



STRATEGIC GUIDELINES FOR QUÉBEC
PROTECTED AREAS

We Take Growth Seriously!

2011-2015 PERIOD

Québec 





1. Background

On April 20, 2011, the Government of Québec adopted strategic guidelines to enable it to reach its objective of bringing the network of protected areas to 12% of the area of the province by 2015 by creating new protected areas or enlarging existing ones. In all, the target network represents an area that will be more than 200,000 square kilometres in size.

The new strategic guidelines confirm the government's commitment to pursuing its efforts to maintain and protect biological diversity. They will serve as a framework enabling the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks to implement an action plan on protected areas and reach the 12% objective that aims at improving the quality of the network of protected areas.

In October 2010, Québec participated in the Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan, at which the 165 countries that ratified Convention on Biological Diversity agreed to increase the area of land and marine zones requiring protection measures to 10% and 17% respectively by 2020. Implementation of the strategic guidelines that Québec has just adopted directly follows the Nagoya decisions. Québec is in this sense taking its place among the leading proactive governments of the planet in the field of creating a high quality network of protected areas.

The Québec network of protected areas currently covers 8.35% of the province. The next challenge will be to protect biodiversity on more than 64,000 additional square kilometres of the territory.

Among the government's previous commitments in the field of the protected areas network was a report on to what degree objectives related to protected areas and safeguarding the representativeness of biological diversity have been achieved. *The Overview of Quebec's Protected Areas Network – Period 2002-2009* was prepared with this in mind and made public in May 2010. It made possible a comparison between the current situation and the situation that pertained prior to 2003. The resulting observations and the numerous consultations that were held, enabled the government to set new guidelines in order to reach the goal of creating protected areas on 12% of the territory of Québec by 2015.



To allow the size of the network of protected areas to reach 12% of the total area of Québec by 2015, the Government of Québec has adopted the following strategic guidelines based on five themes.

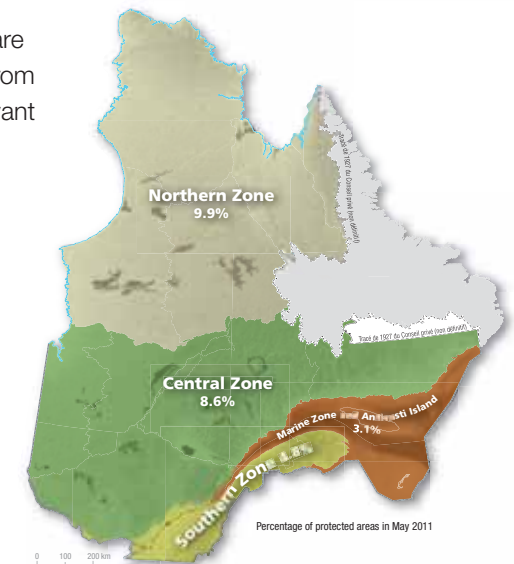
2. Strategic Guidelines for Protected Areas

Theme 1. Representativeness of the Network of Protected Areas

The Government of Québec will complete the representativeness of the network of protected areas by adding both rare and common elements of biodiversity that are under-represented in the current network. The guidelines will emerge from observations reported in the Overview of Québec's Protected Areas Network – Period 2002-2009 and any other relevant information.

Enhancements to the network of protected areas will be made in four major geographic zones (Southern, Marine, Central and Northern). Each of these zones possesses unique characteristics and faces unique challenges. This approach allows for the implementation of actions that target recognized biodiversity challenges in Québec. The governmental guidelines for the four zones are as follows:

- **Southern Zone:** In partnership with regional planning and development authorities, ensure a broader presence of protected areas, in particular through the use of a wider range of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) management categories such as endangered or vulnerable species' habitats, human landscapes or other protected areas where sustainable use is made of natural resources
- **Marine Zone:** Aim for protection coverage in the order of 10%, which will enable the international target for 2020 that was agreed to at the last Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to be met. To this end, establish a round table on marine protected areas composed of ministries and organizations that work in this field of endeavour, dedicated to finding solutions to issues that are specific to the St. Lawrence, match strategies with knowledge acquisition studies and, eventually, with hydrocarbon exploration and extraction; provide the government with the necessary legal tools that initially give priority to measures that will reserve areas of interest with minimal regulatory intervention
- **In the Central Zone,** first complete the representativeness of the network by adding tightly defined conservation areas (IUCN categories I to III) that will enable improved representation of old growth forest massifs and more efficient protection of the habitats of endangered or vulnerable species; improve the efficiency of the network by adding areas in categories IV to VI in order to reach protected areas that are equivalent in total size to 12% of the lands in this zone
- **In the Northern Zone,** create protected areas on the equivalent of at least 12% of these lands, in particular by protecting environmentally significant aquatic ecosystems and large ecosystems that are sparsely represented or unrepresented, through the use of IUCN categories IV to VI areas and other measures



Theme 2. Consolidation of the Network of Protected Areas



The Government of Québec will consolidate its network of protected areas by:

- Protecting conservation cores capable of safeguarding wildlife species that are particularly sensitive to human activities. In this regard, the Government of Québec will aim to protect a large land area that matches the conservation requirements of a particular species, for example, woodland caribou, and will assess opportunities to extend protection to an additional large “wilderness” area covering more than 10,000 km²
- Maintaining or enhancing connectivity between various protected areas and reducing the size of human encroachment between them
- Protecting ecosystems and species that are the most sensitive to climate change or ecosystems that are threatened with extinction due to human activity
- According new protected area status with sustainable use of resources that meet IUCN management categories IV to VI

Theme 3. Governance and Participation by the Public and Aboriginal Communities

The Government of Québec will continue to employ a transparent process of public participation at all stages leading to the creation or enlargement of protected areas and, to that end, will:

- As much as possible, match the creation of new protected areas with regional land planning processes, particularly where regional elected councillors have responsibility, while fully respecting existing governance tools and acting within the framework of the integrated regional approach used by the ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune
- Continue the process of consultation with First Nations upstream of the decision-making process for creating protected areas and the consideration of their rights and concerns in regard to the creation and management of such areas

The Government of Québec must also ensure that the appropriate ministries match the process of creating protected areas with land development and resource allocation planning procedures within the perspective of integrated management of land and resources, of which protected areas are an integral part. This matching process includes procedures developed as part of Plan Nord measures and recognition of agreements signed with First Nations and their various communities.





Theme 4. Socio-economic Issues

The Government of Québec will also ensure that socio-economic issues are taken into account when implementing the 2011-2015 Action Plan on Protected Areas, particularly when considering existing land rights, potential economic repercussions on resource sector companies, social repercussions on communities and current and future land access needs.

Theme 5. Scientific Knowledge

The Government of Québec will continue to update and acquire new knowledge required for planning, particularly in regard to setting up selected research programs, such as the one on adapting to climate change, and for the design and management of the network of protected areas in Québec. When the 2011-2015 Action Plan on Protected Areas has been completed, the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks will prepare a report on the performance of the protected areas network (Overview 2010-2015).



3. The 2011-2015 Action Plan

As part of the department's 2009-2014 Strategic Action Plan, the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks is committed to establishing a ministerial strategy on conservation of biodiversity that includes four action plans for the 2011-2015 period, one of which will specifically bear on protected areas. This action plan will be implemented in cooperation with appropriate government partners (in particular, the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife), regional partners and Québec First Nations.



Front cover photos

Rodolph Balej
Marc-André Bouchard, MDDEP

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- P. 2 : Rodolph Balej,
Université McGill
Heather Milligan
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Norman Dignard, MRNF
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Marc-André Bouchard, MDDEP
- P. 7 : Rodolph Balej
Stéphane Cossette, MDDEP

**For information, please contact the
Centre d'information du ministère
du Développement durable,
de l'Environnement et des Parcs.**

Telephone: 418 521-3830
1 800 561-1616 (sans frais)
Fax: 418 646-5974

Email: info@mddep.gouv.qc.ca
Internet: www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca

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