A Critical Appraisal of British Columbia’s Cumulative Effects Framework

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**Project Description:** The need to address and understand cumulative effects in British Columbia is gaining widespread recognition, as multiple resource industries continue operating across the landscape, land uses and local values conflict, significant speculation on future projects accelerates, and policy frameworks to manage cumulative effects emerge. As is well-documented, the multifaceted nature of impacts to natural environments and human populations is currently not well understood. Further, in the context of multiple industries operating in close proximity, as is the case across much of the province, attribution of such impacts is complex. The challenges associated with adequately measuring and monitoring cumulative effects were recently documented in a report issued by the Auditor General, which concluded that cumulative effects were not being adequately addressed or accounted for within the current BC Cumulative Effects Framework (BC CEF) and associated environmental assessment processes (BC Auditor General 2015). In response to these conclusions, the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations is developing and implementing a policy framework aimed at addressing the cumulative effects of multiple and diverse forms of land use including resource development operations. As this initiative emerges, this project will examine the potential of the BC CEF to adequately address the cumulative environmental and social impacts associated with resource development. In addition, it will compare BC’s policy with other provincial, national, and international best practices in cumulative effects assessment. Ultimately, this project seeks to strengthen BC’s cumulative effects assessment and monitoring processes in order to enhance the sustainability of communities and ecosystems across the province.

**Key Deliverables:** Key research outcomes will be collated in a policy brief and circulated to contacts at the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

**Role of the CIRC:** CIRC staff are collaborating with researchers from across UNBC on this project. CIRC staff provide strategic project oversight, utilize research outcomes in ongoing research and community engagement activities, and ensure insights gained help to inform a broader understanding of cumulative effects assessment and monitoring in BC, and beyond.