

Annual Report for 2022-23

Ministry of Environment

Letters of Transmittal



The Honourable
Dana Skoropad
Minister of Environment

Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan:

I respectfully submit the Annual Report for the Ministry of Environment for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Skoropad', written in a cursive style.

Dana Skoropad
Minister of Environment



Veronica Gelowitz
Deputy Minister of
Environment

The Honourable Dana Skoropad
Minister of Environment

Dear Minister:

I have the honour of submitting the Annual Report for the Ministry of Environment for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Gelowitz', written in a cursive style.

Veronica Gelowitz
Deputy Minister of Environment

Ministry Overview

The purpose of the ministry is established in *The Ministry of Environment Regulations, 2007*.

Vision	Mission	Mandate
A healthy, resilient environment.	We will manage and protect Saskatchewan’s environment for the well-being of the province and its people.	The Ministry of Environment’s role is to manage the health of Saskatchewan’s environment in a responsible manner that supports sustainable growth through objective, transparent and informed decision-making and stewardship.

The Ministry of Environment’s mandate in 2022-23 was supported by three core lines of business:

1. Environmental protection, which includes mining and industry regulation, hazardous materials management, responding to spills, air quality monitoring, environmental assessment and waste management.
2. Resource management, which provides stewardship for the province’s fisheries, wildlife, Crown lands and forests.
3. Climate resilience, which includes greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) regulation, and adaptation and resilience analysis.

These core lines of business support the Government of Saskatchewan’s goals by ensuring the responsible management of our natural resources and protecting the province’s people. They also contribute individually and collectively to the province’s 10-year Growth Plan by providing goals and guidance for responsible and sustainable development. In 2022-23, the ministry’s adjusted full-time equivalent (FTE) utilization was 339.4.

The ministry derives its mandate, responsibilities and authority from several acts and regulations. Acts currently assigned to the Minister of Environment, either solely or jointly, are:

<i>The Conservation Easements Act</i>	<i>The Ecological Reserves Act</i>
<i>The Environmental Assessment Act</i>	<i>The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010</i>
<i>The Fisheries (Saskatchewan) Act, 2020</i>	<i>The Forestry Professions Act</i>
<i>The Forest Resources Management Act</i>	<i>The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act</i>
<i>The Management and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases Act</i>	<i>The Natural Resources Act</i>
<i>The Protection of the Wild Ponies of the Bronson Forest Act</i>	<i>The Provincial Lands Act, 2016</i>
<i>The Sale or Lease of Certain Lands Act</i>	<i>The Wildlife Act, 1998</i>
<i>The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act</i>	

[Ministry Business Plan for 2022-23](#)

Strategic priority: Protect the environment.

Progress on Goal 1: Safe communities and a healthy environment

Delivering on commitments identified in the Growth Plan, the ministry is continually working to enhance the health of the environment in Saskatchewan. In part, this is being accomplished by ensuring the province is more resilient to the effects of climate change and taking a strategic approach to reducing and managing solid waste. A made-in-Saskatchewan industrial emissions pricing system and opportunities to advance small modular reactor technology will increase innovation and help build a stronger provincial economy. Taking a One Health approach to responding to fish and wildlife diseases and a comprehensive view to protecting the environment further demonstrates the ministry's commitment to supporting strong and safe communities.

Strategy:

Coordinate the development and implementation of provincial policy to enhance Saskatchewan's resilience to the cumulative effects of climate change.

Key Actions:

- Build flexible and streamlined regulatory compliance mechanisms, including implementing a Saskatchewan Technology Fund.
 - On Nov. 22, 2022, the government received confirmation that the Saskatchewan Output-Based Performance Standards (OBPS) Program, provincial carbon pricing plan, was approved to replace the federally imposed carbon tax on industrial emitters in the province, effective Jan. 1, 2023.
 - All industrial carbon taxes will now stay in Saskatchewan, saving Saskatchewan industry (and the jobs and families these industries support) an estimated \$3.7 billion in federal carbon taxes between now and 2030 compared to federal carbon pricing benchmark.
 - The Ministry of Environment worked with Innovation Saskatchewan and the industry-led Saskatchewan Technology Fund Advisory Committee to draft a Technology Fund standard and guidance document. The document has been published online and sent out to regulated emitters. The Saskatchewan Technology Fund began operating and receiving OBPS Program compliance payments in 2022-23 fiscal year.
- Coordinate policy and program work within Executive Government to support the development and deployment of small modular reactors (SMRs).
 - The Ministry of Environment SMR unit completed and met its objectives, which included the SMR feasibility study, strategic plan, supply chain and business case.
 - The SMR work has been transferred to the Crown Energy Security Unit that was established at the Crown Investments Corporation.

Strategy:

Implement the Solid Waste Management Strategy to improve the health of Saskatchewan's people and environment, as well as attract investment into the province through new growth opportunities.

Key Actions:

- Lead collaboration to implement the commitments in the Solid Waste Management Strategy, including:
 - Identify diversion opportunities for non-residential waste.
 - The ministry has been evaluating opportunities in this area. This work will support the development of an options paper outlining approaches to meet waste reduction goals identified in the Solid Waste Management Strategy.
 - Work with Indigenous Services Canada and the Ministry of Government Relations on the development of northern regional landfills.
 - The ministry continues to collaborate monthly with Indigenous Services Canada and the Ministry of Government Relations. Construction of the North Central regional landfill is now complete.
 - Work with other jurisdictions to implement action plans in support of the Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.
 - The ministry participated on Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment project teams to develop *A Roadmap to Strengthen the Management of Single-Use and Disposable Plastics* and *Guidance to Facilitate Consistent Extended Producer Responsibility Policies and Programs for Plastics*. The documents were published in 2022 and are available to the public through the ministry's website.

Strategy:

Identify, prevent and mitigate risks to human health and safety through comprehensive plans and regulations.

Key Actions:

- Identify and respond to emerging fish and wildlife diseases through a One Health approach with the ministries of Agriculture and Health.
 - The provincial One Health Management Group that includes representatives from the ministries of Environment, Health and Agriculture continues meeting each quarter to discuss and coordinate response to outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases.
 - The Ministry of Environment has undertaken engagement with Indigenous communities on chronic wasting disease. This will help the ministry incorporate Indigenous perspectives into its work, in line with the principles of a One Health approach.
- Evaluate risks and implement corrective action plans at priority non-uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan. Complete public safety assessments at abandoned non-uranium mine sites.
 - The ministry made progress on the action plans for remediation of the Anglo-Rouyn and Newcor non-uranium mine sites throughout 2022-23.

- Develop and strengthen partnerships with stakeholders to assess the air quality in Saskatchewan, as well as ensure air quality data is publicly available.
 - Representatives from the ministry and Government of Alberta met in October 2022 to share air quality information. Plans are in place to collaborate to update acid deposition modelling in Alberta and Saskatchewan in 2023-24.
 - The ministry collaborated with air zone association leadership and the Ministry of Energy and Resources to help identify financial and infrastructure solutions for air quality monitoring.
 - Ambient air quality data is now publicly available online through GeoHub.

Performance Measure Results:

Total GHG emissions from the electricity sector.

- According to the 2021 National Inventory Report published in April 2023, the electricity sector released 15.2 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2021, an increase from 12.6 megatonnes in 2020. The increase was primarily due to a combination of activities at SaskPower: reduced hydro generation availability, increased load requirements and unexpected outages at the Carbon Capture and Storage Facility at the Boundary Dam Power Station.

Emissions intensity of Saskatchewan’s economy (GHGs per unit of GDP).

- In 2021, the latest year for which data is available, Saskatchewan had an emissions intensity of 813 tonnes of carbon dioxide per million chained 2012 dollars* in gross domestic product, an increase from 782 tonnes in 2020. An increase was due to the impact of COVID lockdowns and the associated economic contraction. At the same time, the GDP for Saskatchewan decreased from 2020 to 2021 that resulted in the emissions intensity being higher in 2021 than in 2020.

Amount of waste generated in kilograms per capita.

- In 2020, the latest year for which data is available, 723 kilograms of waste were disposed of per capita in Saskatchewan landfills, a decrease of 14 per cent from 2014. Amount of waste generated in kilograms per capita has seen a downward trend since 2014.

Number of impacted sites entered in the notice of site condition registry.

- In 2022-23, the ministry received 29 notices of site condition. Of those, 12 were approved and included in the impacted sites registry.

* Chained dollars is a method of adjusting real dollar amounts for inflation over time, to allow the comparison of figures from different years.

Strategic priority: Improve Saskatchewan's natural resource sustainability.

Progress on Goal 2: Sustainable landscapes and wildlife populations that are resilient and biologically diverse

The Ministry of Environment is delivering on its commitment to sustainably grow Saskatchewan's natural resource economy. This is accomplished, in part, through evidence-based decision-making on land use and environmental impacts, which is supported by cumulative effects analysis. Plans and strategies, such as the Habitat Management Plan and Framework for the Prevention and Management of Invasive Species in Saskatchewan, guide monitoring and response to issues impacting natural resources. In collaboration with partners, including First Nations and Métis communities, programs and policies are developed to conserve the province's biodiversity and resilience. Combined, these measures will help ensure the long-term health of Saskatchewan's natural resources by supporting their future sustainability.

Strategy:

Conduct and use cumulative effects analysis to better support evidence-based decision-making on environmental impacts and issues.

Key Actions:

- Align priorities and improve collaboration on insect and disease prevention and management through the provincial Framework for the Prevention and Management of Invasive Species in Saskatchewan.
 - The Framework for the Prevention and Management of Invasive Species was released on Nov. 10, 2022.
- Support landscape management decision-making within the northern boreal forest by enhancing the provincial terrestrial forest inventory.
 - In 2022-23, the ministry released more than four million hectares of land cover data and 3.7 million hectares of terrain data on the Government of Saskatchewan website. The Forest Resource Inventory portal now contains a complete land cover record of 17.3 million hectares, 6.5 million hectares of terrain and maps for 5.7 million hectares.
- Guide habitat conservation while supporting responsible growth through the Habitat Management Plan.
 - The ministry engaged provincial ministries, Crowns, industry, Indigenous and environmental groups to provide input and advice on a draft Habitat Management Plan. These perspectives will inform the 20-year plan which the ministry will review every five years.

Strategy:

Work with our partners to develop and implement programs and policies to protect the province's biodiversity.

Key Actions:

- Implement a multiple-species approach to managing critical habitat on Crown land with the ministries of Agriculture and Energy and Resources.
 - In collaboration with the ministries of Agriculture and Energy and Resources, the ministry is developing the Prairie Siting Guidelines to facilitate industry's planning and avoid risks to multiple species at risk in southern Saskatchewan.
 - The ministry completed critical habitat assessment field work on 15 agricultural Crown leases. The Critical Habitat Project report was drafted in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Support the establishment of protected and conserved areas through ongoing collaboration with First Nations and Métis communities and conservation organizations.
 - The ministry continues working with Indigenous communities and conservation organizations on the establishment of protected and conserved areas.
- Identify and incorporate First Nations wildlife management values into wildlife management planning and programming.
 - The ministry continues to engage with First Nations communities throughout the province to discuss Indigenous peoples' wildlife management values. Through the course of this work, regional meetings have been held in the Athabasca, La Ronge, Prince Albert, North Battleford and Regina.

Performance Measure Results:**Total protected areas in Saskatchewan.**

- Every year, protected areas are added to the provincial Representative Areas Network. To date, 6,390,709 hectares, or 9.8 per cent of Saskatchewan are contained within the network.

Forest type and age class distribution of forests.

- Saskatchewan's forest management plans and the emulation of natural disturbance patterns ensure that forest type and age class distribution are maintained within the natural range of variation (+/- 25 per cent). This approach preserves the historical range of ecosystems and promotes a more resilient forest system.

Population status of game species.

- The population status of most game species has remained stable or shown increases, with the exception of white-tailed deer populations, which have declined in forest, forest fringe, and parkland regions following a severe winter; and mule deer populations which have experienced declines in areas with high levels of chronic wasting disease. [The 2023-24 Hunters and Trappers Guide](#) highlights our current hunting opportunities based on game species populations.

More information can be found in the *2023 State of the Environment* and *2019 State of the Environment: A Focus on Forests* reports available at saskatchewan.ca/environment.

Strategic priority: Deliver comprehensive, clear and transparent regulation and enforcement.

Progress on Goal 3: Knowledgeable, compliant and engaged regulated communities

Saskatchewan's natural resource industries are instrumental to the economic growth of the province. Delivering comprehensive, clear and transparent regulation and enforcement ensures industry partners are able to operate, while enhancing environmental outcomes for the province. This is further accomplished by reducing the risk of contamination through compliance assurance activities and working with industry partners to identify impacted sites. Opportunities to increase engagement and involvement with Indigenous communities continues through the Duty to Consult and permitting processes.

Strategy:

Collaboratively design and implement regulatory tools and processes to enhance environmental outcomes.

Key Actions:

- Reduce contamination risk from mining and industrial operations and landfills through compliance assurance activities.
 - In total, the ministry conducted 307 inspections at assigned facilities including:
 - 62 inspections of operating landfills;
 - 58 inspections of closed landfills;
 - 34 inspections of operating transfer stations;
 - 131 inspections at mining and industrial facilities; and
 - 22 inspections at industrial water and wastewater facilities.
 - Environmental audits were completed at five industrial and mining facilities and four landfills. Additionally, an audit of groundwater monitoring reports, involving seven landfills, was conducted.
- Continue to fulfill provincial Duty to Consult obligations and improve permit timelines.
 - The ministry ensures that Duty to Consult obligations are consistently met applying the First Nation and Métis Consultation Policy Framework.
 - The ministry implemented several changes to enhance communication with industry and increase transparency.
- Work with First Nations on development and implementation of provincial environmental regulations on reserves, as requested.
 - The ministry has an agreement in place with Whitecap Dakota First Nation to regulate *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010* on reserve.
 - In 2022-23, the ministry conducted an inspection of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation transfer station, fuel station and golf course fuel storage.

Performance Measure Results:

Percentage of operating landfills that require groundwater monitoring are doing so.

- Groundwater monitoring at landfills is meant to detect unacceptable groundwater contamination resulting from landfill operations. In 2022-23, 85 per cent of operating landfills in Saskatchewan monitored the underlying groundwater.

Financial Summary

The ministry's approved allocation for 2022-23 was \$129.1 million. Total 2022-23 expenditures were \$123.6 million, a variance of \$5.5 million from the ministry's approved estimate. The under-expenditure was primarily due to IT capital project delays, winddown of the Small Modular Reactor Unit and a decrease in the grant to the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund due to lower hunting and angling licence sales. Vacancy savings, reduction in contract expenditures, travel and training also contributed to the variance.

The ministry's budgeted revenue was \$101.7 million. Actual revenue recorded by the ministry in 2022-23 was \$111.2 million. The additional revenue of \$9.5 million was mostly due to continued high forest commodity prices and high market demand of forestry products and revenue from higher than anticipated beverage container distribution.

Environment is responsible for the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund and the Impacted Sites Fund. Explanations and financial tables for these funds are found on page 13.

Expense Summary

The following table outlines information on the actual and budgeted expenditures by subvote and subprogram. Variance explanations are provided for individual variances greater than \$100 thousand.

Expense Actuals

	2021-22 Actuals (\$000s)	2022-23 Budget (\$000s)	2022-23 Actual (\$000s)	2022-23 Variance (\$000s)	Notes
Subvote					
Central Management and Services (EN01)					
Minister's Salary	51	53	53	0	
Executive Management	1,625	1,750	1,595	-155	1
Central Services	9,630	9,151	8,066	-1,085	2
Accommodation Services	6,324	3,682	3,691	9	
Subvote Total	17,630	14,636	13,405	-1,231	
Climate Change and Adaptation (EN06)					
Climate Resilience	4,531	5,827	4,355	-1,472	3
Subvote Total	4,531	5,827	4,355	-1,472	
Fish, Wildlife and Lands (EN07)					
Fish, Wildlife and Lands Program	9,605	10,052	9,224	-828	4
Fish and Wildlife Development Fund	4,319	5,933	5,184	-749	5
Subvote Total	13,924	15,985	14,408	-1,577	
Environmental Protection (EN11)					
Environmental Protection Program	5,087	6,150	5,955	-195	6
Environmental Assessment and Stewardship	1,499	1,671	1,653	-18	
Beverage Container Collection and Recycling System	35,090	35,536	35,536	0	
Remediation of Contaminated Sites	1,484	34,466	37,912	3,446	7
Business Support Services	2,087	6,289	2,338	3,951	8

Subvote Total	45,247	84,112	83,394	-718	
Forest Service (EN09)					
Forest Programs	5,589	7,317	6,632	-685	9
Insect and Disease Control	1,705	1,246	1,357	111	10
Subvote Total	7,294	8,563	7,989	-574	
Total Appropriation	88,626	129,123	123,551	-5,572	
Capital Assets Acquisitions	-807	-3,723	-514	3,209	
Capital Assets Amortization	1,845	1,745	1,699	-46	
Non-spending Control Items	4,605	-34,509	-35,850	-1,341	
Total Expense	94,269	113,134	113,689	555	

Explanation of major variances

1. Vacancy and operational savings.
2. Vacancy and operational savings and reduction in allowance for doubtful accounts.
3. Vacancy and operational savings and winddown of the Small Modular Reactor Unit.
4. Vacancy and operational savings.
5. Reduction in grant to the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund due to lower hunting and angling licence sales.
6. Vacancy savings offset by contract pressures.
7. Inflation and remediation plan adjustment.
8. Vacancy savings and IT project delays.
9. Vacancy savings.
10. Additional expenditures for slowing the eastern spread of Mountain Pine Beetle.

Revenue Summary

The Ministry of Environment collects revenues related to environmental handling charges, hunting and angling licence fees, forestry fees and dues, and receipts from other governments. These revenues are collected on behalf of the government and all revenue collected is deposited into the General Revenue Fund. The ministry's 2022-23 budgeted revenue was \$101.7 million; actual revenue recorded was \$111.2 million, an increase of \$9.5 million. The increase is primarily due to forestry dues and beverage container distribution.

Revenue

	2022-23 Budget (\$000s)	2022-23 Actuals (\$000s)	2022-23 Variance (\$000s)	Notes
Own-source revenue				
Investment Income	130	38	-92	
Other fees and charges	97,198	97,237	10,039	1
Miscellaneous	12,595	11,081	-1,514	2
Transfers from the federal government	1,735	2,867	1,132	3
Total Revenue	101,658	111,223	9,565	

1. Increased forestry dues as a result of high commodity prices and demand, beverage container distribution, big game draw applications and hunting licence sales.
2. Fewer unredeemed beverage deposits.

- Contribution agreement with Alberta as part of the effort to slow the eastern spread of Mountain Pine Beetle.

Fish and Wildlife Development Fund

The Fish and Wildlife Development Fund (FWDF) is a special purpose fund established under *The Natural Resources Act*. The ministry uses the fund to support habitat protection and fish and wildlife management throughout the province. Revenues are transferred to the FWDF based on an amount equivalent to 30 per cent of habitat licence certificates and hunting, angling and trapping licence fees collected by the province, less \$180,000 which is allocated for other grants. The FWDF also receives seven per cent of Crown land sales. Expenditures relate to habitat protection through the purchase, management and enhancement of habitat.

The following table summarizes the budgeted and unaudited results of the FWDF for 2022-23. Audited financial statements will be available on saskatchewan.ca under the Ministry of Finance public accounts section.

(Based on unaudited figures)	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Actual	Variance
	(\$000s)	(\$000s)	(\$000s)
Revenue	6,282	5,840	-442 ¹
Expenses:			
Fish enhancement projects	2,111	2,085	-26
Wildlife habitat projects	2,882	2,437	-445 ²
Municipal habitat projects	402	423	21
Total expenses	5,395	4,945	-450
Excess of revenue over expenses	887	895	8

- Decrease of revenue from hunting and angling licence sales.
- Decrease in land securement and contract expenses.

Impacted Sites Fund

The Impacted Sites Fund was established on April 2, 2015, by *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010*. The fund receives all revenue from fines and administrative penalties imposed in accordance with the act. Other revenues may include interest, gifts, donations, grants or moneys appropriated by the legislature. The act permits expenditures from the fund to reclaim, restore and remedy orphaned environmentally impacted sites and to pay the expenses of administering the fund.

The following table summarizes the budgeted and unaudited results of the fund for 2022-23. Audited financial statements will be available on saskatchewan.ca under the Ministry of Finance public accounts section.

(Based on unaudited figures)	2022-23 Budget (\$000s)	2022-23 Actual (\$000s)	Variance (\$000s)
Revenue	62	81	19
Expenses:			
Contracts	-	-	-
Grants	200	37	-163 ¹
Total expenses	200	37	-163
Excess of revenue over expenses	-138	44	182

1. Lower than anticipated funding requests received.

Additional financial information can be found in the Government of Saskatchewan Public Accounts located at <https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/categories/893>