



ON THE PATH TO 2030

A REPORT CARD ON PROGRESS TO
PROTECT LAND AND OCEAN ACROSS
CANADA

2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Photo: Anandpreet Deol



The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has reviewed the progress made from 2022 through 2024 by federal, provincial, and territorial governments towards Canada’s commitment to effectively protect at least 30% of land, freshwater, and ocean by 2030.ⁱ This report presents our key findings, assigning grades to federal, provincial, and territorial governments based on their contributions - or lack thereof – to area-based conservation efforts. It highlights major achievements and shortcomings, and provides critical insights to help guide more effective conservation actions on the pathway to 2030.

In June 2022, CPAWS published the *Roadmap to 2030*,¹ summarizing actions needed to implement this commitment, viable conservation opportunities, and potential challenges in each jurisdiction. Our analysis determined that the quality of protected areas is just as important as quantity. To help advance this principle, CPAWS presented recommendations for each jurisdiction across six themes:

1. Collaborate to achieve Canada’s 30% targets
2. Set ambitious regional targets
3. Prioritize Indigenous-led conservation
4. Complete existing conservation projects
5. Identify additional areas for protection
6. Increase long-term funding



In December 2022, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted by 196 signatories to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, including Canada. The GBF outlines a new, more ambitious pathway to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and live in harmony with nature by 2050.² Commonly referred to as the “30x30 target”, Target 3 of the GBF contains the commitment to conserve at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal, and marine areas by 2030, “through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing Indigenous and traditional territories”.³

ⁱ Freshwater (or inland water) protected areas count towards terrestrial 30x30 targets. Protection of coastal and ocean environments contribute to the marine 30x30 targets.

Although significant, the 30x30 target is only a milestone toward what is ultimately needed to conserve biodiversity. With the release of the 2030 Nature Strategy⁴ and Nature Accountability Law (Bill C-73)⁵ in 2024, the Government of Canada has taken steps to apply the GBF domestically. The federal government, along with the provinces and territories must continue working to implement the goals and targets outlined in the GBF to ensure positive conservation outcomes and long-term success. Despite notable progress, there is a crucial need to enhance provincial and territorial ambition to ensure protected area targets, goals, and plans credibly align with national needs and international commitments while prioritizing Indigenous rights and Indigenous-led conservation initiatives.

We recognize that good conservation takes time. Nevertheless, decisive action allowing for thoughtful planning, knowledge gathering, and meaningful community engagement, is needed now to achieve impactful and widely supported conservation outcomes. This includes the critical step of uplifting the conservation efforts of Indigenous Peoples across the country.

Fundamentally, Canada is at a conservation crossroads: with most funding set to expire within the next year, ongoing progress—and the many sites currently on the pathway to protection—are at serious risk. To fulfill its commitment to protect nature for the benefit of all Canadians, the federal government must extend conservation funding through to 2030 and beyond.



Photo: Brandon En



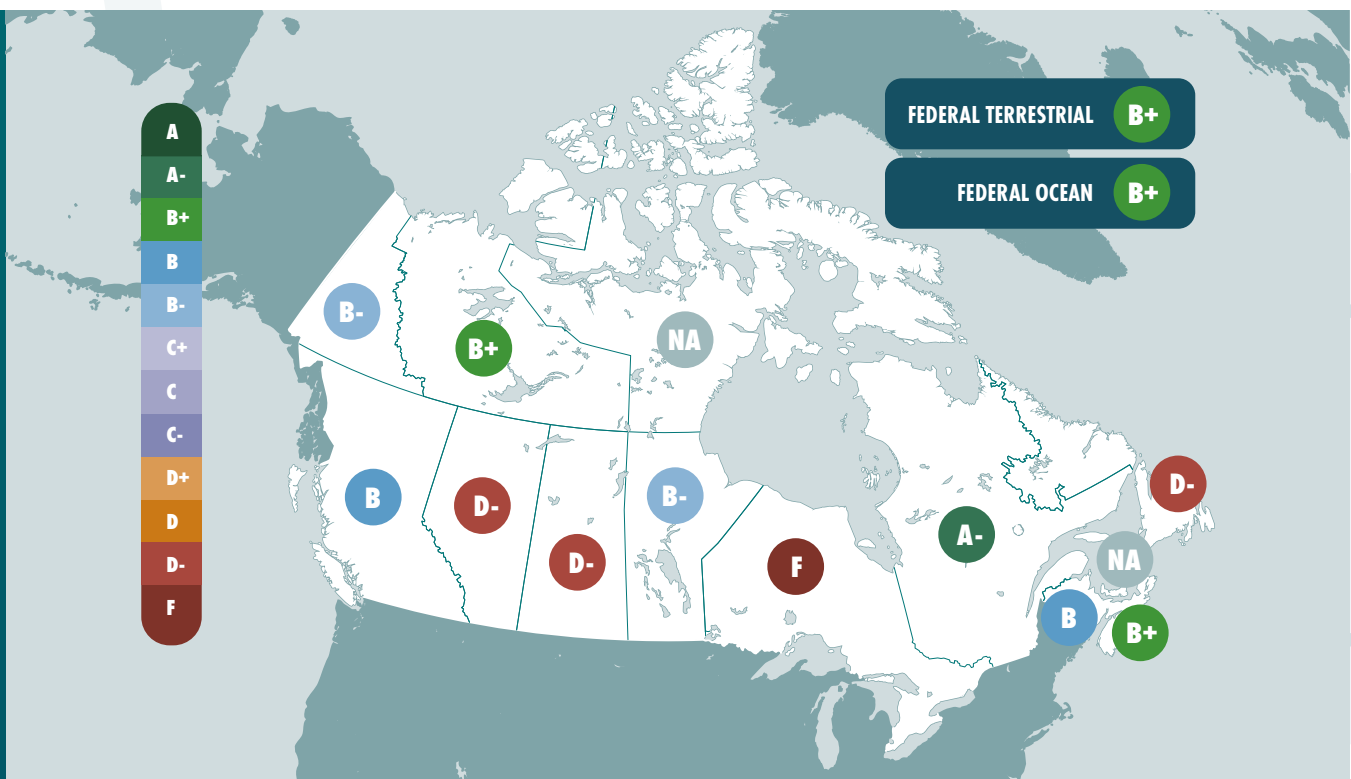
Photo: Nick Hawkins

GRADES BY JURISDICTION

Looking to 2030 and using CPAWS' 2022 Roadmap recommendations listed above as criteria, we examined how conservation has advanced federally in the marine and terrestrial realms, and terrestrially within each province and territory. We looked at whether jurisdictions are making the best of opportunities and working to overcome challenges. For the marine assessment, we focused on the federal government because most marine activities fall under federal jurisdiction, and federally designated marine protected areas are the primary conservation tool for ocean ecosystems.

Our results across Canada (Figure 1) are organized into three categories: Leaders (**A-** to **B+**), Mixed Review (**B** to **B-**), and Laggards (**D-** to **F**). As CPAWS does not have staff on the ground in Nunavut or Prince Edward Island we did not assign a progress grade for these jurisdictions and instead provided a summary of activities.

Figure 1. 2024 Report card grades for federal, provincial and territorial governments



The federal government (terrestrial and ocean), and the government of Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nova Scotia form the leaders group.

The federal government earned a **B+** for terrestrial conservation by committing to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and affirming ambitious land protection targets; supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives; securing three Nature Agreements with provinces and territories; and advancing new national park and national urban park projects, including establishing Pitumkek National Park Reserve (PEI) in partnership with Mi'kmaq Epekwitnewaq Kapmntemuow (Mi'kmaq Nation Government in PEI). The federal government also made critical investments in terrestrial conservation in Budget 2021 through the Enhanced Nature Legacy initiative. However, this funding is due to end in 2026, so must be renewed or replaced with an alternate funding model. Long-term investment is also urgently needed to deliver the promised 10 new national parks and 15 new national urban parks. The absence of upfront, adequate, and sustained long-term funding poses serious challenges that could hinder or derail on-going and future conservation efforts across the country. This is the primary reason for the federal government's slight decrease in grade since 2021, from an A- to a B+.

The federal government scored a **B+** for marine conservation by crossing the halfway mark on its commitment to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030. Since 2021, three sites have been designated: the Eastern Canyons Conservation Area, the Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala Marine Refuge, and Tang.gwan-ħačx^wiqak-Tsigis Marine Protected Area. Progress has also been made on several potential marine protected areas (MPAs) across the country including MPA networks in British Columbia and the Maritimes; a National Marine Conservation Area off the coast of Ontario in Hudson and James Bay; new co-governance agreements with Indigenous partners; and the negotiation of Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) agreements to advance ocean protection in three marine regions. Despite an important investment in Budget



Photo: Nunzio Guerra

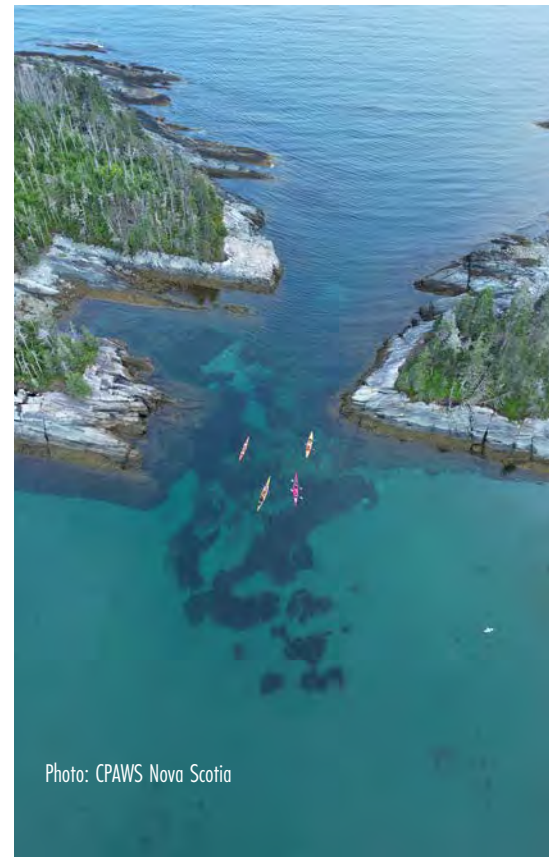


Photo: CPAWS Nova Scotia

2021, long-term funding is critical to complete efforts underway and maintain momentum. The federal government must also focus on quality and equity, better supporting Indigenous-led conservation, implementing minimum protection standards, and strengthening collaboration with provincial and territorial governments on coastal and marine protection.

The Government of Quebec earned the highest grade in the country, an **A-**, for committing \$650 million to conservation in 2022, sustaining momentum through the publication of the 2030 Nature Plan, and developing an innovative process for public and Indigenous groups to identify and designate protected areas. Some progress is still needed as the government has not established a Woodland Caribou recovery strategy, hindering progress for this species at risk. Increased support for certain Indigenous-led initiatives that have been ongoing for many years and integrating input from Indigenous communities in land use planning would further strengthen conservation efforts.

The Government of the Northwest Territories earned a **B+** for agreeing to establish, in partnership with Indigenous communities and the federal government, the NWT Project Finance for Permanence (PFP). Through the leadership of Indigenous Nations, there is enormous potential for conservation to generate transformative environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits for the NWT with long-term, large-scale protection of new and existing areas that may contribute over 2% towards Canada's land conservation target. Despite notable advancements, significant work remains for the Government of the Northwest Territories, including drafting legislation to enable the PFP, and for various parties to finalize several land use plans.

The Government of Nova Scotia earned a **B+** for signing the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement, releasing the Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy, designating 62 new or expanded protected areas since 2022, and defending pending protected areas from industrial development. Despite these achievements, the provincial government needs to provide more support for Indigenous-led conservation and IPCA establishment and to clear the backlog of over 100 pending protected areas from the 2013 *Nova Scotia: Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan* that are still awaiting legal designation.

Governments of British Columbia, New Brunswick, Yukon and Manitoba demonstrate varying degrees of promise, but they still face considerable challenges ahead.

The Government of British Columbia earned a **B** for numerous bold commitments to nature conservation over the past two years, including protecting 30% of lands by 2030 in partnership with First Nations. This commitment is entrenched in the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, which coordinates federal funding and \$563 million in provincial funds to support Indigenous-led protected areas. In July 2024, the B.C. government released the Coastal Marine Strategy, a comprehensive plan to improve

coastal management and protection, co-developed with First Nations. Despite bold promises, at-risk ecosystems continue to be degraded and threatened due to slow action to advance protections on the ground. This was compounded by a rise in polarization on land-use policy heading into the 2024 B.C. fall election.

The Government of New Brunswick earned a **B** for doubling its protected areas to reach the province's 2020 target of 10%, and for successfully implementing its Nature Legacy Initiative. There is still work to be done on protecting specific areas such as coastlines, drinking watersheds, peatlands, and salmon habitat. However, in November 2024, the newly elected government committed to protect 15% of NB by 2030, and to work with communities, First Nations, and experts to develop a plan to reach 30 percent.

The Government of Yukon earned a **B-** for protecting a significant amount of its land area and signing the first Nature Agreement with the federal government in 2022. It is important to note that many of the new protected areas in the Yukon are due to the vision and work of the Inuvialuit and First Nations. The processes through which future conservation and ongoing management occur must be better supported by the territorial government, including through meaningful partnerships with First Nations and a broadening of focus from resource utilization to resource stewardship.

The Government of Manitoba earned a **B-** for committing to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030, and for its work with First Nations and the federal government to advance the establishment of the Seal River Watershed IPCA. Despite notable achievements, considerable financial and institutional capacity constraints persist, impeding progress and making it challenging to meet ambitious conservation targets. It is hoped that Manitoba's 2025 provincial budget along with federal funding will provide the financial resources required to fully undertake 30x30.

The governments of Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario received the lowest grades, ranging from D- to F.



Photo: Yannick Menard

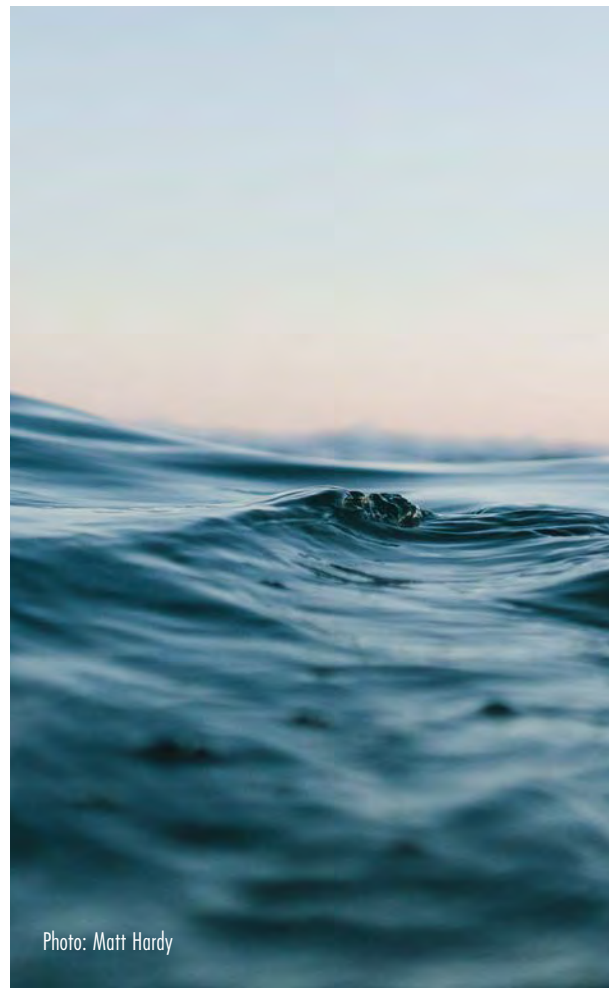
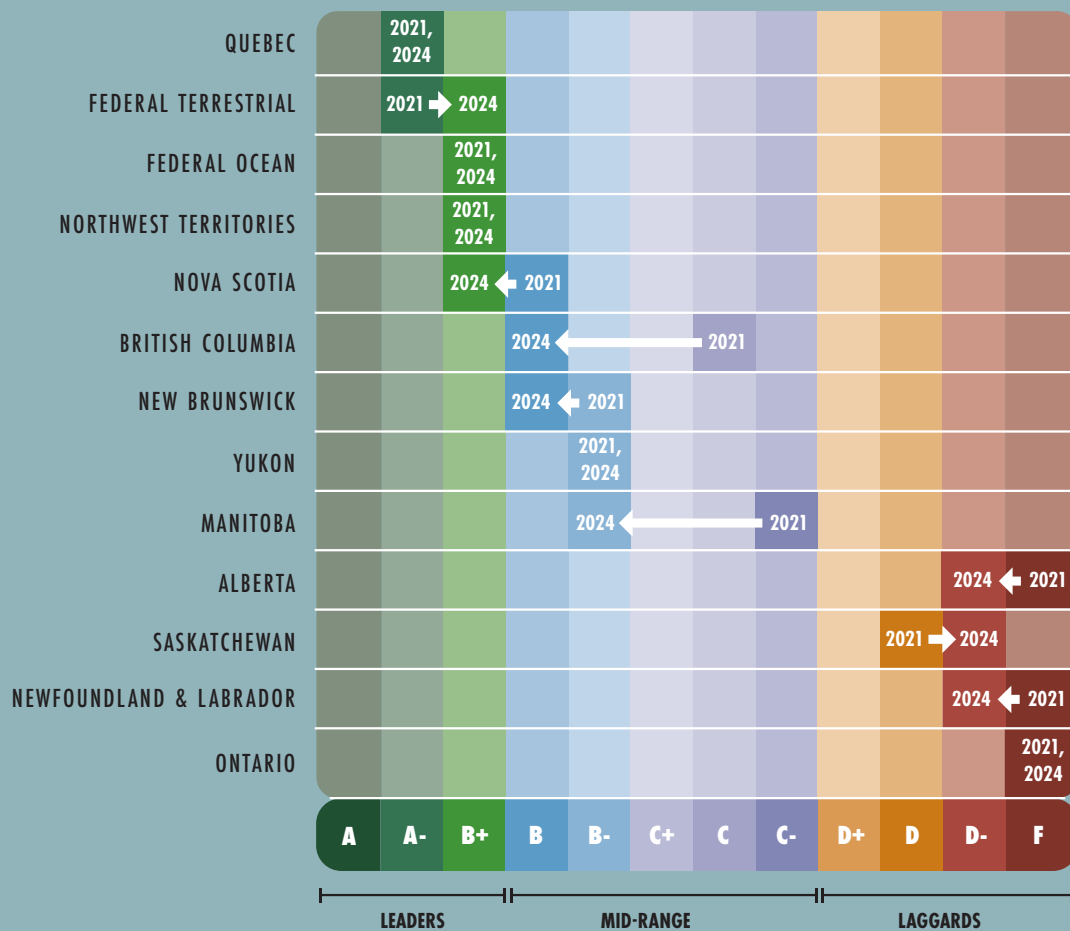


Photo: Matt Hardy

These four jurisdictions demonstrated little or no commitment to protecting more of their land and have shown minimal interest in pursuing effective and equitable processes for establishing protected areas. In Ontario and Alberta, this lack of progress is made worse by the rolling back of nature protection policies and legislation, and the increasing authorization of development in sensitive habitats. In Newfoundland, progress to create protected areas is slow, yet the government is releasing public lands quickly for controversial wind energy projects. Proposals to delist protected areas and policies that may allow degradation of native grassland habitats and wetlands have reversed conservation progress in Saskatchewan.

Changes in grades since CPAWS' 2021 report card, which assessed progress on the past decade's conservation targets, are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Summary of change in grades from 2021 to 2024.



KEY MESSAGES

In undertaking this assessment of conservation progress, CPAWS also gained insight into effective conservation actions across Canada. While provincial and territorial governments face unique prospects and concerns, the following observations apply to all jurisdictions:

1. Continuing with ambitious goals, increased funding, and Indigenous-led stewardship will keep conservation momentum strong through to 2030.

2. Creating new protected areas requires time because of the need for strong relationships, planning, and full partnership with Indigenous rightsholders.

3. Leveraging additional investments from provincial, territorial, philanthropic, and NGO sources is made possible by federal financial support and amplifies bold conservation commitments.

4. Achieving Canada's 30x30 target is possible and requires sustained federal funding to 2030 and beyond, including renewed support for critical conservation programs.

5. Simplifying funding processes and building trust-based models will accelerate and improve conservation results for nature and communities.

Photo: Nicholas Bullet

6.

Investing in Indigenous-led preliminary land use or marine spatial planning is essential to building a foundation of knowledge and lasting relationships.

Implementing policies and legislative tools that support and recognize Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and governance models advances reconciliation and conservation.

7.

8.

Prioritizing quality and equity in protected areas ensures effective conservation outcomes.

9.

Tailoring conservation strategies to regional needs is crucial to success.

10.

Ensuring robust protection and effective management of all current and future conservation sites means Canada's conservation efforts will meet international quality and equity standards.

I. INTRODUCTION



Photo: Paul Regular

Over the past several years, federal leadership and investment have been critical in advancing conservation objectives across most regions of Canada. The significant funding allocated in the federal 2021 budget has not only driven tangible progress but has also empowered Indigenous-led conservation efforts and inspired provincial and territorial governments to increase their respective conservation ambitions. Now, however, Canada is at a crossroads. With most funding set to expire within the next year, ongoing progress – and the many sites currently on the pathway to protection – are at serious risk. To fulfill its commitment to protect nature for the benefit of all Canadians, the federal government must extend conservation funding through to 2030 and beyond.

In December 2022, Canada, along with 195 other countries, adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Among other aims, the GBF requires countries to conserve at least 30% of terrestrial areas and inland waters, and 30% of coastal and marine areas by 2030. This global commitment reaffirms Canada's 2019 pledge to protect 30% of land and oceanⁱⁱ by 2030.

Protected areas are an essential tool to stem the loss of habitats and species. CPAWS' *Roadmap to 2030* report published in 2022 showed that more than 29% of land and over 30% of ocean in Canada could be protected by 2030. As we approach the halfway point of this commitment period, we now assess advancements made by federal, provincial, and territorial governments toward this target, the manner in which progress is occurring, and whether Canada is on track to deliver effective conservation outcomes by 2030. Our current assessment builds on the *Roadmap to 2030*, which identified opportunities and recommended actions needed for federal, provincial, and territorial governments to deliver and looks at headway, or lack thereof, in these fields.

ii We are using the terminology "land" to refer to terrestrial areas and freshwater or inland waters, while "ocean" refers to coastal and marine environments.



WHAT IS A PROTECTED AREA?

Protected areas are places that are off-limits to harmful industrial activities and infrastructure, and where priority is given to protecting (or restoring) ecosystems and species.

Canada has adopted the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition of a protected area: *“a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”*⁶



Photo: JeniFoto

Like much of the worldⁱⁱⁱ, Canada failed to meet its 2020 terrestrial protection targets^{iv}. While Canada exceeded its marine protection targets, significant questions remain about quality. Globally and in Canada, habitat loss and degradation are the most important direct drivers of biodiversity loss on land. In the ocean, overexploitation is the primary driver, with habitat loss a close second. Thus, safeguarding and restoring habitat must be at the core of conservation actions across Canada.

Given the primary jurisdiction of provinces and territories over land and terrestrial resources, delivering on Canada’s conservation commitments requires these governments to recognize the importance of protecting significantly more of our landscape, and to work with partners to do so. On the coast and seascape, the federal government plays a primary role as most maritime activities are managed under federal jurisdiction. Provinces and territories are still involved in coastal sites, so collaboration is required for effective conservation. Indigenous governments and communities play an essential role in conserving both land and freshwater, and ocean.

Overall, successfully reversing the biodiversity crisis and getting on a path to ecological recovery by 2030 will require transformative action across governments and society to address all the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss.

ⁱⁱⁱ As of January 2021: globally, 16% of terrestrial and 7.7% for marine areas are protected and/or conserved, according to the Protected Areas Database.

^{iv} By 2020, at least 17% of terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, are conserved through networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

The Canadian federal government played a leadership role at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal by hosting the meeting and helping to land an ambitious global agreement to save nature. The GBF sets out a pathway to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and live in harmony with nature by 2050.⁷ The Framework contains four overarching goals for 2050 and 23 targets to be achieved by 2030, including **Target 3**, which commits countries to effectively protect at least 30% of land and freshwater, and ocean by 2030.



Photo: Markus Thompson

TARGET 3: 30X30

Commonly referred to as the “30x30 target,” Target 3 of the GBF contains the evidence-based commitment to conserve at least 30% of terrestrial and inland waters, and 30% of coastal and marine areas by 2030, “through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing Indigenous and traditional territories.”⁸

Protecting at least 30% of Canada by 2030 is a critical step that requires implementing existing conservation actions and identifying new opportunities to fill the gap to 30% by 2030. Nevertheless, evidence shows that 30% is the absolute minimum area that requires protection if we are to safeguard biodiversity, and that as much as 50-70% of ecosystems likely need to be protected in the long term to sustain a healthy planet.^{9,10} The evidence is also clear that achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes depends on quantity, on selecting the right areas to protect, and on ensuring they are well-connected, effectively and equitably governed, and nested within sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes.

Canada now needs to implement the GBF by translating big commitments on the global stage into equally big actions at home. The federal government has released a 2030 Nature Strategy¹¹ that commits to delivering on all the GBF targets and proposed a *Nature Accountability Act*¹² requiring planning and regular transparent reporting to Parliament on progress.

Photo: Gurpreet Singh

2030 NATURE STRATEGY

This strategy outlines Canada's plan to achieve the GBF goals and targets domestically, establishing a shared vision and roadmap for halting and reversing biodiversity loss in Canada. It builds on existing initiatives in all regions and sectors across the country. It recognizes that the sweeping change required calls for a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach built on partnership and collaboration.

The vision for 2050 will serve as the guide for federal action: "Nature is healthy, thriving, and sustaining and enriching the lives of current and future generations, and all Canadians have re-established their relationship with and are honouring their responsibilities to nature."¹³

NATURE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Along with the 2030 Nature Strategy, the federal government tabled a nature accountability law (Bill C-73) in Parliament in June 2024. This Bill, which died on the order paper when Parliament prorogued in January 2025, will now need to be reintroduced to a new session of Parliament. In its current form the Bill would require the federal government to regularly review plans for meeting the global targets, publicly report on progress, and establish an independent advisory committee to support implementation. While legal experts have flagged the need to strengthen the Bill to ensure alignment with international commitments, and respect for Indigenous rights and Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, passing a nature accountability law would be an important step forward.¹⁴

While recognizing the importance of delivering on all goals and targets in the GBF, this report focuses on progress made towards Target 3 and the processes put in place to move conservation outcomes in a positive direction. With only six years left until the end of 2030, all levels of government need to ramp up action now to allow enough time for inclusive planning, including knowledge gathering and relationship-building, in-depth engagement of communities, and other work required to achieve effective and broadly supported conservation outcomes by 2030.

Indigenous-led Conservation Offers a Hopeful Path

Indigenous Peoples are demonstrating tremendous conservation leadership across Canada, offering pathways to achieve the GBF's vision of living in harmony with nature. Work to halt and reverse biodiversity loss at all levels in Canada must recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights, jurisdiction, and knowledge systems and support Indigenous leadership in conservation.

This includes alignment of land and ocean use-related policy frameworks (e.g., critical minerals, forestry, fisheries) with achieving GBF goals and targets and ensuring they respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).¹⁵ It also means committing more long-term funding to support the establishment and stewardship of **Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)**, including Indigenous Guardians programs, and ensuring funding programs meet the needs of Indigenous Nations and communities.

Indigenous Peoples, groups, communities, and governments cannot be expected to do the work of conservation alone. Rather, the pathway to success as CPAWS' *Roadmap to 2030* report demonstrated, lies in ensuring Indigenous-led conservation initiatives are recognized, respected, and supported by provincial, territorial, and federal governments, other land and ocean users, and broader Canadian society.

Photo: Yann Allegre



Photo: Yannick Menard



WHAT ARE INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS (IPCAs)?

The 2018 Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) Report, *We Rise Together*, defines IPCAs as “lands and waters where Indigenous governments have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance, and knowledge systems”.¹⁶

IPCAs share three defining elements:

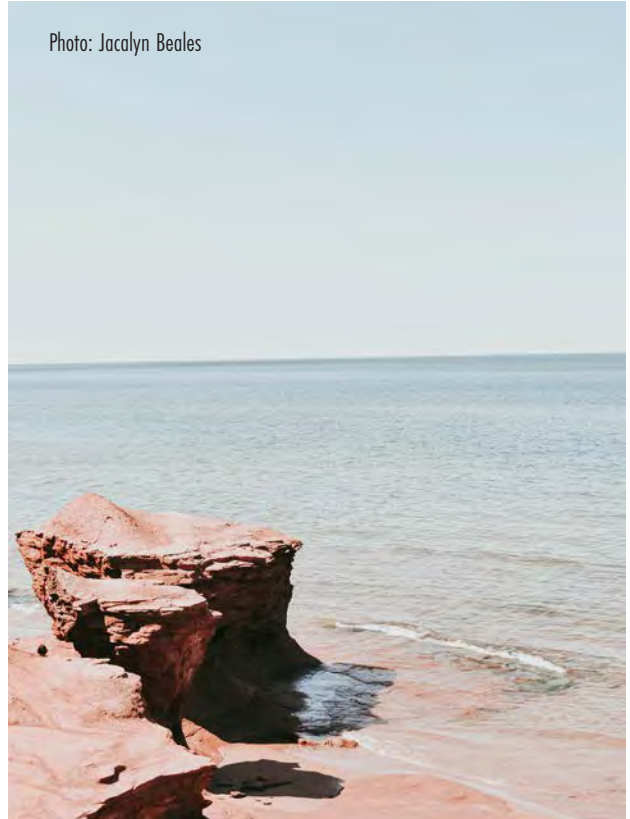
- **They are Indigenous-led**
 - Indigenous governments have the primary role in determining the objectives, boundaries, management plans, and governance structures for IPCAs as part of their exercise of self-determination
 - There may be a range of partnerships to support acts of self-determination, including with Crown governments, environmental NGOs, philanthropic bodies, and others
 - Reflect the objectives and needs of their respective nations or governments and emerge through transparent negotiations
- **They elevate Indigenous rights and responsibilities**
 - Represent a modern application of traditional values, Indigenous laws and Indigenous knowledge systems
 - Display exercises in cultural continuity on the land and waters
 - Provide a foundation for local Indigenous economies
 - Present opportunities to reconnect to the land, healing both the land and Indigenous Peoples
 - Acknowledge international law, such as Canada’s Treaties, UNDRIP, CBD, and other relevant instruments and commitments
 - Offer an opportunity for true reconciliation to take place between Indigenous and settler societies and between broader Canadian society and the lands and waters, including relationships in pre-existing parks and protected areas
 - Represent an innovative expression of Section 35 (Constitution Act, 1982)
- **They represent a long-term commitment to conservation**
 - Indigenous Peoples take a multi-generational view of stewarding their territories. Therefore, IPCAs represent a long-term commitment to conserve lands and waters for future generations

Photo: Andy Holmes

Spatial planning (e.g. land use planning, marine planning, etc.) led or co-led by Indigenous Peoples offers a route to identifying and delivering well-connected networks of protected areas, **other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)** and IPCAs that reflect the quantity, quality, and equity requirements of Target 3, and to stopping the loss of ecosystems of high ecological integrity in ways that respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Done well, regional land and marine spatial planning processes can bring Crown governments, rightsholders, and stakeholders around a table to design knowledge-based plans that identify areas of the land and seascape that will be conserved, restored and developed based on western science and Indigenous knowledge, providing greater certainty for all. To achieve this, governments need to provide long-term financial support for Indigenous-led or co-led regional spatial planning initiatives, including capacity support for Indigenous Nations and communities to prepare to engage in planning processes and scientific and technical support, where appropriate.

Photo: Jacalyn Beales



WHAT ARE OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA-BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES (OECMs)?

Canada adopted the international definition of OECMs agreed to under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and, through the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, has developed guidance and a decision support tool¹⁷ to assess whether terrestrial areas qualify as OECMs. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) developed its own guidance for marine OECMs, which are currently comprised of marine refuges.

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 deliver effective conservation outcomes. OECMs are not meant to be a “weaker” form of protection. Both protected areas and OECMs require that incompatible activities be prohibited (including industrial activities and damaging infrastructure developments), and that other activities be effectively managed. Like protected areas, OECMs must also be permanently protected.

Grading Criteria and Approach

In our 2022 publication, *Roadmap to 2030*, CPAWS concluded that federal, provincial, and territorial governments can meet Canada's commitment to protect 30% of land and ocean by 2030 if they make a concerted collective effort, prioritize support for Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, and make adequate long-term investments. This report summarized opportunities, challenges, and actions needed in each province and territory to implement this pan-Canadian commitment. The report also reinforced the importance of focusing not only on how much land and ocean is conserved, but on which areas to protect and what measures to take to ensure they are effectively and equitably protected in the long term.

In our current evaluation, we looked at both quantitative and qualitative information. Recognizing that conservation requires extensive planning, strong relationships, and time to do well, we considered progress toward the desired endpoint of permanent protection by 2030. For example, a provincial or territorial government that committed to a regionally ambitious land protection target and that is actively identifying and establishing new protected areas in partnership with Indigenous groups or governments and the public, could receive a higher grade than a jurisdiction that made no commitment or progress, even if the former currently contains a lower percentage of land protected.

To assess progress since CPAWS's last full report card in mid-2021 and to ensure success on the 30% target, this report card looks at how jurisdictions are faring in implementing the Roadmap's six recommendations:



Photo: Jasper Graetsch

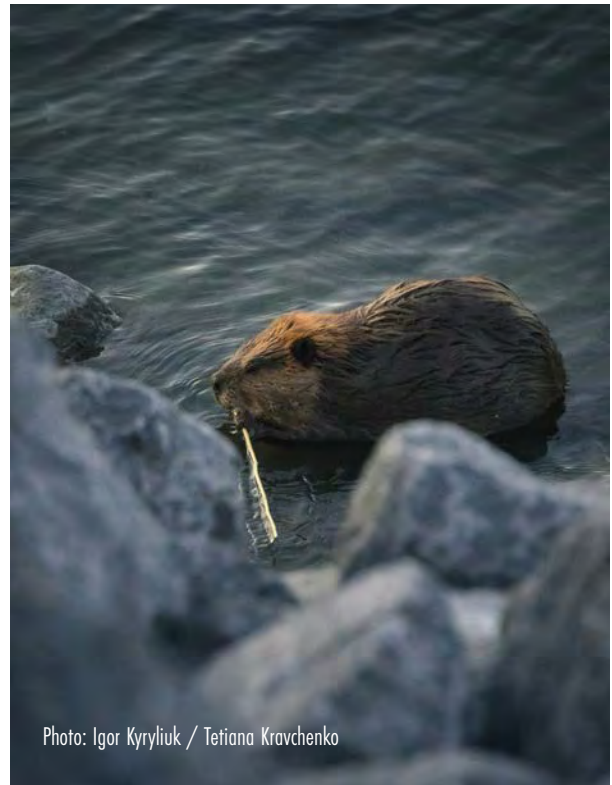


Photo: Igor Kyryliuk / Tetiana Kravchenko



Collaborate to achieve Canada's 30x30 target

We assessed whether provinces and territories have formally committed to work with the federal and other governments to implement Canada's commitment to protect at least 30% of lands and freshwater by 2030. If no formal commitment has been made, we reviewed the individual jurisdiction's commitment to cooperate to increase land and ocean protection significantly. This included examining whether governments had implemented supportive plans, processes, and/or improved legislation and policy.



Set ambitious regional targets

We evaluated whether the federal government, provinces, and territories have set ambitious jurisdictional targets that align with or exceed Target 3. We then assessed if or how thoroughly these targets have been embedded in a whole-of-government manner, for example, as objectives in regional land planning initiatives, along with the level of prioritization that targets have been given in various government actions.^v



Prioritize Indigenous-led conservation

Identifying Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights and jurisdiction to land, freshwater, and ocean stewardship and management, and the conservation leadership demonstrated by Indigenous Nations across the country is of utmost importance to Canada's conservation success. Therefore, we assessed whether federal, provincial, and territorial governments have been prioritizing support for Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and ensuring Indigenous rights and jurisdiction are respected. We also noted whether they are supporting Indigenous Guardians programs.^{vi}

v It is important to note that some provinces, such as Prince Edward Island, are unlikely to be able to reach the terrestrial and freshwater 30% conservation target in the near future due to limited public land (high private land ownership) and population density. While this is not a free pass to avoid conservation, in these situations we did consider practical limitations and whether such jurisdictions are aiming to do their "fair share" and implementing other innovative initiatives.

vi CPAWS is not assessing the actions of Indigenous governments, groups, or communities but how federal, provincial, and territorial governments have worked to recognize and support Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), Indigenous-led conservation initiatives like land use planning, and co-governed or co-managed protected areas.



Complete existing conservation projects

We assessed whether the federal government and provinces and territories had completed and implemented existing protected area proposals, as well as other conservation and land use or marine planning processes. We also evaluated whether governments had provided upfront and long-term financial investment to expedite and optimize these conservation processes.



Identify additional areas for protection

We determined whether additional areas for protection had been identified and if these regions had been located through transparent and collaborative land or ocean planning processes that:^{vii}

- are based on science and Indigenous knowledges;
- prioritize Indigenous-led initiatives;
- enhance connectivity;
- identify carbon-rich ecosystems for protection; and
- protect habitat for species at risk, including meeting critical habitat requirements under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.



Increase long-term funding

We assessed whether federal, provincial and territorial funding has increased or decreased for regional conservation. This includes funding to support the establishment and management of protected areas, including Indigenous partners and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs). We also investigated whether jurisdictions had begun negotiating and/or signed a Nature Agreement with the federal government and, if signed, how the Agreement was being used to leverage additional funding for nature protection.

vii These criteria for identification of additional protected areas are not limited to, and extend beyond the categories provided, for example, to issues of regional value and focus.

WHERE DID WE GET OUR DATA?

The spatial data on terrestrial and marine protected areas and OECMs for 2021-2023 were obtained through the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).^{viii} This database is compiled and managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), with data provided by the relevant federal, provincial, and territorial government authorities, and land trusts (in the case of private lands). The database for Quebec protected areas is managed separately by the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs.

Some additional spatial data on terrestrial and marine protected areas for 2024 was provided by CPAWS chapter staff, who have on-the-ground expertise in the respective areas. At the time of writing, these new protected areas or OECMs have not yet been formally entered into CPCAD but are included as mapped polygons (rather than identified as areas of opportunity) due to their importance. Notes are made in each instance to clarify.

CPAWS does not have chapters in Prince Edward Island or Nunavut. For these jurisdictions, our overview was based on publicly available information about recent progress, and conversations with conservation practitioners working in these jurisdictions.

^{viii} The Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD) is updated at the end of every calendar year. The data used for mapping existing (pre-2021) and new protected areas and OECMs is current as of December 2023.

Photo: Dev Leigh



Photo: Pete Nuij



CPAWS' ROLE

CPAWS is ready to support all governments on the path to protection. For over 60 years, CPAWS has supported hundreds of conservation initiatives and has helped establish protected areas throughout Canada. With this unwavering commitment to conservation, we endeavor to support all governments in Canada on their collective journey to protect 30% of the country's land and ocean by 2030 and beyond.

This report is intended to assess progress towards Canada's land and ocean protection commitment, collectively and by each jurisdiction. The ultimate goal of this report is to encourage decision-makers at the federal, territorial, and provincial levels to take the actions necessary to achieve this important milestone in the quest to save nature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to working with staff across all CPAWS chapters and in the National Office, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following organizations:

- Nature Conservancy of Canada – for information on P.E.I.
- Friends of Land Use Planning – for information on Nunavut
- World Wildlife Fund Canada – for information on Nunavut
- CPAWS Northern Alberta Chapter and CPAWS British Columbia Chapter – for the mapping support from your staff
- SNAP Quebec – for the translation review support from your staff



Photo: James Wheeler



Photo: Igor Kyryliuk / Tetiana Kravchenko

CANADIANS SUPPORT MORE NATURE CONSERVATION¹⁸

Public polling has demonstrated that 90% of Canadians support the federal government's commitment to protect 30% of the country's land and ocean by 2030, 80% expect Canada to be a global leader in protecting land and water, and 75% support expanding funding to create more protected areas.



Photo: Floris Stegers

II. RESULTS



As we reach the middle of the decade, it is important to assess the status of land and ocean protection, what positive processes are in place, or where opportunities remain for additional conservation actions (see Figures 5 and 6) and funds leading to real on-the-ground growth of protected areas.

While limited progress has been made over the past four years in the percentage of land and ocean designated as new protected areas, there was significant progress made towards the 2030 goal in some regions. We found that some provinces and territories have made new commitments and agreements to deliver on the 30 by 30 target and that planning processes to advance initiatives to their final designation are moving forward, led by Indigenous nations and supported by federal funding. Significant time and work are needed to build relationships and conduct inclusive planning processes based on western science and Indigenous knowledge before areas can be permanently protected.

We determined that the biggest barriers to achieving the 30 by 30 target were the lack of confirmed long-term funding to continue this important work, and the continued lack of political will for ambitious action in some provinces.



Photo: Andrew SVK

Nationwide

In 2010, 9.6% of land and freshwater in Canada and 0.8% of its ocean territory was permanently protected. By 2020, this had increased to 13.1% of Canada’s land and freshwater and 13.8% of its ocean under protection, as protected areas or OECMs (Figure 3).¹⁹

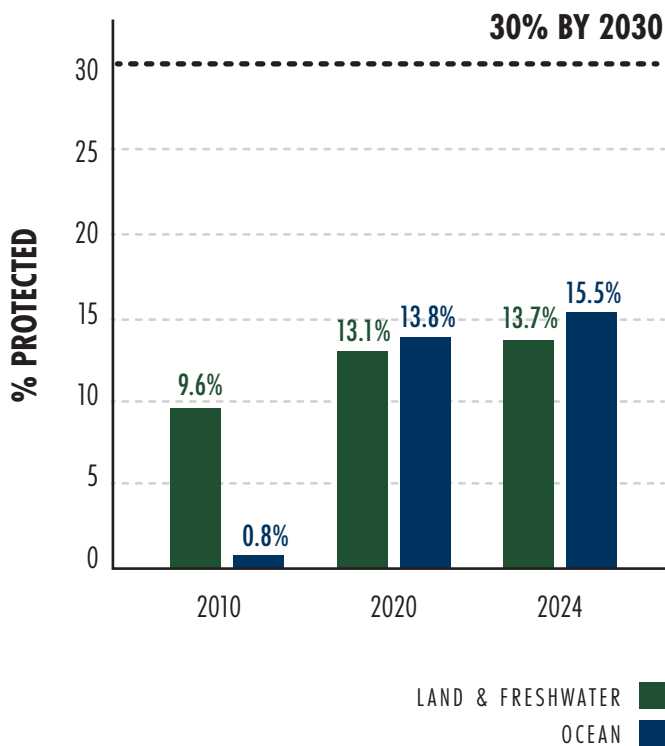


Figure 3. Increase in protected land, freshwater and ocean in Canada, 2010-2024. Data source: Canadian Protected and Conserved Database (CPCAD, 2023), CPAWS.

Photo: L.J. Nova Scotia



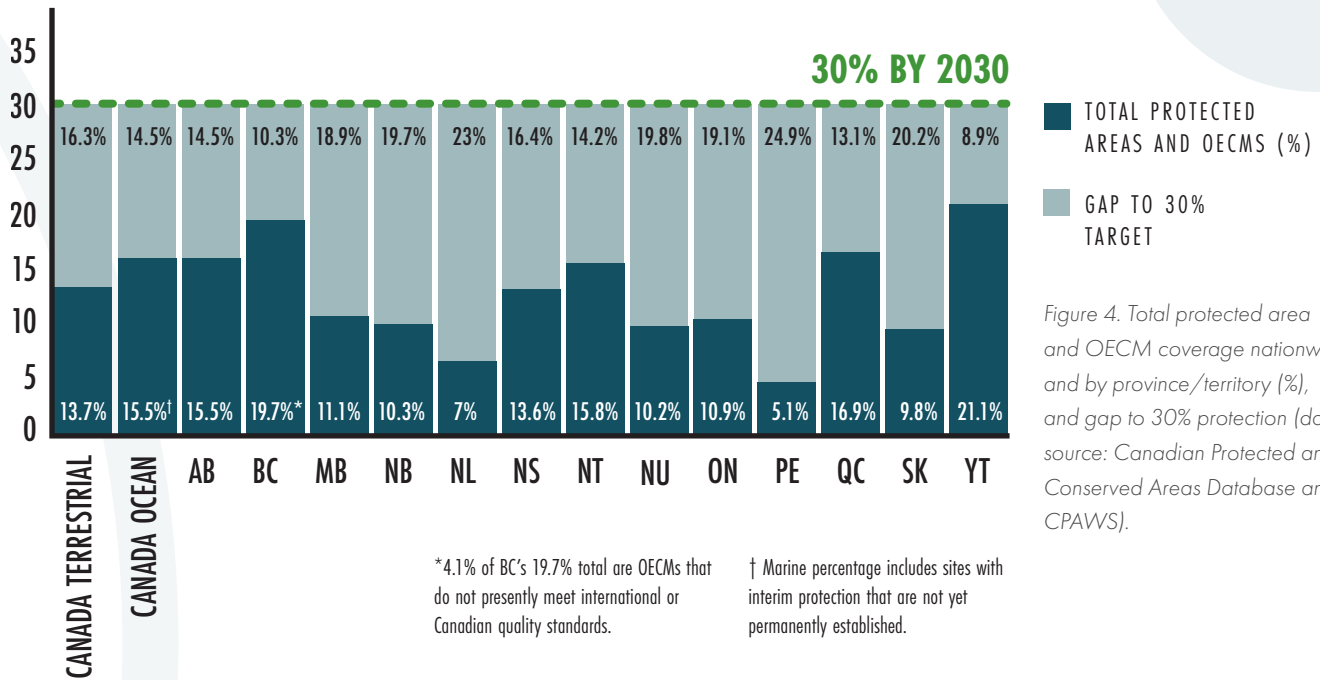


Figure 4. Total protected area and OECM coverage nationwide and by province/territory (%), and gap to 30% protection (data source: Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database and CPAWS).

From a quantitative perspective, at the end of 2023^{ix} 13.7% of Canada’s land and freshwater were protected, while by the end of 2024, 15.5% of ocean in Canada was protected (updated land statistics are not yet available for 2024).^x To meet its commitment of protecting at least 30% by 2030, an additional 16.3% (or 1,627,336 km²) of land and freshwater and 14.5% (or 833,750 km²) of ocean need to be protected in the next six years (Figure 4).

At the end of 2023, percentages of protected land and freshwater varied greatly across Canada, ranging from 5.1% in Prince Edward Island to 21.1% in the Yukon (Figure 4). Canada’s largest province, Quebec, has protected the greatest area of land, 256,046 km², 16.9% of the province or 2.56% of Canada.

However, accounting only for the areas under protection does not present a full picture of conservation action and progress. The remainder of this report considers how governments are faring at implementing current initiatives while also considering how well they are looking to the future to conserve Canada’s land and freshwater, and ocean.

ix The Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD) is updated at the end of every calendar year. The data for land and freshwater was current at the time of writing in December 2023.

x This includes interim and proposed measures for marine sites, and these numbers do not reflect the effectiveness (including connectivity) or quality of the protection.

FEDERAL TERRESTRIAL B+

The Government of Canada continues to demonstrate nation-wide leadership in terrestrial conservation through an ongoing commitment to the 30x30 target. This includes supporting interested provinces and territories, Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiatives, and progress towards establishing the promised 10 new national parks and 15 new national urban parks. However, the lack of committed long-term funding raises questions about Canada’s ability to deliver on the 2030 target. This resulted in a slight downward adjustment to the federal terrestrial grade from A- in 2021 to B+ now.

Federal investments in Budget 2021 and subsequent funding commitments for four large Indigenous-led Project Finance for Permanence initiatives (see page 37) have been key to achieving progress towards the target, setting the stage for potential success. However, much of this funding expires in 2026, raising serious questions about whether the work can be completed. There are four priority areas that need renewed and enhanced long-term investment in 2025:

- Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship;
- Parks Canada for completion and co-management of promised new parks;
- provinces and territories to encourage and support them in protecting more land; and
- other implementation partners, including NGOs.

To ensure that momentum isn’t lost, funding must be allocated to address these priority areas in 2025.



Photo: David Gomez



Photo: Igor Kyryluk / Tetiana Kravchenko

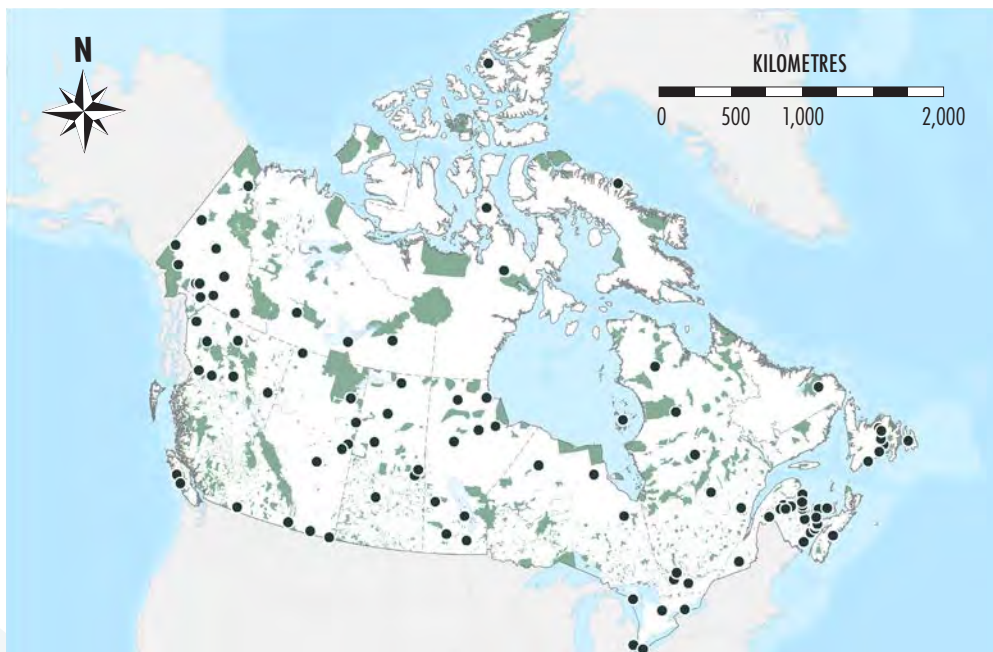


Figure 5. Across Canada, significant opportunities for terrestrial protected and conserved areas exist. This report notes progress on such sites in each jurisdiction where the information is available. See provincial/territorial sections for more details.

- Terrestrial Protected Area Opportunities
- Protected Areas

FEDERAL OCEAN B+

The federal government scored a B+ for its progress in protecting Canada’s marine ecosystems. With three new Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations since 2021 and 15.5% or 885,000 km² of the ocean currently protected, there has been some headway on Canada’s commitment to protect 30% of its ocean by 2030. Several more MPAs are currently in development, along with MPA Networks in B.C. and the Maritimes. But if these sites and networks are to be successfully established, long-term funding must be in place by the end of 2025. At the same time, quality and equity must remain priorities as Canada strives to meet its targets. This includes implementing the minimum protection standards across all sites, including existing sites, like the Scott Islands Marine National Wildlife Area, which allows trawling, and the Gully MPA, which still has existing oil and gas licenses. It also means seeking opportunities and creating pathways to advance Indigenous-led conservation, including providing adequate resources. These issues must be addressed for the grade to improve in the future.

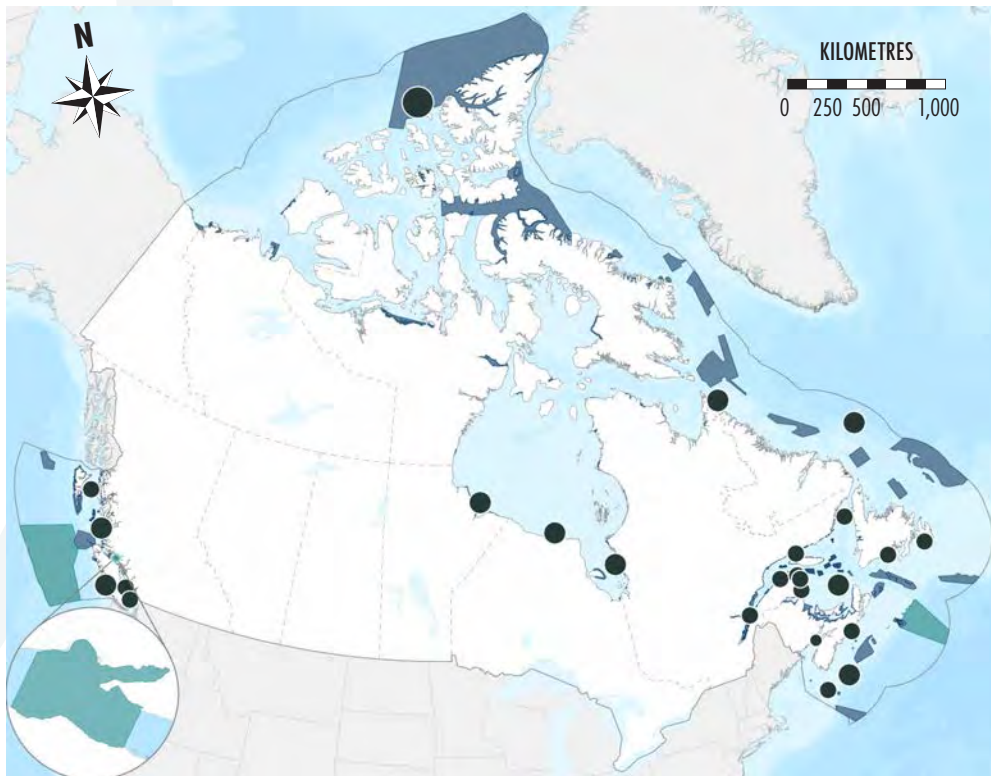


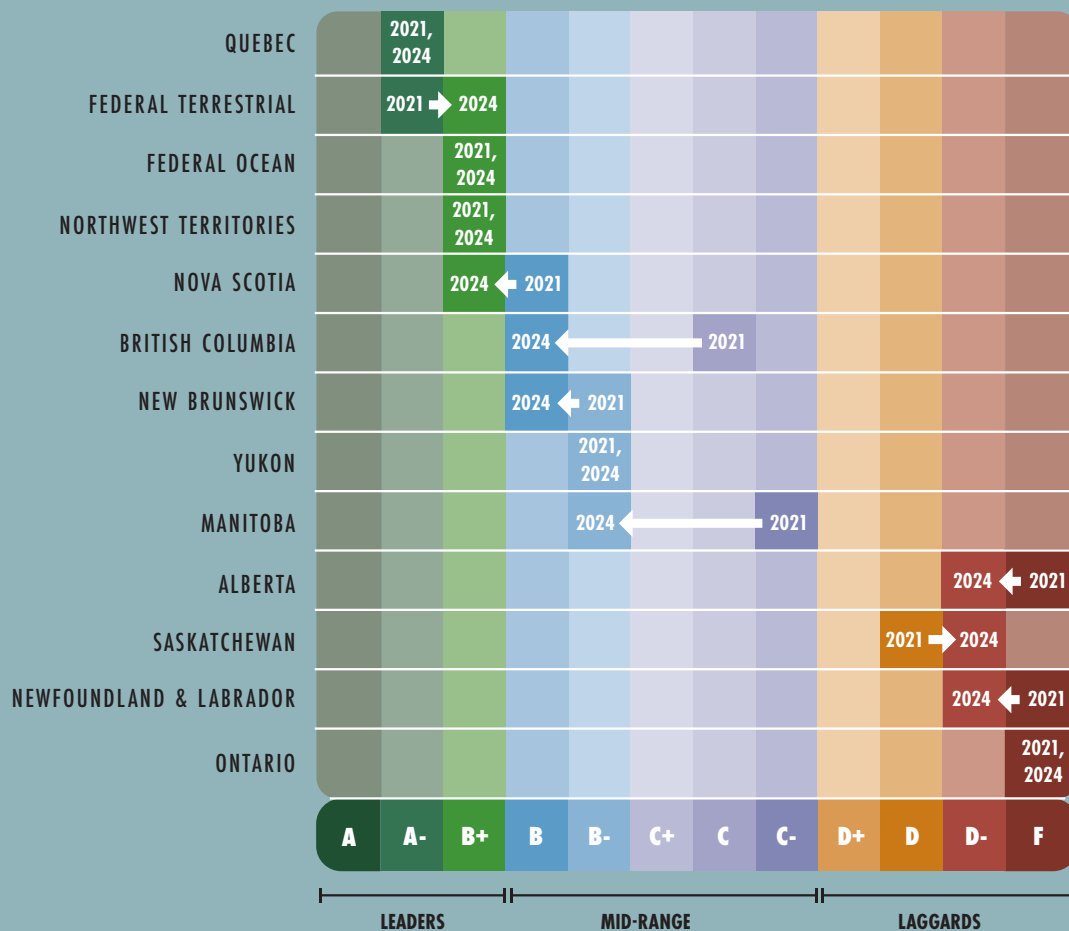
Figure 6. Many opportunities for marine protected and conserved areas exist in Canada’s ocean. See the federal ocean assessment section for more detail.

Across Provincial and Territorial Governments

Although they have primary jurisdiction over land and natural resources, provincial and territorial governments have shown varying levels of enthusiasm for their nature conservation promises and delivering on them. Achieving Canada’s commitments and responsibilities requires provincial and territorial governments to recognize the importance of protecting significantly more of the landscape and working with partners to complete well-designed, well-managed protected area networks.

Six provinces and territories received better grades than in 2021; three stayed the same, and two declined (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Summary of grades across Canada’s federal, provincial, and territorial governments in 2021 and 2024.



Governments varied dramatically in their contributions to both the quantity and quality of land protection. Grades ranged from A- for Quebec to F for Ontario (Figure 8). Because CPAWS does not have staff on the ground in P.E.I. or Nunavut, we did not grade these jurisdictions.

Figure 8. Grades for federal, provincial and territorial governments

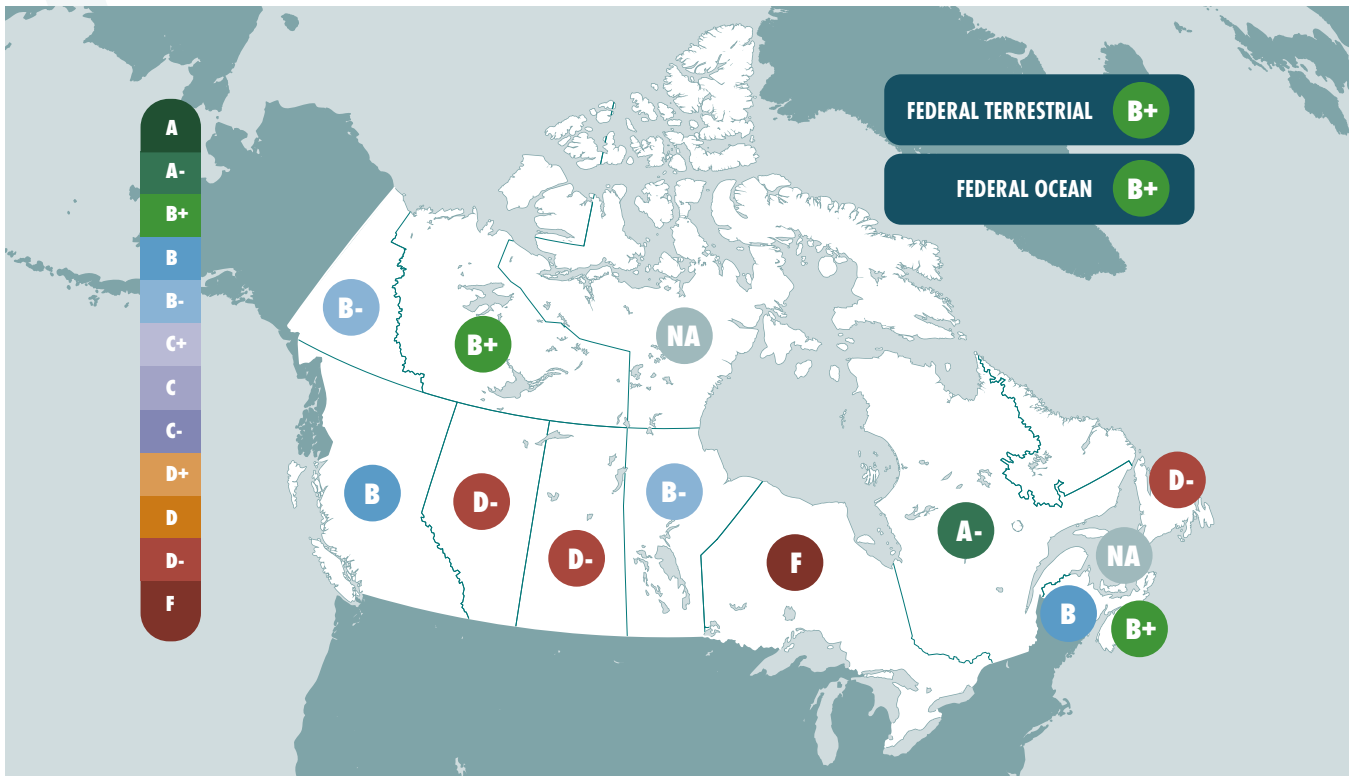
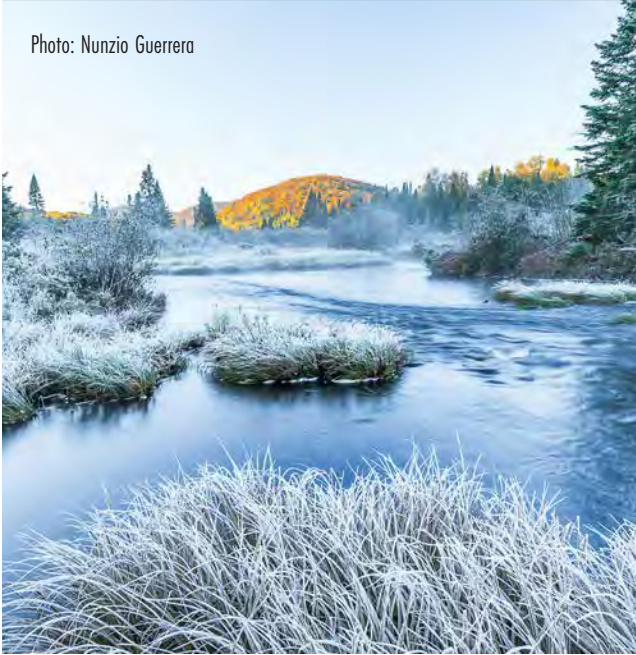


Photo: Redd Francisco

LEADERS

Photo: Nunzio Guerrero



QUEBEC **A-**

The government of Quebec continues its work as a leader in conservation in Canada and beyond and has protected 16.9% or 256,046 km² of its lands and 10.4% of its marine territory or 16,140 km². Significant funding was committed in 2022, and in June 2024, the government began an innovative, open process for the public and Indigenous groups to identify additional protected area proposals. Quebec has also completed a major review of land use legislation and guidelines to encourage municipalities to identify their natural ecosystems and enact local conservation efforts. These initiatives lay the groundwork for substantial results for the 2030 target. A recovery strategy for all provincial woodland caribou populations is still in development, while consultation on pilot projects ended in October 2024. The Call for Protected Areas represents an opportunity for the government to recognize IPCAs already declared by Indigenous communities, such as the Magpie River (Muteshekau shipu) and Pipmuakan, as well as for the creation of a number of new Indigenous protected areas. Collaboration with the federal government has been mostly limited to marine conservation.



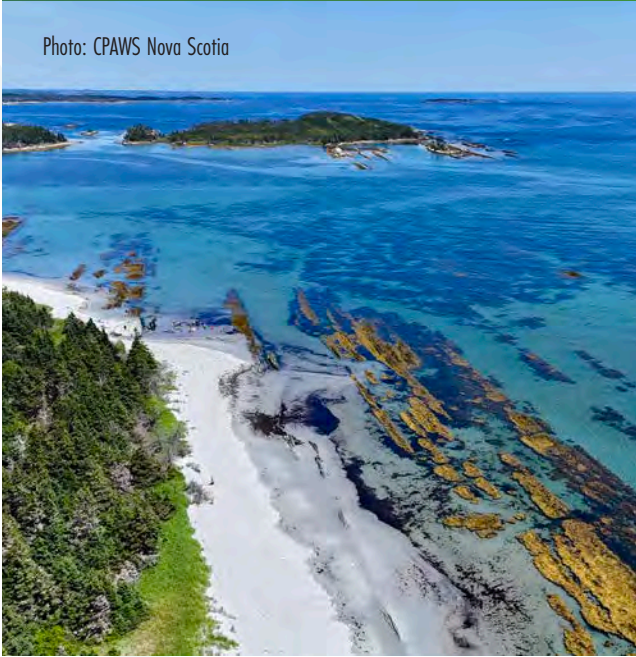
Photo: Kwan Fung

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES **B+**

Regarded as an up-and-coming conservation leader in Canada, 15.8% or 173,140 km² of lands and freshwater in the Northwest Territories have now been protected, and 2.9% or 39,181 km² are recognized as OECMs. With the significant, Indigenous-led NWT Our Land for the Future Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) agreement signed in November 2024, there is enormous potential for conservation to generate transformative environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits for northern communities. The PFP will support long-term, large-scale protection of new and existing conserved areas – 379,390 km² of lands and inland waters. Nonetheless, plenty of work remains to be done by the Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT), for example, in enacting legislation to enable the PFP, as well as by various parties to implement the PFP and complete several land use plans. The NWT grade remains the same as in 2021 to recognize strong, ongoing efforts.

LEADERS

Photo: CPAWS Nova Scotia

NOVA SCOTIA **B+**

Nova Scotia has made recent progress on protected area establishment. The province has protected 13.4% or 7,422 km² of its land and freshwater, with an additional 0.2% designated as OECMs. Advancements include the designation of 62 new and expanded protected areas, the signing of the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement and steps to advance protected area establishment through the release of the Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy. The provincial government has also made progress on Indigenous-led conservation, recognizing IPCAs and the concept of *Etuaptmuk* (Mi'kmaw: Two-Eyed Seeing) as key in protected areas establishment. However, more work is required to truly prioritize and support Indigenous partners working on IPCA establishment and management. Additionally, a large backlog of over 100 pending protected areas from the 2013 *Nova Scotia: Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan* are still awaiting legal designation. Despite attempts to work through this backlog, the pace of implementation remains too slow and needs to be expedited. Nonetheless, the province's efforts and achievements led to an upgrade from its 2021 mark.

MID-RANGE

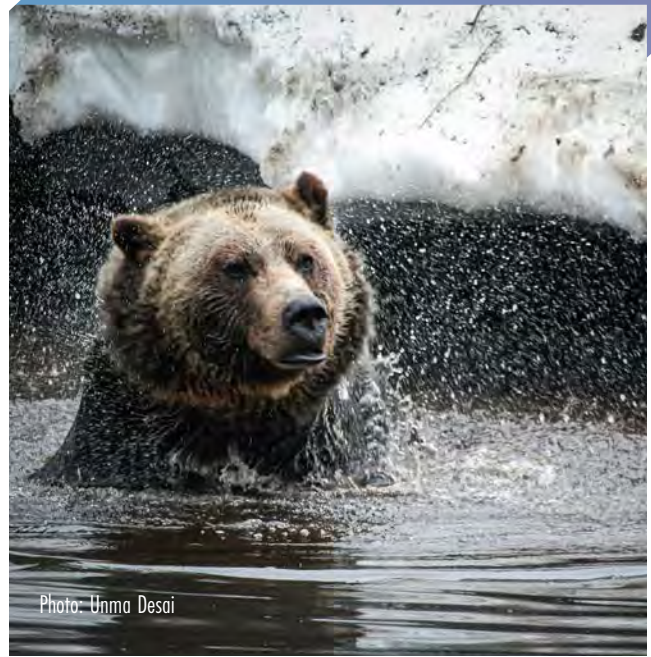


Photo: Uma Desai

BRITISH COLUMBIA **B**

The Government of British Columbia made numerous bold commitments to nature conservation over the past two years, including protecting 30% of lands by 2030 in partnership with First Nations. This commitment is entrenched in the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, which contains nature conservation and Indigenous stewardship funding contributed by the provincial and federal governments. The Agreement also commits to developing a mechanism for advancing and recognizing Indigenous-led protection. Currently, 15.6% or 147,214 km² of land and freshwater is formally protected. An additional 4.1% of the land is declared as OECMs. However, most of these areas do not meet international or pan-Canadian OECM standards. A siloed approach to natural resource management, combined with a lack of resources and capacity for land-use planning has resulted in delays to action and protection on the ground. Nevertheless, B.C.'s work resulted in a full grade point increase from 2021.

MID-RANGE

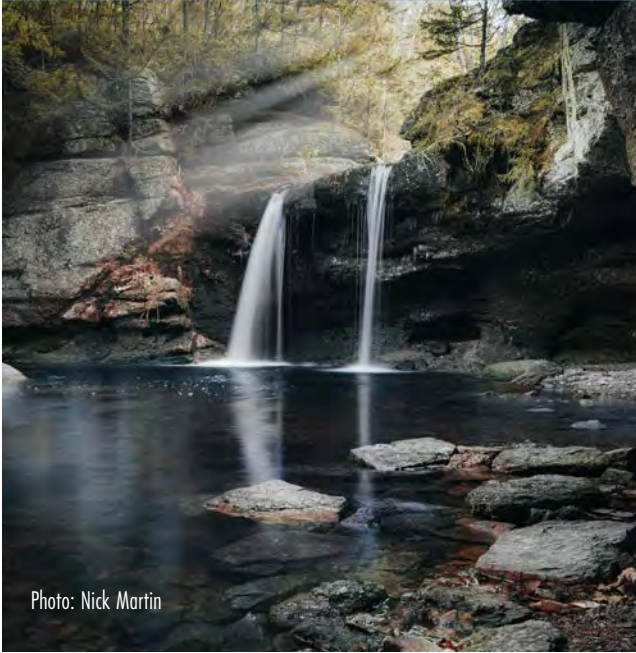


Photo: Nick Martin



Photo: Kalen Emsley

NEW BRUNSWICK B

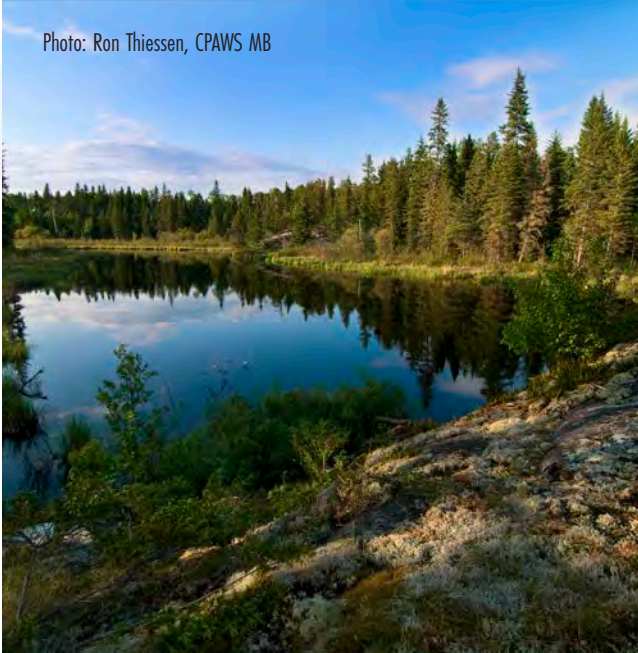
New Brunswick's doubling of its protected areas in 2023 to reach the government's 10% target is a significant achievement and resulted in an uptick in its grade since 2021. To date, the province has conserved 10.3% or 7,508 km² of its lands and waters, with 0.2% classified as OECMs. Recent conservation efforts focused on forests and intact areas next to existing protected areas. The government now needs to protect more coastal areas, peatlands and drinking water watersheds as part of the province's future target. The Government of New Brunswick also made strides by creating an open public process to identify candidate conserved areas. However, relationships and trust between the provincial government and Indigenous communities and organizations must improve significantly to make lasting progress. To maximize conservation in the future, New Brunswick needs to quickly work with conservation groups and Indigenous partners to act on its 15% target and begin the planning towards 30%. The province should invest significantly to build and strengthen trusting and cooperative relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

YUKON B-

By the numbers, the Yukon leads Canada in terrestrial conservation, with 21.1% or 101,710 km² of its lands protected. While the territorial government signed the first of Canada's Nature Agreements with the federal government in December 2022, most of the Yukon's new protected areas are due to the vision and work of the Inuvialuit and First Nations. For example, the Ross River Dena Council is exploring designating part of their IPCA as a national park. Work remains to transition some territorial parks from interim to a final protected area designation, and land use planning initiatives require support. Furthermore, the Government of Yukon continues to make decisions that promote mining above other values, limiting the potential of land use planning. These missed opportunities resulted in no change to Yukon's grade from 2021 to 2024.

MID-RANGE

Photo: Ron Thiessen, CPAWS MB



MANITOBA B-

In 2023, a newly elected Manitoba government committed to protecting 30% of provincial lands and waters by 2030. While some progress was made between 2021 and 2023, much of the advancement occurred after the 2023 election. Currently, the province has protected 11.1% or 71,670 km² of its lands and waters, and if the Seal River Watershed IPCA is fully protected, this would advance it to 17.7%. This and other Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and protected area proposals continue to advance, offering substantial land and freshwater protection opportunities that contribute to reconciliation. Despite these advancements, considerable institutional capacity challenges remain. However, it is hoped that the province will secure federal funding and provide significant resources in the 2025 provincial budget that would result in increased funding and capacity to work with and directly support Indigenous Nations to achieve the target. Manitoba's grade increased the most significantly of any jurisdiction due to the new government's commitments to the protected areas target and Indigenous-led conservation.

LAGGARDS

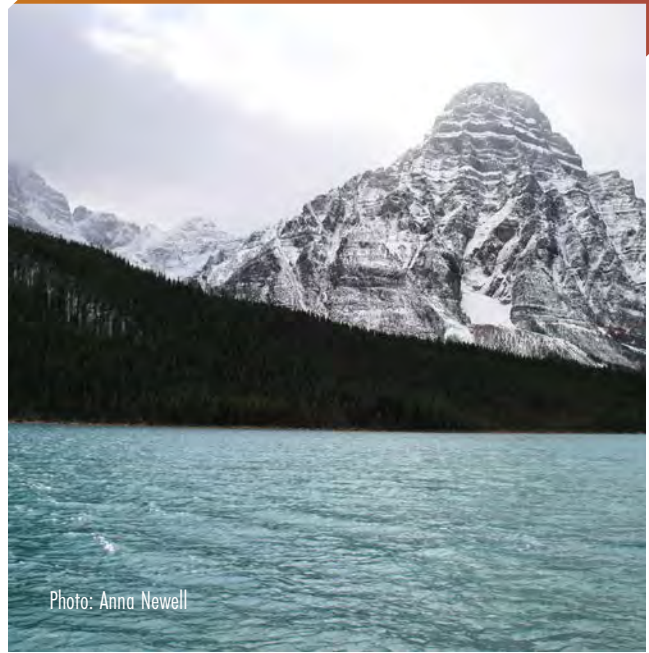


Photo: Anna Newell

ALBERTA D-

Alberta has conserved 15.5% or 102,483 km² of its lands and waters. Despite excellent opportunities and broad public support for parks, the provincial government continues to prioritize short-term profit-driven extractive activities over protecting the province's rich natural heritage. The province also has no active commitment to conservation targets, and has opposed the federal biodiversity strategy and action plan. The cumulative effects of industrial development and poor implementation of conservation regulations have heavily impacted species at risk (such as caribou, bison, and native trout), and put downstream communities at risk. Despite these issues, the Government of Alberta continues to pursue and support resource-based land development without advancing the protection and conservation of lands or waters. Alberta did minimally increase its provincial parks and undertook public engagement on its "Plan for Parks", resulting in a slightly upgraded score. However, the Plan for Parks does not mention expanding the parks network.

LAGGARDS



Photo: Landon Parenteau



Photo: Nolan Rocoff

SASKATCHEWAN D-

The Government of Saskatchewan continues to show limited conservation ambition, resulting in minimal progress in protecting nature. With only 7.8% of the province in protected areas, or 51,037 km², and an additional 2% as OECMs, the province is falling short of even its 1992 target of protecting 12% percent of land and freshwater. While the province has recognized that protecting 30% of land is central to tackling biodiversity loss, they have not agreed to raise conservation ambition in Saskatchewan beyond the original target. The province has also provided limited support to Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and continues to fall short on the protection of native grassland habitats and wetlands, instead creating policies that may support the degradation of these ecosystems. Saskatchewan was downgraded from 2021 because of this and its general lack of new protected areas, despite opportunities presented by Indigenous-led initiatives.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR D-

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has a history of limited progress in developing protected areas and poor cooperation with Indigenous partners. Despite a renewed commitment with the federal government in 2022 to accelerate the creation of new protected areas, based on a plan devised over 25 years ago, the province's efforts remain largely talk with little action. To date, the province has conserved 7% or 28,175 km² of its lands and freshwater, and while several new processes are underway, no additional areas have been officially designated, nor has the province made any official commitment to contribute to Canada's target. The provincial government's key advisory council is currently focused on improving public understanding of these opportunities, but tangible results are still lacking. Indigenous leadership in conservation is a large component of the progress in the discussions for protection. However, the provincial government has been slow to recognize and provide the necessary support for IPCAs. Paired with accelerated pressure and designation of land for wind development, the government's slow efforts to improve conservation resulted in only a minor increase in grade from 2021.

LAGGARDS



Photo: Sergey Pesterev

ONTARIO F

The Ontario government continues to show limited ambition in nature conservation, protecting only 10.9% or 117,129 km² of the province while pushing a development agenda that puts water, wildlife, climate, and community health at risk. Despite agreeing to support Canada's biodiversity commitments, it prioritizes industrial and commercial development over environmental protection. The provincial government remains silent on supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives in Ontario and instead continues to prioritize the advancement of industrial activities such as logging, mining, and highway development over conserving ecosystem health. As a result, endangered species habitats and significant wetlands are being sacrificed at an unprecedented rate. Despite some minor advances in land protection, including taking steps to regulate areas that were identified for protection two decades ago (Living Legacy sites), Ontario's grade remains at an F due to the provincial government's support of detrimental environmental activities.

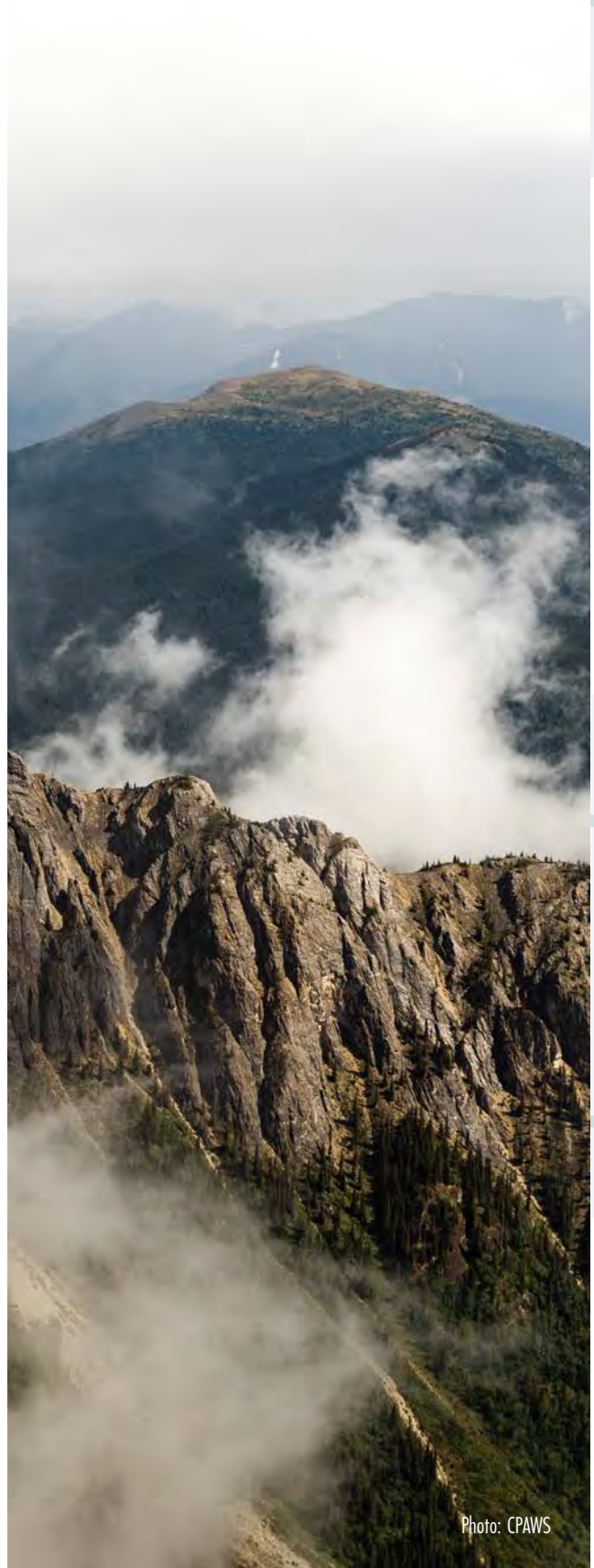


Photo: CPAWS

PATHWAY TO CANADA TARGET 1 – LAND AND FRESHWATER

Since 2016, federal, provincial, and territorial governments have been working together with Indigenous organizations, NGOs (including CPAWS) and other partners through the Pathway Process to help deliver on Canada's land and freshwater protection commitments.

Two Advisory Panels were struck (Indigenous Circle of Experts and National Advisory Panel) and released recommendations in 2018. Pathway governments (federal and all provincial and territorial except Quebec and Nunavut, which put in place their own parallel conservation initiatives) then produced and endorsed a pan-Canadian policy framework called *One with Nature: A Renewed Approach to Land and Freshwater Conservation in Canada*,²⁰ which provides guidance for how to meet terrestrial protection targets. They also endorsed pan-Canadian guidance and a decision support tool to determine what qualifies as a protected area or OECM, and can contribute to the targets.

This important collaboration continues, now focused on supporting achievement of the 30% by 2030 target. As of 2023, Indigenous organizations and CPAWS are represented on the steering committee.



Photo: Andy Holmes

What We Have Learned: Key Messages

By assessing governments across Canada on conservation progress, CPAWS gained insight into what works or will continue to work across the country. Although each provincial and territorial government faces its own regional challenges and opportunities, the following conclusions apply to all jurisdictions:

1.

Ambitious commitments, scaled-up investments, and support for Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiatives have made significant progress towards the 30x30 target, and need to continue through 2030 and beyond.

2.

Creating new protected areas takes time because of the critical importance of building trusted relationships, conducting inclusive and comprehensive planning processes, and proceeding in full partnership with Indigenous rightsholders.

Photo: Nicholas Bullet

3.

Federal financial support for implementation partners has leveraged additional investments from provinces and territories where Nature Agreements have been signed, as well as from philanthropic and NGO sources. It has also encouraged some provinces and territories to make ambitious commitments.

4.

The 30% by 2030 target is achievable in Canada, but only if federal investment continues to 2030 and beyond. Specifically, renewal of the federal Enhanced Nature Legacy and Marine Conservation Targets programs is critical to success. Additionally, long-term funding is required to establish and co-manage the promised 10 new national parks, 15 new National Urban Parks, and 14 National Marine Conservation Areas. Completing agreements for all four PFPs announced at COP15 in Montreal is also essential for success.

5.

While federal investment has been key, complex processes to access funding and expectations of short-term results have posed a barrier for many implementation partners. Simpler and more trust-based partner funding models would deliver even better and faster results for nature and communities.

6.

Investing in preliminary planning work (e.g., land use planning, marine spatial planning) by Indigenous Nations and communities, even where provincial and territorial governments do not yet support the protection of lands and waters, is important to build a foundation of knowledge and relationships that can generate results in the longer term.

7.

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments should all work to ensure policy and legislative tools and approaches are in place to enable and recognize Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and governance models.

8.

Focusing on quality and equity elements of protected areas, as well as quantity, is important to deliver effective conservation outcomes. This means concentrating on protecting carbon-rich ecosystems and areas of importance for biodiversity, and ensuring all ecosystem types are represented in conservation networks. Working in full partnership with Indigenous governments and communities will also ensure protection of culturally important areas.

9.

More conservation work is needed in all regions of Canada, however different approaches are appropriate. For example, the focus in southern Canada needs to concentrate largely on protecting remaining fragments of natural areas, species at risk, and restoration, while in northern Canada, Indigenous-led and co-led land use planning processes offer a pathway to meeting the quantity, quality, and equity elements of the 30 by 30 target. In provinces with ocean shorelines, focus is needed on novel inter-jurisdictional measures to protect coastal areas, while in provinces with limited public lands, collaboration with private land conservancies is critical to success.

10.

To ensure effective conservation outcomes it is essential that all current and future terrestrial and marine sites contributing to Canada's conservation targets, including OECMs, are strongly protected and effectively managed and meet international and national standards for quality and equity.

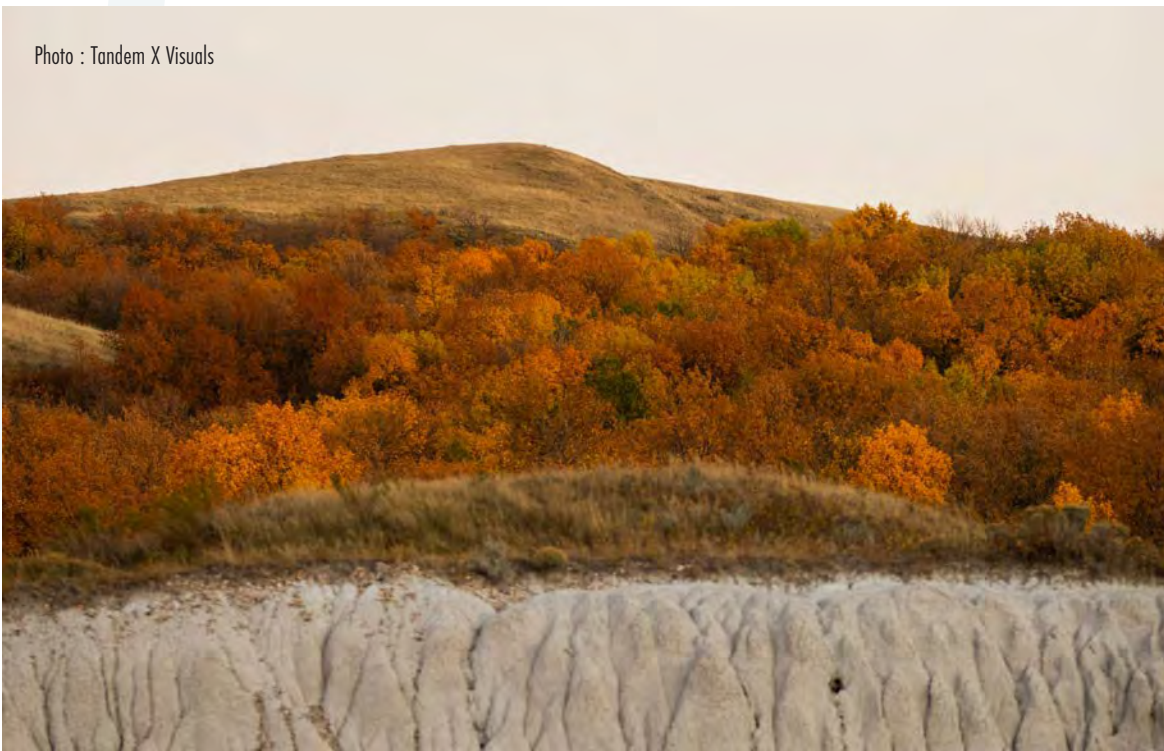
III. ASSESSMENT



To encourage continued progress, we assessed governments not only on how much area of land and ocean they had protected from 2022 to present (December 2024) but also on evidence of their ongoing efforts and commitments to significant expansion of protected areas. For example, a provincial or territorial government that committed to a regionally ambitious land protection target and that is actively identifying and establishing new protected areas in partnership with Indigenous governments and the public could receive a higher grade than a jurisdiction that made no commitment or progress, even if the former designated fewer square kilometres of land as officially protected.

In the assessment of each government, in addition to the area protected, the quality and equity of the work to create protected and conserved areas was a key lens through which all criteria were viewed. In addition, to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and achieve full recovery by 2050, identifying appropriate areas for protection through collaborative and transparent engagement processes, ensuring protected areas are effectively connected as conservation networks, and sustainably managing land and ocean areas that fall outside protected area and OECM designation will be essential.

Photo : Tandem X Visuals



Some fundamental quality considerations for delivering on the 30x30 target include:

- Equitable governance (or co-governance) and management (or co-management);
- Adhering to international and national standards for protected areas and OECMs;
- Effective management, including through ongoing permanent funding;
- A focus on areas of importance to biodiversity and ecosystem services (including climate change mitigation and adaptation);
- Establishing well-connected networks of protected and conserved areas to contribute to landscape and seascape connectivity.

In highlighting projects and initiatives in our assessment of federal, provincial, and territorial jurisdiction, we cannot bring attention to all of the meritorious conservation work being done, but we aim to showcase those projects that embody one or more of the above-noted quality considerations.

COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONSERVATION

It is important to recognize that federal actions alone will not be enough to achieve 30x30 terrestrially, as federal jurisdiction over public lands accounts for only 6% of Canada's landmass. Beyond this, 76% of public land in Canada falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, 6% of lands are under Indigenous title, and 12% are under private ownership.²¹ Federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous leadership and ambition will be essential, complemented by actions in all other segments of society. Because of its limited jurisdiction over land, Canada's federal government cannot create terrestrial protected areas without the support or leadership of provincial or territorial, and Indigenous governments. For this reason, CPAWS assessed the federal government's contributions based on commitments and actions that fall within its authority.



Photo: A.S. Wright, CPAWS



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TERRESTRIAL



Highlights and Lowlights



2021-2025: Enhanced Nature Legacy – following an initial \$1.3 billion investment in nature in 2018 and a commitment in 2019 to protect 30% of land and ocean in Canada by 2030, the federal government announced \$2.3 billion over five years in Budget 2021.²² This Enhanced Nature Legacy program supported important progress towards the 30x30 target, including Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiatives across the country and Nature Agreements with three provinces and territories.



2022: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) – the Government of Canada helped lead the world to an agreement on this historic global framework to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.



2022: Ecological Corridors – Parks Canada Agency launched a new national program to support the identification and establishment of key ecological corridors to connect habitats and conserve biodiversity.



2024: Pituamkek (Hog Island Sandhills) National Park Reserve – in partnership with L'nuey, Island Nature Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Province of P.E.I., Parks Canada designated this area as Canada's 48th National Park.



2024: Seal River Watershed – the Seal River Watershed Alliance, in partnership with the federal government and the Province of Manitoba, signed a memorandum of understanding and undertook a joint feasibility assessment to explore establishing an IPCA and a potential National Park Reserve in the Seal River Watershed.



2024: Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy – the federal government released a national strategy to deliver on all targets of the GBF in Canada. However, no new funding was allocated to support its implementation.



2024: Canada's Nature Accountability Bill – if passed by Parliament, this Bill would embed international nature commitments in Canadian law and require transparent implementation plans and progress reports.



2024 Federal order regarding caribou in Quebec – an emergency order process under the federal *Species at Risk Act* was set in motion to protect the habitat of the three most at-risk Boreal Caribou populations in Canada. This step was taken after Quebec failed, over many years, to act to safeguard these herds.



2024: Lack of long-term funding – a lack of upfront and enduring funding commitments, including for the establishment and ongoing management of protected areas, poses a significant barrier to achieving conservation throughout Canada.



2024: No committed funding for establishing Parks Canada sites – the federal government has committed to establish 10 new national park reserves, 14 new National Marine Conservation Areas, and 15 new National Urban Parks by 2030, but without funding committed for their establishment and management this goal will be difficult to achieve. Funding to establish Pituamkek took two years to secure after agreement was reached, delaying its designation and putting relationships with local partners at risk.

Good Conservation Takes Time

Since the publication of the *2021 Report Card*, quantitative progress on areas fully designated as protected may appear limited. However, it is vital to recognize that federal government funding is supporting numerous conservation projects that are underway. Conservation takes time, as it depends on building strong, trusting relationships among rightsholders and stakeholders, along with the development of inclusive planning that respects western science and Indigenous knowledge. This includes identifying candidate areas through community discussions, collecting baseline data using traditional knowledge and western scientific methods, and creating future management plans. There is no one-size-fits-all model for creating protected areas, particularly if the quality of the area and equity of process are given equal weight to the quantity of land protected.

Enhanced Nature Legacy Initiative

In 2021, the federal government committed \$2.3 billion over five years to safeguard nature, address biodiversity loss, support Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, and protect species at risk. This substantial investment served as the catalyst for the Enhanced Nature Legacy Initiative, driving unprecedented conservation ambition across the nation. Actions and achievements include:

1. NATURE AGREEMENTS

To further conservation progress across the country, the federal government has worked to establish Nature Agreements between the federal and interested provincial/territorial governments. Through expanded channels of collaboration, governments will work together to identify and invest in projects that effectively support biodiversity conservation and enhance landscape resilience to climate change impacts. Moreover, the three current Nature Agreements include strong commitments to advancing Indigenous leadership in conservation and recognizing the unique rights and responsibilities Indigenous Peoples have to the land.

TO DATE: CANADA'S THREE NATURE AGREEMENTS

Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement: signed December 2022, the first agreement of this kind commits \$20.6 million to advance nature protection across the territory by supporting Indigenous-led conservation, protecting and recovering species at risk, and sharing knowledge.²³

Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement: signed in October 2023, puts forward \$28.5 million to protect an additional 825 km² of land by March 2026, enhance land use planning, support the Mi'kmaq in conservation leadership, undertake species at risk protection and recovery, and share knowledge.²⁴

Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation: signed in November 2023 in partnership with the province of British Columbia and the First Nations Leadership Council, commits \$1 billion (\$500 million federal input) to strengthen nature conservation efforts provincially. This agreement sets goals in four areas: habitat and ecosystem conservation and protection, habitat enhancement and restoration, species at risk protection and recovery, and knowledge sharing.²⁵



Photo: Erin Minuskin

2. PROJECT FINANCE FOR PERMANENCE (PFP)

In December 2022, the federal government committed \$800 million to establish four Indigenous-led Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) initiatives. Recognized as an innovative and reputable conservation finance model, PFPs combine public and private investments from a diverse set of partners – including governments, NGOs, private investors, First Nations, and local communities – to support equitable and long-term conservation strategies that also promote sustainable economic development.²⁶

Photo: Pietro de Grandi

TO DATE: CANADA'S NEW PFPs

Great Bear Sea PFP (Northern Shelf Bioregion): following endorsement of the Great Bear Sea MPA Network Action Plan by First Nations, Canada, and the Government of British Columbia, these parties then announced they would jointly advance a sustainable conservation financing arrangement, the PFP, for ongoing network implementation, management and stewardship. The initiative was signed and launched in June 2024.

Northwest Territories Our Land for the Future PFP: partners drafted a framework outlining their shared vision for the PFP in 2023. The historic agreement for large-scale, long-term conservation and stewardship of land and water was signed in November 2024. In due course Indigenous partners plan to contribute over 2% of land and freshwater towards Canada's 30x30 goal. (See *Great Conservation Gains Possible with NWT PFP* for more details.)

Omushkego Wahkohtowin PFP: in the Treaty 9 area, the Mushkegowuk Council and other partners are working with the federal government and private philanthropy to support conservation with hopes of finalizing an agreement. However, the Ontario government is choosing not to come on board and as a result is blocking success.

Qikiqtani PFP: the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and federal government have committed to this work the core objective of which is to enhance the deep and meaningful link between Inuit and their ancestral lands and waters via investment in an Inuit-led conservation economy.



3. IPCAs AND INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

The federal government has a special relationship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada, grounded in s.35 of the *Constitution Act* and reaffirmed by the country's commitment to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Through the Enhanced Nature Legacy initiative, the Government of Canada has invested over \$202 million to advance Indigenous-led area-based conservation initiatives, working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis across Canada. To date, 94 Indigenous communities across Canada have received Indigenous-Led Area-Based Conservation funding to establish new protected areas, OECMs, or undertake early planning and engagement work that could result in the creation of new conservation areas.²⁷

This funding has been critical for many Indigenous Nations across Canada, helping to ensure they have the capacity to do important work on the ground while also growing relationships with partners. However, this important work can take many years, and long-term investment is critical. When sufficient time and resources are allocated, it can lead to large-scale conservation projects that help promote reconciliation while providing for economic growth and increased certainty to industry. The federal government continued to support new and existing Indigenous Guardians initiatives through the establishment of the First Nations National Guardians Network in 2022. The Network aims to foster a sense of unity between projects and connect First Nations Guardians initiatives across the country. As of 2024, there are an estimated 250 Guardians programs throughout Inuit, Metis, and First Nations communities, creating over 1,500 jobs across Canada. Long-term funding will be key to continued success of the Guardians programs.

4. NATIONAL URBAN PARKS (NUPs)

In 2021, the federal government committed \$130 million towards the establishment of 15 new National Urban Parks (NUPs). So far, six candidate sites have been identified. The Ojibway Prairie Complex in Windsor, Ontario, and Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes in Halifax, Nova Scotia, are approaching the final stages of designation. Meanwhile, candidate sites in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba are in the pre-feasibility stage. With nearly 72% of Canadians living in urban centers, establishing a widespread network of NUPs has become increasingly important. Urban protected areas provide unique opportunities for visitors to experience nature close to home. Additionally, NUPs will work to conserve and restore nature in cities, protect cities from climate change impacts, improve access to nature, expand cultural heritage awareness, and advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.²⁸

5. ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

In 2022, the federal government introduced Parks Canada's National Program for Ecological Corridors to further support connectivity conservation across Canada as a pilot program. Recognized as the first program of its kind in North America, the Parks Canada Agency identified 23 areas where connectivity conservation "hotspots" are most needed. Following this study, the agency has been working with First Nations, NGOs, local land stewards, and other partners to support the establishment of well-connected and ecologically representative conservation corridors.²⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure Canada successfully delivers on its 30 by 30 land protection commitment and to maintain its leadership in conservation efforts, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Canada:

1. Ensure that long-term funding is in place by the end of 2025, so that momentum is not lost. This investment should focus on supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, encouraging action and investment by provinces and territories through Nature Agreements, and supporting other implementation partners, including NGOs.
2. Commit long-term funding to establish and co-manage the promised 10 new national parks, 15 new National Urban Parks, and 14 National Marine Conservation Areas.
3. Complete remaining agreements for Indigenous-led sites that are proposing conservation finance models that leverage government and private funds to support long-term protection of lands and waters.
4. Learning from Nature Legacy and Enhanced Nature Legacy funding programs, simplifying funding processes, and move to more trust-based funding models to overcome barriers.

5. Invest in preliminary planning work by Indigenous Nations and communities to build the foundation of knowledge and relationships necessary to deliver effective and equitable conservation results in the long term.

6. Approve the Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan and allocate sustained funding to support Inuit Impact Benefit Agreements, implementation of the Land Use Plan, and to support community-based conservation economies and jobs.

7. Work to ensure a *Nature Accountability Act* is passed with all tools necessary to be effective and then implemented.

In summary, numerous conservation projects with the potential to make substantial contributions towards the 30x30 target are advancing due to federal government commitment and funding. Most of these initiatives are still in progress, and renewing funding is essential to achieve Canada's land protection commitment, safeguarding species at risk, and addressing the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. Overall, federal ambition and support have been of paramount importance to progress on conservation over the past few years. Looking forward, it is now crucial for the government to provide adequate and enduring long-term funding commitments to ensure this momentum continues and delivers sustained nature protection at the scale required to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

FEDERAL OCEAN

2021
B+

2024
B+

Highlights and Lowlights



2022: Guidance for recognizing marine Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) – Fisheries and Oceans Canada released this information for marine OECMs.³⁰ The guidance clarifies the criteria for recognition and provides guiding principles to ensure the effective conservation of biodiversity.



2023: Fifth International Marine Protected Area Congress (IMPAC5) – hosted by the Government of Canada and Host First Nations x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk^wx^wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətat (Tsleil-Waututh) in Vancouver. With more than 3,000 decision makers, scientists, resource managers, and advocates attending, IMPAC5 spotlighted Indigenous-led conservation, ocean protection in Canada, and the need to protect 30% by 2030 with quality and equity as priorities.

**2023: Marine Protected Area (MPA) Protection Standard –**

Canada released its MPA standards, which support and clarify the 2019 commitment to prohibit bottom trawling, oil and gas activities, mining, and dumping from all new federal MPAs.³¹ However, there are crucial gaps in the guidance, particularly regarding dumping and discharge from vessels, which still needs to be developed by Transport Canada.



2023: 17 proposed marine areas across the country – unveiled by the Government of Canada as its roadmap to protect 25% of Canada's coast and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030.³²

**2023: New policy for National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCAs)**

– Parks Canada announced a policy to guide the establishment and management of NMCAs.³³ The policy emphasizes the priority of biodiversity conservation, defines ecologically sustainable use, and sets a goal of ensuring that most of each NMCA is highly protected.

**2024: No renewed funding for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)**

– Budget 2024 did not include a renewal. Prior to this, DFO invested in developing marine spatial plans since 2018 for several priority areas to ensure sustainable use and management of our ocean.

PROGRESS IN THE EAST

2022: Eastern Canyons Conservation Area (43,976 00 km² protected) – A marine OECM or Marine Refuge is established off the coast of Nova Scotia to protect cold-water coral reefs and the many species they support.

2023: South Coast Fjords National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) (9,112 km² proposed) – Miawpukek First Nation and Qalipu First Nation, the Governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Town of Burgeo agreed to assess the feasibility of creating a NMCA in one of the most dynamic marine ecosystems in Canada, home to giants like blue whales and bluefin tuna.

2023: Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park (3,200 km² proposed) – The Governments of Canada and Quebec announced their intention to increase four-fold the Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park, which would protect important habitats for over 2,000 species, including all the summer critical habitat for beluga whales.

Photo: L.J. Nova Scotia

2023: Anticosti-Mingan (10,000 km² potential) – Canada and the Government of Quebec announced their intention to create a joint Marine Park in the Anticosti-Mingan area, which will protect a rich and diverse ecosystem that includes seabird breeding colonies, sponge and corals, eels, cod, and North Atlantic right whales.

2024: Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Bioregion (46,994 km² proposed) – DFO publicly released the draft Plan which spans the rich coastal waters of the Inner Bay of Fundy out to the deep ocean and the Scotian Shelf, protecting a great diversity of marine life and habitats.

2024: Napu'saqnuk selected as a candidate Ecologically Significant Area (ESA) (160 km² potential) – As a direct result of strong local support and advocacy, the federal government selected Napu'saqnuk-St. Mary's River, as a candidate site to become the first ESA designated in Canada. Over the next two years, the federal government will work with Mi'kmaw partners and community groups to determine what implementing an ESA, a new tool for protection under the *Fisheries Act*, will look like in the watershed and estuary to protect critical fish habitat from industrial disturbances.

PROGRESS IN THE NORTH

2022: Aviqtuuq Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (40,730 km² proposed) – DFO announced \$3.53 million in funding over three years to support Inuit-led ecological monitoring, knowledge gathering, and the creation of a marine stewardship program for Aviqtuuq, an Inuit-identified priority area for protection in Nunavut.

2024: Torngat Inuit Protected Area (14,906 km² proposed) – The Nunatsiavut Government and Canada announced the completion of the feasibility study for a proposed Inuit Protected Area along the northern coast of Labrador. The Indigenous Protected Area will encompass important areas of sea ice and culturally and ecologically important species like whales, sea ducks, polar bears and arctic char.

2024: Minatstawin Kinipiminnan, Mushkegowuk NMCA (91,000 km² proposed) – The Mushkegowuk Council and Canada announced the completion of the feasibility assessment for the proposed NMCA in western James Bay and southwestern Hudson Bay. An agreement is currently being negotiated to support the long-term management of this ecologically and culturally important (offshore) area. Protection would uphold Omushkego cultural and harvesting practices, recognize the hemispheric importance of the area for shorebirds, provide critical linkages to globally significant wetlands, and conserve unique populations of polar bear, beluga, fish and

Photo: Dr. Evan Edinger

other key wildlife species. Negotiations with the province regarding near shore and coastal areas of Minatstawin Kinipiminnan are also anticipated.

2024: Wiinipaakw Indigenous Protected Area and NMCA (26,000 km² proposed) – The Cree Nation Government and Canada announced the completion of the feasibility assessment and signed an agreement to formally work towards an Indigenous Protected Area and NMCA in Eastern James Bay. This rich marine region holds immense cultural value for Eeyou pimaatisiwin, the Cree way of life, and is a critical habitat for migrating birds and beluga whales.

PROGRESS IN THE WEST

2023: Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) (21.4 km² protected) – The first marine IPCA and Marine Refuge is designated as part of the Great Bear Sea MPA Network planning process. The Mamalilikulla First Nation declared Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala an IPCA in 2021 to protect a vibrant pocket of corals and sponges in the middle of Knight Inlet.

2023: Great Bear Sea MPA Network (30,000 km² proposed) – First Nations, Canada, and the Government of British Columbia jointly endorsed the Great Bear Sea MPA Network Action Plan in early 2023 after decades of work. In 2024, the completion of the Great Bear Sea Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) secured \$335 million to support establishment and long-term management by First Nations. The Great Bear Sea MPA Network will protect and connect diverse and productive marine habitats along the northern coast, from deep-sea corals and sponges to lush kelp forests and eelgrass meadows.

2024: Central Coast NMCA Reserve (12,540 km² proposed) – A feasibility study is underway, and Budget 2024 included \$109.6 million over 11 years for the creation and management of the Central Coast NMCAR in British Columbia. Part of the Great Bear Sea MPA network, this site will protect the rich coastal waters that neighbour the Great Bear Rainforest and have supported First Nations for millennia.

2024: Tang.gwan – ɥačɥʷiqak – Tsigis MPA (133,017 km² protected) – Tang.gwan – ɥačɥʷiqak – Tsigis MPA is established and is co-managed by the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, Council of the Haida Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, Quatsino First Nation and Canada. This new MPA protects a massive area of underwater seamounts and hydrothermal vents off the West Coast of Vancouver Island.

Photo: Duane Fuerter

Fewer Marine Designations but More Network Planning and Indigenous-led Work

Since 2021, three new sites have been designated and formally recognized: Eastern Canyons Conservation Area, GwaꞱdlala/NalꞱdlala Marine Refuge, and Tang.gwan – ḥačḥʷiqak – Tsigis MPA. However, a few sites like the Fundian Channel-Browns Bank MPA are well underway, and several initiatives are in the early phases of establishment, including the South-East Avalon Peninsula on the island of Newfoundland, Western Hudson Bay in Manitoba, and the Inner Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

The endorsement of the Great Bear Sea MPA Network Action Plan (British Columbia) and the release of the long-awaited draft Maritimes Marine Conservation Network Plan were also important steps forward. Network planning is a more effective and efficient approach than individual designation and should align with Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) initiatives to provide comprehensive and integrated management of an area. The decision not to renew funding for MSP in Budget 2024 was disappointing.

Indigenous-led initiatives, mostly in collaboration with Parks Canada, have made the most progress since 2021. These include completing feasibility studies in the Torngat area of Labrador led by the Nunatsiavut Government, and in Ontario, the western Weeneebeg (James Bay) and southwestern Washabeyoh (Hudson Bay) led by Mushkegowuk Council. Feasibility studies were also launched for the Central Coast of British Columbia, co-led by six First Nations, and the South Coast Fjords area of Newfoundland, led by Miawpukek First Nation and Qalipu First Nation. These significant advancements are a testament to the strength of Indigenous leadership. Several sites now benefit from co-management structures and agreements with Indigenous partners. However, significant barriers remain in aligning federal/crown law with Indigenous governance and law. The Assembly of First Nations' 2023 recommendations on the establishment of marine Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas provides guidance on how to recognize overlapping jurisdictions, and Indigenous rights and title.³⁴

Canada must continue to strengthen collaboration with Indigenous, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as with other actors involved in marine and coastal conservation throughout Canada to align and maximize efforts (See B.C. COASTAL MARINE STRATEGY – A NEW ERA OF COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT for an example).

Finally, adequate financing is essential to the effective management of MPAs. Budget 2021 saw significant federal investment into ocean protection, with \$976 million over five years. Canada has also signed a \$335 million Project Finance for Permanence agreement with 17 First Nations and philanthropic partners to support the establishment

and management of the Great Bear Sea MPA Network in B.C. and is negotiating similar agreements with the Mushkegowuk Council in Ontario and Qikiqtani Inuit Association in Nunavut.

However, this funding will soon expire, and long-term funding must be in place by the end of 2025 for Canada to complete the work currently underway and deliver on its commitments to a healthy ocean and coastal communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada has invested significant resources and energy in advancing ocean protection. To successfully complete the many sites where work is underway, the Government of Canada needs to:

1. Ensure that long-term funding is in place by the end of 2025 for the establishment and management of marine protected areas and marine spatial planning. This is essential in unlocking Indigenous-led and community-led conservation projects and maximizing the ecological, social, and economic benefits of ocean protection.
2. Continue to advance and support Indigenous leadership and co-governance and adopt the recommendations of the Assembly of First Nations to support the establishment of marine IPCAs.
3. Recognize the role of provincial and territorial government in marine protection by including more coastal areas in Federal-Provincial Nature Agreements.
4. Ensure existing and future sites that are counted towards the targets, including OECMs, are strongly protected and well managed to meet international standards for quality and equity. At a minimum, all new sites should meet the national 2023 Protection Standard, and existing sites should be reviewed and, where necessary, strengthened to meet and exceed the protection standard.

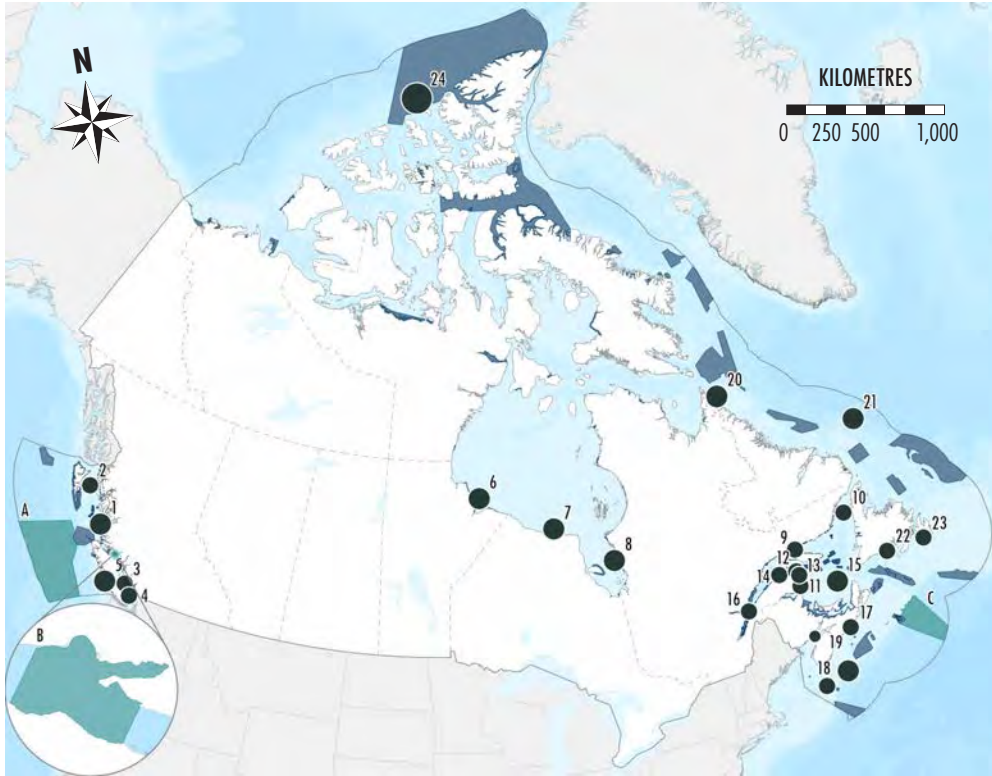


Figure 9. Map of existing protected areas and identified marine opportunities in progress across Canada

Marine Protected Area Opportunities	
1	Central Coast
2	Great Bear Sea*
3	Southern B.C./Salish Sea
4	Southern Strait of Georgia
5	West Coast of Vancouver Island
6	Western Hudson Bay
7	Minatstawin Kinipiminnan
8	Wiinipaakw
9	Anticosti - Mingan
10	Basse-Côte-Nord
11	Baie des Chaleurs
12	Baie de Gaspé
13	Côte de Gaspé
14	Haute Gaspésie
15	Îles de la Madeleine
16	Saguenay - Saint-Laurent
17	Eastern Shore Islands
18	Fundian Channel/Browns Bank
19	Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy*
20	Imappivut
21	Newfoundland and Labrador Shelves *
22	South Coast Fjords
23	Southeast Avalon
24	Nunavut Land Use Plan

MARINE PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

CHS, Esri, Garmin, NaturaVue, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NRCan, Parks Canada, Esri, GEBCO, Garmin, NaturalVue, CPCAD, ECC

Created After 2022	
A	Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala: Est. 2021 (Formally recognized by Canada in 2023)
B	Tang.gwan - ḥačx ^w iqak - Tsigis: Est. 2024
C	Eastern Canyons Conservation Area: Est. 2022



Photo: Ocean Quest Adventure Resort

* Marine Protected Area Network

YUKON

2021
B-

2024
B-

Highlights and Lowlights



2023: Ross River Dena Council IPCA – Ross River Dena Council proposed an IPCA covering 35,000 km² of their traditional territory. They are discussing co-management options with the Governments of Canada and Yukon, and signed an agreement in December 2024 to explore designating part of the IPCA as a national park.



2024: Peel Watershed Plan implementation – the Gwich'in Tribal Council, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Governments of Canada and Yukon committed to exploring the establishment of a co-managed, 3,000 km² national park in the Peel Watershed Region.



2024: Chasàn Chùà (McIntyre Creek) protected area – Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the City of Whitehorse, Government of Yukon, and Parks Canada committed to permanently protecting Chasàn Chùà, a wildlife and cultural corridor that has faced past development threats. Public engagement began in November 2024.



2024: Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area – Inuvialuit Parties and the Governments of Canada and Yukon signed an agreement to create a collaboratively managed, 8,500 km² Indigenous-led conservation area, joining a network of terrestrial protected areas and the Tarium Niryutait Marine Protected Area.



2024: Governments greenlit mine despite First Nation opposition – in 2024, the Yukon Supreme Court and Yukon Court of Appeals both ruled that the Governments of Canada and Yukon had failed in their duties to consult with the Kaska Nation on the impacts of the Kudz Ze Kayah mine. The mine threatens caribou, water and Kaska culture, in a part of the Yukon with a long history of abandoned mines.



2023: Yukon government challenges Peel Watershed Plan – the Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Board recommended against an exploration project in the Peel Watershed, as it did not align with the region's land use plan and would adversely impact wildlife and First Nation wellness. The Government of Yukon has taken the board to court over the recommendation, an action which undermines the Yukon's modern treaties with First Nations.

Yukon First Nations and Inuvialuit Leading the Way in Conservation

Yukon's Final Agreements (modern treaties) enable constitutionally protected land use planning processes. First Nations that have not signed Final Agreements also have options to create protected areas, such as IPCAs and co-management and co-governance planning processes. These plans take time, and they also require political will from the territorial government and considerable resourcing. Our *2022 Roadmap to 2030* identified the lack of adequate federal funding to complete land use planning and implementation as a top challenge. The 2022 Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement³⁵ may address this. However, it is unclear how well First Nations are able to access this funding.

Furthermore, the territorial government strongly delayed progress on the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan, and starting land use plans in other regions, despite requests from First Nations.

The Government of Yukon's prioritization of extractive industries above ecological and cultural values is another barrier to conservation progress. The number of court cases relating to mineral development and land use planning in the Yukon in recent years indicate little progress in this arena. These cases generally showcase First Nation parties challenging the government's decision to allow projects to proceed or the government challenging independent boards that have recommended against projects.

Nevertheless, the Government of Yukon is advancing the creation of some protected areas. Chasàn Chùà (McIntyre Creek) protected area is a place treasured by local First Nations and residents. It is also symbolic of collaborative work between municipal, First Nation, territorial, and federal governments. Management planning for the Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area and Asi Keyi Natural Environment Park continues with Kluane First Nation and White River First Nation and through community engagement sessions. In the Peel Watershed Region, a new Territorial Park, Tagé Héinlin (Nijin Han Niinlaih), is in the early stages of planning led by the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and a feasibility study for a national park is also underway for a separate area.

Significant advances are also happening through IPCAs. The Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area (8,500 km²) arose via Inuvialuit leadership, and a Stewardship and Guardians program will be supported with a trust fund of federal and philanthropic contributions. Ross River Dena Council proposed an IPCA in their unceded territory, and they are exploring the feasibility of co-designating portions of the IPCA as a national park.



Photo: Joris Beugels

RECOMMENDATIONS

To maintain the territory's position as a leader in Canadian conservation, to better support Yukon First Nations and Inuvialuit in Indigenous-led stewardship, and to integrate decision-making that honours cultural and environmental values into government actions, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Yukon:

1. **Initiate moratoria on mineral staking and/or development, as requested by First Nations, in areas slated for land use or conservation planning. This work must focus on relationships and honouring agreements and rights to decision-making.**
2. **Work with First Nation governments to complete the development of the new minerals legislation and new public lands legislation, ensuring they centre around partnership and co-management with First Nations.**
3. **Include tools in the new minerals legislation to guide mineral claim relinquishment, buy-outs, and expropriation. To date, the government has been slow to consider options beyond voluntary relinquishment, which limits the protection of other values in land use planning.**

In conclusion, the Yukon has protected a significant amount of its land base and, when considering the additional opportunities available (see table below), is on track to exceed the 30% by 2030 target. However, the processes through which future conservation and ongoing management occur must be better supported by the territorial government, including meaningful partnerships with First Nations and a broadening of focus from resource utilization to resource stewardship.

Mapping Out 30% by 2030 in the Yukon

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

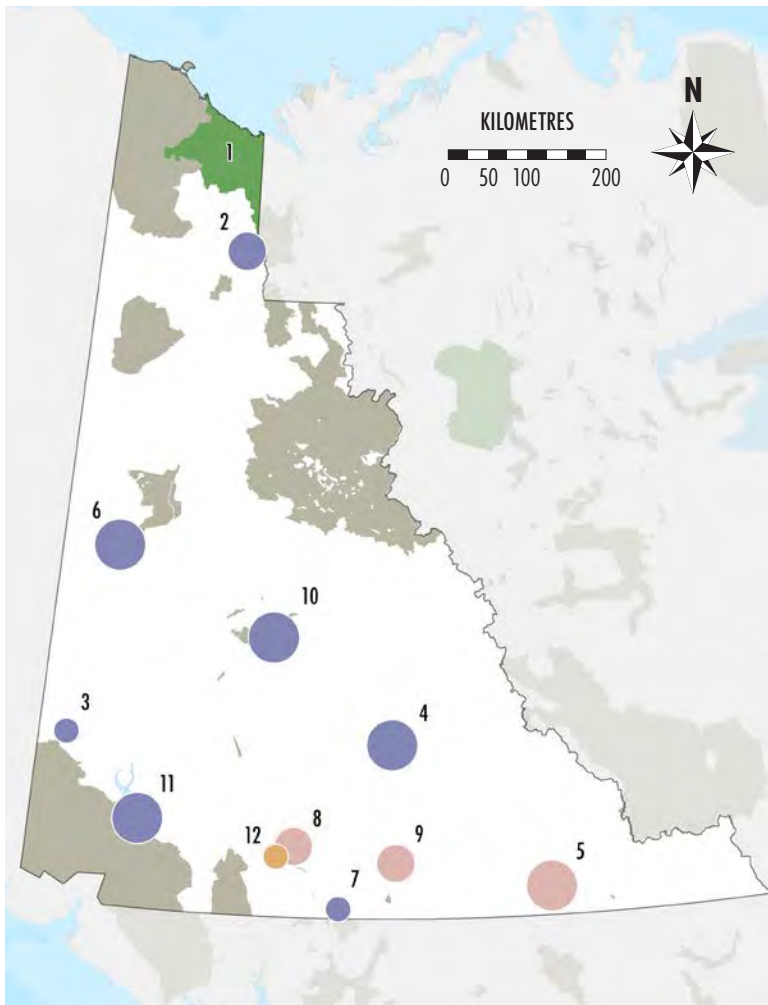
- Identified After 2022
- In Progress
- Progress Uncertain

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

1	Eastern Yukon North Slope Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area covering 8,472 km ² created June 2024.
2	Daadzäi Vän Territorial Park No management plan in place yet. Need to complete as Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement committed to reporting to CPCAD as an interim protected area of 1,525 km ² by April 2024.
3	Pickhandle Lakes Habitat Protection Area Need to complete Recommended Management Plan. Nature Agreement committed to reporting to CPCAD as interim protected area of 51 km ² by April 2024.
4	Ross River Dena Unceded Territory Tu Iidlini IPCA of about 35,000 km ² proposed by Ross River Dena Council.
5	Liard First Nation Unceded Territory Too early to update progress on the approx. 15,000 km ² area.
6	Dawson Regional Land Use Plan Recommended plan awaiting modifications. This includes 13,598 km ² of protected areas/OECMs.
7	Agay Mene Territorial Park Nature Agreement commits to reporting to CPCAD as protected area of 725 km ² by December 2026.
8	Whitehorse Planning Region Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council developed a land and water relationship pre-planning document for the Southern Lakes <i>How We Walk with the Land & Water</i> .
9	Teslin Planning Region Yukon Land Use Planning Commission (YLUPC) is prepared to recommend planning proceed once Yukon and First Nation governments reach an MOU.
10	Northern Tutchone Planning Region YLUPC recommended a General Terms of Reference for a Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Regional Planning Commission in October 2023.
11	Kluane Planning Region Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation, and Government of Yukon are in the pre-planning stage.

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

12	Chasàn Chùà (McIntyre Creek) MOU in place; the first round of public engagement began in November 2024; parties agree to determine next steps to permanent protection for the 46 km ² .
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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

2021
B+

2024
B+

Highlights and Lowlights



2023: NWT Project Finance for Permanence (NWT PFP) – framework signed outlining a plan to create a 180,000 km² Indigenous conservation initiative supporting long-term, large-scale protection of biodiversity, lands, and inland waters in the NWT. The project also aims to support thriving cultures, build capacity, and contribute to healthy communities with equitable economies. Collaborators include 22 Indigenous governments, the federal and territorial governments, and private philanthropies.



2023: Slave River Delta/Taltson Watershed IPCA – Deninu Kųę First Nation (DKFN), in collaboration with the Fort Resolution Métis Government (FRMG) and the federal government, signed a Contribution Agreement³⁶ in 2022 exploring an IPCA in the Slave Delta and parts of the Taltson watershed. In 2023, an IPCA committee was formed by the DKFN and the FRMG to uphold their inherent rights, jurisdiction, and responsibilities as stewards of their traditional territories.



2024: Dehcho Land Use Plan – the planning area covers 185,000 km² and a draft interim Plan could be released for public review in 2025. Once complete, the plan will establish a landmark agreement enshrining a conservation-focused draft Dehcho Land Use Plan in the NWT.



2024: NWT's large, relatively undisturbed landscape – limited competing land use interests have encouraged the conservation agenda to evolve and expand with less constraints than other jurisdictions, providing a unique opportunity for Indigenous-led conservation across the territory.



2024: Our Land for the Future Agreement – the NWT PFP partners signed an agreement outlining terms, activities, and expected outcomes of the initiative, and will now begin implementing their shared vision of conservation, stewardship, and economic development benefits.

Great Conservation Gains Possible with NWT PFP

Our Land for the Future PFP is an Indigenous-led conservation initiative focused on ensuring the long-term, large-scale protection of lands and inland waters in the NWT. In October 2023, the federal and territorial governments, 22 Indigenous governments, and charitable organizations signed a framework agreement that outlined the shared vision for the PFP and included the terms, activities, and expected outcomes of the initiative.³⁷ The partners have now finalized this as the Our Land for the Future Agreement³⁸ that defines the scope of activities and the necessary resource commitments, ensuring that the shared vision is aligned with the conservation, stewardship, and economic development needs of the territory.

OUR LAND FOR THE FUTURE PFP

By 2030, this initiative is expected to conserve up to 379,390 km² of the territory's lands and inland waters, encompassing both new and existing conserved areas. This ambitious conservation proposal is expected to safeguard over 2% of Canada's terrestrial area, significantly contributing to the national 30x30 conservation goal. Using innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms, the project will leverage government and philanthropic funding to support long-term, Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and the establishment and/or expansion of IPCAs. Conservation and cultural revitalization activities that are central to the PFP's success include identifying and establishing new protected areas, expanding Indigenous Guardians programs, environmental monitoring, on-the-land cultural and Indigenous language revitalization activities, and sustainable community economic developments.³⁹



Photo: A.S. Wright, CPAWS

Following a contribution agreement with the federal government in 2022 and an MOU to confirm mutual aspirations, in 2024, the Deninu Kųé First Nation and Fort Resolution Métis Government announced terms of reference for a proposed IPCA in the Slave River Delta and portions of the Taltson watershed. The terms will guide the work of a committee on an integrated plan for the area. A key goal is protecting and maintaining an area of traditional territory according to Dene and Metis Indigenous law, combined with stewardship efforts incorporating science and legislated protection.

Despite notable conservation efforts, land use plans in the Dehcho and Wek'èezhii Area and regional planning for the southeastern region still need to be completed. Once approved, these documents will help guide development, evaluate human impacts on the landscape, and designate special areas of spiritual, cultural, and ecological importance.

Through the 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework⁴⁰, the GNWT recognized the inherent value of the natural environment to help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Intact landscapes act as carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Specific ecoregions of the NWT, like its peatlands and boreal forests, have been identified as globally significant, providing natural sequestration and filtration services in the fight against climate change. Nearly one-fifth (230,000 km²) of Canada's peatlands are in the NWT, storing approximately 24 billion tonnes of carbon in the ground.⁴¹ However, disturbances to the landscape can cause these carbon sinks to become carbon sources, re-emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Despite this, the GNWT has conducted very minimal research, modeling, and monitoring of the territory's carbon sequestration potential and has not yet identified priority conservation regions for these critical carbon sinks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To further demonstrate itself as a leader in Indigenous-led land protection and management, as well as ensure its *Healthy Land, Healthy People* plan to create, implement, and strengthen protected areas across the NWT is executed, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Northwest Territories:

- Formally adopt a target of protecting at least 30% of the territory by 2030 and include this in any future revision of the *Healthy Land Healthy People* strategy.

- 2.** Champion the conservation-focused draft Dehcho Land Use Plan and support land use planning processes, new IPCA proposals, and Indigenous Guardians programs, recognizing their key roles in protecting the land and addressing climate change, as well as economic, social, and cultural benefits.
- 3.** Ensure conservation project proposals that protect species at risk and critical habitat (e.g., for barren-ground caribou, areas such as water crossings, migratory corridors, calving grounds, and post-calving habitats) are prioritized under the PFP or other conservation initiatives.
- 4.** Formally acknowledge the importance of natural carbon sequestration to joint climate and biodiversity conservation objectives and develop effective and equitable nature-based climate solutions that restore, conserve, and improve the management of carbon-rich areas within broader protected areas.
- 5.** Identify natural areas important to carbon sequestration and storage and work across levels of government – Indigenous, territorial, and federal – to protect and manage these.

In conclusion, The GNWT is positioning itself as a true champion of Indigenous-led conservation. Through Our Land for the Future, the GNWT has a significant opportunity to substantially contribute to regional and national conservation goals, while also advancing the social and economic needs of local and Indigenous communities. As climate change and subsequent environmental degradation progress, it will be important for the GNWT to recognize the considerable value of carbon-dense landscapes to climate mitigation and adaptation efforts and integrate them into broader conservation strategies.

Mapping Out 30% by 2030 in the Northwest Territories

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

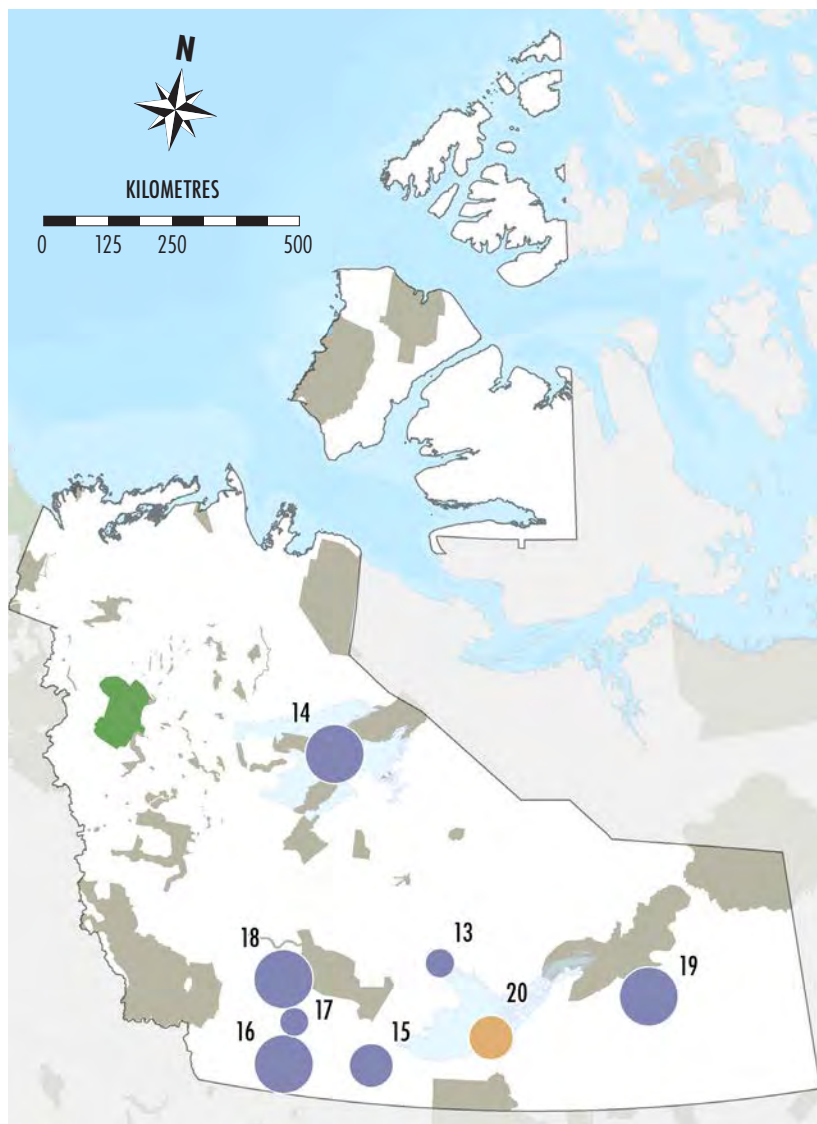
- Identified After 2022
- In Progress

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

- 13** **Dināgà Wek'èhodi Indigenous and Territorial Protected Area** Candidate Area under the Protected Areas Act; 790 km² of interim protection through a land withdrawal order; may receive ongoing protection under the PFP.
- 14** **Sahtu K'áowe Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area** Dé Inę Got'Inę Government, GNWT, and Government of Canada signed a Letter of Intent to advance this 75,062 km² IPCA, which may receive ongoing protection under the PFP.
- 15** **Ka'á'gee Tu** Candidate Area; temporarily protected through the Dehcho region interim land withdrawal; 9,600 km² may receive ongoing protection under the PFP.
- 16** **Sambaa K'e** Candidate Area; temporarily protected through the Dehcho region interim land withdrawal; 10,600 km² may receive ongoing protection under the PFP.
- 17** **Lue Tue Sulai** Candidate Area; temporarily protected through the Dehcho region interim land withdrawal; 180 km² may receive ongoing protection under the PFP.
- 18** **Dehcho Land Use Plan** Draft Interim land use plan completed by the Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee in 2016 was submitted to the Main Table for consideration. Includes 52,500 km² of proposed protected area.
- 19** **Akaitcho Land Use Plan** Akaitcho Dene First Nations, GNWT, and Government of Canada are negotiating an Agreement-in-Principle on land, resources, and self-government; completion of this will further the land use planning process and protect approximately 60,000 km².

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

- 20** **Slave River Delta/Taltson watershed IPCA** Deninu Kųé First Nation and the Ft. Resolution Metis have formed a committee to consider an IPCA for the Slave River Delta and portions of the Taltson River watershed. An interim area for discussions has yet to be determined.
- N/A** **NWT Project Finance for Permanence** An Indigenous-led conservation initiative; by 2030, it is estimated the NWT PFP could conserve over 180,000 km² of lands and inland waters (see sites above for examples).



BRITISH COLUMBIA



Highlights and Lowlights



2022: B.C. committed to protecting 30% of lands by 2030 – announced by Premier David Eby during COP15 through the Minister of Water, Lands & Natural Resource Stewardship’s mandate letter.⁴²



2023: B.C. Conservation Fund – B.C. Parks Foundation and the Province of B.C. jointly announced the new \$300 million B.C. Conservation Fund. This Fund matches funding from public and private sources to advance conservation that recognizes and promotes First Nations leadership and co-governance.⁴³



2023: Draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework – released for consultation after months of stakeholder engagement; the Framework outlines a paradigm shift to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health across all natural resource sectors in the province.⁴⁴ This set the stage for the B.C. government to deliver an implementation plan and co-develop legislation to advance and enshrine this work in law.



2023: Great Bear Sea Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) – B.C. announced a \$60 million contribution to the Great Bear Sea PFP and the Marine Plan Partnership to protect vital coastal ecosystems and advance sustainable economic opportunities in partnership with First Nations and donors.



2023: Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation – an over \$1 billion historic investment in conservation in B.C. was signed between the governments of B.C. and Canada and the First Nations Leadership Council. The agreement restates their shared commitment to protecting 30% of lands by 2030 in partnership with First Nations and rooted in the principles of UNDRIP. A further announcement in 2024, as part of the agreement, allocated \$49 million from the federal Nature Smart Climate Solutions fund to address climate change by protecting carbon-rich ecosystems.⁴⁵



2024: B.C.'s first-ever Coastal Marine Strategy – a comprehensive provincial plan, co-developed with First Nations, was released to improve coastal management and protection in B.C.



2024: Klinse-za Park expansion – a 1,700 km² addition announced with West Moberly and Saulneau First Nations and the governments of B.C. and Canada created the largest provincial park established in B.C. in a decade.



2022: OECM standards – B.C.'s claimed OECMs do not meet international or Canadian quality standards for biodiversity conservation. To meet the standards of conservation, upgrades are needed, or the areas must be removed from the province's protected area accounting.



2024: Lack of funding for natural resource management and land-use planning – the Ministry tasked with carrying out land-use planning and action on biodiversity goals suffered from insufficient funding to deliver on these goals. This resulted in delays in the launch of key processes to advance nature conservation, such as land-use planning.

Promising Commitments, but Enhanced Actions Necessary in B.C.

British Columbia has a huge diversity of species and ecosystems, and currently, 15.6% or 147,214 km² of land is protected through legislated, long-term mechanisms. An additional 4.1% of the land is designated as OECMs which do not meet international or Canadian standards. The inflated accounting of conserved areas in B.C. is a barrier to

progress that needs to be addressed by upgrading the level of protection of OECMS or removing them from reporting.

In 2023, just weeks before the signing of the historic \$1 billion Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, the province launched the made-in-B.C. Conservation Financing Mechanism in partnership with the B.C. Parks Foundation. This \$300 million fund is a significant step and is expected to provide much-needed funding for the ongoing management of new protected areas created in partnership with First Nations.

As a result of consistent public pressure, the provincial government has also committed to a full review and working on upgrading the level of protection for OECMs working in collaboration with conservation groups and First Nations. However at the time of writing, the non-compliance of the suite of OECMs has not been rectified.

Despite delays from the provincial government in advancing ambitious new protected areas on the ground, First Nations continue to advance Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship efforts in their traditional territories.^{xi}

xi Any projects listed in this section do not necessarily reflect CPAWS involvement and are highlighted to support but not appropriate IPCA work.



Photo: Adam Combs

EXAMPLES OF INDIGENOUS-LED CONSERVATION INITIATIVES IN B.C.

Northern B.C. hosts conservation opportunities that are remarkable on a global scale. The Dene K'eh Kusān IPCA – covering 40,000 km² of intact forests and supporting wildlife populations, including caribou and thinhorn sheep is led by the Kaska Nation through the Dena Kayeh Institute.

In the northeast, Tsay Keh Dene Nation continues to work towards the protection of the Ingenika IPCA, a core cultural and ecological area for them. In addition, 6,500 km² have been identified to address the infringement of Treaty 8 rights of Blueberry River First Nation as part of the precedent-setting *Yahey v British Columbia* court case.

In northwest B.C., Wilps Gwininitxw, of the Gitxsan Nation, declared their lands — the ancestral Maxhla Didaat and Galaanhi Giist territories — to be protected in 2022. This includes 1,700 km² in the upper Skeena River watershed. Nearby, the Gitanyow Nation, represented by the Simgigyet'm Gitanyow (Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs), declared interim measures for mineral tenure establishment and exploration in 2024 on the Wii Litsxw Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area (540 km²), established in 2021. This was done out of concern that the provincial government was not addressing concerns about consent to mining activities. Concurrently, the Gitanyow also signed a federal funding agreement to restore self-government on these ancestral lands.

Also in the northwest, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation declared 60% of the T'akú watershed protected in January 2023. This includes salmon rivers and spawning areas, and landscapes needed for wildlife, clean water, and Lingít Kusteeyí (the Tlingit way of living). The Tahltan Stewardship Initiative intends to establish IPCAs covering at least 10,000 km² in Tahltan Territory through the Tahltan Land Stewardship Planning process.

The Southern Rocky Mountains in southeast B.C. hosts transboundary rivers and wildlife corridors, recognized as the most important basin for large carnivores, with the highest density of grizzly bears in inland North America. The traditional territory of the Ktunaxa people is identified as important for Indigenous-led conservation efforts following the successful completion of the Qat'muk IPCA in the Purcell Mountains.

In 2022, the sməłqmíx (Lower Similkameen Indian Band) declared the nʔaysnúlaʔxʷ (Ashnola) watershed to be protected as a sməłqmíx Protected and Conserved Area. Also, in the Similkameen Valley, the proposed Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve remains in establishment negotiations between First Nation, provincial and federal governments.

In Nootka Sound, the Nuu-chah-nulth Salmon Parks initiative has also received federal investment to protect and restore areas of forest habitat surrounding key salmon streams. Led by the muwačath (Mowachaht/Muchalaht) First Nation, protection from headwaters to the sea aims to secure a strong future for salmon in the Ḥaḥahuuti (chiefly territories) for all. Also, on Vancouver Island, new conservancies covering 760 km² were announced by Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations and the B.C. government in June 2024 to protect ecologically rich old-growth forests in Clayoquot Sound.

Photo: Adam Combs

Despite these tangible advancements, the B.C. government has been slow in establishing the necessary planning procedures and sufficient funding to advance conservation objectives. With a newly elected B.C. government, the province has the opportunity to make progress with planning and proper engagement processes that result in protections on the ground.

In January 2025, the B.C. government restated its commitment to protecting 30% of lands and waters by 2030 as well as to carry out land use planning with First Nations, industry, and local communities. Clear process, well-resourced teams and conservation objectives will all be important to guide B.C.'s revitalized land use planning and advance biodiversity goals.

B.C. COASTAL MARINE STRATEGY – A NEW ERA OF COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT

In July 2024, the B.C. government released its first-ever **Coastal Marine Strategy**, a comprehensive provincial plan, co-developed with First Nations, to improve coastal management and protection. It's a 20-year vision and roadmap with set activities to ensure coastal areas remain healthy and resilient to climate change, support community well-being, and ensure a sustainable ocean economy. Until now, the coast was governed through a patchwork of regulations and laws overseen by different provincial ministries and departments with no overarching vision for management decisions. Now, the Coastal Marine Strategy must be actioned, including the development of a law, to ensure its long-term implementation.

Photo: Bryce Evans

RECOMMENDATIONS

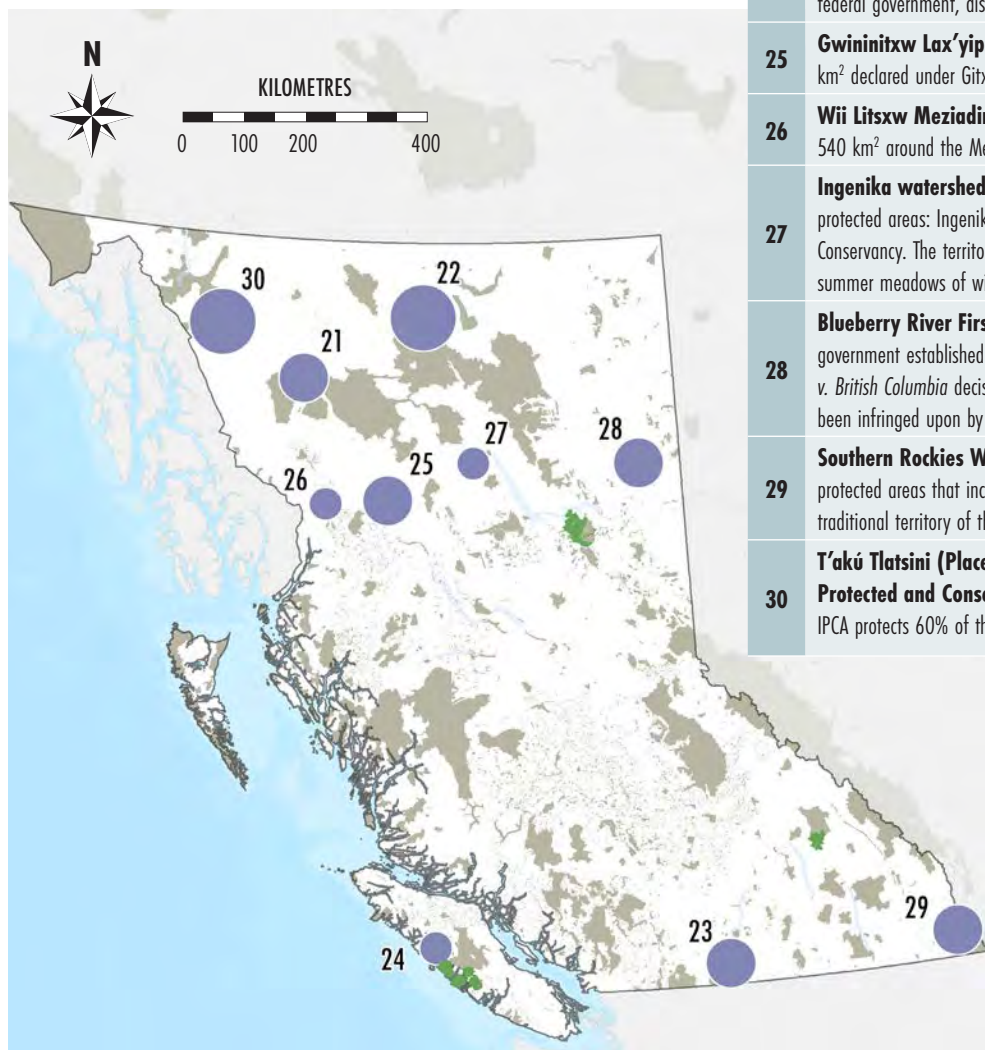
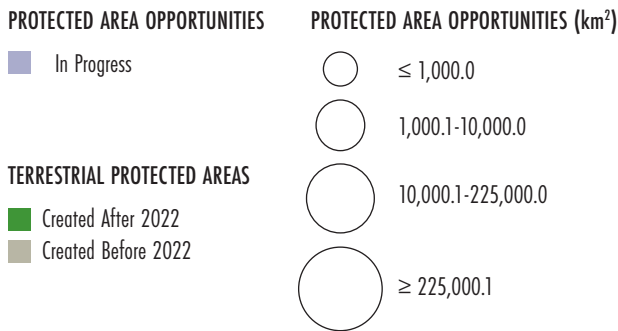
To effectively, equitably, and transparently advance conservation commitments, CPAWS recommends that the Government of B.C.:

- Immediately advance its commitment to protecting 30% of lands by 2030 in partnership with First Nations. This process must incorporate a range of conservation values including rare ecosystems and ecosystem representation; habitat for wildlife and species at risk; ecological connectivity and climate resilience; and key large, intact areas.

- 2.** Invest in land-use planning to support and advance Indigenous-led conservation and engage stakeholders, experts, and communities.
- 3.** Ensure all areas that count as protected meet the international and pan-Canadian criteria for protected and conserved areas.
- 4.** Advance the commitments made in the tripartite nature agreement, including developing a mechanism to support and acknowledge IPCAs in partnership with First Nations.
- 5.** Continue work that will result in a legal tool to protect habitat for species at risk to support the over 1,700 species at risk of extinction in the province.
- 6.** Continue work to bring the Biodiversity & Ecosystem Health Framework into law in partnership with First Nations. This is necessary to balance an overwhelmingly industry-centered approach to land and resource management.

In conclusion, British Columbia has demonstrated significant commitments to conservation, establishing the historic tripartite nature agreement and launching the Conservation Financing Mechanism. Partnerships and co-development with First Nations and communities are positive, but the lack of investment in land use planning inhibits further progress, with harm happening on the ground in the absence of critical decisions and funding. B.C. has massive conservation opportunities with expansive areas in the north and, in the south, places ready for restoration and connectivity to support high biodiversity or species at risk. The time is now to put an effective province-wide protected areas strategy in place.

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in British Columbia



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified	
Information on Progress to Protected Area Status	
21	Tahltan IPCAs through the Tahltan Nation Land Use Plan First Nation continues to lead in the protection and stewardship of approx. 10,000 km ² .
22	Dene K'eh Kusān (Kaska Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area) Kaska continues to advance the protection and stewardship of 39,136 km ² .
23	South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve and Similkameen Valley sm̓aqlmix Conservation Areas The South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve negotiations continue between B.C., Canada and the Okanagan Nation Alliance, and the Lower Similkameen continued to protect the sm̓aqlmix Protected Areas for a total of 2,682 km ² .
24	Nuu-chah-nulth Salmon Parks First Nation is engaged with the federal government, discussing an area of about 650 km ² .
25	Gwininitxw Lax'yip: Indigenous Protected Area IPCA of 1,700 km ² declared under Gitxsan law, or Ayook.
26	Wii Litsxw Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area An area of 540 km ² around the Meziadin River declared in 2021.
27	Ingenika watershed Tsay Keh Dene Nation has established two protected areas: Ingenika IPCA (about 790 km ²) and the Chuyaza Conservancy. The territory is home to grizzly bears, wolves, moose and summer meadows of wild berries.
28	Blueberry River First Nation A 2023 agreement with the B.C. government established zones to be protected as a result of the <i>Yahey v. British Columbia</i> decision acknowledging the FN's Treaty 8 rights had been infringed upon by cumulative impacts from industrial development.
29	Southern Rockies Wildlife Corridor A key linkage to existing protected areas that includes the Flathead Valley located within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa people, approx. 6,500 km ² .
30	T'akú Tlatsini (Places that Make Us Strong) Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Taku River Tlingit First Nation's IPCA protects 60% of the T'akú watershed at approx. 10,800 km ² .

ALBERTA

2024

D-

2021

F

Highlights and Lowlights



2024: Alberta park boundary amendments – the Government of Alberta announced changes to provincial parks and recreation areas, including the creation of two new and the expansion of three existing parks, primarily through private lands donations, and the delisting of 12 sites.⁴⁶ This added about 14 km² to the provincial parks system while removing 0.05 km². The delisted sites were mostly former highway rest stops and not of high conservation concern. The response from the public regarding potential changes to the park system was significant.



2024: Alberta Parks Plan survey – over the summer of 2024, Alberta undertook public engagement on the development of a new Plan for Parks. While the feedback process suggests potential increases in high-impact recreation (e.g., off-highway vehicle use), commercialization, and changes to the *Parks Act* and makes no mention of expanding the protected areas network, this was an

opportunity for Albertans to show strong support for a healthy parks system and increased conservation areas.



2022: Changes to Parks Act and Public Lands Act – as part of the Red Tape Reduction Bill⁴⁷ allowing the Minister to adopt into regulations “standards, directives, practices, codes, guidelines, objectives or other rules”⁴⁸ written by any group, thus creating different regulations in different parks and areas of public land based on desires of special interest groups in specific areas.



2022: Changes to Parks management through ministry restructuring – the Alberta Environment and Parks Ministry split and merged with forestry, creating the Environment and Protected Areas Ministry and the Forestry, Parks and Tourism Ministry. This was later changed to the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas and the Ministry of Forestry and Parks (and Ministry of Tourism and Sport). The separation of management of park operations from environmental management and protected areas increases the likelihood of losing or reducing protections. Merging the management of parks with forestry further transfers a significant number of areas to a department focused on industry. This increases the likelihood of changes in allowed activities contrary to environmental protection.



2023-2024: Renewables moratorium and buffers – Alberta’s renewable energy infrastructure policy changes included renewable energy infrastructure development restrictions with minimum buffer zones of 35 km around protected and ‘pristine viewscapes’ designed by the province, making 76% of the province off-limits. While the buffers have since been refined, there remains a focus on restricting renewable development, which represents a double standard compared to managing other more damaging industries (e.g., forestry and coal mining) and highlights the need for land-use planning to determine where any development is appropriate.



2022-2024: Coal mining – the provincial government recently announced the development of a new Coal Industry Modernization Initiative which re-opens the threat of new coal mines across Alberta’s headwaters and iconic mountain ranges. The process ignores the government’s own consultation, which indicated that 70% of Albertans oppose any new coal exploration and development in Alberta’s Rocky Mountains, and commits that further consultation will only occur with industry.



2024: Alberta Nature Strategy development – while the province working to outline how it intends to contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework could be positive, government

communications to date indicate that this Strategy will be a reframe of what has already been done without commitments to new conservation measures or protected areas.



2024: All Season Resorts Act passed – the Government of Alberta passed Bill 35, exposing parks, protected areas, and public land to the development of year-round privatized resorts. The *All Season Resorts Act* unprecedently transfers land management to the Tourism and Sport Ministry, while making it clear that protected area designations may be rescinded to create all season resort areas.



Ongoing: Caribou recovery is falling short – conservation agreements between Alberta and the federal government are failing to protect and recover caribou populations. Over 200 non-standard development applications were submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas for approval within the caribou range in 2022 and 2023. Most were in the Cold Lake region - an area with a subregional plan. The remaining subregional plans for caribou recovery are far behind schedule.

Political Will Urgently Needed to Prioritize Conservation in Alberta

The Government of Alberta has no active commitments to conservation targets and has opposed the federal government's 2030 Nature Strategy. The province continues to promote policies and actions that undermine protected areas and threaten natural ecosystems despite Albertan's strong support for nature conservation and park establishment.⁴⁹ In July 2023, Ministry Mandate Letters (Environment and Protected Areas, Forestry and Parks) emphasized increasing infrastructure (e.g., 900 new campsites, money for trail upgrades) but made no mention of using land-use planning to choose appropriate areas or new or expanded parks or protected areas. There were no commitments to supporting Indigenous-led conservation and no mention of advancing conservation of at-risk species. The province's general failure to prioritize conservation has led to Alberta not meeting any of the six recommendations outlined in our *Roadmap to 2030*.

In 2024, the Alberta government committed to creating a *Made-in-Alberta Nature Strategy*, which could outline the measures and actions needed to meet the GBF targets.^{xii} Additionally, over the summer of 2024, the government was in the public engagement phase for its *Plan for Parks*, which will guide the conservation and

xii At the time of writing, it is not clear what this will contain.

recreational use of areas under the *Provincial Parks Act*. At present, there appears to be a focus on additional infrastructure and revenue generation, with linkages to provincial tourism planning, but little focus on the conservation of nature and no indication that they will expand the network.

In January 2024, the government of Alberta announced the creation of two new parks — Kleskun Hills Provincial Park and La Biche River Provincial Recreation Area — and three expanded provincial parks and recreation areas, adding approximately 14 km² of protected land. These additions were primarily the result of private land donations. Further additions to the protected area landscape include Big Island Provincial Park, which will protect 0.68 km² and be cooperatively managed by the Government of Alberta, Enoch Cree Nation, and the City of Edmonton. Despite these quantitative advancements, concerns remain about the overall quality of consultations, engagement, and Indigenous inclusion in protected area planning.

Management of protected areas in Alberta continues to be a challenge, with industrial activities permitted in many provincial protected areas. While the government announced the Coal Industry Modernization Initiative (CIMI) in December 2024, the direction indicated explicitly contradicts the government's Coal Policy public consultation and committee reports. CIMI will prohibit new open-pit coal mining in the Eastern Slopes, however, this excludes Grassy Mountain and Mine 14 thus allowing some project applications that are harmful to sensitive landscapes, species at risk, and freshwater, and that impact treaty rights.

Government action and policies have not reflected larger support for Indigenous-led conservation in Alberta. The province has not supported the development of IPCAs and has not constructed policies to advance Indigenous-led conservation initiatives. Despite creating a cooperative management board for the Kitaskino Nuwenënë Wildland Park, the government has avoided using the term "co-management" here and in other relationships with Indigenous groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the protection of Alberta's natural ecosystems, promote sustainable land use, and enhance Indigenous collaboration, CPAWS reiterates our 2022 recommendations that the Government of Alberta:

● Commit to protecting 30% of land and freshwater by 2030.

2. Commit to a permanent prohibition on new coal mining and exploration on the Eastern Slopes to prevent irreversible harm to this important wildlife habitat and the irreplaceable ecological services it provides for communities, including the provision of clean water, sustainable economies, and recreational values.
3. Uphold provincial responsibilities under the federal *Species at Risk Act* and commitments made in the Section 11 agreement with Canada on boreal caribou and implement Critical Habitat protection requirements for caribou, wood bison, native trout, and other at-risk species.
4. Ensure effective and equitable management of current and future protected areas in line with international standards to conserve biodiversity and ecological integrity. Ensure protections for existing protected areas are maintained or increased.
5. Continue to develop co-stewardship relationships with Indigenous Peoples to advance protected area establishment and management of their territories.
6. Support the development of a legislative framework for IPCAs and other Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and a clear process for communities to identify potential areas for protection.
7. Continue long-stalled regional land-use planning processes, ensuring that the process includes a path to creating new protected areas that will benefit species at risk and are areas of interest for Indigenous communities in all sub-regional and regional land use plans.
8. Ensure the Alberta Nature Strategy includes ambitious and measurable provincial goals and targets that are accompanied by specific actions and timelines that can be implemented over the next decade to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

To conclude, Alberta is in urgent need of a conservation course correction. This not only includes refraining from policies and actions that threaten natural ecosystems but also committing to evidence-based conservation targets and standards for protected areas, providing stronger protection for the Eastern Slopes, representative protection of diverse ecosystems, and meaningfully supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives. We urge the government of Alberta to develop a strong Nature Strategy that includes clear commitments to expanding conservation measures in Alberta.⁵⁰

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Alberta

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

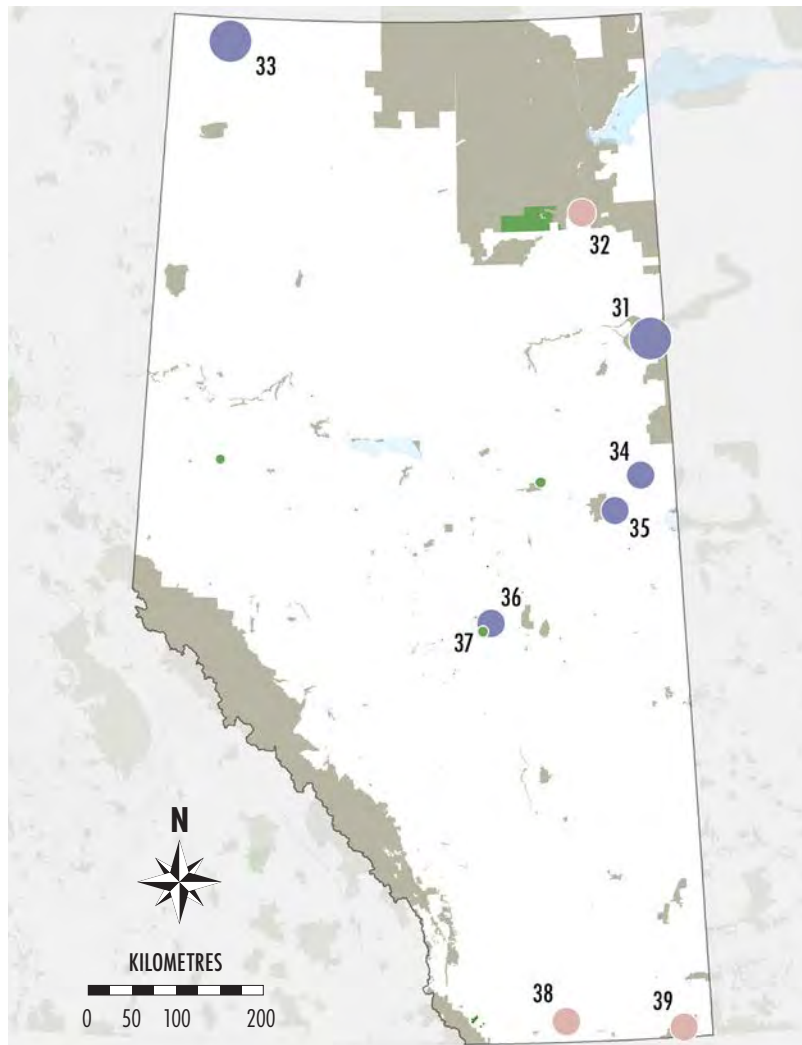
- In Progress
- Progress Uncertain

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified	
Information on Progress to Protected Area Status	
31	Gipsy-Gordon Wildland Provincial Park expansion Progress has been made, but the proposed 1,585 km ² is still not formally protected.
32	Kitaskino Nuwenēné Wildland Park – East Expansion Past expansion of 371 km ² completed in 2022; this protected area has been awaiting Order in Council since 2012.
33	Bistcho Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Dene Tha’ First Nation continues work to protect 5,000 km ² .
34	Cold Lake Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Discussions are ongoing to protect 1,000 km ² .
35	Metis Settlements Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Progress is being made to protect 500 km ² , but the provincial government does not seem supportive.
36	Greater Edmonton Regional National Urban Park In 2023 Edmonton passed a resolution to investigate the 100 km ² opportunity; slow progress in developing MOU with Indigenous partners.
37	Big Island Provincial Park Finalized in February 2023, protecting 0.79 km ² .
38	Twin River Heritage Rangeland Reclassification and Expansion No progress on the anticipated 32 km ² expansion.
39	OneFour Heritage Rangeland Reclassification and Expansion No progress on the anticipated 133 km ² expansion.

SASKATCHEWAN



Highlights and Lowlights



2024: Indigenous conservation – Indigenous Nations continue to show leadership in addressing environmental challenges and conservation opportunities. The Government of Saskatchewan still needs to do much more to support this work.



2023: Contribution to 30x30 target – the provincial government has made a commitment to contribute to the national target of 30x30. However, an increased provincial target would be ideal.



2024: Low conservation ambition – the Government of Saskatchewan has consistently not prioritized conservation resulting in inadequate progress in nature protection, poor conservation measures, and limited effective management to safeguard ecologically significant habitats.



2024: Lack of support for Indigenous-led conservation – the Government of Saskatchewan has shown reluctance to fully embrace the spirit and potential of Indigenous-led conservation despite the work of Indigenous Nations, organizations, and communities in the province.



2024: Boreal caribou recovery – conservation agreements between Saskatchewan and the federal government have so far failed to effectively protect and connect critical habitats to support healthy caribou populations.



2024: Loss of native grassland habitats – Saskatchewan continues to see ongoing loss, degradation, and fragmentation of native prairie. While some of these areas are under federal jurisdiction, there has been no pushback from the Saskatchewan government to guarantee protection using provincial conservation instruments nor to undertake any form of habitat restoration where possible.

Not Good News for Conservation in Saskatchewan

Provincial interest in supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives has shown little progress, despite Indigenous Nations working to advance IPCAs and other conservation initiatives across the province. In the boreal region, Kitaskīnaw (the Saskatchewan River Delta) was declared protected under Indigenous law in June 2021. As North America's largest inland delta and one of Canada's most biologically rich and important ecosystems, the 10,000 km² delta supports a critical and unique space for many species to thrive. There is a significant benefit to Saskatchewan in acknowledging existing Indigenous protection measures, as it provides water security and economic stability, mitigates climate change, and forms the basis for ongoing conservation initiatives.

Establishing provincial protected areas has been slow, and to date, 63,907 km², or 9.81% of Saskatchewan, is contained within the province's network of protected and conserved areas. In Saskatoon, Meewasin Valley Authority is in the feasibility stage with Parks Canada to determine the possibility of establishing a Saskatoon region National Urban Park (NUP). The Denesūliné First Nations and Athabasca communities continue to advocate for the protection of critical areas of the Athabasca Basin (Nuhenéné), for the benefit of their people and the land.

Saskatchewan remains the only province without a dedicated wetlands policy. In its place, the province is working towards an Agricultural Water Stewardship Policy, which instead of prioritizing the preservation of wetlands, provides a clear opportunity for their destruction and removal.

Furthermore, endangered native grassland ecosystems are under increasing threat from habitat encroachment, degradation, and fragmentation due to development and agricultural expansion, poor management, opposing/sub-standard policy, and climate change. The province has failed to implement adequate conservation measures or build sufficient management capacity to safeguard ecologically significant native grassland habitat. Additionally, through a federal process, the Prairie National Wildlife Area, which includes native prairie grasslands, will likely experience delisting of 19 units labeled as “low conservation value,” despite some sites harboring significant biodiversity, carbon storage and restoration value. With less than 15% of native grasslands and 30% of original wetlands remaining in Saskatchewan, areas with even a portion of native vegetation provide value to a host of ecological services and are important for conservation and agriculture. The absence of effective conservation measures has led to Saskatchewan not fulfilling any of the six recommendations set out in the *Roadmap to 2030*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the province’s conservation efforts, better support First Nations and Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, and safeguard wetlands and endangered native grassland habitats, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan:

1. **Commit to a more ambitious provincial contribution (above 12%) to the national goal of 30% of land and freshwater protected by 2030.**
2. **Develop a transparent and collaborative plan to reach and exceed the current provincial target, including prioritizing and supporting the establishment of IPCAs and other protection measures proposed by First Nations and Métis governments.**
3. **Support and contribute to developing a dedicated grassland conservation initiative to protect and restore remaining ecologically significant grassland habitat.**
4. **Build strong relationships with Indigenous Nations to support further conservation measures in the Saskatchewan River Delta.**

5. Recognize the declared protection that Cumberland House Cree Nation has placed on Kitaskinaw (the Saskatchewan River Delta) area and provide means to action their management proposals.
6. Continue in good faith the negotiations for the four Athabasca Dënesuliné Nuhenéné IPCAs and ensure these are finalized in a transparent and equitable manner.
7. Ensure an updated *Species at Risk Act* Section 11 agreement is once again reached with the federal government for boreal caribou and actively fulfill requirements for habitat protection, connectivity, and species recovery.
8. Work with Parks Canada and Meewasin Valley Authority to ensure the best ecological outcome for a National Urban Park in Saskatoon.
9. Consideration of a bilateral nature agreement with the federal government to access funding and demonstrate a commitment to nature conservation in Saskatchewan's rural and urban landscapes.

To conclude, Saskatchewan continues to fall short of its 30-year-old conservation ambitions. Despite the province expressing interest in Indigenous-led conservation, the government hasn't followed through, delaying essential progress and obstructing meaningful opportunities for reconciliation. Future conservation efforts and ongoing management must be carried out in meaningful and collaborative ways that actively and equitably involve Indigenous communities, are grounded in evidence-based practices, and promote ambitious objectives.

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Saskatchewan

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

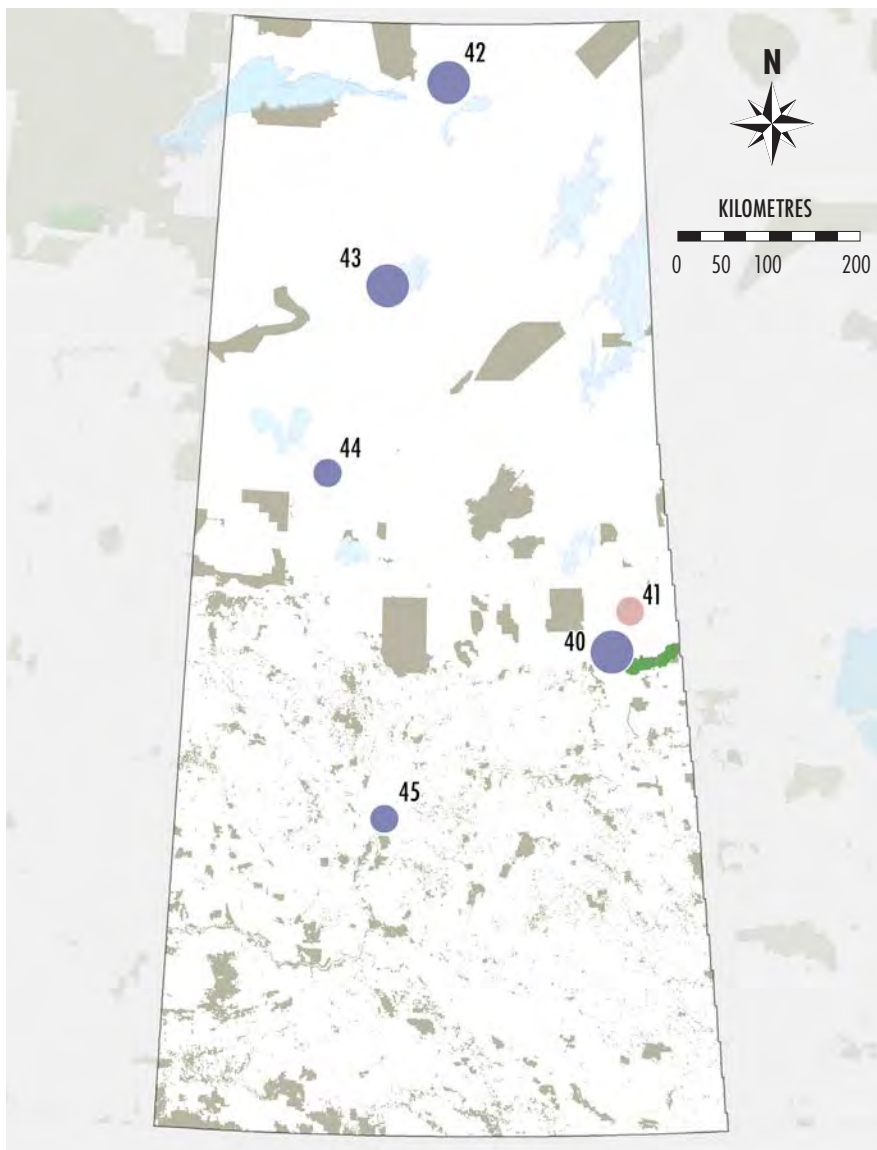
- In Progress
- Progress Uncertain

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

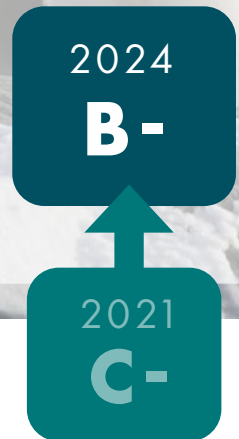
- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified
Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

40	Saskatchewan River Delta Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas Not recognized by the provincial and/or federal government, but 5,000-6,000 km ² has been declared protected from a community perspective since 2021.
41	Rare Alvar Sites No progress on protecting areas totalling a proposed 400 km ² .
42	Athabasca Dēnesuliné Nuhenéné Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Some progress to protect 5,920 km ² ; the provincial government has agreed to meet with Indigenous partners.
43	Cree Lake Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (English River First Nation) Community has detailed what they plan to do; no formal designation progress with government.
44	Sakitawak IPCA in Île-à-la-Croix Community developing planning packages; the government is not engaged.
45	Saskatoon Region National Urban Park Progress has been made in advance of the 100 km ² NUP; engagement with consultants is underway to develop a planning strategy.
N/A	Dedicated conservation initiatives to support remaining ecologically significant grassland habitat Poor policy development/neglect has resulted in reversal of progress.

MANITOBA



Highlights and Lowlights



2023: Provincial 30x30 election commitment – Manitoba government committed to protecting 30% of lands and waters by 2030 by working with Indigenous communities.



2023: Rejection of provincial park privatization – following the 2023 provincial election, Manitoba’s NDP government opposed the previous government’s intent to privatize provincial park services. To keep parks affordable and accessible, it froze provincial park fees for the 2024 camping season.



2023: Designation of provincially significant peatlands – Moswa Meadows and Fish Lake Fen designated under the Peatlands Stewardship Act⁵¹ to safeguard biodiversity. Development activities are prohibited across nearly 280 km² to ensure the areas can continue to provide long-term climate and environmental benefits.



2024: Seal River Watershed IPCA – to establish a new IPCA, the Seal River Watershed Alliance and the governments of Canada and Manitoba are undertaking a feasibility study. This includes the potential of 42,808 km² of new protected lands. The area has been granted interim protection from developments during the feasibility study. A complementary National Park Reserve (NPR) in the Seal River Watershed is also being considered.



2024: Winnipeg National Urban Park – the City of Winnipeg, the Government of Canada, the Government of Manitoba, Treaty One, and the Manitoba Métis Federation have established a committee to identify conservation opportunities.



2022: The provincial government's intent to privatize park services – resulted in campsite fees tripling in cost at St. Ambrose Provincial Park after a private company was awarded a 21-year management lease.



2022: Proposal to decommission protected areas – those areas deemed to be unprofitable 'assets' were at risk of being decommissioned by the provincial government.



2024: Budget ignores conservation – despite its mandate to protect 30% of provincial lands and waters by 2030, the provincial government's 2024 budget was not aligned with this. Conservation commitments were not mentioned in budget documents, nor were greatly needed resources provided to increase the establishment of protected areas.⁵²

New Government in Manitoba Turns over a New Leaf

Despite the ambitious commitment to achieve 30x30 and substantial efforts on the Seal River Watershed IPCA, the Manitoba government's 2024 budget neglected to provide adequate funding to ensure long-term conservation progress. This lack of funding does not inspire confidence in terms of addressing significant capacity constraints, internal conservation processes, working with and supporting Indigenous Nations, or the support required for protected area establishment.

In 2023 the Manitoba government reached a three-year agreement with the federal government to support the recovery and conservation of boreal caribou. Despite an updated provincial caribou recovery strategy in 2015 mandating action plans for nine range management zones by 2020, to date, no plans have been completed. The

new federal funding is hoped to support the province in finalizing and beginning to implement long-overdue range action plans by 2025, including large-scale habitat conservation and continuous population monitoring.

SEAL RIVER WATERSHED IPCA AND POTENTIAL NATIONAL PARK RESERVE⁵³

Progress towards establishing the Seal River Watershed IPCA has advanced following a signed MOU between the four First Nations of the Seal River Watershed Alliance (Sayisi Dene First Nation, Northlands Dene Nation, Barren Lands First Nation, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation) and the governments of Manitoba and Canada.

A joint feasibility study is underway to determine whether northern Manitoba's largely intact area of tundra, wetlands, and forest will become an IPCA and potentially a National Park Reserve. This study is slated for completion at the end of 2024, with release likely in early 2025. The 260 km Seal River is a Canadian Heritage River; at least 25 known species are at risk in the watershed, and significant wetlands act as carbon sinks. Protecting the habitats of wolverines, polar bears, grizzly bears, moose, barren-ground caribou, birds, and the eponymous harbour seals, will honour the Nations in the Seal River Watershed Alliance's continued role as guardians of the region.

The region has been granted indefinite interim protection while the study is conducted and the involved parties have made their recommendations. If fully approved, the IPCA will protect an additional 42,808 km², or 6.6% of Manitoba's land area.

Photo: Corey Schleining

The Manitoba government has moved forward on its commitment to work with Indigenous communities to achieve 30x30. The province has stated its support for the KITASKEENAN KAWEEKANAWAYNICHIKATEK IPCA initiative in northeastern Manitoba and the FISHER RIVER CREE NATION CONSERVATION AREAS INITIATIVE in the southeastern Interlake region. KITASKEENAN KAWEEKANAWAYNICHIKATEK (Our Land We Want to Protect) is progressing, as evidenced by the release of its Vision shared by York Factory First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation and Shamattawa First Nation. The FISHER RIVER CREE NATION CONSERVATION AREAS INITIATIVE, supported by the Governments of Canada and Manitoba, is advancing through community and stakeholder engagement to establish new protected areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To further advance conservation progress and support Indigenous-led conservation throughout the province, CPAWS recommends that the government of Manitoba:

1. Make good on its commitment to produce an action plan with a framework to achieve its 30x30 mandate.
2. Provide greatly increased resources in provincial budgets and through other mechanisms that are needed to achieve 30x30.
3. Establish a fund for IPCAs and Indigenous-led conservation initiatives in the province.
4. Increase internal funding and capacity to support the establishment of protected areas.
5. Conduct an assessment of other candidate-protected areas to identify the most advantageous opportunities to pursue for establishment.
6. Complete woodland caribou action plans that map out and actively protect critical habitat.

In conclusion, the province of Manitoba has committed to substantially increasing the percentage of land conserved in the coming years to ensure the 30x30 target is achieved. Despite notable efforts related to Indigenous-led conservation and the protection of carbon-rich peatlands, the provincial government must increase funding and internal capacity to ensure IPCA projects are supported, other protected area candidates are advanced, and species recovery along with their respective management systems are sustainably coordinated to maximize benefits and ensure long-term conservation success.

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Manitoba

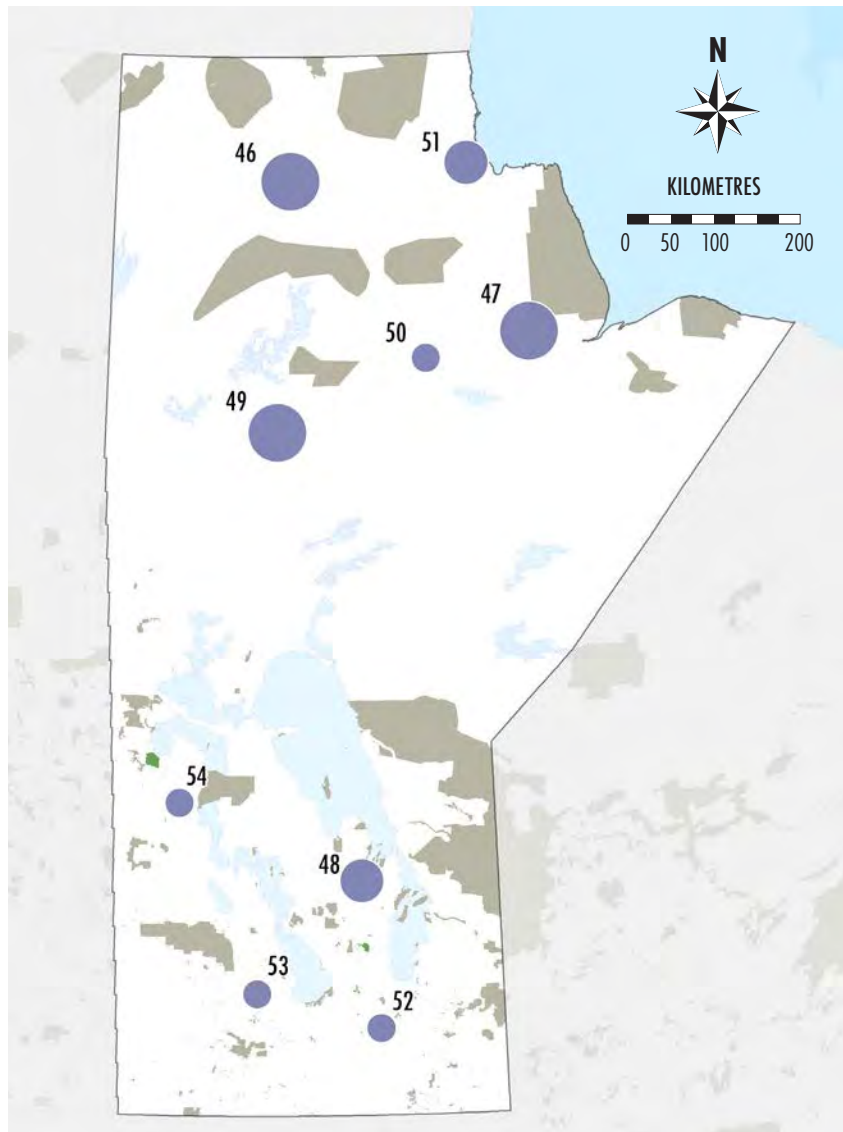
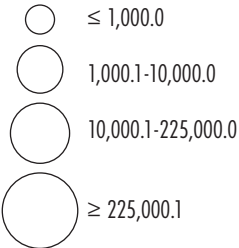
PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

■ In Progress

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

■ Created After 2022
■ Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

46	Seal River Watershed Indigenous Protected Area Indefinite interim protection of 50,000 km ² of which 42,808 km ² would be new protected area.
47	Kitaskeenan Kaweekanawaynichikatek IPCA Five First Nations released a joint vision in Sept 2024; the study area spans tens of thousands of square kilometres.
48	Fisher River Cree Nation Conservation Areas Initiative Community and stakeholder engagement underway to establish protected areas within a 9,341 km ² study area.
49	Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Land use planning and IPCA initiative to advance progress is underway.
50	Aski Pahminahaswin – Tataskweyak Cree Nation Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Limited progress.
51	Manitoba’s Caribou River Provincial Park to Wapusk Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Engagement underway; no study area defined to date.
52	Winnipeg National Urban Park Three levels of crown government, Treaty One and Manitoba Métis Federation created a committee and meet regularly to discuss proposals for a Winnipeg-based NUP.
53	Chitek Lake Anishinaabe Provincial Park Expansion The Skownan First Nation is working towards establishing a management board and an Indigenous-led monitoring program.
54	Kettle Hills Blueberry Patch IPCA Work to date includes some community engagement as well as vegetation surveys and bird recording units to determine species prevalence.
N/A	Grassland Stewardship and Priority Places Programs From 2021-2023, Manitoba Habitat Conservancy secured approximately 175.7 km ² of habitat through permanent land acquisition or 10-year agreements with farmers.

ONTARIO



2021

F

2024

F

Highlights and Lowlights



2024: Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park – newly established recreation class park (5.32 km² in three parcels) under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act* (PPCRA). Uxbridge provides new hubs of protection that can help connect Rouge National Urban Park with other protected and rural lands through ecological corridors.



2024: Regulating outstanding Ontario Living Legacy sites and Acquired Lands – following federal investment from Canada's Enhanced Nature Legacy program, the province announced its intentions to regulate lands. Several Living Legacy sites identified in 1999 are still awaiting protection.

-  **2021-2024: Lack of support for Indigenous-led conservation** – despite calls and leadership from many Indigenous Nations throughout Ontario, the province continues to show little support and instead prioritizes industry over nature and people. Ontario has not responded to Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, Moose Cree, Grassy Narrows, and others, who have declared protections under their laws.
-  **2022-2024: National marine conservation areas in Great Lakes** – Ontario is absent from these discussions and refusing to engage with Parks Canada on Lakes Erie, Huron, and Ontario.
-  **2024: Western James Bay and southwestern Hudson Bay** – the province has shown a lack of support for protecting coastal and near shore areas. Mushkegowuk Council is seeking protection for near-shore and coastal areas as part of Minatstawin Kinipiminnan, which means ‘preservation of our waters’ in Cree. Early in 2024, a major step was taken by Canada and the Mushkegowuk Council toward protecting the rich offshore waters of western James Bay and southwestern Hudson Bay, but Ontario has yet to engage.
-  **2021-2024: Habitat protections for endangered species** – this is especially important for threatened boreal caribou. Despite an Agreement for the Conservation of Caribou under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, Ontario has delayed implementing any habitat protections for boreal caribou. In 2023, the Government of Canada found that the province is still not effectively protecting habitat.
-  **2021-2024: Prioritization of harmful and irresponsible developments** – despite the biodiversity crisis and climate emergency, Ontario continues to approve development of new highways, clearing forests in urban settings and clearing intact boreal forests. The government has also promoted mining in IPCAs and key ecosystems, including peatlands and habitat for endangered species.
-  **2022-2024: Role of Conservation Authorities diminished** – Ontario’s planning system has 36 conservation authorities that manage and protect watersheds. The province’s *More Homes Built Faster Act* repealed regulations enabling the authorities to oversee the land development process, removed revenue tools, and forced an evaluation of lands held for conservation purposes to identify “surplus” areas to be repurposed for housing.

Course Correction Immediately Needed for Conservation in Ontario

While it recently agreed to help with Canada's domestic and international biodiversity commitments, including the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, Ontario's record to date is one of prioritizing industrial and commercial development over ecosystems, water, and people. The habitat of endangered species and intact forests, and globally significant wetlands are all being sacrificed for reckless and irresponsible developments that are inconsistent with tackling the looming climate and biodiversity crises or meeting society's obligations under reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

In 2024, the Environmental Registry of Ontario contained a \$10 million proposal by the provincial government to expand crown land protected areas by adding 27 sites, totalling 103.24 km², to the roster of provincial parks and conservation reserves. Several areas have been identified as critical habitat for species at risk and serve as vital wildlife corridor passages. About half of the proposed additions are located in southern Ontario, which is widely recognized as one of Canada's crisis ecoregions. Despite this seemingly positive announcement, the identified sites have been slated for protection for many years and only contribute an additional 0.01% to the protected area total in the province.

The creation of Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park and support for the establishment of Ojibway National Urban Park are two positive steps by the province. The City of Windsor is collaborating with Parks Canada, the Town of LaSalle, and numerous partners, including the Walpole Island First Nation, Caldwell First Nation, and Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, to advance the NUP candidate site to the designation phase. Pending finalization, Ojibway would become the second NUP established in Canada.

The Madawaska Highlands in eastern Ontario contain old-growth forests, wetlands, and 42 species at risk, as well as providing recreational space and an ancestral home to the Algonquin Anishinaabeg Peoples. However, less than 5% of this important area is protected, and resource extraction and development threaten the vulnerable ecosystems. Increasing protected areas to 30% of the Highlands would support carbon sequestration, create a wildlife corridor between other existing parks, and support the local economy.

The peatlands of the Hudson Bay Lowlands contain globally significant carbon stores that have been helping to cool the planet for thousands of years. 70% of the Hudson Bay Lowlands is located in Ontario. The province has yet to recognize these carbon stores and its immense responsibility to keep the carbon undisturbed. Since 2022, mining claims have increased in area by more than 45% in the Ring of Fire of the Hudson Bay Lowlands. In these sensitive wetlands, exploration activities are intrusive and damaging, resulting in permanent scars. Mining claim registration often occurs without the consent of Indigenous Peoples or environmental review in Ontario.

The Greater Golden Horseshoe and Southwestern Ontario are recognized as extinction hotspots, urgently needing stronger protections to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Rather than prioritizing the conservation of this landscape — home to some of Canada’s most vital and productive farmland and many species at risk — the Ontario government is moving ahead with extensive infrastructure, housing, and transportation developments across the region. These actions, weaken critical environmental safeguards, threatening the long-term health and resilience of Ontario’s natural heritage, farmland, and wetlands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To protect nature, restore degraded ecosystems, and support Indigenous-led conservation, CPAWS recommends that the government of Ontario:

1. Commit to meeting and implementing the 23 targets of the GBF, and specifically, protecting 30% of Ontario’s land and waters by 2030; and restoring 30% of all degraded ecosystems.
2. Support Indigenous-led protection in the boreal forest and Hudson Bay Lowlands, including Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug’s Fawn River Indigenous Protected Area and Moose Cree’s North French First Nation Protected Area.
3. Complete the Mushkegowuk Council’s vision for marine protection by protecting the globally significant coastal and nearshore areas.
4. Halt logging throughout Algonquin Park, thereby expanding the protected area.
5. Create a connected network of protected land in central Ontario, the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and Southwestern Ontario, including supporting the federal government expansion of Rouge National Urban Park; contributing provincial lands to a new National Urban Park in Windsor; supporting a new National Urban Park in Guelph; and potentially creating a National Urban Park for the Ottawa Greenbelt.

6. Increase protected areas to 30% in the Madawaska Highlands in eastern Ontario.
7. Collaborate with the Government of Canada to create three new National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCAs) in the Great Lakes.
8. Restore and enhance the integrity of the *Endangered Species Act* and lift the permanent exemptions for logging and mineral exploration from protecting and recovering species at risk.
9. Commit to new investments (three times the existing annual provincial parks budget) to properly manage ecological integrity in the existing protected areas system and additional investments of \$100 million to expand the protected areas network and support Indigenous-led conservation.
10. Return authority and funding to Ontario's conservation authorities to effectively manage watersheds via the planning process, thereby preventing flooding and protecting lives and property.

In summary, the Ontario government continues to take big steps backward in nature conservation despite the significant opportunities across the province. A course correction is urgently needed, including setting evidence-based conservation targets that align with international commitments, supporting Indigenous-led conservation, investing in protecting nature, and working with government and non-government partners.

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Ontario

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

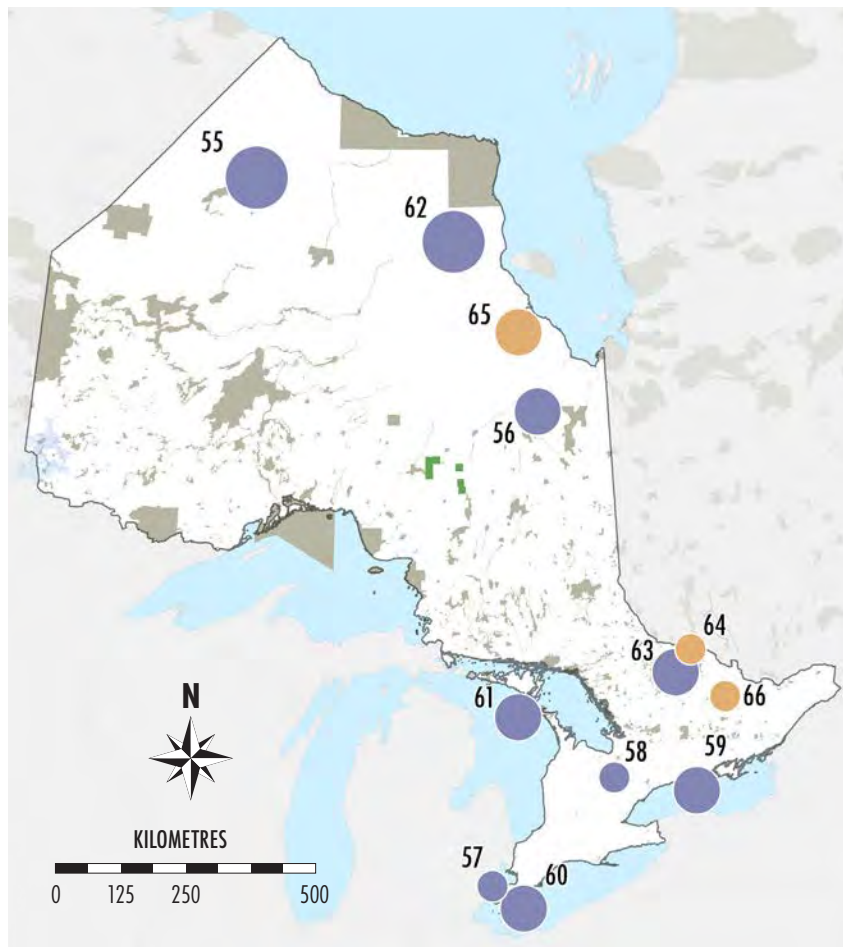
- Identified After 2022
- In Progress

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

55	Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Fawn River Indigenous Protected Area No progress on this 13,000 km ² area.
56	Moose Cree's North French First Nation Protected Area No further progress in this area.
57	Ojibway National Urban Park, Windsor Federal funding provided; Ontario indicated it intends to transfer some land to this 3.5 km ² NUP but has yet to commit to a timeline.
58	Greater Golden Horseshoe No further progress in this area.
59	Lake Ontario National Marine Conservation Area No progress in protecting this freshwater area.
60	Western Lake Erie National Marine Conservation Area No progress in protecting this freshwater area.
61	Lake Huron National Marine Conservation Area No progress in protecting this freshwater area.
62	Hudson Bay Lowlands No progress in protecting this region.
63	Complete Protection of Algonquin Park No progress in preventing logging in a 4,990 km ² area.

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

64	Algonquin-Dumoine Gap Conservation measures to maintain or restore connectivity for an 18 km distance between Algonquin Provincial Park (ON) and Dumoine River Aquatic Reserve (QC) would connect these areas creating an ecological corridor.
65	O mushkego Wahkohtowin Project Finance for Permanence In the Treaty 9 area, Mushkegowuk Council and other partners are working with the federal government and private philanthropy to support the creation of a PFP.
66	Madawaska Highlands 5% of the Madawaska highlands are currently protected. The project aims to increase the area protected to 30%.



QUEBEC



Highlights and Lowlights



2022: Ministerial responsibilities – change to the ministère de l’Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs resulted in dossiers for sectors of wildlife protection and parks being moved from the ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts.



2024: Call for Protected Areas Projects in Southern Public Territories – the Quebec government created a unique opportunity for individuals and groups, including Indigenous communities or Nations, to contribute to the protection of public lands and biodiversity, increase access to nature, and combat climate change by submitting proposals for new protected areas of various types. Regional consultations will take place throughout 2025, and final decisions will come in 2026. A process adapted to Indigenous proponents, with different timelines and a possibility for them to conduct regional consultations for their proposals, has been integrated into the Call for Projects.



2024: Plein aire Initiative – aims to support the creation of protected areas and ecological corridors in close collaboration with local stakeholders to combine accessibility to nature with the protection of natural environments. Five new protected areas have been announced and 18 are in the works.



2024: 2030 Nature Plan released – in October 2024, following a broad public consultation, the Government of Quebec presented its 2030 Nature Plan to implement the GBF. The Plan reaffirms Quebec's ambition to achieve the flagship target of conserving 30% of land and waters by 2030. It presents the means to achieve this with a consistent action plan and monitoring indicators. Including a target and funding specifically aimed at supporting Indigenous leadership in conservation is of particular interest.



Ongoing: Forgotten Territories in Southern Quebec – 83 protected area projects in various stages of completion, totalling 14,202 km², were set aside in 2020, perhaps to protect economic interests. Now, 24 of these areas are protected, and 7 are close to being completed, resulting in 3,810 km² protected.



Aboriginal-led Protected Areas – the government of Quebec has mandated the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute to conduct consultations for the development of Aboriginal-led Protected Area (ALPA) status created in 2021. Representatives from over 20 First Nations participated and presented their vision of ALPAs. Provisions and guidelines for ALPAs should be published in 2025-2026 based on the results of this extensive consultation.



New conservation tools in the making – following the overhaul of the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*⁵⁴ in 2021, the government of Quebec began developing guidelines for two new conservation mechanisms: protected area with sustainable use (PASU) and other effective conservation measures (OECM). Because of their flexibility, these two tools could lead to important gains in the more densely habited areas of southern Quebec.



Ongoing: Species at Risk – while pilot projects and consultation for caribou herds in Gaspésie and Charlevoix have been announced, an overarching provincial strategy for other caribou populations remains incomplete. Another problematic example is Quebec's lack of recognition of the Eastern Wolf as a species, limiting the possibility of habitat protection in the province, despite protection at the Federal level and in Ontario.



Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species (LEMV) – the opportunity for revising the law has not been acted on; measures to protect endangered species remain very discretionary. The Government has not prioritised this file.



Lack of recognition for IPCAs – despite repeated calls from First Nations, SNAP Quebec and other partners, the government of Quebec still delays formally recognizing IPCAs such as the Pipmuakan and the Magpie River (Muteshekau shipu), which has been declared as an Indigenous and Community Conserved Area.



Lack of governmental cohesion – the mandate of the ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts doesn't include a mission to achieve 30x30. Instead, this is carried mostly by the ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs. This often results in mining claims and other industrial uses of the land hindering designating new protected areas.

Reinforcing Position as Leader, Quebec Continues to Take Positive Action

Quebec remains a conservation leader in the country by establishing an innovative participatory approach and continuing the dialogue on new governance tools with Indigenous Peoples. Since 2021, Quebec has made additional progress on protecting its land base by revisiting some territories of interest in southern Quebec originally set aside in 2020 (the “Forgotten Territories”), and by designating protected areas supported by the Plein aire Initiative through which \$3.3 million was allocated towards local initiatives over 2021-2026. While 3,810 km² of the territories identified in 2020 have been recognized through formal protection mechanisms, another approximately 10,000 km² remain to be addressed. Five new Plein aire Initiative areas were announced (Mount Kaikop, Noire and Coulonge Rivers, Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc, Parc régional Massif-du-Sud, and Zec des Anses, covering 1,085 km² in total) while work on 18 others continues.

A significant new program to achieve 30x30 is the Call for Projects. This uses a simple online form for individuals, groups and communities to submit a proposed protected area, and aims to involve many players, democratizing the conservation agenda. The Call for Projects was deemed a success and included significant participation from local actors. A regional roundtable consultation process is scheduled for 2025 to prioritize areas. Interdepartmental analysis and government decisions will follow, with announcements in 2027. An alternative parallel process allows First Nations to conduct the consultation processes themselves and submit directly to the Minister. The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute is a key partner working to support Indigenous groups in this process. Quebec is planning a second Call for Projects between 2027 and 2030.

There is widespread interest in establishing Indigenous-led protected areas across Quebec and growing capacity and expertise in communities to do so. Important participation in the development of the ALPA guidelines and significant interest in proposing protected areas in the recent Call for Projects is an indication of this. One recent example is also the Innu First Nation of Essipit who have set a goal of protecting 30% of their Nitassinan (traditional territory) by 2030 and have proposed the Essipiunnu-meshkanau project that covers 1202 km² and connects with existing protected areas. The Innu Council of Essipit, who are already co-managing the Akumunan Biodiversity Reserve with the Government of Quebec, hope to have made significant progress toward the designation of this new project by 2025. How the Government of Quebec responds is still uncertain, especially given their continued refusal, despite a decade of advocacy from First Nations and their partners, to formally protect the Magpie River and a decision in April 2023 by the ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêt to allow logging in the Pimlukan proposed Innu Protected Area, a place of great cultural significance for the Innus of Pessamit and habitat of the boreal caribou. However, the Call for Projects represents an opportunity for the government to recognize these self-declared IPCAs finally, and both communities have been invited to submit their initiatives as part of the process.

To have a truly up-to-date and current set of conservation legal tools, the government still needs to modernize key pieces of legislation – its *Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species* (1989) and *Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife* (2002). Likewise, Quebec's forestry regime requires an update; and although there have been discussion tables and some changes to more science-based harvesting, a full overhaul of the legislation is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To maintain Quebec's position as a conservation leader, to support Indigenous Peoples, particularly in efforts to conserve caribou habitat, and to improve industrial practices, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Quebec:

1. Financially support the participation of stakeholders in the different stages of the Call for Protected Areas process.

2. Revise the *Mining Act* – end free entry mining to reduce the presence of mining claims as a barrier to new protected areas.

3. Reform the forestry regime to better take into account climate change and forest fires, caribou habitat, and other uses of the forest, and increase forest contribution to 30x30.
4. Improve general accountability and transparency in reaching 30% and implementation of the Nature Plan to reduce the current perception of these taking place in "black box" and help communities gain a better understanding of the process.
5. Work with Indigenous Nations, communities and organizations for the formal recognition of proposed IPCAs.
6. Sign a Nature Agreement with the federal government so that both governments are aligned on objectives and priorities for the implementation of the new Biodiversity Framework.

In conclusion, Quebec has put forward significant funding for new conservation projects. Support for regional and grassroots initiatives is strong and positive. That said, greater support for and formal recognition of Indigenous-led initiatives and the consideration of Indigenous communities' consultation input for decision-making on industrial development would further foster conservation.



Photo: Nunzio Guerrero

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Quebec^{xiii}

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

- Identified After 2022
- In Progress
- Progress Uncertain

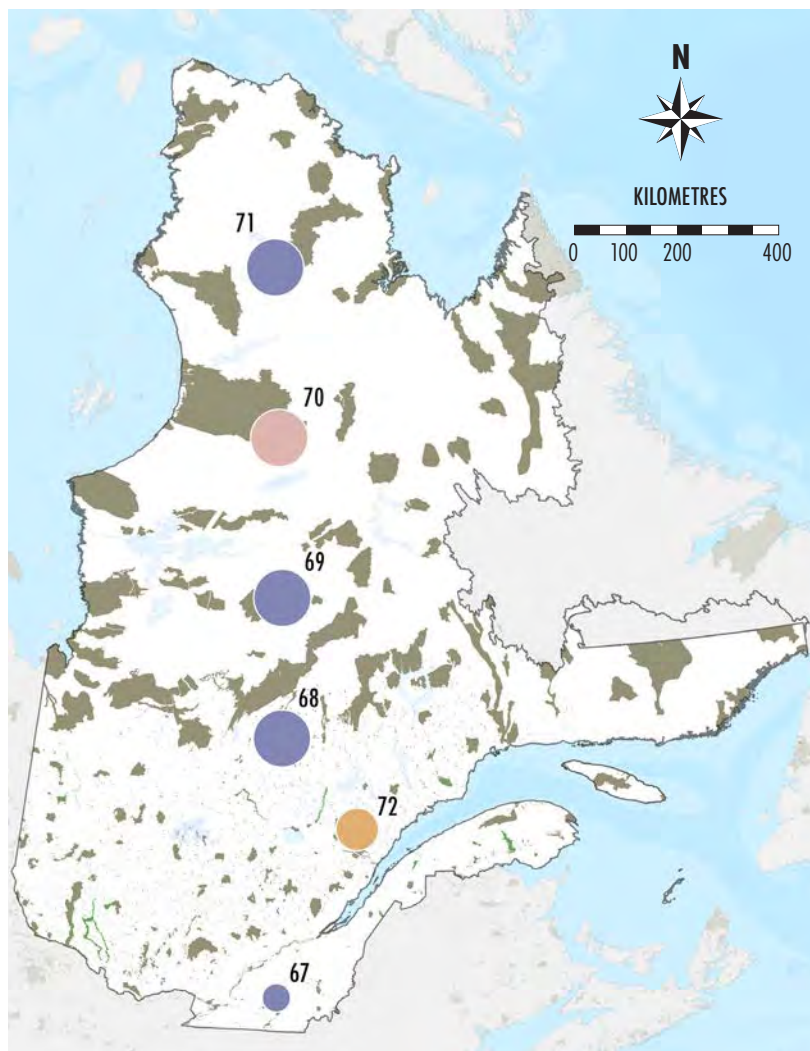
TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1

xiii Map data note: sites 67-71 are not geographically located but are instead generalized representations.



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

67	Forests for Health Initiative (now Plein aire Initiative) Between 2023 and 2024, the Government of Quebec announced its intent to protect 5 Plein aire projects out of 23 (total area protected: 1,085 km ²). In the fall of 2024, as part of the Call for Protected Areas launched by the Quebec government, 9 new projects emerged for a total surface area of more than 6,400 km ² and 27 projects remaining to be protected.
68	Forgotten Territories in Southern Quebec, Including Noire and Coulonge Rivers, Lac Walker and Bas Saint-Laurent sites Some progress: of 83 sites, 24 are protected and 7 are on the way to being designated, resulting in the protection of 3,810 km ² with the goal of additional future protection totalling up to 10,932 km ² .
69	Indigenous-led Protected Areas, including Pimpuakan, Pakatakan, and Mutehekau Shipu-Proposed IPCAs Some progress thanks to the work of Indigenous groups to advance the protection of 22,297 km ² ; international recognition of the Magpie River as Canada's first Indigenous and Community Conserved Area; Federal protection decree currently being developed for Pimpuakan caribou.
70	Species at Risk Critical Habitat Federal decree for caribou habitat protection may apply to some areas; there is potential for conservation of up to 65,655 km ² if all critical habitats were protected.
71	Climate stabilization areas – contribution to 50% target in Northern QC No current proposal associated with the Plan Nord, but ongoing negotiations with Société du Plan Nord are underway. Project funded by ECCC's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund to identify and protect more than 10,000 km ² of carbon-rich ecosystems with several Indigenous communities and the support of the Quebec Government.

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

72	Essipiunnu Meshkanau Project brought forward by Essipit Innu First Nation Council with 1202 km ² proposed for protection.
N/A	Call for Projects Too soon to tell, and includes several IPCA proposals.
N/A	Plein aire 2.0 New areas covered under this initiative could total approximately 30,000 km ² .



NEW BRUNSWICK

2021
B-



2024
B

Highlights and Lowlights



2022 - 2023: Doubling of protected areas achieved – doubling protected areas in New Brunswick fulfilled the province’s commitment to protect 10% of lands and waters. 552 new protected areas covering 3848 km² marked an important stage in conservation in the province as a significant proportion of natural areas are being protected for nature and from industrial development.



2022 - 2023: Nature Legacy initiative – to achieve a doubling of protected areas, the province created an open method of public nominations. This was the first time the government included New Brunswickers in identifying natural areas for conservation on such a large scale. Sites in the Restigouche wilderness, along the Nepisiguit River, on Miscou Island and adjacent to both Fundy and Kouchibouguac national parks received protection. However, many coastal areas, peatlands and drinking water watersheds that were nominated were not protected under the Nature Legacy Initiative.



2024: Conservation Network Plan for Bay of Fundy and Scotian Shelf – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) undertook consultation on a draft plan that identified candidate marine conservation sites and explained the special values that would be protected for each site. The plan is expected to be finalized by Winter 2025.



2024: Commitment in place to protect 15% and plan how to get to 30% – the Government of New Brunswick has committed to protect 15% of NB, and to work with communities, First Nations, and experts to develop a plan to reach 30%.



2023: Lack of relationship building with Indigenous Nations – the Nature Legacy initiative was not completed to meet the expectations, values or needs of Indigenous Peoples and organizations. A strong agreement on reconciliation and collaboration is needed to set New Brunswick on a path for future conservation action.

From 10% to Beyond: New Brunswick's Path to Meaningful Conservation

New Brunswick achieved a significant accomplishment by increasing the province's protected area from 5% to 10%. While this falls short of 30%, only about 50% of the province is public (unceded Crown) land. To achieve its 10% target, the provincial government successfully implemented the Nature Legacy initiative⁵⁵ and received over 1,000 submissions. Nominations from First Nations, conservation groups, scientists, communities, land managers and members of the public made up 76% of the total new protected area, resulting in the creation of 552 new protected areas covering 3,848 km². Continuing this momentum, in late 2024 the incoming government's speech from the throne outlined conservation as a priority by setting a new target to protect 15% of the province's lands and waters. This welcomed objective is supported by a commitment to create a plan to reach 30%.

A good proportion of NB's natural areas are being protected for nature and from industrial development. However, despite support for these conservation efforts, a key opportunity to advance reconciliation with Indigenous communities through the Nature Legacy program was missed. The Wolastoqiyik, Mi'gmaq, and Peskotomuhkati peoples have been the stewards and knowledge keepers of the land since time immemorial. For New Brunswick to move forward with future conservation initiatives, a meaningful agreement that respects reconciliation and Crown-Indigenous collaboration is essential.

The Nature Legacy initiative protected terrestrial and freshwater areas, and although the Federal Government made progress towards completion of the *Marine Conservation Network Plan for the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy Bioregion*, many coastal places adjacent to the intertidal zone—dunes, beaches and salt marshes—remain unprotected. The provincial and federal governments need to collaboratively establish new types of agreements to surmount jurisdictional overlaps and effectively protect coastal areas.

The draft Marine Conservation Network Plan⁵⁶ identifies six areas of high conservation value in the New Brunswick part of the Bay of Fundy. These sites include habitats for rare and endangered species such as the North Atlantic Right Whale and the Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic salmon, saltmarshes and mudflats that are internationally important stopovers for millions of migratory shorebirds each year, and hotspots for whales, seabirds and fish nurseries. Each identified site will undergo a full consultation process with Indigenous Peoples, industries that use the Bay, local communities, and the public. Despite the forward momentum, this is just the first step in a lengthy decision-making process. In addition, specific peatland sites were nominated under Nature Legacy but were not protected due to a potential conflict of interest with the peat mining industry. Given the link between climate change and the biodiversity crises, protecting rather than exploiting peatlands should be a high priority as it simultaneously aids in both carbon sequestration and habitat protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To continue recent conservation momentum through to 2030, to position NB as a leader in Canadian conservation, to better support Indigenous Peoples in their efforts to protect their homelands, and to integrate nature-positive decisions into government actions, CPAWS recommends that the Government of New Brunswick:

1. Complete revisions of the *Protected Natural Areas Act* to adhere to Indigenous rights and sovereignty, and new areas can be protected using this legislation. Furthermore, areas designated under the *Conservation Easements Act* during this revision process should be moved to protections under the *Protected Natural Areas Act* for enduring conservation.

2. Develop a “beyond 10%” plan with the new provincial conservation target. To reach this objective, areas proposed by Indigenous Peoples, citizens, and organizations through the Nature Legacy consultations (including coastal zones, wetlands, and peatlands) that were not protected under the previous target should be prioritized.

3. Use Two-Eyed Seeing to identify and co-establish protected areas with Indigenous Nations.
4. Develop shared governance models and tools with Indigenous Nations to support ongoing co-governance and co-management of protected areas, including IPCAs.
5. Engage communities in stewardship, monitoring, and management of protected areas, and support jobs in these areas of the conservation economy.
6. Adopt conservation best practices across industries in the province to ensure habitats between protected areas are well-connected and resilient.
7. Create a permanent standing agreement between provincial and federal governments, including a working group, to address issues of authority and jurisdictional overlap along coasts, thereby enabling the protection of these areas.
8. Begin negotiations with the federal government to sign a Nature Agreement, with the goal of accessing additional funding to advance conservation in the province.
9. Develop and implement a new long-term Biodiversity Strategy to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and ensure natural areas are resilient and robust in the face of climate change impacts.

In conclusion, New Brunswick has improved their conservation standing by achieving a previous target, and they now need to act on their ambitious commitments for the future. Greater gains towards Canada's 30x30 target will also require strong provincial relationships with Indigenous organizations to support work on IPCAs.

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in New Brunswick^{xiv}

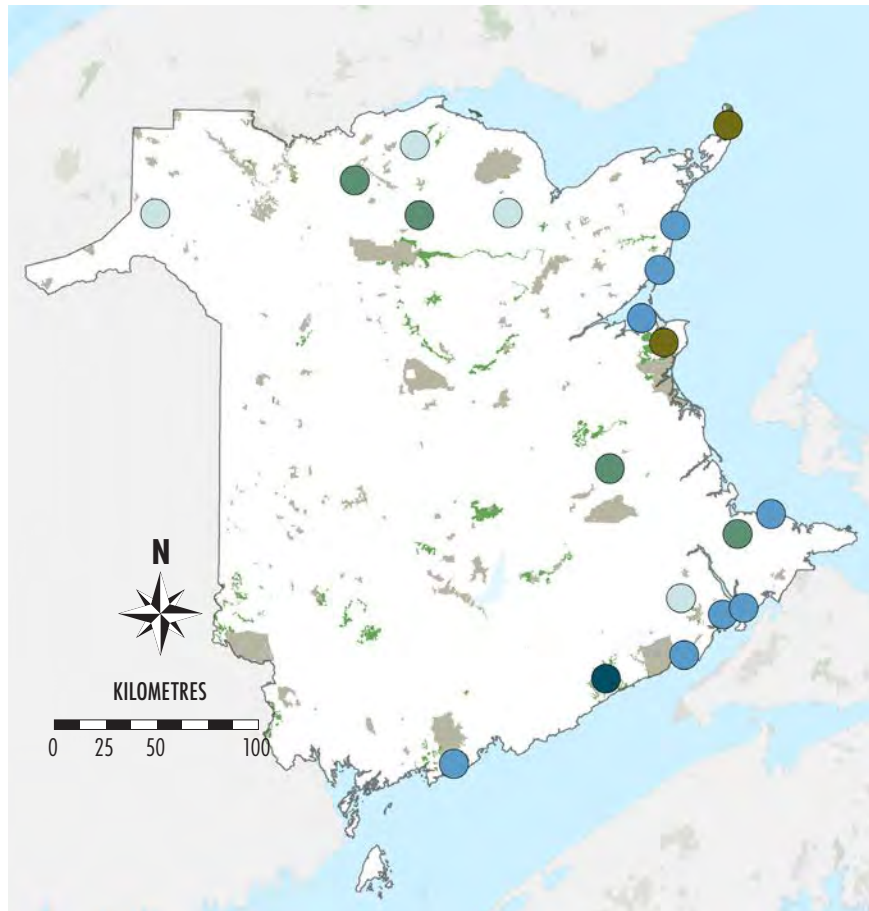
PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

- Coastal Areas
- Drinking Water Watersheds
- Ecological Stepping Stone
- Intact Peatlands
- Salmon River Catchment

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

^{xiv} Map data note: location of new areas identified for conservation provided by CPAWS New Brunswick.



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified
Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

N/A **Nature Legacy initiative, including the Restigouche Wilderness** 552 sites encompassing 3847.89 km², including linear areas along the Restigouche River and Old Growth Forest, are now protected.

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

N/A **New areas for conservation have been identified**, including drinking watersheds (light blue), salmon river catchments (grey), ecological stepping stones (green), intact peatlands (brown), and coastal areas (mid-blue). Provincial government needs to consider these under upcoming new target.



Photo: Arielle DeMerchant

NOVA SCOTIA



Highlights and Lowlights



2022-24: 62 new protected areas established – the Nova Scotia government legally designated 62 new or expanded protected areas since 2022. These designations occurred as “batches” in December 2022, December 2023, and February 2024.



2023: Owls Head Provincial Park defended against delisting – despite attempts to delist a coastal provincial park reserve for a golf course development, the Nova Scotia government rejected the proposal and instead applied protection to the public lands as a legally designated provincial park.



2023: Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes National Urban Park progressing – all levels of government are supportive of the National Urban Park designation for Halifax’s Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes and planning work is now underway for park establishment.



2023: Archibald Lake Wilderness Area designated – the Nova Scotia government formally protected the public lands and waters of Archibald Lake as a legally designated wilderness area in August 2023. This designation prevents attempts by the mining industry to extract water from Archibald Lake for a nearby proposed open-pit gold mine close to the St. Mary’s River.



2023: Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement – the Federal and Provincial governments signed the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement in October 2023. The agreement provides \$28.5 million in federal funding for conservation and requires the Nova Scotia government to protect an additional 825 km² of land by March 2026.⁵⁷



2023: Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy released – the Nova Scotia government finalized and publicly released the *Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy* in December 2023, which provides a roadmap for the province to increase land protection to 15% by 2026 and at least 20% by 2030.⁵⁸



2022-2024: Huge backlog of promised protected areas – the Nova Scotia government has committed to “fully implementing” the existing *Nova Scotia: Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan*, which was completed in 2013. Implementation has been very slow, with over 100 pending protected areas from this plan still awaiting legal designation.

Great Strides but More Work to Do in Nova Scotia

Since 2022, the Nova Scotia government has created 62 new or expanded protected areas, designated as “batches” in December 2022, December 2023, and February 2024. The new protected areas are scattered throughout Nova Scotia and protect rare species, old forests, coastal habitats, significant waterways, and wetlands, providing important conservation values and fostering opportunities for recreation and community enjoyment. Marquee sites include the Sackville River Wilderness Area (8 km²), Archibald Lake Wilderness Area (6.84 km²), and Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve (2.66 km²).

NEW MARQUEE PROTECTED AREAS IN NOVA SCOTIA

Sackville River Wilderness Area contains old forest, drumlin ecosystems, a key wildlife corridor, and intact forests within the Halifax Greenbelt. It is also a popular location for outdoor recreation, including hiking, fishing, biking, and swimming.

Owls Head Provincial Park contains globally-significant coastal barren communities, species-at-risk habitat, remote coastal headlands and estuaries, and temperate rain-forest ecosystems. The area was threatened by a proposed golf course development, and after huge public backlash against delisting the park, the Nova Scotia government applied legal protection to conserve the public lands at Owls Head.

Archibald Lake Wilderness Area is an ecological hotspot that contains old-growth forest and many rare species. It also protects the waters and tributaries that flow into the St. Mary's River, which supports Atlantic salmon, wood turtles, and many other ecologically significant species. The Nova Scotia government protected Archibald Lake Wilderness Area in August 2023, stopping attempts by the mining industry to extract water from Archibald Lake for a nearby proposed open-pit gold mine close to the St. Mary's River.

Photo: CPAWS Nova Scotia



Progress has also been achieved in creating a National Urban Park in Halifax at Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes. Over the past two years, the site was announced as a candidate site for a National Urban Park and successfully passed the feasibility assessment phase for park establishment. The area already contains some measures of protection as a Wilderness Area and through targeted land purchases made by the municipal government and Nova Scotia Nature Trust. Currently, all levels of government support the National Urban Park designation and are collaborating.

In addition to the 62 new protected areas and protection of marquee sites, the Nova Scotia government also set an interim target of 15% land protection by 2026, signed the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement, and finalized the *Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy*. These initiatives lay the foundation for additional protected area establishment in the near future. The Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement provides \$28.5 million in funding to the Nova Scotia government to establish 825 km² of protected areas by March 2026. The *Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy*, publicly released in December 2023, provides a path for achieving the 20% land protection target by 2030 and will help guide the process of creating an updated protected areas plan for Nova Scotia. Work to identify potential new protected areas is underway.

The Nova Scotia government recognizes Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) as a type of protected area that contributes to provincial protected areas targets. They also state their support for the concept of *Etuaptmumk* (Mi'kmaw: Two-Eyed Seeing) in protected areas planning. More work is required, however, to truly prioritize and support Indigenous partners working on IPCA establishment and management. The pending development of a protected areas plan for Nova Scotia will be an important litmus test for the provincial government to centre and prioritize Indigenous-led conservation and decision-making as it works to achieve 20% land protection.

Despite this progress, the provincial government needs to speed up the designation process for the long list of backlogged sites from the 2013 *Nova Scotia: Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan*. About 100 pending protected areas are still awaiting legal protection over a decade later, and the pace of designations remains too slow. The federal funding support provided by the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement and the interim target of 15% land protection by 2026 should help the provincial government work through the long backlog of pending sites promised for protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To maintain the province's position as a leader in Canadian conservation, to better support Indigenous Peoples, and to meet its legal target of protecting 20% of the province, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Nova Scotia:

1. **Prioritize Indigenous-led conservation in all planning processes and provide capacity for the establishment and management of IPCAs.**
2. **Speed up the designation of all remaining pending protected areas from the 2013 *Nova Scotia: Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan*.**
3. **Support the designation of a National Urban Park at Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, including land purchases and the protection of additional public lands.**
4. **Complete an updated protected areas plan for Nova Scotia that achieves the at least 20% land protection target.**

5. Apply interim protections to all proposed candidate sites in the updated protected areas plan.

6. Budget for strategic land purchases for future protected areas and to expand the public land base.

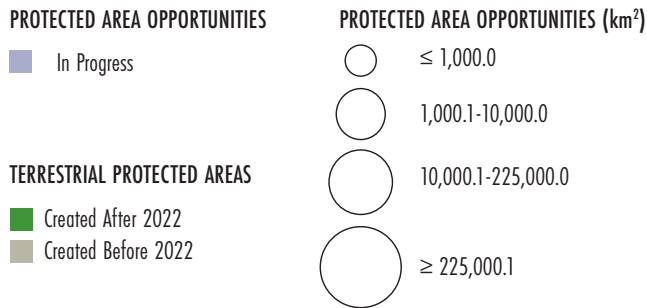
7. Set up an advisory table with Indigenous leaders and independent experts to oversee the implementation of the *Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy* process and the development of a protected areas plan.

In conclusion, the Nova Scotia government has made progress over the past two years creating new protected areas and setting the conditions for future protected area establishment to ensure protected area commitments are met. Noticeable progress on new protected areas and the NUP shows political will for conservation in the province. However, the processes to achieve future conservation and ongoing management of protected areas must include better support for Indigenous-led initiatives, funding for private land acquisition by the provincial government, and expedited processes to clear the backlog of pending protected areas that are awaiting legal designation.

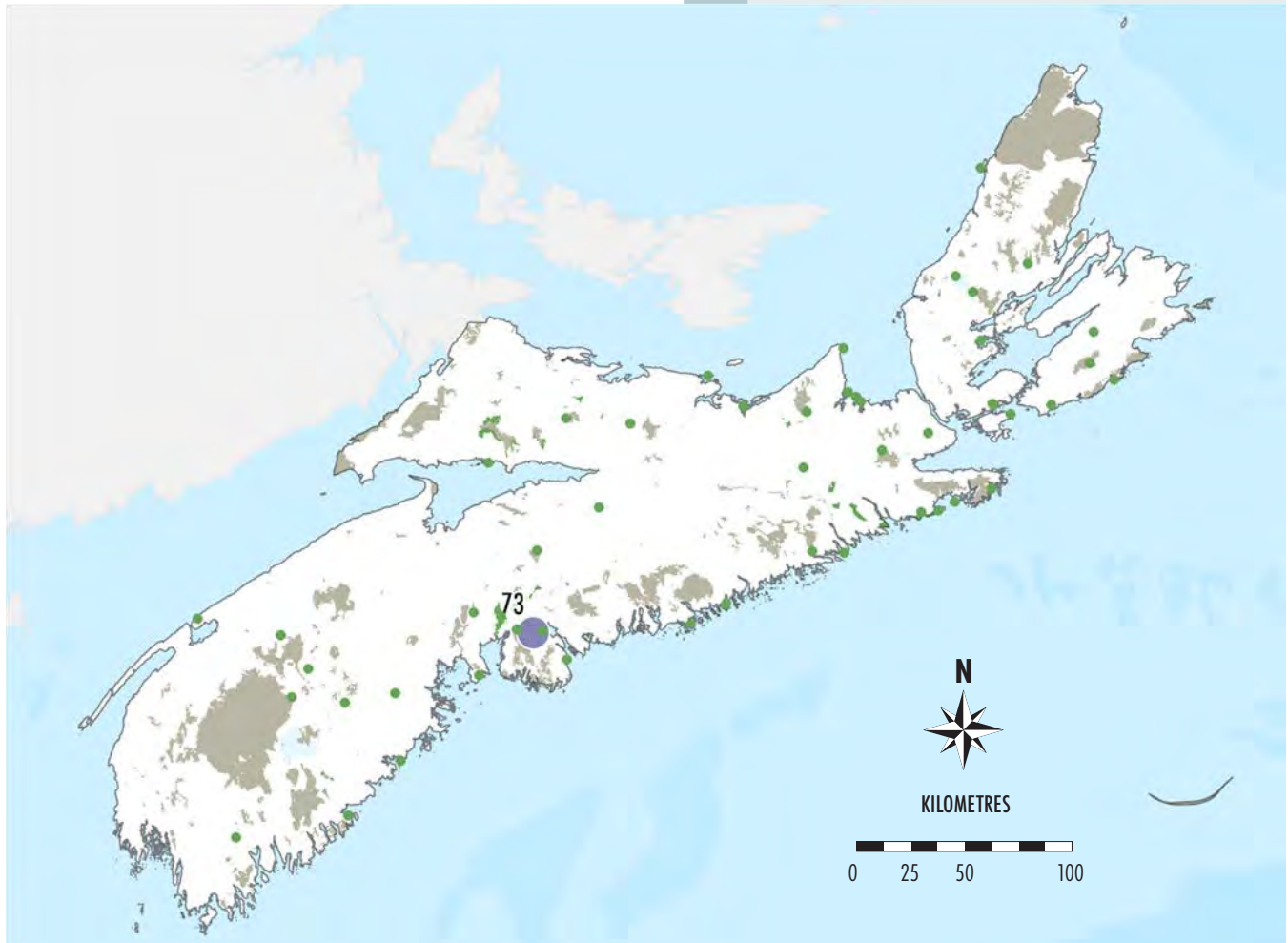


Photo: CPAWS Nova Scotia

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Nova Scotia^{xv}



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified	
New Information on Progress to Protected Area Status	
73	Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes National Urban Park Feasibility study was completed, moving to the planning phase.
N/A	Full implementation of the Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan 62 new and expanded protected areas designated, resulting in protection of 256 km ² .
N/A	Legal target to protect at least 20% of the provincial landmass by 2030 Collaborative Protected Area Strategy released; interim target of 15% protection by 2026 set.



xv Map data note: 62 areas designated in the province’s December 2022, December 2023, and February 2024 protected area batches have not yet been entered into the CPCAD database, however these are depicted as protected areas due to the provincial protected designation. For clarity, some protected areas have been represented as dots. Their shape has been altered and generalized to make them visible at the current map scale. Spatial data from CPAWS Nova Scotia.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

2021

F

2024

D-

Highlights and Lowlights



2024: Little River (Tjinoṭj'ijek) – Miawpukek First Nation (MFN) sought protection for the area due to its significant social, cultural, and historical value. Given the Little River's rich history of traditional resource use and occupation, MFN has been working to advance this as a new IPCA for several years.



2024: Potential National Urban Park for St. John's – the Government of Canada and the city of St. John's signed a Statement of Collaboration confirming a shared commitment to explore options for a national urban park in St. John's.⁵⁹ Improving access to nature for residents and tourists and providing opportunities to amplify and honour Indigenous voices and stories would be key functions of a new park.



2023: Potential Sandbanks redesignation and South Coast Fjords National Marine Conservation Area – the Government of Canada, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, MFN, Qalipu First Nation (QFN), and the Town of Burgeo signed a Memorandum of

Understanding⁶⁰ to jointly assess the feasibility of creating an NMCA and the possibility of redesignating Sandbanks Provincial Park as a national park.



2023: Public engagement to begin on Proposed Provincial Ecological Reserves – the provincial Minister of Environment and Climate Change directed the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) to launch site-specific consultations for four of nine provincially nominated sites identified in 2021 as priorities, plus one community-nominated site. The province has also begun exploring opportunities for sites in other areas of interest. While positive, this crucial next step was two years in the making, meaning progress has been slow and public engagement has yet to begin since the Protected Areas Plan was released in 2020.



2023: Indian Arm Brook Proposed Ecological Reserve – after public consultations had been shelved for many years, public engagement took place for a community-nominated proposed reserve, but this was poorly received by the community due to the perception that many traditional land-use activities may be prohibited. Concerns arising from this process resulted in WERAC creating an overarching document explaining a “new approach” to establishing protected areas focused on increasing opportunities for community input and prioritizing traditional uses.



2023: Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park holdup – there have been no public updates on the Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park since the 2022 *Roadmap to 2030*. Parties are interested but until land claim issues in the area are rectified, progress on the site is stalled.



Ongoing: government prioritization of development over conservation – overall, the government has been slow in designating protected areas, and yet concurrently has accelerated approval of crown land use for controversial purposes, such as wind turbines.

Slow Progress After Years of Provincial Inactivity in Newfoundland and Labrador

Although Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a love of nature, the government has been slow to actively protect both portions of the jurisdiction. After languishing in a 25-year development period, the draft, *A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland*,⁶¹ was released by the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC) in 2020 to mixed reviews. This was followed by WERAC publishing a recommendation report for the plan, emphasizing the need for

implementation planning; improving public engagement, communications and education – including meaningfully involving Indigenous groups; expanding the plan to create a network of protected areas; and managing areas to benefit people and nature while updating the relevant legislation.

In 2022, Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador committed to accelerating the creation of new protected areas in the province. Further to this, signing a Nature Agreement with the federal government as soon as possible would make good on previous public intent to do so. Since 2022, the province has capitalized on a key opportunity by signing an MOU with Indigenous, federal, and municipal partners to undertake a feasibility study for the creation of a national park in the Burgeo area (formerly Sandbanks Provincial Park) and an adjoining NMCA in the South Coast Fjords. In October 2024, a Steering Committee engaged with key stakeholders and the public to seek feedback. In Labrador, no progress is reported on the Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park south of the existing Mealy Mountains National Park, first announced in 2010 with the intention to protect Atlantic Salmon habitat.

IPCA activities have shown progress, though, after years of little to no recognition, Mi'kmaq Alsumk Mowimsikik Koqoey Association (MAMKA) has advanced the discussion of an IPCA in Little River, with an announcement by MAMKA in June. Charlie's Place, another localized IPCA, was established by the QFN community in central Newfoundland. The province, however, has been slow to approve and provide the necessary support to these IPCAs.

Internally, in 2023, the provincial government directed WERAC to advance the establishment of wilderness and ecological reserves by undertaking the public consultation phase for nine sites previously identified in the Protected Areas Plan and prioritized in the 2021 report. This process faltered with engagement for a supplemental site, the Indian Arm Brook study area, nominated about 14 years prior, drawing significant public concern about the prohibition of traditional activities. A decision on this site is pending, but due to widespread misconceptions and confusion over permissible activities and the benefits of protected areas, WERAC committed to a new, public-centred approach. This includes clear messaging and readily available information for the public, addressing two challenges identified in our 2022, *Roadmap to 2030*. This approach is expected to be beneficial in the consultations commencing in 2024 on the proposed reserves. Targeted engagement only began on these sites in 2024, which included creating a landing page through the government's Engage NL platform. Overall, consultation is slow and, considering the sites were proposed in WERAC's Protected Areas Plan in 2020, the delays are unacceptable. If the province intends to contribute meaningfully to Canada's 2030 targets, it needs to act with greater urgency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To maintain the province's improved processes for conservation, to better support Indigenous groups in creating IPCAs, and to better integrate community input and land uses into planning, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador:

1. **Begin negotiations with the Federal Government to sign a Nature Agreement, which should reference the protected areas plan released by WERAC and include a firm commitment to Indigenous leadership in the protection of traditional territories, ensuring that Indigenous voices are central to future conservation efforts.**
2. **Announce a commitment to community engagement, and develop and release a comprehensive engagement plan. This plan should outline strategies for timely and meaningful community consultation in the planning and designation of future protected areas across the province, ensuring that local voices and lands are thoroughly considered.**
3. **Provide dedicated support for Indigenous-led conservation initiatives (a.k.a. IPCAs), through funding and resources. This includes collaborating with Indigenous communities to develop capacity-building programs and ensuring long-term support for their conservation initiatives.**
4. **Set clear conservation targets aligned with national goals and publicly announce and integrate this target into all provincial planning efforts with regular progress reports to ensure accountability.**
5. **Increase transparency of the role of WERAC and its members in the process of designing and establishing protected areas. Additionally, providing WERAC with increased resources and a clear mandate to oversee the implementation of protected area plans would help ensure that the recommendations made by WERAC are promptly acted upon.**

6. Increase capacity within the province's Natural Areas Division by allocating additional staff and increasing its working budget. This would enable the division to effectively manage and expand protected areas, ensuring that conservation efforts are adequately supported and implemented.

In conclusion, the process of creating protected areas has gradually advanced in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly with WERAC's efforts to prioritize and consult on new sites. The provincial government has also made efforts by collaborating on a proposed new National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) and park redesignation. However, much more can be done, and the pace of the government to commit to a protection target, establish, or address any matter relating to protected areas has been extremely slow. Nevertheless, the province is fast to release lands for controversial development uses such as wind energy. Currently, IPCAs rely heavily on federal and ENGO support and there remains a need for greater provincial collaboration and support to fully realize the potential of Indigenous-led conservation initiatives. By seeking a federal Nature Agreement, supporting Indigenous-led initiatives, and improving community engagement, the province can build on its recent momentum and ensure that conservation goals are met.

Photo: Matthew Myler



Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Newfoundland and Labrador

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

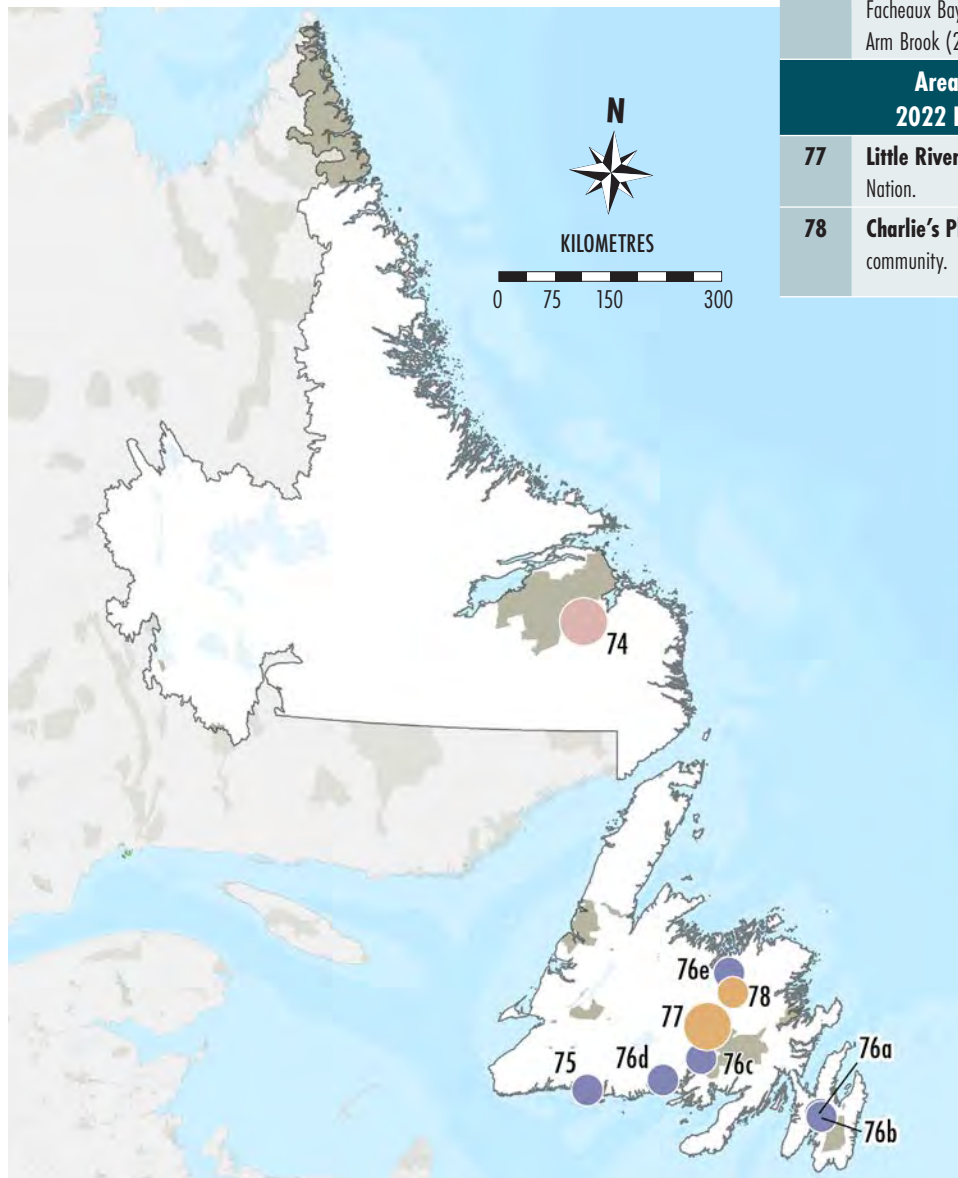
- Identified After 2022
- In Progress
- Progress Uncertain

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

74	Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park No progress on this potential site of 3,000 km ² .
75	Potential national park in Burgeo region MOU signed; steering committee formed; public engagement underway for 2.26 km ² protected area.
76	Protected Areas Plan (potentially 6394.43 km²) Public engagement is underway on 76a Ripple Pond (70 km ²), 76b Halls Gullies (19 km ²), 76c Conne River North (22 km ²), and 76d Facheaux Bay (900 km ²). Engagement completed on 76e Indian Arm Brook (272 km ²).

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

77	Little River (Tjinoj'ijek) Established by Miawpukek First Nation.
78	Charlie's Place – IPCA Established by the Qalipu First Nation community.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND^{xvi}

2024
NA

Highlights and Lowlights



2022 - 2024: New tools – provincial government explored additional conservation tools (e.g. agreements, recognition of good stewardship, and financial incentives) beyond the *Natural Areas Protection Act* and continues work on OECMs with various groups.



2024: P.E.I. National Park – an additional 0.55 km² parcel of land on the Island's North Shore in the French River area was put under the administration of Parks Canada. While this requires adjustment for local users, Parks' focus on ecological protection is of benefit to the coastal ecosystem portion of the area.



2024: Pitumkek National Park Reserve – an agreement was signed between Parks Canada and the Chiefs of Lennox Island First Nation and

xvi CPAWS does not have a chapter office in P.E.I.. Given our lack of on-the-ground presence, we are not assigning a grade to the provincial government. Our review is based on conversations with other eNGOs who work there and publicly available information about recent progress and opportunities to advance protection.

Abegweit First Nation to establish Canada's 48th National Park.⁶² Comprised of a chain of barrier islands along northwestern P.E.I., this area is a culturally important place and an ecologically significant coastal dune ecosystem.



Ongoing: Price of real estate – because much of P.E.I.'s terrestrial conservation occurs through the acquisition of private lands, inflated concepts of land values have limited the ability of organizations working in this area to acquire properties.

New Tools and Collaboration on Private Land Conservation in P.E.I.

Pitumkek (Hog Island Sandhills) National Park Reserve, a 30 km² archipelago and coastal area on the northwestern shores of Prince Edward Island, was established in 2024 through joint work of the Government of Canada and the Mi'kmaq Epekwitnewaq Kapmtemuow (Mi'kmaq Nation Government of P.E.I.), in collaboration with the provincial government and Nature Conservancy Canada and Island Nature Trust. Another increase in public land protection was the 2024 expansion of Prince Edward Island National Park, with Parks Canada now administering an additional parcel of land currently encompassing an agricultural lease and recreational-use beach. Future conservation in the area will be determined by a new P.E.I. National Park Management Plan to be developed throughout 2025, including public consultation.

The Government of Prince Edward Island has consistently provided funding to civil society groups, and recently, greater collaboration has enabled these organizations to collectively strengthen the case for conservation, thereby encouraging more private landowners to participate. Groups have created a loose "securement team," sharing information and aiding landowners in best aligning with an organization's conservation mandate. In addition to the Natural Areas Protection Act,⁶³ which was previously the only mechanism the province had available to achieve new conservation, the provincial government has recently developed new avenues of protection and ways to contribute to 30x30 through financial incentives to landowners and recognition or promotion of good stewardship practices.

Post-tropical storm Fiona hit P.E.I. in September 2022. While this was a traumatic event for many and caused significant damage to forests, coasts and infrastructure, it has also provided the province with an opportunity to rethink and redesign natural areas to augment climate change resilience. For example, the P.E.I. forested landscape was identified in 2019 as one of eleven Priority Places for Species at Risk in Canada. After the damage to forests caused by Fiona, groups took the opportunity to create joint public messaging about dynamic natural processes, succession and maintaining biodiversity management in changing forested landscapes.

As an island province, P.E.I.'s coasts are subject to ongoing impacts from erosive storm surges. To mitigate damage from future events like Fiona, the government commissioned research on coastal protection and received its Interim Coastal Policy Recommendations Report in December 2023.⁶⁴ This recommends, among other items, the development of shoreline management plans and an interim planning policy for coastal development. The P.E.I. government has recently committed to the development of the province's first strategic Land Use Plan and commissioned a "State of the Island Report" as an initial step.⁶⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

To carry on the challenging work of conservation on the island, working with Indigenous Peoples, and supporting conservation initiatives on private land, CPAWS recommends that the Government of Prince Edward Island:

1. Continue collaborative and transparent work with private land trusts, such as the Island Nature Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited, and P.E.I. Wildlife Federation, to protect more private land on the island.
2. Continue work with Indigenous communities to create a strategy to protect and restore more public land and improve the connectivity of protected areas across the island.
3. Continue education of landowners, celebrating good stewardship and enhancing stewardship programs.
4. Look to, learn from, and apply examples of conservation practices from other densely populated islands (e.g. those of Denmark and Scotland) where both agriculture and coastlines are under pressure from climate change.

Overall, conservation in P.E.I. is hard and time-consuming due to population density and newfound climate change pressures. However, collaboration with the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq (Mi'kmaq of P.E.I.) and among non-profit groups, novel government initiatives, and the incremental, small wins of private land acquisitions are moving the needle slowly in a positive direction.

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Prince Edward Island

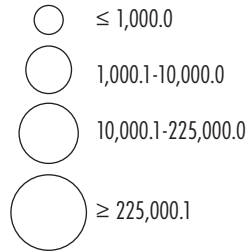
PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

■ In Progress

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

■ Created After 2022
■ Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

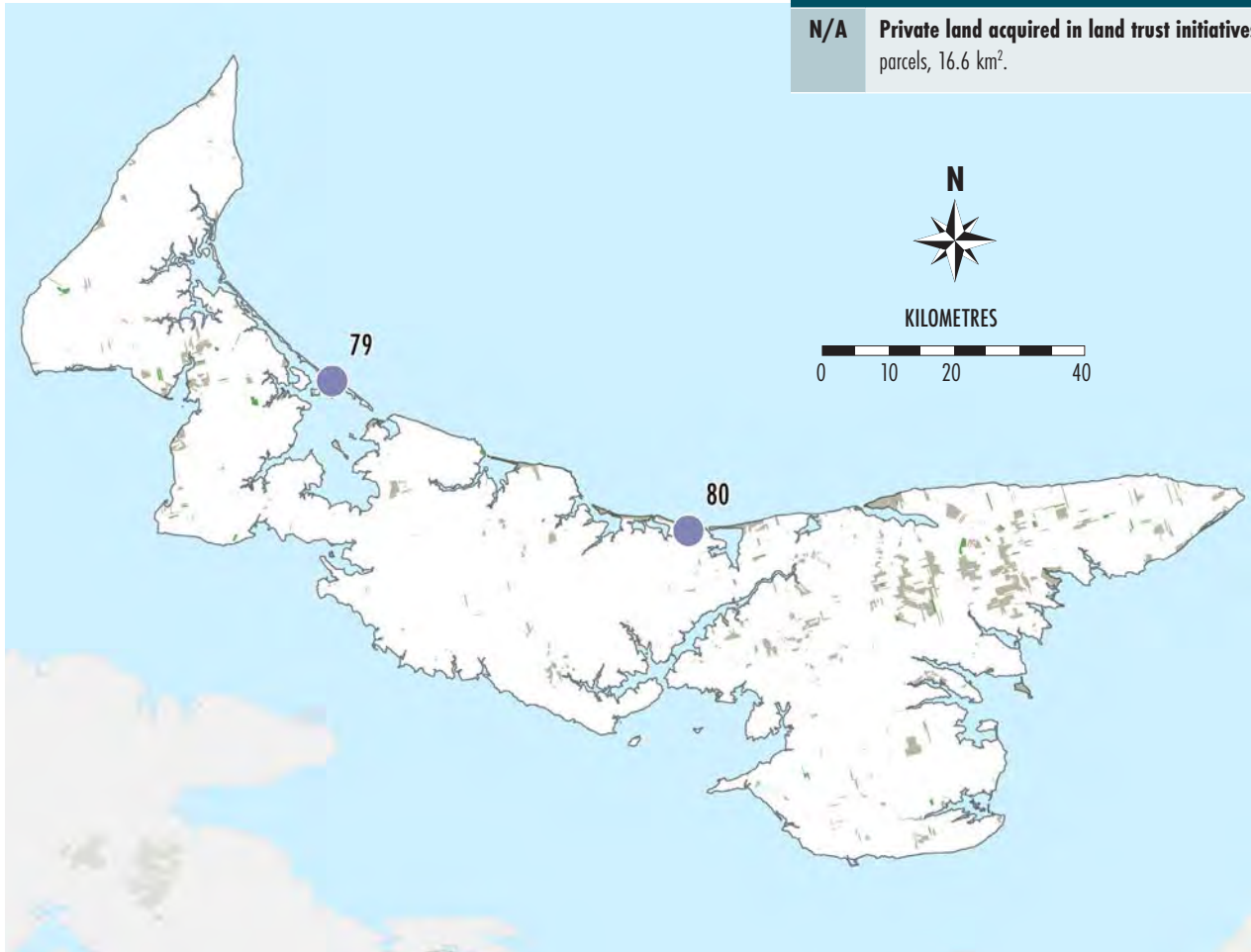


Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified
 Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

79	Pituamkek (Hog Island Sandhills) National Park Reserve Agreement to establish signed by First Nations and federal government for areas of 19.85 km ² (land) and 120 km ² (including water).
80	Expansion of P.E.I. National Park New parcel of 0.55 km ² under administration of Parks Canada as of 2024.

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

N/A	Private land acquired in land trust initiatives 58 parcels, 16.6 km ² .
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NUNAVUT^{xvii}

2024
NA

Highlights and Lowlights



2023: Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan (DNLUP) – submitted by the Nunavut Planning Commission to the governments of Nunavut, Canada, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) for final review and approval.⁶⁶



2023: Qikiqtani-Project Finance for Permanence (Q-PFP) Project – Qikiqtani Inuit Association, DFO and ECCC signed an Agreement in Principle⁶⁷ regarding a shared commitment to work towards the Qikiqtani Regional Conservation Vision through the Q-PFP model. An Advisory Council has been established, a critical step in raising the necessary philanthropic contributions for the Q-PFP.



2023: Aqviqtuuq Inuit Protected and Conserved Area – proposed IPCA led by the Taloyoak Umaruliririgut Association covering

^{xvii} CPAWS does not have a chapter office in Nunavut. Given our lack of on-the-ground presence, we are not assigning a grade to the territorial government. Our review is based on conversations with other eNGOs who work there and publicly available information about recent progress and opportunities to advance protection.

almost 90,000 km² of marine, terrestrial and fresh-water ecosystems, and representing almost a decade of work focusing on protecting the area to ensure sustainable harvest of many species, Terrestrial portions included in the DNLUP.



2020-2023: Qikiqtait Protected Area – to advance conservation planning, a baseline inventory of the Belcher Islands Archipelago was conducted by Sanikiluarmit (people of Sanikiluaq) hunters, harvesters, and environmental monitors. The regional conservation approach of the Q-PFP covers this area.



Delays with the DNLUP – after decades of work and consultation, the DNLUP is now sitting on the desks of three levels of government, awaiting their approval. Until the plan is approved, mining claims can continue to be staked in critical areas identified for protection.

High Hopes for Land Use Planning and Conservation Economies in Nunavut

After 16 years of work and four drafts, it is hoped the 2023 DNLUP will be approved in the coming months to provide certainty for all parties in Nunavut. The current plan recommends two designations: approximately 500,000 km² of “limited use” areas that could be considered towards Canada’s conservation targets and about 500,000 km² of “conditional use” areas covering both land/freshwater and ocean areas. The territory has the opportunity to advance these as permanent protected areas rather than land use designations under the NLUP, securing additional investment and longer-term conservation stewardship of these areas. Throughout the development of the plan, Inuit communities have been consistent and clear that conservation is implicit in their way of living. Thus, protecting wildlife such as caribou, whales, walruses, and birds is critical. Another factor amplifying the urgency for plan approval is that responsibility for land management will begin transferring from the federal government to Nunavut in 2027.

To support the plan, Nunavut will need to see federal investment for two purposes. First, funding is needed for the Inuit Impact Benefit Agreements legally required when conservation areas are created. Second, financing to implement the plan is key, particularly to support the development of an Inuit labour force to fill new jobs arising from the plan. The Government of Nunavut has indicated 10,000 young people will be looking for jobs in the upcoming years, and federal support for secure social conditions would greatly contribute to comprehensive conservation and social goals. This funding would overcome a key challenge identified in our *Roadmap to 2030* to diversify local economies beyond extractive industries.

Beyond the land use plan, Inuit-led conservation projects are also proceeding in parallel. A key goal of the Aqviqtuuq and the Qikiqtait Protected Area projects is to create a conservation economy focused on protecting land and ocean as a foundation for social and economic well-being. Conservation and sustainable harvest will allow communities to focus on local food consumption, rather than expensive and less healthy imports. Overall, there is a strong desire to advance Inuit-led protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To move forward with conservation; support the progress of land management by the Government of Nunavut following devolution; and sustain the socio-economic growth of Inuit communities with cultural connection to the land and ocean, CPAWS recommends that:

1. The required signatories (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Government of Nunavut, Government of Canada) approve and implement the Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan.
2. The federal government allocate secure, sustained funding to support Inuit Impact Benefit Agreements and implementation of the Land Use Plan for long-term stewardship of protected areas.
3. The federal government allocate funding to create jobs (particularly Indigenous Guardians jobs), and support community-based conservation economies.
4. The Government of Nunavut enact policy and legislative changes to promote and support Inuit-led governance models and start the development of territorial legislation now to support the devolution of land management scheduled to commence in 2027.

In conclusion, Nunavut has tremendous potential to protect a significant amount of its land, freshwater and ocean through the Nunavut Land Use Plan. Approval of the plan would support the priorities of Inuit communities and could contribute substantially towards Canada's goal of protecting 30% of land by 2030. The Q-PFP has the potential to support a regional, Inuit-led governance model and identify new protected areas contributing to Canada's marine conservation target.

Mapping out 30% by 2030 in Nunavut^{xviii}

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES

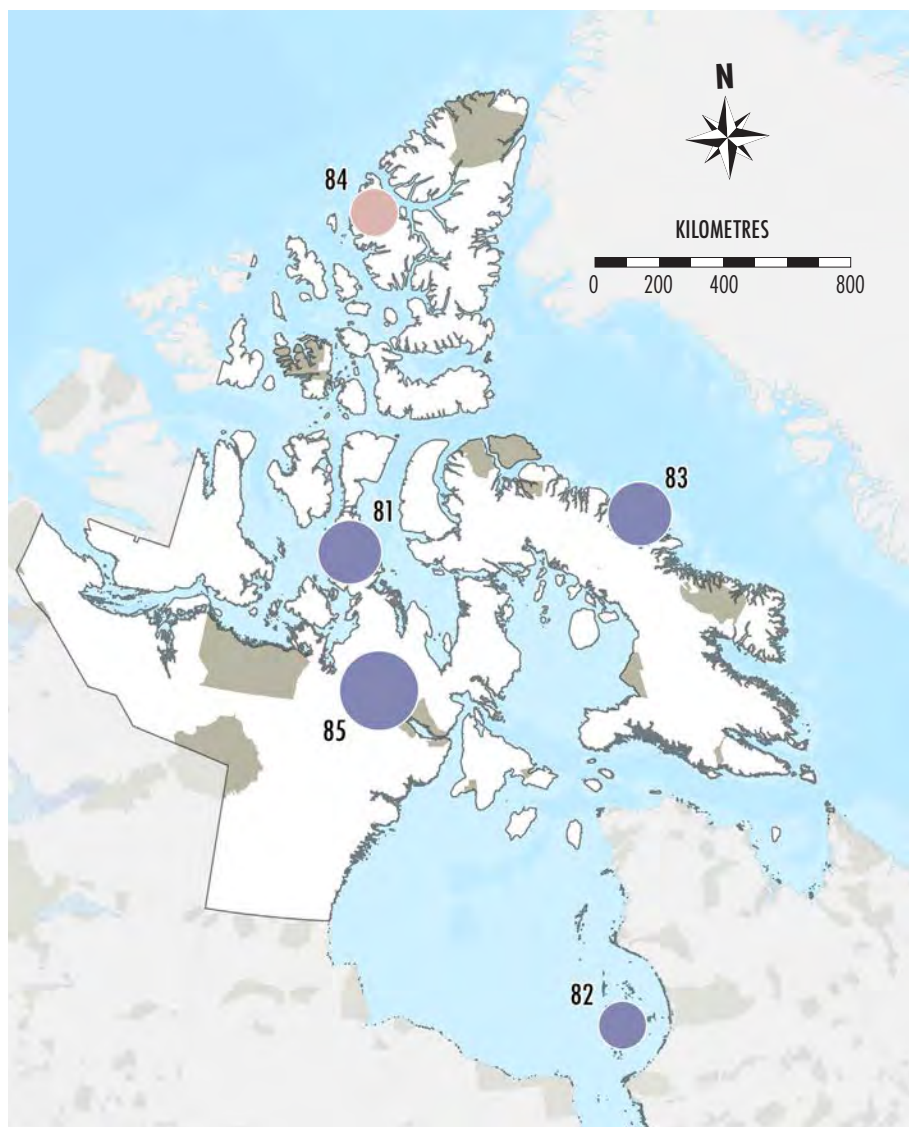
- In Progress
- Progress Uncertain

TERRESTRIAL PROTECTED AREAS

- Created After 2022
- Created Before 2022

PROTECTED AREA OPPORTUNITIES (km²)

- ≤ 1,000.0
- 1,000.1-10,000.0
- 10,000.1-225,000.0
- ≥ 225,000.1



Opportunities for Protection: Areas Previously Identified

Information on Progress to Protected Area Status

- 81 Aqviqtuq Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (Boothia Peninsula), Proposed by the Community of Taloyoak** Draft protections for the terrestrial area put forward under DNLUP; strong investment from DFO towards marine protection; undergoing continued stakeholder discussions on permanent protection and governance of an estimated 45,039 km² of land (including 4,413 km² freshwater) and 40,730 km² ocean.
- 82 Qikiqtait Protected Area in the Belcher Islands around Sanikiluaq** Draft protections for the terrestrial area put forward under DNLUP. The proposed area is 30,000 km² in total, with 2,866 km² encompassing land and freshwater.
- 83 Agguttinni Uumajunut Pimmariuninginnut (Territorial Park), Clyde River, Qikiqtani Region** Master Plan complete in 2022, implementation of 16,465 km² park is underway.
- 84 Napartulik / Napaqtulik (Axel Heiberg Island) Territorial Park, Qikiqtani Region** Unclear on progress.
- 85 Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan** Draft submitted by Planning Commission for review and approval to the governments of Nunavut, Canada, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.; proposes to protect ~500,000 km².

Areas not previously included in 2022 Identification of Opportunities

- N/A Qikiqtani-Project Finance for Permanence (Q-PFP) Project** Led by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, this regional conservation approach includes the creation of several large conservation areas stewarded by local Inuit communities (including 82 above).

^{xviii} Map data note: site 85 is not geographically located but is instead a generalized representation.

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About CPAWS

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is Canada's only charity dedicated to the protection of public land, freshwater and ocean with a strong national and regional presence across the country. We are Canada's leader in conservation with 60 years of success based on our expertise, public education and advocacy, relationships and local knowledge. We are a credible, trusted, knowledge-based, nationally coordinated, collaborative organization, focused on conserving nature to respond to the dual crises of accelerated biodiversity loss and climate change. Our vision is that at least half of land, freshwater and ocean in Canada is permanently protected to sustain nature and people for current and future generations.

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