

Progressive Stewardship of Mountain Ecosystems: Next Practices for Sustainability

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Social & Community Focus Area

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The Vision

The vision for social and community value is to demonstrate the dedication and importance of helicat operations to communities by supporting relationships with stakeholders, organizations and economies, ensuring the personal well-being of staff and clients, and building positive connections between people and the natural environment.

Background Information

As an industry of less than 50 operations nationwide, helicat operations are truly unique. The use of government-owned land to provide a dramatic product draws considerable engagement from stakeholders and the public. Sharing the landscape with others is their responsibility. They need to maintain relationships with stakeholders and communities to ensure welcome access to the landscape in which they operate.

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is a term that has a variety of definitions in academic journals. Put simply, it relates to the issues that directly impact people.¹ It pertains to the priorities, values and concerns of individuals, such as personal safety and well-being, but also of communities and social institutions, such as economic development, cultural integrity and governance. This network of social interactions plays an important role in relation to the greater picture of economic and environmental sustainability – to the degree that social conditions are necessary to support ecological sustainability.²

“Social sustainability is about identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people. The quality of a company’s relationships and engagement with its stakeholders is critical. Directly or indirectly, companies

¹ Dillard, J., Dukon, V., & Brennan, E. M. (2013). Introduction to Social Sustainability. In *Social Sustainability: A Multilevel Approach to Social Inclusion* (1st ed., pp. 1–14). New York: Taylor & Francis.

² Vallance, S., Perkins, H. C., & Dixon, J. E. (2011). Geoforum What is social sustainability? A clarification of concepts. *Geoforum*, 42(3), 342–348. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.002>

affect what happens to employees, workers in the value chain, customers and local communities, and it is important to manage impacts proactively. Businesses' social license to operate depends greatly on their social sustainability efforts." ([UN Global Compact](#))

Social License to Operate

Social license to operate (SLO) is a term that is commonly used within industry sustainability reporting, yet this term is largely intangible and not well understood³. Typically, SLO has been used by industry as a term that evokes community approval for an operation or a project. This definition implies that one unanimous actor is giving approval to the proponent. In practice, it has been recognized that stakeholder opinions are varied, and not everyone is going to agree with a project.

The current discourse in theory, policy and practice is moving towards using SLO as a more flexible term. SLO can be defined as "broad sentiments of stakeholders towards an activity and/or operation...it is often tied to an operation's legitimacy". New approaches to SLO emphasize a collaborative process that is based on the comprehension of local socio-cultural values. "In order to establish a collaborative SLO, host communities and developers are obliged to work through processes of listening, understanding each other's concerns and interests, and reaching compromise."⁴

SLO can better be understood as a continuous process of "working directly with project-affected stakeholders to achieve accommodation and agreement on issues that are of priority in the local context"⁵. By working together with stakeholders and considering the greater business impacts on them, helicat operations can build and maintain support for their business.

³ Business Council of British Columbia. (2015). Rethinking Social Licence to Operate – A Concept in Search of Definition and Boundaries. Environment and Energy Bulletin.

<http://www.bcbc.com/content/1708/EEBv7n2.pdf>

Harvey, B., & Bice, S. (2014). Social impact assessment, social development programmes and social licence to operate: tensions and contradictions in intent and practice in the extractive sector. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 32(4), 327–335. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2014.950123>

⁴ Harvey & Bice. (2014).

⁵ Harvey & Bice. (2014).

Sustainability Standards

Province of British Columbia Land Act

Helicopter and snowcat skiing involves operators offering services on Crown land to persons for compensation.⁶ This is regulated by the province through a process for a commercial tenure on the land under the Land Act with reference to the Adventure Tourism Policy⁷.

Mandatory actions:

- Follow the appropriate application process to obtain tenure outlined by the Land Tenures Branch website.
- Abide by the regulations contained in the Adventure Tourism Policy and agreed upon within the Management Plan required by the tenure holder.

Resources:

Province of British Columbia: Land Tenures Branch – Land Use – Adventure Tourism & Commercial Recreation

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/land-use/crown-land/crown-land-uses/recreation-tourism/adventure-tourism-commercial-recreation>

FrontCounter BC – Crown Land Tenure Application

<http://www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca/guides/crown-land/crown-land-tenure/overview/>

WorkSafeBC

WorkSafeBC is committed to creating a province free from workplace injury or illness, and to providing services driven by its core values of integrity, accountability and innovation.⁸ As an employer, it is mandatory to register for WorkSafeBC insurance coverage for employees and contractors working at your operation.

Mandatory Actions:

- Apply for insurance coverage
- Know what contractors you are required to cover
- Report your payroll and pay premiums
- Contact WorkSafeBC about changes to your business

⁶ Province of British Columbia. Land Use - Adventure Tourism & Commercial Recreation.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/land-use/crown-land/crown-land-uses/recreation-tourism/adventure-tourism-commercial-recreation>

⁷ Province of British Columbia. (2013). Adventure Tourism Policy.

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/land-water-use/crown-land/adventure_tourism.pdf

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/land-water-use/crown-land/adventure_tourism.pdf

⁸ WorksafeBC. Our mandate, vision, mission, goals & values.

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/who-we-are/mission-vision-values>

- Provide a safe workplace
- Report injuries and diseases
- Report and investigate certain incidents

Resources:

WorkSafeBC – Learn about employers’ responsibilities

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/insurance/need-coverage/employers-responsibilities>

Occupational Health and Safety Legislation

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety provides access to occupational health and safety legislation and resources designed to help employers keep their workplace healthy and safe.

Resources:

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

<https://www.ccohs.ca/>

B.C. Employment Standards Act

The B.C. Employment Standards Act outlines the minimum standards that apply in most workplaces in British Columbia. including wages, payroll, holidays, leave and dispute resolution.

Mandatory actions:

- Follow the minimum standards outlined in the [BC Employment Standards Act](#).

Resources:

Guide to the Employment Standards Act

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advise/employment-standards/guide-to-the-employment-standards-act>

Canadian Human Rights Act

The Canadian Human Rights Act is based on the principle that all individuals should have opportunities equal to other individuals without being hindered by discriminatory practices.

Mandatory actions:

- Follow the requirements of the Canadian Human Rights Act to employ, advertise employment, develop policies and practices and maintain equal wages without discrimination within the operation.

Resources:

Canadian Human Rights Act: Part 1(7-11)

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/H-6/page-1.html#docCont>

Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act

Dangerous goods are shipped as part of the business of the helicat industry. There is great potential for endangering human life and damaging the environment should incidents occur in the course of transportation. It is essential to minimize the risk of incidents in transportation of dangerous goods and keep damages at a minimum. In Canada, the federal Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulations are consistent across provincial and federal jurisdictions.

Mandatory actions:

- Operations must abide by the requirements of the TDG regulations.

Resources:

Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulations
<http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/tdg/clear-menu-497.htm>

Transportation of Dangerous Goods Primer
https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/tdg/publications-primer_e-263.htm

Next Practice Guidelines

Respect the Indigenous history of the land

- Consistently engage with local First Nations groups in an effort to protect traditional use areas as well as to preserve cultural and heritage values within operating areas.
- Liaise with groups that support indigenous tourism and promote responsible and respectful use of the land, such as Indigenous Tourism BC.⁹

Build relationships with other land users

- Work with resource extraction industries to create land use planning strategies that compliment the continued health of both operations.
- Recognize the value of economic diversification that is fostered by complimentary land uses within local communities.
- Engage recreational users of the backcountry in a manner that fosters and encourages mutual respect and recognition of the need for meaningful public access opportunities alongside the operation of a successful commercial business.
- Strive to mitigate or eliminate all issues of conflict related to helicat operations and their impact.

⁹ Indigenous Tourism BC. <https://www.indigenoussc.com/>

Government relationship building and education

- Develop a working relationship with all levels of government to educate it about operations and the industry.
- Foster positive communication and cooperation with government to work towards collaborative solutions to enhance tenure security and adventure tourism policy.

Foster a culture of safety

- Foster clear safety communication, goals, policies, procedures and reporting.¹⁰
- Develop mentorship programs for staff development and risk management.¹¹

Contribute to public safety

- Subscribe and contribute to InfoEx reporting for operational benefit and to support the production of public avalanche bulletins.
- Work actively with local communities to engage resources, communications and staff for public safety and search and rescue efforts.

Minimize impact on communities

- Consider the distance of flight paths from populated areas.
- Consider using quieter helicopters.

Engage with the local community

- Whenever possible directly support the local economy by procuring supplies and services from locally owned businesses.
- Develop opportunities for greater interaction between guests and local communities, such as local businesses, charities and community events.
- Sponsor and participate in social events, local fundraisers, and community support organizations.
- Contribute to local infrastructure or services where feasible.
- Support, both directly and indirectly, the skills development of local residents through the provision of training opportunities and apprenticeship programs.

¹⁰ Johnson, J., Haegeli, P., Hendrikx, J., & Savage, S. (2016). Accident causes and organizational culture among avalanche professionals. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 13, 49–56.
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2015.11.003>

¹¹ Latosuo, E., Johnston-Bloom, A. & Wolfe, L. (2016). Tinder for mentors: Examining the prevalence and value of mentorship relationships amongst avalanche professionals in the United States. Proceedings, International Snow Science Workshop, Breckenridge, Colorado.
http://arc.lib.montana.edu/snow-science/objects/ISSW16_P2.25.pdf

Employ local residents

- Provide significant employment opportunities for local residents by hiring locally and purchasing locally offered goods and services to support the operation.
- Work with local communities to ensure adequate affordable housing for operation employees.
- Stimulate the local economy by purchasing goods and services needed for the operations locally.

Create equal opportunity employment

- Create a culture that is inclusive and supportive of all people as equals in the workplace regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race or background.
- Provide opportunities without bias in the workplace.

Market the community

- Explore opportunities to share costs and jointly market community recreation and tourism opportunities with local destination marketing organizations.

Research and education

- Proactively search out solutions to problems within the helicat industry as they become apparent.
- Communicate new knowledge and research findings to all potentially affected parties.
- Incorporate the interests of local communities in efforts to develop new research studies.

Conclusion

Adventure tourism operations, including the helicat industry, have a unique opportunity in British Columbia to provide guided, safety-focused, nature-based tourism experiences to visitors and residents on provincial Crown land. While these are private businesses, they rely on the shared use of Crown land to operate. All business operations must take into consideration the needs of their local community; however, helicat operations have a much broader community to consider when developing their social license. By following provincial and federal regulations and taking proactive steps to foster collaborative relationships with all stakeholders, helicat operations can work towards a socially sustainable future.

In a broader perspective, as one of the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic and environmental), social sustainability is key to upholding the larger pursuit of overall sustainability. Fortunately, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between best practices for social sustainability and the best interests of environmental and economic sustainability.

- A positive culture and workplace for staff and guests will build positive connections with the natural environment.
- Building engaged and supportive relationships with communities, local resources and economics can be integrated into business practice and operations.
- Partnerships with other organizations, knowledge and resources can be shared in a collaborative effort to conserve and responsibly manage natural areas.

Resources

Indigenous Tourism BC

ITBC is a non-profit, stakeholder-based organization that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich indigenous tourism industry.

<https://www.indigenoussc.com/>

Consulting with First Nations

This province of British Columbia resource provides a list of guides and resources for proponents who are interested in building relationships and engaging with First Nations to share information and support consultation processes.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations>

A Business Reference Guide: The UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights

This reference document prepared by the United Nations is to help businesses understand, respect, and support the rights of indigenous peoples by illustrating how these rights are relevant to business activities.

https://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/IndigenousPeoples/BusinessGuide.pdf

Beyond Zero Harm Framework: A participatory process for measuring community well-being

While this resource was developed for mining contexts, the framework provides one of the most innovative guides for meaningful engagement with communities to identify priorities and concerns, as well as co-create indicators to monitor progress.

http://devonshireinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/Beyond-Zero-Harm-Framework-01M_arch2016_v2.pdf

Tinder for Mentors: Examining the prevalence and value of mentorship relationships amongst avalanche professionals in the United States.

This International Snow Science Workshop proceedings paper discusses the value of mentorship in the snow and avalanche safety industry.

http://arc.lib.montana.edu/snow-science/objects/ISSW16_P2.25.pdf



Getting Equal to 2018: Creating a culture where everyone thrives

This research presentation highlights the benefits in employee progression to both men and women when 40 identified indicators are present in the workplace culture.

https://www.accenture.com/t20180306T024312Z_w_/us-en/_acnmedia/PDF-73/Accenture-When-She-Rises-We-All-Rise.pdf#zoom=50

Out in Front: Tracking Women's Leadership in Adventure Travel

This research presentation discusses the current state of women's representation on the boards of adventure companies and the benefits provided by these companies.

<https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/out-in-front-tracking-womens-leadership-in-adventure-travel/>