



ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

2024-25

Natural Resources

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, September 2025

Accountability Report 2024–2025

ISBN: 978-1-77448-804-1

Contents

- Accountability Statement2
- Introduction.....3
- Measuring Performance.....3
 - Ecological Forestry Transition and Conserving Wildlife3
 - Maintaining the Provincial Parks System and Achieving Land Protection Commitments.....4
 - Managing Crown Lands and Natural Resources for Public Benefit..... 4
- Financial Summary and Variance Explanation.....6
- Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act8

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Natural Resources for the year ended March 31, 2025, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the Department of Natural Resources outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Department of Natural Resources management.

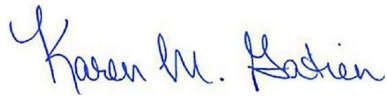
We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Department of Natural Resources management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the 2024-25 Business Plan.

Original signed by:



Hon. Tory Rushton

Minister of Natural Resources



Karen Gatien

Deputy Minister

Introduction

The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for the development, management, and conservation of forests, geoscience, mines, minerals, parks and wildlife resources and the administration of the Province's Crown lands.

In December 2024, the Department of Natural Resources was created. The 2024-25 Business Plan of the former Department of Natural Resources and Renewables is now represented in the 2024-25 Accountability Reports of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Energy.

Measuring Performance

Ecological Forestry Transition and Conserving Wildlife

- In 2024, licensees managed 6,534 hectares of Crown lands using the Silvicultural Guide for the Ecological Matrix and another 45 hectares using High Production Forestry methods, producing more than 400,000 gross metric tonnes of timber and about \$7.5 million revenue for the Province.
- The development of the new pre-treatment assessment program was completed to align with the Silvicultural Guide for the Ecological Matrix and is being implemented by Crown lands licensees.
- The first 5-year development plan for the outcome-based forestry pilot was submitted by Port Hawkesbury Paper and posted on the Harvest Plan Map Viewer for comment.
- Forest products that are grown, harvested, crafted or manufactured in Nova Scotia and sold to consumers were added to the Nova Scotia Loyal program.
- Development of the State of Biodiversity Report for 2025 release.
- Internal protocols were developed for reviewing applications to rehabilitate orphan bear cubs and implemented through work with a local rehabilitation facility to ensure they meet the requirements.
- Collaboration continued between the Province and the Mi'kmaq to co-manage the Cape Breton moose population. The Province paused the licensed hunt for three years, and the Mi'kmaq put a one-year moratorium on the Indigenous hunt.
- Special management practices for the *Endangered Species Act* were implemented. Work was done with Environment and Climate Change Canada to collate data and develop landscape planning tools to manage Nova Scotia's biodiversity.
- Through the Species at Risk Program, the department prepared or updated six management and recovery plans.

Maintaining the Provincial Parks System and Achieving Land Protection Commitments

- The department undertook capital investments in provincial parks, with a focus on accessible infrastructure and amenities, including:
 - Parking lot, toilets, and beach access improvements at Carters Beach
 - Park office upgrades at Five Islands
 - New parking area at Martinique Beach
 - New accessible toilets at Queensland Beach
 - Septic upgrades in day-use areas at Mira River
 - Road paving and parking lot upgrades at Oakfield
 - Road improvements, shoreline protection at Porters Lake and Taylor Head
 - Water system improvements, new water and electrical posts at Rissers Beach
 - New nature-based play spaces at Mira River and Smileys
 - Campsite and washroom improvements and road upgrades at Dollar Lake
- The department advanced the 2022-25 Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan in provincial parks by continuing to partner with municipalities and sport and recreation associations to promote and invest in infrastructure improvements and adaptive equipment.
- The department continued to work with Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change to implement the Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy and the Parks and Protected Areas Plan, and with the Mi'kmaq on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.
- More than 24,000 hectares of new protected areas were created, with federal government support through the Canada-NS Nature Agreement. That brought Nova Scotia to 13.68% of land and water protected.
- The department and the federal government jointly invested \$10 million in wildfire preparedness. The funding helped with the purchase of four fire trucks, and downpayments for helicopters, helicopters parts and tools.
- Wildfire crews participated in specialized wildlife training in Maine and New Brunswick.

Managing Crown Lands and Natural Resources for Public Benefit

- The department created simpler, faster ways to handle Crown lands requests by introducing new tools and streamlined processes, including an updated online system that uses GIS data, digitized historical records, and automated tracking to help staff work more efficiently.
- The department assessed the potential to extract critical minerals from historic mine tailings sites and how these minerals can be integrated into value chains in Nova Scotia, from exploration to finished products.

- Staff attended five home shows around the province to raise awareness and educate the public about radon testing.
- The department established a new radon reduction pilot program with Lung Nova Scotia-PEI to provide free radon test kits and financial support for low-income Nova Scotia households to remediate their homes.
- Approximately 500,000 trees were planted through the first 23 projects supporting the national 2 Billion Trees initiative.

Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)

Programs and Services	2024-2025 Estimate	2024-2025 Actuals	2024-2025 Variance
Senior Management	1,147	1,520	373
Forestry & Wildlife	32,344	39,786	7,442
Geoscience and Mines	6,142	6,018	(124)
Regional Services	50,887	52,887	2,000
Policy and Corporate Services	9,333	9,206	(127)
Land Services	3,862	3,361	(501)
Total - Departmental Expenses	103,715	112,778	9,063
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenues	16,526	69,856	53,330
Fees and Other Charges	3,004	3,395	391
Ordinary Recoveries	2,864	5,556	2,692
TCA Purchase Requirements	37,417	22,382	(15,035)
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	696.2	657.9	(38.3)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Expenses were \$9.1 million higher than estimate primarily due to \$3.1 million for 2 Billion Trees, \$2.4 million related to Resource Management, \$2.1 million operating demands on provincial parks and forest nursery, \$0.9 million in operating costs across the department, \$0.3 million Geoscience Data Initiative, and \$0.3 million Aerial photography.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Revenue was \$53.3 million higher than estimate primarily due to an accounting adjustment related to the close out of Sable Offshore Energy Project royalty refunds based on final audit return.

Fees and Other Charges were \$391 thousand higher than estimate primarily due to Nursery sale of trees.

Recoveries were \$2.7 million higher than estimate primarily due to \$1.8 million for the 2 Billion Trees program, \$0.3 million Geoscience Data Initiative, \$0.3 million Aerial Photography, \$0.2 million Out of Province Firefighting, and \$0.1 million in other recoveries.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

TCA was \$15.0 million less than estimate primarily due to \$13.0 million for delays in Shubenacadie Complex Renewal, \$1.3 million for delays in Grave Island project, \$1.0 million for delays in Parks Upgrades, \$1.0 million for delays in Shubenacadie Operations Centre; offset by \$1.7 million for a price escalation in Carters beach.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Variance primarily due to temporarily vacant positions.

**Instructions: Please note - variance explanations should be for material differences only.*

Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations;
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets;
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment; or,
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Natural Resources:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2024-25
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing.	N/A