



From Strategy to Action

An Action Plan for **The Path We Share**
A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia

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From Strategy to Action

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From Strategy to Action

Sustainability, Diversity, Collaboration, Transparency and Informed Decision Making. These are the values that guide our 10-year natural resources strategy.

The strategy marks a departure from traditional natural resource management and is inspired by a vision of a sustainable and prosperous future—a vision described to us by Nova Scotians and reflected in *jobsHere*, the economic plan for Nova Scotia. As the foundation for the government’s extensive agenda of change, the principles inherent in that economic plan give direction to this strategy and the actions that flow from it.

The vision

In 2020 and beyond

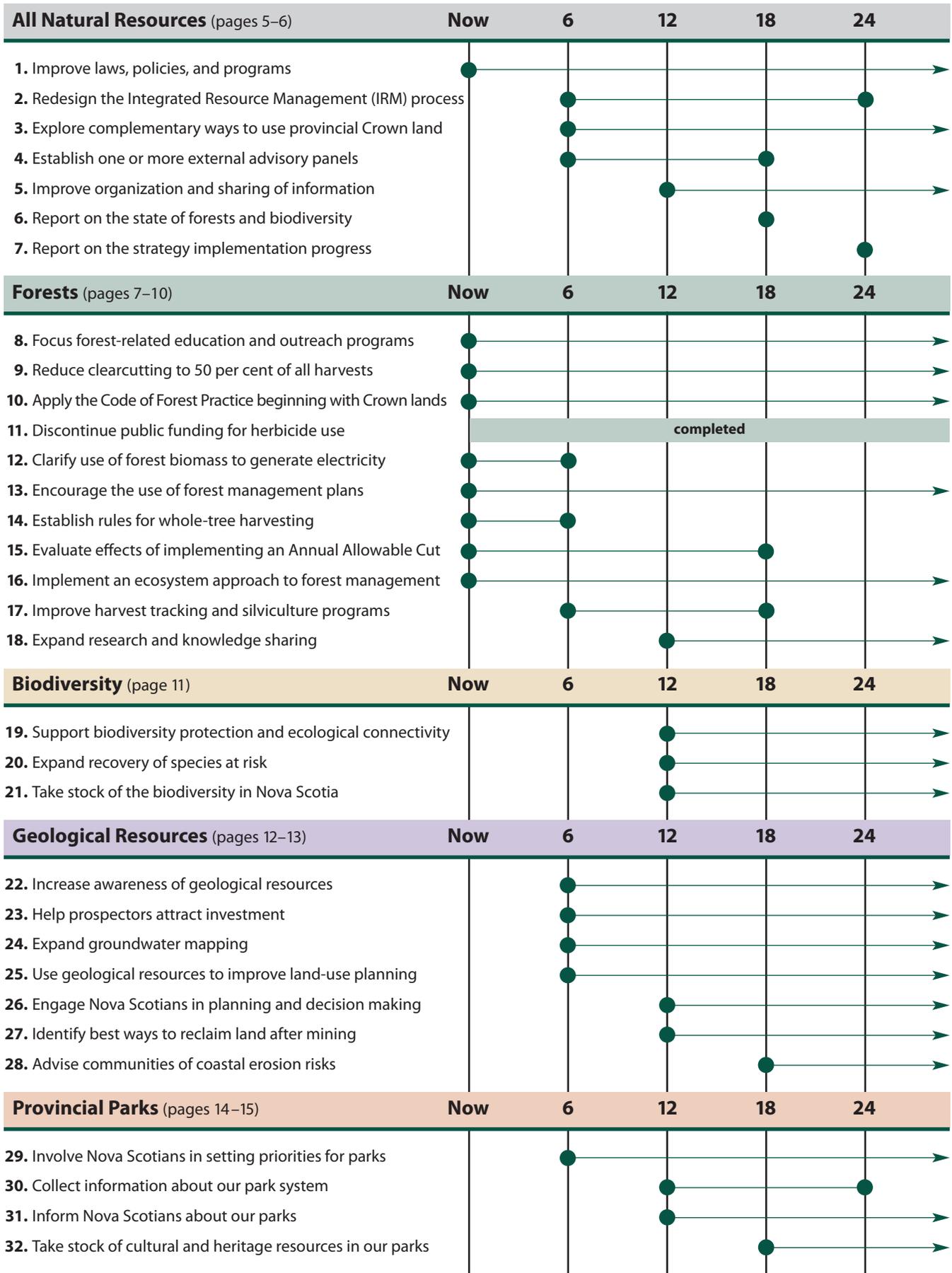
Nova Scotia is rich in natural resources, including biodiversity, forests, geological resources, and provincial parks.

Individuals and groups interested in our natural resources work with government to manage these resources wisely.

All Nova Scotians benefit from the natural health and wealth of the province.

Actions at a Glance

Timeline (months)



Putting Strategy Into Action

Natural resources mean many things to many people. They are a source of economic wealth, a natural wonder to be preserved, a place to enjoy life outdoors.

For two years, Nova Scotians engaged in a consultation process to talk about the future of our natural resources.

The first round of consultations (Phase 1) resulted in a document called *Our Common Ground*. It defined Nova Scotians' expectations in terms of the five values cited at the beginning of this document. Everything we do must hold true to those values.

The second round of consultations (Phase 2) focused on stakeholder engagement and technical expertise. Recommendations were presented in the report titled, *A Natural Balance*.

Together, those two efforts informed what has now emerged as *The Path We Share, A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia, 2011–2020*.

This strategy takes a new approach to natural resources management that can be summarized in four overarching goals

- collaborative leadership
- sustainable resource development
- research and knowledge sharing
- good governance

In addition, the strategy sets specific goals and actions in four areas of primary concern

- forests
- biodiversity
- geological resources
- provincial parks

Actions to carry out the strategy have already started, and there are more to come. We will continue to work with other government departments, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, industry, non-government organizations, academia, and other interested groups.

Government affirms the existing aboriginal and treaty rights in section 35 of the *Constitution Act* (1982). We will continue to consult with First Nations, using the *Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Consultation Terms of Reference*, whenever decisions being considered might affect these rights.

The following is an outline of actions taken and those we will take in the next 24 months.

All Natural Resources

What we're doing now

1. Improving laws, policies, and programs related to the development and conservation of Nova Scotia's natural resources.

We are overhauling laws and regulations as they relate to biodiversity, forests, geological resources, and parks. The following areas are priorities

- introduce biodiversity legislation
- make changes in regulations about forests
- review and update the *Mineral Resources Act*

What we'll start within 6 months

2. Redesign the Integrated Resource Management (IRM) process to guide resource management on public and private land.

We will consult with interested groups to determine how the IRM process should be reconfigured.

3. Explore complementary ways to use provincial Crown land.

Currently, Crown land that is not set aside for protection or recreation is used to generate revenue through forestry, agriculture, wind energy, communications, etc. Through the Land Asset Management Pilot Project, the Department of Natural Resources will look at ways to improve the decisions made about the use of Crown land, with a focus on developing wind and agricultural resources. This initiative will be linked to the IRM process redesign.

4. Establish external advisory panels to offer guidance to the Department of Natural Resources.

The department welcomes input from various Nova Scotians, including those in the scientific community and those with Mi'kmaq traditional knowledge. These panels will help the department by providing advice and feedback in areas such as research, reviews of research findings, strategy implementation, and measuring success of the strategy and its implementation.

What we'll start within 12 months

5. Improve the way key information about natural resources is organized and shared.

We will work with others across government to improve the way information on Nova Scotia's land and resources is shared between departments.

We will create a new Department of Natural Resources information system to

- streamline land resource transactions within the department
- pinpoint where particular resources are located on provincial lands

This work is expected to take five years to complete.

What we'll do within 18 months

6. Report on the state of Nova Scotia's natural resources.

Several reports are planned to look at how our land and natural resources are used, and social impacts of that use. Two already planned are

- the first report on the *State of Biodiversity* in Nova Scotia
- a report on the state of Nova Scotia's forests, with a focus on changes from 2005–2010

What we'll do within 24 months

7. Report on the strategy implementation progress, including that of the Forestry Policy Framework.

We will produce and publish the first biennial progress report on all actions contained in this document as well as all other actions that flow from the strategy.

Forests

What we've already done

With the release of this strategy, the province's definition of clearcutting in non-technical terms is *"The removal of all trees in an area at one time, except those required to be left uncut under the Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations."* At the time of publication, a technical definition of clearcutting was being developed.

The department, with the Nova Scotia Department of Energy, has completed the COMFIT (Community Feed-in-tariffs) biomass eligibility guidance document.

The government of Nova Scotia has put in place a series of measures in response to recommendations made by Woodbridge Associates, the consultants who provided an economic impact analysis of the new clearcutting policy. These measures will

- ease the burden of the new policy on the forest sector
- invest in small woodlot owners who want to participate in the forest sector

The measures include

- \$1 million to support small private woodlot owners; contracts will be in place for 2011–2012 operations
- \$4.1 million per year to enhance private land silviculture with a focus on non-clearcut harvesting (\$2.2 million in new money and \$1.9 million in reallocated money)

The Department of Natural Resources has also begun discussions with other government departments and agencies about

- job training and recruitment
- a review of transportation weight restrictions
- credit available to contractors

Silviculture

The Department of Natural Resources will continue to support silviculture programs on both private and Crown lands. These programs provide funding for forest management practices that promote forest growth and ways to increase the value of the trees in those forests.

Reduced the cap for new consumption of biomass.

The cap set for new consumption of forest biomass has been reduced to 350,000 dry tonnes per year, down from the original 500,000 dry tonnes per year for renewable electricity generation. This demonstrates a cautious approach to the use of this resource.

What we're doing now

8. Focusing education and outreach programs on shared stewardship to support the changes in forest policy and practices.

Education and outreach may include seminars and online information about sustainable forestry, better coordination of forest management and silviculture programs, support for professional associations, and forest certification services.

9. Reducing clearcutting to 50 per cent of all harvests.

A Policy Framework for the Future of Nova Scotia's Forestry, released in December 2010, set a target for reducing clearcutting to no more than 50 per cent of all harvests. The government of Nova Scotia has set a time limit of five years for reaching this target; the countdown began with the release of the strategy.

10. Applying the Code of Forest Practice on publicly and privately owned woodlands, beginning with Crown lands.

This code is a set of principles, guidelines, and technical recommendations for the sustainable management of Nova Scotia's forests. We are providing training to forest workers on factors that support non-clearcut harvesting. This training will be available to forest professionals, forest company staff, and woodlot owners and operators. It will include information on vegetation types, soil types, silviculture, and forest eco-sites.

Standards for biomass will be incorporated into this code.

11. Discontinuing public funding for herbicide use.

Public funds will continue to be available to support sustainable weed control practices, such as manual weeding, so that naturally and artificially regenerated areas will survive and thrive. However, public support will no longer be extended to the use of herbicides. This change is reflected in forest sustainability agreements. Woodland owners and operators may use herbicides at their own expense and in compliance with all safety and environmental regulations.

12. Clarifying the use of forest biomass to generate electricity.

Work is being done to change the Forest Sustainability Regulations to make biomass users subject to the same rules as the existing forest industry.

13. Encouraging the use of forest management plans.

While the Department of Natural Resources does not require land owners to have management plans, it does encourage their use as an essential part of woodland management. Such plans can be used to document sustainable forest management practices. Management plans complement sustainable fuel procurement plans, which the government of Nova Scotia requires companies have if they generate renewable electricity from forest biomass.

14. Establishing rules for whole-tree harvesting.

Rules for whole-tree harvesting will be developed as part of ongoing legislative and policy review actions, consultation, and engagement. Requirements for the use of tree stems—for electricity generation only—have been completed and added to regulations and policy documents. The government of Nova Scotia will continue to consult with interested groups to develop these rules for whole-tree harvesting. This is part of an ongoing review of legislation and policy.

15. Evaluating the effects of implementing an Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) to ensure the sustainability and productivity of Nova Scotia forests.

We are preparing a discussion paper that outlines the options surrounding an AAC for use in meetings with interested groups.

We are getting more accurate information about future wood supply in the different regions of Nova Scotia. This will inform the decisions to be made about an AAC.

We are applying the AAC to Crown lands and using it when allocating resources.

16. Implementing an ecosystem approach to forest management.

The staff at the Department of Natural Resources has begun to use the Forest Ecosystem Classification System to guide them in planning and decision making around forest harvest practices. This is to direct forest activity to restore the characteristics of the original Acadian forest ecosystem. It is a move away from traditional forest practices and will be a new learning experience for forest practitioners.

What we'll start within 6 months

17. Improve harvest tracking and silviculture programs.

We will develop and carry out a system to track harvests across Nova Scotia. This system will accurately track harvests by type and location. It will allow government to monitor and report on progress toward the target to reduce clearcutting to no more than 50 per cent of all harvests. This will ensure compliance and improve accountability.

In addition, we will improve decision-making tools and training for forest professionals who will carry out the new harvesting policy.

We will consult with interested groups on the best way to redesign the silviculture program for the long term.

What we'll start within 12 months

18. Expand research and knowledge sharing about the management of Nova Scotia forests.

We will expand research in

- climate change
- long-term forest productivity
- forest fire and pest risk

Biodiversity

What we'll start within 12 months

19. Support biodiversity protection and ecological connectivity between landscapes.

Connectivity is the understanding that plants, animals, and other elements are not limited to a single site or landscape but flow from one to the other.

We will inform Nova Scotians about the value of ecological connectivity.

We will adapt natural resources planning to maintain and improve connectivity.

20. Expand the recovery of populations of species at risk.

We will review the recovery plans for species at risk and reallocate resources so that more species at risk can be recovered.

21. Take stock of the biodiversity in Nova Scotia and use this information to allocate resources.

We will use scientific research to identify species at risk, wildlife species, habitats, ecosystems, ecosystem processes, and goods and services provided by our natural resources. From this inventory, we will set priorities for monitoring these elements of biodiversity and allocate resources accordingly.

Geological Resources

What we'll start within 6 months

22. Increase awareness, particularly among young Nova Scotians, of the vital importance of earth sciences and geological resources.

We will redesign and update the Department of Natural Resources website to make it easier for everyone to learn about the geology and geological resources in Nova Scotia.

23. Help prospectors attract investment for mineral exploration and development.

We will consult with prospectors to determine the best ways to help them to attract investment for mineral exploration and development. Then we will put those measures into practice.

24. Expand groundwater mapping to (a) identify water resource potential and associated risks and (b) provide advice and direction for future development and land-use decisions.

Water is an essential resource that must be valued, used wisely, and protected. *Water for Life*, Nova Scotia's water resource management strategy, commits Nova Scotia to being a national leader in water resource management. To achieve this goal, we must understand how much water we have and how much we are using. The Department of Natural Resources is working collaboratively with Nova Scotia Environment to advance our knowledge of the province's groundwater resources.

25. Use geological resources information to improve provincial and municipal land-use planning.

We will publish a series of surface geology maps for the urban areas of Halifax Regional Municipality showing drumlins and other glacial deposits.

We will work with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to develop guidelines for municipalities dealing with subsidence caused by abandoned coal mines.

What we'll start within 12 months

26. Engage Nova Scotians in project planning and decision making about mineral resource development that affects their communities.

Where mineral resource development affects local communities, citizens will be engaged throughout the life cycle of the mining operation.

27. Identify the best ways to reclaim land after mining.

We will conduct research into the best ways to reclaim land after mining. One such research project is the Surface Coal Mine Reclamation Enhancement Project, currently underway. The report will be released in 2012.

What we'll start within 18 months

28. Warn communities that are at risk from rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and flooding.

We will develop and distribute maps showing where coastal flooding and erosion are likely to occur for

- Yarmouth
- Lunenburg
- Pugwash
- Oxford

We will evaluate park infrastructure that is at risk of being damaged by coastal flooding and erosion.

Provincial Parks

What we're doing now

We are working with Nova Scotia Environment to make sure that we reach our goal of having 12 per cent of Nova Scotia land set aside as some form of protected area. This goal was established in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*. We will look to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and natural resources classifications to inform our choice of protected categories for lands. This action should be completed within six months.

What we'll start within 6 months

29. Involve Nova Scotians in setting priorities for a sustainable provincial park system.

Beginning within six months and continuing over the next several years, the Department of Natural Resources will lead an evaluation of the current park system. With the help of interested groups, the department will design a park system for the future that fits into an integrated parks and protected areas system.

We will create a set of standards and guidelines to make sure that the classifications of our parks and protected areas follow international and national guidelines.

We will make sure that reporting on provincial protected areas is done in a clear, consistent, and timely manner.

What we'll start within 12 months

30. Collect information from Nova Scotians and visitors about our park system.

We will establish a youth advisory panel for all provincial parks and protected areas.

We will carry out a detailed visitor survey in 2012.

31. Inform Nova Scotians about the importance of our parks.

We will work with others to publish a Mi'kmaq interpretive plan for provincial parks. This plan would increase awareness and understanding of Mi'kmaq heritage and culture.

What we'll start within 18 months

32. Take stock of all the cultural and heritage resources within Nova Scotia's provincial parks.

How will we know we're on the right path?

The actions set out in this plan are challenging and to succeed, we will need the help of others.

An external advisory panel will oversee our work from outside government. Senior staff within the Department of Natural Resources will lead the implementation of actions in the four focus areas of the strategy. They will build partnerships and work with other government departments, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, industry, non-government organizations, academia, and other interested groups.

Strong links will be made with government's *jobsHere* leadership teams to ensure this strategy aligns with government's plan to grow our economy.

We will measure and evaluate progress on an on-going basis, with a progress report issued within two years. This report will not only look back at what we have accomplished—it will also look to the future. It will allow us to adjust course, if needed, to stay on the path to achieve our vision of a sustainable and prosperous future.

