



Environmental Assessment Terms and Acronyms

The following are terms and acronyms that are found in various documents related to an environmental assessment.

Acronyms

ATK – aboriginal traditional knowledge

CEAA – *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*

CEA Agency – Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency

CEAR – Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry

CTA – *Canada Transportation Act*

EA – environmental assessment

FA – federal authority

FCR – Federal Coordination Regulations

FEAC – federal EA coordinator

PAC – project assessment committee

RA – responsible authority

SD – sustainable development

TEK – traditional ecological knowledge

VEC – valued ecosystem component

Environmental Assessment Terminology

Note: *The following definitions are provided for guidance only. In the case of inconsistencies between this text and that of the CEAA, the latter must prevail.*

aboriginal traditional knowledge (ATK): Knowledge that is held by, and unique to, Aboriginal peoples. It is a living body of knowledge that is cumulative, dynamic and adapted over time to reflect changes in the social, economic, environmental, spiritual and political spheres of the Aboriginal knowledge holders. It often includes knowledge about the land and its resources, spiritual beliefs, language, mythology, culture, laws, customs and medicines. It may be considered in the EA of a proposed project.

Note: The term traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is often used interchangeably with the term ATK; however, TEK is generally considered to be a subset of ATK that is primarily concerned with knowledge about the environment.

adaptive management: Involves the implementation of new or modified mitigation measures over the life of a project to address unanticipated environmental effects. The need for the implementation of adaptive management measures may be determined through an effective follow-up program.

alternative: Methods of a similar technical character or methods which are functionally the same (i.e. different routes, different types of crossings) or functionally different ways of achieving the same end (i.e. use of different modes of transportation).

applicants: Parties that have made application to the Agency pursuant to the CTA.

application: A submission to the Agency seeking approval pursuant to a section of the CTA or the *Railway Relocation and Crossing Act*.

biodiversity: As defined in the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, "biological diversity" means the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, terrestrial and marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they form a part and includes the diversity within and between species and of ecosystems.

biophysical environment: All the biological (presence, seasonality and significance of vegetation, bird, fish and animal populations and their habitat) and physical (landscape, soils, drainage, geology and geomorphology) characteristics of the environment.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry (CEAR): An information system established in accordance with the CEAA to facilitate public access to records relating to EAs conducted under the CEAA or its regulations.

The Registry consists of a Web site and a project file. The Registry must be maintained throughout the duration of an EA. The purpose of the Registry is to contain information about the conduct of EAs, and to ensure that the information is accessible to the public in a timely and convenient manner.

community knowledge: Information held by community members, such as farmers, hunters, fishers and naturalists, who are familiar with the environment in a specific geographic area. Community knowledge may be used in the EA of a proposed project. For example, fishermen in a specific area may know where the best "fishing spots" are, and therefore may contribute to identifying potential fish habitats.

compliance monitoring: A broad term for a type of monitoring conducted to verify whether a practice or procedure meets the applicable requirements prescribed by legislation, internal policies, accepted industry standards or specified terms and conditions (e.g., in an agreement, lease, permit, license or authorization). Mitigation monitoring is one type of compliance monitoring.

critical habitat: As defined in the *Species at Risk Act*, "critical habitat" means the habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of a listed wildlife species and that is identified as the species' critical habitat in the recovery strategy or in an action plan for the species.

cumulative effect: Environmental effects that are likely to result from a project in combination with the environmental effects of other past, existing and future projects or activities.

The CEAA requires consideration of cumulative environmental effects in all types of EA.

For example, one might consider the effects of siltation on fish and fish habitat during construction in combination with the effects of local agriculture and fishing activities.

determination of significance: Taking into account the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, a conclusion about whether adverse environmental effects are likely to be significant.

The significance of adverse environmental effects is determined by a combination of scientific data, regulated thresholds, standards, social values and professional

judgment. For example, the ecological context of a project may be a determinant of whether likely adverse effects are significant.

deviation or variation: A change in a proponent's mitigation measures requiring Agency approval.

ecosystem: As defined in the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, "ecosystem" means a dynamic complex of plant, animal and microorganism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

effect: Any change that a project may cause in the environment, including secondary effects on health, and socio-economic conditions, heritage, aboriginal uses of land or resources, or on any structure, site or thing that is of historical, archaeological, paleontological or architectural significance; as well as, any change to the project that may be caused by the environment.

environment: The components of the earth including physical (land, water and air including all layers of the atmosphere) and biological characteristics (all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms, including humans), as well as the interacting natural systems that include components of the biological or physical environments.

environmental assessment (EA): An assessment of the potential effects of a project falling under the CEAA.

environmental component: A part of the environment that a project may affect.

environmental monitoring: Periodic or continuous surveillance or testing, according to a predetermined schedule, of one or more environmental components.

Monitoring is usually conducted to determine the level of compliance with stated requirements, or to observe the status and trends of a particular environmental component over time.

environmental protection plan: A practical tool that describes the actions required to minimize environmental effects before, during and after project implementation.

The plan may include details about the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the EA, such as who is responsible for implementation, where the measures are intended to be implemented and within what timeframe.

exclusion list: A list, under paragraph 59(c) of the CEAA, for which an EA is not required because the effects are insignificant.

expert federal authority: An FA that – upon request from an RA, a mediator or a review panel – has the obligation to make available any specialist or expert information or knowledge that it possesses with respect to a project.

This expertise can be used during any stage of the EA, from the commencement of the EA to the implementation of the mitigation measures or any follow-up program.

factors to be considered: Elements to be examined in an EA. Under section 16 of the CEEA, consideration of certain factors is mandatory depending on the type of EA.

Examples of factors include environmental effects of the project, significance of the environmental effects, public comments and technically and economically feasible mitigation measures, and any other relevant matter such as the need for the project and alternatives to the project.

federal authority (FA): A federal department or agency.

federal EA coordinator (FEAC): A staff member from an RA or the CEA Agency, who coordinates the participation of RAs or FAs in the screening of a project.

federal lands: As defined in the CEEA, "federal lands" means:

- (a) Lands that belong to Her Majesty in right of Canada, or that Her Majesty in right of Canada has the power to dispose of, and all waters on and airspace above those lands, other than lands under the administration and control of the Commissioner of Yukon, the Northwest Territories or Nunavut;
- (b) The following lands and areas, namely:
 - (i) the internal waters of Canada,
 - (ii) the territorial sea of Canada,
 - (iii) the exclusive economic zone of Canada,
 - (iv) the continental shelf of Canada; and
- (c) Reserves, surrendered lands and any other lands that are set apart for the use and benefit of a band and are subject to the *Indian Act*, and all waters on and airspace above those reserves or lands.

federal project committee: A committee that may be established and chaired by the FEAC to co-ordinate the participation of FAs among themselves, and with any other persons, bodies or jurisdictions.

The committee is composed of the FEAC and the FAs that are, or may be, an RA for the project and those that are, or may be, an expert FA.

follow-up program: A program implemented to verify the accuracy of an EA, and to determine the effectiveness of the mitigation.

inclusion list: A list, under paragraph 59(f) of the CEAA, of physical activities that require an RA to ensure that an EA is conducted for the project.

indirect effect: A secondary environmental effect that occurs as a result of a change that a project may cause in the environment. An indirect effect is at least one step removed from a project activity in terms of cause-effect linkages.

For instance, a river diversion for the construction of a hydro power plant could directly result in the destruction of fish habitat causing a decline in fish population. A decline in fish population could result in the closure of an outfitting operation causing loss of jobs. Thus, the river diversion could indirectly cause the loss of jobs.

interested party: Any person or body having an interest in the outcome of an EA (interested parties can include: expert federal departments/agencies; other FAs; provincial, territorial or municipal governments; private sector organizations; and the public).

law list: A list, under paragraph 59(f) of the CEAA, of sections of federal statutes or regulations to which the CEAA applies.

mitigation measure: An action to eliminate, reduce or control an adverse effect (includes restitution for damages through replacement, restoration or compensation).

project: A physical work (construction, operation, modification, decommissioning or abandonment), as described in the law list; or a physical activity, not related to a physical work, as described in the inclusion list.

project-environment interaction: A link between a project activity and an environmental component that will result in an adverse effect.

proponent: The person, body or government department/agency that proposes a project subject to an EA under the CEAA.

protected areas: As defined by the World Conservation Union, a protected area is:

An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.

public concern: Concern raised by an interested party.

residual effect: An effect that persists after the successful implementation of the proposed mitigation measures.

responsible authority (RA): An FA or decision-maker that, pursuant to the CEAA, must ensure that an EA of a project is conducted.

scope of project: The physical works and activities to be covered in an EA. Scope is determined by the RA(s) under subsection 15(1) of the CEAA.

scope of the factors: The extent to which the factors listed in the CEAA, and other factors that are considered to be appropriate, need to be considered in the EA.

The scope of the factors identifies the geographical, spatial and temporal boundaries of the analysis.

scoping document: A project-specific document that guides the proponent in the preparation of EA supporting documentation that supplements information included as part of the application to the Agency.

screening: An evaluation of the environmental effects of a project conducted by the Agency in accordance with section 18 of the CEAA.

significance: Taking into account the planned mitigation measures, a determination as to whether an effect is likely to occur and whether the effect will be negative based on its magnitude, extent, frequency, irreversibility and ecological context.

species at risk: As defined by the *Species at Risk Act*, "species at risk" means an extirpated, endangered or threatened species or a species of special concern.

sustainable development (SD): As defined in the CEAA, "sustainable development" means development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

valued ecosystem component (VEC): An environmental element of an ecosystem that is identified as having scientific, social, cultural, economic, historical, archaeological or aesthetic importance.

The value of an ecosystem component may be determined on the basis of cultural ideals or scientific concern. Valued ecosystem components that have the potential to interact with project components should be included in the assessment of environmental effects.