



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

**STUDY TO PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS
REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN**

**Report of the Standing Committee on
Environment and Sustainable Development**

Mark Warawa, M.P.

Chair

JUNE 2012

41st PARLIAMENT, FIRST SESSION



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has the honour to present its

THIRD REPORT

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the Committee on Tuesday, January 31, 2012, the Committee has proceeded to its study to provide recommendations to the Minister of the Environment regarding the development of a national conservation plan and has agreed to report the following:

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In its Speech from the Throne in June 2011, the Government of Canada announced its intention to “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.”¹ On January 31, 2012, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (the “Committee”) adopted a motion to begin a study to provide recommendations to the Minister of the Environment regarding the development of the National Conservation Plan (NCP).²

At the beginning of its study in March 2012, the Committee issued a press release asking interested parties to share their ideas about what should be the purpose, goals, principles, conservation priorities, implementation priorities and consultation process for an NCP. The Committee heard from 56 witnesses and received over 20 briefs from other stakeholders. As well, the Committee travelled to British Columbia, Alberta and Nova Scotia in May to visit several conservation sites and hear from more than 20 people and groups in those areas. Witnesses and other participants included conservation groups, Aboriginal groups, hunters and anglers, industry representatives, landowners and farmers, community activists, scientists and interested individuals. We are grateful to all those who assisted the Committee in its study.

Committee members are now pleased to provide the following insights to the Minister of the Environment to assist him in his efforts, in concert with Canadians across the country, to develop an NCP.

THE PURPOSE OF A NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

The purposes of the NCP should be to protect Canada’s natural spaces, connect Canadians to nature and restore degraded ecosystems. Many witnesses suggested the overarching purpose for the NCP is well summarized as: protect, connect, restore and engage.³ “Protect” means complete the network of Canadian terrestrial and marine protected areas. “Connect” means integrate the protected areas with sustainably managed working land- and seascapes. “Restore” refers to degraded ecosystems and species at risk. “Engage” refers to a broad range of Canadians working together in nature stewardship and education.

1 [Speech from the Throne](#), Ottawa, June 3, 2011.

2 House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), January 31, 2012.

3 Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, British Columbia Chapter, written brief.

Stakeholders reminded the Committee of the primary benefits of environmental conservation: the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services, which have an impact on human health and well-being. Our air, water, food, and prosperity all depend on having healthy, functioning ecosystems.⁴

Central to the NCP is the concept of “conservation.” The Committee heard a number of ideas for a definition of conservation.⁵ The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters suggested a definition that touches on several key points: “Conservation is the protection, use and management of natural resources to supply benefits at optimal sustainable levels for present and future generations of Canadians.”⁶

An alternative definition for conservation that was suggested relates to the protection of ecological systems in order to protect ecological goods and services, such as commercial, recreational, and subsistence food gathering, flood and drought control, sediment filtering, nutrient cycling, erosion control, and climate regulation.⁷ In this case, “protection” is linked to decisions regarding the use of non-renewable resources in Canadians’ everyday lives, including transportation, heating and food.⁸ From other submissions, the Committee understands protecting natural resources or ecological systems to include protecting or restoring ecosystems, biodiversity and habitat. Several witnesses suggested that “conservation” may also include the creation of new habitats or the enhancement of existing habitat.

“In addition to conservation, we must now restore or create natural habitats on our farms and ranches, in our cities, neighborhoods, commercial buildings, yards, and on our roofs.”⁹

In summary, the Committee suggests that the definition of conservation ultimately adopted for the NCP should include protection of both natural resources (defined to include ecological goods and services, for example, flood control through protecting wetlands) as

4 For example, see: Conservation Ontario, speaking notes, p. 2; Bradley Young, Senior Policy Analyst, National Aboriginal Forestry Association, [Evidence](#), April 3, 2012; Michael Keenan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment, [Evidence](#), March 8, 2012; Len Ugarenko, President, Wildlife Habitat Canada, [Evidence](#), April 26, 2012; and Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, written brief.

5 For a glossary of other definitions, please see: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, [Canadian Biodiversity Strategy Canada’s Response to the Convention on Biological Diversity 1995](#).

6 Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, written brief, p. 1-2. Note that the Federation was quoting a definition “agreed upon by all three political parties in Ontario many years ago.” Other witnesses suggested definitions containing some similar points. For example, see: Alison Woodley, National Conservation Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012; Nature Québec, written brief, p. 1; and Canadian Nature Network, Strategic Plan, p. 3.

7 Joan Elmer et al., [Canadian Biodiversity: Ecosystem Status and Trends 2010](#), prepared under the guidance of the Steering Committee representing federal, provincial and territorial governments, 2010.

8 See Canadian Model Forest Network, written brief, p. 5.

9 Richard Louv’s New Nature Principle as cited by Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, written brief, p. 4.

well as ecological systems, and it should incorporate the notion of sustainable use as well as working landscapes.

An NCP should clearly affirm a national vision for conservation that will focus and engage Canadians¹⁰ and facilitate conservation actions and the partnerships necessary to achieve conservation goals.¹¹ It should be a framework or resource to help coordinate, guide and inform the many conservation activities that Canadians are already undertaking across Canada. The NCP could link and align these activities.¹²

The challenge is to inspire, coordinate, inform and support those individuals and groups who have the most power to advance conservation in Canada: landowners, including farmers; resource and other industry leaders; Aboriginal groups; communities; conservation organizations; anglers and hunters; outdoor enthusiasts; scientists; non-governmental organizations; and everyday Canadians who love wildlife and nature. Inspiring Canadians with a vision for conservation and empowering them to realize that vision will be at the heart of an NCP.

“This conservation vision will provide a platform upon which Canadians can band together, creating a sense of community, common interest and pride in tackling the important tasks that lay ahead. This conservation vision will also inspire the need for a National Conservation Plan (NCP), anchoring people’s actions to tangible outcomes and helping Canada brand itself as a world leader in conservation.”¹³

Facilitation will require that communication and collaboration among stakeholders be enhanced. Coordination is needed among federal government departments and agencies, as well as between different levels of government (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and Aboriginal). Partnerships and shared resources should produce synergies and economies of scale. Local capacity should be built with committed government funding that leverages additional efforts and funding from industry, academia, volunteers and others. The best available science should be shared and applied in decision-making and implementation. In short, an NCP should seek to engage and inspire Canadians, and to mobilize them to work together, making the best use of collective resources, towards a common conservation vision.

10 See Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, p. 3; Bill Wareham, Senior Marine Conservation Specialist, David Suzuki Foundation, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012; Michael Keenan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment, [Evidence](#), March 8, 2012; and Conservation Ontario, speaking notes, p. 2.

11 Some of the ideas from this section were proposed by Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, p. 5.

12 See David Collyer, President, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012; Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, written brief, p. 1; and Martin Willison, as an individual, Adjunct Professor, School for Resource and Environmental Studies and Marine Affairs, Dalhousie University, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

13 Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, p. 3.

PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD GOVERN A NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

Governing principles should be articulated early in the development of the NCP and used to judge, justify or reject proposed goals and priorities for conservation, as well as proposed courses of action.

The Committee heard dozens of ideas from witnesses and others as to what principles should govern the NCP. From these many ideas, seven broad principles were recurrent and generally supported by most witnesses who commented on these points. In no specific order, the seven main principles the Committee heard are that the NCP should:

- Focus on conservation in addition to preservation;
- Position Canada as an international provider of best practices in conservation;
- Take into consideration both environmental and economic factors;
- Be based on the best available science and knowledge;
- Be workable by employing many different implementation tools, for example legislation and incentives, and by building on existing conservation efforts;
- Be adaptive and long term; and
- Better connect Canadians with nature.

A. The National Conservation Plan Should Focus on Conservation in Addition to Preservation

Several witnesses emphasized a distinction between conservation and preservation. They recommended that Canada not adopt a “wilderness at any cost” ideology.¹⁴ Rather, they suggested that the concept of “conservation” allows for a certain level of sustainable use of the land and water.

“Present day ecosystems are dynamic, complex and intertwined with industrial processes, we simply do not have the option of leaving them alone.”¹⁵

14 Bradley Young, Senior Policy Analyst, National Aboriginal Forestry Association, [Evidence](#), April 3, 2012.

15 Bob Jamieson, written brief, p. 2.

Sustainable use means different activities are allowed in different areas, depending on environmental and economic requirements. Such activities might range from hiking or fishing to resource extraction, farming or urbanization, all within appropriate areas. Preservation, in the sense of protecting species at risk and areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, will play a significant role in the NCP. However, as the Committee learned, even Parks Canada is experimenting by introducing cattle grazing into some areas of Grasslands National Park as a means to restore the biodiversity of the park. All these activities may be carried out under an NCP as long as they are done in a responsible, sustainable manner that optimizes environmental and economic outcomes for present and future generations of Canadians.

Canada's NCP should deliver real and measureable conservation results. Examples of such results would include improved water quality, wildlife conservation, watershed improvement, and improved fish stocks among others. Millions of Canadians hunt, fish, trap, farm and/or depend on the harvest/extraction of natural resources. The NCP must acknowledge and support the concept of sustainable use of fish, wildlife, soil and our natural resources.

B. The National Conservation Plan Should Position Canada as an International Provider of Best Practices in Conservation

Canada should be an international leader in the development and implementation of best practices in conservation. By "implementing world-leading standards for the sustainable use of natural resources" on Canadian land and ocean not formally part of protected areas, Canada would emerge as a "leader in the global 'green' resource economy."¹⁶ One witness described this as "owning the podium, so to speak, among all nations in its lands and waters conserved."¹⁷

Canada's globally significant terrestrial and maritime ecosystems are the "envy of the world."¹⁸ The Committee therefore believes that Canada has the responsibility to be a world leader in developing and implementing best practices in conservation and stewardship. Such efforts would not only protect the beauty of Canada, its biodiversity and the health of the ecosystems on which we all rely, it also would support increased tourism and help to market Canadian resource and other products, both domestically and internationally, as "green and responsible."¹⁹ Nature is part of Canada's brand.

16 Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, written brief, p. 2.

17 John Lounds, President and Chief Executive Officer, Nature Conservancy Canada, [Evidence](#), April 24, 2012.

18 World Wildlife Fund (Canada), written brief, p. 1.

19 See Ron Bonnett, President, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, [Evidence](#), May 1, 2012, for a discussion about marketing with the Canada brand.

C. The National Conservation Plan Should Take into Consideration both Environmental and Economic Factors

A running theme in the testimony was the need for partnerships. Though this theme mostly referred to people and groups, one of the guiding principles of the NCP could also be viewed as the partnership between the environment and the economy.

Historically, the conservation movement was initiated to protect species' populations for hunting purposes and to manage natural resources wisely. It is now recognized that nature also provides many valuable ecological services, such as water and air purification, carbon storage and flood control. Together these natural resources and services may be referred to as Canada's natural capital.²⁰

Conserving natural capital has clear economic benefits in terms of reduced need for certain types of infrastructure, reduced environmental clean-up costs, increased tourism, and the advantage of being able to market Canadian goods internationally as "green" or "responsibly produced."²¹ Conservation activities have the potential to create significant employment in the "green" economy, often in rural and remote areas of Canada.²² One witness noted that for every million dollars invested in ecological restoration and stewardship, 22 jobs are created, as opposed to 3 for the same investment in grey infrastructure.²³ Conserving our natural capital, therefore, is essential not just for the environment, but important for the economy also. Witnesses emphasized this point on numerous occasions.

A witness noted that ecological services can be affected by development. The inverse is also true – conservation activities also can have an impact on the economy. An NCP should be cognizant of both of these principles, and should strive to help reach a balance between the two.

All too often, however, economic development and environmental goals can seem to be at odds, especially for those who shoulder the burden of conservation for the benefit of others. For example, the Committee heard from landowners who testified that managing their lands in more environmentally friendly ways could be detrimental to the landowners' economic bottom-line.²⁴ They questioned why they personally should have to pay for the benefits enjoyed by society more broadly.

20 See Southern Alberta Land Trust Society, written brief, p. 1.

21 Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Canada, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012.

22 Canadian Land Trust Alliance, written brief, p. 3.

23 Margo Sheppard, Chair, Canadian Land Trust Alliance, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012 citing D. Wolthausen, et al, [Economic Impact Analysis of Stewardship Activities in Canada. A Review of Selected Case Studies](#), Contract Report prepared by the Fur Institute of Canada and the Centre for Environmental Stewardship and Conservation for Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, May 2010.

24 Larry Sears, Chairman, Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012.

The flip-side of this problem could include an industrial activity that doesn't include adequate remediation measures and generates a short-term economic benefit but creates environmental liabilities.²⁵

Neither of these types of situations results in optimal environmental and economic outcomes. They should be avoided through the use of appropriate tools, such as incentives for farmers to practice responsible stewardship, and policy tools which mitigate environmental impact and incent conservation activities. In implementing the NCP, care should be taken to use the right tools in the right situations so that environmental and economic benefits and burdens are distributed fairly to ensure positive environmental and economic outcomes.²⁶

D. The National Conservation Plan Should be Based on the Best Available Science and Knowledge

A recurrent theme throughout testimony was that conservation decisions should be based on scientific knowledge. Certainly scientists who participated noted that science should be integral to all conservation efforts.²⁷ While the Committee is strongly supportive of the NCP being science-based, it also notes that valuable conservation knowledge is not the exclusive purview of scientists. It was noted in testimony and, in particular during site visits, that Aboriginal traditional knowledge,²⁸ "citizen science" and community knowledge should also play valuable roles. A challenge will be assembling all this information into a usable format to inform decision-making. At least one witness suggested using the Internet, or more specifically, Wiki software, to share knowledge and information related to the NCP across the country.²⁹ The Committee is very interested in that possibility.

E. The National Conservation Plan Must be Workable

The Committee has already stated that the NCP should position Canada as a world leader in the development and implementation of conservation best practices. Achieving such a high goal will require workable strategies. Multiple tools will be needed and, just as important, a commitment to use them in the appropriate circumstances. Building the NCP upon the strong foundation of existing conservation programs, networks and efforts will also be fundamental.

25 See Southern Alberta Land Trust Society, written brief, p. 3.

26 See Susanna Fuller, Marine Conservation Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

27 See for instance: Jeffrey A. Hutchings, as an individual, Professor of Biology, Dalhousie University, President, Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012 and Association of Professional Biology, written brief, p. 3.

28 See for instance: Betty Ann Lavallée, National Chief, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012 and Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations, [Evidence](#), May 3, 2012.

29 See Martin Willison, as an individual, Adjunct Professor, School for Resource and Environmental Studies and Marine Affairs, Dalhousie University, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

The federal government has various tools at its disposal, including financial incentives and disincentives, regulation, and scientific research and knowledge. The NCP will be national in scope and ambitious in its purpose, but efforts will be regional and involve many people with differing points of view. The government must show willingness to work with all Canadians and a commitment to use the proper set of tools in the right circumstances for conservation efforts to succeed. Collaboration is not an option, but a necessity, and the government must promote and support it.³⁰

Existing programs, such as the Ecological Gifts Program and Environmental Farm Plans, to name but two, should be evaluated and extended where appropriate. New tools may need to be developed to address specific circumstances, particularly market-based mechanisms applicable to private land.³¹

In addition, to be workable, the NCP should not start from scratch or try to “re-invent the wheel,” as many stakeholders told the Committee.³² It should build on the solid foundation of existing conservation programs, networks and efforts of the hundreds of thousands of Canadians already engaged in conservation. The Committee was hosted on site tours by various organizations carrying out such programs on Vancouver Island, north of Calgary and in the Halifax region, and was impressed by the dedication and commitment shown by all those involved from many different backgrounds and sectors. Witnesses described many more existing programs and initiatives, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, Quebec’s Plan Nord, Hinterland Who’s Who, the Great Lakes Action Plan, the Earth Rangers, the Endangered Species Campaign, the Natural Areas Conservation Plan, the Canadian Nature Network Strategy, and the Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, to name but a few.

The NCP must support, expand and focus such existing efforts toward achieving its vision. In addition, application of best practices taken from international experience³³ would not only help make the plan workable, but will be necessary if Canada is to become a world leader in conservation.

To this end, the NCP should facilitate mechanisms to keep an inventory of conservation activities and best practices across the country, measure their success or transfer to other jurisdictions as appropriate or necessary.

The NCP should also address the need to have adequate data management and reporting systems necessary to leverage best practices, and implement policy tools.

30 Susanna Fuller, Marine Conservation Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

31 See Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Canada, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012.

32 For example, see: Margo Sheppard, Chair, Canadian Land Trust Alliance, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

33 For example, see: Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project Steering Committee, written brief, p. 3.

F. The National Conservation Plan Should be Adaptive and Long-term

The one constant in nature is change, whether as part of natural cycles or caused by human activity. Canada requires conservation efforts to help in the struggle to mitigate climate change, to build the resilience of Canada's ecosystems to allow them to adapt,³⁴ as well as new research to help Canadians adapt to a changing world.³⁵ As well, technologies, ecological knowledge and best practices improve and evolve over time. The NCP must not remain constant while the world around it changes. It should be developed to be adaptive.

*"The NCP should be an action-orientated framework that seeks and adapts to new knowledge. It should include clear implementation plans and a commitment to achieving measurable, time-bound results. Traditional approaches to conservation must be rethought in a changing environment. Managing for uncertainty will be critical, and will require greater emphasis on risk management and adaptive management approaches."*³⁶

Also, the NCP must take a long-term view. Human activities can disturb landscapes that can later be reclaimed.³⁷ However, in some cases, results of efforts may not be realized for decades. As one witness told the Committee, conservation is a patient person's business.³⁸ The need for a healthy and vibrant environment and economy is long-term. The NCP must be for the long term, and the government must show long-term commitment to its vision.

G. The National Conservation Plan Should Better Connect Canadians with Nature

To be successful, an NCP will need to involve as many Canadians as possible in its scope and mandate. Specifically, the Committee was reminded many times that Canada's rapidly growing urban populations are becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural environment. Some termed this the "nature deficit disorder." The NCP should include activities which strive to connect urban Canadians with nature, and leverage the efforts of numerous local organizations that are dedicated to doing so.

34 See World Wildlife Fund (Canada), written brief, p. 3 and Jeffrey A. Hutchings, as an individual, Professor of Biology, Dalhousie University, President, Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

35 For example, in Halifax the Committee visited a small mussel farm struggling to adapt to an infestation of an invasive species exacerbated by warmer winters.

36 Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, p. 8. Also see Western Stock Growers' Association, written brief.

37 David Collyer, President, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012.

38 Lorne Fitch, Provincial Riparian Specialist, Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society — Cows and Fish, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012.

*“Citizen engagement to re-establish Canadians’ relationships with nature will be essential. These efforts must go beyond simple communications. Indeed, both education and opportunity for nation-wide citizen involvement in nature-based activities must be an integral part of the Plan.”*³⁹

A clear principle that must underlie all NCP efforts, therefore, is that the NCP should engage a broad range of Canadians, raise awareness for the need to engage in conservation activities, and rally them around a desire to conserve Canada’s great natural heritage. Numerous stakeholders suggested focussing on children, urbanites and new Canadians. Educating and providing opportunities for Canadians to experience our “remarkable natural heritage for themselves will help people understand the benefits of and the need for conservation, leading to an increased constituency of support. It will also increase their well-being....”⁴⁰ The link between human health and well-being and nature was an ongoing theme.⁴¹

H. Other Principles

Other principles to consider in the NCP are:

- Recognizing the contributions of all partners and stakeholders;
- Identifying and sharing best practices regarding conservation among regions;
- Maximizing conservation benefits resulting from the use of available tools and resources;
- Seeking to achieve measureable conservation outcomes and results, and ensuring monitoring, evaluation and performance reporting are included in the NCP’s scope;
- Encouraging the adoption of a broad range of conservation activities and practices;
- Encouraging the broad participation of a wide cross-section of communities across the country;
- Ensuring that investment in conservation efforts yield measurable conservation outcomes;

39 International Union for Conservation of Nature, letter, received March 30, 2012.

40 Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project Steering Committee, written brief, p. 2.

41 See for instance: Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, written brief, p. 3.

- Ensuring that clarity and predictability in the purpose, function, and organization of the NCP is apparent throughout its scope, including clarity in lead points of responsibility;
- Encouraging the collaboration between industry and non-governmental organizations in conducting conservation activities and consultation; and
- Ensuring that the NCP does not add administrative burden to conservation activities, but rather enhances and enables them.

GOALS OF THE NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

The goals of the NCP should flow from its purpose and be guided by its principles. The importance of goals cannot be overstated. Without them, and the commitment to achieve them, there is no point in having an NCP.⁴² This point was emphasized during the Committee’s site visit to Olds College, where defined outcomes have been a key part of its success.

“If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.”⁴³

Several witnesses suggested that the NCP could prescribe how useful targets can be derived and used.⁴⁴ A number of witnesses suggested that most, if not all goals should be measurable, and environmental factors should be monitored so that it is possible to determine whether goals are being achieved. Measurement is essential for two of the principles articulated earlier: the NCP should be workable, that is, it should use the right tools in the right situations, and it should be adaptive to change.

Other witnesses suggested more specific goals. Since the NCP will be a national plan initiated by the federal government, numerous stakeholders suggested that the NCP should include goals of fulfilling current domestic and international conservation commitments.

Domestically, the Government of Canada has set the following goals for the protection of nature under the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*:

- Wildlife Conservation: Maintain or restore populations of wildlife to healthy levels.
- Ecosystem/Habitat Conservation and Protection: Maintain productive and resilient ecosystems with the capacity to recover and adapt; and protect

42 Brian Riddell, President and Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Salmon Foundation, [Evidence](#), May 15, 2012.

43 Lewis Carroll, as recounted by Dan Fullerton, Director of Business and International Development, Olds College.

44 See Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, written brief, p. 17.

areas in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations.

- Biological Resources: Sustainable production and consumption of biological resources are within ecosystem limits.⁴⁵

Targets, or timelines to set targets, have been set under these goals, some of which are more measurable than others.⁴⁶ Stakeholders suggested goals for the NCP that are consistent with those of the Strategy, including those that would promote sustainable use of resources,⁴⁷ aim to protect species at risk,⁴⁸ as well as improve fisheries management.⁴⁹ In addition, some stakeholders suggested that water quality and quantity targets⁵⁰ also be considered under the NCP. Such goals and targets are also described in the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*.

In addition to the goals and targets outlined in the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*, other domestic commitments are inherent in the law, such as establishing recovery strategies (which identify critical habitat) and action plans under the *Species at Risk Act*. Canadian law also requires respect for treaty and Aboriginal rights, which may entail maintaining healthy ecosystems needed for Aboriginal peoples to exercise their rights.

Since the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy* and other federal commitments have already been made, honouring them could be a goal under the NCP. This does not preclude making further federal commitments that may improve on those already made.

Other goals for the NCP could include the facilitation of the implementation of existing Government of Canada's conservation mandates, the identification of national conservation priorities, and the provision of a framework that facilitates coordinated action with a broad range of conservation partners and stakeholders.

Internationally, Canada has made a number of commitments relating to environmental conservation. For example, under the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, Canada committed to 20 targets under five strategic goals (the Aichi Targets).⁵¹

45 Environment Canada, *Planning for a Sustainable Future, A Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for Canada*, [Annex 3: Theme III, Protecting Nature](#), October 2010.

46 Ibid.

47 Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, written brief, p. 2, and Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations, [Evidence](#), May 3, 2012.

48 Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Canada, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012, and Ian Davidson, Executive Director, Nature Canada, [Evidence](#), April 24, 2012.

49 David Browne, Director of Conservation, Canadian Wildlife Federation, [Evidence](#), April 24, 2012, among others.

50 Ian Davidson, Executive Director, Nature Canada, [Evidence](#), April 24, 2012.

51 Convention on Biological Diversity, [COP 10 \[Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, 18-29 October 2010\] Decision X/2](#), (this decision includes the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets: "Living in harmony with nature"*).

Stakeholders repeatedly suggested the Aichi Targets as minimum targets for the NCP. While all could be part of the NCP, Target 11 was the most frequently cited:

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular 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 landscapes and seascapes.

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES OF A NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

The Committee asked stakeholders to identify their conservation priorities for the NCP. A range of views was expressed, with priorities falling into three categories: *where* conservation efforts should be focussed, *what* areas should be prioritized, and *when* it should be done.

A. *Where* Conservation Efforts Should be Focussed

In terms of *where* in Canada conservation efforts should be focussed, stakeholders discussed two key categories of areas: protected areas and the working landscape.

Protected areas, both terrestrial and aquatic, include areas such as national parks and national marine conservation areas. A number of witnesses urged that Canada should hasten to complete the creation of a large, core network of protected areas of wildlife habitat in each region of Canada as a cornerstone of the NCP.⁵² The *Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy* was suggested as a model process for creating protected areas.⁵³

Many other witnesses stressed the importance of focussing efforts on the working landscape. There is no single definition of the “working landscape.” The Committee understands it to mean lands, including aquatic areas, managed to produce goods and services for human needs. It includes public lands, which account for a greater area, as well as private lands, which though smaller in area, are generally worked more intensely. It includes everything from remote areas used for lumbering, fishing, hunting, trapping or resource extraction, through rural areas used for farming, to urban and built-up areas used by industry and for dense human habitation.⁵⁴

52 For example, see: Alison Woodley, National Conservation Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012, and Rick Bates Executive Director, Canadian Wildlife Federation, [Evidence](#), April 24, 2012.

53 See Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy, written brief.

54 See also: Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, written submission, for a discussion of what is described as the three Canadas “the crowded, developed and fertile south, the open landscape of middle Canada, and the wild north.”

“Conservation initiatives need to focus on enhancing the protection and restoration of natural resources within these working landscapes, including agricultural, urban and resource extraction land uses. Developing conservation programs for these landscapes will mitigate environmental impacts of land use activities, at the same time supporting a quality of life that includes a strong economy, good jobs and healthy, vibrant places to live.”⁵⁵

Focussing on working landscapes is important for a number of reasons. They account for the majority of the Canadian land- and water-base. Most human activity is carried out on working landscapes, often affecting ecosystems and wildlife habitat.⁵⁶ Therefore, “it is on the working landscapes where the greatest conservation gains can be made.”⁵⁷ Establishing or supporting sustainable practices on the working landscape can help to maintain ecosystem functions. Conservation of areas within working landscapes can maintain important reference sites to allow remediation efforts in similar areas.⁵⁸ It is also important to keep the balance between conservation and economic activities firmly in hand when examining this principle.

In addition, working landscapes connect Canada’s protected areas, allowing wildlife to move between them regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.⁵⁹ This is “particularly important in the context of climate change. We need to allow plants and animals the space they need to shift and adapt to changing conditions.”⁶⁰

“Protected areas are central to but not sufficient for a robust National Conservation Plan. Particularly important are efforts to promote sustainable use. The plan can build on a range of government, NGO, industry and private land holder programs and collaborative initiatives, providing incentives and rewards for truly sustainable use of our natural resources and stewardship of our biodiversity.”⁶¹

During its site visits, the Committee saw efforts to restore, protect and enhance the natural systems on working landscapes.

55 Conservation Ontario, speaking notes, p. 3.

56 Colleen Cassady St. Clair et al., *Urban Biodiversity: Why it matters and how to protect it, A public discussion paper prepared for the City of Edmonton*, May 2010. (as submitted by Marie Tremblay, an author of the paper and representative of the Nature Conservancy of Canada at the site visit at the Kerfoot Ranch, Alberta).

57 Michael Keenan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment, [Evidence](#), March 8, 2012.

58 Canadian Water Network, written brief, p. 3.

59 See Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, written brief, p. 1.

60 Alison Woodley, National Conservation Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012.

61 International Union for Conservation of Nature, letter, received March 30, 2012.

B. What Areas Should be Prioritized for Conservation

In terms of what kinds of ecosystems or areas within protected areas and the working landscape should be prioritized, the Committee heard a range of opinions. Some stakeholders emphasized the importance of wetlands.⁶² Others testified about the many issues facing aquatic environments, both freshwater and marine.⁶³ Some stakeholders recommended giving priority to farming regions, rapidly developing regions, or urban areas.⁶⁴ Numerous stakeholders stated that the NCP should include everything: terrestrial, marine and freshwater components, habitat conservation and restoration; plant and animal biodiversity in rural and urban areas; and land, air and water, with no single area more important or more urgent than another.

Stakeholders therefore suggested that conservation priorities “should be established on a regional basis recognizing the vast diversity of Canadian landscapes and conservation issues.”⁶⁵ To this end, the NCP could include detailed regional implementation plans, developed in concert with other levels of government. This would then ensure the principle of respect for regional jurisdiction is maintained.

More specifically, the Committee heard that designing and implementing conservation plans at a watershed scale would have a number of advantages.⁶⁶ “Integrated watershed management is the process of managing human activities and natural resources in an area defined by watershed boundaries.”⁶⁷ This type of management would “address economic and development needs within the context of regional water resource needs and challenges.”⁶⁸ As the Committee heard, it is often easier for people to adopt a conservation ethic when efforts are focussed on the water on which they depend.⁶⁹

Of course, marine areas cannot be defined in this way. At least one witness suggested that the ecosystem approach should be used to manage fisheries in different

62 For example, see: Andrea Barnett, National Policy Analyst, National Operations, Ducks Unlimited Canada, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012, and Bill Wareham, Senior Marine Conservation Specialist, David Suzuki Foundation, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012.

63 For example, see: Rick Bates, Executive Director, Canadian Wildlife Federation, [Evidence](#), April 24, 2012; Canadian Water Network, written brief, p. 3; and Zone d'intervention prioritaire (ZIP) Baie des Chaleurs, written brief, p. 1.

64 For example, see: Doug Chorney, President, Keystone Agricultural Producers, [Evidence](#), May 1, 2012; Canadian Water Network, written brief p. 3; and Julia Ricottone, Regional Certification Coordinator, Canadian Nursery Landscape Association, [Evidence](#), May 3, 2012.

65 Conservation Ontario, speaking notes, May 10, 2012.

66 Canadian Water Network, written brief p. 3.

67 Conservation Ontario, speaking notes, p. 4.

68 Canadian Water Network, written brief, p.1-2.

69 See for instance: discussion regarding Beaver Creek watershed, Lorne Fitch, Provincial Riparian Specialist, Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society — Cows and Fish, and Bob Jamieson, as an individual, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012.

sections of the ocean,⁷⁰ a method that the Committee heard the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is already geared toward.⁷¹ Though perhaps more difficult to study, it was thought that enough is known to identify marine zones for conservation purposes.⁷²

“Conservation decisions should be science-based and rely on an integrated watershed management approach.”⁷³

Ultimately, whether conservation priorities are identified at the watershed or ecosystem scale, the Committee agrees that they should be determined regionally. In addition, as various witnesses pointed out, regional decisions should be supported by the best available information. This includes both scientific research as well as local and traditional knowledge.⁷⁴

Other broad priorities the Committee agreed could be considered in the NCP included:

- Water management;
- Conservation of biodiversity;
- Creation of new protected areas;
- Restoration of endangered species;
- Soil quality;
- Net gain of carbon sequestration; and
- Invasive species management.

C. When Conservation Priorities Should be Determined

Several witnesses discussed the best timing for conservation decisions, a topic covered during the Ministerial Round Table in January 2012. In the context of planning for conservation efforts, they suggested that federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments could consider integrated land-use planning before, or at the same time as decisions are made about major industrial developments to assist in ascertaining

70 David Browne, Director of Conservation, Canadian Wildlife Federation, [Evidence](#), April 24, 2012.

71 Steve Burgess, Ecosystem Programs Policy, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, written brief.

72 Brian Riddell, President and Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Salmon Foundation, [Evidence](#), May 15, 2012.

73 Conservation Ontario, speaking notes, p. 4.

74 See Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, p. 7.

conservation priorities.⁷⁵ Related to this is the fundamental need to conclude land claims agreements, and to respect treaty rights.

“Often you have to sequence conservation accomplishments up front when you’re making economic development decisions, because you aren’t going to get a chance down the line. For example, give communities a chance to identify and protect areas that are important to them before you open it up for industrial development, whether it’s diamond mining, oil and gas, or forestry.”⁷⁶

Some of the benefits of integrated land-use planning include a focussed consideration of cumulative effects of multiple possible developments in an area.⁷⁷ From an economic perspective, development proposals can receive more timely decisions when regional perspectives have already been taken into account and acceptable impacts in a specific area have been established.

However, the Committee acknowledges that integrated land-use planning may be more relevant in less developed areas of Canada than in settled, southern areas, where the focus may be more on restoration and private stewardship. “Different approaches will be needed in different regions of Canada, and the plan needs to reflect this.”⁷⁸

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES FOR A NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

The implementation priorities stakeholders identified are consistent with the conservation priorities they suggested to the Committee. Specific implementation priorities were identified for specific regions or sectoral purposes. Some programs may need to be set at a national level, such as those to prevent entry of invasive species and the spread and impact of wild animal pathogens.⁷⁹ However, the overall message the Committee received, which is relevant for all areas of Canada, is that the NCP should generally be national in scope and regional in implementation.

Considering the extent and complexity of conservation work that needs to be done in all areas of Canada, “all segments of society have a contribution to make.”⁸⁰ During the Committee’s site visit to Nanaimo, British Columbia, Committee members saw, first-hand, the importance of community involvement and citizen engagement in conservation efforts.

75 For example, see: Bradley Young, Senior Policy Analyst, National Aboriginal Forestry Association, [Evidence](#), April 3, 2012.

76 Monte Hummel, Chair, Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, [Evidence](#), April 3, 2012.

77 See David Collyer, President, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012.

78 Alison Woodley, National Conservation Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012.

79 Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre, written brief, p. 1.

80 Michael Keenan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment, [Evidence](#), March 8, 2012.

Sports fishers, scientists, construction contractors, artists, community government and others all have roles to play in conservation.

With community buy-in, conservation efforts are far more likely to succeed. As the Committee learned, people will generally do the right thing if they are well informed and left financially whole. Information dissemination and education will therefore play an important role in implementation. Consistent with another principle articulated earlier in this report, educating and generally helping to better connect Canadians with nature will help broaden engagement in, and commitment to, conservation. Urban parks, such as the new Rouge River urban national park, and zoos can play an important role in achieving this.

The Committee believes that the NCP should foster and support strong, long-term conservation partnerships between stakeholders. A good example is the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, which is carried out by numerous regional joint ventures between government, conservation groups and other organizations.⁸¹ Conservation efforts traditionally made by the hunting and angling community should be recognized and built upon. Critically, the resource sector, farmers and industry partners must be engaged in such conservation efforts, recognizing the good voluntary conservation practices being implemented and building on these while honouring regulatory obligations.⁸²

Two of the suggested principles discussed in an earlier section of this report were that the NCP should use many different tools, including economic incentives, and that it should be long-term. As one witness described it, “[t]his means continued support for existing programs that are effective.... This also means designing new funding models, particularly ones that use private sector capacity. New approaches should target innovative cost-share models and new incentives to encourage conservation on private lands.”⁸³

“No consideration of a national conservation plan could ignore the reality of the current fiscal situation, nor can such a plan succeed when the necessary resources are not behind it.”⁸⁴

In addition to education and funding, strong but flexible legislation and regulation was also stressed as another core tool to create the accountability necessary for successful implementation of conservation plans.⁸⁵ Some witnesses suggested that such legislation

81 See Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, p. 6.

82 Ibid., p. 16.

83 Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Canada, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012.

84 Greg Farrant, Manager, Government Affairs and Policy, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, [Evidence](#), May 3, 2012.

85 See for instance: Susanna Fuller, Marine Conservation Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012; Jeffrey A. Hutchings, as an individual, Professor of Biology, Dalhousie University, President, Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012; and Devon Page, Executive Director, Ecojustice Canada, [Evidence](#), May 15, 2012.

and regulation should be less prescriptive and more outcome-oriented.⁸⁶ While legislation should be able to even the playing field between those who do the right thing and the rare cases of egregious behaviour, it should also offer flexible compliance mechanisms.⁸⁷ To this end the NCP should seek to add value to conservation activities across the country rather than adding administrative burden.

Since one of the fundamental principles of the NCP is that it should be based on scientific and other knowledge of ecosystem functions, as well as an understanding of economic risks and opportunities, creating or collecting this knowledge will be necessary through scientific research in particular.⁸⁸ Directed research programs may also be needed.⁸⁹ Training of conservation specialists may be required if gaps are detected, for the oceans in particular, as mentioned by at least one witness.⁹⁰ Citizen engagement should include helping to collect local information to make informed decisions. This was particularly evident in the Committee's site visits where it was clear that local residents hold a wealth of knowledge about their home areas and the collection of the information needed to inform decisions was greatly aided by the involvement of "citizen scientists." Research at all levels of government, universities and by private industry will need to be shared and coordinated and the data made accessible and useful to decision-makers.⁹¹ The Wiki concept is important because, if properly implemented, it could create a large and perhaps comprehensive database of environmental baselines and existing conservation projects and needs, helping to classify and determine priorities that enable local engagement in the NCP.

The development of detailed regional implementation plans which support the setting and implementation of conservation priorities within regions could also be identified as an implementation priority.

The Committee also feels that the NCP should articulate principles upon which competing plans and needs can be ranked in priority. Examples might include the principle of greatest urgency, the principle of greatest impact, and the principle of cost-effectiveness.

Additional implementation priorities might include the development of public education programs, or the aggregation of baseline ecosystem information.

86 See David Collyer, President, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012.

87 Brenda Kenny, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, [Evidence](#), May 17, 2012.

88 Jeffrey A. Hutchings, as an individual, Professor of Biology, Dalhousie University, President, Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

89 Canadian Model Forest Network, written brief, p. 4.

90 Fred Whoriskey, Vice-Chair, Education, Huntsman Marine Science Centre, [Evidence](#), May 29, 2012.

91 Business Council of British Columbia, written brief, p. 3.

CONSULTATION PROCESS THE MINISTER SHOULD CONSIDER USING WHEN DEVELOPING A NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

Those stakeholders who shared their ideas regarding the consultation process that the Minister should consider using when developing an NCP were largely in agreement: the Minister should consult a broad range of Canadians to develop a plan that will strive to benefit them and that they could assist in implementing.

Witnesses recommended that the people who will be most affected by the NCP should be consulted in its development, as Canadians will not embrace an NCP unless they can perceive the economic, environmental and cultural value it holds for them. Consulting them from the outset will help to ensure that their interests are properly taken into account.

“If they don't have some skin in the game, if there isn't something in it for them, then it's going to be very difficult for them to own it and champion it and lead it and be proud of it and make sure that it continues.”⁹²

There are many groups that will have an interest in the NCP, as the Committee saw during the testimony that led to this report. Many stakeholders underscored the importance of consulting Aboriginal leaders, including female leaders.⁹³ Other groups who could be consulted include landowners, representatives from resource-based communities and industry leaders. The NCP should enable them to share and receive best practices pertaining to conservation activities. This includes successful examples of corporate social responsibility programs as they relate to conservation. Additional groups who could be included in the consultation process include wildlife and conservation organizations, including those representing anglers and hunters, scientists and academics, youth, urban residents and new Canadians, and other relevant stakeholder groups.

This combination of partners working together can help develop a bold NCP for Canada that reflects a broad range of interests and priorities – environmental, economic and social – incorporates the best science, traditional knowledge and policy, builds on existing programs and efforts, and is championed and implemented for the long term by those who benefit from it and own it.

While it is clear that there are many parties with an interest in the NCP, consultations should be transparent and should not preclude action, with at least one witness suggesting that consultations be time-limited.⁹⁴ The Committee also feels the consultation process used during the development of this report yielded much information, and the viewpoints of many of the stakeholder groups mentioned earlier, which could be considered as part of the consultation process.

92 Ibid.

93 Native Women's Association of Canada, written brief, p. 4.

94 Southern Alberta Land Trust Society, written brief, p. 6.

CONCLUSION

The Committee hopes that the points made in this report will help guide the Minister of the Environment during his engagement with Canadians to develop the NCP. As emphasized by many witnesses, the NCP cannot simply be a paper exercise, but must be bold and backed by a real commitment to meet its vision.

“In closing, [Ducks Unlimited (DU)] hopes the national conservation plan gains the full support of all conservation partners in Canada and serves to drive real, profound, targeted, and measurable actions and results. We challenge the Government of Canada to continue showing strong leadership and support, including funding, for the creation and implementation of this plan. As the old adage from one of our founding DU leaders goes, conservation without action and funding is just conversation.”⁹⁵

95 Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Canada, [Evidence](#), March 27, 2012.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Department of the Environment</p> <p>Michael Keenan, Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic Policy Branch</p> <p>Robert McLean, Executive Director Habitat and Ecosystem Conservation</p>	2012/03/08	25
<p>Parks Canada Agency</p> <p>Mike P. Wong, Executive Director Ecological Integrity Branch</p>		
<p>Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society</p> <p>Alison Woodley, National Conservation Director</p>	2012/03/27	27
<p>David Suzuki Foundation</p> <p>Bill Wareham, Senior Marine Conservation Specialist</p>		
<p>Ducks Unlimited Canada</p> <p>Andrea Barnett, National Policy Analyst National Operations</p> <p>Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning</p>		
<p>Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement</p> <p>Monte Hummel, Chair</p>	2012/04/03	29
<p>National Aboriginal Forestry Association</p> <p>Bradley Young, Senior Policy Analyst</p>		
<p>Canadian Wildlife Federation</p> <p>Rick Bates, Executive Director</p> <p>David Browne, Director of Conservation</p>	2012/04/24	30
<p>Nature Canada</p> <p>Ian Davidson, Executive Director</p>		
<p>Nature Conservancy of Canada</p> <p>John Lounds, President and Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Michael Bradstreet, Vice-President Conservation</p> <p>Nathalie Zinger, Regional Vice-President Québec</p>		
<p>Earth Rangers</p> <p>Mark Northwood, President and Co-Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Peter Kendall, Executive Director and Co-Chief Executive Officer</p>	2012/04/26	31
<p>Nature Québec</p> <p>Sophie Gallais, Project Manager Protected Areas</p>		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Wildlife Habitat Canada Len Ugarenko, President Julia Lambrechts, Grants Administrator and Executive Assistant	2012/04/26	31
Canadian Federation of Agriculture Ron Bonnett, President	2012/05/01	32
Keystone Agricultural Producers Doug Chorney, President		
Assembly of First Nations Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief William David, Senior Policy Analyst Environmental Stewardship	2012/05/03	33
Canadian Nursery Landscape Association Julia Ricottone, Regional Certification Coordinator		
Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Mary Simon, President Udloriak Hanson, Executive Director		
Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Greg Farrant, Manager Government Affairs and Policy		
Association of Professional Biology Pamela Zevit, Registered Professional Biologist Past President, Chair, Practice Advisory and Professional Ethics	2012/05/15	36
B.C. Wildlife Federation Alan Martin, Director Strategic Initiatives Neil Fletcher, Education Coordinator Wetlands		
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - British Columbia Chapter Chloe O'Loughlin, Director Terrestrial Conservation		
Delta Farmland & Wildlife Trust David Bradbeer, Program Coordinator		
Ecojustice Canada Devon Page, Executive Director		
Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia Scott Ellis, Executive Director		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Pacific Salmon Foundation Brian Riddell, President and Chief Executive Officer	2012/05/15	36
Trout Unlimited Canada Jeff Surtees, Chief Executive Officer		
West Coast Environmental Law Association Jessica Clogg, Executive Director and Senior Counsel		
Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada Damien Joly, Associate Director Nanaimo		
World Wildlife Fund (Canada) Linda Nowlan, Director Pacific Conservation		
Alberta Beef Producers Doug Sawyer, Chair Rich Smith, Executive Director	2012/05/17	37
Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association Larry Sears, Chairman		
Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society - Cows and Fish Lorne Fitch, Provincial Riparian Specialist		
As an individual Bob Jamieson		
Calgary Zoo Jake Veasey, Director of Animal Care Conservation and Research Kevin Strange, Senior Advisor Conservation Outreach		
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers David Collyer, President David Pryce, Vice-President Operations		
Canadian Cattlemen's Association Lynn Grant, Chair Environment Committee Fawn Jackson, Manager Environmental Affairs		
Canadian Energy Pipeline Association Brenda Kenny, President and Chief Executive Officer		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Encana Corporation Richard Dunn, Vice-President Canadian Division, Regulatory and Government Relations</p> <p>Shell Canada Limited Murray Elliott, Vice-President Health, Safety, Environment and Sustainable Development</p> <p>Southern Alberta Land Trust Society Alan Gardner, Executive Director</p> <p>Suncor Energy Inc. Gordon Lambert, Vice-President Sustainable Development</p> <p>Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association Stephen Vandervalk, Alberta Vice-President</p> <p>Western Stock Growers' Association Bill Newton, Member Board of Governors Norman Ward, Member Board of Governors</p>	2012/05/17	37
<p>As individuals Jeffrey A. Hutchings, Professor of Biology Dalhousie University, President, Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution Martin Willison, Adjunct Professor School for Resource and Environmental Studies and Marine Affairs Program, Dalhousie University</p> <p>Atlantic Salmon Federation Todd Dupuis, Executive Director Regional Programs Lewis Hinks, Program Director Nova Scotia</p> <p>Canadian Land Trust Alliance Margo Sheppard, Chair</p> <p>Congress of Aboriginal Peoples Betty Ann Lavallée, National Chief Dwight A. Dorey, National Vice-Chief</p> <p>Conservation Council of New Brunswick Inc. David Coon, Executive Director</p> <p>Department of Fisheries and Oceans Steve Burgess, Acting Director General Ecosystem Programs Policy</p>	2012/05/29	38

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of Fisheries and Oceans	2012/05/29	38
Marty King, Oceans Biologist Oceans and Coastal Management Division		
Ecology Action Centre		
Susanna Fuller, Coordinator Marine Conservation		
Huntsman Marine Science Centre		
Frederick G. Whoriskey, Vice-Chair Education, Dalhousie University		
Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation		
Ward Samson, Member		
Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada		
Andrew Hammermeister, Director Assistant Professor, Nova Scotia Agricultural College		
Science and Management of Protected Areas Association		
Soren Bondrup-Nielsen, Treasurer Head, Department of Biology, Acadia University		

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society - Cows and Fish

Ambioterra

Association of Professional Biologists

Atlantic Salmon Federation

B.C. Wildlife Federation

Baie des Chaleurs ZIP Committee

Bayliss, Lea

Business Council of British Columbia

Canadian Association of Forest Owners

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement

Canadian Boreal Initiative

Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre

Canadian Energy Pipeline Association

Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Canadian Land Trust Alliance

Canadian Model Forest Network

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - British Columbia Chapter

Canadian Water Network

Child and Nature Alliance of Canada

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Conservation Council of New Brunswick Inc.

Organizations and Individuals

Conservation Ontario

Cootes to Escarpment Park System Project Steering Committee

Department of Fisheries and Oceans

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Ecology Action Centre

Forest School Canada

Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia

Héritage Laurentien

Hinterland Who's Who

Hutchings, Jeffrey A.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Jamieson, Bob

National Aboriginal Forestry Association

Native Women's Association of Canada

Nature Québec

Nature Vancouver

Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation

Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy

Oldman Watershed Council

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada

Patrie, Jean-Paul

Peart, Bob

Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada

Organizations and Individuals

Réseau de milieux naturels protégés du Québec

Sackville Rivers Association

Southern Alberta Land Trust Society

Tremblay, Marie Anne

Trout Unlimited Canada

Western Stock Growers' Association

Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada

Wildlife Habitat Canada

Willison, Martin

World Wildlife Fund (Canada)

Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings ([Meetings Nos. 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Warawa, M.P.

Chair

Dissenting Opinion from the Official Opposition New Democratic Party on the development of a national conservation plan

The New Democratic Party would like to thank all who appeared before or submitted written briefs to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development during the Committee's study of a National Conservation Plan.

While we agree with some of the Committee Report, there are significant areas where we have concerns. Unfortunately, given an imposed page restriction, we are only able to articulate some of those in this report.

New Democrats believe in sustainable development as set out by the Brundtland Commission: development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"ⁱ. New Democrats believe a National Conservation Plan must take an ecosystems approach to conservation, which not only meets domestic and international targets but strives to exceed them, which incorporates monitoring and follow-up, respects and embraces Aboriginal traditional knowledge, which consults and includes all Canadians in its development and implementation, and which engages the public in sharing in its benefits and successes.

The Committee report fails to recognize the important contributions of science and scientists, and of environmental groups, aboriginal groups, and communities. The Conservative Government's suspicion and vilification of the role of some of these key stakeholders in advocating for the greater good over development at all costs has created substantial rifts in the democratic fabric that underpins sound policy and decision making in Canada, and efforts should be made to restore the mutual trust and respect between all stakeholders and decision makers. All Canadians must be included in developing a National Conservation Plan. Working together would be a positive step, and we should actively pursue a comprehensive plan to develop an inclusive process.

Furthermore, recent government cuts to funding to the Canadian Environmental Network, which facilitated low-cost, effective consultation, outreach, and coordination to over 640 groups across Canada, as well as to provincial networks on behalf of the government of Canada were shortsighted and ill-advised. The CEN could provide valuable assistance in both the development of a National Conservation Plan and in the implementation and delivery of regional initiatives. New Democrats recommend that funding to the CEN be restored.

The Committee report stresses the need to "balance" the environment with the economy. However, New Democrats do not believe it is balanced or wise over the long-term to only protect the environment when it is profitable to do so. New Democrats do not believe that unbridled development that sacrifices endangered species, clean air and water, and healthy ecosystems and people is sustainable for future generations. A conservation plan should protect the environment, and a clean environment supports a healthy economy. Unfortunately, instead of seeking resources to build this balanced approach, the Conservative government has shut down the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, which was in the best position to provide exactly this kind of advice to the government. New Democrats recommend that funding to the NRTEE be restored.

The Committee report emphasizes public private partnerships to fund conservation activities; New Democrats believe the federal government has a leadership role in providing predictable, ongoing funding for the commitments it has

made. We also believe in the polluter-pay principle, which would put the onus on the polluter to pay to restore degraded habitat and for conservation efforts which minimize their activities.

As a result of the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, the global community developed the Convention on Biological Diversity, with Canada one of the first nations to sign on.

Under Article 8, Canada committed to:

- Regulate or manage biological resources important for the conservation of biological diversity whether within or outside protected areas, with a view to ensuring their conservation and sustainable use;
- Promote the protection of ecosystems, natural habitats and the maintenance of viable populations of species in natural surroundings;...(and)
- Develop or maintain necessary legislation and/or other regulatory provisions for the protection of threatened species and populations.

It is ironic that this report is being tabled just as the global community comes together for the 20th anniversary of the Rio Summit, and just as the Conservative government, through its omnibus budget bill, is radically undermining some of Canada's most important existing environmental legislation. It is radically reducing environmental assessments, gutting the Fisheries Act and stripping habitat protection from all but a few species of fish. Furthermore, this Committee never reported on its statutory review of the Species at Risk Act, conducted in the last Parliament, in spite of this government's failure to properly implement the legislation.

Many witnesses, including Nature Quebec, underscored the importance of strong environmental law and regulation in Canada. They recommended the Government should: both "Maintain and reinforce environmental regulations and evaluation processes to ensure that biodiversity conservation objectives are addressed."ⁱⁱ Witnesses urged the government to adhere to the Aichi Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity, stressing the importance not just of meeting the targets, but of exceeding them. New Democrats strongly support incorporate this approach on all of the targets, not just target 11, in the National Conservation Plan.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, New Democrats believe that Canada needs a strong regulatory approach to conservation that sets out clear priorities and rules, with sufficient monitoring and enforcement, thereby eliminating uncertainty for everyone. As one witness succinctly put it,

"An NCP must be developed within a strong regulatory framework that protects Canada's species, habitats and incents conservation as part of doing business in this country. Without legally binding commitments, a national conservation plan would lack accountability"ⁱⁱⁱ.

ⁱ Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, 1987, Transmitted to the General Assembly as an Annex to [document A/42/427](#)- Development and International Co-operation: Environment

ⁱⁱ Nature Quebec, Brief to the Committee, p.7

ⁱⁱⁱ Testimony, Susanna Fuller, Coordinator, Marine Conservation. *Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, Halifax, May 29, 2012.*

**DISSENTING OPINION BY THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA
STUDY TO PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF
A NATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN**

Kirsty Duncan, Member of Parliament

This dissenting report first thanks all witnesses who testified before the Environment and Sustainable Development Committee, and thanks them for their time, effort, and good will.

The development of a National Conservation Plan (NCP) should be an important step for Canada. It is therefore extremely unfortunate that its consideration comes at a time when the government is gutting 50 years of environmental protection, and thus, risking the health and safety of Canadians. For example, Bill C-38 repeals the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, weakens several environmental laws, including species at risk and water, and nearly eliminates fish habitat in the fisheries act, and gives the federal cabinet authority to over-rule a decision of the National Energy Board.

Real consideration of a NCP should ensure strengthening of environmental laws, not eliminating and weakening them.

Recommendation 1: That an independent committee of experts be appointed to review the changes made in Bill C-38, its impacts on the environment and sustainable development, and make recommendations to the Minister based on the results of its review.

It is also extremely unfortunate that the committee's report does not include: (1) a framework of Canada's existing conservation efforts; (2) a comprehensive list of Canada's international and national environmental commitments; (3) a valuing of the environment beyond an economic value or a natural resource value; (4) a comprehensive discussion of conservation, protection, and restoration; and (5) a comprehensive discussion of how climate change is projected to impact the environment, how a NCP might be developed to mitigate projected impacts, and how a NCP might be developed to aid adaptation.

The foundation of the report should have been based on evidence--namely, a comprehensive framework, including GIS maps, of all conservation efforts to date. Surely, the government would want to know what conservation efforts are currently in place before beginning any consideration of the development of a NCP.

Recommendation 2: That the government provide a comprehensive review, catalogue, and framework of conservation efforts to date, as the starting place for the development of the NCP.

Other key evidence that should have been included in the committee's report is the

government's current international and national environmental commitments, with a recommendation that the government should use the development of the NCP to help meet its commitments.

Recommendation 3: That the government provide a comprehensive listing of its current international and national environmental commitments, its progress in meeting each commitment (e.g. no action, in progress, or completed), and identification of priority goals and targets for inclusion in the development of the NCP.

A discussion recognising the intrinsic value of the environment should have been included in the committee's report.

Recommendation 4: That the government undertake a values exercise regarding the environment.

A comprehensive discussion of conservation, protection, and restoration should have been included in the committee's report

Recommendation 5: That as part of the recommended comprehensive review of conservation efforts, the government should identify all conservation, protection, and restoration efforts to date, and identify goals and targets for each of conservation, protection, and restoration.

Climate change will have a significant impact on Canada's environment, including the atmosphere, biosphere, terrestrial landscape, and water.

Recommendation 6: That the government identify how climate change is projected to impact Canada's regional environments, as well as the atmosphere, biosphere, terrestrial environment, and water, and how a NCP might be developed to mitigate projected impacts, and how a NCP might be developed to aid adaptation.

Finally, perhaps the government should consider the development of a Biological Survey of Canada to perform biological surveys and protect the environment.

Recommendation 7: That the government should consider the establishment of a Biological Survey of Canada.