

Conservation of Ecological Integrity in B.C. Parks and Protected Areas

As at: August 20, 2012

Released: 23 August 2010

1st Follow-up: October 2011

Discussed by the Public Accounts Committee: 7 December 2010

Self-assessment conducted by BC Parks

Comments:

Overall, BC Parks has successfully implemented the Ministry's commitments regarding the seven recommendations made by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) in the 2010 performance audit on the conservation of ecological integrity in parks and protected areas. For this self-assessment, we have included the original ministry response to each of the recommendations in the first paragraph. The second paragraph outlines the implementation of the commitments made in our response.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED IN PREVIOUS FOLLOW-UP REPORT(S):	SELF-ASSESSED STATUS
Recommendation 1: The ministry update its BC Parks Program Plan so that it includes clarification of ecological integrity and performance targets that adequately address the ministry's goal of proactive stewardship of ecological integrity.	Alternative action taken
Recommendation 7: The ministry report periodically to the Legislative Assembly and public on how it is conserving ecological integrity in the province's parks and protected areas system.	Fully or substantially implemented

Outstanding Recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS	SELF-ASSESSED STATUS
Recommendation 2: The ministry complete the strategic direction and procedural guidelines for its Conservation Management Program and ensure that the Conservation Program policies are consistently upheld.	Fully or substantially implemented

Actions taken, results and/or actions planned

Ministry response: BC Parks Conservation Management policy will be updated by the end of the 2011/12 fiscal year.

Implementation: A review of the existing conservation policy set was completed. Conservation policies have been updated to reflect the BC Parks definition of ecological integrity and consideration of adaptation to climate change. The updated conservation policy set is in the final approval stage and will be available on the BC Parks website once approved. Existing policy gaps will be addressed on an ongoing basis. Strategic direction in the form of a Conservation Strategy (2012-2015) for the program area is in final draft. Once approved, it will also be posted on the BC Parks website.

Recommendations (Cont.)

<p>Recommendation 3: Government develop a plan to address current gaps in the parks and protected areas system.</p>	<p>Fully or substantially implemented</p>
<p>Actions taken, results and/or actions planned</p>	
<p>Ministry response: The Ministry will maintain the land acquisition program and ensure that ecological representation continues to be a primary consideration in the prioritization of properties. Work will continue with other provincial resource management ministries to use a variety of land management tools to manage for ecological function across regional landscapes. This includes specific identification and protection of rare and endangered habitats.</p>	
<p>Implementation: BC Parks reviewed and revised the land acquisition criteria to ensure that ecological values are appropriately represented. The revised criteria have been shared with BC Parks regional planning staff for their use in assessing and recommending private lands for acquisition.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4: The ministry obtain the information it needs in order to determine management actions for the conservation of ecological integrity and ensure that its policy of developing a five-year conservation management activities plan (research, inventory and monitoring) is met.</p>	<p>Fully or substantially implemented</p>
<p>Actions taken, results and/or actions planned</p>	
<p>Ministry response: Staff training will occur on the use of the Conservation Risk Assessment (CRA) tool and annual business plans will be updated to include targets for completion of the risk assessments. BC Parks will update its policies to reflect advancements in the CRA model. The ministry will continue to develop the Citizen Science Monitoring Program for protected areas and pilot this approach in regions in 2011/12.</p>	
<p>Implementation: The BC Parks Conservation Risk Assessment is an existing tool that holds both information about ecological values and threats to those values on a park by park basis. Updating this database occurs on an ongoing basis. Refresher training for staff groups commenced in 2011 and is ongoing through 2012/13. Regional Conservation Specialists are accountable for training regional staff and for seeing that the CRA is up to date in their region. The goal is to ensure that all field staff are trained in using CRA which includes, adding data and using the data to assist with management decisions. The second major piece of work related to this recommendation is the development of a long term ecological monitoring program using citizen science. The program has been rolled out in summer 2012 in eight major biomes of BC. Simple protocols for key indicators continue to be field tested with data beginning to be collected in all regions. A data storage system has been developed. The program will continue to grow in the years to come as more sites and volunteers come on board.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5: The ministry review and update its Master Plans Policy to clarify what type of management plan is required for each park and protected area, how ecological integrity in each area will be conserved and when each plan should be reviewed and updated.</p>	<p>Fully or substantially implemented</p>
<p>Actions taken, results and/or actions planned</p>	
<p>Ministry response: By the end of 2011/12 the Management Plan policy will be updated to reflect current approaches. This will include the shift from prescriptive to outcome based direction. Management plans will be developed and reviewed on a priority basis using a risk management approach subject to available funding.</p>	
<p>Implementation: Strategic policies for management planning are largely complete and in the final approval stage. The strategic policies will be available on the BC Parks website once approved.</p>	

Recommendations (Cont.)

Recommendation 6: The ministry conduct annual planning for each park and protected area to determine what actions are needed to address conservation objectives, threats and stressors, determine priorities from this plan, and monitor and evaluate action items against conservation objectives.

Fully or substantially implemented

Actions taken, results and/or actions planned

Ministry response: BC Parks will revise the Annual Management Planning (AMP) process using best practices by the end of 2011/12. The revised process will assist the agency in identifying key priorities to undertake and include a process to evaluate and monitor progress.

Implementation: BC Parks refined the existing Annual Management Planning process in Winter 2011 to ensure a simple and consistent approach across the province. The revised process was approved and rolled out for implementation in December 2011. All regions completed AMPs in 2011/12 which helped to set business plan priorities.