

Overview

Protected Areas Network in Quebec

Background

In 2000, the Government of Quebec adopted strategic orientations to set up a network of protected areas:

- a) set up a network of protected areas representative of Quebec's biodiversity;
- b) take into account the socioeconomic conditions of the population and its communities;
- c) protect 8% of the surface area of Quebec by 2005 (revaluated to 2008).

Since 2000, what has been done?

In order to succeed, the *Strategic Plan of Action for Protected Areas*, adopted by the Government in 2002, proposed different measures:

- A) Implementation of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act that creates and provides for three new protected areas statutes: biodiversity reserve, aquatic reserve and man-made landscape.
- B) Through protection and management measures, guarantee the permanent protection of 47 territories (29 000 km²) that, since 2002, have been temporarily protected as proposed biodiversity and aquatic reserves. Permanent protection of these territories will be achieved through the elaboration of detailed conservation and management plans and through public hearings as to ensure the adoption of planned protection statutes and conservation and management plans. These 47 territories are located in the Côte-Nord, Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean, Baie-James and Abitibi-Témiscamingue regions.
- C) Pursue the identification of new protected areas in the following regions: Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean, Hautes Laurentides, Mauricie, Outaouais, Basses terres du Saint-Laurent, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Gaspésie and Northern Quebec, in order to add 36 500 km² to the existing network. These new protected areas should guarantee the preservation of aquatic, estuarine and marine ecosystems.

Encourage and support voluntary protection of natural habitats on private lands, through an increased flexibility of the recognition mechanism for applicants and a regular financial support program for persons or environmental groups or organisations.

Today, 5,8 % of Quebec's territory is protected. Figure 1 shows the current protected areas network as of October 1st, 2006.

Objective 2008: what must be done?

By 2008, various tasks should be achieved to complete the protected areas network:

- a) Complete the current network by protecting an additional 36 500 km²;
- b) Ensure the implementation of minimal management and protection actions;
- c) Identify new territories of interest that are representative of the biological diversity and acceptable socioeconomically;
- d) Integrate the public participation throughout the implementation process (selection, protection and management);
- e) Conduct significant investments as to protect and ensure minimal management for these new protected areas.

Moreover, these challenges should be met without compromising the local and regional economy.

The geographical distribution of the protected areas network within the thirteen natural provinces of the ecological reference framework (identification and selection reference frame) and within Quebec's administrative regions is presented in Figure 2. The protected areas' percent coverage of both administrative entities is presented in Figures 3 and 4.

Protected areas of the Plateau-de-la-Basse-Côte-Nord natural province

The proposed Belmont and Magpie Lakes Massif, Sauterelles Lake Knolls, Guernesé Lake Foothills and Brador Hills Biodiversity Reserves are located in the natural province of the « Plateau de la Basse-Côte-Nord » and in the administrative region of the "Côte-Nord".

Since June 2002, several proposed protected areas have been created in the Côte-Nord region, which currently protects 10.5 % of the natural province of the « Plateau de la Basse-Côte-Nord ». This natural province covers the eastern part of the administrative region. The Côte-Nord region holds seven proposed biodiversity reserves, one proposed ecological reserve, one ecological reserve, one Canadian national park reserve and other permanent protected areas that have been previously created under other statutes (Figure 5). Two Quebec national park areas are also under study. When completed, the network of protected areas will preserve a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems representative of this natural province.

*Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP)
10 October 2006*

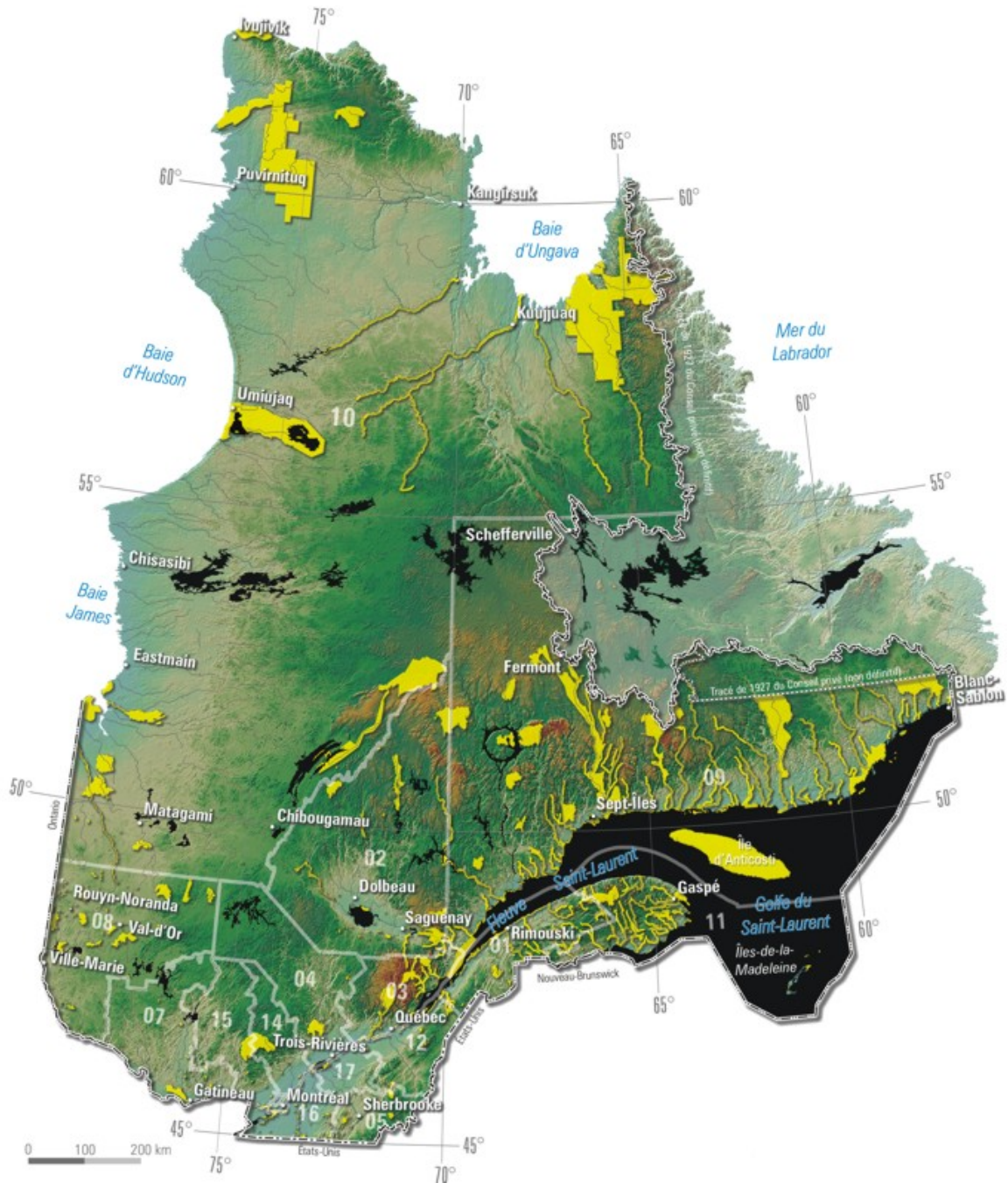


Figure 1: Quebec protected areas network as of 10 October 2006.



Figure 2: Natural provinces of the ecological reference framework and Quebec administrative regions.

Province naturelle

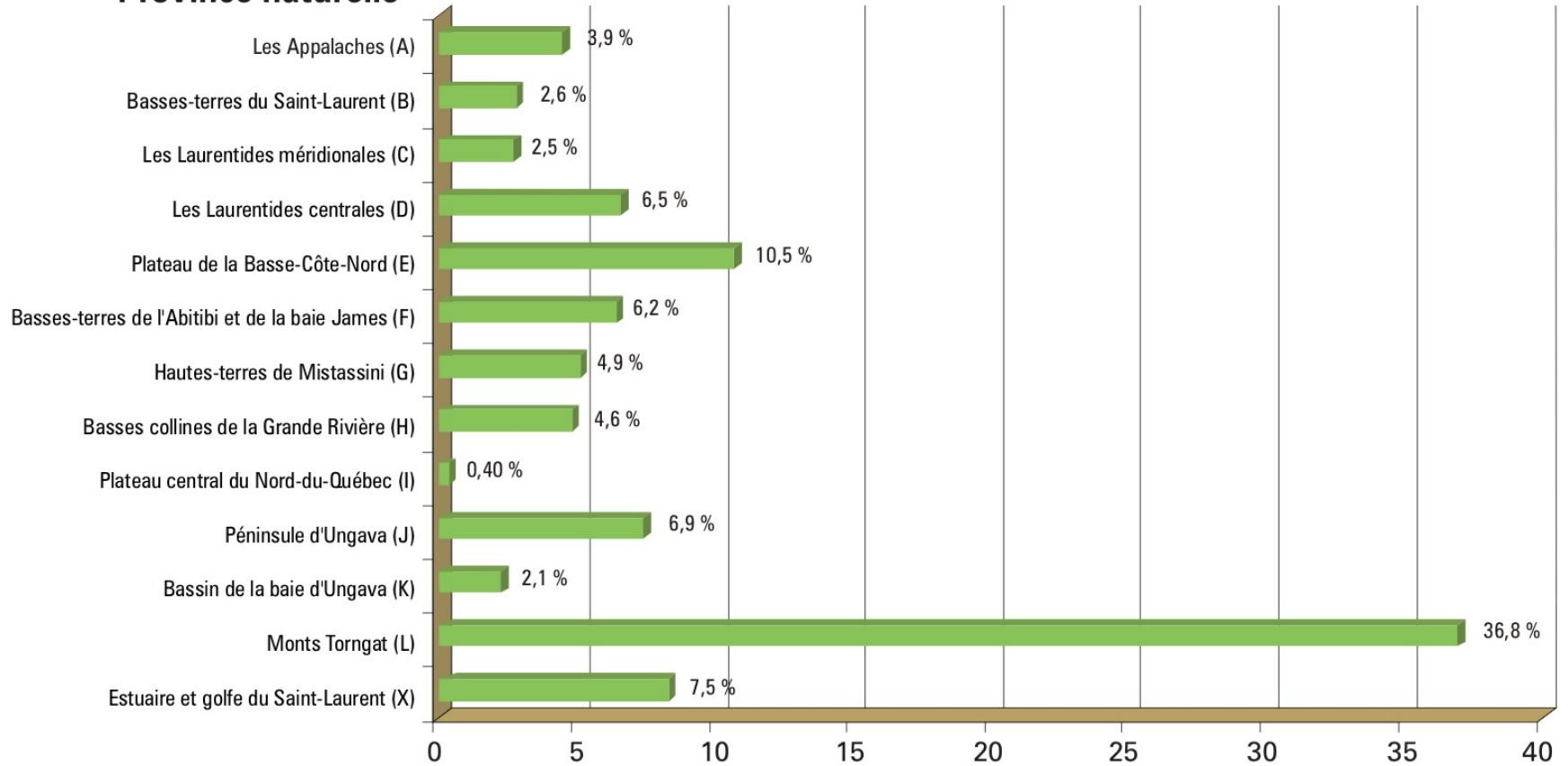


Figure 3: Percent coverage of protected areas within each natural province (10 October 2006).

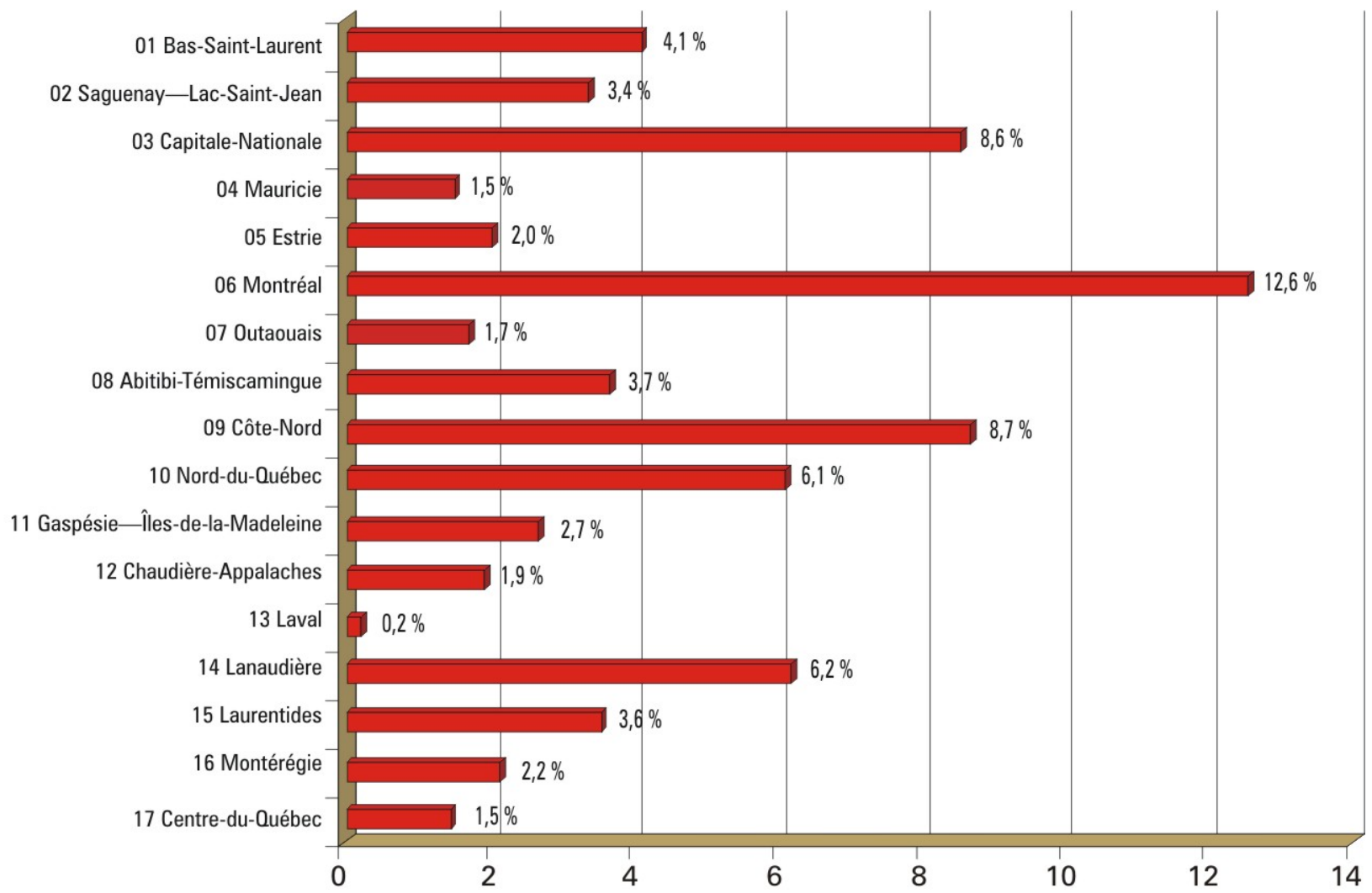


Figure 4: Percent coverage of protected areas within each administrative region (10 October 2006).