

In that natural regions are based on biophysical factors they encompass the range of pristine areas values (e.g. biodiversity, wildlife, recreational opportunities, scenic attributes). Therefore, utilizing natural regions mapping to develop a protected areas system is a means to plan for the retention of the pristine areas values associated with individual landscape regions and/or an overall jurisdiction.

PROTECTION STANDARDS

Simply securing a subset of natural region protected areas values within one or more conservation sites is not enough to ensure that these attributes will remain intact into the future. For this to happen, three protection criteria must be addressed:

1) Integrity

The Canadian Council on Ecological Areas defines protection integrity as "the capability of a protected area to support and maintain assemblages of organisms (communities) that have a composition, form and functional organization comparable to that of similar ecosystem types of the region".¹⁶

To date, there are no nationally agreed upon standards in Canada to determine when a protected area is adequately preserved in these terms. Probably the most suitable standard is that developed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN): that no industrial activities be permitted, especially logging, mining, and hydroelectric development. (Although agriculture, hunting, recreational development, road access and other activities can also have unacceptable impacts on natural ecosystems through their direct effects on habitat and wildlife populations, if properly regulated, these impacts can be considerably less than industrial activity.)

2) Protective Status

The second protection requirement involves the need for long-term security of a particular site through formal conservation status designation. Here too, there is no universally accepted standard. Although protection goals need not be confined solely to sites with "park" or "wilderness" designations, the conservation site must have some form of long-term legal status and a specified management authority in order to qualify as "protected." This implies that a wide range of protection mechanisms ranging from private lands managed by conservation organizations through easements or restrictive covenants, to nature reserve zones in official municipal plans, and to national parks established by Parliament under the National Parks Act can all be used to achieve preservation of sites.