

Other Effective Conservation Measures

The concept of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) emerged in 2010 as an element of Aichi Target 11 under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Aichi Target 11 states that at least 17% of land and inland waters should be conserved by 2020 through protected areas and “other effective area-based conservation measures”. A fundamental requirement of OECMs is that they must be effective in conserving biodiversity within their natural surroundings.

According to international guidance, the main difference between protected areas and OECMs is that protected areas must have a primary goal of conserving nature, while OECMs may be established for other purposes, but must still effectively conserve biodiversity. OECMs are not meant to be less effective conservation measures than protected areas.

The definition of an OECM, developed by the IUCN taskforce and formally adopted under the CBD, is as follows:

“A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.”

As an organization focused on public land in Canada, CPAWS has identified five priority criteria for terrestrial OECMs:

1. OECMs should be permanently protected;
2. No industrial activities should be permitted within OECMs;
3. OECMs can be protected through legal or “other effective means”; however, if “other effective means” are used to justify an area as an OECM, the entity that governs the area should demonstrate how these “other effective means” will deliver on the other four criteria;
4. OECMs should protect all components of ecosystems;
5. OECMs must offer year-round protection for ecosystems.

CPAWS acknowledges that work on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in Canada is ongoing, including a collaboration between the Pathway to Target One and the Assembly of First Nations. This work will help inform how Indigenous-led conservation can be incorporated in the definition of and guidance for OECMs.