

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

It is my pleasure to present the 2023-24 annual performance report for the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. This report was prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** requirements for a category one government entity and details the progress made towards achieving the objectives outlined in our 2023-26 strategic plan. As Minister, I am accountable for the results contained within.

Through the dedicated efforts of department staff, we made significant progress delivering key programs and services. In addition, the department achieved success by meeting its objectives as demonstrated through meeting required indicators.

The department continued to focus on initiatives that aim to enhance sustainable growth in Newfoundland and Labrador's renewable resources industries. A few highlights were: a new modernized **Aquaculture Act** that once in force will provide guidance and direction for growing Newfoundland and Labrador's aquaculture sector; \$42.6 million through the five-year Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership to strengthen competitiveness, innovation and resiliency of the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector; \$25 million through the Atlantic Fisheries Fund to help modernize equipment and improve quality, productivity, and sustainability in the Newfoundland and Labrador fish and seafood sector; and significant investments in silviculture, wildfire equipment and training to protect the province's valuable forest resources.

The fishing, forestry, and farming sectors make significant economic and cultural contributions to this province. We continue to work hard with industry, government, community and others to create new opportunities. I am confident that through the fine work of our valued employees we will continue to deliver programs and services more effectively for the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Sincerely,

Hon. Gerry Byrne
Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture

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Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture (FFA) is a category one government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. FFA supports and encourages the development and sustainability of the province's fishing, aquaculture, agriculture and forestry industries, as well as wildlife conservation and management, resource enforcement and administration of Crown lands. Its main responsibilities include:

- Licensing and regulating the province's fish processing sector, as well as wildlife, forestry and land resources;
- Supporting the strategic development of the fishing industry as a key pillar of economic growth;
- Promoting the further development and diversification of competitive and sustainable agriculture businesses;
- Managing the province's timber resources and forest industry to develop and sustain it as an economic pillar in the province;
- Effectively and sustainably developing, managing and licensing the aquaculture sector;
- Conserving, protecting and responsibly managing inland fish, wildlife, forestry and land resources;
- Providing emergency response services related to fire suppression and wildlife control/vehicle collisions; and
- Delivering education and awareness around the province's natural resources.

Additionally, FFA is responsible for the conservation, marketing, sustainable development and diversification efforts for sectors under its mandate. For additional information, please visit the departmental website at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/ffa>.

Staff and Budget

As of March 31, 2024, the department had 537 employees. For the 2023-24 fiscal year, FFA's gross budget was \$107,104,000.

Branch	Number of Employees	Budget
Agriculture and Lands	171	\$36,158,400
Fisheries and Aquaculture	61	\$11,579,500
Forestry and Wildlife	170	\$12,877,200
Executive and Executive Support	11	\$39,655,600
Enforcement and Resource Services	124	\$6,833,300
Total Department	537	\$107,104,000

FFA is headquartered in St. John's and has 68 offices located in 44 communities throughout the province.

Vision

The vision of FFA is that of sustainable renewable resources that are responsibly developed for the social, cultural, ecological and economic well-being of the province.

Mandate

The mandate of FFA includes:

- Development and growth of renewable resource including fisheries, aquaculture, inland fish and wildlife, agriculture and forestry for optimum sustainable economic benefit to the province as well as its ecological integrity.
- Conservation and protection of the province's inland fish, wildlife, wildlife habitat, forestry and land resources.
- Administration of Crown lands as a social and economic resource for the province.

- Regulation of, and compliance and enforcement activities for animal health and protection, food safety, aquaculture, agriculture, fish processing, inland fish, wildlife and forestry.

Lines of Business

FFA has the following eight main lines of business:

1. **Animal Health** - Provides mobile clinical routine and emergency veterinary services to livestock and poultry owners across the province, and veterinary services and regulatory oversight of the aquaculture industry.
2. **Education and Awareness** - Provides activities to promote education and awareness around the province's natural resources.
3. **Licensing/Permitting** - Responsible for licensing and permitting and the development and implementation of policies and regulations related to each type of licence, such as fish processing, fish buyers and restricted buyers.
4. **Inspection, Compliance and Regulatory Enforcement** - Conduct comprehensive inspection, compliance and enforcement duties within its legislative authority.
5. **Marketing** - Provides marketing support services to fish, seafood, and agrifoods industries in the province.
6. **Resource Research and Development** - Assists the fishing, aquaculture, agriculture and forestry industries through the provision of technical and financial support in business development.
7. **Sustainable Resource Management** - Works to ensure a balance between environmental, economic and social values with management plans and programs that safeguard viable resources that are economically sustainable and provide employment.
8. **Conservation** - Responsible for sustainable management of the resources under its mandate and jurisdiction, such as our province's forest, agricultural and land resources.

Additional information about FFA, its mandate and lines of business can be found at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/ffa/>.

Highlights and Partnerships

Highlights

- In May 2023, the big game licence draw results for 2023-24 were released. The results were available earlier this year compared to prior years due to the transition to a fully online application process, thereby providing hunters more time to prepare for a safe and successful hunting season. Additionally, FFA concluded its big game surveys for the island portion of the province. Five moose management areas and five caribou areas were surveyed demonstrating Government's commitment to sustainable big game management for the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.
- In September 2023, FFA launched the Newfoundland and Labrador Active Wildfire Dashboard, which provides residents with important information related to forest fires in the province. It provides information about active wildfires, size and location of fires, fire suppression activities and more. Similar dashboards are in use across Canada and the tool is proving useful.
- In 2023-24, American Marten (Island of Newfoundland Population) was downlisted in status from Threatened to Vulnerable under the provincial Endangered Species Act. First considered endangered in 1996, it was one of the first species formally designated under the provincial Endangered Species Act in 2002. Recovery programs in place since the 1990's have supported population growth to an estimated 2,500 to 2,800 mature animals thanks to the efforts of the Newfoundland Marten Recovery Team, the trapping sector, small game harvesters, Indigenous governments and organizations, stewardship organizations, the forestry industry, provincial and federal governments, and the public.
- In January 2024, components of the provincial spatial forest inventory became available as an open Geographic Information System (GIS) data offering on the FFA

GeoHUB. Utilizing this technology, offers public access to forest inventory data to support research, mapping and analysis projects.

- In 2023-24, a Crown land reserve, encompassing approximately 75 hectares was established near Ragged Beach to further protect the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, which is home to North America's largest colony of Atlantic Puffins with over 600,000 breeding birds. The reserve ensures that light pollution in the Ragged Beach area is minimized and protections are enhanced for the Atlantic Puffin and Leach's Storm Petrel populations of nearby Witless Bay Ecological Reserve.
- Based on feedback from the 2022 public consultation regarding amendments to section 36 of the Lands Act, FFA has worked towards preparing amendments to this section of the **Lands Act** which focuses on adverse possession of Crown lands. The proposed amendments aim to help address challenges related to Crown title.
- In 2023-24, the Vegetable Transplant Program provided 4.3 million vegetable transplants to 123 farmers to increase the production and variety of produce grown in the province; promote higher marketable yields and earlier harvests; and support food self-sufficiency. Additionally, the Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development produced and shipped 6.5 million tree seedlings to assist with the province's reforestation efforts (e.g. Crown reforestation efforts, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited (CBPPL), silviculture efforts, National Parks reforestation, mineral exploration land reclamation and urban planting).

Partnerships

- In July 2023, FFA launched a cost-shared program under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP) in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Sustainable CAP is a five-year, \$3.5 billion (\$42.6 million for five years for Newfoundland and Labrador) initiative to strengthen the competitiveness, innovation and resiliency of Canada's agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector.
- In November 2023, FFA and the Government of Canada announced funding support for 147 projects, totaling a contribution of more than \$25 million, to help modernize equipment and improve quality, productivity, and sustainability in the Newfoundland

and Labrador fish and seafood sector. The contribution is from the Atlantic Fisheries Fund (AFF), which is a \$400 million fund that is funded by the Federal and Provincial Governments.

- In 2023-24, FFA partnered with Environment and Climate Change Canada to establish a Federal-Provincial Priority Place for Species at Risk, the Limestone Landscapes of the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland and Labrador. Priority Places are areas of significant biodiversity, concentrations of species at risk, and opportunities to advance conservation efforts. This partnership commits three years of Federal funding in the amount of \$2,294,978 and \$1,256,550 in Provincial funding to implement on-the-ground priority actions that will help to conserve and recover biodiversity and species at-risk in the Priority Place.
- FFA also signed a Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund Contribution Agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada to undertake municipal stewardship conservation agreements to secure important wetlands and to identify and assess provincially important wetlands in Newfoundland and Labrador. Under this Contribution Agreement ECCC contributed \$93,900 and FFA \$30,000 in 2023-24.
- In June 2023, the Fisheries Advisory Council released the Fisheries Action Plan, which is prepared as a collaborative and strategic approach by the province's fisheries stakeholders including FFA, to advance the industry. Its focus is fisheries science collaboration, climate change impacts on fisheries and marine ecosystems, strategies to address market access for seals, new product development and solutions to recruitment and retention for fisheries related occupations.
- On June 8, 2023, World Oceans Day was attended collaboratively with officials from FFA, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Parks Canada, World Wildlife Fund Canada, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and the Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University. Many ocean-themed events were organized during Oceans Week, to appreciate the benefits oceans provide and raise awareness about actions that can be taken to protect the world's marine environments.
- In 2023-24, FFA continued work with federal partners and industry stakeholders to promote the seal products industry and increase awareness. On May 16, 2023, FFA represented Newfoundland and Labrador at National Seal Products Day, which

aimed to promote the seal products industry and highlight the importance of the seal fishery, particularly for coastal communities and Indigenous people.

Report on Performance

Issue 1 – Development and Growth of Renewable Resources

The continued development and growth of renewable resources provides significant economic, cultural and recreational value to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. FFA, through its programs, services and initiatives, focuses on exploring and supporting opportunities to utilize natural resources that generate employment and bring economic benefits. It supports initiatives to create opportunities for more people in the province to engage in traditional cultural and recreational activities such as hunting, wood-cutting, fishing and growing food.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture will have supported development and growth of renewable resources for the socioeconomic benefit of the province.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture will have developed and implemented initiatives to facilitate the development and growth of renewable resource sectors for the socioeconomic benefit of the province. The table below outlines planned versus actual results of the 2023-24 objective indicators set out in FFA's 2023-26 Strategic Plan.

Results

This table outlines planned versus actual results of the 2023-24 objective indicators set out in FFA’s 2023-26 Strategic Plan.

<p>Indicator 1: Completed a timber resource analysis to provide opportunities for advancing timber production and forest enhancement.</p>
<p>FFA has prepared a provincial timber resource analysis (TRA) in 2023-24 which reflects updated annual allowable cuts (AAC) for forest management planning zone 6, which encompasses forest management districts (FMD) 15 and 16. Results of the TRA are anticipated to be published in the 2025-26 sustainable forest management strategy. The TRA will help provide opportunities for advancing timber production and forest enhancement by quantifying the sustainable AAC’s and harvested wood products potential throughout the various regions of the province.</p> <p>AAC’s were set in 2023-24, taking into consideration the best available science, updated land base, silviculture investments and environmental assessment release conditions.</p> <p>Additionally in 2023-24, one new five-year plan (zone 6 - FMD’s 14 and 16) was registered and released from environmental assessment. Ongoing work includes updating the provincial land base classification to identify the provincial working forests in support of the development of a new five-year forest development plan.</p>
<p>Indicator 2: Launched the Aquaculture Multi-Species Research and Development Fund and commenced development of a Multi-Species Aquaculture Strategy.</p>
<p>The Aquaculture Multi-Species Research and Development Fund (MSRDF) was launched on September 6, 2023, to help advance the development of a Multi-Species Aquaculture Strategy. Funding allocation was \$500,000 annually for three years to diversify and expand the aquaculture industry by supporting multi-species aquaculture</p>

development and the collection of oceanographic data. The grant program in 2023-24 was \$150,000. As of March 31, 2024, four applications/proposals were submitted and approved that focused on marine plants at the marine and nursery stage and wolffish. FFA is expecting to receive more applications in 2024-25 as there has been significant interest in the program.

Additionally, FFA commenced development of a Multi-Species Aquaculture Strategy in 2023-24. A jurisdictional scan and a SWOT analysis were completed on five species of interest. New monitoring sites based upon licensing trends and expansion goals were identified and sampling completed in the fall 2023 season under the Environmental Biological Monitoring Program, which is also part of this strategy. Field work (e.g., data collection, oceanographic work and new site selection) began in spring 2024. Further development work on the Multi-Species Strategy will continue in 2024-25, including a consultation plan.

Additionally, the Aquatic Animal Health Division completed oceanographic work in support of Bay/Area Management Areas in the fall of 2024. The data will support the development of the Multi-Species Aquaculture Strategy. The Division is working collaboratively to advance the development of this strategy and will continue to collaborate and complete field work in 2024-25.

Indicator 3: Enhanced data collection methods to support advancement of multi-year forest management planning and reforestation initiatives.

In 2023-24, the forest inventory data collection method switched from ruggedized xPlore tablets using Visual Basic programming to iPads and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) data capture software (e.g., Survey 123 and Field Maps). Additionally, an application was developed for the temporary sample plot program and updates developed for the permanent sample plot program. With respect to silviculture, iPad and ESRI digital data capture software was deployed in spring 2023-24. Field results have been compiled in support of multi-year silviculture prescriptions, budgets and annual workplans.

Additionally in 2023-24, inventory and silviculture tablet development (e.g., digital data collection) became operational and software updates were incorporated to reflect data limitations in previous versions and is currently being used to capture cutover regeneration information to inform multi-year silviculture prescriptions. These enhancements of data collection methods helped support the advancement of multi-year forest management planning and reforestation initiatives by providing real-time data.

Indicator 4: Implemented the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership Agreement and the Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program by providing funding to support sustainability and growth of the agriculture sector.

Sustainable CAP is a five-year Federal, Provincial and Territorial Agreement with an allocation of \$42.6 million over five years for Newfoundland and Labrador. The total funding allocated for this province in 2023-24 was approximately \$8.5 million. As of March 31, 2024, 124 projects have been funded for a total expenditure of over \$6.6 million in Sustainable CAP funding. Sustainable CAP provided funding to support sustainable agricultural initiatives under the Climate Change and Environmental Outreach program. As of March 31, 2024, Sustainable CAP provided approximately \$284,000 to improve the environmental sustainability of producers through five Sustainable CAP projects, including an investment in precision farming for fertilizer application, an investment in a heat recovery system for a poultry barn and investment to assist the transition to renewable energy sources for farm machinery. Sustainable CAP provided approximately \$1.1 million in funding to 38 new entrants to support growth in the Newfoundland and Labrador agriculture industry. Additionally, Sustainable CAP provided funding to enhance 135 acres of new agricultural land to support food self-sufficiency and industry sustainability. Through the efforts described above, Sustainable CAP has supported, and will continue to support, sustainability and growth of the agriculture sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program (PAAP) is a provincial program that provides financial assistance to eligible applicants involved in primary production or secondary processing activities that will: improve the economic viability of the agriculture and agrifoods industry; promote commercialization and growth in the sector; and enhance the competitive capability of the agriculture and agrifoods industry. Funding is provided for eligible activities including land development and agriculture infrastructure. The PAAP will prioritize investment on projects that support food self-sufficiency, enhance agricultural growth and increase secondary processing of food products in the sector. In 2023-24, a total of 141 projects were approved for over \$2.0 million in funding, including 106 land development projects valued at approximately \$1.3 million and 35 agriculture infrastructure projects valued at \$756,904. PAAP funding has helped to support sustainability and growth of the agriculture sector in 2023-24.

Indicator 5: Upgraded equipment and strengthened programs at the Centre for Agriculture and Forestry.

In 2023-24, FFA upgraded equipment, infrastructure and strengthened programs at the Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development. These include:

- Completed the restoration of five large cold-frame structures that were 20 years-old, thereby allowing the Centre to produce near capacity and for the continued production of 7,000,000 tree seedlings per year.
- Continued to improve the Certified Seed Potato Program with the creation of a potato working group, involving farmers, Provincial and Federal staff.
- Improved sanitization techniques on and off the potato fields, aimed at disease prevention and enhanced crop quality.
- Developed a strategic plan for potato and cover crop rotation, to enhance growth, quality and overall health of the Certified Seed Potato Program.
- Completed the upgrade of the Argus climate controls system from the 30-year-old system.

- Purchased a new potato harvester to create efficiencies during the harvesting process and to improve the quality of harvested seed.
- Relocated the Eastern Larch seed orchard to a new site at the Centre, which will improve the quality and quantity of native eastern larch seed availability.
- Cleared six additional acres of land that will be used to increase seed potato production in the province.
- Completed the extension of the black spruce clone bank and breeding garden to aid in the establishment of the third-generation black spruce seed orchard.
- Continued work on the established third-generation black spruce orchard within the tree improvement program. This gave the Centre the ability to grow and harvest selectively improved black spruce seed that is providing the forest industry of the province with seedlings that are projected to grow 25 to 30 per cent faster than native wild seed.

Finally, in 2023-24, the Centre joined the Atlantic Tree Improvement Group, which is a collaborative effort by the Atlantic Provinces and industry to enhance, diversify and improve genetic tree seed quality. This will aid in climate change adaptability, increased yields on land base footprint, maintain genetic diversity and collaborative efforts on tree improvement initiatives.

Indicator 6: Supported fish harvesters and processors to improve productivity and operational efficiencies.

During 2023-24, FFA supported fish harvesters and processors through 94 projects that helped improve productivity and operational efficiencies. These projects also helped ensure that a top-quality fish product was landed and processed. Some of these projects are highlighted below.

Firstly, an AFF investment of more than \$5.33 million (\$1.6 million from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and \$3.73 million from the Government of Canada) focusing on increasing opportunities and market value for sustainably-sourced, high-quality fish and seafood products from Atlantic Canada. This

investment helped approximately 130 harvesters obtain equipment to improve onboard handling processes; make harvesting more efficient with automated hook and line systems; help make trawling for shrimp more efficient and sustainable with the acquisition of trawl monitoring systems; and improve processes for maintaining proper temperature while on board vessels with the use of refrigerated seawater and slurry ice systems.

Secondly, an AFF investment of more than \$13.6 million (\$4.08 million from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador) for the processing sector to modernize and automate processes for cod; support innovative technology for a new salmon processing facility; implement innovative crab cleaning technology to improve production efficiency; improve or create live holding equipment and facilities; and improve packaging and shipping equipment. Of note, one of the challenges to the provincial processing sector is access to international markets for live and fresh seafood products. Included in this \$13.6 million investment to the processing sector is nearly \$2.3 million (\$687,190 from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador) to allow the Gander Airport Authority to construct and develop a holding facility for live and fresh seafood to allow efficient air shipments to global markets.

Thirdly, an investment of \$6 million (\$1.8 million from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador) from AFF supported innovative technology for a new salmon processing facility at Quinlan Brothers Limited in Bay de Verde. This facility will provide processing services to Grieg Seafoods as they expand their salmon production in the province and will provide nearly year-round employment for up to 50 workers in the short-term and additional employment as production allows.

Indicator 7: Supported initiatives to identify new market opportunities and expand international markets for fish and seafood products.

In 2023-24, FFA supported initiatives to identify new market opportunities and expand international markets for fish and seafood products. FFA continued to work with industry stakeholders to diversify markets through participation in key international

trade shows such as the Seafood Expo North America (Boston, United States), Seafood Expo Global (Barcelona, Spain), Conxemar (Vigo, Spain), Seafood Expo Asia (Singapore) and China Fish and Seafood Expo (Qingdao, China). Attending these events is vital to identifying new trade leads, meeting with seafood distributors, promoting Newfoundland and Labrador's seafood products and gaining knowledge on competitors, new technology and emerging global market trends.

FFA also continued its work towards increasing exports to existing and emerging markets by participating in business-to-business (B2B) Export Cafés in Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines and Japan. These events included B2B matchmaking, seminars and meetings with retailers, processors and importers, alongside in-market promotional activities.

FFA supported the fish and seafood industry in 2023-24 through the Seafood Development Program by contributing up to \$200,000 to companies and organizations for innovative marketing projects, which included funding assistance for market diversification and other initiatives, including branding, packaging, product development and promotion.

Finally, FFA also continued in 2023-24 to build momentum on its pan-Atlantic partnership, with support from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), for the 'Seafood from Canada' brand and digital marketing program. The program launched geographically targeted media strategies during in-market events, focusing on digital campaigns in diversifying markets.

Discussion of Results:

During 2023-24, FFA developed and implemented numerous initiatives to facilitate the development and growth of renewable resources in the province. This included initiatives such as: identifying available timber, setting annual allowable cuts and enhancing forestry data collection methods; launching the Aquaculture Multi-Species Research and supporting initiatives to identify new market opportunities for fish and seafood products; implementing the Sustainable CAP; and more as described above. Wherever possible, FFA worked collaboratively with its valued stakeholders to advance these initiatives and will continue to advance related initiatives in 2024-25.

Objective 2024-25:

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture will have further developed and implemented initiatives to facilitate the development and growth of renewable resource sectors for the socioeconomic benefit of the province.

Indicators:

1. Advanced the development of a provincial Forestry Strategy.
2. Advanced the development of a Multi-Species Aquaculture Strategy and Multi-Species Research and Development
3. Continued to implement the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership Agreement and the Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program.
4. Supported fish harvesters and processors through the Atlantic Fisheries Fund.
5. Supported market research, trade shows, trade missions and in-market promotional activities to identify new market opportunities and expand international markets for fish and seafood products.

Issue 2 – Sustainable Resource Management

Renewable resources must be protected and managed sustainably and in a manner that recognizes the cultural significance of these resources as well as the social, economic, and recreational activities related to them. Additionally, enhancing the resilience of the province's renewable resources to the effects of a changing climate has become increasingly important. FFA will support initiatives that improve sustainability of our forests, wildlife and plant biodiversity, along with other renewable resources. This will ensure that resources in Newfoundland and Labrador are managed to maximize their socio-economic benefits for now and for future generations.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture will have enhanced the sustainable management of renewable resources for the socioeconomic benefit of the province.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture will have developed and implemented initiatives to enhance the sustainable management of renewable resources for the socioeconomic benefit of the province. The table below outlines planned versus actual results of the 2023-24 objective indicators set out in FFA's 2023-26 Strategic Plan.

Results

This table outlines planned versus actual results of the 2023-24 objective indicators set out in FFA's 2023-26 Strategic Plan.

Indicator 1: Advanced initiatives to better manage the Province's approach to wildfire management.

In 2023-24, FFA advanced initiatives to better manage Newfoundland and Labrador's approach to wildfire management. FFA signed a four-year contribution agreement, valued at \$32 million with a 50/50 cost share, with Natural Resources Canada for the Federal Fire Equipment Fund. It will use this funding to: increase the risk and predictive services it provides; create three new positions to facilitate project implementation; increase efforts to prevent wildland fires; increase the number of wildland fire suppression response vehicles and equipment; increase aerial attack capabilities through purchasing a bird dog aircraft and repairing one existing tanker; enhance communications network; purchase and upgrade key infrastructure; and deliver an enhanced training program.

Indicator 2: Progressed development of legislation regarding resource enforcement and development of enforcement related amendments to other relevant legislation.

FFA has progressed development of the **Resource Enforcement Act** that would: authorize the appointment of enforcement officers to enforce certain legislation; enforce additional legislation should the need arise; require the establishment of a code of conduct for Resource Enforcement Officers; and authorize entering into agreements with the federal government or another province or territory related to resource enforcement. The proposed Act is intended to reflect the new structure of resource enforcement authorities under one umbrella, and created a centralized, transparent authority which will support a clear and consistent resource enforcement framework for the province. FFA has also progressed development of enforcement related amendments to the **Wild Life Act** and **Endangered Species Act**.

Indicator 3: Continued actions to manage spruce budworm populations and infectious animal diseases of concern.

FFA continued actions to manage spruce budworm populations by using an early intervention strategy. In 2023-24, FFA treated 110,485 hectares of forested land using

a biological insecticide (BTK) on the West Coast of the Island of Newfoundland. FFA continued to monitor all insect populations using its three main surveys i.e., Pheromone, Defoliation Survey and Fall Forecast Survey. The 2023 defoliation survey reported 34,204 fewer hectares of defoliated forest by spruce budworm on forested land than in 2022, excluding Gros Morne National Park. Since 2020, FFA has treated 419,549 hectares of forested land using early intervention strategy.

Also in 2023-24, FFA continued actions to manage infectious animal diseases of concern. FFA's Aquatic Animal Health Division continued to provide veterinary oversight for cultured aquatic animals in Newfoundland and Labrador. This includes regulatory oversight of Aquatic Animal Health Management Plans, active and passive surveillance for pathogens of concern, biosecurity audits and reportable disease and abnormal mortality investigations. The Division supports the new **Aquaculture Act**, which came into force in November 2023 and gives powers to the Chief Aquaculture Veterinarian to take necessary mitigation and regulatory measures to prevent the spread of pathogens.

Indicator 4: Advanced a fish processing licensing review by conducting research, including a jurisdictional scan, to determine industry best practices.

FFA advanced its work on the fish processing licensing review. In 2023-24, FFA conducted research including the completion of a comprehensive jurisdictional scan to determine industry best practices with respect to fish processing licensing. The information collected was analyzed and will be subsequently used to advance the review which will continue in 2024-25 in an effort to update industry best practices.

FFA also started updating standard operating processes for many tasks included in fish processing licensing to streamline and create efficiencies within the process.

Indicator 5: Implemented science-based management and monitoring of wildlife populations to protect and conserve wildlife resources.

In 2023-24, FFA implemented several science-based management and monitoring of wildlife initiatives to protect and conserve wildlife resources. Surveys were conducted for several species at risk including peregrine falcon, several listed vascular plants, piping plover and short eared owl. Classifications of caribou populations on the Island and for the George River were completed in the fall of 2023. Samples were collected and processed from moose, caribou, polar bear, black bear and coyote hunters to assess specific population traits and aid in management planning. Survey results and information gathered from sampling programs were used as part of game planning processes and other management actions. Surveys were conducted in winter 2023 included a survey of Middle Ridge/ Pot Hill Caribou Herds and four MMAs. Collaring activities were undertaken for George River Caribou Herd. Partial classification and collaring of the Mealy Mountain herd was also completed. Additionally, botanical specimens were collected and sent for identification to support conservation of species at risk. Collectively, these science-based initiatives helped protect and conserve wildlife resources in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Indicator 6: Increased in-province capacity to conduct preliminary testing of reportable animal diseases and modernized the Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory.

The provincial Foreign Animal Disease laboratory in St. John's passed Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) facility inspection as a level 2+ biocontainment foreign animal disease laboratory and joined the Canadian Animal Health Surveillance Network in June 2023. Laboratories within the network, through collaboration and innovation, help to provide early detection and rapid response to animal disease threats and help to minimize risk to animal health, public health and potentially Canada's economy. This certification has initiated in-province capacity to conduct preliminary testing of reportable animal diseases such as avian influenza, rabies, African swine fever and foot and mouth disease.

FFA modernized the Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory in 2023-24 with the replacement of end-of-life milk quality laboratory equipment. This equipment included

a CombiFoss 7 and Bactoscan from FOSS, a leading global provider of analytics for the food and agriculture industries. This equipment provides raw milk testing for somatic cell counts and bacterial analysis respectively and enhances herd and individual animal health diagnostics and improves operational and cost-efficiency for the dairy industry and the provincial laboratory.

Indicator 7: Implemented the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program and On-Farm Climate Action Fund under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership by providing funding to support sustainability of the agriculture sector.

The Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program (RALP) is a Federal program, administered out of Nova Scotia. FFA supported its implementation in Newfoundland and Labrador by working with farmers in the province. The objective of the program is to incentivize the adoption of beneficial management practices (BMPs) that enhance ecological goods and services performed by agricultural lands. There were 17 on-farm RALP projects approved for a total investment of \$708,763 in 2023-24. BMPs were implemented on 315 acres, including rotational grazing on tame pasture; increasing frequency of perennials in annual rotations; and increasing the use of alfalfa or perennial legumes in pasture and hay. RALP extension efforts have resulted in 48 one-on-one farmer consultations and reached 208 industry members through virtual and in person information sessions.

The On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF) is a \$704 million Federal program that help farmers adapt to climate change. In 2024-25, Perennia Food and Agriculture Incorporated was awarded approximately \$15 million through the fund to help farmers in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador adopt eligible beneficial management practices under cover cropping, nitrogen management and rotational grazing on farm. FFA staff helped implement the OFCAF by promoting it to farmers in the province, including the owners of Fixed Vegetables and Seed, who applied and were successful recipients of OFCAF programming. This programming helped them learn about improving soil health through cover cropping learning sessions offered by

Perennia. By planting cover crops, farmers were able to improve soil health, water retention and sequester carbon that should go a long way to improving their yields and profitability for years to come.

Indicator 8: Supported silviculture and research into reforestation and forest improvement.

In 2023-24, the Crown Silviculture Program consisted of 2,015 hectares of tree planting, 891 hectares of site preparation and 50 hectares of forest enhancement (i.e., plantation maintenance and pre-commercial thinning). Additionally, the Provincial Tree Improvement Program continues to realize positive gains with respect to increased forest growth and environmental resiliency. Several tree improvement sites were remeasured and analyzed to inform future breeding criteria. Each of these initiatives helps support silviculture reforestation and forest improvement initiatives throughout the province.

Finally, in 2023-24, FFA continued as a founding member of the Atlantic Tree Improvement Council (AtlanTIC) and established one new AtlanTIC tree improvement trial within the province. Additionally, AtlanTIC trials are planned for the 2024 field season. These efforts help support climate change research with respect to species resiliency and seedling migration when adapting to climate change. The valuable information gathered here will help inform future reforestation and forest improvement activities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Indicator 9: Initiated tree planting projects to capture carbon, enhance biodiversity and expand provincial forest coverage.

In 2023-24, in addition to the Crown Silviculture Program, 125 hectares were planted to support the reforestation of naturally disturbed areas along the Bay d 'Espoir highway that were impacted by the 2022 fire season.

Discussion of Results

During 2023-24, FFA developed additional measures to facilitate the growth of renewable resources for the socioeconomic benefit of the province. It accomplished this

through supporting industry research; improving the province's ability to adapt to climate change; amending or introducing relevant legislation; enhancing management of the province's wildlife; and advancing coastal and ocean management initiatives. FFA worked collaboratively with its partners and will continue to leverage these relationships in 2024-25 as it further develops and implements initiatives to enhance the sustainable management of renewable resources in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Objective 2024-25

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture will have further developed and implemented initiatives to enhance the sustainable management of renewable resources for the socioeconomic benefit of the province.

2024-25 Indicators

1. Advanced initiatives to further develop the fisheries sector with a focus on sustainability.
2. Improved processing of Crown land applications through updated policies and new technology.
3. Implemented initiatives under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership to support sustainability of the agriculture sector.
4. Facilitated initiatives for sustainable forest management in the province.
5. Undertook management and monitoring of wildlife populations to protect and conserve wildlife resources.
6. Continued actions to research and test infectious animal diseases of concern.

Opportunities and Challenges

Newfoundland and Labrador relies greatly on its renewable resources and it is therefore imperative that these resources are managed sustainably. Renewable resources are an important economic driver, particularly in rural areas, where they provide important employment opportunities for residents. FFA will support the continued development, growth and sustainability of these resources.

Opportunities

There continues to be a significant opportunity for growth and expansion in the renewable resource sectors under FFA's mandate. FFA is committed to sustainably growing the fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, and forestry industries while also improving regulations, policies and enforcement activities to protect the natural environment and wildlife of this province. Continued supports for renewable resource industries will be achieved through policies and programs aimed at helping these industries adapt and succeed, encouraging innovation, and supporting emerging opportunities that improve efficiency and product quality, while mitigating environmental impacts and promoting sustainability.

There also continues to be an opportunity for FFA to expand collaboration and partnerships with its stakeholders, both internal and external. Through a collaborative approach, stakeholder input and partnerships will be utilized to benefit industries for the long-term. Additionally, this approach will also maximize the benefits to our fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, and forestry industries for the people of the province.

Challenges

Climate change is an ever-growing threat that will remain a key challenge for FFA. Some examples of climate change related challenges include; extreme weather affecting agriculture, increased wildfire activity, increased pests and disease affecting agriculture and forestry, and, the effects of warming water temperatures on the fishery.

For example, the recent wildfires in Labrador were likely influenced by climate change and these types of events are expected to increase. As such, climate change is a multi-faceted challenge and requires a coordinated approach to mitigate and adapt to its effects both now and into the future.

Although inflation has shown signs of improvement, the battle against inflation is far from over. As such, inflation will continue to present numerous challenges to industries under FFA's purview. Given that the costs of goods, labour and capital have increased substantially over the last few years, individuals and businesses in these industries are continuing to be affected by economic and financial headwinds. Additionally, international trade is challenged by its own unique market-price fluctuations, market-access issues, exchange-rate volatility, and competition from producers in other provinces and countries.

Financial Information

Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture			
Statement (Unaudited) of Expenditures and Related Revenue *			
Summary for the Year Ended March 31, 2024*	ESTIMATES		
	Original	Amended	Actual
	81,814,200	82,814,200	61,129,081
EXECUTIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICES			
Minister's Office			
Minister's Office	268,900	268,900	264,455
General Administration			
Executive Support	1,387,500	1,387,500	1,290,593
Administrative Support	5,176,900	10,134,900	4,113,405
Executive and Support Services	6,833,300	11,791,300	5,668,453
FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE			
Fisheries Programs			
Marketing and Development	1,425,500	2,425,500	2,316,632
Licensing and Quality Assurance	2,269,000	2,169,000	1,881,691
Atlantic Fisheries Fund	5,100,000	5,100,000	5,010,770
Sustainable Fisheries Resources and Oceans Policy	753,900	653,900	506,874
Revenue – Federal (Sustainable Fisheries Resources and Oceans Policy)	(70,000)	(70,000)	-
Coordination and Support Services	100	100	-
Aquaculture Development			
Aquaculture Development and Management	1,493,700	1,253,700	1,122,487
Revenue – Provincial (Aquaculture Development and Management)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(14,720)
Aquaculture Capital Equity Investment	100	100	-

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Revenue – Provincial (Aquaculture Capital Equity Investment)	-	-	(5,263,167)
Aquatic Animal Health			
Aquatic Animal Health	1,834,900	2,314,900	2,296,811
Fisheries and Aquaculture Subtotal	12,797,200	13,837,200	7,857,378
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE			
FOREST MANAGEMENT			
Administration and Program Planning	3,800,300	3,145,300	2,936,671
Revenue – Provincial (Administration and Program Planning)	-	-	(408)
Operations and Implementation	6,581,900	7,161,900	7,081,098
Silviculture Development	3,900,600	3,850,600	2,597,381
Revenue – Federal (Silviculture Development)	(650,000)	(650,000)	-
Resource Roads Construction	3,707,000	3,715,000	3,646,923
FOREST PROTECTION			
Insect Control	6,073,000	10,829,000	10,730,267
Fire Suppression and Communications	9,145,100	4,367,100	3,439,563
Revenue – Federal (Fire Suppression and Communications)	(2,875,000)	(2,875,000)	-
Revenue – Provincial (Fire Suppression and Communications)	-	-	(21,800)
WILDLIFE			
Wildlife Operations	4,990,900	5,080,900	4,810,176
Cooperative Wildlife Projects	1,456,800	1,456,800	837,890
Revenue – Federal (Cooperative Wildlife Projects)	(1,029,700)	(1,029,700)	(811,501)
Revenue – Provincial (Cooperative Wildlife Projects)	(287,000)	(287,000)	(40,309)
Forestry and Wildlife Subtotal	34,813,900	34,764,900	35,205,951
AGRICULTURE AND LANDS			

LAND MANAGEMENT			
Land Management	2,135,000	2,023,000	1,855,668
Revenue – Provincial (Land Management)	(8,608,000)	(8,608,000)	(15,338,741)
Land Development	1,301,900	1,101,900	380,431
AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION AND RESEARCH			
Agriculture Production and Research	6,112,800	5,857,800	4,945,080
Revenue – Provincial (Agriculture Production and Research)	(104,500)	(104,500)	(40,727)
Marketing Board	233,000	236,000	215,038
Limestone Sales	431,800	431,800	431,783
Revenue – Provincial (Limestone sales)	(147,500)	(147,500)	(115,756)
AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT			
Agricultural Business Development Administration	6,315,700	1,500,700	990,747
Revenue – Federal (Agriculture Business Development)	(5,125,000)	(5,125,000)	(5,125,000)
Agriinsurance and Livestock Insurance	457,800	457,800	214,186
Revenue – Federal (Agriinsurance and Livestock Insurance)	(202,800)	(202,800)	(149,674)
Agricultural Initiatives	2,282,900	2,282,900	2,166,909
Revenue – Provincial (Agriculture Initiatives)	-	-	(728)
Canadian Agricultural Partnership	9,115,300	9,115,300	7,813,548
Revenue – Federal (Canadian Agricultural Partnership)	(4,828,200)	(4,828,200)	(3,865,155)
Revenue – Provincial (Canadian Agricultural Partnership)	(100)	(100)	-
ANIMAL HEALTH			

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Administration and Support Services	3,744,200	4,179,200	4,096,001
Revenue – Provincial (Animal Health)	(1,300,000)	(1,300,000)	(1,324,991)
LANDS			
Crown Land	4,028,000	4,028,000	3,954,135
Agriculture and Lands Subtotal	15,842,300	10,798,300	1,102,754
ENFORCEMENT AND RESOURCES			
POLICY AND PLANNING SERVICES			
Policy, Planning and Administration	1,943,900	2,028,900	2,003,138
Revenue – Provincial (Policy, Planning and Administration)	(2,000)	(2,000)	(116,233)
GIS AND MAPPING			
GIS and Mapping	1,292,900	1,242,900	1,200,220
Revenue – Provincial (GIS and Mapping)	(50,000)	(50,000)	(42,192)
ENFORCEMENT			
Compliance	1,182,600	927,600	860,461
Enforcement	7,110,100	7,425,100	7,346,959
Enforcement and Resource Services Subtotal	11,527,500	11,622,500	11,294,545
<u>Department Total</u>	<u>81,814,200</u>	<u>82,814,200</u>	<u>61,129,081</u>

* Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the Year Ended March 31, 2024.

