

POLICY STATEMENT

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that environmental conservation is essential to long term economic prosperity while at the same time economic development can contribute significantly to the achievement of conservation goals. This interdependence between conservation and development will be officially recognized by the Government of the Northwest Territories through the application of the concept of sustainable development to all its decisions and actions related to natural and heritage resources in the Northwest Territories.

PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on the following principles:

1. The Government of the Northwest Territories shall promote economic development which maintains harvestable resources at sustainable levels, essential ecological processes and natural diversity.
2. The Government of the Northwest Territories shall routinely combine and equally weigh conservation and development factors in decision-making processes for the use of resources.
3. Sustainable development of resources is essential to the long term economic, cultural and social well-being of northern residents.
4. Northern residents shall be assured meaningful input and participation in decisions related to conservation and resource development.
5. Initiatives associated with this policy shall be consistent with, or complement, all agreements, policies and legislation related to the settlement of aboriginal claims as they relate to conservation and development of resources.
6. Conservation and development practices shall take into account the local knowledge, values and experience to be found among the regular users of the environment as well as the information developed in academic institutions, industry and government.
7. Natural resources should be managed so that opportunities for future resource uses are maximized and maintenance of ecosystems is ensured.
8. Conservation commitments in resource development proposals shall be a major consideration in determining the degree of Government of the Northwest Territories' political and financial support.

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9. The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes the need for conservation areas to maintain special values related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific, and aesthetic resources. The Government of the Northwest Territories shall support human activities in such areas where they are compatible with the values being protected.
10. Enhanced cooperation with other circumpolar and neighbouring jurisdictions is important in addressing transboundary concerns related to resource management and the maintenance of environmental quality.
11. As far as possible, implementation of this policy will rely primarily on existing mechanisms and processes or those already under development through land claims or other processes.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all decisions and actions of the Government of the Northwest Territories related to resource development in the Northwest Territories.

DEFINITIONS

1. Conservation

Means the wise use of renewable, non-renewable and heritage resources so that long term benefits can be enjoyed by present and future generations.

2. Conservation Area

Means an area of land or water that provides special management measures to maintain outstanding values related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific, and aesthetic resources.

3. Environment

Means the air, water, ice, snow, land, animal and plant life, and heritage resources of the Northwest Territories.

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4. Environmental Quality

Means the environment's capability to support the well being of all life forms.

5. Heritage Resource

Means the material remains or places of past human use or occupancy. They consist of sites and artifacts of historical, archaeological, ethnological and ongoing cultural or religious significance.

6. Integrated Resource Management

Means a coordinated process in which all components of resource management (policy development, land and water use planning, environmental assessment, legislative and regulatory mechanisms) are formally linked and complementary. The process is characterized by the sharing of values, information and advice among various interests.

7. Natural Diversity

Means the naturally occurring variety of living and nonliving elements in the environment.

8. Non-Renewable Resources

Means resources which cannot be replaced or renewed following extraction, including all minerals, aggregates, and fossil fuels.

9. Renewable Resources

Means land and water resources, such as fisheries, wildlife and their habitat, forestry and agriculture.

10. Resource Development

Means those activities including the exploration, construction and operational phases of non-renewable resources extraction, and commercial renewable resource use activities, plus other supporting activities.

11. Sustainable Development

Means a way of managing natural resources and the environment so that economic, social and cultural needs are met while maintaining ecological processes and natural diversity.

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PROVISIONS

1. Authority and Accountability

(a) Executive Council

The Executive Council is accountable for the application of the principles and guidelines outlined in this policy to all decisions and actions of the government regarding resource development.

(b) Ministers

Ministers responsible for programs and initiatives related to resource development shall adhere to the principles and guidelines outlined in this policy.

The Minister of Renewable Resources, in consultation with the Ministers of Economic Development and Tourism and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, shall coordinate implementation and periodic review of this policy.

2. Sustainability Guidelines

The Government of the Northwest Territories shall promote conservation and resource development projects, or combinations of projects, which support the achievement of the following guidelines:

(a) Ecological

- maintain essential ecological processes
- maintain or enhance natural diversity
- maintain harvestable resources at sustainable levels

(b) Economic

- promote economic self-reliance at the local level
- increase employment opportunities for the resident labour force through education, training and job creation
- maximize opportunities for local retention and investment of profits
- influence the pace of development to promote long term benefits from the use of resources

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(c) Social

- maintain or strengthen community values and identity
- build a sense of meaningful participation and responsibility into project development and implementation

(d) Cultural

- support and maintain traditional activities and relationships
- maintain or enhance heritage resources

3. Sustainable Development Objectives

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that sustainable development of resources is essential to the long term economic security, self-sufficiency and social well-being of northern residents. The Government of the Northwest Territories shall, therefore, adopt the principles of sustainable development to guide all its decisions and actions related to resource use in the Northwest Territories.

Five main objectives shall provide the focus for pursuing this goal. These objectives shall be implemented through the Government of the Northwest Territories' own programs and through collaboration with other governments and organizations.

(a) Promote Integrated Resource Management

Recognizing that resource development decisions usually involve numerous management objectives and interest groups, the Government of the Northwest Territories shall promote an integrated approach to managing the environment and its resources.

(b) Maintain and Enhance Environmental Quality

Recognizing that the Northwest Territories' economy and cultures are deeply rooted in the environment, the Government of the Northwest Territories shall ensure that environmental quality is maintained to support the long term stability of northern society.

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(c) Establish Conservation Areas

Whereas the Government of the Northwest Territories will promote the consistent application of sustainable development principles to all lands and waters within the Northwest Territories, it recognizes the need for conservation areas to protect special values related to wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific and aesthetic resources.

(d) Develop Non-Renewable Resources in Ways that Contribute to a Sustainable Economy

The Government of the Northwest Territories will promote exploration, development and use of mineral, aggregate and fossil fuel resources in ways that provide lasting social and economic benefits while maintaining ecological processes and natural diversity.

(e) Promote Cooperation in the Management of Transboundary Resources

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that bilateral or multilateral cooperation with other circumpolar and neighbouring jurisdictions will greatly help to prevent or abate transboundary environmental or socio-economic impacts.

5. Implementation

The provisions of this Directive shall be implemented through:

- (a) Collaboration on joint programs or projects, and regular consultation with:
- (i) native organizations;
 - (ii) other governments;
 - (iii) industry and business organizations;
 - (iv) environmental organizations;
 - (v) the public.
- (b) Periodic reviews of Government of the Northwest Territories programs, policies and legislation to ensure that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

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6. Prerogative of Executive Council

Nothing in this Directive shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take actions with respect to conservation and resource development in the Northwest Territories outside the provisions of this Directive.

Original Signed by Nellie J. Cournoyea
Government Leader and Chairman of the Executive
Council

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