

Burrard
Inlet
Environmental
Action
Program

Fraser
River
Estuary
Management
Program

COORDINATED PROJECT REVIEW

in Burrard Inlet and Fraser River Estuary

The History of the Coordinated Project Review Process in Burrard Inlet and the Fraser River Estuary

For many years now, federal and provincial agencies have been coordinating the review of all projects in Burrard Inlet and the Fraser River Estuary under the Burrard Inlet Environmental Action Program (BIEAP) and the Fraser River Estuary Management Program (FREMP). This has offered a harmonized one-window access to project review for proponents and has eliminated the need for proponents to deal separately with many different government agencies.

After many years of successful operation of its coordinated project review process, BIEAP-FREMP commissioned a review of the process with a view to further improving its operation, effectiveness and efficiency. At the same time, it was recognized that the process needed to adapt to recent statutory changes, including the promulgation of specific regulations for environmental assessments by Port Authorities under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and new Port responsibilities for environmental management under the *Canada Marine Act*.

This pamphlet provides a summary of the new BIEAP-FREMP coordinated project review process with a particular emphasis on the changes that have been made to improve and streamline the process.



What is Coordinated Project Review/Environmental Assessment All About?

The purpose of an environmental assessment is to ensure that the environmental effects of a project receive careful consideration before the proponent and responsible authorities take actions and make decisions in connection with the project. Environmental assessment is intended to encourage proponents and responsible authorities to take actions and make decisions that promote sustainable development and thereby achieve or maintain a healthy environment and a healthy economy. An effective environmental assessment of a project should offset, in a cost-effective manner, any irrevocable environmental damage that the project might otherwise cause.

An environmental assessment should also provide an opportunity for public participation and input to the assessment process, thereby building public trust in the process.

Within BIEAP and FREMP, the coordinated review of a project is undertaken before a federal, provincial, or municipal authority makes any decision that would allow the project to proceed. Such decisions can include a regulatory approval, a land use approval, a decision to provide project funding, or a decision to sponsor a project or assume the role of project proponent.

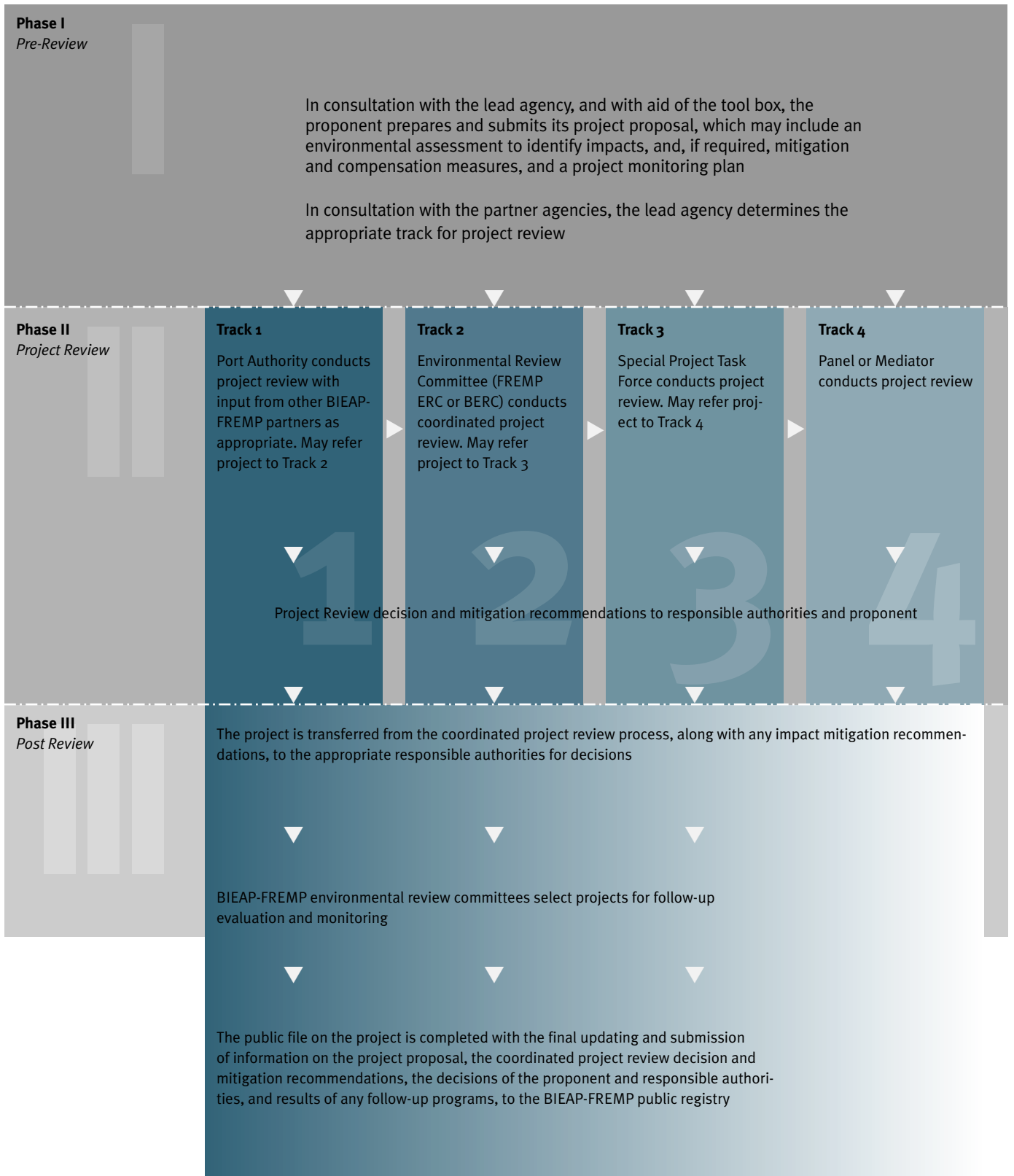
It is important to note that the coordinated project review process does not issue project approvals – rather, it provides the responsible authorities and the proponent with mitigation recommendations prior to their making project decisions.

Based on the location, potential impact and size of a proposed project, the environmental assessment may include consideration of the following elements:

- the purpose of the project;
- the environmental and related socio-economic effects of the project;
- the significance of any of those effects;
- measures to mitigate any adverse effects, including current best management practices, guidelines and policies;
- alternative means of carrying out the project;
- any cumulative effects of the project;
- sustainability of renewable resources that may be affected by the project;
- public comments on the project, and
- follow up programs.

From a proponent's perspective, coordinated project review should provide an indication of environmental (and related socio-economic) issues early enough in project planning that corrective steps can be taken to resolve those issues without unduly delaying the project. The environmental assessment process should facilitate a smoother project approvals process. The environmental assessment should also provide greater certainty of regulatory compliance and should facilitate effective dialogue between project proponents and government authorities.

The Three-Phase, Four-Track Coordinated Project Review Process



The Updated Coordinated Project Review Process for Burrard Inlet and the Fraser River Estuary

BIEAP and FREMP have adopted a three-phase, four-track process for the review of projects in Burrard Inlet and the Fraser River Estuary.

PHASE 1 (PRE-REVIEW): In the pre-review phase, the appropriate lead agency, usually a Port Authority, will work with the proponent to ensure that a project proposal is developed with all the necessary environmental and related health and socio-economic information.

BIEAP-FREMP have developed a “Tool Box” to assist proponents in preparing project proposals and as a resource to aid lead agencies. The “Tool Box” includes;

- environmental quality guidelines and objectives
- guidelines and information requirements for preparing applications
- current best management practices and operating guidelines
- Inlet and Estuary management plans
- class assessments
- habitat and resource inventories and maps, and
- regulatory requirements.

In certain circumstances, pre-review discussions with the lead agency and reviewing member agencies may be appropriate in facilitating the planning and design of the proposed project.

The lead agency will then assign the project proposal, in consultation with other BIEAP-FREMP partners as appropriate, to one of the four tracks for Phase II environmental review, depending on such factors as the uniqueness, size and likely adverse impacts of the project, the level of public interest and concern, and the sensitivity of fish and wildlife habitat.

PHASE 2 (ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW):

In this phase, the coordinated environmental review of the project takes place through one of four tracks as determined by the lead agency in Phase I. Environmental reviews will be guided by the requirements of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, the *Canada Port Authority Environmental Assessment Regulations*, and/or the B.C. *Environmental Assessment Act*, and other applicable legislation, guidelines and policies as appropriate.

TRACK 1: Track 1 will be suitable for projects where operational guidelines and/or best management practices are already in place, adverse effects are unlikely, valuable habitat is not at risk, and public interest is limited. Review of Track 1 projects will be conducted by the appropriate Port Authority acting on behalf of the broader BIEAP-FREMP partnership, although a Port Authority may consult with other BIEAP-FREMP partners at any time to access their technical or scientific expertise. Track 1 reviews are usually completed in less than one week, assuming that the proponent has provided all the necessary information.

TRACK 2: Track 2 will be suitable for projects where operational guidelines and best management practices are not in place, some adverse effects are likely, valuable habitat may be at risk, and some public interest is anticipated. Review of Track 2 projects will be conducted by the existing BIEAP and FREMP environmental review committees, made up of representatives of the partner agencies – the Environmental Review Committee (ERC) for FREMP and the Burrard Environmental Review Committee (BERC) for BIEAP. Track 2 reviews are usually completed in less than one month, assuming that the proponent has provided all the necessary information.

TRACK 3: Only a very few projects are expected to follow Track 3. Track 3 will be suitable for projects where operational guidelines and best management practices are not in place, adverse effects are likely, valuable habitat is at risk, and public concerns are evident. The review of a Track 3 project will be conducted by a Task Force established specifically for that project by the BIEAP-FREMP Management Committee. Timelines for Track 3 reviews will be established specifically for each Task Force.

TRACK 4: Only very rarely are projects expected to follow Track 4. Track 4 is for projects where environmental, social, economic, and/or public concerns are such as to warrant referral to a panel review or a mediation under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and/or the *B.C. Environmental Assessment Act*. In such cases, the projects will be handed over to the appropriate federal and/or provincial Environmental Assessment Agencies, and the BIEAP-FREMP partnership will play only an intervenor role.

COMPLETION OF PHASE 2

Phase 2 ends with a project review decision and a set of mitigation recommendations for the project which are directed to the proponent, and the responsible authorities.

There are three possible decisions that can be made following the project review process:

- With appropriate mitigation measures in place, the project is not likely to cause significant adverse effects. In this case, the project can proceed.
- Even with appropriate mitigation measures in place, it is possible the project will still cause significant adverse effects **or** it is felt that the significant adverse effects of the project might be justifiable **or** there are serious public concerns about the project. In this case, the project must be referred to a review panel or a mediator.
- Even with appropriate mitigation measures in place, the project is likely to cause significant adverse effects that cannot be justified. In this case, the project cannot proceed.

PHASE 3 (POST-REVIEW): In this phase, the project review decision, along with any mitigation recommendations, is transferred to the responsible authorities.

As part of Phase 3, the environmental review committees of BIEAP and FREMP will select a number of projects for follow-up evaluation and monitoring. Follow-up evaluation will assess the degree to which impact mitigation recommendations were incorporated into project decisions by responsible authorities and proponents, and follow-up monitoring will assess the degree to which environmental and related health and socio-economic effects were actually mitigated.

Also in Phase 3, the public file on the project will be completed with the final updating and submission of information on the project proposal, the project review decision and mitigation recommendations, the decisions of the proponent and responsible authorities, and the results of any follow-up programs, to the BIEAP-FREMP public registry.

Where Can I Get More Information?

For information on the **BIEAP-FREMP** coordinated project review processes, contact the BIEAP-FREMP Project Review Coordinator at 604-775-5195, visit the BIEAP-FREMP Office at 5945 Kathleen Avenue, Suite 501, in Burnaby, or visit the BIEAP-FREMP Web Site at: www.bieapfremf.org

For assistance with project proposals:

- Burrard Inlet, Roberts Bank, and Boundary Bay areas**, contact Environmental Services at the Vancouver Port Authority at 604-665-9080.
- Fraser River** area below Kanaka Creek, contact the Environmental Assistant at the Fraser River Port Authority at 604-524-6655.
- North Fraser River:** contact the North Fraser Port Authority at 604-273-1866.



