

- Established in 1988, the Mine Environment Neutral Drainage (MEND) program is a volunteer, co-operative research effort involving federal and provincial governments and the mining industry. The program provides a scientific, technical, and economic basis for environmental sustainable management of the mining sector by solving problems caused by acid mine drainage.

In addition, the Eco-Research Program, set up under Canada's Green Plan, is responding to the government's commitment to strengthen Canadian research and training on environmental issues. It places particular emphasis on developing a greater understanding of the critical interactions between humans and the environment and how these interactions may best be managed. The research teams assembled under the program, together with their advisory committees, consisting of government, industry, and community representatives, are integrating information from the natural, social, and health sciences and providing a wealth of sustainable development models on large-scale Canadian ecosystems.

In direct response to long-term public concern, Canada has established a number of regional ecosystem "flagship" programs to target some of the most degraded areas across the country. The flagships achieve progress through a multidisciplinary approach involving ecosystem research and technology development. In each case, goals have been defined by stakeholder groups, including all orders of government, universities, industry, and the public.

The Great Lakes 2000 program maintains the highest profile of the regional ecosystem programs because of Canada's commitment to collaborative management of the Great Lakes with the United States under the GLWQA. Scientific research is ongoing to restore local degraded areas, initiate pollution prevention strategies, and conserve ecosystems and biodiversity. Similar research programs are under way around the country, on the Fraser River; the Peace, Athabasca, and Slave rivers; the Arctic; the St. Lawrence River; and the Atlantic coast. Ecosystem indicators and environmental quality guidelines are being developed to track progress made in the improvement of environmental quality in these ecosystems.

Improving Long-Term Scientific Assessment

Canada is reassessing and rationalizing scientific monitoring programs to maintain the databases required for long-term scientific assessments. The development of real-time environmental information services and support for an environmental information network continue. To this effect, the national Environmental Knowledge Network (EKN) is building on several government initiatives to identify sources of environmental information worldwide so that Canadians can both access and contribute information. The network will facilitate integration of environmental, social, and economic information; enhance analysis and interpretation capabilities; optimize environmental assessment; reinforce ability to report environmental information; and increase Canada's contribution to sustainable decision making globally. Other aspects of EKN are described in the section on information for decision making.