

FACTSHEET

The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy

Ten years after the Rio Earth Summit, Canadians can be proud of the significant progress that all Canadian jurisdictions have made in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity, ratified by Canada in 1992.

The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy was endorsed by all jurisdictions 1996 as Canada's formal response to the Biodiversity Convention. Since then, each jurisdiction and each sector has been implementing the Strategy according to its own priorities and circumstances. There are issues of national importance, however, that require collaborative action.

In 2001, the Forests, Wildlife, and Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers' Councils met jointly and agreed to collaborate on four priority biodiversity issues of Canada-wide concern. At their 2002 joint meeting, Ministers noted progress in all four areas:

Stewardship

Stewardship is a key conservation tool for involving individuals, organizations and their communities in both preventing loss, and recovering species and habitat.

Ministers have approved *Canada's Stewardship Agenda*, which was completed a year ahead of schedule. The Agenda delivers both the national commitment for a Stewardship Strategy under the *Canadian Biodiversity Strategy*, and the commitment for a Stewardship Action Plan under the Accord for the Protection of Species At Risk.

The Agenda is a plan for collaboration that proposes a national vision for stewardship and operating principles. The national vision is "a nation where Canadians are actively working together to sustain our natural life support systems."

The Agenda includes eight stewardship principles, four key goals, objectives for each goal and a set of priority actions that recognize and empower stewards. The four goals are to:

- Invest in Stewardship – by enhancing stewardship program support and capacity;
- Strengthen the Application of Knowledge – by enhancing participation in stewardship, through education and awareness, and by better recognizing the contribution of stewards;

- Strengthen Policy and Legislative Support for Stewards - by providing the essential economic, policy and legal tools and instruments required to support stewardship programs and activities;
- Connect Stewardship Programs - by fostering cooperation among stewardship programs, and integration with terrestrial and aquatic approaches to conservation and sustainable use.

The federal, provincial and territorial governments will implement the Agenda through a set of Priority Actions that support stewardship initiatives appropriate for each jurisdiction. This includes improved inter-jurisdiction cooperation, a national stewardship network, the Stewardship Canada web portal, and consideration of a Stewardship Charter.

Invasive Alien Species

Species that have been introduced into areas beyond their natural distribution, either accidentally or deliberately, are known as alien species. These can include mammals, birds, fish, plants, insects, bacteria or other organisms. Not all alien species cause harm. Some, in fact, are introduced intentionally to provide economic benefits.

Invasive alien species are those species whose introduction or spread threatens the environment, the economy or society. Examples include the purple loosestrife, which is choking Canadian wetlands, and the zebra mussel, which has eliminated native species in the Great Lakes and clogged water lines and fouled engines, boats and piers in Ontario.

Invasive alien species are the next significant threat requiring coordinated action by all Canadian jurisdictions. Ministers have approved a blueprint for a national plan to address the threat of invasive alien species.

The national plan will place a priority on preventing new alien species from invading Canada, as well as eradicating, containing, and controlling established invasive alien species. It will address threats to biological diversity, the environment, and natural resources that are under pressure from the increasing rates of invasion that are accompanying growth in global trade and travel.

The national plan will include a comprehensive review and assessment of legislation, policy, and program capacity, needs, and gaps.

Four thematic working groups will be established to develop the plan, which will be presented to Ministers for review in fall 2003.

Biological Information Management

Ministers also took steps to improve the management of Canada's biological information, and reporting mechanisms on biodiversity status and trends. They agreed on a set of guiding principles, and will establish a national coordinating mechanism to act as a focal point for biological information management including facilitating the development of a biological information management strategy, which would address issues such as policies, standards and protocols.

Ministers recognized the need to coordinate this initiative with other similar ones, such as the National Forest Information System, and the Canadian Information System for the Environment.

Status and Trends Monitoring and Reporting

Ministers endorsed a plan to develop a biodiversity index and a web portal as the two main elements of a national biodiversity reporting system. The web portal will link information on biodiversity contained within the reports produced by jurisdictions so that status and trends information can be more easily accessed, shared and integrated.

The purpose of the biodiversity index is to provide Canadians and decision makers with a clear, easy to understand message on the state of biodiversity in Canada and to enable the aggregation of assessments done at the local scale into a national index.