

Pipeline Associated Watercourse Crossings Fisheries Self-Assessment Tool

**Lucas Warner¹,
Doug Chipertzak²,**

¹Stantec Consulting Ltd., Calgary, AB, Canada

²Stantec Consulting Ltd., Calgary, AB, Canada

Revisions to the federal Fisheries Act came into effect in November 2013 and the new Fisheries Protection Policy outlines the new goals, objectives and principles behind the changes to the Fisheries Act. Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) Fisheries Protection Program has changed its focus from the productive capacity of fish habitat and harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction (HADD) of fish habitat to the sustainability and ongoing productivity of commercial, recreational, and Aboriginal (CRA) fisheries and serious harm to fish.

The new fish habitat provisions have implications for conducting work in and around water. Many of the activities associated with pipeline projects are not included in DFO's criteria for self-assessment. However, DFO will recognize and support the use of externally-developed guidelines that provide clarity and certainty to proponents, while maintaining the sustainability and ongoing productivity of CRA fisheries. DFO is also moving to a one-window approach to reviewing projects with requirements under the Species At Risk Act (SARA). Therefore, Stantec was retained by the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association (CEPA), Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), and Canadian Gas Association (CGA) to update the Pipeline Associated Watercourse Crossing (PAWC) document to a new 5th Edition.

This presentation outlines key changes in the Fisheries Act and provides guidance on the interpretation and application of the new Act and policy. A key component of this presentation is a Canada-wide guidance framework to assess the likelihood for pipeline associated watercourse crossings to cause serious harm to fish, comply with the SARA, and determine when to submit projects for review. This framework is available through an online interface that guides the user through the assessment process. Although developed for the pipeline industry, the regulatory framework applies to stream restoration and natural channel design projects. A similar approach and online interface could be developed for the permitting requirements for stream restoration projects.