

## 2 Historical background of conservation and comprehensive overviews of the protected areas

### 2.1 Outside Québec

While in 2003, the proportion of terrestrial protected areas the world over was estimated at between 9% and 10% (Jenkins and Joppa, 2009; Coad *et al.*, 2009a), the most recent complete compilation, produced in 2008, estimates the proportion at 12.2% (BIP 2010). According to the same sources, the proportion of protected areas in territorial offshore zones increased from 0.5% in 2003 to 5.9% in 2008, as against only 0.5% of the extraterritorial seas. According to the World Database on Protected Areas, the proportions of terrestrial and offshore zones in 2010<sup>4</sup> stood at 12.7% and 7.2%, respectively. During the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the *Convention on Biological Diversity* held in Nagoya, Japan, the parties set as their objective to preserve by 2020 at least 17% of terrestrial zones and 10% of offshore and coastal zones by means of ecologically representative, properly connected networks of efficiently managed protected areas.

At the 1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, the Government of Canada signed the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD). The proportion of protected areas in Canada appears to have increased subsequently between 2000 and 2005, to 9.9% in terrestrial environments, as against 0.5% in marine environments (Government of Canada, 2005). According to the Conservation Areas Reporting and Tracking System (CARTS) (Environment Canada and the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas), the proportion of protected areas in Canada was estimated at 6.51% for the territory overall as of March 2011. More precisely, 9.65% of Canada's land area is protected, compared with 0.83% of the sea area, defined as inland saline waters, territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone.

### 2.2 In Québec

While Québec's first protected area was established in the late 1890s (the Parc de la montagne Tremblante), it was only in the 1970s, with the advent of the international biological program and the adoption of the *Act respecting ecological reserves* (1974) and the *Parks Act* (1978), that the development of a network of protected areas as we now understand it began. Until the early 2000s, the expansion of the network of protected areas hinged, by and large, on the expansion of the network of provincial parks, of which, on average, one new one was established each year.

In November 1992, the Québec government officially adhered to the objectives of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and decided to implement the objectives in its territory. Québec committed itself to acting in the realm of conservation, in particular by developing a network of protected areas and elaborating guidelines concerning the choice and creation of protected areas in respect of which specific measures must be adopted to protect biological diversity in the territories.

In order to attain the objectives of the CBD, in 1996 the Québec government adopted a strategy on biological diversity, which it revised in 2004. Moreover, in order to apply the Convention, in 1999 it produced a review of the Québec network of protected areas. The review highlighted that Québec was lagging significantly in biodiversity conservation. Indeed, in 1999, the protected areas totalled less than 3% of Québec's territory and most of them were of small geographic size and concentrated in the St. Lawrence Valley. Moreover, three very big protected areas alone accounted for over half of the total geographic area of the network at the time. The three protected areas were declassified when Québec's Register of Protected Areas was published since they no longer reflected the international criteria that define protected areas. The review also emphasized the absence of a genuine strategy governing the establishment of a network of protected areas. This observation prompted the Québec government to adopt, in June 2000, the first PASAP.

During the 2000s, Québec adopted ambitious objectives concerning the establishment of protected areas and adopted new legal tools to do so. Accordingly, in December 2002, the National Assembly adopted the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*. The Act marked a turning point in the history of conservation in Québec by creating new forms of status for protected areas, in particular, biodiversity reserves, aquatic reserves and man-made landscapes, which allow for the protection of biological diversity in vast territories in light of their distinctive ecological and social traits while facilitating the sustainable, ecosystemic use of the territory. Moreover, the Act makes provision for temporary but legal protection (proposed biodiversity reserve and proposed aquatic reserve) of certain territories, which is an effective legislative tool since it makes possible the prompt safeguarding of territories of ecological interest. Through the tools, the proportion of protected areas in Québec, which stood at 2.88% (48 061 km<sup>2</sup>) in 2002, increased to 8.35% (136 234 km<sup>2</sup>) in 2011, although the number of territories initially recognized as protected areas were not recorded in the Québec Register of Protected Areas published in 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The data exclude Antarctica.

On March 29, 2009, the Québec Premier announced a new target of 12% of Québec's territory set aside as protected areas by 2015 and the government adopted an orientation brief to structure the initiatives that will facilitate the attainment of this objective. Such an objective means that the percentage appears to approach the current international average as regards protected territories.