

THE GRADES ARE IN

A REPORT CARD ON CANADA'S PROGRESS
IN PROTECTING ITS LAND AND OCEAN



Federal government – land	A-
Federal government – ocean	B+
Yukon Territory	B-
Northwest Territories	B+
British Columbia	C
Alberta	F
Saskatchewan	D
Manitoba	C-
Ontario	F
Quebec	A-
New Brunswick	B-
Nova Scotia	B
Newfoundland and Labrador	F

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Cover photo Richard Lee

EXECUTIVE

SUMMARY



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The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has conducted an assessment of how well Canada fared in delivering on a promise that dates back to 2010: **to protect at least 17% of its land and 10% of its ocean by 2020**. This report card presents our key findings. It assigns grades to the current federal, provincial, and territorial governments based on their contributions and highlights major achievements and shortcomings. Our goal in producing this report card is to learn from the successes and failures of the past decade to inform more effective conservation action moving forward. Using this report as a baseline, we plan to release subsequent report cards to track progress made by each jurisdiction towards the 2025 and 2030 targets of protecting 25% of land and ocean and 30% of land and ocean, respectively.

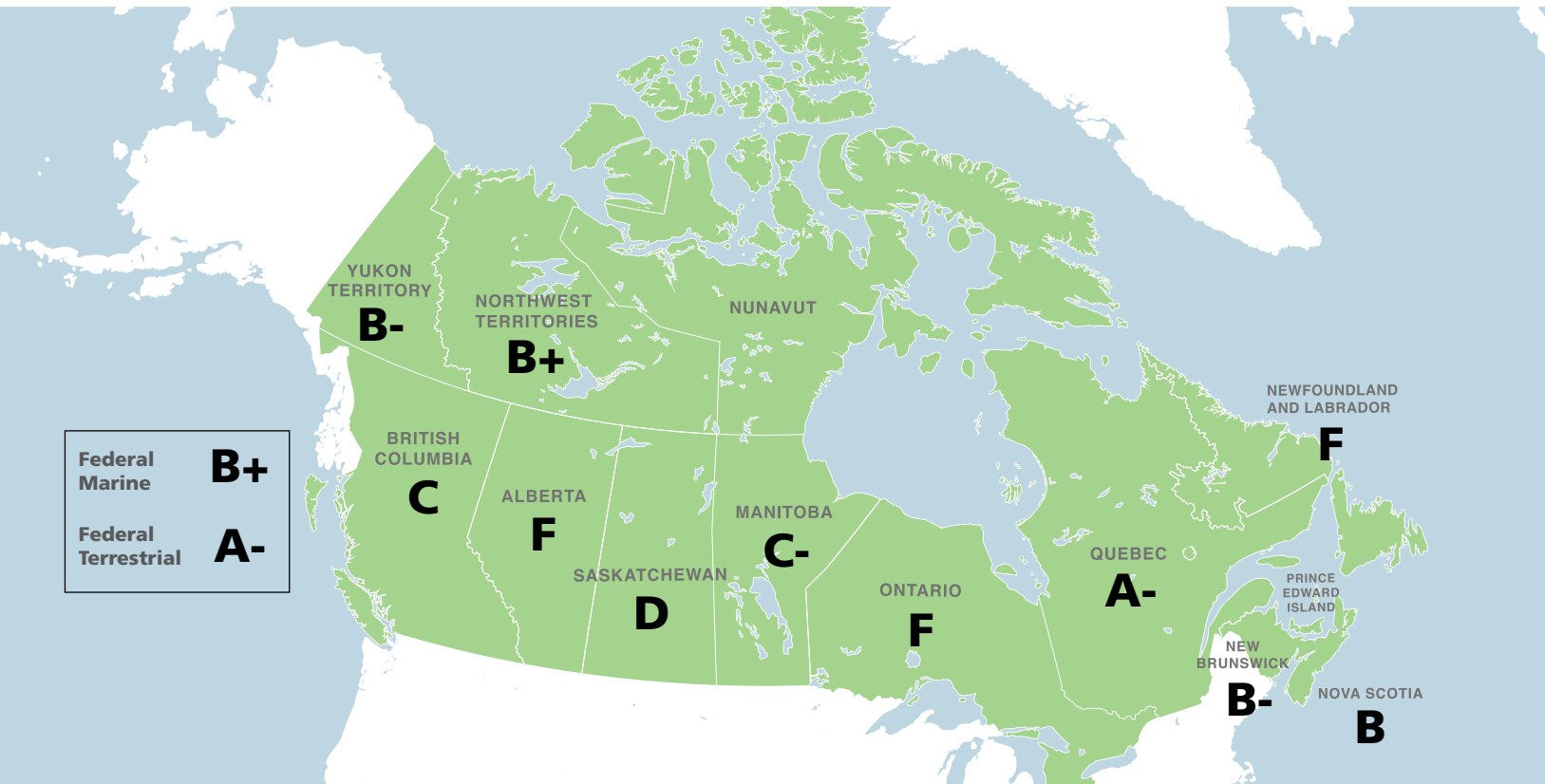
Habitat loss and fragmentation from human activities are the primary causes of the current rapid decline of biodiversity and the resulting Nature Emergency. Well-designed and managed protected areas are scientifically proven to be effective in conserving nature. Protected areas also play an important role in our well-being and the economy, making them a critical investment for ensuring a healthy and happy future for all Canadians. While significant, the 17% and 10% targets approved by the international community in 2010 were just milestones towards what is ultimately needed to conserve biodiversity: protecting at least half of the Earth's land and ocean ecosystems.

Canada met the 10% ocean protection target by 2020 with 13.8% protected, albeit with concerns about the quality of conservation measures in some areas. However, the 17% terrestrial target was missed by a significant margin, with only 13.1% of land and freshwater protected. The report card assesses federal, provincial, and territorial governments on their contributions to the terrestrial target. For the ocean component we only assessed the federal government because most marine activities are under federal jurisdiction, and federally designated marine protected areas are the primary conservation tool for ocean ecosystems.

Our results are organized into four categories: **Leaders (A- to B+)**, **Mixed Review (B to C-)**, **Laggards (D to F)**, and **Notable Efforts (B-)**.

Photo Lewis Parsons





Grades by jurisdiction

The Government of Quebec, the federal government, and the Government of the Northwest Territories form the Leaders group. Quebec publicly committed to the 17% target and delivered 16.7% by creating new protected areas.* In addition, Quebec also amended its protected areas legislation to recognize Indigenous-led protected areas and to commit to international standards for protection. The province received an A- because it failed to establish protected areas proposed for southern Quebec due to industrial interests.

The **federal government** also earned an A- for **terrestrial conservation** by committing to deliver on the 17% target, convening provinces and territories to work together through the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, making two historic conservation investments, supporting Indigenous-led conservation, and committing to ambitious protection targets for the next decade. Weaknesses in how the 2018 federal funding was allocated, the lack of long-term investment, and problems with protected area management lowered the grade.

The **Government of the Northwest Territories** earned a B+ for passing protected areas legislation that recognizes and supports Indigenous protected areas and international standards, and for working with federal and Indigenous governments

* In December 2020, the government of Quebec announced it had reached the 17% target. However, CPAWS has identified that only 16.7% has actually been protected and is encouraging the Quebec government to quickly address this shortfall.



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to establish protected areas. While it did not quite meet the 17% target, the territorial government made significant headway and set the stage for further progress.

For its efforts to protect Canada's **coastal and ocean ecosystems**, the **federal government** scored a **B+**. Over the past five years it made substantial progress in establishing new marine protected areas (MPAs) and met the 10% target, announced minimum protection standards for MPAs, and made an historic budget investment as well as a commitment to ambitious protection targets for the next decade. Significant weaknesses in protection standards and the lack of progress on implementing minimum standards and Indigenous-led conservation lowered the grade.

The Governments of Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Manitoba show varying degrees of promise, but still have a lot of work ahead. Nova Scotia made progress over the past decade, establishing more than 200 protected areas, including 91 just within the past year. The province faltered, however, by delisting Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve and being slow to fully implement its parks and protected areas plan. Once a leader on nature conservation, British Columbia has demonstrated limited progress over the past decade. The province reported 4% of its land base as OECMs, including existing Old Growth Forest Management Areas, thus reaching the 17% target on paper, but with many of its Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), falling short of Canadian and international standards. On a positive note, British Columbia's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, which embeds the UN Declaration in provincial law, was passed, and in 2021 the province invested \$83 million in park management. While Manitoba created a \$102 million conservation trust in 2018, worrying signs have emerged recently that the province may divest of some of its park assets and/or decommission or transition parks to other models. For example, campsite fees tripled at St. Ambrose Provincial Park after a private company was recently awarded a 21-year lease.

The Governments of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador received the lowest grades, ranging from D to F. Although most achieved some increases in coverage, this was largely under previous governments and, in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, through the completion of new federal protected areas. These four jurisdictions demonstrated little or no commitment to protecting more of their land base. In Ontario and Alberta, this lack of interest is coupled with serious harmful anti-conservation action, including rolling back nature protection policies and legislation and proposing the delisting of protected areas.

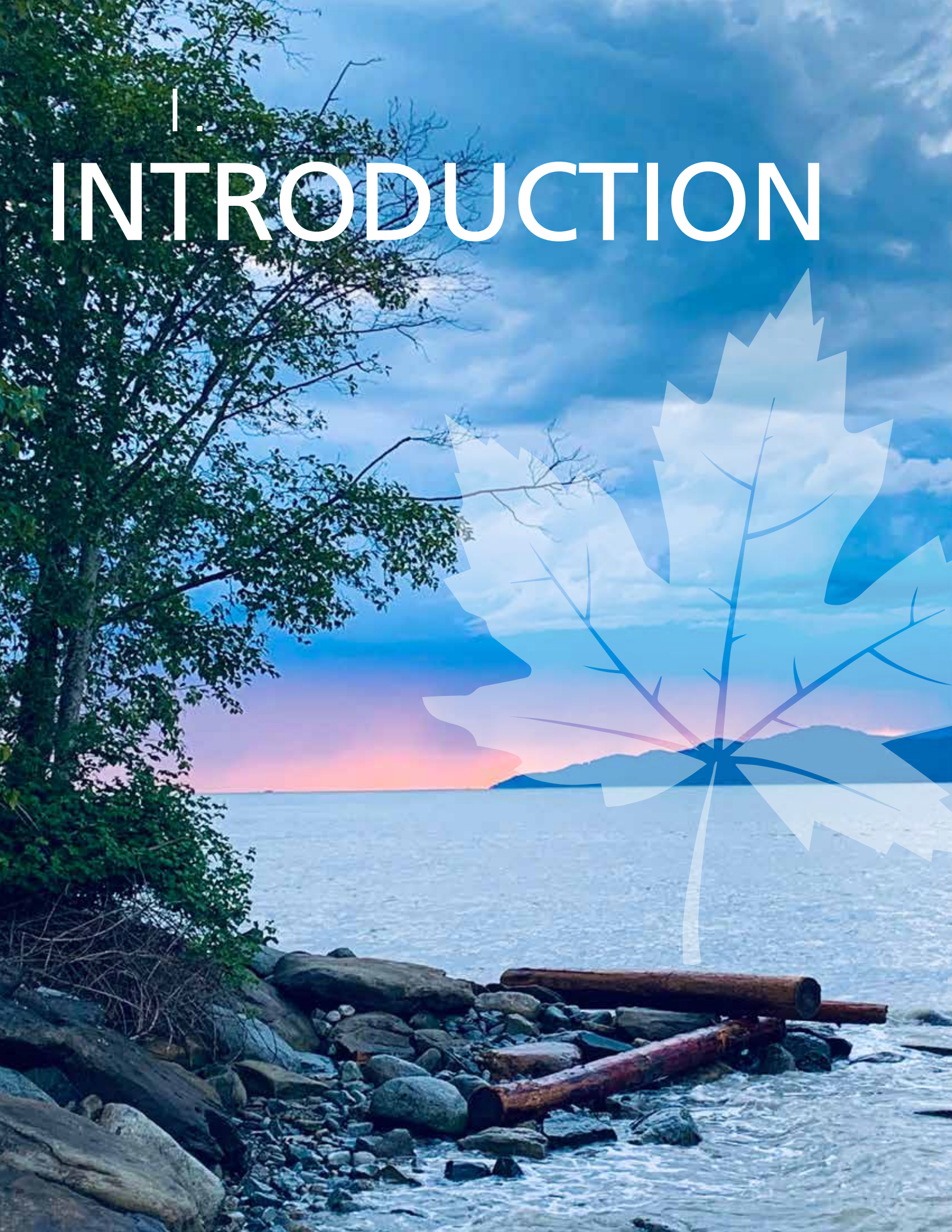
The Governments of New Brunswick and Yukon remain far behind the leaders but earned **B- grades**, as they have recently demonstrated **significant effort** and are showing positive trends. Once a laggard, in 2019 New Brunswick committed to double the extent of its protected areas system and is now working with Indigenous Nations and the public to identify new protected areas. Although the percentage of land protected in the Yukon has not increased since 2010, land use planning is back on track and a final decision has been made to permanently protect 55% of the Peel River Watershed, which will result in a significant leap forward in total area protected.



Key Takeaway Messages

- **Where there is a (political) will, there is a way.** Quebec's progress demonstrates what strong political will combined with Indigenous leadership and public support can achieve.
- **Indigenous leadership drives success.** The most consistent trend we observed across all jurisdictions is the critical role that Indigenous Peoples are playing in advancing conservation in Canada.
- **Federal funding can be a game-changer.** Federal funding for conservation partners, including Indigenous, provincial, and territorial governments, and NGOs, has leveraged additional investment from the philanthropic community, and moved the dial on conservation considerably in just a few years.
- **Proactive and coordinated efforts help build momentum.** Progress on terrestrial protected areas establishment noticeably increased after 2017, aligned with the launch of the Pathway to Target 1 and associated processes.
- **Conservation takes time.** A barrier to delivering on the 17% terrestrial target was the lack of time between 2018, when the federal government committed significant funding to deliver on the target, and the 2020 deadline. Delivering on the goal of 30% protection by 2030 will require starting the work now.
- **Do not cut corners with Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).** Although OECMs that meet standards may be valuable in some circumstances, protected areas, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, should remain the core conservation tool for delivering on the next decade's targets.

I. INTRODUCTION



In 2010, as part of a worldwide effort to stem the tide of biodiversity loss, Canada joined the global community in endorsing a 10-year strategic plan under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).¹ The plan's five strategic goals and 20 biodiversity targets (the Aichi Targets) covered a suite of actions needed to help reverse the decline of biodiversity and advance the CBD vision of “living in harmony with nature”.² Recognizing that habitat loss is a primary driver of nature's decline, Aichi Target 11 committed countries to increase the coverage and quality of their protected area systems by conserving at least 17% of land and inland waters and 10% of coastal and marine ecosystems by 2020 in well-designed, connected, and managed networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments adopted “*2020 Goals and Biodiversity Targets for Canada*” in 2015, with Canada Target 1 mirroring the commitments in Aichi Target 11.*

In late 2015, the new federal government made a political commitment to implement Canada Target 1. Since then, the federal government has worked with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments and other partners to deliver on this promise.

With 2020 behind us, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has conducted an assessment of how well Canada fared in delivering on this promise, including the degree to which federal, provincial, and territorial governments each contributed to this shared goal. This report card presents our findings. It assigns grades to each government based on its contributions and highlights key successes and shortcomings.

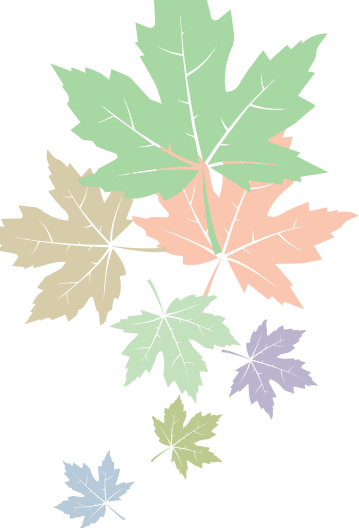
It is important to recognize that the 17% and 10% targets approved by the international community in 2010 were just milestones towards what is ultimately

* Quebec endorsed Aichi Target 11 in 2011 and developed its own parallel plan to deliver on this target.

Photo Michael Burzynski



Photo Dustin Woodhouse



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needed to conserve biodiversity. Evidence shows that protecting between 30 and 70% of the Earth's land and ocean ecosystems will likely be needed to reverse the decline of biodiversity and sustain a healthy planet.^{3,4} Countries are now negotiating a new global biodiversity framework under the CBD, and a target of conserving at least 30% of land and ocean by 2030 is likely to be adopted as part of this new plan. Canada has already committed to this target, along with an interim target of protecting 25% of land and ocean by 2025.

CPAWS is committed to helping deliver on this promise, and to supporting the creation of well-designed and managed networks of protected areas in all regions of the country. Our goal in producing this report card is to learn from the successes and failures of the past decade to inform more effective conservation action moving forward. Using this report as a baseline, we plan to release subsequent report cards to track progress made by each jurisdiction towards the 2025 and 2030 targets.

Photo Ingrid Cornec



WHAT IS A PROTECTED AREA?

Canada has adopted the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition of a protected area: *"A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."*^{5,6}

What are Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)?

The concept of OECMs emerged in 2010 in the wording of Aichi Target 11, which enables countries to deliver on the target of conserving at least 17% of land and freshwater and 10% of the ocean by 2020 through protected areas and "other effective area-based conservation measures".⁷

The IUCN developed a definition and guidance for OECMs, which was incorporated into CBD guidance. Canada adopted the agreed-to international definition and, through the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, has developed guidance and a decision support tool to assess whether terrestrial areas qualify as OECMs. Fisheries and Oceans Canada concurrently developed its own guidance for marine OECMs, which differed from the IUCN guidance, and are now working to revise the guidance so that it aligns.^{8,9}

The main difference between protected areas and OECMs is that protected areas must have a primary goal of conserving nature, while OECMs may be established for other purposes, but must still deliver effective conservation outcomes. OECMs are not meant to be a "weaker" form of protection. Both protected areas and OECMs require that incompatible activities be prohibited (including industrial activities and damaging infrastructure developments), and that other activities be effectively managed. Like protected areas, OECMs must also be permanently protected.

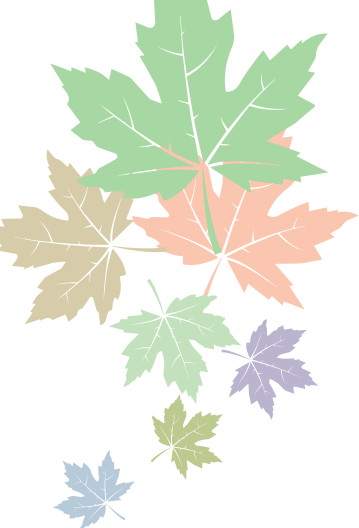
WHAT ARE AICHI TARGET 11 AND CANADA TARGET 1?

Aichi Target 11, United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020:

*"By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape."*¹⁰

Canada Target 1, 2020 Goals and Biodiversity Targets for Canada:

*"By 2020, at least 17% of terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, are conserved through networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures."*¹¹



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Grading Criteria

We assessed provincial and territorial governments on the terrestrial component of the target, recognizing they are the Crown governments in Canada with primary jurisdiction over land and natural resources. We also assessed the federal government on its contribution to the terrestrial target based on criteria that reflect its limited jurisdiction over land management. For the ocean component of the target, we only assessed the federal government because most marine activities are under federal jurisdiction, and federally designated marine protected areas are the primary conservation tool for ocean ecosystems.

We considered three primary criteria in assigning grades to Canada's provincial, territorial, and federal governments for their contributions to Canada Target 1:

1. Achievement of, or progress towards, Aichi Target 11/ Canada Target 1

We assessed whether provinces and territories achieved the 17% terrestrial protection target in their region, and whether the federal government achieved the 10% ocean target. If the target was not achieved, we looked at how much progress was made. We also examined whether governments had adopted new, more ambitious protected area targets or commitments over the course of the last decade, and whether they put in place plans, processes, and/or improved legislation to support implementation. If a jurisdiction reported OECMs towards the target we examined whether these met agreed-upon international and Canadian standards.

Photo Isaac Demeester

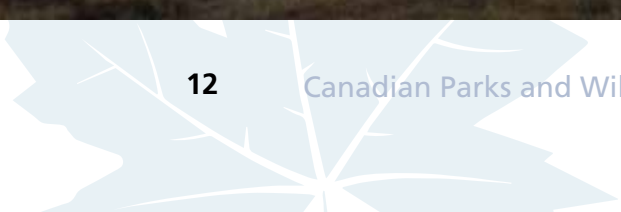




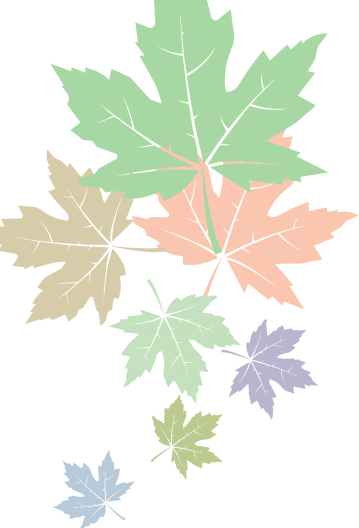
Photo Pat Kane

2. Support for Indigenous-led conservation

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights and responsibilities related to land and ocean stewardship and management in Canada, as well as the conservation leadership demonstrated by Indigenous Nations across the country is of utmost importance. Therefore, we assessed whether federal, provincial, and territorial governments recognized and supported Indigenous-led conservation and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through legislation, policy, or other public commitments or mechanisms. We also examined whether governments had supported, recognized, and/or reported Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), Indigenous-led conservation initiatives like land use planning, and co-governed or co-managed protected areas. We also noted whether they are supporting Indigenous Guardians programs.

3. Advancing effective management of protected areas

Recognizing the importance of effectively managed protected areas to deliver conservation outcomes, we examined whether governments are working to improve protected area management. Where possible, we considered adequacy of funding and management plans, and whether protected areas and OECMs prohibit industrial activities and other relevant threats to biodiversity.



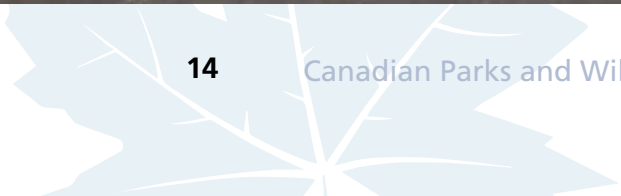
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We used the above criteria to grade provincial and territorial governments on their contribution to the terrestrial target as well as to grade the federal government on its implementation of the ocean target.

To assess the federal government's contribution to the terrestrial target we evaluated its performance against amended criteria that reflect its responsibilities and limited jurisdiction over land management. These include:

- Leading and convening governments and other interested parties;
- Supporting Indigenous-led conservation;
- Creating federal protected areas (e.g. under the *Canada National Parks Act* and *Canada Wildlife Act*) where agreed to by provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments, and effectively managing these areas;
- Funding conservation action, including by government and non-government partners; and
- Championing ambitious conservation action in international forums and negotiations.

Photo Kalen Emsley



While we focused our grading primarily on the performance of current governments, we also noted important achievements or backwards steps that occurred over the past decade.

To encourage continued progress, we assessed governments not only on how much area of land and ocean they had protected by 2020, but also on evidence of their ongoing efforts and commitments to significant expansion of protected areas. For example, a provincial or territorial government that committed to a regionally ambitious land protection target and that is actively identifying and establishing new protected areas in partnership with Indigenous governments and the public could receive a higher grade than a jurisdiction that made no commitment or progress, even if the former ended the decade with a lower percentage of land protected.

WHERE DID WE GET OUR DATA?

The spatial data on marine and terrestrial protected areas and OECMs for 2018—2020 were obtained through the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).¹² This database is compiled and managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), with data provided by the relevant federal, provincial, and territorial government authorities. The database for Quebec protected areas is managed separately by the ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques.¹³

The spatial data on marine and terrestrial protected areas for 2010-2017 were reported in the Conservation Areas Tracking System (CARTS).¹⁴ A predecessor of CPCAD, CARTS was informed by protected areas data from all jurisdictions, which was maintained in partnership between the not-for-profit Canadian Council on Ecological Areas (CCEA) and Environment Canada.

II.

RESULTS



Nationwide

Canada started the last decade with 9.6% of its land and freshwater and 0.8% of its ocean territory protected. Ten years later, 13.1% of Canada's land and freshwater and 13.8% of its ocean are in protected areas and OECMs (Figure 1).

Canada's marine protected areas system has increased in size more than ten-fold since 2010 (Figure 2). However, this includes 7.4% of Canada's ocean estate currently designated as a proposed or interim MPA, thus lacking permanent protection, and 4.9% of Canada's ocean estate recognized as OECMs. Conservation groups have noted that many OECMs do not meet international standards and would need more effective conservation measures in place to keep threats like oil and gas development out before they should count towards the target.¹⁵ A new analysis of Canada's federal MPAs by CPAWS has also identified a number of weaknesses in protection standards (In prep).

While the terrestrial target of protecting 17% of land and freshwater by the end of 2020 has not been achieved, the rate of establishment of protected areas has increased significantly since the Pathway to Canada Target 1 was launched in 2017 (Figure 3), largely associated with the leadership of Indigenous Nations. The \$175 million federal Canada Nature Fund Target 1 Challenge is supporting 62 conservation projects across Canada, many of which will be new IPCAs. Once completed, these projects are expected to protect enough new area to allow Canada to reach approximately 17% protection.

Photo Steve Wiesner



Photo Tandem X

PATHWAY TO CANADA TARGET 1

In 2016, federal, provincial, and territorial governments came together to launch the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative with the aim of developing a plan for how jurisdictions could contribute to achieving Canada's terrestrial and inland waters components of Canada Target 1. These governments developed the following vision:

*"In the spirit and practice of reconciliation, Canada conserves its natural diversity in interconnected networks of protected and conserved areas for the enduring benefit of nature and future generations, through collective efforts in the Pathway to Canada Target 1 and beyond."*¹⁶

An Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE) and a National Advisory Panel (NAP) were appointed to advise on how to deliver on Canada Target 1. These advisory bodies publicly released their reports in 2018.

Pathway governments then produced a report called *One with Nature: A Renewed Approach to Land and Freshwater Conservation in Canada*, which provides broad guidance for how to meet the terrestrial elements of Canada Target 1.¹⁷

As part of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, working groups, which include CPAWS representatives, have developed guidance and a decision support tool to determine what qualifies as a protected area and OECM¹⁸, and are finalizing recommendations on how to enhance ecological connectivity in Canada.¹⁹

Quebec did not participate in the Pathway to Canada Target 1, but developed its own instruments to implement the CBD, including Aichi Target 11, and contributed to the pan-Canadian effort by essentially achieving an identical target for the creation of protected areas by 2020.

Photo Benoit Tremblay



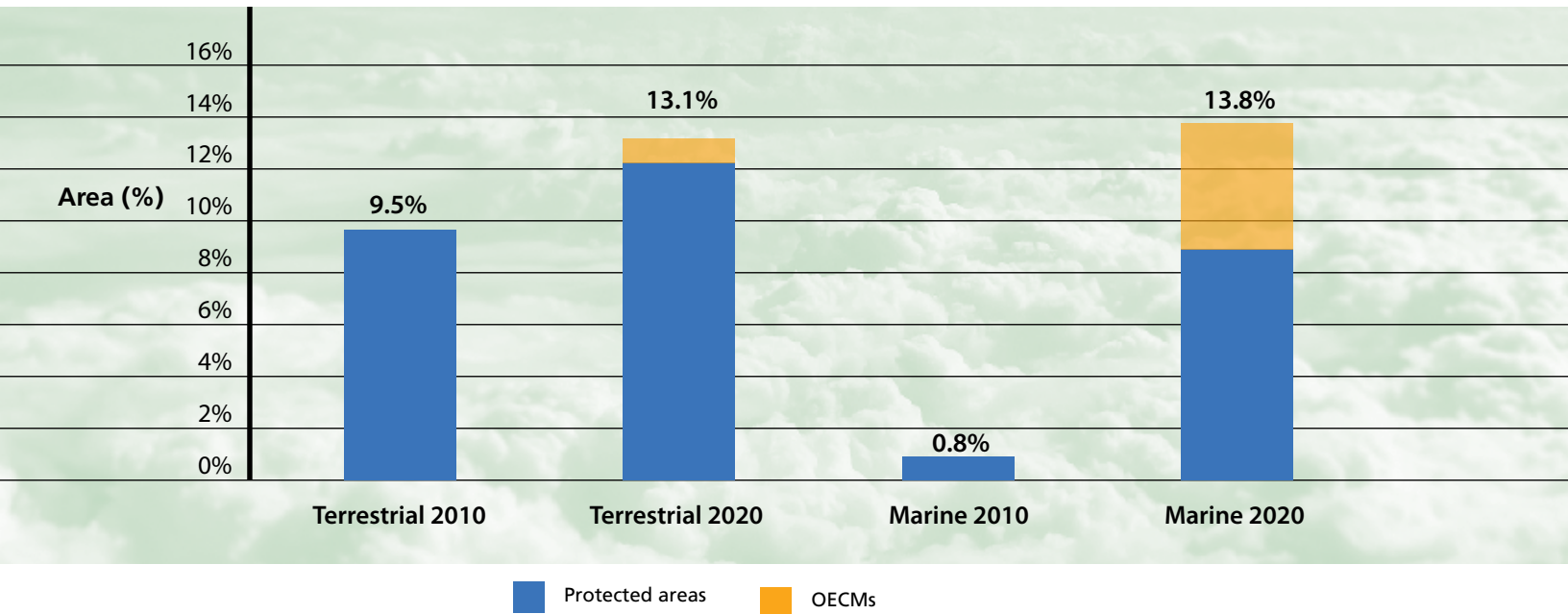


Figure 1. Terrestrial and marine protected areas and OECMs in Canada as of December 2020.

Data sources: Conservation Areas Reporting and Tracking System (CARTS) (2010), Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD) (2021), and Registre des aires protégées au Québec (2021).

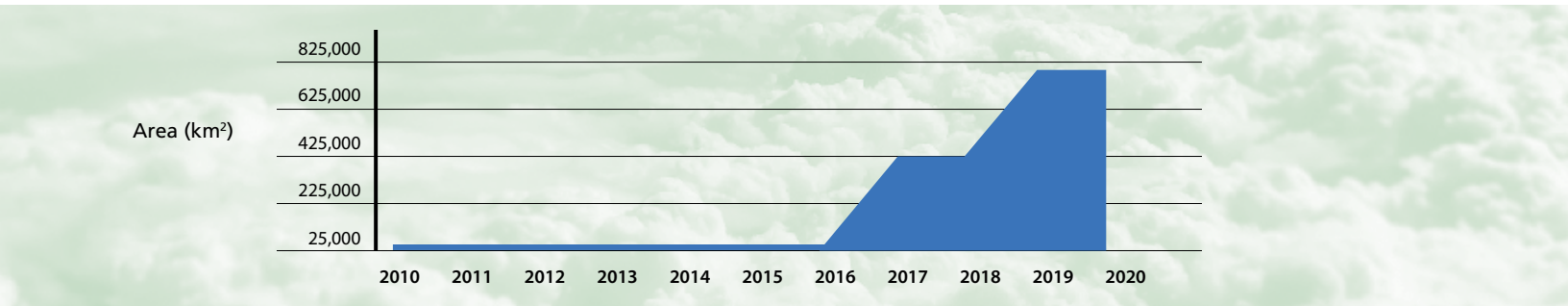


Figure 2. Increase in Canada's marine protected area and OECM coverage (km²) from 2010 to 2020.

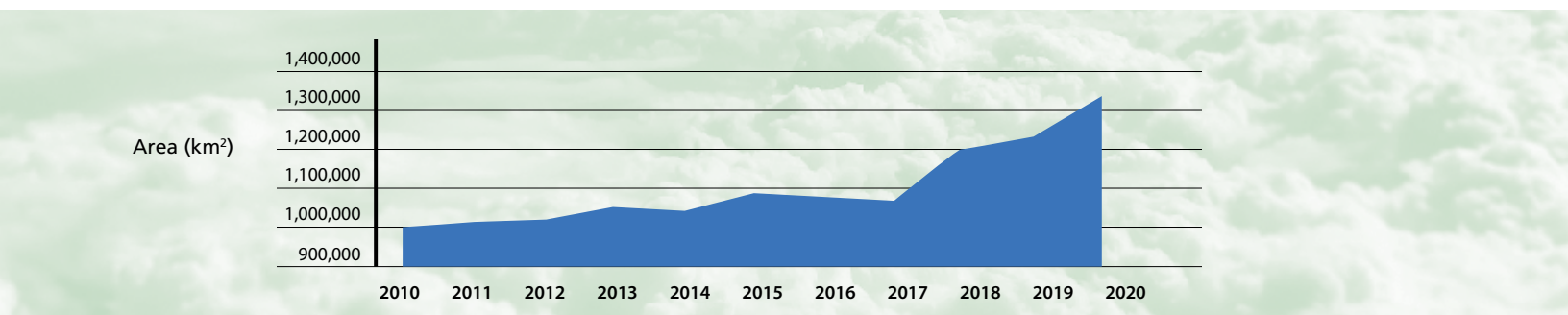
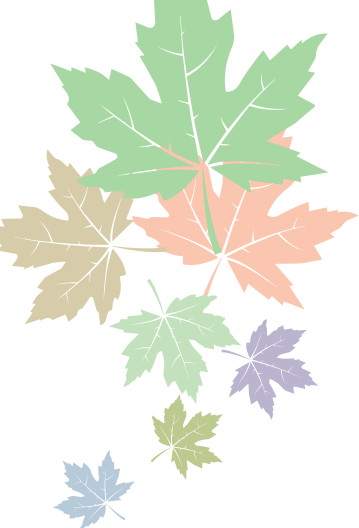


Figure 3. Increase in Canada's terrestrial protected area and OECM coverage (km²) from 2010 to 2020.



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Across Individual Governments

Governments varied dramatically in their contributions to Canada Target 1. Grades ranged from A- for Quebec and the federal government (terrestrial) to F for Alberta, Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador (Figure 4). Because CPAWS does not have staff on-the-ground in PEI or Nunavut, we did not grade these jurisdictions, instead we provided a brief summary based on publicly available information.

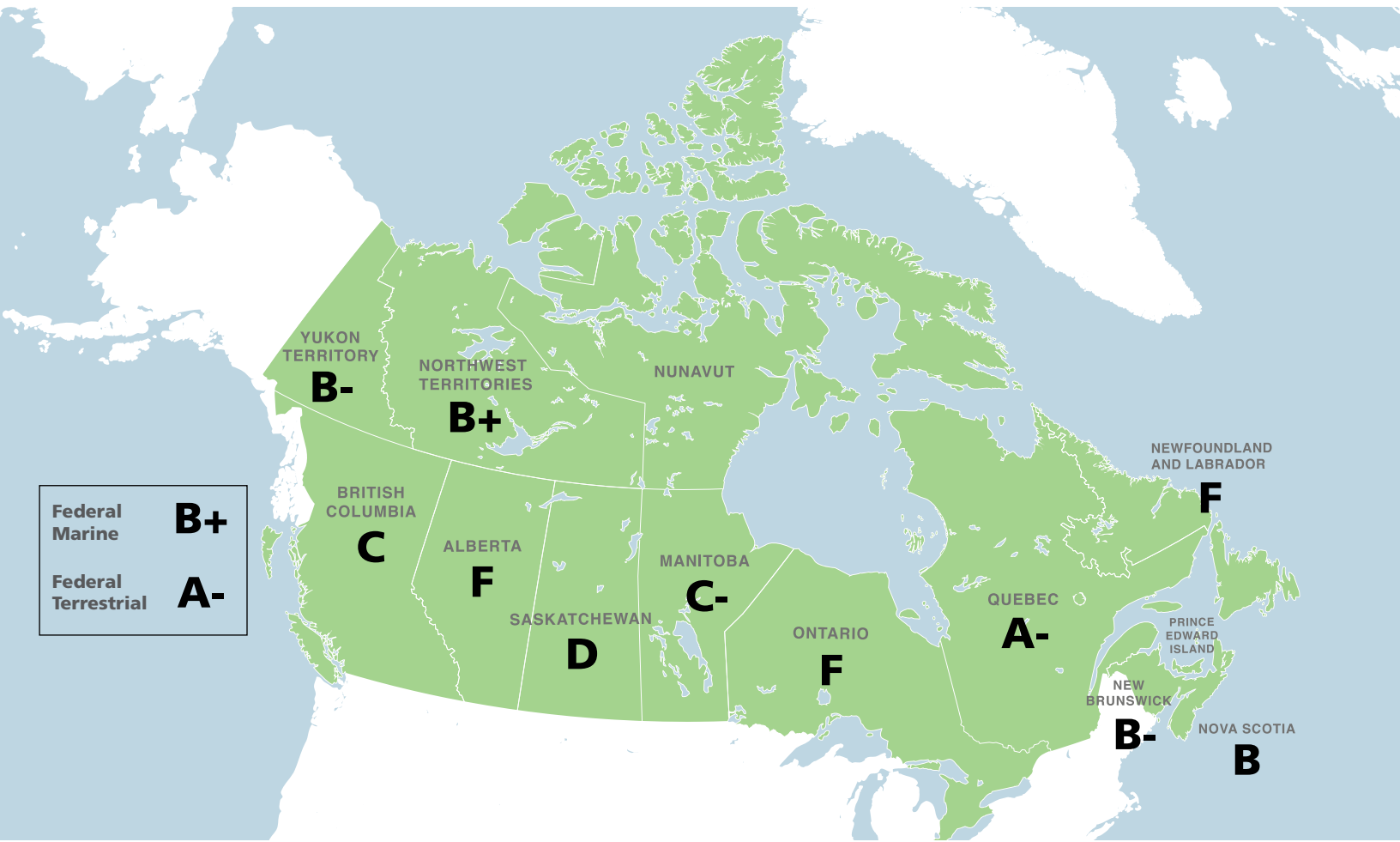


Figure 4. Grades by jurisdiction





Photo François Léger

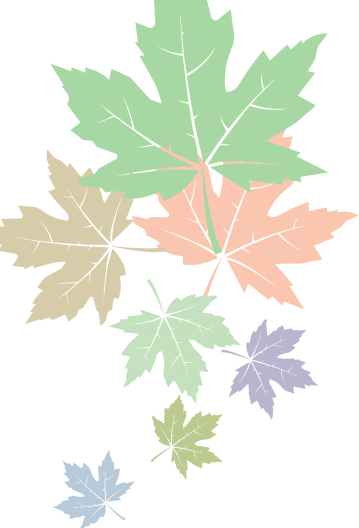
Leaders

Quebec and the federal government earned the highest grade of **A-** for their contributions to the terrestrial target, with the Northwest Territories close behind with a **B+**.

Quebec announced it reached the target in December 2020, making an unparalleled leap from 10 to 16.7%* protection, entirely through new protected areas. Quebec initiated regional planning processes early in the decade, which resulted in a suite of protected area proposals that were supported at the local level. The province earns high marks not only for essentially reaching the percentage target, but also for recognizing international standards and Indigenous-led protected areas in its recently updated legislation. However, while the province has demonstrated strong leadership, significant gaps remain in southern Quebec and the southern boreal forest where too many projects were disregarded because of industrial interests.

The federal government also earned an **A-** for terrestrial conservation by committing to deliver on Canada Target 1, providing nation-wide leadership through the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, making the two largest-ever conservation investments in Canadian history, supporting Indigenous-led conservation and Guardians programs, and committing to ambitious protection targets for the next decade. Weaknesses in how the 2018 federal funding was allocated, the lack of long-term investment, and problems with protected area management dropped the mark from an **A** to an **A-**.

*In December, the government of Quebec announced it had reached the 17% target. However, CPAWS has identified that only 16.7% has actually been protected and is encouraging the Quebec government to quickly address this shortfall.



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The Government of the Northwest Territories earned a **B+** for passing new territorial protected areas legislation that recognizes and supports Indigenous protected areas and international standards, and for making significant progress towards the target by working with federal and Indigenous governments to establish Indigenous protected areas. It also recognized strongly protected conservation zones as OECMs and reported them towards the target.

For its efforts to protect Canada’s coastal and ocean ecosystems, the federal government also scored a **B+**. Over the past five years it made substantial progress in establishing new MPAs, signed co-governance agreements with Indigenous Nations, announced its first-ever minimum protection standards for MPAs, and committed to ambitious protection targets for the next decade. In 2021 the federal government announced a historic budget investment of almost \$977 million to deliver on the next decade’s ocean protection target. Weaknesses in the protection standards for both MPAs and OECMs, lack of progress in implementing the minimum protection standards, and inadequate focus on Indigenous Protected Areas lowered the grade.

Photo Earth Theatre



Mixed Review

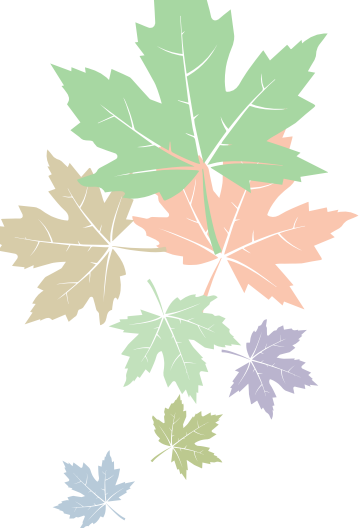
Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Manitoba show varying degrees of promise, but still have a lot of work ahead. Of the three provinces, Nova Scotia has made the most progress over the past decade, announcing 91 sites for protection just within the past year. After a period of inactivity, the Nova Scotia government has recently recommitted to fully implementing the province's protected areas plan.

Although historically regarded as a leader on nature conservation, British Columbia has demonstrated limited progress in establishing new protected areas over the past decade. The province reported 4% of its land base as OECMs, including existing Old Growth Forest Management Areas, thus reaching the 17% target on paper, but with many of its OECMs falling short of Canadian and international standards. On a positive note, British Columbia's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, which embeds the UN Declaration in provincial law, was passed, and in 2021 the province invested \$83 million into park management.

Although the Manitoba government made some progress early in the decade, the area protected in the last five years has been minimal. While Manitoba created a \$102 million conservation trust in 2018, it has not embraced the extensive opportunities that exist to advance conservation and reconciliation. Although Manitoba has provided some support to Indigenous-led conservation, a much deeper investment is needed. Recently, worrying signs have emerged that the province may divest of some of its park assets and/or decommission or transition parks to other models. For example, campsite fees tripled at St. Ambrose Provincial Park after a private company was recently awarded a 21-year lease.

Laggards

Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Alberta received the lowest grades, ranging from **D** to **F**. Although Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Alberta showed some increase in coverage, this was mostly due to the work of previous governments and, in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, the completion of a new national park reserve early in the decade. These four jurisdictions demonstrated little or no commitment to protecting more of their land base. In Ontario and Alberta, this lack of interest is coupled with harmful anti-conservation action, including rolling back nature protection policies and legislation and proposing the delisting of protected areas.



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Notable Efforts

New Brunswick and Yukon remain far behind the leaders but have demonstrated significant effort and are showing positive trends. While New Brunswick has consistently been a laggard on protected areas, in 2020, supported by the federal Canada Nature Fund, the province committed to doubling the extent of its protected areas system and is now working with Indigenous Nations and the public to identify potential new protected areas, guided by science and Indigenous knowledge.

Although the percentage of land protected in the Yukon has not increased since 2010, land use planning is back on track and a final decision has been made to permanently protect 55% of the Peel River Watershed. Once the Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan is implemented, Yukon will have protected almost 20% of the territory, with more land use planning processes underway.

Photo Peter Mather



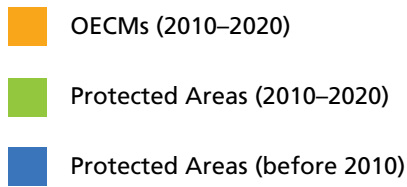
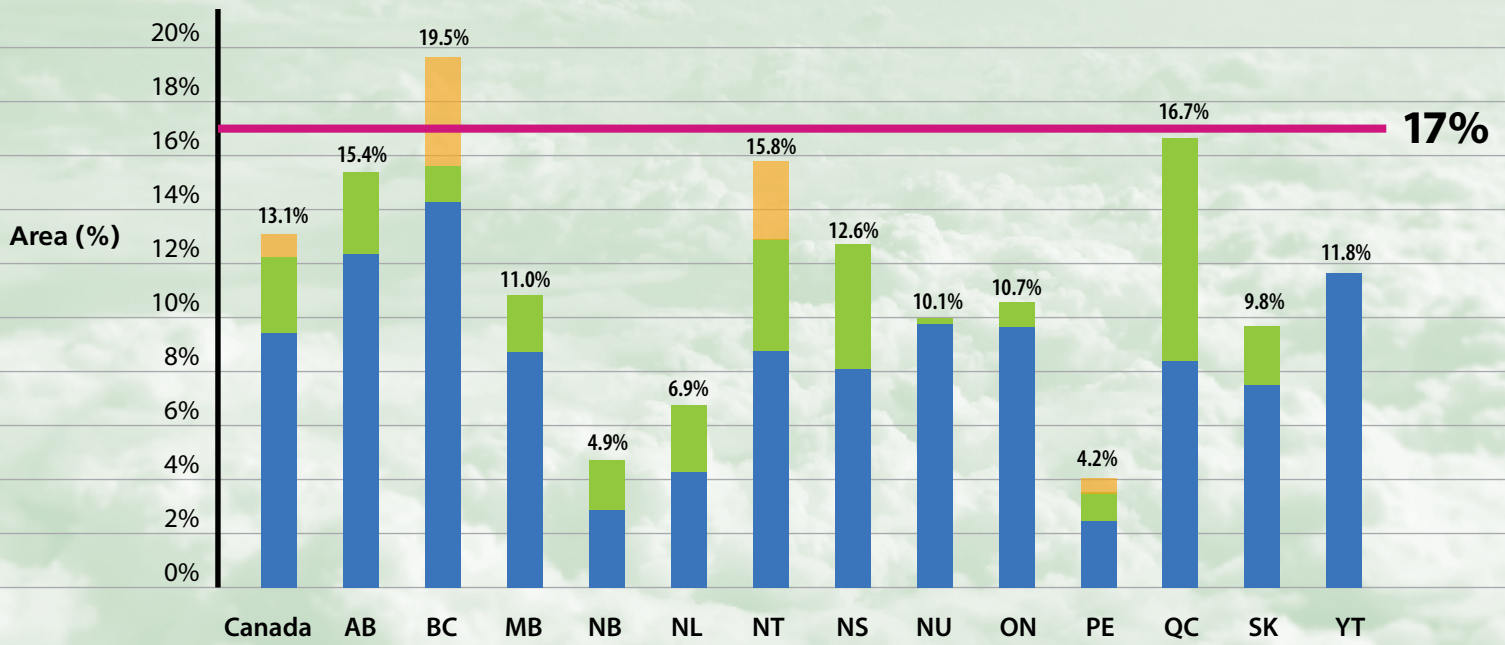


Figure 5. Progress on terrestrial protected area and OECM coverage nationwide and by province/territory.

III.
WHAT WE HAVE
LEARNED—

KEY TAKEAWAY
MESSAGES





Where there is a (political) will, there is a way. Among provinces and territories, Quebec's progress stands out, demonstrating what strong political will combined with Indigenous leadership and public support can achieve. Quebec sets a high yet achievable benchmark, especially for provinces like Manitoba and Ontario that have strong Indigenous and public support for conservation but have governments that are not making establishing protected areas a priority. Federal political commitments to set and deliver on protected area targets, as well as to support Indigenous-led conservation, have helped generate momentum and resulted in historic levels of funding for conservation.

Photo Claude Poirier



Indigenous leadership drives success. The most consistent trend that we observed across all jurisdictions is the critical role that Indigenous Peoples are playing in advancing conservation in Canada. Even where provincial and territorial governments showed little or no interest in protecting land, Indigenous governments have steadily and persistently pushed forward their Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas and launched Indigenous stewardship and Guardians programs.

Photo Markus Thompson



Photo Tim Foster

THE GRADES ARE IN



Federal funding can be a game-changer. Federal funding for conservation partners, which leveraged additional investment from the philanthropic community, moved the dial considerably in just a few years, including for Indigenous-led conservation²⁰. Demand for the Canada Nature Fund far exceeded supply, demonstrating the enormous potential that exists to advance protected areas across the country through the 2021 federal nature budget allocation. However, to deliver on this potential, a higher proportion of the federal funding needs to be allocated to partners, including provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments, and NGOs. Also, both the 2018 and 2021 budget allocations lacked any long-term funding for management. Long term funding for protected areas is essential to ensure they can be effectively managed and deliver benefits to local communities.

Photo Ron Thiessen



Proactive and coordinated efforts help build momentum. Progress on terrestrial protected areas establishment noticeably increased after 2017, aligned with the launch of the Pathway to Target 1 and associated processes. A joint effort for nature protection that brings together federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments, NGOs and other partners in a coordinated push to protect nature can help build momentum and drive progress.

Photo McKenzie Toyne





Conservation takes time. A major barrier to delivering on the 17% terrestrial target was the lack of time between 2018, when the federal government committed significant funding to deliver on the target, and the 2020 deadline. Delivering on the goal of 30% protection by 2030 will require starting the work now, to allow enough time for planning that includes knowledge gathering, in-depth engagement of communities, and other work needed to achieve successful and broadly supported conservation outcomes.

Photo Joseph Gato

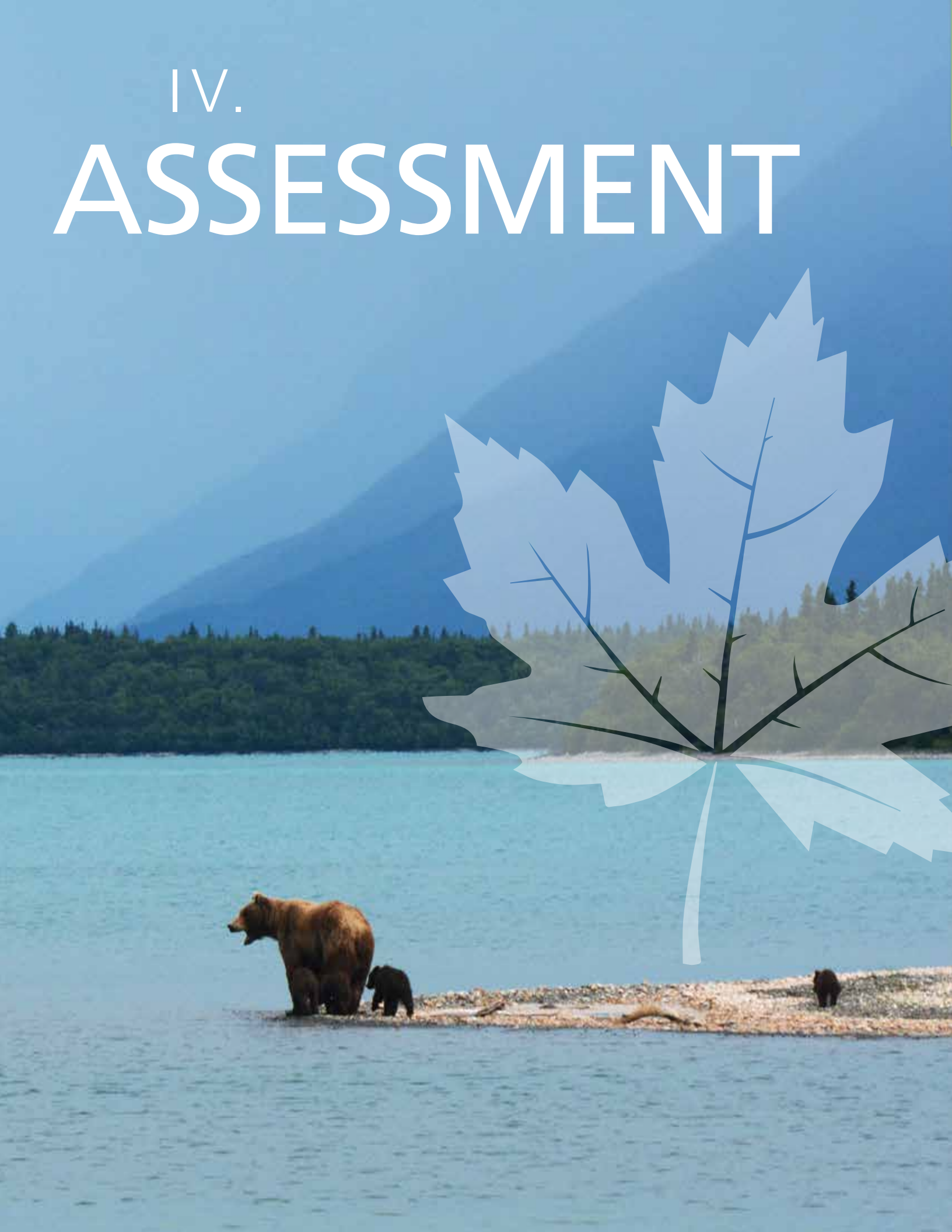


Do not cut corners with OECMs. British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the federal government were the only jurisdictions that reported significant OECM coverage towards the target (Figures 1 and 5). While some of these reported sites meet the agreed-upon IUCN and Canadian standards, others do not. Although OECMs that meet standards may be valuable in some circumstances, protected areas have a proven track record in conserving nature if well-designed and managed and should remain the core conservation tool for delivering on the next decade's targets.

Photo JKelen Loewen



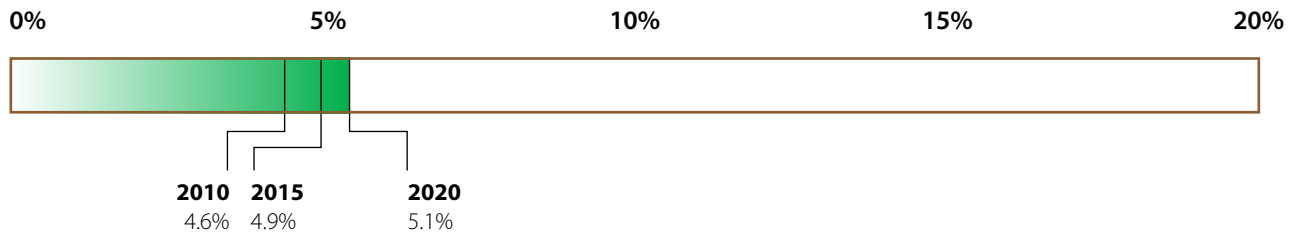
IV. ASSESSMENT



A-

Federal Government – Land and Freshwater

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2010: Federal government endorses CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020 on Canada's behalf, which includes the Aichi targets.²¹

2010-2015: Three new national parks established (Sable Island National Park Reserve, Qausuittuq National Park, and Akami-Uapishku-KakKasuak-Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve). First national urban park established (Rouge).

2015: Canada adopts 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada. Federal government commits to implementing Canada Target 1.

2016: Federal, provincial, and territorial governments agree to work together on a plan to deliver on Canada Target 1, leading to the creation of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative (see text box on p. 18 for more details).

2016: Federal government announces full support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In 2020, it tables legislation in Parliament to begin the process of aligning Canadian law with UNDRIP.

2018: Federal budget includes historic investment of \$1.3 billion over five years for terrestrial nature conservation, including to support partners. This is the largest conservation investment in Canadian history at this point.

2019: The federal government commits to new milestone targets of protecting 25% of land and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030, and to championing the 30% by 2030 target internationally.

2019: Working with Indigenous Nations, the federal government co-creates Edézhíe IPCA and

National Wildlife Area²² and Thaidene Néné Indigenous Protected Area and National Park Reserve²³.

2020: Canada joins the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People²⁴ and endorses the Leader's Pledge for Nature²⁵.

2021: Federal budget includes \$2.3 billion investment in terrestrial nature conservation, becoming the largest conservation investment in Canadian history.

SUMMARY

The federal government has demonstrated strong national and international leadership and commitment, supported and elevated Indigenous-led conservation, made two historic budget investments, and committed to more ambitious targets for the next decade. However, long-term funding to manage protected areas remains a gap to be filled, and management of national parks and national wildlife areas is a concern in some areas.

Because of its limited jurisdiction over land, Canada's federal government cannot create terrestrial protected areas without the support of provincial or territorial and Indigenous governments. Therefore, we assessed the federal government's contribution to Target 1 based on commitments and actions that are within its authority.

Leading and convening in Canada. After endorsing the United Nations CBD Strategic Plan in 2010, including the Aichi Targets, the federal government worked with provinces and territories to develop Canadian biodiversity goals and targets that were adopted in 2015, including a national target of protecting at least 17%



THE GRADES ARE IN

of land and freshwater by 2020 (Canada Target 1). Later that year, the new federal government made a political commitment to deliver on Canada Target 1. In 2017, the Pathway to Canada Target 1 was launched, bringing together federal, provincial, and territorial governments, Indigenous organizations, and other partners to develop a shared Pathway “to achieve the 2020 target and to set the stage for the work required beyond 2020 to complete an effective network of protected areas”. The Pathway process and its advisory bodies (ICE and NAP) have helped craft a shared vision for protected areas in Canada, advanced and supported IPCAs and Indigenous-led conservation, developed Canadian standards for terrestrial protected areas and OECMs, and provided recommendations to improve ecological connectivity.

Supporting Indigenous-led conservation. The federal government has a special relationship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada, grounded in s.35 of the *Constitution Act*. Although historically conservation has in many instances marginalized Indigenous Peoples, a commitment to reconciliation and recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ longstanding leadership in conservation is now embedded in the vision of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative, and is at the heart of recommendations from ICE and NAP, as well as the *One with Nature* report. The 2018 Canada Nature Fund supported many Indigenous-led protected area and land use planning initiatives; however, the demand for funding for these proposals significantly exceeded the supply and many Indigenous-led projects were left unfunded.

The federal government has repeatedly expressed support for Indigenous-led conservation and Guardians programs, and the most recent Speech from the Throne and federal budget reiterated this commitment. How much funding will be allocated from the \$2.3 billion investment in terrestrial conservation to Indigenous-led initiatives remains unclear. As the new funding rolls out it will be important to lighten the administrative



Photo Kevin Noble

Photo: Paul Zizka



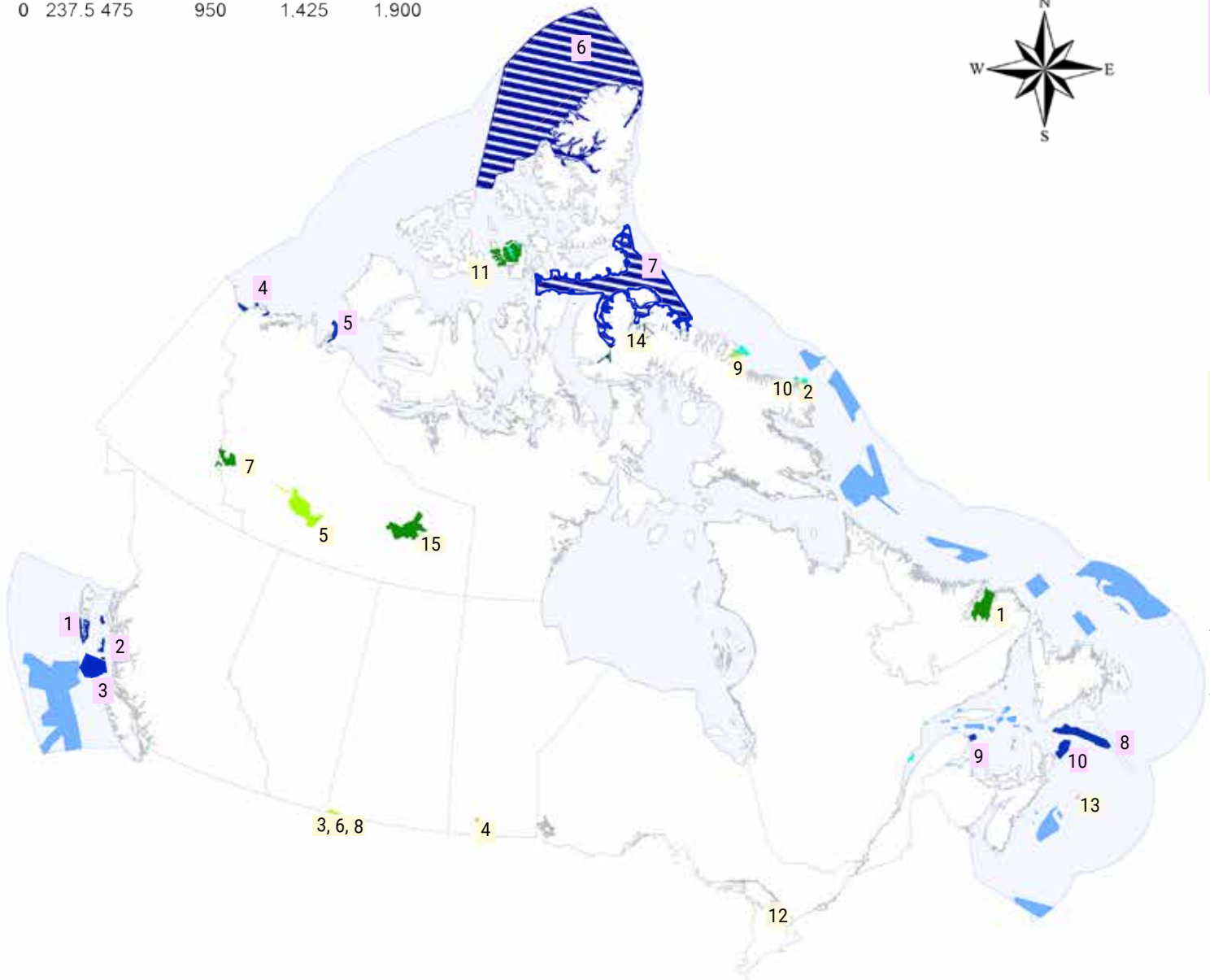
burden for Indigenous communities and ensure funding priorities reflect Indigenous priorities. Designing these programs should be done in collaboration with Indigenous organizations.

Federal protected area tools. While the federal government can only create new terrestrial protected areas with the agreement of provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments, 14 new federal or co-governed protected areas have been reported since 2010. These include six national parks and park reserves, one national urban park, the terrestrial portion of one national marine conservation area (NMCA), seven national wildlife areas (NWAs), and one federal OECM. Together, these protected areas added 55,500 km² (0.5% of Canada's total land area) to Canada's protected areas system (Figure 5). Several of these areas are also Indigenous protected areas/IPCAs declared by Indigenous governments, supported by federal legislation and co-managed by the federal and Indigenous governments.

Despite positive leadership from the federal government over the past decade, there continue to be challenges in the management of national parks and NWAs. For example, despite the recent extirpation of the Maligne caribou herd in Jasper National Park, Parks Canada has not modified access to critical habitat of remaining herds in the park, in spite of scientific evidence that current uses could have negative impacts. The UN World Heritage Committee continues to warn Canada that they may declare Wood Buffalo National Park a World Heritage Site “In Danger”, and the Committee's repeated recommendation to create a buffer zone around Gros Morne National Park remains unfulfilled. Legislation and regulations for NWAs need strengthening to provide clarity that industrial activities are prohibited. Finally, the requirement to review national park management plans at least every five years—part of the Minister's promise from the 2017 Minister's Roundtable on Parks Canada—has not been restored.

THE GRADES ARE IN

0 237.5 475 950 1,425 1,900 Kilometres



Data Source: Dec 2020 Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database

Marine Protected Areas

- Established Federal MPA
- Interim/Proposed MPA
- OECM
- Other Protected Area

- 1 Gwaii Haanas NMCAR
- 2 Hecate Strait Glass Sponge Reef MPA
- 3 Scott Islands mNWA
- 4 Tarium Niryutait MPA
- 5 Anguniaqvia niqiqyuam MPA
- 6 Tuvaijuittuq Interim MPA
- 7 Tallurutiup Imanga NMCAR (proposed)
- 8 Laurentian Channel MPA
- 9 Banc-des-Américains MPA
- 10 St. Anns Bank MPA

Terrestrial Protected Areas

- Parks Canada Agency
- Canadian Wildlife Service, ECCC
- Department of National Defense

- 1 Akami-Uapishku - Kakkasuak – Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve of Canada
- 2 Akpait National Wildlife Area
- 3 Battle Creek Conservation Area
- 4 Canadian Forces Base Shilo OECM
- 5 Edézhñle Protected Area
- 6 Govenlock Conservation Area
- 7 Nààts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve Of Canada

- 8 Nashlyn Conservation Area
- 9 Ninginganiq National Wildlife Area
- 10 Qaulluit National Wildlife Area
- 11 Qausuittuq National Park of Canada
- 12 Rouge National Urban Park
- 13 Sable Island National Park Reserve Of Canada
- 14 Tallurutiup Imagana National Marine Conservation Area
- 15 Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve Of Canada

Figure 6. Federal terrestrial and marine protected areas and OECMs established between 2010 and 2020.²⁶

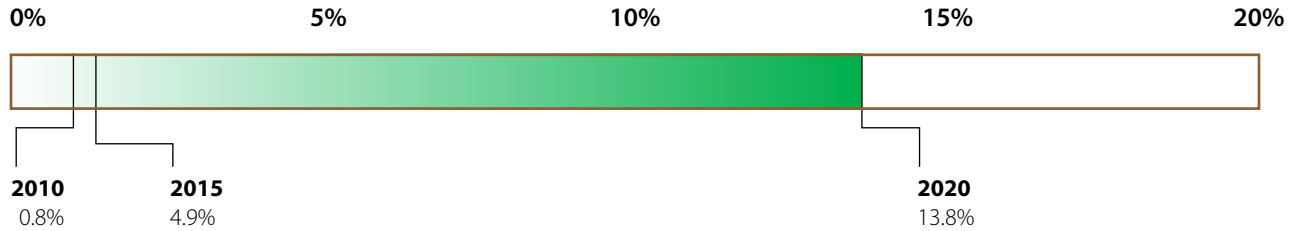
Funding – In 2018 the federal government invested \$1.3 billion in terrestrial protected areas and species at risk: the largest-ever conservation investment in Canadian history. A new “Canada Nature Fund” was set up with \$175 million allocated to a Challenge Fund to support partners’ work to create protected areas on provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous land, and \$100 million allocated to the Natural Heritage Conservation Program to support the creation of protected areas on private lands. Both of these programs leveraged additional funding from private and philanthropic sources.²⁷ Sixty-two projects were supported by the Challenge Fund, most of which were Indigenous-led conservation initiatives.²⁸ This partnership funding has already helped to complete long-standing protected area proposals like Edézhíe²⁹ and Thaidene Nënë, and is encouraging new commitments and opportunities. In April 2021, the federal government announced another investment of \$2.3 billion over five years to protect an additional one million km² to deliver on the 25% by 2025 target, including by supporting IPCAs, Indigenous Guardians programs, provincial and territorial protected areas, and species at risk protection. This will now become the biggest ever conservation investment in Canadian history. While the 2018 and 2021 budgets provide a major boost for conservation action in Canada, they failed to include the long-term investment needed to ensure new protected areas are effectively managed, including through Indigenous Guardians programs, to deliver conservation outcomes and maximize benefits to local communities.

International leadership. In 2010, the federal government endorsed the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020 on Canada’s behalf. In 2019, the federal government stepped forward as a global champion for ambitious conservation action, hosting an international Nature Champions’ Summit in Montreal, and publicly committing to advocate for a new global target of protecting at least 30% of land and ocean by 2030.³⁰ In 2020, Canada joined the *High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People*, a group of 60 countries championing a central goal of protecting at least 30% of the world’s land and ocean by 2030 in the next global biodiversity framework.³¹ The Prime Minister also endorsed the *Leaders’ Pledge for Nature*, reinforcing Canada’s commitment to ambitious international conservation targets and to putting nature and climate at the heart of post-COVID recovery strategies and investments.³²

Photo Annie Spratt



PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2010: Canada endorses Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, which includes protecting at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020.

2015: Canada adopts 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada. New federal government commits to implementing Canada Target 1 which includes protecting at least 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020, and sets an interim target of protecting 5% by 2017. This commitment is made a priority in the mandate letter for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and a five-point plan is developed by Fisheries and

Oceans Canada (DFO) to meet the targets.

2016: DFO develops its own operational guidance for the identification of OECMs, separate from international guidance being developed by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and CBD.

2017: DFO tables amendments to Canada's Oceans Act to allow for the designation of interim MPAs and provide stronger powers to the minister to prohibit oil and gas activities in MPAs.

2018: DFO establishes a National Advisory Panel (NAP) on MPA Standards to advise on the

development of protection standards for federal MPAs.

2019: NAP releases final recommendations on protection standards and co-governance. In response, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard announces minimum protection standards. No response or recommendations were made regarding co-governance.

2019: Amendments to Canada's Oceans Act receive Royal Assent. Canada designates its first interim MPA, and in doing so announces that it has protected 13.8% of its ocean estate.

2019: The federal government commits to protecting 25% of Canada's ocean by 2025, working towards 30% by 2030.

2020: Canada joins the Global Oceans Alliance and High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, reaffirming commitments to protect at least 30% by 2030.

2021: Canada commits \$977 million to ocean protection as part of the federal budget - the largest ever investment in ocean protection in Canada.

Designated federal MPAs*	0.8%
Proposed/Interim federal MPAs‡	7.4%
OECMs/Marine Refuges	4.9%
Other federally designated sites†	0.5%
Provincial and Private sites	0.2%

* Federal MPAs here include *Oceans Act* MPAs, National Marine Conservation Area Reserves (NMCARs) and marine National Wildlife Areas (mNWAAs).

‡ Tuvaijuittuq Interim MPA and Tallurutiup Imanga proposed NMCAR are being counted towards the conservation targets; however, they have not been fully designated and thus lack permanent protection.

† Other federally designated sites include the marine components of National Wildlife Areas, National Parks and Migratory Bird Sanctuaries that lack specific regulations for marine activities.

SUMMARY

After a slow start, Canada has made considerable progress on marine protection over the past six years—from less than 1% protection in 2015 to 13.8% in 2019, exceeding the international target of protecting 10% by 2020. To meet this target, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has developed new tools and approaches to expedite marine protected areas establishment and to implement minimum protection standards in all federal MPAs.

In 2015, the federal government restated Canada's commitment to protect 10% of the ocean by 2020 and set an interim goal of 5% by 2017. For the first time, the establishment of MPAs was set as a priority in the mandate letter of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. With strong political will driving the agenda, DFO established a five-point plan to meet the targets, which included (1) finishing what was started, (2) establishing large offshore MPAs, (3) MPA network planning in three coastal regions, (4) advancing OECMs, and (5) undertaking legislative reform to expedite protection.³³

To finish what was started, six MPAs that were in the establishment process were completed. These included five *Oceans Act* MPAs and Canada's first marine National Wildlife Area (mNWA). Designation was broadly welcomed as most of these sites had been underway for several years. However, there were—and in some instances still are—questions around the quality of protection for some of these sites. In particular, the draft regulations for the Laurentian Channel MPA, which were released for public consultation in 2017, proposed to allow oil and gas activities to continue within the MPA while prohibiting all fishing activities. There was immediate and significant public outcry for stronger protections.

Photo: Unsplash





THE GRADES ARE IN

In Spring 2018, Canada established a National Advisory Panel on MPA Standards to provide guidance and recommendations on protection standards, as well as on the establishment of IPCAs and co-governance of MPAs. In April 2019, after a year of travelling the country to speak with stakeholders, the Panel released its recommendations.³⁴ In response, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada announced the implementation of minimum protection standards for all new federal MPAs that would prohibit bottom trawling, oil and gas activities, mining and dumping. The Minimum Protection Standards were announced alongside the designation of the Laurentian Channel MPA, the first MPA to meet the minimum standards with oil and gas activities now prohibited. The Minister also committed to reviewing existing sites against the minimum protection standards. Since this announcement, an interdepartmental task force has been formed to operationalize the minimum protection standards; the recommendations of the task force are awaited.³⁵ At the time of writing this report, no response has been made to the panel's recommendations on IPCAs or Indigenous co-governance. Several sites have established co-governance and co-management structures with Indigenous governments including Gwaii Haanas NMCAR, Tuvaijuittuq Interim MPA, and Tallurutiup Imanga proposed NMCAR; however, work is needed to support the wider establishment of marine and coastal Indigenous Protected Areas.

Little progress was made on establishing MPA networks in coastal areas. Although MPA network planning was underway in four regions (the Maritimes, Newfoundland and Labrador Shelves, Gulf of St Lawrence, and Pacific Northern Shelf), progress has slowed considerably or in some cases stalled completely, despite initial momentum.

The MPAs officially designated between 2015 and 2019 added just over 0.5% to Canada's protected ocean area. The largest gains in total area protected were through the designation of OECMs and sites with interim protection. In 2016, DFO began to develop its own operational guidance to identify OECMs. This was at roughly the same time that the IUCN WCPA, with input from the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas (CCEA), was developing international guidance on OECMs. Under its own operational guidance, DFO has designated a suite of over 50 OECMs, mostly closures under the *Fisheries Act*, which collectively added almost 5% to Canada's ocean protection target. However, there are considerable gaps between the IUCN WCPA and DFO guidance and outstanding concerns about protection standards, as closures under Canada's *Fisheries Act* are not able to prohibit other activities such as oil and gas.³⁶ In April 2018 and November 2020, the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board awarded exploratory licenses in the Northeast Newfoundland Slope OECM, reinforcing concerns about the protection standards of OECMs. DFO is now working to revise its OECM guidance to better align with the IUCN and CBD.

In 2019, amendments to Canada's *Oceans Act* received Royal Assent. The Amendments included the establishment of Interim MPAs by freezing the footprint of existing activities, strengthening authoritative powers to prohibit oil and gas activities in MPAs, and supporting the application of the precautionary principle and inclusion of ecological integrity. With these new powers, Canada designated Tuvaijuittuq as its first Interim MPA, which covers almost 320,000 km² and added 5.5% to Canada's marine protection targets. As an interim MPA, the current protection measures are in place for five years, after which the site must be fully designated or de-listed. Freezing the footprint prohibits new activities, but existing activities are permitted to continue. A proposed National Marine Conservation Area in Tallurutiup is also being counted towards the target (contributing 1.9%) with the establishment of an Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement; however, there are no regulations or protection measures in place yet.³⁷

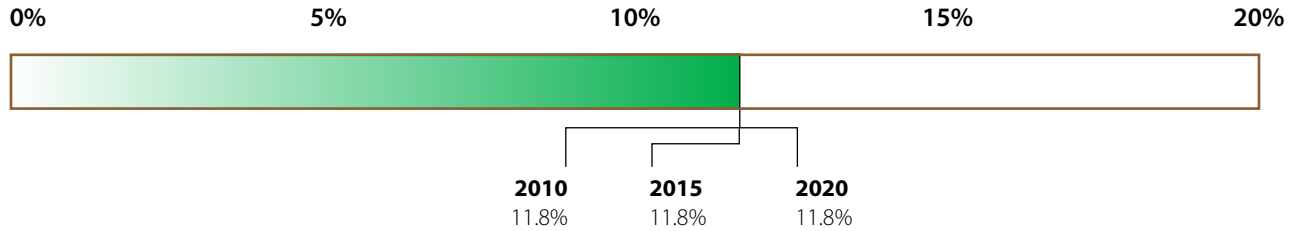


Photo: Leah Honka

While Canada has made great strides in ocean protection over the past few years, questions remain around the implementation of minimum protection standards, the effectiveness of MPA and OECS management, and the establishment of marine and coastal IPCAs and co-governance agreements with Indigenous governments. In addition, increased effort is needed to successfully complete MPA network planning in the priority bioregions, including re-engaging effectively with provinces and Indigenous partners in areas where planning has stalled.

Yukon Territory

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2011: Peel Watershed Planning Commission releases Final Recommended Plan, with permanent protection for 55% of the watershed (37,000 km²) and interim protection for 28% (18,836 km²).

2014: Yukon Government ignores Commission's Plan and releases its own, which would open 71% of the Peel Watershed to development. First Nations and environmental groups, including CPAWS Yukon, launch a legal challenge.

2017-18: Legal case goes to the Supreme Court of Canada, which delivers a decisive victory, opening the door for a return to the Final Recommended Plan.

2019: Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan approved by First Nations and Yukon Government after additional public consultations and Nation-to-Nation negotiations.

2019-21: Yukon Government and First Nations establish an independent panel to develop a Mineral Development Strategy. Panel recommends modernizing outdated mining legislation and aligning it with UNDRIP.

2019: Dawson regional land use planning process launched. Yukon Government leaves most of region open to development, undermining efforts to protect ecologically and culturally significant areas.

2020: Yukon Government releases the territory's first Parks Strategy, which includes commitments to develop a park system plan and to advance Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

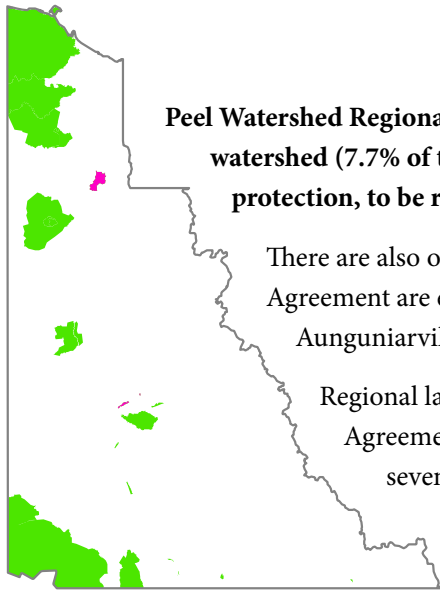
2020-21: Yukon Government approves permits for mining exploration in Beaver River Watershed (Tsé Tagé) before the region's land use plan is complete. First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun launches a legal challenge.

Protected areas*	11.8%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

The Yukon Government's performance on protected areas over the past decade has been mixed. While three small Habitat Protection Areas were established, the regional land use planning process, one of the territory's main pathways for creating protected areas, was largely stalled. Planning resumed following a successful legal challenge, where First Nations and environmental groups took the government to the Supreme Court of Canada to undo its attempt to undermine the planning process for the Peel Watershed. Sustained First Nations' leadership finally led to the approval of the

* This does not include the 37,000 km² that will be permanently protected through the Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan. When the Plan is completed and accounted for, 19.4% of the Yukon will be permanently protected.



Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan in 2019, which will protect 37,000 km² of the wild northern watershed (7.7% of the territory). An additional 28% of the watershed will have interim protection, to be reviewed after a decade.

There are also other significant conservation initiatives underway. Parties to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement are exploring an IPCA for the eastern part of the Yukon North Slope (Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik), an important habitat area for the Porcupine caribou herd.

Regional land use planning is mandated for most of the territory under the Final Agreements (modern treaties). While the Dawson land use plan is underway, only two of seven land use plans have been completed. With the original allocation of funds for land use planning nearly depleted, a funding injection is needed to expedite the remaining plans. In southeast Yukon, where Kaska Dena First Nations do not have land claim agreements in place, First Nations are exploring the potential for IPCAs and conducting their own planning. Delivering on these

opportunities will require stronger support from the territorial and federal governments.

Unfortunately, the Yukon Government continues to approve mineral development projects prior to land use planning and without adequately consulting First Nations. This undermines the constitutionally protected planning process and is inconsistent with the intent of the Final

Agreements. In response, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has launched a legal challenge of the government's recent approval of a mining exploration project in the Beaver River Watershed (Tsé Tagé).

In spite of these ongoing challenges, the current government has taken some positive steps. These include committing to a new strategy and system plan for the territorial parks system and a framework for Indigenous-led protected areas, completing a Yukon *Species at Risk Act* and revising outdated mining legislation. The government also stood firm, alongside First Nations, environmental groups, and the federal government, in defending the Porcupine caribou herd from U.S. proposals to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling.

If the Yukon stops issuing development permits in advance of land use planning and consistently prioritizes First Nations rights and interests over mining interests, the territory could become a global leader in conservation over the next decade.

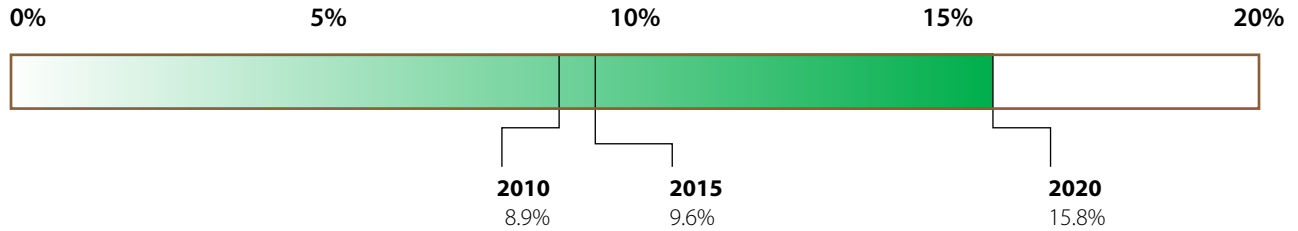
- Protected areas created after 2010
- Protected areas created before 2010

Photo: Juri Peepie



Northwest Territories

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2012: Agreements signed to create Nááts'įhch'oh National Park Reserve (4,895 km²).

2013: Sahtu Land Use Plan approved.

2013: Wehexlaxodiāle Indigenous Protected Area (980 km²) established through the Tłı̄chou land use plan.

2014: Responsibility for public land, water, and resource management devolved from the federal government to the Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) under the *Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement*.

2018: Agreement signed to create Edézhíe Indigenous Protected Area and National Wildlife Area (14,200 km²).

2019: Agreements signed to create Thaidene Nënë Indigenous Protected Area, National Park Reserve, Territorial Protected Area, and Wildlife Conservation Area (26,376 km²).

2019: Agreement signed to create Ts'udé Níliné Tuyeta Protected Area (10,060 km²).

2019: GNWT enacts leading-edge territorial Protected Areas legislation that recognizes Indigenous protected areas and international standards.

Protected Areas

12.9%

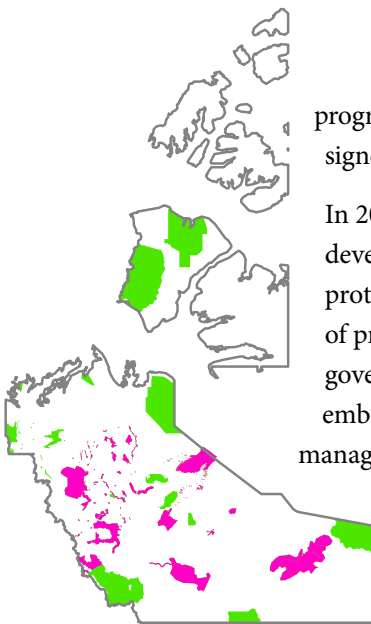
OEEMs

2.9%

SUMMARY

Since 2018, four Indigenous protected areas have been established in the Northwest Territories (NWT), covering 4.5% of the territories. Indigenous Guardians programs have been created to support management. This progress was largely the result of longstanding Indigenous leadership and investments from the federal Nature Fund.

Early in the decade, the Sahtu Dene and Metis and Parks Canada jointly created Nááts'įhch'oh National Park Reserve in the headwaters of the South Nahanni River, and the Tłı̄chou Government established Wehexlaxodiāle Indigenous Protected Area through the Tłı̄chou Land Use Plan. For much of the decade, however, protected areas establishment was on hold while negotiations were completed to devolve some authority over land and resources from the federal to the territorial government. After the NWT devolution agreement came into force in 2014, new GNWT legal and policy frameworks needed to be developed to guide land management. In 2018 and 2019



- Protected areas and OECMs created after 2010
- Protected areas created before 2010

progress resumed and agreements to establish three new Indigenous protected areas were signed between Indigenous Nations and the federal and/or territorial governments.^{38, 39, 40}

In 2019 a new territorial protected areas law was enacted.⁴¹ This leading-edge legislation, developed collaboratively by Indigenous governments and the GNWT, has a goal of protecting ecological integrity and cultural continuity, supports the establishment of protected areas that are collaboratively governed and managed by the territorial government and Indigenous governments, prohibits industrial activities in these areas, and embraces Indigenous and scientific knowledge and the precautionary principle to guide management.

In addition to protected areas, fully protected conservation zones in land use plans have now been formally recognized by the GNWT as OECMs. Covering 2.9% of the NWT, these OECMs contribute towards Canada's 17% target.

With devolution complete and a legal and policy framework that supports Indigenous protected areas in place, the stage is set for the GNWT to become a true champion of Indigenous-led conservation, by supporting long-standing and new opportunities over the next few years, through the Dehcho and Akaitcho Land Use Plans, as well as through other Indigenous-led IPCA initiatives.

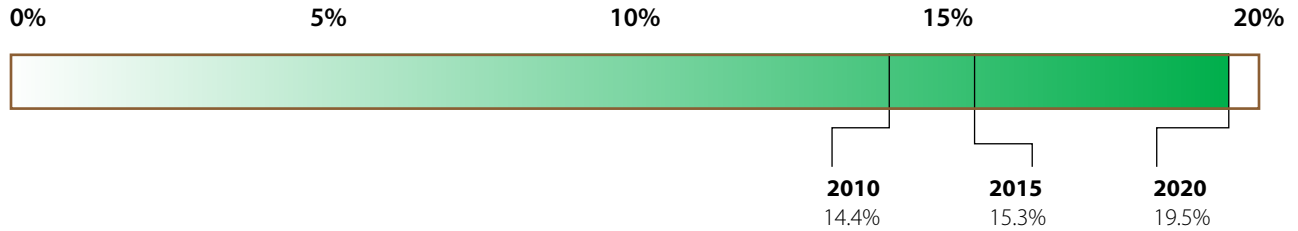
Photo Antje Rilke





British Columbia

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2011: British Columbia Auditor General finds BC Parks is not meeting its goal of conserving the ecological integrity of the province’s parks and protected areas.

2012-2013: Twelve new Conservancies, covering 6,655 km², created as a result of First Nations leadership and historic

cross-sectoral collaboration in the Great Bear Rainforest.

2014: *B.C.’s Park Act* amended to allow private companies to conduct industrial research in parks, to then be used in proposals to remove lands from parks for development purposes.

2016: BC Parks Future Strategy announced by the provincial

government. This created the BC Parks specialty license plate program and launched the BC Parks Foundation.

2019: Legislation passed to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

2021: B.C. government invests \$20 million to create over 250 youth conservation jobs, and

\$83 million for BC Parks capital investments and operations.

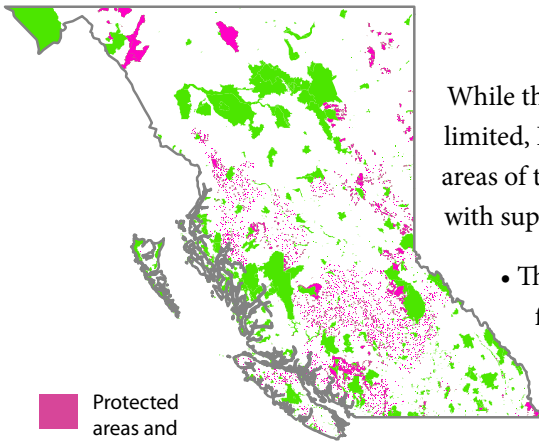
2021: B.C. Auditor General releases a report stating that British Columbia failed to adequately manage its Conservation Lands Program aimed at protecting habitats for fish and wildlife species.

Protected Areas	15.5%
OECMs	4%

SUMMARY

British Columbia started the decade with the highest percentage of land protected of any Canadian jurisdiction; however, since 2010, only one percent has been added in protected areas. B.C. reports an additional four percent of the land base as OECMs, which are now under review by the provincial government. B.C. includes designations such as Old Growth Management Areas, which fall short of both international and Canadian standards for OECMs. This detracts from forward-looking opportunities to create protected areas that further commitments to reconciliation and protecting species at risk.

Most of the province’s progress on new protected areas occurred in 2012 and 2013, thanks largely to First Nations leadership and collaboration as part of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. This agreement led to the creation of 12 new provincial Conservancies, protecting 6,655 km² (0.7%) of the province. Provincial Conservancies recognize and prioritize First Nations’ social, cultural, and ceremonial interests and values.



Protected areas and OECMs created after 2010

Protected areas created before 2010

While the B.C. government's progress on protected area establishment has been limited, Indigenous groups are forging ahead with proposals to protect significant areas of their territories. Indigenous-led conservation projects in B.C., advancing with support from the Canada Nature Fund, include:

- The establishment of Dene K'eh Kusan—covering 40,000 km² of intact forests and supporting wildlife populations, including caribou and bighorn sheep—in the heart of Kaska Dena territory in northern B.C.
- A land use planning process led by the Tahltan First Nation, which will include the designation of a new IPCA in Tahltan territory.
- The creation of a new IPCA in the Taku River Tlingit territory in northwestern B.C.
- A formal declaration by the Ktunaxa Nation, and partnership with the provincial and federal governments, to create the Qat'muk IPCA in an area of the Central Purcell Mountains.
- Canada's newest National Park Reserve, being established by the member bands of the Syilx/Okanagan Nation, the province, and the federal government.

Long-standing challenges with park management have persisted for most of the last two decades. In 2010, a report by B.C.'s Auditor General found that the province was not meeting its goal of conserving the ecological integrity of B.C.'s protected areas. Two decades of chronic underfunding of the parks system have resulted in limited park management, monitoring, and enforcement. The recent announcement of \$83 million over three years for BC Parks is a positive step for improving accessibility and visitor infrastructure in B.C.'s parks.

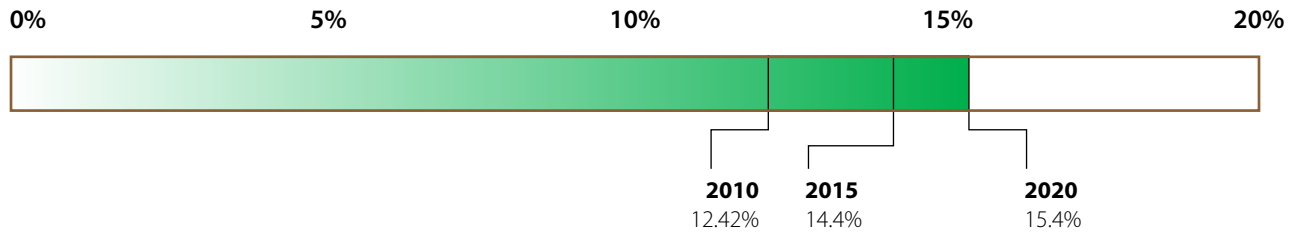
Moving forward, B.C. has the opportunity to be a conservation leader by committing to protect 25% of the province by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives will help advance multiple provincial priorities, including landuse planning, IPCAs, and Guardians programs, and ensuring that existing protected areas are managed with ecological integrity as the priority.

Photo Adobe Stock



Alberta

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2012: Government of Alberta approves Lower Athabasca Regional Plan, which includes a 13,600 km² - 56% - expansion of the provincial parks system in the region.

2017: Government of Alberta commits to achieving 17% protection target and co-chairs the

nationwide Pathway to Canada Target 1 process.

2019: Government of Alberta abandons 17% target and steps down as co-chair of Pathway to Canada Target 1 process.

2019: Government of Alberta abandons protected areas proposal for the Bighorn Backcountry region.

2020: Government of Alberta proposes to remove protected area status from 175 provincial parks, then backtracks due to overwhelming public disapproval.

2020: Government of Alberta opens Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains to coal exploration and mining. Public pressure caused the government

to announce a public consultation process on a new coal policy. However, permits had already been issued, the damage had begun, and several projects are still moving forward.

Protected Areas

15.4%

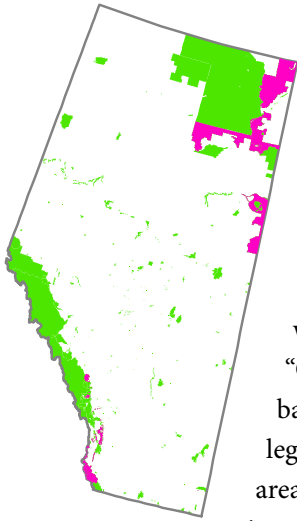
OECMs

0%

SUMMARY

While Alberta governments created new protected areas, committed to protecting 17% of the province's land and freshwater by 2020, and co-chaired the nationwide Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, the current provincial government has completely reversed progress by abandoning the 2020 target, undermining Alberta's existing provincial parks system, and opening the Rocky Mountain foothills to coal development.

In 2012, approval of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) set the stage for the largest expansion (13,600 km²) of Alberta's provincial parks system in history. The LARP resulted in an expansion of Birch Mountains Provincial Park and the creation of the Kazan, Richardson, Dillon River, and Birch River Wildland Provincial Parks.⁴² In 2015, the provincial government stepped forward as a national leader, committing to a 17% protection target in Alberta and co-chairing the new intergovernmental process tasked to coordinate the delivery of the 17% commitment nationwide. In 2017 it established Castle Provincial Park and in 2018



- Protected areas created after 2010
- Protected areas created before 2010

committed to protecting the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River in the Bighorn Backcountry.

However, in 2019 the Alberta government reversed course by abandoning the 17% target, stepping down from chairing the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process, and walking away from protecting the Bighorn. Then in 2020, the provincial government announced it was planning to remove the protected area status from 175 provincial parks through the “Optimizing Alberta Parks” process. While massive public outcry caused the government to backtrack on this process, the future of these sites remains uncertain, and changes to parks legislation are expected. In 2020, Alberta revoked its 1976 Coal Policy, opening up sensitive areas of the Eastern Slopes to coal exploration and mining. Although the Policy was reinstated in response to immense public pressure, several exploration and development projects are continuing, and the future of this landscape is uncertain as a new coal policy is being created.⁴³

In February 2021, in response to sustained pressure from First Nations, the Alberta government announced a plan to almost double the area of Kitaskino Nuwenēné Wildland Provincial Park from 1,618 km² to more than 3,000 km².⁴⁴ If approved, the expanded park would be an Indigenous-led conservation initiative, cooperatively managed by provincial and Indigenous authorities.

Management of protected areas in Alberta continues to be a challenge, with industrial activities permitted in many provincial protected areas. Of the approximately 5% of provincial parks that have management plans,⁴⁵ most are out of date and have not been implemented.

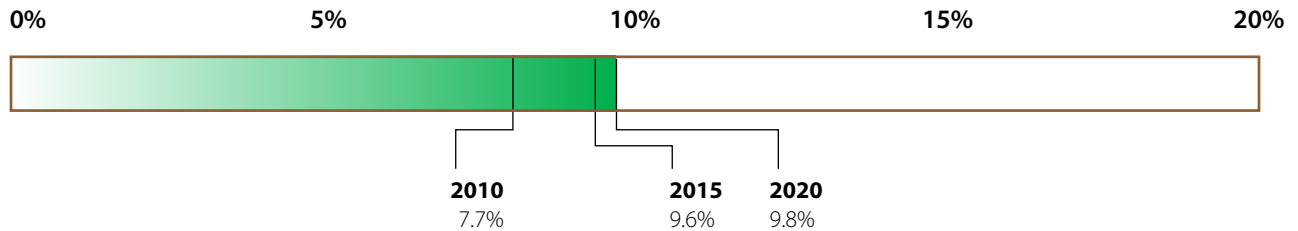
Alberta is in urgent need of a conservation course correction. This includes not only refraining from policies and actions that threaten natural ecosystems, but also committing to evidence-based conservation targets and standards for protected areas, providing stronger protection for the Eastern Slopes, and supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, including Guardians programs.

Photo Martin Penrice



Saskatchewan

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2013: Provincial government designates Great Blue Heron Provincial Park (112 km²) and establishes the Pink Lake Representative Area Ecological Reserve (3,660 km²) in collaboration with the Lac Laronge Indian Band.

2013 – 2017: After the federal government divests ecologically sensitive grassland Community Pastures to the province, 60 pastures are designated under Saskatchewan's *Pastures Act*. However, this fails to provide adequate conservation measures

to maintain their important ecological values.

2018-2019: Four small provincial protected areas are designated.

2019-2020: Lobstick Lake in the Saskatchewan River Delta receives interim protection status.

2019-2020: Four conservation projects receive federal financial support from the Canada Nature Fund: one led by the Saskatchewan government and three led by Indigenous organizations.

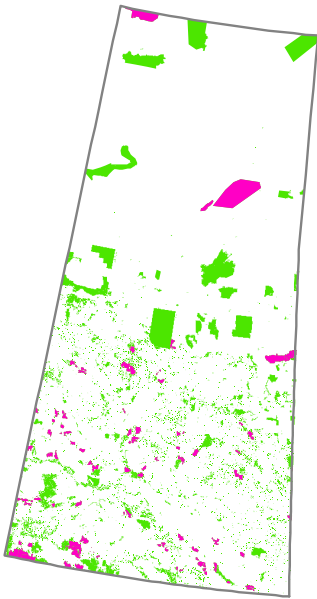
Protected Areas	9.8%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

Over the past decade, the Government of Saskatchewan showed little ambition and achieved limited progress in protecting nature. The province only protected an additional two percent of Saskatchewan's land base, falling well short of its 30-year-old target of protecting 12 percent. Saskatchewan also failed to put in place adequate conservation measures or management capacity to safeguard ecologically significant native grasslands that were transferred from the federal government. On a more positive note, Indigenous Nations are advancing proposals for large IPCAs with financial support from the Canada Nature Fund and are calling on the provincial government to support implementation of these initiatives.

After 15 years of work by First Nations, NGOs, the forest industry, and other partners, the province ended the 2010 decade by providing interim protection to Lobstick Lake, which is a small step forward towards conserving the Saskatchewan River Delta—one of North America's largest and most important inland river deltas.

Saskatchewan's endangered native grassland ecosystems are less secure now than they were in 2010. After



- Protected areas created after 2010
- Protected areas created before 2010

Agriculture Canada closed its Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Area (PFRA) program, which had conserved significant tracts of Canada’s endangered grassland ecosystems since the 1930s, responsibility for most of these lands was divested to the provincial government. Between 2013 and 2017, Saskatchewan designated most of these areas under its *Pastures Act* but failed to put in place adequate conservation measures to safeguard the ecological values of these endangered native grasslands. It also failed to invest in ecological monitoring or management of these sites. Despite downgrading their conservation status, the province continues to report the pastures as “protected areas” and count them towards provincial and national targets.

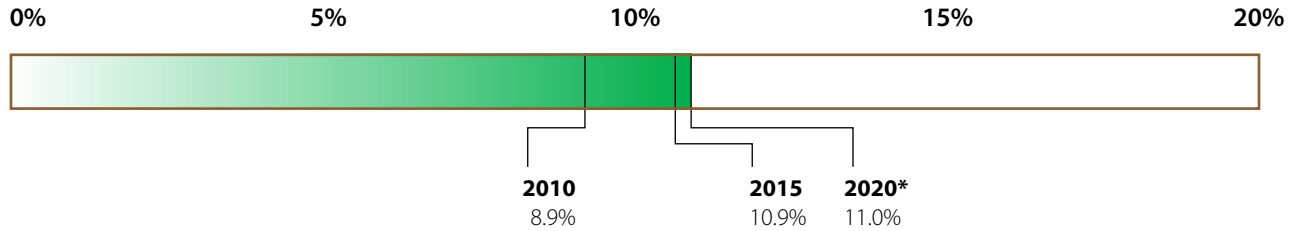
Indigenous leadership offers hope for a brighter future for conservation in much of Saskatchewan. In the boreal region, Cumberland House Cree Nation has been working with partners for many years to create an almost 4,000 km² protected area in the Suggi Lowlands/Mossy River Watershed at the heart of the Saskatchewan River Delta. Ya’thi Néné and neighboring Athabasca Dene First Nations and communities have identified important caribou habitat for protection as Indigenous Protected Areas in Athabasca Dēnesuliné Nuhenéné. Both projects have received financial support through the Canada Nature Fund and partners are now looking to the provincial government to help implement the plans, including by recognizing new Indigenous-led governance and management models and supporting Indigenous Guardians programs.

With the province expressing interest in Indigenous-led conservation, there is now hope that Saskatchewan may embrace a more positive conservation path over the next decade. Setting a more ambitious evidence-based target of protecting at least 30% of land and freshwater by 2030 would be an important first step.

Photo: Garth Lenz



PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2011-2015: Fifteen new provincial protected areas established (covering more than 20,000 km²)⁴⁶ under the Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative - four of which are protected through First Nation-led land use plans that are enshrined in provincial legislation.

2018: Pimachiowin Aki, a vast area of boreal forest, becomes Canada’s first “mixed” (cultural and natural) World Heritage Site. This initiative, launched in 2004,

was led by regional Indigenous Nations and the Manitoba government.

2018: The Manitoba government establishes \$102 million Conservation Trust Fund.

2015-2020: Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative stalls. Only 177 km² is protected over five years.

2020: Federal Canada Nature Fund supports seven Indigenous-led conservation projects, including the Seal River Watershed Indigenous Protected Area

Initiative and Fisher River Cree Nation Conservation Areas Initiative - the latter having the official support of the Manitoba government.

2020: The Manitoba government announces \$16.6 million investment in park infrastructure and up to \$500,000 to support development of trails in provincial parks.

2020: The Manitoba government commissions assessment of provincial parks to identify “which assets should be divested” and how to “decommission/transition parks to other models” to “achieve greater financial sustainability”.⁴⁷

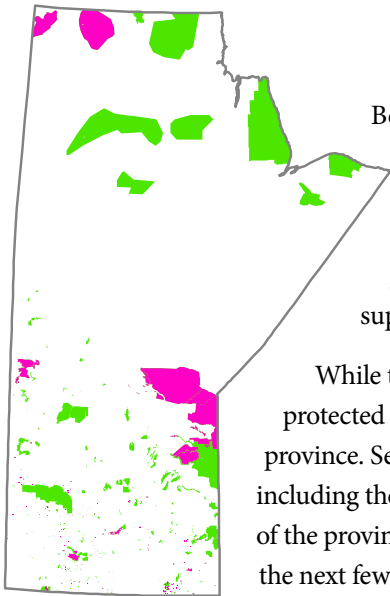
2021: The Manitoba government creates a new \$20 million Provincial Parks Endowment Fund to support park improvements and programming.

Protected Areas	11%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

While progress was made in expanding Manitoba’s protected areas prior to 2015, the provincial government protected just 177 km² in the following five years. Worrying signs point to the province looking to identify “which assets should be divested” and seek “opportunities to decommission/transition parks to other models” (i.e. for other groups to operate or own parks).⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and protected area proposals in Manitoba continue to move forward, offering a significant opportunity for protecting the province’s land and freshwater in a way that will contribute to reconciliation.

* The province reports 11.1% - <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=48557>



Between 2010 and 2015, the Manitoba government made progress in expanding the province's protected areas system, and protecting an additional 2% of the province by establishing 15 new protected areas. Since then, however, there has been little on-the-ground progress. On a positive note, in 2018 the current provincial government created an arms-length \$102 million "Conservation Trust Fund" to support the provincial climate strategy through ecosystem conservation and restoration.

While the current Manitoba government has made little progress in expanding the provincial protected area system, Indigenous governments are accelerating their conservation work across the province. Seven Indigenous-led conservation projects were supported by the Canada Nature Fund, including the Seal River Watershed Indigenous Protected Area Initiative, which covers almost 8% of the province (50,000 km²), and the Fisher River Cree Nation Conservation Areas Initiative. Over the next few years, these Indigenous-led initiatives should result in the protection of many more ecologically and culturally important areas in the province.

- Protected areas created after 2010
- Protected areas created before 2010

Recently the Manitoba government sent a very worrying signal about the future of Manitoba's provincial parks by commissioning an assessment to determine which parks and services could be divested/decommissioned and/or potentially privatized. Before the study was even complete, campsite fees tripled at St. Ambrose Provincial Park after a private company was awarded a 21-year lease in January of this year. The Manitoba parks assessment has yet to be publicly released.

Privatization will undermine the critical role parks play as an accessible, affordable public service at a time when parks are needed more than ever for Manitobans' well-being. The assessment also includes exploring how to "achieve greater financial sustainability" for Manitoba's parks. This seems to ignore evidence that public investments in parks generate significant positive economic impacts, including job creation and significant savings in health costs. The gap between park revenues and operating expenses is appropriately filled by Manitoba's provincial budget because the social, economic, and environmental values parks hold are essential services for citizens.

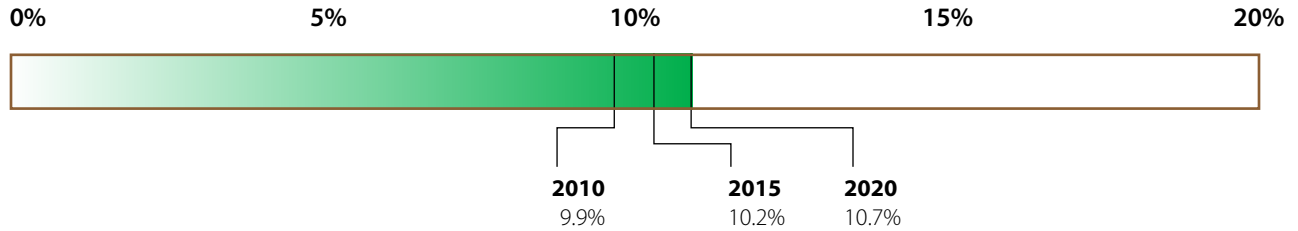
With ample conservation opportunities available, the Manitoba government should set a target of protecting at least 30% of the province by 2030, support Indigenous-led conservation, including land use planning, and abandon any plans to divest itself of public parks and their services.

Photo Rob Thiesen



Ontario

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2011: Nine large new protected areas are created in northern Ontario (11,000 km²) through Community led Land Use Planning

2012: Ontario embeds 17% protection target in its biodiversity conservation plan.

2012-2017: Eight small new protected areas created (319 km² total)

2016: Algonquin land claim agreement in principle (AIP) signed, which includes a proposed new provincial park and expansion to Lake St. Peter Provincial Park, both within the Algonquin to Adirondack corridor.

2018: Ontario omits 17% protection target from new “Made in Ontario Environment Plan”.

2020: Government of Ontario exempts forest industry from legal requirement under the *Endangered Species Act (ESA)* to protect and recover species at risk on commercial tenures (which cover over half the province).

2020: Government of Ontario permanently exempts forest industry from *Environmental Assessment (EA)* requirements.

2020: By using omnibus budget bills to enact changes to ESA and EA, rights to participate in environmental decision-making—as guaranteed by Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights—are circumvented.

Protected Areas

10.7%

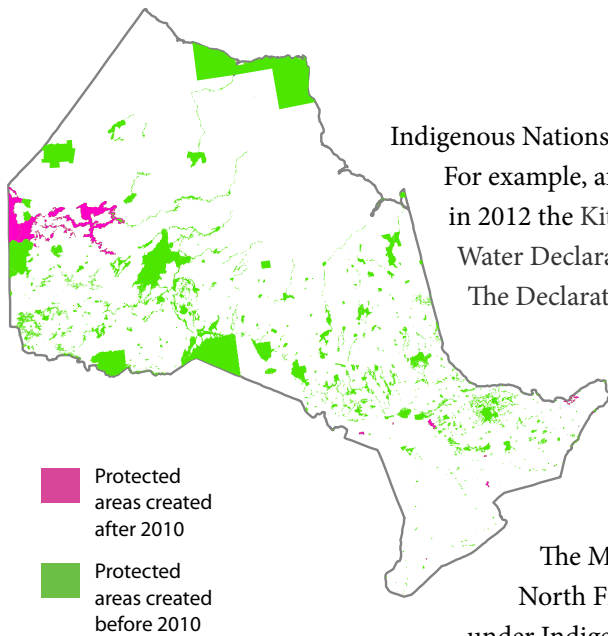
OECMs

0%*

SUMMARY

The past ten years can be summed up as a decade of missed opportunities for conservation in Ontario. While a 17% land protection target was embedded in Ontario’s biodiversity strategy in 2012, the target was dropped in 2018. The province protected less than one percent of Ontario’s land base over the decade, and most of this progress occurred in 2011 as a result of Community-led land use planning in northern Ontario. Since then, only eight small sites have been established, and no new protected areas have been reported since 2017. Meanwhile, the Government of Ontario has also dismantled or weakened key elements of its environmental law and policy framework, including the Endangered Species Act and the Environmental Assessment process.

* Ontario is reporting three OECMs covering 38 km². This area is too small to show up in the percentage measure.



Indigenous Nations in Ontario have continued to demonstrate conservation leadership.

For example, after many years of conflict over mineral staking in their territory, in 2012 the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) Nation released the “KI Water Declaration and Consultation Protocols” through their Indigenous Law.

The Declaration protects the Fawn River watershed and their home lake,

Kitchenuhmaykoosib, from industrial and other harmful uses, and sets out consultation protocols that require free, prior, and informed consent for activities affecting KI’s lands and resources. After years of conflict over mineral exploration, the Ontario government withdrew the lands from mineral staking.

The Moose Cree First Nation declared the 6,660 km² watershed of the North French River - the heart of their homeland - permanently protected under Indigenous Law. However, to date the Ontario government has yet to apply protections to the watershed using provincial tools.

In 2019, the Moose Cree, KI, Grassy Narrows, and Shawanaga First Nations received federal funding from the Canada Nature Fund to advance the establishment of Indigenous Protected Areas in their territories. Funding was also provided to a coalition of NGOs to help advance conservation and restoration of natural areas in the peri-urban environment around Toronto.

Park management in Ontario also continues to be under-resourced and limited in scope. Industrial logging continues in Algonquin Provincial Park, 65% of which remains open to logging, quarrying for gravel, and/or roadbuilding. Early in the last decade Ontario Parks began a province-wide effort to update park management plans to reflect the legal requirement to prioritize ecological integrity in park management; however, this effort was later abandoned.⁴⁹

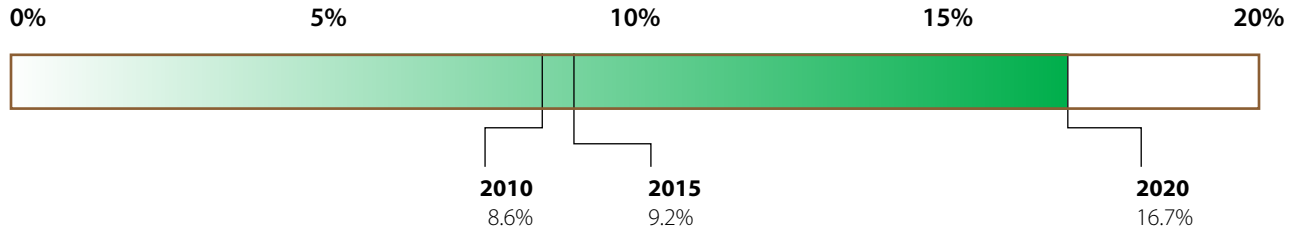
In summary, the Ontario government has taken a big step backwards on nature conservation over the past decade in spite of the significant opportunities that exist across the province. A course correction is urgently needed, including by setting evidence-based conservation targets, supporting Indigenous-led conservation, investing in protecting nature, and working with government and non-government partners.

Photo: Leila Boujraie



Quebec

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2011: Quebec adopts target of protecting 12% of land by 2015 and mandates regional governments to identify priority areas for protection.

2015: Quebec confirms target of protecting 20% of northern region (north of the 49th parallel), including at least 12% in the boreal forest.

2019: New Quebec government confirms commitment to protect 17% of land and freshwater by 2020.

2020: Quebec and Indigenous Nations and communities announce 30,000 km² in new protected areas, achieving target of protecting 20% of Nunavik (far north of Quebec).

2020: Quebec achieves 16.7% protection, announcing protection of an additional 66,000 km², including 39,000 km² in Eeyou Itsee (Cree territory) and numerous sites in other regions.

2021: Quebec adopts updated and strengthened *Protected Natural Heritage Areas Act*.

2021: Quebec commits to adopting the anticipated new CBD target of protecting 30% of land and ocean by 2030.

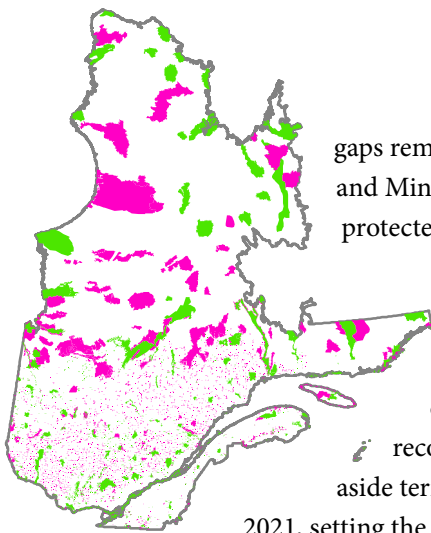
Protected areas ⁵⁰	16.7%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

Quebec essentially delivered on its promise to protect 17% of the province's land and freshwater by 2020 through a major expansion of its protected areas network.^{51,52} While this is a significant achievement, many important sites identified for protection in southern Quebec still need to be designated.

Early in the last decade Quebec formally adopted targets and mandated regional governments to create plans to implement them, including through consultations with the public, some stakeholders, and Indigenous Nations and communities. This means there are many protected area proposals ready and awaiting designation.

The biggest advances were made in northern Quebec, in Eeyou Itsee and Nunavik. In these regions, Cree, Inuit, Naskapi, and Innu Nations and communities identified vast ecologically and culturally significant areas for protection and worked with the Quebec government to protect these areas under Quebec law. Significant



Protected areas created after 2010

Protected areas created before 2010

gaps remain in southern Quebec and the southern boreal forest where the forest industry and Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks are a major obstacle to protection. Several dozen protected area proposals for southern Quebec that were identified through comprehensive regional planning processes still need to be designated.

Progress has also been made on protected area legislation in the province. In 2020, the Quebec government updated its *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, confirming international (IUCN) standards for protected areas and OECMs in law, recognizing Indigenous-led protected areas, and creating the possibility to rapidly set aside territories that have conservation values. This updated Act was passed in February 2021, setting the stage for the next decade's conservation work. Quebec is also the first jurisdiction in Canada to put forward protected areas for consideration under the IUCN Green List standard, an international certification system for high-quality protected areas.⁵³

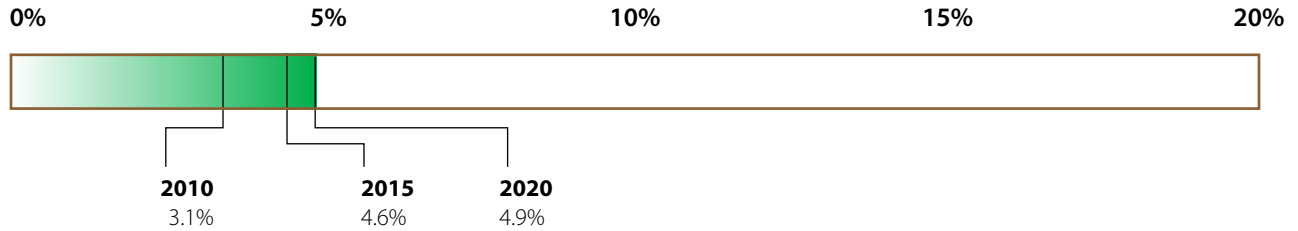
With these achievements, Quebec is now well-positioned to adopt a “conservation staircase” and incrementally deliver on the next international target of protecting at least 30% of land and ocean by 2030. With many protected area proposals ready to be designated in southern and boreal regions, and with an on-going commitment to protect 50% of the area north of the 49th parallel through the Plan Nord, Quebec is set to protect 22% of the province by 2022, 25% by 2025, and 30% by 2030. This would position Quebec as a global and national conservation leader.

Photo Louis Fradet



New Brunswick

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2014: Government of New Brunswick revises *Parks Act* to strengthen conservation mandate for natural areas within provincial parks.

2014: Government of New Brunswick increases protected areas by 48% (from 3.1% to 4.6% of the province), including some core wild areas in the Restigouche, old-growth forests near the Miramichi River, and coastal islands in the Bay of Fundy.

2019: Government of New Brunswick commits to doubling protected areas to 10% coverage by 2020.

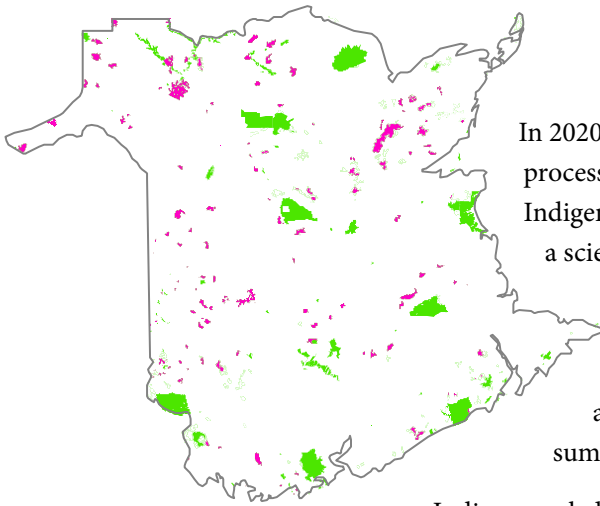
2020: Government of New Brunswick launches Nature Legacy Initiative to identify new protected areas to deliver on target.

Protected Areas	4.9%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

A recent commitment to double protected areas in the province, the launch of an extensive consultation process to engage the public, and relationship-building with Indigenous organizations for potential Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) move New Brunswick forward from the back of the pack. While the province still has a long way to go before its nature legacy is adequately protected, it is poised for a significant step forward.

At the end of 2020, the protected areas system in New Brunswick, including provincial, federal, and privately protected areas, covered less than 5% of the province, giving it the dubious status of having the second-lowest percentage protected among all Canadian jurisdictions.⁵⁴ Progress on protected areas establishment was slow until 2014, when the provincial government announced 1,150 km² of new Protected Natural Areas, increasing the percentage of land and freshwater protected from 3.1% to 4.6%. After this, little progress was made until 2019, when the current provincial government committed to doubling protected areas to cover 10% of the province by the end of 2020.



In 2020, the provincial government launched an extensive public consultation process called the Nature Legacy Initiative to invite the public and Indigenous communities to propose areas for protection, while conducting a scientific analysis to inform a broader plan. In early 2020, the federal government confirmed \$12.8 million in financial support from the Canada Nature Fund to support the expansion of protected areas across New Brunswick. With consultations actively underway, it is anticipated that proposed sites will have interim protection status by summer 2021 and permanent protection by 2023.

Indigenous-led conservation is also advancing in New Brunswick, including IPCAs proposed by the Miꞌgmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Peskotomuhkati Nations, supported by the Canada Nature Fund. The provincial government needs to do more to engage and build trust with Indigenous organizations and communities on conservation and stewardship programs that will empower Indigenous-led conservation in New Brunswick.

New Brunswick's provincial parks previously focused primarily on recreation, not conservation. In 2014 the New Brunswick government revised its *Parks Act* to strengthen the conservation mandate for natural areas within provincial parks.

With a commitment to double the extent of its protected areas within two years and a comprehensive process to identify new protected areas and engage Indigenous communities and the public, New Brunswick has taken a big leap forward. With 10% protection, the province will still have the third-lowest percentage of land protected among Canadian jurisdictions. This progress, however, sets the stage for committing to more ambitious conservation targets that will safeguard New Brunswick's Nature Legacy for future generations.

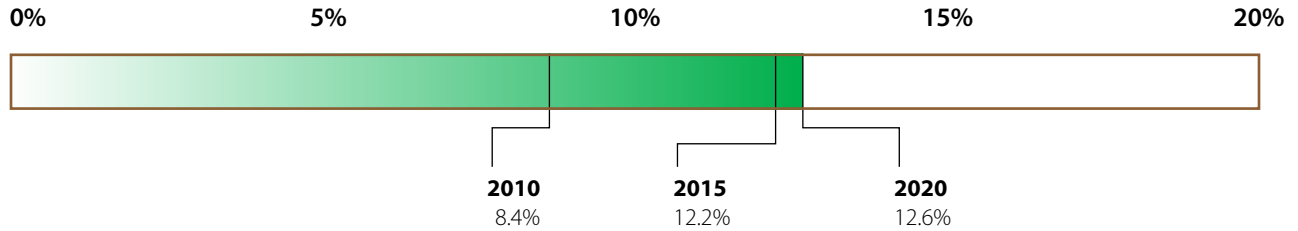
- Protected areas created after 2010
- Protected areas created before 2010

Photo: Roberta Clowater



Nova Scotia

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2013: Sable Island National Park Reserve established.

2013: Nova Scotia government identifies a quarter million hectares of land for protection.

2012-2021: Marquee protected areas established, including Chignecto Wilderness, Eastern Shore Islands, Kluscap Mountain, Wentworth Valley, Katewe'katik, Mabou Highlands, Humes

River, and Medway Lakes, and expansions are made to Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, Chignecto Isthmus, and Tobeatic.

2011-2021: Total amount of protected land increases by 50%.

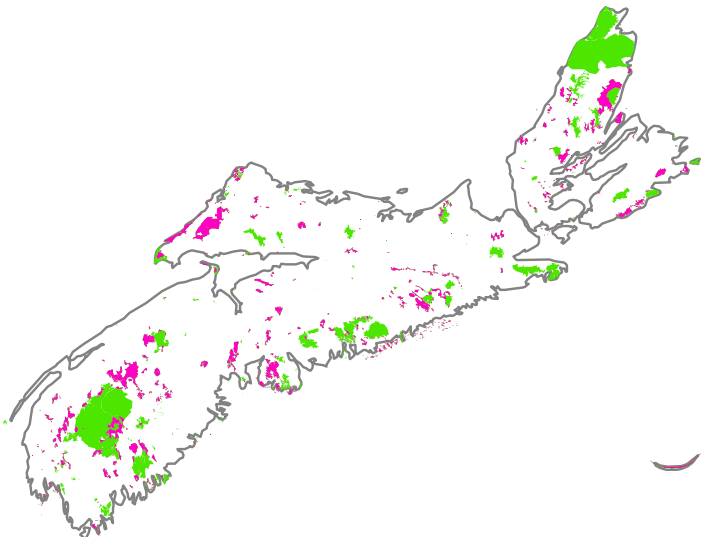
2020-2021: Ninety-one new protected areas are announced.

Protected Areas	12.6%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

Nova Scotia has made considerable progress over the past decade creating new protected areas. Approximately 200 sites have received legal protection, with an additional 24 sites currently going through the public designation process. Within the past year, 91 sites have been announced for protection. This has increased the total amount of protected land in Nova Scotia by approximately 50% over the past decade. The *Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan*, approved in 2013, identifies approximately a quarter million hectares of land for conservation. Most protected areas created in Nova Scotia, since then, are due to the implementation of this plan.

Over the past decade, numerous high-priority sites for conservation have been protected by the Nova Scotia government. These include Chignecto, Eastern Shore Islands, Wentworth Valley, Mabou Highlands, and Katewe'katik. Several other existing protected areas have been expanded, including Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes and the Tobeatic. The Nova Scotia government and the federal government also collaborated to establish Sable Island National Park Reserve in 2013. This was the first national park created in Nova Scotia in more than a half century.



■ Protected areas created after 2010

■ Protected areas created before 2010

Despite progress creating new protected areas in Nova Scotia, missteps have occurred. The majority of sites within the parks and protected areas plan were supposed to be officially designated no later than 2015. Stalled implementation has left approximately 125 sites protected only through interim policies, and this has prevented progress toward more ambitious conservation targets. The Nova Scotia government has yet to identify sites to achieve 25% protection by 2025, and 30% by 2030, to align with federal conservation targets. The Nova Scotia government also made the serious error of secretly delisting Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve and attempting to sell-off these coastal public lands for a golf course development. Legislation in Nova Scotia must be strengthened to prohibit the delisting of protected areas without public debate.

The Nova Scotia government must prioritize Indigenous-led conservation. Insufficient progress has been made in embracing Indigenous protected areas and investing in Indigenous Guardians programs. Several encouraging steps occurred recently with the protection of Katewe'katik and Pu'tlaqne'katik in the traditional territory of Kespukwitk in 2020, but much work remains to support protected area governance and management models that prioritize Indigenous leadership, rights, and interests.

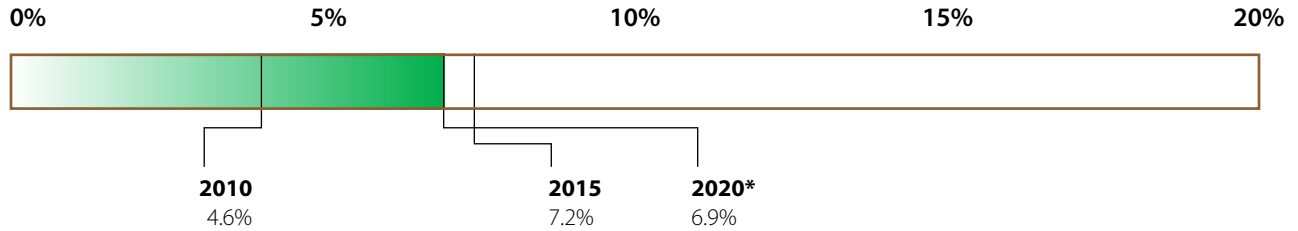
Over the past year, there has been an increase in protected area designations in Nova Scotia. This is welcome news, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when people are eager to be in nature for their health and well-being. Fully implementing the parks and protected areas plan remains the critical next step for creating new protected areas in the province. An action plan is needed that prioritizes Indigenous-led conservation; restores landscape-level connectivity; and invests in private land conservation.

Photo: Irwin Barrett



Newfoundland and Labrador

PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

2010: Federal and provincial governments and Indigenous Nations commit to creating two new protected areas in Labrador: a national park reserve in the Mealy Mountains (10,700 km²) and a provincial park on the adjacent Eagle River waterway (3,000 km²).⁵⁵

2012: Hydraulic fracturing and oil drilling is proposed for just outside Gros Morne National Park.

2014: The UNESCO World Heritage Committee formally recommends a buffer zone for Gros Morne National Park. To this day, the buffer zone has not been established.

2014: Provincial government institutes a temporary moratorium on hydraulic fracturing after public outcry and response from UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

2015: Akami-Uapishku-KakKasuak-Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve is established. The provincial park on the Eagle River Waterway has not yet been established.

2015: Lawn Bay Provincial Reserve receives status upgrade, becoming Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve.⁵⁶

2020: The provincial government's Natural Areas Systems Plan

(NASP) for the island of Newfoundland is released for public consultation 25 years after it was first created. The plan, if adopted, would lead to the protection of 13.2% of the island.

2021: A "What We Heard" report is released following the public consultation for NASP, with the majority of respondents in support of the plan.

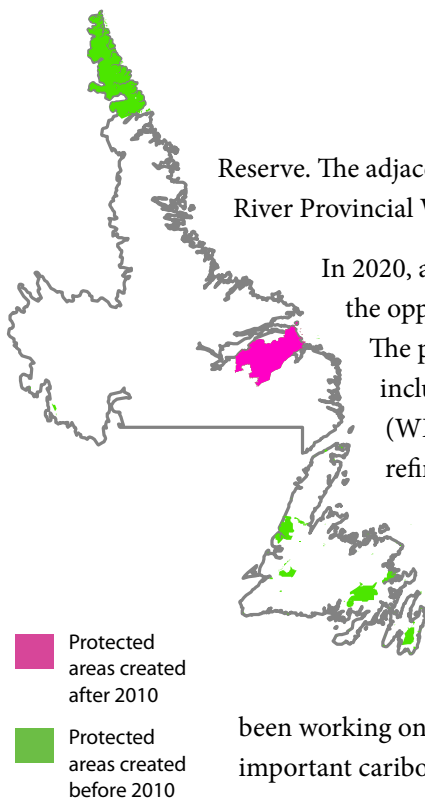
Protected Areas	6.9%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

The Newfoundland and Labrador government made virtually no progress over the past decade in creating new protected areas and still ranks behind most Canadian provinces and territories in the percentage of land and inland waters protected. Only one small seabird site (Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve) was upgraded in status over the last decade. The province urgently needs to step up its work to protect important ecological and cultural areas, increase its focus and support for Indigenous-led conservation, and modernize its approach to site selection, including by engaging the public early in the process.

An increase in protected areas coverage in Newfoundland and Labrador is the result of the federal government's establishment, with Indigenous Nations, of Akami-Uapishku-KakKasuak-Mealy Mountains National Park

* The decrease in area protected is due to an accounting issue, not a reduction in protected areas.



Reserve. The adjacent provincial protected area that the province committed to a decade ago, Eagle River Provincial Waterway Park, has yet to move forward.

In 2020, after more than 25 years of delays, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians finally had the opportunity to see a proposed protected areas plan for the island of Newfoundland.

The plan was drafted in the 1990s by a government-led science committee, which included members of the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council (WERAC), and was presented to Cabinet in 1996. The plan underwent further refinement and was finally released for public consultation in 2020, but only after two prominent WERAC members resigned in protest over government inaction.

While the provincial government has done little to advance conservation and has no enabling legislation to support Indigenous-led conservation, Indigenous governments continue to work to advance nature conservation in the province.

With support from the Canada Nature Fund, several First Nations have been working on conservation plans to better protect their traditional territories, which include important caribou habitat and large intact landscapes on the island of Newfoundland.

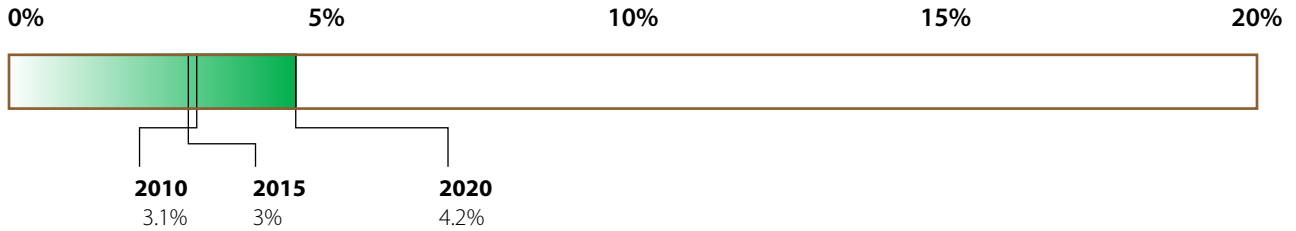
Capacity in the Newfoundland and Labrador government's Natural Areas division has been dramatically cut over the past few years and is inadequate to embrace the conservation opportunities that currently exist. Industrial activities are generally prohibited within provincial protected areas; however, there are exceptions. In 2017, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro proposed a transmission line 40 meters wide through Bay du Nord Wilderness Reserve. This prompted a change to the Reserve's boundary to allow for the transmission line project to move forward, furthermore, an access road was constructed to facilitate this work, which in turn has allowed illegal motorized access to the reserve.

The newly elected provincial government has an opportunity to do better. They should start by recognizing the ecological and cultural significance of Newfoundland and Labrador's vast boreal landscape; working with Indigenous Nations to help support existing and emerging Indigenous-led conservation projects; and moving to the next phase of implementing a Protected Areas Plan for the island of Newfoundland.

Photo Calypso Orchid



PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



Protected Areas	3.8%
OECMs	0.4%

SUMMARY

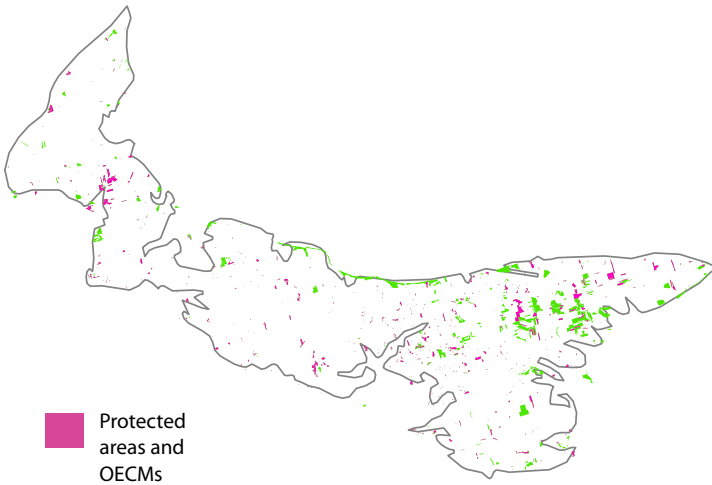
Prince Edward Island continues to make incremental progress on protecting land. In 2019 the province recommitted to achieving their decades-old target of protecting 7% of the island by the end of 2020. The province expanded their protected lands by 25% over 18 months but fell short of achieving the target on time.⁵⁷ Private land protection and non-governmental land trust organizations continue to play a pivotal role in establishing protected areas on the island, and Indigenous-led initiatives are helping to drive progress.

P.E.I. still has the smallest percentage of land protected of any province or territory in Canada, with only 4.2% of its land base protected. The province is unique in Canada in that 90% of land is privately owned, the opposite of Canada overall where 90% of land is in the public trust.

Between 2010 and 2020, Prince Edward Island designated 87 protected areas (14 as interim), covering an additional 50 km² of the province’s land base (0.9%). Eight sites (24 km²) were recognized as OECMs covering 0.4% of the province.

Support from the Canada Nature Fund is helping to drive progress. In 2019 the Nature Fund supported the acquisition of 18 ecologically important properties by land trust organizations (Island Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada), in partnership with the province.⁵⁸ In 2020, it supported a project to protect approximately 44 km² of high-priority habitat. Partners include the provincial and federal governments, the Mi’kmaq Confederacy of PEI, and land trust organizations (Island Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada).⁵⁹ Along the northwest coast of the island, Parks Canada is working with the province and PEI Mi’kmaq First Nations to assess the feasibility of establishing a cooperatively managed national park reserve to protect the Hog Island Sandhills.⁶⁰

* CPAWS does not have a Chapter office in Prince Edward Island. Given our lack of on-the-ground presence we are not assigning a grade for PEI. Our overview is based on publicly available information about recent progress and opportunities to advance protection.



Protected areas and OECMs created after 2010

Protected areas created before 2010

In March 2021, Parks Canada also announced they had acquired a new property adjacent to the Greenwich section of Prince Edward Island National Park, which will expand the national park by 1.64 km².⁶¹

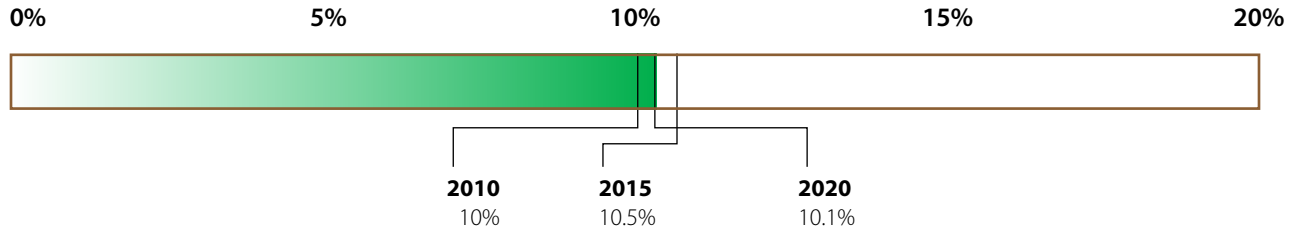
These recent steps represent important progress for conservation in P.E.I., but the province still has a long way to go to meet its 7% commitment. Continued support from the provincial and federal governments, including investment in Indigenous-led conservation

initiatives and land trusts, will be needed to deliver on this short-term promise and move towards the larger scale conservation action needed to protect and restore the island's biodiversity in the long term.

Photo: Adobe Stock



PROGRESS ON COVERAGE



Protected Areas	10.1%
OECMs	0%

SUMMARY

Just over 10% of Nunavut is in protected areas, with many more protection opportunities identified through the Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan. Five new protected areas were established in the territory in the past decade, all using federal legislation. Five more conservation projects have been funded through the Canada Nature Fund, which should result in new IPCAs and other protected and conserved areas in the next few years.

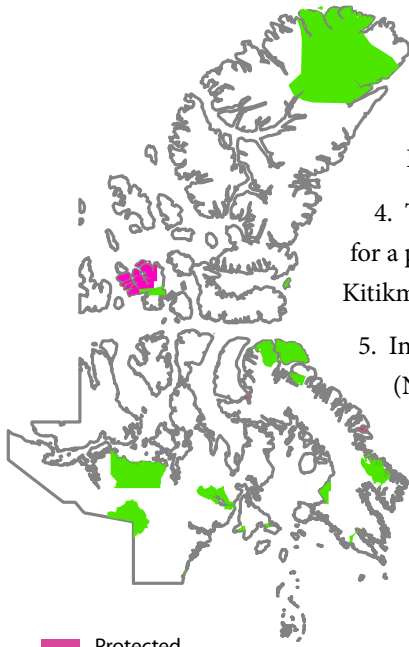
Five new protected areas have been established in Nunavut in the past decade. All are federal protected areas established through the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement, and all will be co-managed with the Inuit. Three NWAs were established in 2010 (Akpait, Ninginganiq, and Qaqulluit), with a total area of 580 km². Qausuittuq National Park was established in 2015 and Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area was designated in 2017 with interim status. Together the terrestrial portions of these protected areas cover 10,500 km², which is 0.5% of the territory.

The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, which led to the creation of Nunavut as Canada’s newest territory in 1999, provides for the establishment of parks and conservation areas, including requirements for Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements, and mandates the creation of a land use planning process which is legally binding.

Five projects in Nunavut have been supported through the Canada Nature Fund:⁶²

1. The Government of Nunavut will create a new protected area in Agguttinni, on Inuit-owned lands.
2. The Arctic Eider Society will protect the Belcher Islands Archipelago through “Qikiqtait”, a 3,238 km² community-driven protected and conserved area.

* CPAWS does not have a Chapter office in Nunavut. Given our lack of on-the-ground presence we are not assigning a grade for the territorial government. Our overview is based on publicly available information about recent progress and opportunities to advance protection.



- Protected areas created after 2010
- Protected areas created before 2010

3. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association will expand protection of Inuit-owned lands on Bathurst Island to conserve endangered Peary caribou.
4. The Spence Bay Hunters and Trappers Association will conduct preliminary planning for a potential Aviqtuuq Inuit Protected and Conserved Area on the Boothia Peninsula in the Kitikmeot region, and
5. Inukjuak Local Nunavimmi Umajulivijiit Katuqijqatigininga (LNUK) and Northern Village (NV) of Inukjuak are proposing to establish a 240km² IPCA for Arqvilliit (Ottawa Islands).

In 2016, the final draft Nunavut Land Use Plan was released, but has not yet been approved. The draft plan includes goals to protect and sustain the environment, encourage conservation planning, build healthier communities, and encourage sustainable economic development. It proposes establishing over 20% of the territory (terrestrial and marine) in some form of conservation area where some or all industrial activities would be prohibited to protect ecological and cultural values.

The plan offers enormous potential to further advance conservation in Nunavut. Community consultations on the most recent draft were underway prior to the pandemic. More federal funding is needed to complete the plan⁶³.

Photo Isaac Demeester



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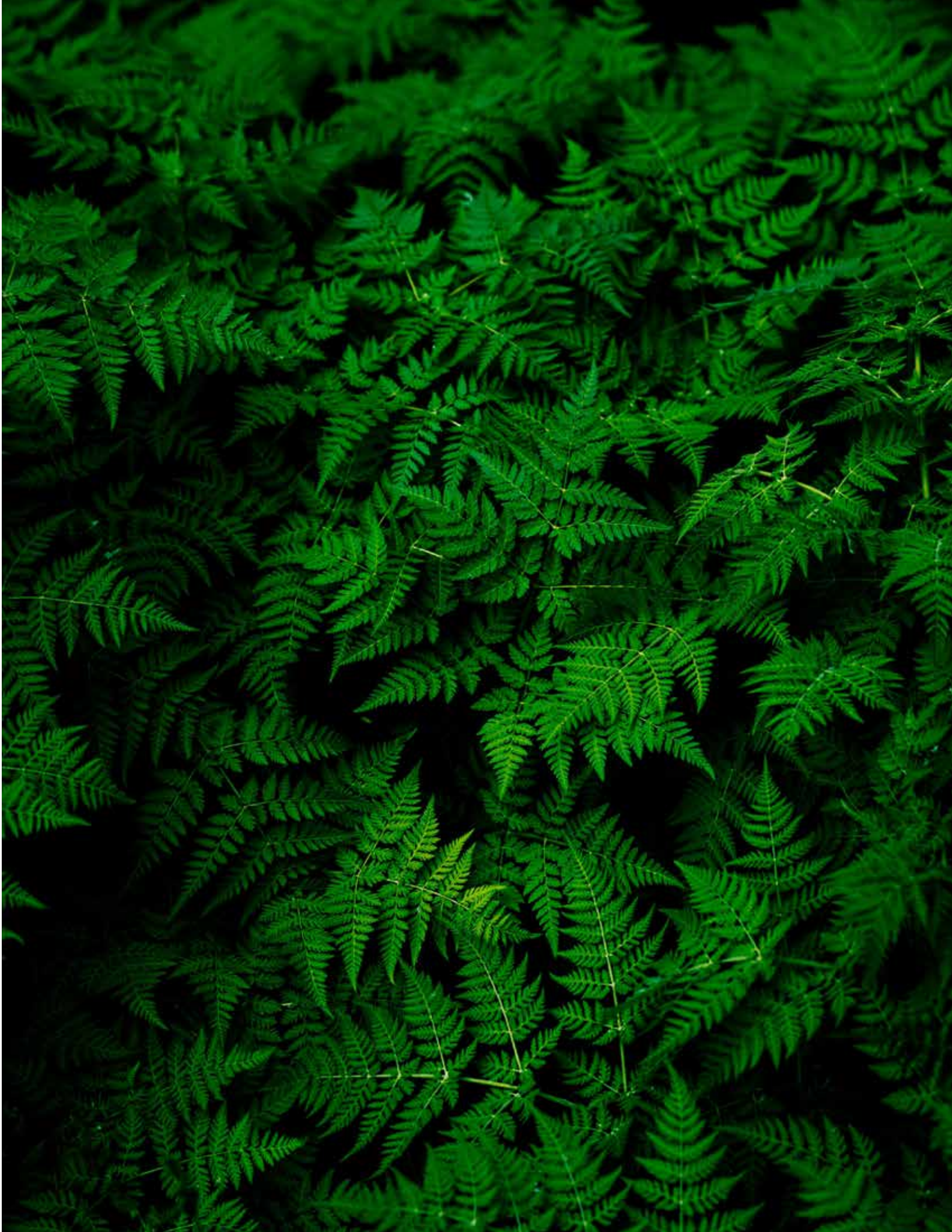


THE GRADES ARE IN

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Photo Mckenzie Toyne





About CPAWS

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) is Canada's only nationwide charity dedicated solely to the protection of our public land and water, and ensuring our parks are managed to protect the nature within them. Since 1963 we've played a lead role in protecting over half a million square kilometres—an area bigger than the entire Yukon Territory! Our vision is that Canada will protect at least half of our public land and water so that future generations can benefit from Canada's irreplaceable wilderness.



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