

## Benefits of environmental assessment

### Promotes sustainable development

Environmental assessment helps to balance environmental protection with economic development.

### Promotes better project planning

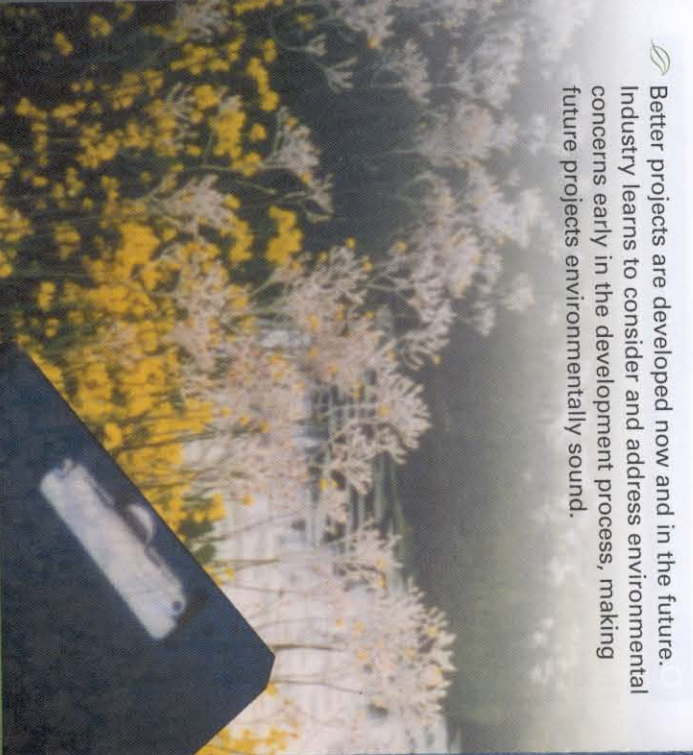
Environmental assessment staff work with industry from the early stages of project development. We help to identify and address environmental effects early in the process. This saves proponents of projects time and money, and improves projects.

### Helps build trust and confidence in developments

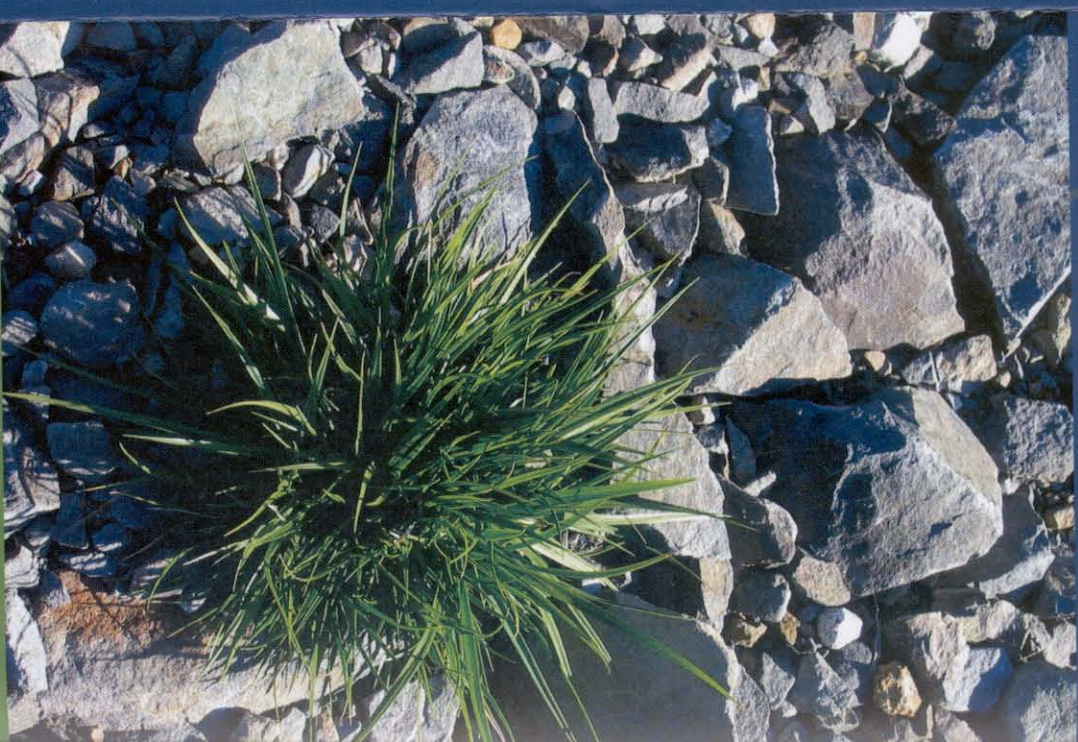
The public is offered formal opportunities to participate in the decision making.

### Helps educate industry on how their developments affect the environment

Better projects are developed now and in the future. Industry learns to consider and address environmental concerns early in the development process, making future projects environmentally sound.



## environmental assessment



balancing  
environmental protection  
with economic growth



Environment and Labour  
Environmental Assessment Branch

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#### For more information

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<<http://www.gov.ns.ca/en/ea/>>  
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Environmental Assessment mailing list.

## What is environmental assessment?

Environmental assessment is a regulatory tool that helps industry to develop projects in a way that protects the environment. We evaluate the potential environmental effects of major developments to determine if and how a development can proceed. The public and government both play an important role in making environmental assessment work.

In Nova Scotia, environmental assessment is governed by the *Environment Act* (Part IV) and the Environmental Assessment Regulations.

### Don't confuse us with environmental site assessments

Environmental assessment is not the same as an "environmental site assessment", which determines whether a property has been contaminated by previous land uses.

### Don't confuse us with the federal process

The federal government also has an environmental assessment process. The two processes have similar aims, but different triggers. The federal process may be triggered by funding sources or land ownership, for example. When a proposed project is subject to both federal and provincial regulations, the two levels of government work together for greater efficiency.



## What type of developments are assessed?

We evaluate major developments. We group them into two categories, Class I or Class II, based on their potential to harm the environment.

Class I undertakings are usually smaller in scale and have potential to cause significant environmental impacts. These undertakings include developments such as mines, some developments in wetlands, and waste dangerous goods facilities.

Class II undertakings are typically larger in scale and have greater potential to cause significant environmental impacts. These undertakings include developments such as solid waste incinerators, petrochemical facilities, and pulp and paper plants.

For a more detailed list of developments that must undergo an environmental assessment, see the Environmental Assessment Regulations.

## How long does an environmental assessment take?

That depends on the type of assessment, how involved that assessment becomes, and how long it takes industry to collect the necessary data and to prepare reports.

The Environmental Assessment Regulations specify the length of government time to process environmental assessments, which varies depending on the type of assessment and project-specific issues. A typical Class I Environmental Assessment is not a long process. For more detail on time lines, please see the Environmental Assessment Regulations, the Proponent's Guide to Environmental Assessment, or the Citizen's Guide to Environmental Assessment on-line or call our office.

## The environmental assessment process

Environmental assessment in Nova Scotia is a government-wide process that is co-ordinated by the Environmental Assessment Branch of the Department of Environment and Labour.

The first step is for the proponent to meet the department staff to discuss the proposed project and regulatory requirements. The next step is for the proponent to collect the necessary information and submit a registration document, which gives details about the proposed development.

For Class I undertakings, the Minister can decide a more detailed review or public hearing, or both, are required.

For all Class II undertakings, the proponent must also submit an environmental assessment report and undergo a formal public review, which may include public hearings.

Everything that is submitted as part of the formal process is public information. Both the public and government departments and agencies are given time to submit comments to the Minister. Based on the comments received, the Minister decides whether to approve the undertaking, reject it, or approve it with conditions.

The environmental assessment decision is always carefully considered and based upon the scientific evaluation of environmental effects reported by specialists. Environmental effects may include positive or negative changes in biophysical and chemical characteristics, socio-economic conditions, human health, physical and cultural heritage, and impact on sites or things of historical, archaeological, paleontological, or architectural significance.

## Opportunities for public participation

The public has an opportunity to participate in every environmental assessment. You are welcome to submit written comments on any undertaking under review.

For more complex assessments, you may also have the opportunity to make a presentation at a public hearing. The level of public involvement depends on the level of assessment of the particular project. Notices are published in newspapers and on our website inviting comments on the development under review.

You can view environmental assessment documents currently under review at a variety of locations throughout the province, at the Department of Environment and Labour library in Halifax, and on-line. If you wish to view past or current documents in our Halifax library, please call our librarian at 424-8474 to make an appointment.

## Beyond environmental assessment

Environmental assessment is only one regulatory tool that works with other regulatory and non-regulatory tools to protect the environment. Other operational approvals may be required before a project can begin. Even in cases where an environmental assessment is not required, other environmental approvals may be needed.