

WSA Definitions



The Water Sustainability Act proposal contains some terms that may not be familiar and that are not defined in a glossary or definitions section of the document.

To save some searching through the document to find those definitions, we have compiled some of them here.

Area-based Regulations: Modifications to WSA thresholds and exemptions could be prescribed in an Area-based Regulation. This would be a regulatory tool that would help address emerging issues and support flexible and adaptable water management at a variety of spatial scales.

Beneficial use: Means using the licensed volume of water for the intended purpose(s) and in compliance with the terms of the water licence.

Critical Environmental Flows (CEF): Protecting Critical Environmental Flows during short-term scarcity ecosystems means maintaining a short-term flow threshold that helps prevent significant or irreversible harm to aquatic ecosystems. As a result licencees may be regulated more often.

Drought Management: There can be indicators of upcoming drought. B.C.'s River Forecast Centre provides ongoing information to the public through its snow survey and water supply bulletins. In the event of drought and scarcity, a Provincial Drought Response Plan (policy) is in place to help manage water resources and would complement the WSA.

Efficiency and Conservation Measures: A suite of tools would support more efficient use of and conservation of water, including: improving the concept of Beneficial Use to require efficient use of water (without waste), Agricultural Water Reserves, licence terms and conditions, licence reviews and Water Sustainability Plans .

Environmental Flow Needs (EFN): Protecting Environmental Flow Needs in a stream means maintaining the water – volume and timing – needed to support the life stages of fish populations and aquatic ecosystem function. Considering Environmental Flow Needs in allocation decisions should reduce pressure on aquatic ecosystems, increase resilience to climate change and help avoid potential conflicts with the federal Fisheries Act.

Orders: Orders are issued by the Comptroller of Water Rights, a Regional Water Manager, or an engineer/geoscientist when remedial action is required to enforce licences or approvals, prevent or address unauthorized activities with potential to impact the environment, address issues of public safety, or protect property and water rights.

Storage: Storage allows a licensee to mitigate the impacts of low water flows, which could be due to seasonally low stream flows or a relatively junior priority on a highly-used water source. Storage provides a licensee with the ability to augment their water supply during periods of low water flow.

Water Objectives: It is proposed that Water Objectives would qualitatively describe the desired condition for water quality, water quantity and aquatic ecosystem health to support consistency in the consideration of water in decision-making across the natural resource sectors.

Water Sustainability Plans: Watershed-level planning could help address issues such as

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conflicts between water users, risks to water supply and water quality, as well as risks to aquatic ecosystem health through a collaborative public process.