

What is a Strategic Environmental Assessment?

The SEA is an environmental assessment process carried out before decisions have to be made about specific projects. It involved the participation of a wide range of stakeholders and the general public, and resulted in recommendations to the provincial government on whether, where and how to develop tidal energy in the Bay of Fundy.

A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is a systematic decision support process, aiming to ensure that environmental and possibly other sustainability aspects are considered effectively in policy, planning and program making.

“A good-quality Strategic Environmental Assessment process informs planners, decision makers and affected public on the sustainability of strategic decisions, facilitates the search for the best alternative and ensures a democratic decision making process. This enhances the credibility of decisions and leads to most cost- and time-effective EA at the project level.” (IAIA 2002. Strategic Environmental Assessment Performance Criteria).

An effective SEA works within a structured and tiered decision framework, aiming to support more efficient and effective decision-making for sustainable development and improved governance by providing for a substantive focus regarding questions, issues and alternatives to be considered in policy, program making and planning. The SEA is an evidence-based instrument, aiming to add scientific rigour to policy, program making and planning, by using suitable assessment methods and techniques.