

update its policy framework for freshwater. Governments, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and individuals all have important responsibilities and must work together to protect water quality and use water wisely.

Canada's **marine ecosystems** are vast and diverse, supporting many different activities. Under the Oceans Act (1997), Canada is moving toward a national oceans management approach based on sustainable development, a precautionary approach, and the integration of activities occurring in and impacting on our oceans. The act also sets the framework for an ecosystem approach to the management of Canada's oceans and oceans resources. Its call for collaboration and cooperation will ensure that oceans management activities include the meaningful participation of provincial and territorial governments, coastal communities, Aboriginal organizations, and other oceans stakeholders.

Canada's Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat (1986) provides direction for interpreting the broad powers mandated in the Fisheries Act consistent with the concepts of sustainable development and the ecosystem approach. The overall objective is to achieve a "net gain of the productive capacity of fish habitats" through the conservation, restoration, and development of fish habitat. The policy emphasizes the importance of integrated planning to ensure that the fish habitat plans are implemented with sufficient knowledge of the current and future demands of other natural resource users. Implementation strategies include protection and compliance, integrated resource planning, scientific research, public consultation, public information and education, cooperative action, habitat improvement, and habitat monitoring.

Air pollution continues to be a serious threat to health and the environment despite improvements in Canada's air quality. One area where smog is affecting human health is the Georgia Basin, British Columbia. The health costs of fine particulate, a component of smog in the basin, are forecast to reach \$1.5 billion by 2005. To improve understanding of how pollutants move through the web of living things by ecosystem interactions, the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative sponsored scientific research into pollution levels, processes, and impacts across the Georgia Basin. The research shows that some of these aerosols drift naturally from the oceans, while urban air emissions contribute to others. Also, increased pollution is found inland as prevailing winds pick up increasing amounts of sulphur and ammonia emitted by industry, transportation, and agriculture. This information will provide the basis for making adjustments to basin activities to improve air quality.

Clean Air

Air quality is a core environmental issue for all Canadians. Scientific studies have recently concluded that at least 5000 Canadians die early deaths every year due to poor air quality. Thousands more will see their doctors or visit clinics and emergency rooms with bronchitis, asthma, and other breathing problems. Children and the elderly are most at risk. Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism. Major urban centres routinely issue air quality advisories during summer due to smog. Canada intends to move toward higher standards for clean air, which are essential to the health of Canadians. We have already introduced higher standards for sulphur in gasoline. New Canada-wide standards for ozone and particulate matter will be formulated through federal/provincial/territorial ministers.