
Regulatory and Permitting Efficiency for Clean Growth Projects

Overview

The [Cabinet Directive on Regulatory and Permitting Efficiency for Clean Growth Projects](#) focuses on the federal efforts needed to accelerate regulatory efficiency for clean growth projects. It is intended to help get clean growth projects built faster by accelerating decision-making related to these projects.

Section 1. Overview of Fisheries and Oceans' Role in Supporting Regulatory and Permitting Efficiency

As a federal regulator, Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is responsible for the implementation of the Cabinet Directive within its mandate. DFO advances regulatory and permitting efficiency through the administration of the fish and fish habitat protection provisions of the *Fisheries Act*, and the administration of the *Species at Risk Act* with respect to aquatic species at risk. The department is working with the Major Projects Office, created in August 2025, to streamline regulatory assessment and reduce approval timelines for projects of national interest listed on Schedule 1 of the *Building Canada Act*. DFO is also helping to advance the government's commitment to reducing costs to Canadians and building a stronger economy by supporting the Red Tape Review, announced in July 2025.

Specifically, DFO is supporting regulatory and permitting efficiency by:

- Implementing new procedures aimed at better integrating project reviews under the *Fisheries Act* with the impact assessment process and with the goal of completing reviews of all projects of national interest and other projects within two years;
- Simplifying its approach to low-risk and routine projects by proposing regulatory amendments which would scale information requirements for authorizations based on the project's risk to fish and fish habitat,; and
- Streamlining the approach to higher-risk and major projects by: introducing a concierge service to guide proponents through the project review process; scaling information requirements in line with project risk; and fostering improved consultation processes with Indigenous Peoples, leading to stronger and more efficient outcomes for Indigenous Peoples, DFO, and proponents.

DFO will continue to advance culture change through internal communications, and coordinating with other federal regulators and entities, such as the Major Projects Office, to find efficiencies when different regulatory processes interact.

DFO is strengthening service standards for all projects, providing timely guidance to proponents, and coordinating consultation activities with Indigenous Peoples.

DFO is reviewing internal and external guidance to ensure they are up to date, and is revisiting regulatory processes to identify opportunities for efficiency where feasible. Taken together, these efforts are forming DFO's response to the Cabinet Directive on Regulatory and Permitting Efficiency for Clean Growth Projects.

Section 2. Results for Thematic Areas of the Cabinet Directive

Theme 1: Strengthening service standards

Planned results:

The requirements related to this theme include:

- respond quickly to proponent applications
 - When DFO receives an application for a *Fisheries Act* authorization, DFO has regulated timelines of 60 days to determine if the application is complete and once complete, 90 days to issue, or refuse to issue, the authorization. DFO will continue to meet these legislated timelines. DFO will continue to develop a process with other federal agencies to ensure project decisions are issued within two years.
- ensuring clear standards for risk evaluation and lines of accountability across regional offices; and
 - DFO will continue to apply its risk-management framework in developing and implementing standardized regulatory and non-regulatory instruments that manage risks to fish and fish habitat. These instruments will continue to both inform proponents and guide staff on the application of the fish and fish habitat protection provisions of the *Fisheries Act*. DFO's new concierge service will also ensure consistent standards across regional offices through the sharing of best practices within a national working group.
- provide the Clean Growth Office with timely information necessary to implement this Directive.
 - DFO will provide regular updates on the status of projects of national interest to the Major Projects Office including responding quickly to requests and providing evidenced-based advice when required in a timely fashion.
 - DFO will also collaborate with other regulators to develop a coordinated approach for reviewing projects of national interest.

Theme 2: Providing timely guidance to proponents

Planned results:

The requirements related to this theme include:

- working together to provide risk-informed, project-specific guidance on information requirements and reduce duplication in subsequent information requests to proponents and in consultations with Indigenous rightsholders
 - DFO will produce an annual report outlining trends in information requests to proponents, timelines for decision-making, and measures taken to reduce inefficiencies. DFO will continue developing guidance for staff and proponents based on needs highlighted in this report to better support Indigenous Peoples during consultation and proponents submitting applications to DFO. The ultimate objective is to reduce the number of information requests and improve the efficiency of DFO's regulatory process.
- considering project risks relative to Canada's climate action and biodiversity objectives
 - DFO has a risk-management framework that guides staff on the application of the fish and fish habitat protection provisions of the *Fisheries Act*.
 - When reviewing an application for a *Fisheries Act* authorization, DFO will continue to consider the factors outlined in Section 2.5 and Subsection 34.1(1) of the *Fisheries Act* when making a decision to issue an authorization. Consideration of these factors allows DFO to consider the relevant risk of a project and establish conditions to avoid, mitigate, or offset impacts that may pose higher risks.
- ensuring up-to-date internal and external guidance for information required for assessment and permit applications.]
 - DFO has reviewed internal and external guidance ensuring they are up to date. To date, this review has resulted in several improvements to core guidance such as tip sheets, sample applications, and applicant guides. DFO will continue reviewing and developing guidance for staff and proponents based on needs identified in this report and from staff and proponents.

Theme 3: Coordinating consultation with Indigenous Peoples

Planned results:

The requirements related to this theme include:

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- Over the planning period, the Department will strengthen the coordination of Crown consultations and modernize its approach to higher-risk and major project reviews to improve efficiency, predictability, and outcomes for Indigenous Peoples, proponents, and federal partners. DFO will work closely with other regulatory departments and Crown consultation coordinators to ensure that consultation activities are aligned, well-sequenced, and supported by clear roles, shared information, and consistent engagement with Indigenous Peoples. To advance the whole-of-government approach, DFO will participate in joint planning, harmonized consultation processes, and coordinated accommodation strategies for projects that involve multiple federal authorities.
 - In parallel, the Department will streamline its internal regulatory processes to help achieve the Government's objective of reducing decision-making time for higher-risk and major projects to two years, consistent with timelines for projects of national interest. DFO is advancing several initiatives to improve regulatory efficiency and strengthen coordinated engagement with Indigenous Peoples. In line with DFO's Red Tape Review Progress Report, the Department is proposing amendments to the Authorizations Concerning Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Regulations to better align or "right-size" its regulatory program while developing enhanced approaches for early engagement with Indigenous Peoples. These proposed changes are grounded in a risk-based approach and informed by extensive multi-year engagement conducted between 2020 and 2024.
 - As part of its commitment to implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) and upholding the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), DFO is strengthening early engagement practices to ensure Indigenous perspectives inform regulatory processes related to fish and fish habitat protection and conservation. This includes proposed regulatory requirements for proponents of higher-risk projects to engage early with Indigenous Peoples, a stronger emphasis on proactive relationship-building beyond project-specific consultations, and the use of DFO's Interim Guidance on the Duty to Consult and Accommodate, supported by ongoing training, to promote more cohesive, effective, and efficient consultation processes. To further refine these improvements, DFO hosted virtual roundtables to provide an overview of the proposed changes and gather additional feedback from Indigenous participants.

The requirements related to this theme include:

- coordinating Crown consultations with other regulatory departments and cooperating with a Crown consultation coordinator

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- DFO will support coordination of consultation efforts conducted on projects of national interest, projects subject to an impact assessment, as well as projects that require a *Fisheries Act* authorization.
 - DFO will continue to support efforts to coordinate consultation activity and support the Crown consultation coordinator.
- increasing early engagement efforts to help ensure actions align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples.
 - DFO processes require early and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples is included as a mandatory information requirement when a proponent submits an application for authorization.
 - DFO reiterates to proponents the importance of early and meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples in recently published tip sheets: [Project planning: Applying for a *Fisheries Act* authorization](#), and; [Project planning: Applying for a *Fisheries Act* authorization acting as a Species at Risk Act \(SARA\) permit or a stand-alone SARA permit](#).
 - Through the concierge service, DFO will collaborate with proponents to promote and support early engagement with Indigenous Peoples. This approach helps advance Free, Prior and Informed Consent, ensures a more efficient and meaningful consultation process and reduces delays during *Fisheries Act* Authorization applications. DFO is preparing a guide to help proponents successfully and meaningfully engage with Indigenous Peoples.