

Sustainable Use of Biological Resources

Efforts are being made in Canada's resource sectors to address biodiversity issues. Some are described in the section of this report on promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development. The national forest strategy (described in the section of this report on measures to manage, conserve, and sustainably develop Canada's forests) includes measures related to biodiversity conservation. The development of guidelines for forest management to conserve genetic, species, and habitat diversity and the incorporation of specific measures to maintain biodiversity in forest management plans are but two examples.

In keeping with the national forest strategy, industries and governments across the country have launched various initiatives. For example, the Ontario government has developed a conservation strategy for old growth red and white pine forest ecosystems. Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries has undertaken research projects aimed at facilitating maintenance of ecosystem function and biodiversity. The projects address forest biodiversity concerns such as forest fragmentation and old growth. Monitoring and implementation of research results into timber planning and woodland activities are an integral part of the research program, which is evolving as new research questions are identified.

Aboriginal Involvement in Wildlife Management

For a significant proportion of Canada's Aboriginal people, wildlife is fundamental to their culture, traditional lifestyle, and economy. Over the last decade, governments have made progress towards actively involving Aboriginal communities in the management of wildlife.

A number of co-management boards have been established, composed of representatives of Aboriginal communities and government appointees. Within the Northwest Territories and Yukon, these boards have become the main instruments of wildlife management in land claim areas. Boards have the authority to make recommendations to which government ministers must respond. The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board was created as part of the land claim settlement with the Inuit of the Northwest Territories' eastern areas. Through it, Aboriginal people co-manage wildlife in what will become the Nunavut Territory.

Some boards, like the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, have been established to address species, population, or area-specific issues. The products of the process include management plans, legislation amendment recommendations, and study proposals. The Porcupine Caribou Management Board has played an active role in conserving the internationally important Porcupine caribou herd, the range of which extends into the American state of Alaska.

Another example is that of the Quebec government. It has prepared a list of parks, ecological reserves, and wildlife management activities for its northern regions that will involve Aboriginal communities. In 1994, that government and the Montagnais concluded an agreement for the co-management of the Louis-Babel ecological reserve.

In 1994, the Canadian Parliament amended federal wildlife legislation, in part, to reflect a broader understanding of biodiversity. The Canada Wildlife Act, proclaimed in 1973 to enable the federal government to conduct wildlife research and a range of conservation and interpretation activities for wildlife and its habitat, and the Migratory Birds Convention Act, proclaimed in 1917 to implement the 1916 Canada-U.S. Migratory Birds Convention, were both amended.

The scope of the Canada Wildlife Act was broadened from any non-domestic animal to all wild animals, plants, and other organisms. Authority was also established for the protection of marine ecosystems between 12 and 200 nautical miles offshore for the first time in Canadian law. Under the amended Migratory Birds Convention Act, the sperm, embryos, and tissue culture of migratory birds are now subject to the Act, consistent with the Biodiversity Convention. Eggs were already protected.