



Government investments bring Canada closer to conservation goals!

Photo: Communications Nova Scotia

Nature unites us. From coast to coast to coast, Canadians take pride in the natural beauty endowed to us. We breathe it, we explore it, we harness it. And we protect it. Because there is hardly anything that we agree on more strongly than our duty to pass on a healthy natural environment to future generations.

Our governments have heeded the call. At the federal level, all parties have supported action to protect nature. Since 2010, successive governments have been striving to reach the goal of protecting 17% of our total land and freshwater. Now that goal is within reach.

In 2018 the federal government invested \$1.3 billion dollars in nature conservation – the largest investment to protect nature in Canada’s history! This “Nature Legacy” funding will, according to the government, help double the amount of nature protected, help protect and recover species at risk, and advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples – and we are already seeing evidence that these claims are true.

The Nature Legacy funding included a \$175 million “Challenge Fund” devoted to the creation of new protected areas by provinces, territories and Indigenous communities working together across Canada.

In 2019, the federal government announced the first of 67 projects, including the establishment of 27 Indigenous protected areas.

The Challenge Fund is directly helping Canada protect species at risk by protecting their habitat. Globally, loss and fragmentation of habitat is the #1 driver of species decline – so protecting habitat is crucial to saving wildlife!

see: ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) was instrumental in securing the Nature Legacy funding from the federal government, and our 13 chapters across the country work with provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous communities to secure protected areas and conservation initiatives for species at risk.



Photo: Chris Paetkau

Manitoba First Nation Empowered to Protect Traditional Territory

Winnipeg – In the Northernmost reaches of Manitoba, the Sayisi Dene First Nation is leading an initiative to protect the 50,000-km² Seal River watershed from industrial activity. The Seal River watershed is a pristine expanse of tundra, wetlands and forests as vast as Nova Scotia, free from permanent roads, dams, mines or industrial activity of any kind. Caribou and polar bears roam beneath massive flocks of birds near a powerful river teeming with beluga whales, seals and fish.

There are at least 23 known species at risk in the Seal River watershed, including caribou, polar bears, beluga whales, wolverines, grizzly bears, killer whales and olive-sided flycatchers.

In August 2019 a three-year federal government grant from the Challenge Fund was announced, setting the stage for the Sayisi Dene First Nation to protect, manage and steward their traditional lands. The Sayisi Dene First Nation, the only community located within the watershed, are working with neighbouring First Nations, the Inuit in Nunavut, and the CPAWS Manitoba chapter as well as other NGOs on the project.

“Finally we are organizing ourselves as a region in the last corner of the province — a part of which is formerly known as Chipewyan Block — where we are directly involved in the protection and managing our lands, waters and animals!”

- Ernie Bussidor, Sayisi Dene First Nation’s Project Director of the Seal River Watershed Indigenous Protected Area Initiative

**\$467
million**

2020-2021
recommended
federal investment

**\$963
million**

2021-2024
recommended
federal investment

**\$2.15
billion**

2024-2030
recommended
federal investment

* Green Budget Coalition

Federal Funding Helps Establish Canada's Newest National Park Reserve and Indigenous Protected Area!

Lutsel K'e, NWT – After decades of work, Thaidene Nënë, which means “Land of the Ancestors” in the Denesuline language, is a new Indigenous protected area! Located at the east arm of Tu Nedhé (Great Slave Lake) and spanning over 26,000 km², Thaidene Nënë will protect the habitat of grizzly bears, wolves, moose and muskox as well as the critical winter grounds for the last herds of barren ground caribou. Importantly, Thaidene Nënë will be governed by Łutsël K'è Dene First Nation in partnership with Parks Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories, and will provide the opportunity for Łutsël K'è Dene to share their culture with Canada and the world by owning and operating world-class hiking and fishing lodges in the protected areas. An investment of \$15 million by the federal government into a \$30 million trust fund will allow Łutsël K'è Dene to manage Thaidene Nënë and support both community stewardship and economic diversification in the Łutsël K'è community.



Photo: Tyrone Burke

Thaidene Nënë represents a historic new partnership between Indigenous and public (Crown) governments to protect natural and cultural heritage and foster local economic development, including the creation and support of Indigenous Guardians programs.

More at: landoftheancestors.ca



Challenge Fund Monies Protecting Innu culture in Québec

Pipmuacan – Woodland caribou have been at the heart of the culture of the Innu First Nation of Pessamit for millennia. Innu knowledge, language and spirituality are fundamentally linked to caribou and their habitat, which is currently threatened in Quebec by industrial forestry activity. Thanks in part to a grant from the Challenge Fund, the Pessamiulnut have affirmed their intention to protect an area called Pipmuacan in the Côte-Nord region of Quebec through a public call for protection to the Government of Quebec.

When protected, this area will help Quebec reach 17% land protection by 2020, an objective that the Government of Quebec committed to reach by the end of 2020. In their public statement, the Pessamiulnut declared that “caribou and the land are the nucleus of our culture. They structure our thoughts, shape our being, our values and our spirituality. Without them we no longer exist.” Protecting Pipmuacan would protect an area that is essential for maintaining the Innu culture and identity. SNAP Quebec continues to work with the Innu First Nation of Pessamit to support this important work.



Photo: John MacDermid

Government of New Brunswick Makes Exciting Announcement Stimulated by Challenge Fund

Fredericton – In October of 2019 the Government of New Brunswick announced that it would protect 10% of the province – an exciting announcement considering that reaching that goal would more than double the amount of protection in the province! Currently, New Brunswick has the second lowest percentage (4.6%) of protected land of any province or territory in Canada.

With help from the Challenge Fund, New Brunswick announced it will double the amount of protection in the province.

In addition to receiving Challenge Fund monies to support new protected area creation, the provincial government received thousands of letters from New Brunswickers in response to public campaigns by CPAWS and our colleagues supporting increased protection of New Brunswick's natural spaces.

Following their announcement, the government began consultations on protecting the beautiful Restigouche Wilderness Waterway, an area CPAWS has worked to protect for years. The government has listened to New Brunswickers on this critical issue! The future is bright for the province.



Canadians overwhelmingly support the creation of protected areas across Canada

A 2019 poll conducted by the University of Northern British Columbia and CPAWS found that Canadians want about 50% of our lands and oceans protected.

See: <https://www.facetsjournal.com/doi/10.1139/facets-2018-0030>

Challenge Fund Leads to 27 New Protected Areas in Nova Scotia

Halifax – Thanks to support from the Challenge Fund, in September 2019, the Nova Scotia government announced the creation of 27 new protected areas, adding approximately fourteen thousand hectares of public land toward the provincial system of protected areas. Included in the announcement are several high priority sites for conservation, including St. Mary's River, Mabou Highlands, Katowe'katik, and St. Margaret's Bay Islands. Together, these new protected areas protect large intact forests, coastal ecosystems, species-at-risk habitat, important wetlands, and significant waterways. They contain several populations of rare species, including wood turtles, Atlantic salmon, Blanding's turtles, eastern ribbon snakes, piping plovers, and Atlantic coastal plain flora.

Nova Scotia's decision to legally-designate these high-priority conservation sites would not have occurred without the funding provided by the Challenge Fund. It is a great example of how different levels of government can work together to protect important natural areas that are crucial for biodiversity conservation.

The Challenge Fund is directly supporting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada by providing the necessary resources they need to protect their traditional territories and the cultural values associated with wilderness and wildlife.



Photo: Pat Kane

Challenge Fund Helps to Protect the Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta Protected Area

Yellowknife – In November of 2019 a Challenge Fund investment of \$6.2 Million was announced to support completion of establishment agreements for the Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta Protected Area (also known as the Ramparts River and wetlands). Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta includes 10,050 km² of K'asho Got'jné traditional territory and is an area of abundant wildlife, fish, birds, caribou, moose, and furbearing animals. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's NWT Chapter extended its congratulations to the K'asho Got'jné Dene and Métis, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the many partners who celebrated the signing of the establishment agreement. This Challenge Fund investment is assisting in the first five years of operation of the protected area as well as the development of regulations and the protected area's management plan.



Photo: Wayne Sawchuk

More is needed.

The positive impacts for nature conservation and communities are already evident as Challenge Fund projects roll out across the country. Now that 2020 has arrived, and as federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments and other partners like CPAWS work together to deliver on the goal of protecting at least 17% of our landscape by 2020, we need to focus on completing this task, while also considering where we go next. In light of a growing body of evidence and scientific consensus that we need to protect and restore somewhere between 30% and 70% of ecosystems in order to sustain healthy life-support systems in the long term, the Government of Canada's recent leadership commitment to protect 25% of Canada's land and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030 provides hope for the future.

The Government of Canada's commitment to protect 25% of Canada's land and ocean by 2025, and 30% by 2030, provides hope for the future.

Building on the success of the Challenge Fund to date, groups across the country are recommending a further federal investment to achieve these more ambitious and much-needed conservation targets. Canadians now and in the future will applaud the resulting legacy of this investment for generations to come.

Imagine what we could protect next...