

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Environmental Enhancement Fund

The Environmental Enhancement Fund (EEF), established in 2003 at \$2m annually, supports on-the-ground projects linked to the ministry's highway infrastructure that directly enhance, restore or protect environmental resources like fish and wildlife populations and their habitat. There are four general categories of projects:

1. Fish passage improvement/restoration at MoT stream crossings to provide access to underutilized habitat through culvert retrofits and replacements to aid in the restoration of prized species like pacific salmon return to their former levels.
2. Acquisition and protection of high value environmental areas like ecologically sensitive and endangered habitats and ecosystems.
3. Fish and wildlife habitat enhancements, such as construction of salmon and trout rearing habitat and spawning channels, water storage to create wetlands or wetted habitat and to augment low (summer) streamflows, habitat complexing, restoration of highway footprint impacts and estuary and riparian planting enhancements.
4. Other fish and wildlife projects, including fishway installations or fish transplants to restore wild fish populations, big game capture and relocation away from highway susceptible populations and reduction of small wildlife mortality like amphibians and small mammals through installation of fencing and crossing structures.

Program eligibility is based on the following criteria:

1. Environmental benefit to fish and wildlife and air and water quality. Tangible biophysical enhancements that provide an on-the-ground environmental return.
2. Linkage to MOT highway infrastructure. Preference is given to linkages to active or planned highway projects.
3. Projects linked to a provincial roadway but not part of an active or planned highway development will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis because the existing infrastructure may have historical environmental impacts, may have been originally done without adherence to modern environmental practices and standards, and have ongoing maintenance and operational activities.
4. Technical feasibility. Projects with reasonable and realistic chances of success, low risk and that are likely to be functional in providing long-term environmental benefits.
5. Cost-effectiveness. At the minimum, competitive or fair market costs or preferably obtaining leverage or partnership in-kind contributions from others to maximize capital returns at minimal cost.
6. Potential good news stories and communications. Opportunity to promote positive environmental stewardship information via internal and external media.
7. Goodwill considerations. Forging and strengthening working relationships between partners, including with environmental agencies and community groups.
8. Partnering with environmental agencies, environmental stewardship groups, etc. where others provide a meaningful contribution to delivery of the project, including in-kind contributions of \$ labour, administrative and technical resources.
9. Past performance and track record of project delivery partners. Partners with good successes for delivering projects that fit EEF criteria are valued.

Partnering is a common theme of the EEF with diverse groups working together and making meaningful contributions to do more, larger and better projects. Key partners include First Nations, the sector businesses, all three levels of government, the public, landowners and local, provincial and national non-profit environmental stewardship groups. This approach enables many more EEF projects to be delivered, and is an excellent model, where many diverse groups work together toward mutual environmental restoration and enhancement objectives.

Delivering high value, on-the-ground environmental projects linked to the highway infrastructure, in a cost-effective manner through private and public partnerships that restore and conserve BC's wild natural resources will ensure the Ministry's ongoing ability and commitment to support one of the BC Government's Five Great Goals *"to lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none."*