policy Framework to underpin the Ministry's climate policies, strategies, and priorities, and guide legislative and regulatory amendments to enable the consideration of climate risks and data in Ministry decision-making and operations;
- With support from the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, 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](#).

### **Discussion**

Through the Forest Investment Program, the Ministry is investing in fertilization, reforestation, tree improvement, and road rehabilitation to increase carbon sequestration, and is encouraging better use of wood fibre to reduce slash pile burning. The Ministry's efforts towards climate action and implementation planning include developing strategies, tools, and guidance to manage climate risks and support operational decision-making and climate policy development. Through research, education, policy, and decision support tools, the Ministry works to incorporate climate change information into its natural resource assessment, planning, and development initiatives with the goal of creating resilient communities and ecosystems.

The Ministry monitors progress through performance measure 4.1, which tracks how the Ministry's forest investment activities are reducing the province's greenhouse gas emissions. The Ministry is also working to implement the activities outlined in the forest bioeconomy pathway of the CleanBC Roadmap to 2030, including advancing the manufacturing and

markets for B.C. bioproducts. In 2024/25 the Ministry is developing and completing public engagement on a Climate Adaptation Policy Framework, a strategic anchor underpinning the Ministry's climate policies, strategies, and priorities.

### **Objective 4.2:** Deliver effective and collaborative forest and range management and planning to support ecosystem health

The Ministry is working to implement a transformative approach to forest stewardship in B.C. with First Nations, that supports healthy ecosystems, resilient communities and sustainable economies.

#### **Key Strategies**

- Advance forest landscape planning in B.C. through the development of regulation, policy, and guidance, that will effectively support new and existing government-to-government planning tables;
- Continue to strengthen and improve B.C.'s forest stewardship planning framework through transformation of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and to help address local issues.

#### **Discussion**

Through the forest landscape planning framework, the Ministry is working with First Nations rights holders to establish legal direction for forestry practices – harvesting, roadbuilding and other investments - for the management of forest resource values within a planning area. Central to this new approach is working collaboratively with First Nations to co-develop plans, and engaging communities, forest tenure holders, and other interested parties. Development of forest landscape plans enables First Nations to partner in the development of operational plans that direct forest management and operations in their territories.

The Ministry monitors progress towards this objective through performance measure 4.2, which tracks the phased implementation of forest landscape planning across B.C. Through the Declaration Act Action Plan progress reporting, the Ministry is also tracking the number of collaborative stewardship agreements, which includes collaborative forest landscape plan projects and the number of First Nations that are engaged.

### **Objective 4.3:** Deliver exceptional research and scientific analysis to sustainably manage B.C.'s forests and natural resources

This objective relates to the Ministry's role of conducting [science-based research](#) and analysis that informs the development of policies and regulations that guide sustainable natural resource management and decisions.

#### **Key Strategies**

- Provide scientific expertise and analysis, and continue to invest in operationally relevant and innovative science-based research to guide resource management decisions;

- Advance the goals and priorities of the [Future Forest Ecosystem Centre 2023-2025 Strategic Plan](#), focusing on climate data, ecological forecasting, and capacity building;
- Work collaboratively with other ministries and agencies to collectively provide science that supports natural resource management;
- Enable forest carbon-offset projects on provincial public forest lands, and generate new scientific knowledge on forest carbon and climate change to support decision-making, and support changes in behavior and practices through education, outreach, and development of decision support tools.

**Discussion**

This objective ensures that the Ministry has the science-based information needed to inform the development of policies and programs that support durable natural resource management decisions that support environmental sustainability. The research delivered by the Ministry is operationally relevant and responsive to existing and emerging needs. On an annual basis more than 140 research projects provide critical information in key areas including climate change, old growth, timber supply, and forest health.

The Ministry’s research scientists communicate their work by [publishing in peer-reviewed journals, technical reports, and extension publications](#) with direct applicability to natural resource management. Through the Future Forest Ecosystems Centre 2023-2025 Strategic Plan, the Ministry is supporting the understanding of how climatic disruption will affect ecosystems by forecasting climate change impacts to B.C.’s forest ecosystems using scientific methods and data.

**Performance Measures**

| Performance Measure   | 2023/24 Forecast | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target | 2026/27 Target |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 4.1 Greenhouse gas emissions reduced or sequestered through forest investment activities (MtCO <sub>2</sub> e) <sup>1,2</sup> | 2.0              | 2.0            | 2.0            | 2.0            |

Data source: Forest Carbon and Climate Services Branch

<sup>1</sup>Emission reductions and sequestration delivered in the current fiscal year are measured in units of MtCO<sub>2</sub>e (Millions Tonnes Carbon Dioxide Equivalent) and the cumulative benefits of each year’s activities are modeled up to the year 2050.

<sup>2</sup>Targets are based on funding commitments and may be adjusted in future plans.

**Discussion**

The performance measure tracks the cumulative greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 2050 resulting from investments in each fiscal year, demonstrating the impact of Ministry strategies to mitigate climate change risk and its effects. Estimates are updated annually to reflect changes in program delivery, impacts of disturbances that occur after treatment, and methodological improvements.



Targets for this measure are set by assessing current and ongoing funding from multiple sources including the Forest Investment Program and CleanBC, as well as recoveries from the federal [2 Billion Trees program](#), and determining the greenhouse gas emissions reduced or sequestered through activities funded by these programs.

| Performance Measure  | 2023/24 Forecast | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target <sup>3</sup> | 2026/27 Target <sup>3</sup> |
|--|------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4.2 Number of forest landscape plans initiated with First Nations through government-to-government agreements <sup>1</sup> | 8 <sup>2</sup>   | 3              | TBD                         | TBD                         |

Data source: Office of the Chief Forester.

<sup>1</sup>This performance measure was tracked under Goal 2 in the 2023/24 – 2025/26 service plan.

<sup>2</sup>Four pilot projects were also initiated in 2020/21, and work continues to complete those projects.

<sup>3</sup>Targets for 2025/26 and 2026/27 will be determined over the course of 2024/25, based on resourcing and other criteria.

## Discussion

Forest landscape planning was introduced in Bill 23, the *Forest Statutes Amendment Act* in November 2021 as a new forest management planning regime under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* that will replace the existing [Forest Stewardship Plans](#) regime over time. Forest landscape plans will be integral in delivering on the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review.

Conducted in partnership with First Nations governments and in collaboration with forest and range tenure holders, forest landscape plans provide legal direction for where and how forest management activities, such as timber harvesting, road layout, and silviculture activities, can occur on the land-base, for the 10-year life of the plan. These plans will also address values such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, old growth management, species-at-risk and wildlife habitat, wildfire risk reduction and wildfire resiliency management, recreation, cultural values, and watershed health.

This performance measure tracks the Ministry's efforts to successfully engage with First Nations on this initiative, which is a first critical step towards implementing forest landscape plans across B.C. Priorities for new projects are identified in collaboration with First Nations partners and natural resource sector ministries, and are considered initiated once a government-to-government agreement has been signed by both parties. Four forest landscape plan pilot projects are currently underway in partnership with First Nations, communities, and the forest sector, which will help inform future forest landscape planning processes. In early 2023 the Ministry identified resourcing to support eight new Forest Landscape Plans projects over a three-year period, and initiated engagement with First Nations build agreement on priority areas. As of November 2023, agreements were reached on five new forest landscape plans projects, and discussions are underway to confirm the remaining three.

# Financial Summary

| (\$000s)                                    | 2023/24<br>Restated<br>Estimates <sup>1</sup> | 2024/25<br>Estimates | 2025/26<br>Plan | 2026/27<br>Plan |
|---|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Operating Expenses</b>                   |   |                      |                 |                 |
| Forest Resiliency and Archaeology           | 3,309   | 3,690                | 3,720           | 3,720           |
| Integrated Resource Operations              | 53,424  | 58,468               | 58,468          | 58,468          |
| Office of the Chief Forester                | 134,568                                       | 131,111              | 131,111         | 131,111         |
| Timber, Range and Economics                 | 11,264  | 11,781               | 11,781          | 11,781          |
| Fire Preparedness                           | 45,437  | 46,992               | 46,992          | 46,992          |
| Regional Operations                         | 97,770  | 102,551              | 102,520         | 102,520         |
| Executive and Support Services              | 58,520  | 59,400               | 59,401          | 59,401          |
| Fire Management                             | 204,120                                       | 232,736              | 238,047         | 238,047         |
| BC Timber Sales Account                     | 236,929                                       | 203,941              | 219,056         | 235,928         |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>845,341</b>                                | <b>850,670</b>       | <b>871,096</b>  | <b>887,968</b>  |
| <b>Capital Expenditures</b>                 |   |                      |                 |                 |
| Executive and Support Services              | 35,749  | 55,448               | 34,948          | 34,948          |
| Fire Management                             | 16,000  | 16,000               | 13,500          | 11,001          |
| BC Timber Sales Account                     | 41,107  | 54,095               | 49,693          | 47,362          |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>92,856</b>                                 | <b>125,543</b>       | <b>98,141</b>   | <b>93,311</b>   |
| <b>Other Financing Transactions</b>         |   |                      |                 |                 |
| BC Timber Sales Account Disbursements       | 89,131  | 106,017              | 107,238         | 97,934          |
| BC Timber Sales Account Receipts            | (0,000)                                       | (0,000)              | (0,000)         | (0,000)         |
| <b>Total Disbursements</b>                  | <b>89,131</b>                                 | <b>106,017</b>       | <b>107,238</b>  | <b>97,934</b>   |
| <b>Total Receipts</b>                       | <b>(0,000)</b>                                | <b>(0,000)</b>       | <b>(0,000)</b>  | <b>(0,000)</b>  |
| <b>Total Net Cash Requirements (Source)</b> | <b>89,131</b>                                 | <b>106,017</b>       | <b>107,238</b>  | <b>97,934</b>   |

<sup>1</sup> For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2023/24 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2024/25 Estimates.

\* Further information on program funding and vote recoveries is available in the [Estimates and Supplement to the Estimates](#).

## Forest Practices Board Resource Summary

The Forest Practices Board (the board) independently monitors and reviews forest and range practices in B.C.'s public forests and rangelands. The Board audits both tenure holders and government ministries for compliance with forest and range practices legislation, carries out special investigations and issues reports as appropriate, investigates concerns and complaints from the public, and participates in appeals to the [Forest Appeals Commission](#). It informs both the B.C. public and the international marketplace of forest and range licensees' performance in carrying out sound practices and complying with legal requirements.

The Board's mandate is provided by the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and the *Wildfire Act*. While the Board operates independently from the Ministry of Forests, its budget vote is the responsibility of the Minister. The Board reports its accomplishments and priorities through an annual report that can be at: [www.bcfpb.ca](http://www.bcfpb.ca).

| Forest Practices Board            | 2023/24<br>Restated<br>Estimates <sup>1</sup> | 2024/25<br>Estimates | 2025/26<br>Plan | 2026/27<br>Plan |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Operating Expenses (\$000)</b> |   |                      |                 |                 |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>3.986</b>                                  | <b>3.991</b>         | <b>3.991</b>    | <b>3.991</b>    |

<sup>1</sup> For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2023/24 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2024/25 Estimates.

\*Further information on program funding and vote recoveries is available in the [Estimates and Supplement to the Estimates](#).

## Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of February 2024, the Minister of Forests is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

### **Coastal Logging Equipment Support Trust**

The purpose of the Coast Logging Equipment Support Trust is to help eligible contractors that are negatively impacted by the ongoing labour dispute between the United Steel Workers and Western Forest Products, and the continued weakness in key markets for lumber and limited access to logs.

### **Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia**

The purpose of the Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia (FESBC) is to identify and fund projects that advance the environmental and resource stewardship of British Columbia's forests.

### **Forest Practices Board**

The Forest Practices Board provides independent oversight of tenure holders' and government ministries' compliance with the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and the *Wildfire Act* through monitoring and reviewing forest and range practices in B.C.'s public forests and rangelands.

### **Managed Forest Land Council**

The Managed Forest Council is an independent provincial agency established under the *Private Managed Forest Land Act*. The objective of the Council is to encourage forest management practices on private managed forest land in B.C., taking into account the social, environmental, and economic benefits of those practices.

### **Timber Export Advisory Committee**

The Timber Export Advisory Committee provides recommendations to the Minister regarding the export of timber originating from lands within British Columbia that is regulated for manufacture in British Columbia by the Government of British Columbia.

# **Forest Enhancement Society of BC**

## **2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan**

**February 2024**



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