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Projets de réserves de biodiversité du lac Opasatica, du lac des Quinze, de la forêt Piché-Lemoine et du réservoir Decelles

Abitibi-Témiscamingue

6212-01-207

Decelles réservoir proposé biodiversité réserve

(provisional name)

Conservation plan



March 2004

1. Plan and description

1.1. Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The location and boundaries of the proposed Decelles reservoir biodiversity reserve are shown on the map in the Schedule.

The proposed Decelles reservoir biodiversity reserve is located in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue administrative region, between 47°43' and 47°50' north latitude and 78°10' and 78°31' west longitude. Most of proposed biodiversity reserve lies within the territory of Municipalité de Rouyn-Noranda, in the regional county municipality of the same name. To the east, the proposed biodiversity reserve is located in Municipalité de Val-d'Or, in Municipalité régionale de comté de la Vallée-de-l'Or.

The proposed biodiversity reserve is situated to the north-west of the Decelles reservoir, approximately 30 km south-west of Val-d'Or. It covers an area of 81.2 km². To the east, the proposed biodiversity reserve borders on the Dunes-de-la-Moraine-d'Harricana ecological reserve, which covers an area of 5.3 km² along Boston bay.

At the edge of the Decelles reservoir, the boundary of the protected area coincides with the line which marks the 311-metre point above sea level. To the north, the protected area is partially bounded by power transmission line 1339 (Rapides-des-Quinze/Rapide-7 substations). The right-of-way of that power line is excluded from the proposed biodiversity reserve to allow access to equipment, and operations and maintenance work. The Rapide-7 generating station and substation are also excluded from the proposed biodiversity reserve.

1.2. Ecological overview

The proposed Decelles reservoir biodiversity reserve is in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands. It protects ecosystems representative of the Lake Témiscamingue Lowlands natural region. The topography is characterized by a complex of mounds and low hills. The elevation of the territory ranges from 295 to 430 metres.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Climate: The territory is characterized by a mild, subpolar and subhumid continental climate, with a long growing season. The proposed biodiversity reserve belongs to the balsam fir-yellow birch bioclimatic field in the west and to the balsam fir-white birch bioclimatic field in the east.

Geology and geomorphology: The proposed biodiversity reserve is part of the Superior geologic province, whose basement is Archean (over 2.5 billion years). The substratum is mainly

formed by felsic igneous rock (granodiorite and granite) and metamorphic rock (gneiss). During the Quaternary period, the basement rock, which outcrops in many places, was covered by moraine till or by glaciolacustrine clay and silt deposits. On the periphery of the Dunes-de-la-Moraine-d'Harricana ecological reserve, the territory of the proposed biodiversity reserve alternates between ombrotrophic and minerotrophic peatlands and dunes and is also characterized by the presence of sandy-gravelly materials of glaciofluvial origin.

Hydrography: The proposed biodiversity reserve belongs to the Outaouais river watershed. It includes several lakes, the largest of which are Godard and Strong lakes. The drainage system is not very well-developed and consists mainly of intermittent watercourses.

Vegetation: The proposed biodiversity reserve includes a wide variety of habitats. To the west, the territory is covered mainly by mixed or resinous forest which has been partially harvested. The dominant species are balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) and yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*). To the east, the vegetation is mainly peat bogs and alder groves on poorly-drained soils or jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) stands in a dune and glaciofluvial environment. Hardwood stands, generally dominated by white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), cover the valley bottoms.

1.2.2. Outstanding elements

The proposed biodiversity reserve includes a dune sector, a geomorphological environment that is rare in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands.

Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) have already been observed within the proposed biodiversity reserve as well as on its periphery. This forest population is experiencing difficult times, in particular because of changes to its habitat caused by predators and hunting activity. Protecting the Decelles lake forest highland would allow the pursuit of the caribou protection objective established by the regional branch of the Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec.

A number of areas within the proposed protected area provide a habitat suitable for the southern bog lemming (*Synaptomys cooperi*), a small mammal present only in the eastern part of North America that is likely to be designated a threatened or vulnerable species in Québec.

1.3. Occupation and main land uses

The occupations and main land uses in the proposed Decelles reservoir biodiversity reserve are shown on the map in the Schedule.

The territory lies almost wholly within the Grand-Lac-Victoria beaver reserve where the Anishnabe Algonquin community residing on the western shore of Simon lake, 32 kilometres to the south-east of Val-d'Or, has special rights regarding the hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals. To the west, the proposed biodiversity reserve overlaps traplines forming part of fur-bearing animal management unit (FAMU) 04.

Power transmission line 1339 (Rapides-des-Quinze/Rapide-7 substations) crosses the proposed biodiversity reserve to the west over a distance of roughly 8 kilometres. The right-of-way of that power line, which is 36.6 metres wide, is withdrawn from the proposed protected area. It constitutes the northern boundary of the biodiversity reserve for some 6.5 kilometres.

The territory is served by some 60 kilometres of gravel forest roads which provide access to Strong lake, the Decelles reservoir and the Rapide-7 dam.

There is one private property within the proposed biodiversity reserve. Sixteen leases have been granted within the perimeter of the protected area as follows:

- 12 leases for the construction of a rough shelter in the forest; and
- 4 leases for personal vacation purposes (cottage).

Also, ten permits for the harvest of firewood are valid in a part of the proposed biodiversity reserve.

2. Protection status

The proposed biodiversity reserve protects a complex of ecosystems of exceptional interest from an ecological perspective and for their beauty.

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

- ✓ the preservation of a mosaic of ecosystems representative of the Lake Témiscamingue Lowlands natural region;
- ✓ the preservation of biodiversity in ecosystems;
- ✓ the consolidation of the protection of the dunes of the Harricana moraine;
- ✓ the acquisition of new knowledge concerning natural heritage.

3. Activities within the reserve

The activities carried on within the boundaries of the proposed Decelles reservoir 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 Decelles reservoir 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 the 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) and provided under the regulation concerning motor vehicle traffic in certain fragile environments made under the *Environment Protection Act* (R.S.Q., c. Q-2));
- **Land rights** (especially the 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 prohibited and 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, as provided for under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*.

4. Permanent protection status

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

Schedule

Map of the proposed Decelles reservoir biodiversity reserve (provisional name)

