



Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve

Conservation plan

September 2003

1. Plan and description

1.1. Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The plan of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve and its location are shown on the maps in Schedules A.1. and A.2.

The proposed biodiversity reserve is located in the Côte-Nord administrative region, between 51°38' and 52°00' north latitude and 57°15' and 58°32' west longitude. It is situated approximately 30 km north of the coastal village of Rivière-Saint-Paul, near the Labrador border.

It lies within the unorganized territory of Petit-Mécatina, in Municipalité régionale de comté de la Minganie.

The proposed biodiversity reserve covers a total area of 2,022 km². It corresponds to the physiographic units of the Guernesé lake foothills and Bujeault river, except in the east, where the boundary runs along the eastern slope of the Nord-Est river valley, including Capannan and Mont Rye lakes. In the north, the boundary is the delineation established by the 1927 Privy Council decision (not final).

1.2. Ecological overview

The protected area is in the Lower North Shore Plateau natural province. It protects a landscape and habitats characteristic of the natural region of the middle Saint-Augustin hills.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Climate: The Guernesé lake foothills are characterized by a subpolar, humid continental climate, with a short growing season. They belong to the bioclimatic field of mossy spruce stands.

Geology and geomorphology: The entire reserve is in the Grenville geologic province of the Canadian Shield. The basement rocks are mainly felsic rock, particularly granite and pegmatite. They are also formed of metamorphic rock, in this instance gneiss, paragneiss and granulite.

In terms of its geomorphology, the dominant landscape is that of a highly dissected plateau the surface of which is formed by hills separated by encased valleys. The substratum of the foothills, with outcroppings in some areas, is covered by a thin layer of well-drained till. The few knolls at their periphery are covered by well-drained moraine or till deposits. Colluvial deposits are found at the foot of the steepest slopes while the valley bottoms are covered with glaciofluvial sand and gravel. The altitude varies from 25 m to 550 m.

Hydrography: The drainage system is well-developed and comprised mainly of small watercourses, the largest being the Saint-Paul river, a Strahler 5 river. The collector watercourses are subparallel, relatively

straight and in a general north-south orientation. The protected area also has 44 lakes which cover 40 km² or 2% of the total area. The lakes are small and mostly concentrated in the southern part of the area. The largest are Gallet and Guernesé lakes, which cover an area of 5.5 km² and 4.2 km² respectively.

Vegetation: To the west of the Beaver-House and Uahatu streams, the territory is essentially covered by a softwood forest. To the east, the slopes and peaks of the foothills are mainly occupied by dry heathland, a plant formation almost devoid of trees that develops in poor, shallow and well-drained soils. These plant formations make up 64% and 28% of the vegetation respectively. Most of the forest communities are over 90 years old, the dominating species being black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*). The poorly-drained valley bottoms are occupied by peat bogs which cover 6% of the area of the protected area.

1.2.2. Outstanding elements

The waters of the Saint-Paul river provide spawning and rearing habitat for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*). The river has salmon river status.

1.3. Occupation and main land uses

The land occupations and uses in the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve are shown on the map in Schedule A.3.

The territory lies within the Saguenay beaver reserve in which the Native communities have special rights regarding the hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals.

The territory of the proposed biodiversity reserve lies wholly within fur-bearing animal management unit (FAMU) 66.

An outfitting operation with exclusive rights is established on the lower portion of the Saint-Paul river, approximately 2.5 km south of its confluence with Kuekuatsheu stream. Club de pêche au saumon Saint-Paul inc. is the leaseholder.

No land rights have been granted within the perimeter of the protected area.

2. Protection status

The proposed biodiversity reserve offers a mosaic of habitats (softwood forests, dry heathland, peat bogs, lakes and rivers, etc.) of exceptional value, both from an ecological perspective and for their beauty.

Biodiversity reserve status would allow the pursuit of the following conservation objectives:

- ✓ the conservation of a representative landscape of the natural region of the middle Saint-Augustin hills;
- ✓ the protection of favourable habitat for Atlantic salmon;
- ✓ the protection of biodiversity in the various ecosystems;
- ✓ the ongoing sustainable management of fur-bearing animals;
- ✓ the acquisition of new knowledge concerning natural and cultural heritage.

3. Activities within the reserve

The activities carried on within the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve are governed by the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act* (R.S.Q., c. C-61.01).

This conservation plan does not specify any prohibited activity other than those prohibited in a proposed biodiversity reserve by the Act; nor does it authorize any other activities, or set any additional constraints on the activities permitted by the Act.

3.1. Prohibited activities

It is important to note that under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, the main activities prohibited in an area designated as a proposed biodiversity reserve are:

- mining, and gas or petroleum development;
- mining, gas or petroleum exploration, brine and underground reservoir exploration, prospecting, and digging or boring, where such activities necessitate stripping, the digging of trenches, excavation or deforestation;
- forest management within the meaning of section 3 of the *Forest Act* (R.S.Q., c. F-4.1);
- the development of hydraulic resources and any production of energy on a commercial or industrial basis;
- any new allocation of a right to occupy land for vacation resort purposes; and
- earthwork or construction work.

3.2. Activities governed by other statutes

All activities likely to be carried on within the boundaries of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve remain governed by the other applicable legislative and regulatory provisions,

including those that require the issue of a permit or authorization or the payment of fees. The carrying on of certain activities may also be prohibited or limited by other Acts or regulations applicable within the boundaries of the proposed biodiversity reserve.

A special legal framework may, within the boundaries of the proposed biodiversity reserve, govern permitted and prohibited activities in connection with:

- **Archaeological research** (especially the measures contained in the *Cultural Property Act* [R.S.Q., c. B-4]);
- **Development of wildlife resources** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife* [R.S.Q., c. C-61.1] and, where applicable, the measures contained in any applicable federal legislation);
- **Access** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* [R.S.Q., c. T-8.1]);
- **Land rights** (especially measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* [R.S.Q., c. T-8.1] and in leases issued by the Minister of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Parks).

3.3. Supervision of activities

The Minister of the Environment is responsible for the application of the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, and is therefore responsible for the proposed biodiversity reserves established under that Act. The Minister will supervise and monitor the measures contained in the Act with regard to permitted activities in protected areas.

All other government departments and bodies will retain their responsibilities as set out in the legislative and regulatory texts that apply within a proposed biodiversity reserve.

The Minister of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Parks will supervise all activities subject to the Minister's authority within the territory of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve, in particular as regards permitted forms of land occupation.

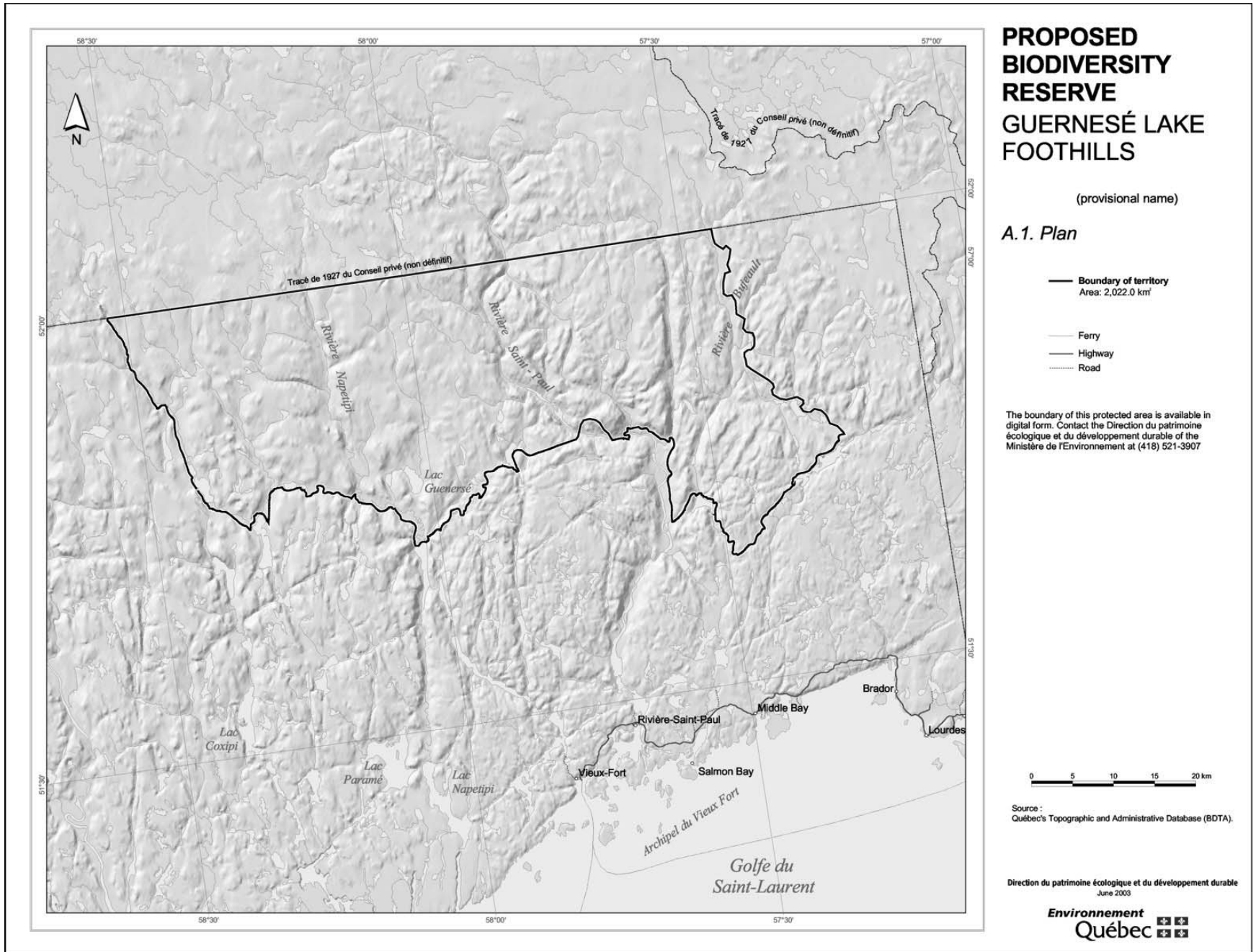
The Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec (FAPAQ) remains responsible for supervising the activities relating to wildlife protection and management that are under its responsibility.

4. Permanent protection status

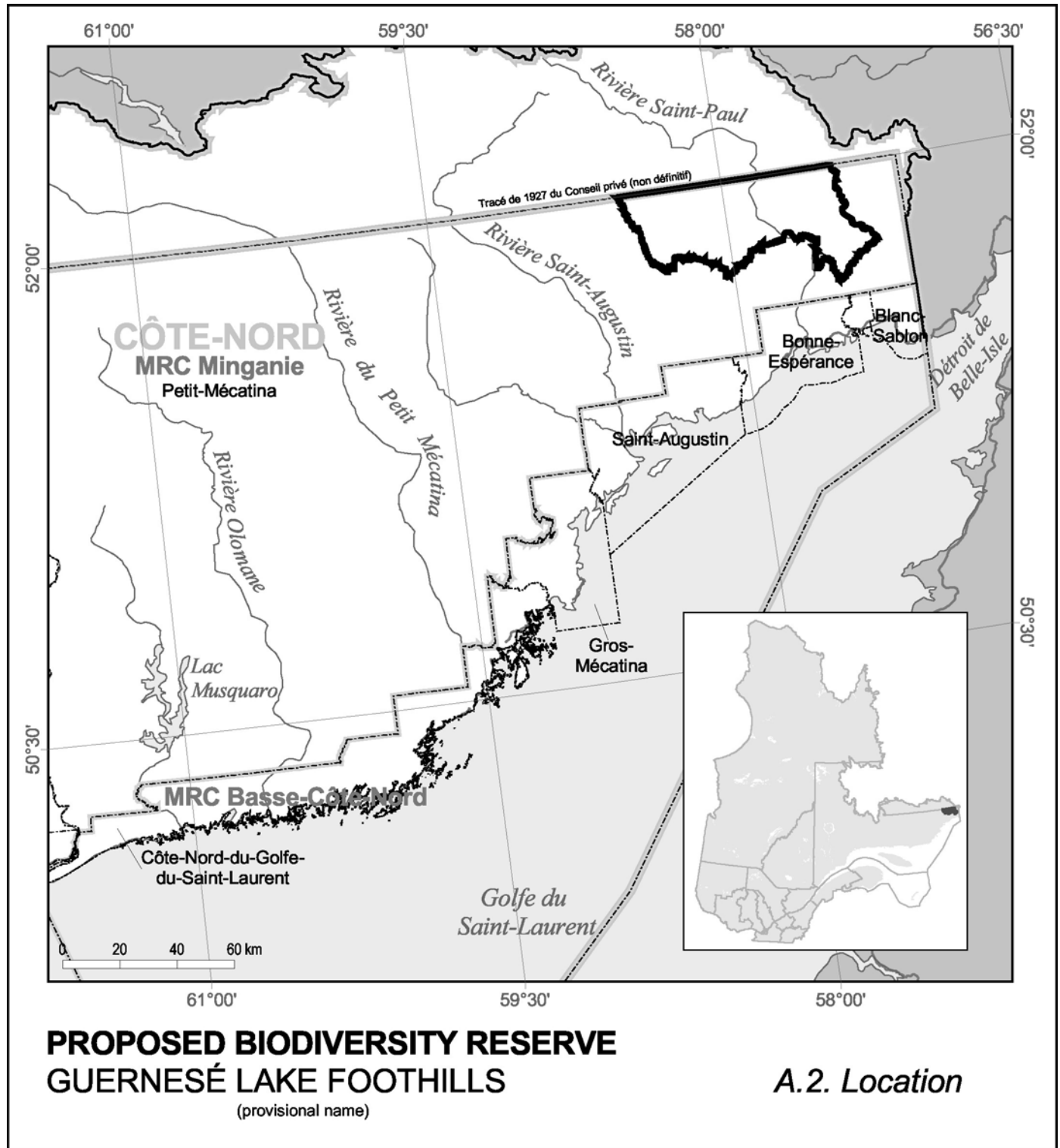
The permanent protection status envisaged for the reserve is “biodiversity reserve” status under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*.

Schedules

A.1. Plan of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve (provisional name)



A.2. Map showing the location of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve (provisional name)



A.3. Map showing land occupation and uses in the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve (provisional name)

