



New Environmental Planning Procedures and Area-based Analysis Updates

EFFECTIVE DATE: SEPT. 5, 2017

The BC Oil and Gas Commission (Commission) is launching new tools to improve the management of environmental values such as riparian reserves, old forest and wildlife habitat areas. These include the implementation of Planning and Operational Measures (POMs) and the introduction of Area-based Analysis (ABA) Wildlife. Supporting documentation will be found in the Environmental Protection and Management Guideline (EPMG), and will be in a new online Environmental Information Management System (EIMS), and new [ABA Status Reports](#). The scheduled updates (including documentation updates) will go live July 27, 2017 and become effective Sept. 5, 2017. Updates include:

1. Planning and Operational Measures

POMs clarify the Commission's expectations for oil and gas activities proposed in sensitive environmental areas, and standardize operating procedures to support government's Environmental Objectives under the [Environmental Protection and Management Regulation](#) (EPMR). Operators are required to follow the specified guidance when operating in Riparian Reserves, Old Growth Management Areas, Resource Features and Wildlife Areas.

Planning Measures list development planning considerations that should be applied at the planning phase to minimize impacts to specific environmental values. Operational Measures are actions that should be employed during operational phases to mitigate or restore impacts to the environment. The Commission expects operators to meet the objectives at the planning phase to limit environmental impacts, and apply recommended operational measures to minimize and mitigate any disturbance.

Applicants will be required to indicate in the Application Management System (AMS) if their application adheres to the EPMG and the Planning and Operational Measures as outlined in the EPMG and EIMS. Routine applications (ABA Status Normal) that adhere to the POMs do not require a Mitigation Strategy. Those that do not satisfy the POMs must submit a rationale to outline why the measures cannot be met, and provide alternative, concise, site-specific mitigations to satisfy the objectives. Applications in Enhanced Management and Regulatory Policy areas (see ABA below) must adhere to the POMs and submit a detailed Mitigation Strategy.

2. Environmental Information Management System

The Commission will launch EIMS to support POMs. EIMS will be an online information portal outlining oil and gas planning and operational measures for a selection of wildlife species and each Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) and Ungulate Winter Range (UWR) in Northeast B.C. Over time, this tool will become an online compendium of the EPMG housing the Commission's terrestrial stewardship information.

3. Implementation of Area-based Analysis Wildlife

ABA Wildlife will report the intactness of WHAs and UWR in Northeastern B.C., assigning an ABA status to risk rank areas according to sensitivity and landscape level disturbance. ABA status will be reported as either normal, enhanced management or regulatory policy. A 100-metre buffer will be applied to all wildlife habitat areas less than 100 hectares to increase protection of edge-sensitive species such as Connecticut Warblers and Fisher.

Operators should avoid WHA and UWR when planning oil and gas activities and must adhere to the POM as outlined in EIMS when avoidance is not practicable. The Commission will only consider applications with no locational flexibility or alternate access in Enhanced Management and Regulatory Policy areas and will escalate the application review procedures. Applications in Enhanced Management and Regulatory Policy areas will require a detailed Mitigation Strategy. Exceptions apply for specific UWR and WHA, see EIMS for details.

Boreal Caribou WHA and UWR areas will not be incorporated into ABA Wildlife until inter-agency agreements and protocol are provided by government. Until then Interim Operating Practices (IOPs) will continue to apply.

4. Area-based Analysis Value Updates and Status Tool

The Commission will launch a new simplified [portal](#) in July to report ABA status information for all ABA values (Old Forest, Riparian and Wildlife). This tool will replace the original quarterly reports. Shapefiles for all ABA Values, including Wildlife, will continue to be available via ftp. There are currently no changes to ABA Status of Old Forest or Riparian Reserves in Northeast B.C.

5. EPMG Updates and Additional Information

The [EPMG](#) will be updated to provide guidance for implementation of planning and operational measures as well as changes to requirements for mitigation strategies and rationale requirements.

Further information will be provided once the systems go live to support industry in the transition. It is anticipated there will be frequently asked questions, proposed training sessions dates and contact information for additional questions and support.

Should you have any questions regarding this bulletin, please contact:

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