

under the convention (Canada's node to the CHM is the Canadian Biodiversity Information Network), the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network, and the North American Biodiversity Information Network. International efforts are under way to create the Global Biodiversity Information Facility. These networks facilitate the sharing of biodiversity information, including taxonomy, ecosystem science, and sustainable use best practices.

## THE PATH FORWARD

The evolution of ecological management in Canada reflects our growing knowledge that the best way to take care of an ecosystem is to manage it as a whole rather than piece by piece. Ecosystem-based planning and management are proving to be valuable tools for sustainable development. We have made progress in advancing understanding of the intricate relationships within and among ecosystems, launching biodiversity information networks, and establishing the partnerships required to support an ecosystem approach. A wide range of activities by private landowners, communities, industries, and all levels of government have successfully demonstrated the application of an ecosystem approach.

Canada faces several challenges in the continued development and expansion of the application of an ecosystem approach. We need to improve our knowledge of the science of ecosystems, preserve and promote the understanding and use of local and traditional knowledge, and expand inventories of biological and physical resources. We also need to strengthen ecological monitoring and assessment and continue building tools and capacity for integrating, communicating, and using economic, environmental, and social information in an ecosystem context. In applying the concept, the greatest challenge is implementation. The next steps must be taken all the way to the front line, and ongoing support must be made available to individuals working on site to meet the targets and goals set out by ecosystem-based policies, plans, agreements, and conventions.

Our success in sustaining the life-supporting services of ecosystems for future generations will depend on our ability to transcend political boundaries and conventional roles and responsibilities to develop a more fully integrated ecosystem-based approach to planning and management.

But how will we know success? Ultimately, Canada's success at implementing an ecosystem approach will be judged in relation to the health of Canadians and the condition of the ecosystems in which they live.

### Sharing Experience and Best Practices

*Canada is sharing its experience in managing human activities within the context of ecosystems through the worldwide network of biosphere reserves and through the International Model Forest Network. The International Model Forest Network was established under the leadership of Canada. There are now model forests in Mexico, Chile, Japan, Russia, and the United States that have adopted the Canadian approach.*