

Mining and Biodiversity

Canadians are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of maintaining biological diversity.

Biodiversity stewardship involves the management of land and activities with proper regard for wildlife, especially wildlife at risk, and habitat. Although some activities to protect wildlife and habitat may be regulated (for example, through species at risk protection); biodiversity stewardship is first and foremost a voluntary commitment to management planning and practices that will help to conserve wildlife and habitat.

Canada is developing a biodiversity stewardship initiative to promote the use of voluntary stewardship activities by natural resource industries to conserve wildlife and habitat. The initiative is intended to promote a biodiversity stewardship ethic within Canada's natural resource industries through the exchange of ideas and best practices. It will also promote partnerships between industry, conservation groups, Aboriginal associations, and communities.

A number of mining companies with operations in Canada are now integrating wildlife and habitat conservation into their project planning, mine development, and closure activities. Many of these companies also support wildlife-related activities outside the mine development area as a measure of their contribution to sustainable development. While some of these activities are regulated, many are voluntary.

Wildlife

The Canadian government, in cooperation with the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo, has compiled the Inventory of Mining Industry Practices to Conserve Wildlife and Habitat in Canada (<http://mmsd1.mms.nrcan.gc.ca/business/inventory>). The inventory catalogues wildlife-related activities of the mining industry in Canada. It is intended as an information source for those seeking to implement their own habitat- and wildlife-related activities, as well as a public information tool.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Commercial mining and mineral and metal activities occur in more than 150 countries. Every nation depends on either exports or imports of mineral and metal products for its industrialization, or both, including environmentally sound technology, equipment, and consumer goods that enhance the quality of life. In many countries, mining contributes to community needs through infrastructure development, medical services, and educational facilities in poor communities.

Canada participates in a number of regional and global mechanisms that encourage dialogue on issues related to mining and sustainable development. Different organizations have opted to explore different aspects, such as innovation, technology development, investment and market access, and trade barriers.