

Comments on the proposed Rivière-Dumoine Aquatic Reserve at BAPE public consultation, 23 January, 2013

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We encourage and support the plan to create a biodiversity reserve along the Dumoine River. The type of biodiversity reserve that is chosen, the Aquatic reserve, has regulations that the local people can abide by and yet it provides some biodiversity protection.

Development on the Rivière-Dumoine Aquatic Reserve should be directed towards protection of biodiversity with support for minor projects in areas such as education and interpretation, ecotourism and adventure tourism. We have concerns regarding motorized activities and permanent overnight accommodations, both of which are can be harmful to biodiversity. Motorized access should be carefully limited and minimized.

The relatively large size of the Rivière-Dumoine Aquatic Reserve (1,445 square km.) should be helpful in maintaining connectivity of habitats for plants and animals, especially in the north/south axis. However, the protection of biodiversity within the reserve is dependant to a large extent on the environmental conditions of the surrounding territory, as species range east/west as well. This problem is particularly acute in the very narrow section in the lower part of the reserve. More territory should be included into the Reserve at this point, even though it has been degraded by logging and roads in recent years.

The eight "refuges biologiques" that were removed in 2009 should be restored in the areas surrounding the Rivière-Dumoine Aquatic Reserve. These future old-growth forests will enhance the biodiversity preservation for the entire area by their proximity to the Aquatic Reserve.

Other issues:

Present network of protected areas: The current network is still lacking in connectivity and future plans toward the 12 % goal should focus upon connectivity of habitats. Deer-yards should not be included in calculations of protected areas because large deer populations are a threat to biodiversity, and because deer yards are logged and have road construction. Invasive species, such as turkeys, should not be introduced because they disrupt the established ecological balance and diminish native biodiversity. We need more protected areas in southern Québec, where there are more threatened and endangered species. Deer-yards are in southern Québec; counting deer yards as protected areas therefore reduces our ability to protect threatened and endangered species in Québec.

The process of developing protected areas would be improved by the MDDEFP doing more public education. This should include both in-person information sessions and internet resources: webinars, pictures, maps and texts in two languages.

Our experiences with the BAPE process have been positive. The format of consultation involving a wide-variety of stakeholders: both lay-persons and experts. The BAPE process is democratic and is an effective way to reach a conclusion that reflects the needs and wishes of a wide range of stakeholders.