

STATEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ontario *Environmental Bill of Rights* (EBR) was proclaimed in February 1994. The founding principles of the EBR are stated in its preamble:

- *The people of Ontario recognize the inherent value of the natural environment.*
- *The people of Ontario have a right to a healthful environment.*
- *The people of Ontario have as a common goal the protection, conservation and restoration of the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations.*

While the government has the primary responsibility for achieving this goal, Ontarians should have the means to ensure that it is achieved in an effective, timely, open and fair manner.

The purposes of the Act are:

- To protect, conserve and where reasonable, restore the integrity of the environment by the means provided in the Act;
- To provide sustainability of the environment by the means provided in the Act; and
- To protect the right to a healthful environment by the means provided in the Act.

These purposes include the following:

- The prevention, reduction and elimination of the use, generation and release of pollutants that are an unreasonable threat to the integrity of the environment.
- The protection and conservation of biological, ecological and genetic diversity.
- The protection and conservation of natural resources, including plant life, animal life and ecological systems.
- The encouragement of the wise management of our natural resources, including plant life, animal life and ecological systems.
- The identification, protection and conservation of ecologically sensitive areas or processes.

To assist in fulfilling these purposes, the Act provides:

- the means by which Ontarians may participate in the making of environmentally significant decisions by the Government of Ontario;

- increased accountability of the Government of Ontario for its environmental decision-making;
- increased access to the courts by residents of Ontario for the protection of the environment; and
- enhanced protection for employees who take action in respect of environmental harm.

The EBR requires a Statement of Environmental Values (SEV) from all prescribed ministries. The prescribed ministries are listed at: <https://ero.ontario.ca/page/sevs>.

The SEV is a means for prescribed government ministries to record their commitment to the environment and be accountable for ensuring consideration of the environment in their decisions. A SEV explains:

- how the purposes of the EBR are to be applied when decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry; and
- how consideration of the purposes of the EBR should be integrated with other considerations, including social, economic and scientific considerations, that are part of decision-making in the ministry.

It is each Minister's responsibility to take every reasonable step to ensure that the SEV is considered whenever decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry.

The ministry will review the SEV every five years and make any necessary amendments as required.

2. MINISTRY VISION AND MANDATE

The ministry's vision is that Ontarians benefit from the health and wealth of the province's natural resources, today and in the future. The ministry's mission is to sustainably manage and promote the responsible use of our natural resources.

The Ministry's Mandated Activities

Specific details on the ministry's responsibilities can be found on the ministry website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-natural-resources-and-forestry>.

3. APPLICATION OF THE SEV

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) is committed to applying the purposes of the EBR when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

As it develops Acts, regulations, policies and instruments, the ministry applies the following principles:

- a. The ministry strives to identify and manage healthy, resilient and diverse ecosystems to provide for sustainable natural resource use.
- b. The ministry recognizes the finite capacity of ecosystems and takes into account environmental, social and economic values, impacts and risks.
- c. The ministry relies on the best available knowledge, including science, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and other information to improve natural resource management and responsible use.
- d. The ministry exercises caution in the face of uncertainty and seeks to avoid, minimize or mitigate harm to the environment.
- e. The ministry provides for open and accessible engagement opportunities that promote awareness and understanding of natural resource management and use.
- f. The ministry seeks to make natural resource management and use decisions through consideration of input from the public, Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and partners.

4. INTEGRATION WITH OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

MNRF will take into account social, environmental, economic and other considerations; these will be integrated with the purposes of the EBR when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

5. MONITORING USE OF THE SEV

MNRF will document how the SEV was considered each time a decision is posted on the Environmental Registry. MNRF will also provide training tools and opportunities for staff to ensure that the capacity exists within the ministry to meet its *Environmental Bill of Rights* obligations.

6. CONSULTATION

MNRF believes that public consultation and participation is vital to sound environmental decision-making. The ministry will provide opportunities for an open and consultative process when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment.

7. PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The ministry is committed to building strong relationships with Indigenous peoples. In support of this and recognizing the value that Indigenous peoples place on the environment, MNRF will provide opportunities to involve Indigenous peoples whose interests may be affected when making decisions that might significantly affect the environment. MNRF will also provide opportunities to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge where available and where this is supported by Indigenous communities. Ontario recognizes, and respects Aboriginal and treaty rights protected under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This commitment is not intended to alter or detract from any constitutional obligation the province may have to consult with Indigenous peoples.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE

MNRF will continue to work with our clients, stakeholders, the public and Indigenous communities and organizations to sustainably manage natural resources in a changing climate with the goal of fostering a prosperous economy and society in Ontario in the face of a changing climate.

The ministry supports integrating climate change into natural resource management policy, planning, programs and practices by building the resilience of species and ecosystems and supporting efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance carbon sequestration and storage by natural environments.

The ministry seeks to build organizational knowledge of the impacts of climate change on natural resources and ways to reduce emissions and mitigate climate risks, including improving preparedness to natural hazards and emergency response to more frequent, extreme weather events.

9. GREENING OF INTERNAL OPERATIONS AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

MNRF believes in the wise use and conservation of natural resources.

The ministry will support Government of Ontario initiatives to conserve energy and water in its own operations, and to wisely use our air and land resources in order to generate environmental, health and economic benefits for present and future generations.

The ministry will continue to encourage energy conservation and resource conservation in its own operations by, for example, ensuring that office lights are turned off when possible and office equipment is turned off when not in use and explicitly considering environmental performance of the various options when equipment leases or purchase decisions are made. The ministry will also continue to educate and encourage staff on the 3Rs – reduction, reuse and recycling – to divert materials from disposal.