

FROM LAGGARD TO LEADER?



**CANADA'S RENEWED FOCUS
ON PROTECTING NATURE
COULD DELIVER RESULTS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Kananaskis region, AB.

Photo: Jeni Foto

CANADA IS A COUNTRY DEEPLY CONNECTED TO NATURE. It underpins our sense of place, our well-being, and our economy. Maintaining the health of Canada's ecosystems to sustain wildlife and people requires the creation of an extensive network of protected natural areas as the foundation for effective nature conservation strategies. This report examines Canada's performance relative to other countries in protecting our land and freshwater, as well as progress made towards our international commitments.

Kelly River, NS.

Photo: Irwin Barrett



In 2010, as part of a worldwide effort to stem the tide of biodiversity loss, Canada committed under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity to protect at least 17% of land and inland waters by 2020 and to improve the quality of protected area systems so they conserve nature more effectively. Achieving this target is an important step towards the much larger-scale protection that is needed in the long-term to safeguard functioning ecosystems, healthy wildlife populations, and sustainable communities.

The report finds that Canada currently ranks last among G7 countries, with only 10.6% of our land and freshwater protected. It also finds that we lag behind other large countries, such as Brazil (29.5% protection), China (17.1%), and Australia (17%). With all Canadian ecosystems in declining health and Canada's list of endangered species growing each year largely due to habitat loss, urgent action is needed to protect much more of our land and inland waters.

Jurisdiction over land in Canada is shared among federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments. With 90% of Canada's land and 100% of inland waters managed by governments, all jurisdictions need to work together to achieve our conservation commitments. The report points to hopeful signs that Canadian governments are finally starting to do this. Canadian governments have taken positive steps over the past 18 months, including commitments by the Prime Minister, as well as by federal, provincial and territorial Ministers to work together to achieve the 2020 target. A new collaborative "Pathway to 2020" process struck by governments to deliver on this commitment, and growing recognition that partnerships with Indigenous peoples, through nation-to-nation and Inuit-to-Crown relationships, all offer an opportunity to protect more land, and to contribute to reconciliation.

There are many protected area proposals across Canada that are well-advanced, have significant support, and are ready for protection. The report concludes by highlighting 13 of these exciting proposals where CPAWS chapters across Canada are working with partners on-the-ground to protect important ecological and cultural landscapes. These are opportunities for governments to demonstrate early progress towards achieving the 2020 target, and to set the stage for the scaled-up action needed to conserve nature and demonstrate Canadian leadership.

Recommendations for Action

CPAWS' OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- 1** All governments should act immediately to implement their existing commitments to protect more land, starting with projects that are well underway, and where there is already clear support from Indigenous governments.
- 2** At the same time, governments need to plan for “beyond 2020” to complete protected area networks based on science and Indigenous knowledge that will conserve healthy, resilient ecosystems in the face of climate change.
- 3** The collaborative and respectful approach exemplified in the Pathway to Target One process should become a long-term collaboration in order to continue efforts to protect more land and waters to 2020 and beyond.
- 4** Jurisdictions should work with Indigenous governments to identify how to better establish and support Indigenous protected areas, including removing legislative and political barriers and creating new legislative tools where needed.
- 5** Provinces and territories should stop issuing permits for industrial development in areas identified for permanent protection by Indigenous governments.
- 6** Canada should apply the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas' and International Union for the Conservation of Nature's guidance on “Other Effective Conservation Measures.”
- 7** Recognizing that the goal is to reverse dramatic and on-going biodiversity loss, Canada should focus primarily on protecting more land and waters to achieve the 2020 target, rather than amending the accounting system to incorporate more existing conservation areas.
- 8** Jurisdictions should develop landscape scale ecological connectivity strategies to determine ways to link core protected areas together.
- 9** Recognizing the substantial economic value and return on investment of protected areas as well as their intrinsic value, governments should invest significant new resources to support the accelerated establishment and effective management of Canada's protected areas. The federal government should play a leadership role by investing in federal protected areas, and investing to support the establishment and management of protected areas by provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments.



Photo: Matthew Majer

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EARLY ACTION ON-THE-GROUND:

1. Peel River Watershed, Yukon
2. Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve and Territorial Park, Northwest Territories
3. South Okanagan–Similkameen National Park Reserve, British Columbia
4. Bighorn Backcountry, Alberta
5. Saskatchewan River Delta, Saskatchewan
6. Saskatchewan Grasslands
7. Ochiwasahow – The Fisher Bay region, Manitoba
8. North French River Watershed, Ontario
9. Three Wild Watersheds of Western Quebec
10. Mutuhekau Shipu/Magpie River, Québec
11. Restigouche River Watershed, New Brunswick
12. Nova Scotia Parks and Protected Areas Plan
13. Newfoundland and Labrador Protected Areas

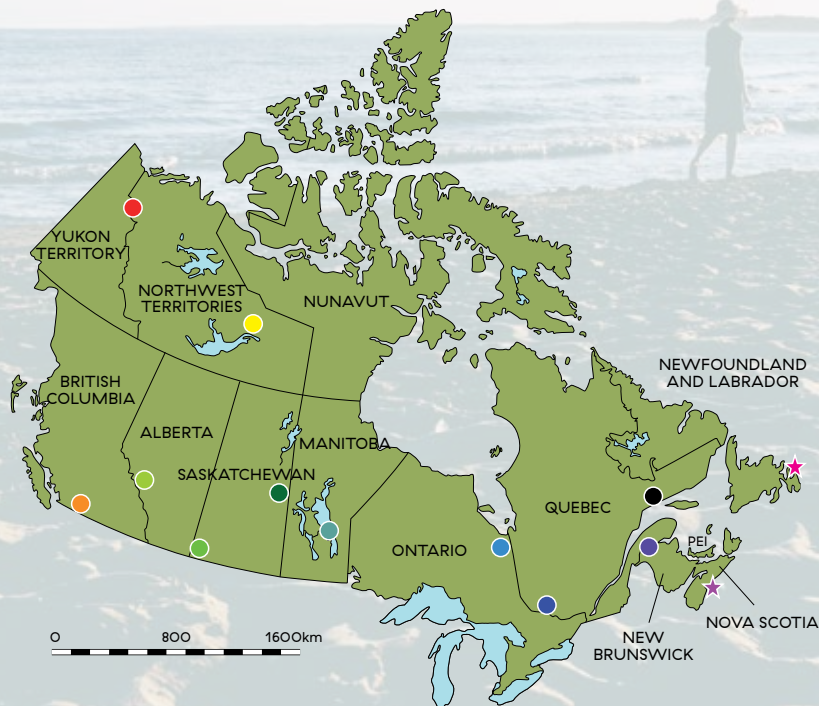


Photo: Scott Webb

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|------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| ● The Peel Watershed | ● Saskatchewan Grasslands | ● Restigouche River Watershed |
| ● Thaidene Nene | ● Ochiwasahow – Fisher Bay | ★ Parks and Protected Areas Plan |
| ● South Okanagan–Similkameen | ● North French River Watershed | ★ Natural Areas System Plan |
| ● Bighorn Backcountry | ● Wild Rivers of Western Quebec | |
| ● Saskatchewan River Delta | ● Mutuhekau Shipu/Magpie River Watershed | |

About CPAWS

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) is Canada's only nationwide charity dedicated solely to the protection of our public land and water, and ensuring our parks are managed to protect the nature within them. Since 1963 we've played a lead role in protecting over half a million square kilometres – an area bigger than the entire Yukon Territory! Our vision is that Canada will protect at least half of our public land and water so that future generations can benefit from Canada's irreplaceable wilderness.



CPAWS National Office

613-569-7226 | 1-800-333-WILD (9453)
Info@cpaws.org | www.cpaws.org

CPAWS British Columbia

604-685-7445
www.cpawsbc.org

CPAWS Northern Alberta

780-328-3780
www.cpawsnab.org

CPAWS Southern Alberta

403-232-6686
www.cpaws-southernalberta.org

CPAWS Saskatchewan

306-469-7876
www.cpaws-sask.org

CPAWS Manitoba

204-949-0782
www.cpawsmb.org

CPAWS Wildlands League

416-971-9453
www.wildlandsleague.org

CPAWS Ottawa Valley

819-778-3355
www.cpaws-ov-vo.org

SNAP (CPAWS) Québec

514-278-7627
www.snapqc.org

CPAWS New Brunswick

506-452-9902
www.cpawsnb.org

CPAWS Nova Scotia

902-446-4155
www.cpawsns.org

CPAWS Newfoundland and Labrador

709-726-5800
www.cpawsnl.org

CPAWS Yukon

867-393-8080
www.cpawsyukon.org

CPAWS Northwest Territories

867-873-9893
www.cpawsnwt.org

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