Major Mine Permitting Office (MMPO)

The Major Mine Permitting Office (MMPO) improves the co-ordination of major mine permitting across the province. The MMPO team works directly with proponents, First Nations and government technical advisors to co-ordinate multi-agency regulatory permits and implement the efficient and timely review of high-quality and complete applications for new major mines and major expansion projects.

MMPO applies project management skills to enhance communication, ensure issues identification and resolution, and efficiently conduct project reviews.

MMPO Structure

MMPO is overseen by a Project Board consisting of senior-level leaders from the Province's natural resource sector. The Project Board provides guidance and oversight to the full scope of regulatory processes required to open or expand a major mine in British Columbia. MMPO's unique Project Board structure provides a mechanism for strategic issues identification and resolution, and to manage resource requirements for the permitting process.

MMPO acts as the point of accountability for co-ordination of project-specific Mine Review Committees (MRCs) and key aspects of the permitting process, including First Nations consultation and strategic issues management. MMPO co-ordinates the provincial regulatory review of permit applications for major mine projects. This includes projects that are subject to review under the *Environmental Assessment Act*, as well as smaller projects not determined to be reviewable under the *Environmental Assessment Act*. For projects reviewable under the*Environmental Assessment Act*, MMPO works in tandem with the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) during the environmental assessment process.

MMPO establishes a framework of accountability and project management principles through project schedules, which provide process certainty and predictability.

The following diagram further illustrates the governance structure of MMPO and the Project Board, and their relationships with the other natural resource sector ministries, the EAO and industry.

- MMPO Governance Structure (PDF, 137KB)

Our Team

The Major Mine Permitting Office (MMPO) is resourced with staff to lead and manage projects through the coordinated permitting process. MMPO has staff located in Smithers, Kamloops and Victoria.

B.C.’s world-class reclamation laws ensure that upon mine closure, land, watercourses and cultural heritage resources are returned to a safe and environmentally sound state. Before starting work at a mine site, companies are required to obtain a permit approving the mine plan, a program for protection of the land and watercourses, and a reclamation program. Mining companies must also place a security with the Province to ensure reclamation obligations are kept. This security is only returned once the mine site has been reclaimed to a satisfactory level and there are no ongoing monitoring or maintenance requirements. The intent of the Province’s reclamation legislation is to ensure that modern mine sites in B.C. do not leave an ongoing legacy or require public funds for clean-up activities.

Administrative Monetary Penalties

In March 2016, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia passed Bill 8: Mines Amendment Act, 2016 to enable the development of an administrative monetary penalty (AMP) program under the Mines Act. AMPs will provide the Province with an additional compliance and enforcement tool that is efficient, cost-effective and flexible, and can be imposed without court involvement. While AMPs are new to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, they are widely used by other ministries in the natural resource sector, including the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

The amendments to the Mines Act put in place key components required for the AMP program, but regulations are required to make the AMP program operational. Government is seeking input on key aspects of the AMP regulation and is providing the following discussion paper for public review and comment:

- AMP Discussion Paper – September 2016 (PDF, 422KB)

Questions or comments can be directed to:

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Comments must be received before October 11, 2016 to ensure that they are considered.

Securities

As a condition of Mines Act permits, the permittee must provide financial security in an amount and in a form acceptable to the Chief Inspector of Mines. This security is held until the Chief Inspector is satisfied that all reclamation requirements for the operation have been fulfilled.

Because every mine site has unique management requirements and operational constraints, the assessment of financial security is done on a site-specific basis. The security is set at a level that reflects all outstanding reclamation and closure obligations associated with the site. For example, mines that require long-term drainage treatment for metal leaching and/or acid rock drainage require full security to cover outstanding liability and ongoing management. The amount of any security may be increased or decreased at the discretion of the Chief Inspector based on the risks at any time.

- 2014 Mine Reclamation Securities in BC for Metal and Coal Mines (PDF, 84KB)

Securities can only be released by the authority of the Chief Inspector of Mines. For more information on reclamation securities held by the Province, please read the Mine Reclamation Security in British Columbia Factsheet (PDF, 78KB).

The Chief Inspector of Mines accepts the following forms of reclamation security:

Guaranteed investment certificates (for security less than $25,000)

Guaranteed investment certificates must be held under a Safekeeping Agreement where the investment interest continues to accrue to the mine operator on the investment amount. The principal is pledged to the Province.

- Instructions on Completing a Safekeeping Agreement (PDF, 281KB)
- Safekeeping Agreement Form (PDF, 114KB)

Cash and cash equivalents (certified cheques, bank drafts)

Security provided by way of cash and cash equivalents (certified cheques and bank drafts) does not accrue interest to the mine operator.

Irrevocable standby letters of credit (ISLOCs)

An ISLOC is issued by a financial institution on behalf of a mine operator and guarantees payment of a specified amount should the mine operator be in default of its obligations.

Reclamation surety bonds

For reclamation surety bonds, the bond shall be with a surety licensed to transact the business of a surety in Canada. The form below outlines the only type of bond acceptable to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, and no changes to the wording of this form are permitted.

- Reclamation Surety Bond Form (PDF, 28KB)

Annual Reporting Forms

Annual reporting for mineral exploration includes summaries on exploration activities, placer activities and a multi-year area-based work program annual update. The necessary forms can be accessed below:

- Annual Summary for Exploration Activities (PDF, 148KB)
- Annual Summary for Placer Activities (PDF, 311KB)
- Multi-Year Area-Based Work Program Annual Update (PDF, 184KB)
- Annual Reclamation Summary

Annual Reclamation Reports

Permittees are required to submit annual reclamation reports in compliance with their Mines Act permits and the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia. The intent of the annual reclamation report is to provide a summary of all activities conducted on the mine property over the previous year. Specifically, it the report must outline the following:

- Mine development, including surface disturbance, stripping, stockpiling and disposal and storage of all materials.
- Activities, research and monitoring results associated with the development and implementation of the Environment Protection Program.
- Activities, research and monitoring results associated with the development and implementation of the Reclamation Program.

The report must also provide a projection of mining and reclamation activities planned for the following 5 years.

Report information is required to be in a specific format. Please review the Annual Reclamation Report Requirements (PDF, 315KB) prior to submitting your report. The format provided here is inclusive, so some components may not be relevant to all mine sites.

NEW for 2015 Annual Reclamation Reports (submitted in 2016)

In order to develop spatial data capabilities for permitting and tracking of major mine activities, the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) requests that digital spatial files (shapefiles, .shp) be submitted with all 2015 annual reclamation reports. For the first phase of this initiative, MEM is targeting spatial data for representing

- permit boundaries;
- disturbance areas; and
- reclaimed areas/ongoing reclamation.

MEM has developed a guidance document to assist permittees in submitting the digital spatial files requested.

- MEM Shapefile Submission Data Standards (PDF, 162KB)

Annual Reclamation Report Tables

The following tables must be completed and submitted with your annual reclamation report.

- Table 1: Summary of Areas Disturbed and Reclaimed (DOC, 48KB)
- Table 2: Quantity of Waste Rock (DOC, 23KB)
- Table 3: Cover Letter Summary (DOC, 14KB)

Reclamation Liability Cost Estimates

Permittees are required to estimate the total expected costs of outstanding reclamation obligations over the planned life of the mine. This information must be submitted with the annual reclamation report.

- User Manual for Reclamation Costing (PDF, 386KB)
- Reclamation Costing Spreadsheet (XLS, 1MB)