

**ENVIRONMENT****OVERVIEW**

Relying upon the leadership and direction of the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE), and with a direct focus on the advancement of Indigenous Knowledge Systems through the support of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Elders Council, the AFN Environment Sector functions to enhance the exercise of First Nations' self-determination and jurisdiction within the context of the natural environment.

The AFN Environment Sector is guided by a wide variety of resolutions passed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly, all of which call upon the AFN to engage in a range of distinct environmental issues. This includes the establishment of several joint AFN-Canada technical committees, as well as providing regional supports through meetings and other information-sharing mechanisms, including a weekly Friday afternoon ACE teleconference.

UPDATE**Climate Change**

In the face of a rapidly changing climate, First Nations have much to contribute to global climate action. First Nations' collective knowledge as observers, stewards, and interpreters of ecosystems offers invaluable insight to lead and complement action on climate change. Led by the ACE, the AFN Environment Sector is working to support the critical role of First Nations in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts to drive an evolution towards more sustainable growth and economic development. This includes engagement in a joint technical process with Canada framed around the Joint Committee on Climate Action (JCCA), as well as the establishment of a network of First Nations Regional Climate Change Coordinators.

The most recent JCCA meeting was held on August 22 and 23, 2018, in Charlottetown, PEI. It included a trip to the Lennox Island First Nation to learn from their first-hand experience with sea level rise and coastal erosion due to climate change.

Species at Risk

The federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) provides for the legal protection of wildlife species and the conservation of biological diversity, in accordance with Canada's commitments under an international United Nations agreement – the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The SARA is the only piece of federal legislation that explicitly recognizes the role of Indigenous Peoples in the administration and implementation of the Act. The AFN Environment Sector is working with officials from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to support the direct inclusion of First Nations interests in species/habitat protection, conservation, management and recovery across Canada.

This includes the creation of a new First Nations Advisory Committee on Species at Risk (FNACSAR) which is a First Nation-specific joint technical committee created under *Section 9* of the SARA to advise the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and other Ministers on the application and implementation of the *Act*. The FNACSAR will host

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its fourth meeting in the fall 2018 (dates and location TBC).

The AFN has also been engaged in efforts leading up to the re-establishment of the National Aboriginal Council on Species at Risk (NACOSAR), an advisory committee constituted under Section 8 (1) of the SARA to similarly provide technical advice to the Minister of Environment on the application and implementation of the Act. The first meeting of the NACOSAR is tentatively scheduled to take place in November 2018.

Environmental and Regulatory Reviews

Following fourteen months of federal “engagement”, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-68: *An Act to amend the Fisheries Act and other Acts in Consequence*; and Bill C-69: *An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act*, to amend the *Navigation Protection Act* and to make consequential amendments to other Acts into the House of Commons. The Environment Sector is involved in this review to engage in a focused dialogue with First Nations to substantively identify and recognize the protocols and for joint processes on the drafting of legislative amendments, policies and regulations.

The AFN Environment Sector continues to host a series of technical sessions across the country in this regard. Working with the ACE, the AFN Environment Sector made a submission to Bill C-69. As Bill C-69 enters second reading in the Senate, the Environment Sector is looking to develop

briefing materials for First Nations to participate in the process. Under the guidance of the ACE, the Sector will likely make a more targeted submission to the Senate. Bill C-68 was handled by our National Fisheries Committee (NFC) and will continue to be advanced by AFN’s newly established Fisheries Sector, under the leadership of its new Director, Ken Paul.

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA)

Working as part of Canada’s “Pathway to Canada Target 1” initiative, the AFN Environment Sector is supporting the creation of First Nations’ protected and conserved areas, whereby First Nations are able to exercise their jurisdiction over broad swaths of their territories, and to have these areas recognized in Canada and in an international context.

This comes after the Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 79/2017, *Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas*, directing the AFN to engage with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to ensure the critical leadership role of First Nations in discussing the process for establishing IPCA nationally.

The Pathway Initiative is currently in a period of transition as the lead role shifts from the Parks Canada Agency to Environment and Climate Change Canada. The AFN remains in discussions with both departments to ensure the on-going leadership role of First Nations throughout this transition.

NEXT STEPS

The following confirmed activities have/will take place between August 1, 2018, and October 1, 2018, led by the AFN Environment Sector:

- JCCA meeting, August 22 and 23, 2018 (Charlottetown, PEI).

- ACE meeting, October 1 and 2, 2018 (Ottawa, ON).
- FNACSAR meeting, Fall 2018 (date/location TBC).