

**CPAWS recommendations for a National Conservation Plan for Canada:
A supplementary submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee
on Environment and Sustainable Development**

May 29, 2012

Summary:

CPAWS recommends that a National Conservation Plan focus on conserving Canada's biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and wilderness heritage for the benefit of current and future generations of Canadians. To do this, the federal government should lead a nation-wide effort to achieve large land and seascape-scale conservation including:

1. Completing a network of large core protected areas of habitat in all regions of the country, and connecting these together as a network through which wildlife can freely move, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries; and ensuring that these areas are managed to protect their long-term ecological integrity;
2. Completing land use and marine spatial planning in all regions of the country to proactively plan for nature conservation and development.
3. Implementing world-leading standards for sustainable use of natural resources, thus positioning Canada as a leader in the global "green" resource economy"

A National Conservation Plan should be ambitious – shifting the conservation paradigm and exceeding international biodiversity targets; inclusive; based in science and traditional knowledge; and focused on achieving "on-the-ground" conservation outcomes in all regions of Canada, both terrestrial and marine.

Conserving nature will result in enormous benefits for current and future generations of Canadians, not only for our natural environment, but also for our economy, health, communities and cultures.

Introduction:

CPAWS was pleased to address the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development twice during their on-going hearings on a National Conservation Plan (NCP): our national conservation director appeared before the Committee in Ottawa on March 27th to share our recommendations for high level framing of a National Conservation Plan, and a representative of our BC Chapter appeared before the Committee on May 15th in Vancouver to elaborate on regional

conservation priorities and activities, and the benefits of conservation for BC. This submission is meant to complement these two presentations, by responding directly to the framing questions posed by the Committee.

Canada has done a lot over the past century to conserve our natural heritage, but to protect this natural legacy for future generations, in a rapidly changing world, we will need bolder, more ambitious solutions, and the strong engagement of all sectors of society.

Developing an effective National Conservation Plan will require strong federal leadership to bring together federal, provincial/territorial, and Aboriginal governments, conservation organizations, industry representatives and individual Canadians to work together to conserve Canada's magnificent natural heritage.

Currently, many major industrial development projects, representing hundreds of billions of dollars in investment are being advanced, including in relatively intact ecosystems in Canada's North. If Canada is to conserve our natural capital for future generations, an equally ambitious conservation plan is needed, with resources behind it. An investment in conservation will be recouped many times over through the direct and indirect economic benefits that will result, from tourism, as well as from the ecosystem goods and services provided by healthy functioning ecosystems.

About CPAWS:

CPAWS is Canada's voice for public wilderness conservation. Since our creation in 1963, we have played a key role in the establishment of over two thirds of Canada's protected areas. We have 13 regional chapters in nearly every province and territory, as well as a national office in Ottawa, and over 50,000 active supporters across the country.

Our vision is that:

Canada will set a new and inspiring standard for the conservation of nature. We will protect the tapestry of life in the Canadian landscape and waterscape and establish a new global standard for protecting the integrity of the Canadian wilderness. At least one-half of Canada's public lands, freshwater and ocean environments will remain permanently wild for the public trust.

Canada's opportunity:

Canada is blessed with a magnificent natural heritage that defines our country in the eyes of Canadians and of the world community. Our expansive natural ecosystems and biodiversity provide the essential goods (e.g. clean water, fibre, productive soils) and services (e.g. carbon storage, pollination, flood regulation, recreation) that underpin our economy and sustain the health and well-being of all Canadians. With this enormous natural wealth, along with our stability and human capacity, Canada has the opportunity, if we choose to embrace it, to lead the world in conservation.

We can show the world that it is not only possible but desirable to maintain pristine lakes, vast caribou herds, and abundant wild salmon, to share the land with magnificent predators like grizzly bears and wolves, to retain and nourish the land ethic of Canadian cultures, and to enjoy the solitude of nearby wild areas in our daily lives and the incomparable experience of a long trip in the Canadian wilderness.

Since 90% of our land base and all of our oceans are in the public domain, Canadians and our elected governments have an important responsibility to ensure our public lands and waters are stewarded in a way that sustains their natural capital for the benefit of future generations.

Our Challenge:

Currently only 10% of our land base and less than 1% of our oceans are protected, which is much less than what is required to safeguard wildlife and healthy ecosystems. And most of our protected areas are far too small and isolated to effectively protect healthy ecosystems.

The continuing decline of species and ecosystem health demonstrates that we have much work left to do to achieve our conservation goals¹. The number of species at risk continues to grow in Canada, with more than 650 species now identified as being at risk of extinction, largely due to habitat loss and degradation. And with growing industrial development pressures, and changing climatic conditions, our wildlife and ecosystems are likely to face greater stresses than ever before.

Background:

The National Conservation Plan for Canada was included as a commitment in the 2011 Conservative Party platform, as well as in the last two Speeches from the Throne. We support framing a National Conservation Plan in the way that is compatible with how it was described in the 2011 Conservative Party Platform:

We will work toward an agreement with provincial, regional, municipal, Aboriginal, and community stakeholders to establish a National Conservation Plan to:

- *facilitate the creation of new protected areas, National Parks, and National Marine Conservation Areas;*
- *make the land between protected areas more permeable to wildlife, and expand the use of digital and multimedia technologies to help connect Canadians to nature; and*
- *strengthen our efforts to restore degraded ecosystems and reintroduce native species.*
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and subsequently in the 2011 Speech from the Throne:

¹ In 2010, Canadian governments released a report that documents significant challenges Canada faces in maintaining or restoring healthy ecosystems: Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments of Canada. 2010. *Canadian Biodiversity: Ecosystem Status and Trends 2010*. Canadian Councils of Resource Ministers. Ottawa, ON. vi +142 pp.

- *Looking to the future, our Government will engage a broad range of stakeholders on the development of a National Conservation Plan, to move our conservation objectives forward and better connect all Canadians with nature.*

CPAWS believes that a National Conservation Plan is an excellent opportunity for Canada to commit to and collectively drive towards a world-leading vision for conservation.

Recent decisions by the federal government to weaken environmental laws, including the Fisheries Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Species at Risk Act, and the Canada National Parks Act, combined with the significant budget cuts to federal departments responsible for conservation, and the particular focus on cutting science and monitoring capacity, are of serious concern to CPAWS, as they run counter to advancing biodiversity conservation objectives in Canada. A National Conservation Plan will only be successful at protecting Canada's biodiversity and long-term ecosystem health if it is nested within a strong framework of environmental laws and policies, and includes long-term support for science, monitoring and program delivery. This is critically important to the success of a National Conservation Plan.

Questions asked by the Committee:

What should be the purpose of a NCP?

The purpose of a NCP should be to drive forward an ambitious conservation vision for Canada, including clear shared goals and targets, coordinating the work of the many jurisdictions and parties involved in conservation, and accelerating effective action by all parties to secure the long term conservation of biodiversity and healthy.

Currently Canada's conservation programs are largely disconnected across and within jurisdictions, and we have no way of assessing the overall impact and effectiveness of our various efforts across the country. It's time to set clear, measurable goals for our conservation efforts Canada-wide, and to take a more coordinated, and accountable approach to effectively protecting Canada's natural heritage for future generations.

A National Conservation Plan for Canada is an important initiative that, if well designed, resourced and implemented, as part of a strong environmental legal and policy framework, could make a significant contribution to conserving our wildlife, wilderness and ecosystems, which in turn will support the health of Canada's economy, communities and individual citizens for generations to come.

It can also be the mechanism through which we deliver on, and indeed exceed, our commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, 2011-2020, which includes 20 biodiversity targets. The targets include

establishing effectively managed networks of terrestrial and marine protected areas networks (covering 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas by 2020); enhancing ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks, including by restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems by 2020, and achieving sustainable management of fishing activities, among many others. With our vast and relatively intact landscape, substantial human resource capacity and relative wealth, Canada has a unique opportunity to demonstrate global leadership on conservation.

CPAWS recommends that Canada commit to exceeding the international CBD targets.

What should be the goals of a NCP?

The overall long-term goal of the National Conservation Plan should be *to protect and restore biodiversity, healthy, resilient terrestrial and marine ecosystems and wilderness for the benefit of wildlife and people, now and in the future*. This will require, as a priority, completing connected networks of protected areas, and ensuring land and seascapes are managed sustainably in a way that allows species to shift and adapt in response to climate change.

The more specific goals of a NCP can be organized according to our suggested framework of protect, connect, restore, engage:

Protect:

- Complete an adequate, comprehensive and representative network of protected areas across Canada, on land and in the oceans.

Connect:

- Ensure protected areas are integrated within sustainably managed land or seascapes with the goal of enabling the full range of biodiversity to move between protected areas and to support the healthy ecosystems we need to sustain our human communities, particularly in the face of climate change.

Restore:

- Restore degraded ecosystems and recover species at risk. This requires collaborative and incentive-based stewardship tools and strong environmental laws.

Engage:

- Working with partners, engage a broad range of Canadians in nature stewardship, education and appreciation activities with the goal of overcoming the “nature deficit disorder”, and building a long term culture of conservation in Canada.

What conservation priorities should be included in a NCP?

Different approaches will be required in different regions of Canada. We suggest the National Conservation Plan could be further organized along the lines of four regions of the country, in which different approaches and tools are best suited to achieve conservation outcomes:

1. **The far north:** Territories and northern portions of provinces where landscapes are largely intact. In these regions, proactive conservation-focused land use planning and protected areas establishment should be the priority, led by Indigenous communities, often within the context of land claim agreements. North of 60, in the NWT and Nunavut, the federal government still has significant (shared) jurisdiction over land management;
2. **The mid-north:** The area coinciding with existing industrial forest and oil and gas tenures in all the provinces. In this region, the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement offers a significant delivery opportunity, along with provincial land use planning and conservation initiatives;
3. **The settled south:** In these private land-dominated areas (Maritimes, southern Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, Sask, Alberta and B.C.), restoring and protecting core habitat areas and ecological connections should be a priority. Public and private land stewardship and conservation initiatives will be important, along with habitat restoration efforts. A national park in the South Okanagan- Lower Similkameen, BC, and the Rouge National Urban Park are examples of immediate opportunities for progress. There should also be a particular focus on engaging Canadians in nature in this region.
4. **Oceans:** The federal government plays a major role in oceans conservation, with protected area network planning and establishment, and marine spatial planning as important collaborative conservation opportunities.

What guiding principles should govern a NCP?

A NCP for Canada should:

- 1) Be driven by a clear and ambitious vision, goals and targets, including committing to exceed the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan 2011-2020 Targets (the Aichi targets), thus grasping Canada's unique opportunity to demonstrate global leadership on nature conservation.²;
- 2) Be based on conservation science and indigenous knowledge
- 3) Respect the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples

² A summary of the CBD Aichi Targets can be found at: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/2011-2020/Aichi-Targets-EN.pdf>

- 4) Ensure meaningful public engagement in developing and implementing the Plan, including transparency and public accountability in decision-making
- 5) Include land, freshwater and marine environments and include all of Canada
- 6) Recognize the need for different regional priorities, for example, different approaches are needed in the far North, mid- North, settled south and oceans
- 7) Pro-actively plan for conservation and economic development in an integrated way through land use planning and marine spatial planning;
- 8) Build on existing government and non-government-led large land and seascape-scale conservation initiatives (eg. National parks; Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement; NWT protected areas strategy and land use plans; marine planning initiatives on the Pacific North Coast and Eastern Scotian Shelf, Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative; Ontario's Far North Initiative, Quebec's conservation commitments under the Plan Nord, private land stewardship programs etc..).
- 9) Engage a broad range of partners in developing and delivering the plan (eg. Federal/provincial/territorial governments, Indigenous peoples, conservation organizations, industry, universities and academics, individual citizens)
- 10) Enable tracking and reporting to Canadians and internationally on the cumulative impact of Canadian conservation efforts
- 11) Provide a common framework to coordinate conservation work across ministries and throughout different levels of government, as well as with non-government parties.

What should be the implementation priorities of a NCP?

- 1) Protected Areas:
 - i. Completing Canada's terrestrial protected areas network, including, as a priority, completing the National Parks system³, and ensuring the ecological integrity of our parks is protected, including science-based ecological monitoring and management programs that are fully funded and implemented;

³ New national parks are in the establishment process in the Mealy Mountains (NL), Nahanni Headwaters (Nááts'ihch'oh, NWT), South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen (BC), Sable Island (NS), Northern Bathurst Island (NU), East Arm of Great Slave Lake (NWT). Other long-standing proposals include the Flathead Valley (BC), the southern Yukon/northern BC, and Manitoba Lowlands, MN. There are also significant gaps in the national parks system in Quebec.

- ii. Completing Canada's network of marine protected areas, with strong science-based conservation measures, starting by completing designation of on-going proposals⁴, and moving to implementation of the 2011 National Framework for Canada's Network of Marine Protected Areas⁵.
- iii. Creating an integrated ecosystem health monitoring program linked to our protected areas system. This program should build on Canada's national park ecological integrity monitoring program, which monitors the ecosystem health of our national parks and directly informs management decisions. Protected areas are ideal benchmarks or "control" areas against which to monitor ecological change on the broader land or seascape.
- iv. Building a common framework for Canada's protected areas programs, including federal, provincial, territorial, private and indigenous, focused on mutually supporting goals, objectives and targets. A more coordinated approach should ensure our protected lands and waters work together more effectively and efficiently to achieve Canada's conservation goals. Canada could look to Australia's "National Reserve System" as one example of such an approach.⁶

2) Connectivity and sustainable management of the "working" land and seascape:

- i. Completing regional land use plans and marine spatial plans in all regions, completing and building on processes already underway (eg. land use planning in NWT; Ontario's Far North and Quebec's conservation commitments under the Plan Nord, Alberta's Land Use Framework; and Large Ocean Management Area planning initiatives such as those on-going for the Eastern Scotian Shelf and Pacific North Coast). These plans should focus on addressing protected areas systems, connectivity between protected areas to enable species to move and adapt to climate change, and implementing sustainable management practices.
- ii. Collaborating with industry to develop and implement world-leading sustainable management practices, by all resource sectors, thus positioning Canada as a leader in the global "green" resource economy.
- iii. Supporting innovative large land and seascape-scale conservation partnerships, such as the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, which includes conservation organizations and the forestry sector, working together on protected areas plans, world-leading sustainable practices, species at risk, with

⁴ CPAWS has been working to complete 12 new marine protected area proposals by the end of 2012 to demonstrate significant progress towards Canada's international commitment to complete a network of marine protected areas. See http://www.cpaws.org/uploads/pubs/oceans/OceanProgressReport_May142012_Final.pdf for CPAWS status report on progress towards establishing these 12 marine protected areas.

⁵ <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/publications/dmpaf-eczpm/framework-cadre2011-eng.asp>

⁶ Australia's National Reserve System is described at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/index.html>

an initial focus on caribou, climate friendly practices and market recognition, over a vast area of the Boreal forest, stretching from BC to NL.

3) Restoration

- i. Ensuring a strong, effective federal Species at Risk Act, and implementing recovery programs for each SARA-listed species, starting by completing and implementing a robust Boreal woodland caribou Recovery Strategy including strong measures for the protection of critical habitat at the range-scale.
- ii. Developing incentive-based programs to encourage restoration and stewardship of habitat
- iii. Prioritizing restoration activities focused on achieving recovery of species at risk. For example, creating a national park and restoring ecosystems in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region of BC will contribute to multiple ecological objectives, including completion of the national parks system, and the recovery of many species at risk in one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada. It will also contribute substantially to the regional economy, making it a win-win-win proposal.

4) Public engagement

- i. Working with a broad range of partners to better connect Canadians with nature and overcome the `nature deficit disorder`, with a particular focus on youth. For example, CPAWS is working with partners in BC, including BC Parks, Mountain Equipment Coop and the Child and Nature Alliance to implement a `Get Outside` program focused on getting youth into nature, through a peer-to-peer initiative. We will be working to broaden the program to other parts of the country over the coming years.

What consultation process should the Minister consider using when developing a NCP?

- We recommend that the Minister appoint a high-level Conservation Commission to lead the development of the plan, supported by a secretariat and science and Indigenous advisory teams, and appoint working groups to further develop each of the elements of the plan: protected areas, connectivity, restoration, and public engagement. A cross-cutting working group focused on innovative financing and economic benefits of conservation would also be valuable;
- Science and traditional knowledge should determine what is necessary to achieve biodiversity conservation, while a broad range of interests should be involved in discussing how these priorities can best be achieved.
- A program to engage a broad range of Canadian society in the discussion should be open, inclusive and transparent, report back on what was heard, and include a variety of means to get involved, including through electronic means.

Additional information relevant to a NCP:

Protected areas as a cornerstone of the NCP

An ecologically representative, diversified and well-managed protected areas system is the most effective way to safeguard biodiversity.

The World Bank (2010)⁷

IUCN believes that protected areas lie at the heart of all effective biodiversity conservation strategies. They offer much more as well: clean water, food security, health and wealth; protection against natural disasters; carbon sequestration; recreational opportunities; sacred natural sites; homes and employment.⁸

IUCN (2010)

There have been questions asked during the Committee hearings about whether the focus of the NCP should be primarily on the “working landscape”. However, there is clear evidence that core protected habitat areas need to be a foundational element of a successful conservation strategy. This concept is widely accepted around the world, including by international institutions such as the World Bank, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

For example, IUCN points to the need to have protected areas to act as refuges for species and ecological processes that cannot survive in intensely managed landscapes and seascapes. Woodland caribou is one example of such a species in the Boreal forest of Canada that relies on large intact forest landscapes.

However, there is also plenty of evidence that protected area “islands” alone will not be enough to achieve biodiversity conservation. That managing the “matrix” or the “working landscape” between protected areas is essential to ensure an adequate flow of genes, species and ecosystems to assure long term biodiversity and ecosystem health.

A primary benefit of developing a National Conservation Plan for Canada is to bring together these two elements of protected areas and sustainable management of the working land and seascape so that, together, they can effectively conserve biodiversity and healthy ecosystems in Canada for the long term.

The Economic Benefits of Conserving Healthy Ecosystems:

In 2005, the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment focused attention on the fundamental linkages between protecting healthy ecosystems and supporting human well being⁹. In recent years, increased attention has been paid to identifying and promoting the enormous economic, social and ecological benefits of protected areas. International organizations including The World Bank, the IUCN, UNEP and the Convention on

⁷ The World Bank (2010) Valuing protected areas. World Bank GEF Operations, Washington DC

⁸ IUCN-WCPA (2010): Putting plans to work: IUCN’s commitment to protected areas. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

⁹ Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Biodiversity Synthesis*. World Resources Institute, Washington DC.

Biological Diversity are focusing considerable attention on identifying and highlighting the benefits that protected areas and healthy ecosystems offer to society¹⁰

In times of fiscal restraint, protecting nature is often seen as an expense we can't afford. However, there is growing evidence that the return on investment from ecosystem protection is enormous. For example, a 2007 natural capital study estimated that the ecological goods and services in Canada's Mackenzie watershed (including carbon storage, water filtration and supply) contribute over 10 times more economic value than the GDP that would be generated by natural capital extraction industries in the same area.¹¹

While protected areas, by definition have a primary purpose of conserving biodiversity, they also provide significant jobs and other economic benefits. A 2011 study released by the Canadian Parks Council, found that Canada's national, provincial and territorial parks "*make a substantial and important economic contribution. Through the spending of park organizations and the visitors to Canada's parks, a significant and recurring economic impact is felt throughout the country*"¹². In 2008/09, national, provincial and territorial park agencies spent \$0.8 billion and visitors to parks spent \$4.4 billion. The economic impacts generated to the Canadian economy as a result of this \$5.2 billion in spending are:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	\$4.6 billion
Labour income	\$2.9 billion
Employment	64,050 full time equivalents
Tax revenue	\$0.3 billion

The \$4.6 billion GDP impact is a measure of value added which is retained in the country from the expenditures made by park organizations and visitors. Many of the jobs supported by parks are in rural and remote regions of Canada, where they support diversified economies and significant long term stability to communities. These national impacts were more or less evenly derived from federal (Parks Canada) parks and provincial/territorial parks.

In the marine realm, there is growing empirical evidence to show that marine protected areas, when they have strong conservation measures, help support sustainable

¹⁰ See for example:

Mulongy, K.J. and S. B. Gidda (2008) *The Value of Nature: Ecological, Economic, Cultural and Social Benefits of Protected Areas*. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, 30 pages;

Stolton, S et al. (2010) *Valuing Protected Areas*. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. Washington DC, 62 pages.

¹¹ The Real Wealth of the Mackenzie Region: Assessing the Natural Capital Values of a Northern Boreal Ecosystem (March 2007), Mark Anielski, Sara Wilson .

¹² The Outspan Group (2011) *The Economic Impact of Canada's National, Provincial and Territorial Parks in 2009*. Canadian Parks Council. http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/pdf/econ_impact_2009_part1.pdf

fisheries. Marine reserves act like fish nurseries, and scientific evidence shows that in these reserves, the abundance of target fish species often increases significantly and fish tend to be larger and have more successful reproduction¹³.

Strong environmental conservation measures can also help position Canada's resource industries as leaders in the emerging international "green economy", an opportunity that has been recognized by the forest sector in their signing, with nine environmental organizations including CPAWS, the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement.

Protecting and restoring healthy ecosystems, including protecting intact forests and peatlands can also contribute to addressing climate by reducing emissions and enabling climate change adaptation.

Investing in conservation, including protected areas, should not be considered an expense to the public accounts, but rather an investment in Canada that will generate significant economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits, both short and long-term.

Monitoring progress:

It will be important to track the implementation and effectiveness of the National Conservation Plan, and report back to Canadians on progress. While the ability to track progress on protected areas in Canada has improved in recent years with the public launch of the "CARTS" database by the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas and Environment Canada, there are still challenges with consistency, and access to data. In recent years, Quebec has implemented a comprehensive tracking system that includes private lands that are recognized as «reserve naturelle». This may serve as a model for improved tracking under a national plan. Australia also has an integrated tracking system for all recognized protected lands, including private, public and indigenous lands, which may provide useful guidance.

Building on our strengths – examples of large land and seascape-scale conservation initiatives currently underway:

A National Conservation Plan should build on our strengths and on the work that is currently underway across the country.

In the last decade or so, a number of large land and seascape scale conservation projects have been initiated in Canada, led by various parties, both government and non-government. CPAWS is actively engaged in many of these, for example:

¹³ Jessen, S., K. Chan, I. Côté, P. Dearden, E. De Santo, M.J. Fortin, F. Guichard, W. Haider, G. Jamieson, D.L. Kramer, A. McCrea-Strub, M. Mulrennan, W.A. Montevecchi, J. Roff, A. Salomon, J. Gardner, L. Honka, R. Menafra and A. Woodley. 2011. *Science-based Guidelines for MPAs and MPA Networks in Canada*. Vancouver: Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. 58 pp.

1. CPAWS is working with partners to implement the **Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement**, an innovative large landscape scale initiative that applies to over 76 million ha of forest from Newfoundland to British Columbia. Under the agreement, 9 environmental organizations and 21 forest companies who are members of the Forest Products Association of Canada are working towards six strategic goals, including protected areas, sustainable practices on the “working landscape”, and recovering species at risk, including woodland caribou. This initiative reflects the proposed framing for a National Conservation Plan (Protect, Connect, Restore), and is a strong potential delivery mechanism for a National Conservation Plan in the mid-north of Canada.
2. CPAWS Wildlands League Chapter is actively engaged in supporting implementation of **Ontario’s Far North initiative** that commits to protecting at least half of the region, and implementing First Nations-led regional land use planning across the far northern reaches of the province.
3. In Quebec, the **Plan Nord** includes a commitment to protecting half of that province’s northern region by 2035. In recent months Quebec confirmed their commitment to protect 20% of the region in protected areas by 2020. CPAWS – QC sits on the advisory committee for the Plan Nord.
4. In the NWT, CPAWS-NWT is a formal partner in the **NWT Protected Areas Strategy** – which engages governments, NGO’s, Aboriginal groups, and industry representatives in a leading-edge collaborative process that incorporates science and traditional knowledge in a community-led process of establishing a network of protected areas in the NWT. CPAWS-NWT worked with the community of Deline to secure the first site protected under the Strategy, and is currently working with communities to support the establishment of other sites, including six proposed National Wildlife Areas. This Strategy, if fully implemented, along with on-going land use planning initiatives offers a pro-active path forward to achieving sustainable development in the NWT.
5. In Nova Scotia, CPAWS-NS engaged in an industry-NGO partnership called the **Colin Stewart Forest Forum** that made innovative recommendations to the provincial government for how to substantially expand the public protected areas system. These recommendations are currently being implemented, and include the purchase of private lands by government to establish public protected areas.
6. CPAWS is working to encourage governments to establish 12 new marine protected areas by the end of 2012 to demonstrate progress towards a network of marine protected areas. Part of our **Dare to be Deep** campaign, over the past year significant progress has been made on more than half of the 12 sites.
7. CPAWS is working to support **new national park** proposals across the country. For example, in the NWT we are working with the Lutsel’Ke Dene First Nation to support the protection of 30,000 sq km of Thaidene Nene – Land of our Ancestors, around the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. In the South Okanagan-Similkameen region of BC we are supporting the establishment of a national park, highlighting the significant economic, environmental and social benefits that the proposal offers to the region.

These are just a few of the large landscape scale conservation initiatives that CPAWS is involved with across the country, led by governments, conservation organizations, industry, indigenous peoples and individual Canadians who are passionately working to protect wildlife and their habitat.

The Government of Canada's Role:

The Government of Canada can play an important leadership role through a National Conservation Plan that includes advancing conservation in its direct areas of jurisdiction, as well as leading a bold agenda that brings together governments, conservation NGOs, Indigenous peoples, industry and individual Canadians, to work together towards ambitious common goals, measurable targets and timelines. The federal government can also play an important role in supporting the plan through science and ecosystem monitoring and technical support, and ensuring effective and clear monitoring and public reporting on progress. Financial support for implementing the plan will also be an important responsibility that the federal government shares with other partners.

Learning from others:

At the early stages of developing a National Conservation Plan, it would be helpful to learn from other countries who have successfully tackled the challenge of bringing together diverse conservation initiatives under a common framework. Australia has developed a suite of national conservation strategies that integrate the conservation efforts of various levels of government, NGOs, private landowners and Indigenous peoples, with common goals and targets. Their "Strategy for the National Reserve System", and the just-released draft "National Wildlife Corridors Strategy" are interesting examples of integrated conservation plans that serve to coordinate the efforts of a broad range of partners. The United States' "America's Great Outdoors" and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives could also provide some interesting examples relevant to Canada. And the Natura 2000 program in Europe could offer lessons for areas of the country, particularly where there is a high proportion of private lands. Inviting representatives from these and other large landscape scale conservation initiatives to participate in a workshop on the National Conservation Plan, could be helpful, so we, in Canada, could learn from their experience.

Final comments:

Canada has a huge challenge as well as a globally significant opportunity to protect and restore our natural heritage. Conservation provides a broad range of benefits to people and nature, making it a win-win opportunity for Canadians now and in the future. This is an opportunity we should not squander. We know what needs to be done. A National Conservation Plan, done right, could build on our collective strengths and drive an ambitious conservation agenda for Canada. CPAWS looks forward to continuing our ongoing dialogue and engagement in the development of such a plan.

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