

The Ecological Monitoring Committee for the Lower Athabasca (EMCLA) was a joint government-industry committee that oversaw the design, implementation, and management of specific monitoring programs for the Lower Athabasca Planning Region (LAPR). Initiated in 2010, the Committee focused on improving the quality and consistency of monitoring that fulfilled selected wildlife and biodiversity clauses in *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA)* approvals for oil sands developments.

The EMCLA enhanced the value of regulated monitoring activities in the LAPR by exploring the feasibility, cost, and utility of developing regional-scale monitoring programs to address regulatory requirements. Key priorities included:

- Filling gaps in existing regional monitoring systems
- Coordinating data collection amongst different development projects
- Ensuring that the key principles of transparency, scientific credibility, and relevance form the basis of new monitoring programs.

These priorities led to an initial investment in three projects studying rare species. Two of these projects, the Rare Plants and Rare Animals projects, have evolved to become long-term initiatives carried out by the ABMI that complement the ABMI's core biodiversity monitoring program.

In February 2012, the governments of Alberta and Canada released the *Joint Canada-Alberta Implementation Plan for Oil Sands Monitoring (JOSM)*. The plan outlined a path forward for a coordinated, government-led monitoring program for air, water, land, and biodiversity in the oil sands, with an annual budget of up to \$50 million dollars.

The work of the EMCLA was deemed by the two levels of governments to be within the scope of the Terrestrial Biodiversity and Habitat Monitoring component of the JOSM, causing a fundamental shift in the EMCLA's governance. Previously, the EMCLA operated largely independently, taking input from its members and from regulatory/approvals officials. After 2012, the EMCLA's work was integrated with the larger JOSM monitoring system.

The JOSM system established a governance structure with joint leadership provided by the federal and provincial governments beginning at the component level and continuing up to provincial and federal Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs). Multi-stakeholder committees were established to ensure effective management, program delivery, and stakeholder involvement. From 2012-14, EMCLA actively integrated its activities into the JOSM program. During this time, EMCLA projects also matured and progressed from an exploratory to implementation phase. As of fall 2014, work planning, governance, and reporting are led by ABMI as part of the Terrestrial Biodiversity and Habitat Monitoring Component Advisory Committee (CAC) of JOSM.

EMCLA Documents:

- EMCLA 2014 Annual Report
- EMCLA 2013 Vision and Workplan
- LAPR 2013 Monitoring Activity Report

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For more information, visit the Rare Animals and Rare Plants projects!