

LAND

This feature on land contains statistics on land use in Canada, showcases some provincial and territorial protected areas strategies, and concludes with a brief explanation of Canada's ecological land classification system and its uses.

Land Use in Canada

In the late 1950s, questions concerning the carrying capacity of land and water, the availability of renewable resources, and the viability of rural communities indicated that the land could not support all the demands placed on it. In 1958, a land inventory program was proposed by the Senate Committee on Land Use. In 1961, the program was endorsed at the federal-provincial Resources for Tomorrow Conference. Consequently, major multidisciplinary projects (e.g., the Canada Land Inventory) and integrated information systems (e.g., the Canadian Geographic Information System) were born. They would form the basis for multidisciplinary land use planning in Canada.

One of the largest land inventories ever undertaken in the world (approximately 2.6 million square kilometres), the Canada Land Inventory is a broad survey of land capability and use for the southern, most heavily settled portions of Canada. Completed in the 1970s, it includes assessments of land capability for agriculture,

forestry, recreation, wildlife (ungulates and waterfowl), and information on actual land use. The inventory is significant as the first major program to assess the carrying capacity of land in Canada and notable for its integration of different assessments of land capability into planning legislation across Canada.

Integrated Land Use Planning and Management

By examining all uses of land in an integrated manner, it is possible to link social and economic development with environmental protection and enhancement, make the most efficient trade-offs, and minimize conflicts. This integrated approach is based on relating sectoral planning and management activities to the capabilities and limitations of landscapes to support various land uses.

The provinces are the major administrators of Canada's natural resources. An integrated rather than sector-by-sector approach to land use planning and management is being practiced in the provinces and territories. In particular, they are devoting attention to developing regional protected areas strategies.

British Columbia has had a protected areas strategy since June 1993. The strategy, entitled *A Protected Areas Strategy for British Columbia: The Protected*

Land use in Canada

Land use class	Predominant activity in the class	Area ^a (km ² , 000s)	% of Canada ^b
Forestry ^c	Active forest harvesting or potential for future harvesting	2440	24
Recreation and conservation ^d	Recreation and conservation within national, provincial, and territorial parks, wildlife reserves, sanctuaries, etc.	756	8
Agriculture ^e	Agriculture on improved farmland (cropland, improved pasture, summerfallow) and unimproved farmland	680	7
Urban	Built-up urban areas	20	<1
Other activities	Includes hunting and trapping, mining,* energy developments, and transportation	6074	61
Total		9970	100

^aIncludes the area of all land and freshwater.

^bRounded to the nearest percent.

^cCanadian Council of Forest Ministers (1995).

^dNational Conservation Areas Database, State of the Environment Directorate, Environment Canada.

^eStatistics Canada (1994c).

Source: The State of Canada's Environment — 1996. (Environment Canada, Ottawa, 1996.)

*Mining occupies 0.03 percent of Canada's land mass. (Source: The Canadian Mining Association.)