

IFOA annual health check

Review under the Coastal IFOA

Purpose

- Outline a proposed approach for annual ‘health check’ reviews of the Coastal IFOA and its monitoring program.

Background

- The Coastal IFOA requires that the Steering Committee recommend to the EPA and the NSW Government changes to the Coastal IFOA based on the results of the monitoring and evaluation activities, including changes to the conditions, supporting protocols, or underlying management practices. The effectiveness of the monitoring program itself will also be reviewed and improved if necessary.
- Under Protocol 38, the Coastal IFOA:
 - *The monitoring program required under Chapter 8 of the approval must incorporate reviews and public reporting of results and progress including:*
 - (a) *an annual forum and review of the monitoring program must be provided by the monitoring steering committee to the EPA and must include:*
 - (i) *monitoring program results;*
 - (ii) *monitoring program progress; and*
 - (iii) *an assessment of the adequacy of the monitoring program*
- The approved Coastal IFOA monitoring program will investigate:
 - *Can Coastal IFOA conditions, forestry operations, forestry management or monitoring be improved to better meet objectives and outcomes?*
- Alongside the broader adaptive management of the Coastal IFOA, ongoing review and improvement of the monitoring program is also good practice. Programs need to be able to explore, evolve and develop in response to new questions, and improve monitoring approaches and protocols. As such, the effectiveness and adequacy of the monitoring program itself will be reviewed and improved as necessary as part of the annual review process.

Proposed way forward for annual reviews

Objectives

- The annual health check will review multiple lines of evidence and key findings to:
 1. Identify where the Coastal IFOA settings can be improved
 2. Review the performance of the monitoring program
 3. Set priorities for the following year of monitoring and evaluation.

Process

- Before the forum:
 1. Parties update common issues register on an ongoing basis. All parties' have access to the register including the Commission.
 2. Where possible, EPA and FCNSW resolve and agree to changes in a collaborative approach before annual health check – these are typically likely to be drafting errors or other minor administrative items. (NB – FCNSW have provided issues register 2020, where issues are helpfully prioritised)
- At the forum:
 1. FCNSW and EPA present their position and evidence on high and medium priority issues. FCNSW and EPA continue to jointly address low priority issues are to be addressed following the annual health check. Independent experts input with their knowledge on the issues.
 2. Parties discuss and agree to assign each issue to the following categories:
 - I. Issue is mutually resolved, and change agreed
 - II. Issue likely to be resolved in next 12 months with additional supporting data and evidence provided by parties.
 - III. Issue needs additional monitoring, independent evaluation or research over the longer-term. Commission to consider implications for monitoring program including cost.

(NB – future forums will need to review the performance of the monitoring program)
- After the forum:
 1. The Commission shares register with EPA and FCNSW:
 - to confirm assigned categories at the meeting with the parties
 - to propose categories to issues that were unassigned at meeting.
 2. FCNSW and EPA confirm and/or provide feedback.

(a second meeting can be held, depending on the extent of the feedback or if parties feel warranted)
 3. Commission provides draft advice to FCNSW, EPA and DPI. Also presents advice to the steering committee for feedback.
 4. Commission provides annual report and advice to NSW Government including DPI and EPA for their consideration. The report will be publicly available.

Roles and responsibilities

- Natural Resources Commission – Chair. Provides independent oversight as per Protocol 38 and approved monitoring program, considers evidence and provides advice to the EPA and DPI.
- Natural Resources Commission team – provides secretariat support, hosts meetings and considers work in the context of the approved monitoring program components
- EPA – Regulator and licence administrator. Registers issues and provides supporting evidence and policy guidance. Attends forum to present evidence and discuss position.
- FCNSW – Operator. Registers issues and provides supporting evidence. Attends forum to present evidence and discuss position.

- DPI – Policy lead on forestry. Attends forum and provides policy guidance to the group. Attends forum.
- EES - Policy lead on biodiversity conservation and member of Steering Committee. May attend forum if there are relevant issues.
- Independent experts - provides expert advice to the group on behalf of the steering committee

Table 1. Proposed tasks and timing

Task	Timing
Parties review and agree to process	11 December 2020
NRC shares issues register with all parties to complete and review	18 December 2020
FCNSW and EPA agree on any changes prior to forum if possible	By 22 January 2020
Annual Coastal IFOA health check forum	January 2021
Commission team sends register to parties with all issues categorised	
FCNSW and EPA confirm and/or provide feedback (Initiate 2 nd forum if needed)	February 2021
Commission provides recommendations to Steering Committee for endorsement. If endorsed, FCNSW and EPA can action agreed changes.	February 2021
The commission, on behalf of the steering committee, provides annual Coastal IFOA monitoring report to NSW Government, EPA and DPI	March 2021
Commission hosts all future workshops annually	November – annually

Next steps

- Parties agree on proposed process
- Develop invite list for review attendees
- Share FCNSW issues register with EPA
- Lock in date for annual ‘health check’ review workshop in January 2021