

This satellite photograph shows development right to the boundary of Point Pelee National Park, isolating the park from other ecosystems.  
Parks Canada



## CHAPTER 9: FROM ISLANDS TO NETWORKS

In much of Canada, protected areas have become ecological islands, disconnected from other areas of remaining natural habitat. Increasingly, national parks and other conservation lands are surrounded by urban development, agriculture, industrial forestry or other land uses that affect the viability of park ecosystems. To maintain ecological

integrity, the network of national parks and other protected lands needs to be managed as part of greater ecosystems. This requires the co-operation and contribution of provincial and territorial governments, First Nations governments, communities, adjacent landowners, non-governmental organizations and industry.

### National Parks as Ecological Islands

For close to a hundred years after Canada's first national park was established at Banff in 1885, most people assumed that protected areas were safe for all time from the advancing tide of human development. Many still do.

Yet by the 1970s, many park managers in Canada faced increasing pressures for growth in tourism and recreation facilities. The logical response of the day was often to direct new development to "buffer zones" outside of parks in order to protect the integrity of parks themselves. Advances in conservation science reveal a more complex picture.

The boundaries of early national parks and other types of protected areas usually did not conform to ecosystems and critical habitat was often located outside of parks, on lands vulnerable to development. The result has been that many protected areas across the continent — and around the world — have become islands of nature, their ecological integrity reduced by land uses outside their boundaries. Research on the status of parks and wilderness areas suggests that species were being extirpated inside of protected areas in spite of their supposed "protection."



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*It is unlikely that protected areas will be able to conserve biodiversity if they are surrounded by degraded habitats that limit gene flow, alter nutrient and water cycles and produce regional and global climate change that may lead to the final disappearance of these "island parks." Protected areas need to be part of broader regional approaches to land management.*

Parks for Life: Report of the IV World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas (1992)

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By the late 1980s, ecosystem-based management and the maintenance of ecological integrity embodied a new way of looking at the management of protected areas: in a regional context. In 1991, the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council noted that, "protected areas must be fully integrated into regional and local land-use planning and into all government land allocation processes" (Protected Areas Vision for Canada, Canadian Environmental Advisory Council, 1991).

The Council also called for "a significant shift in focus within the agencies responsible for planning, establishing and managing protected areas, toward greater leadership, partnerships, flexibility and accountability." This sentiment was echoed in 1992 by the World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas.

Today, national parks are a key part of the mosaic of conservation lands, totalling 40 per cent of all Canada's protected lands. Yet maintaining the ecological integrity of national parks through improved regional co-opera-

tion within greater ecosystems will not assure the conservation of wilderness or biodiversity at the broader landscape scale. Successful conservation implies a truly national and comprehensive approach that includes national parks, national wildlife areas, heritage rivers, provincial and territorial protected areas, lands protected by Aboriginal peoples, private conservation lands and stewardship of all lands outside of protected areas.

In response to the overwhelming evidence that protected areas alone are not sufficient to conserve wild species, environmental non-governmental organizations forged new citizen-led approaches to conservation, seeking to develop systems of protected areas, corridors and other ecological links. In Canada, this began with the national Endangered Spaces Campaign in 1989, followed by the even broader vision reflected by the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. Conservation at this scale, with national parks as one key part, is the new paradigm of protected areas — from islands to networks.

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## New Visions: The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

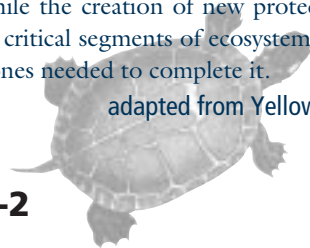
The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative belongs to a new global family of far-sighted, broad-based biodiversity strategies that have arisen in response to the lessons of conservation biology.

The Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative is a vision for the future of the wild heart of North America, the vision of a bright green thread, uncut by political boundaries, stitching together 1800 contiguous miles of the Rocky, Columbia and Mackenzie Mountains, all the way from Yellowstone to Yukon.

To protect biodiversity we must protect much larger areas of habitat than anyone previously imagined. We must begin to think and to act on a scale larger than anyone has in the history of the North American conservation movement.

Our mission is to build and maintain a life-sustaining system of core protected areas and connecting wildlife movement corridors, both of which will be further insulated from the impacts of industrial development by transition zones. Existing national, state and provincial parks and wilderness areas will anchor the system, while the creation of new protected areas and the conservation and restoration of critical segments of ecosystems will provide the cores, corridors and transition zones needed to complete it.

adapted from Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative brochure



## Regional Empowerment and Responsibility

### Some Good Efforts, Still Many Barriers

We found excellent examples of promising regional co-operation efforts. A recent Parks Canada workshop summarized the conditions needed for successful regional integration in this way:

*“Successful regional integration depends on bringing a full range of staff skills to bear on key issues. The biological knowledge and skills at the park, service centre and national office are important. Of equal importance, are skills in GIS [geographic information systems] analysis, negotiation, diplomacy, conflict resolution and communication. Effective regional integration requires clear goals, management support, a resolve to work together, action plans to “get things done on the ground,” credible and professional operational staff in the field, a focus on key results, and an investment in data management and systems.”*

Managers, Warden Service/Ecosystem  
Secretariat Workshop (1998)

The Panel found that Parks Canada is engaged in many different approaches to regional integration. Some examples are:

- at La Mauricie National Park, the “Inhabited Forest” provides an alternative to large-scale industrial logging next to the park boundary. Community residents manage the forest and have adopted a holistic management approach to land use. Their goal is to practice sustainable logging in balance with conservation, tourism, recreation and other forest uses. Such an approach results in a smaller development footprint on lands next to the park;
- genuine long-term efforts have been made at both Riding Mountain and Waterton Lakes national parks to implement the Biosphere Reserve concept, but progress in both areas has been severely hampered by lack of financial support;
- Foothills Model Forest next to Jasper National Park, and the Model Forest by Fundy National Park are examples of promising approaches to integration. The Fundy Model Forest biodiversity objectives are being implemented;
- at tiny national parks such as Georgian Bay Islands and St. Lawrence Islands in Ontario we found strong efforts to co-operate with neighbours, in recognition of the fact that these national parks are small and vulnerable links in regional ecosystems. For example, natural corridors are now part of municipal plans;
- northern national parks, such as Ivvavik, provide some of the best examples of regional integration where park management is embedded in land claim agreements through co-management boards. In these cases, the national park is part of a First Nation’s traditional territory where land use and wildlife management practices outside the park boundary are integrated through boards, hunter-trapper committees, renewable resource councils and other instruments. Strong community participation and legally-defined partnership terms are key elements of these arrangements;
- in other cases, regional integration work is being carried out through less formal but close working relationships with provinces, territories, First Nations, municipalities or private landowners.



Despite these successes, we observed that some park managers are reluctant to work towards ecological integrity objectives beyond park boundaries, particularly where resource and land use are in conflict, or where there is fear of political repercussions from the federal, provincial or territorial level. Varying national, provincial or territorial land use objectives around national parks make the task even more difficult. We also observed that many provincial agencies, for example in forestry or wildlife management, are moving in the direction of ecosystem-based management — but these efforts are new and results lag behind plans and policies.

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## Waterton-Glacier International Biosphere Reserve

*“Biosphere Reserves are internationally recognized by UNESCO’s (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Man and the Biosphere Program. They promote and demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and nature. Biosphere Reserves are working examples for land management, and sustainable development. They support research, monitoring, and education.”* (Waterton Biosphere Reserve brochure)

The Waterton-Glacier International Biosphere Reserve is one of five Canadian biosphere reserves. It is centred on Waterton Lakes National Park in the southwestern corner of Alberta. The Biosphere Reserve has no fixed boundaries. Its “Zone of Co-operation” extends outward in all directions. Waterton was the first Canadian national park to receive Biosphere Reserve designation in 1979. Waterton’s unusual landscape — where the mountains meet the prairie — gives the Waterton Biosphere Reserve its characteristic plants and animals, many of which are rare or absent from the rest of Canada.

The Biosphere Reserve’s “Zone of Co-operation” supports many resource uses such as forestry, ranching, farming, and oil and gas extraction. The Biosphere Reserve seeks out solutions to environmental problems by involving local communities. The goal is to encourage a balance between development and conservation of natural resources through public information, education, research, and monitoring. The Biosphere Reserve’s Management Committee is comprised of area residents and defines goals and programs for the Biosphere Reserve.

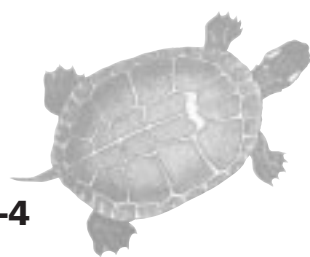
We found that land use conflicts around national parks are typically framed by “conservation versus development” debates, whereas reliable information on the real economic impacts of land use alternatives is usually absent. This makes it more difficult to effect land or resource use change to support ecological integrity, since the economic benefits of conservation are under-valued.

The Panel heard and observed that:

observed that:

- government and private land managers in greater park ecosystems lack a common vision for land use and conservation objectives, making it more difficult for Parks Canada to advocate for conservation outside park boundaries;

- industry seeks security of tenure, permit approval and operating conditions on provincial and territorial lands around national parks, and conservation advocacy by Parks Canada is seen to infringe on these interests;
- local partners, who often depend on volunteers, also lack the resources to participate effectively in greater park ecosystem planning;
- there are few economic incentives for regional co-operation in greater ecosystems, such as tax relief for voluntary conservation efforts by land or woodlot owners;
- regional integration efforts are not matched by a complementary and equal emphasis on community interpretation services outside park boundaries in greater park ecosystems;
- Parks Canada does not have sufficient specialized staff trained and experienced in consultation and liaison with communities or other governments. While many existing staff are very competent in this area of work, they are hard-pressed to keep up with their obligations in the park, let alone dedicate sufficient time to regional integration. This problem is not unique to Parks Canada.
- high turnover of senior park staff makes it more difficult to sustain consistent working relationships in neighbouring communities and jurisdictions. With high staff turnover, there is an increased risk of inconsistent approaches to regional integration. This inconsistency erodes both public and staff trust;





Bison graze in an enclosure on the edge of Waterton Lakes National Park; the park is bordered by ranches and farms. Blackbird Design

## Principles for Regional Co-operation

Successful regional integration of land uses in and around national parks depends in large measure on a common vision for the greater ecosystem. Without doubt, the ecological integrity in national parks and the maintenance of regional biodiversity and ecological processes depends on Parks Canada's ability to co-operate with park neighbours. Parks Canada's contribution at the regional level is to manage its lands and waters to the best of its ability, while encouraging others to do the same for lands and waters under their jurisdiction.

We suggest three principles for successful regional integration of national parks within their respective greater park ecosystems:

- regional integration depends on a comprehensive approach to management including participation by provinces, territories and the federal government. Such an approach contrasts with most resource or land management agencies, including Parks Canada and many provincial agencies, which are characterized by specific missions, specialized organizational structures, and division of problems into narrow tasks;
- Parks Canada's relationship with environmental non-governmental organizations is uneven across the country. We observed parks with little or no contact with local environmental non-governmental organizations. Others experienced an adversarial stance with conservation groups and still others reported a strong and positive co-operative effort. Sustained and productive partnerships appear to be the exception, not the rule.
- **empowerment** - Parks Canada staff and their provincial or territorial counterparts, along with First Nations and other partners, need to have both authority and accountability in order to co-operate effectively on ecosystem-based management;
- **responsibility** - the full responsibility for ecological integrity in national parks rests only in part with Parks Canada. The integrity of greater park ecosystems depends on responsible actions by all land and water users in the region;
- **regional contribution** - in order to earn the respect of its partners, Parks Canada needs to make a contribution to the region, but so too must park neighbours contribute to the success of meeting national park ecological integrity objectives. Perhaps the most important contribution Parks Canada can make is to work with the provinces and territories, First Nations, and other partners to promote and facilitate a common vision for the greater park ecosystem.



Regional integration is most likely to succeed when it is defined within the context of greater park ecosystems, but also within cultural boundaries such as Aboriginal peoples' traditional territories. When cultural and ecological boundaries are considered holistically, and political boundaries are overcome, regional ecosystem-based management is possible and the ecological integrity of national parks can be maintained.

Parks Canada's responsibility is to protect the ecological integrity of national parks within the region, share knowledge about parks and greater park ecosystems, advocate for conser-

vation principles and lead by doing to influence other land users in the region.

The diversity of experience and conditions across Canada led the Panel to avoid recommending a focus on only one regional integration model, such as Biosphere Reserve or Model Forest. Parks Canada must use the full range of regional integration tools available, from legal agreements to informal arrangements. Regional integration approaches will vary across the country. There is no single formula for success that is applicable to all national parks in the system.

## **Regional Co-operation and National Goals**

The State of the Parks 1997 Report shows that more than 85 per cent of ecological stresses are regional in scope. Many stresses originate from outside park boundaries. These stresses include impacts from adjacent land use activities such as logging and mining, agriculture, tourism development, sport hunting and water pollution.

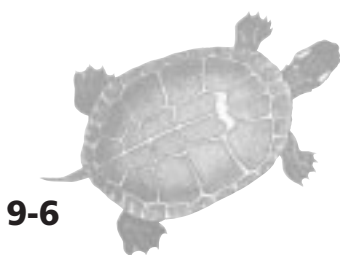
The Panel found that Parks Canada has acknowledged regional co-operation as an essential part of maintaining the ecological integrity of national parks. Much good work is being done, yet there are still comparatively few examples that have led to real beneficial changes in land uses adjacent to national parks. Numerous submissions to the Panel described cases where Parks Canada, despite clear threats to the ecological integrity of a national park, failed to intervene effectively in land use decisions or environmental assessments of major projects just outside park boundaries.

### **Working with Other Governments**

Regional co-operation to maintain the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks, along with the entire network of protected areas, depends on the participation of federal, provincial and territorial governments. About two-thirds of Canada's protected areas are managed by the provinces and territories, with the provinces maintaining jurisdiction over most resources and land uses around both national and provincial parks. First Nations governments co-operate with both levels of government through land claims agreements, treaties, or voluntary arrangements.

A range of co-operative federal and provincial/territorial policies and programs are available to support Parks Canada's regional co-operation initiatives. These include:

- Canada Forest Accord;
- Wildlife Policy for Canada;
- National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk;
- Federal Policy on Wetlands Conservation;
- provincial and territorial protected areas strategies;
- Whitehorse Mining Initiative;
- Canadian Biodiversity Strategy.



**Wildlife move freely across the Canada/United States border between Waterton Lakes National Park (Alberta) and Glacier National Park (Montana).** P. Wilkinson



The federal government retains considerable authority within its jurisdiction regarding fisheries, endangered species, migratory birds, navigable waters and environmental impact assessment in the provinces and territories. Within the shared jurisdiction over environmental management, these federal roles and responsibilities could be better employed to support the maintenance of ecological integrity in ecosystems that encompass national parks. Federal

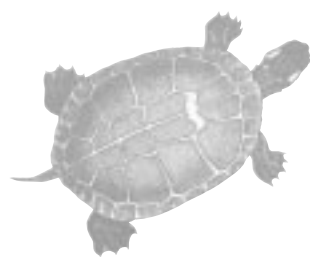
actions must also be sensitive to concerns from provincial and territorial governments regarding interventions in what are seen to be local issues.

Federal ability to support the ecological integrity of national park ecosystems, particularly in the North, is sometimes impeded by conflicting departmental policies. Federal agencies, such as Natural Resources Canada and Indian Affairs and Northern Development, have a mandate to support economic development that is not always consistent with Parks Canada's efforts to maintain ecological integrity in greater park ecosystems. There is room for improved inter-departmental cooperation among federal resource and land management agencies in the maintenance of ecological integrity around national parks. Furthermore, any federal decisions that may impair the ecological integrity of a national park should trigger the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Parks Canada has established management partnerships with First Nations in many newer parks including Gwaii Haanas and northern national parks established through land claims, such as Ivvavik and Kluane. At the national scale, however, much work remains to be done in creating genuine and long-lasting partnerships.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

9-1. We recommend that the Minister work with the provinces and territories to protect the ecological integrity of the national, provincial and territorial network of protected areas through formal agreement. In developing the agreement, include First Nations governments, municipalities, non-government organizations and industry as partners in the discussions.



We recommend that the Minister initiate a federal inter-departmental memorandum of understanding to support the maintenance of ecological integrity of national parks by ensuring consistent policies and plans with respect to lands under federal jurisdiction in greater ecosystems that include national parks.

9-2. We recommend that the Minister requests the government of Canada to use existing federal government authority within its jurisdiction regarding fisheries, endangered species, migratory birds, long range air pollution, navigable waters and environmental impact assessment to support the maintenance of ecological integrity in national park ecosystems. (A similar action was also recommended with respect to boreal forest management by the Senate Subcommittee on the Boreal Forest, 1999.)

9-3. At the provincial and territorial level, we recommend that Parks Canada undertake regular and continuing dialogue among senior executives of federal, provincial and territorial agencies responsible for land and resource management to support improved co-operation on the maintenance of ecological integrity in national parks and other protected areas. For example:

- encourage the establishment of co-operative planning structures to address regional integration of national parks. When such an inter-agency co-ordination structure is

created, focus on providing guidance and resources needed to sustain on-the-ground efforts, rather than on imposing a new hierarchy to oversee all aspects of work;

- support adoption of provincial legislation on conservation easements where it is absent;
- participate in regional sustainable development strategies and in regional management plans where they may affect a national park's ecological integrity. Promote the maintenance of biodiversity and ecological processes within greater park ecosystems as underlying principles of these strategies.

9-4. We recommend that Parks Canada, in partnership with the provinces and territories where appropriate, improve regional co-operation with Aboriginal peoples in two ways:

- use co-operative management arrangements set out in existing land claim agreements or treaty provisions, to work with First Nations on maintaining ecological integrity in greater park ecosystems;

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## **Innovative Approaches to Protected Areas and Special Management Zones: British Columbia's Northern Rockies Precedent**

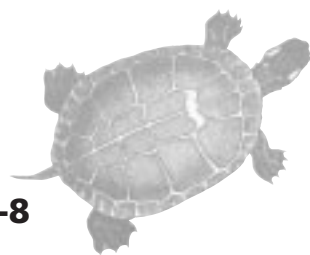
Located in northeastern British Columbia, the 4.4 million hectare Muskwa-Kechika remains one of North America's last true wilderness areas south of the 60th parallel.

Through dedication and hard work, local land and resource planning groups reached consensus on land-use in the Muskwa-Kechika. They recommended that an advisory board be appointed to advise government on management of the area and that a special trust fund be created to support special projects and planning initiatives within the Muskwa-Kechika.

The management plan for the Muskwa-Kechika area balances resource management with conservation, making it an example of how interests that were once in competition have found a way to co-exist on the land. More than one million hectares will be permanently protected with the creation of 11 new protected areas. These areas are surrounded by more than three million hectares of legislated special management zones where wilderness and wildlife habitat will be maintained while resource development such as logging, mineral exploration and mining, and oil and gas exploration and development will be allowed in a way that is sensitive to wildlife and environmental values. In all, the Muskwa-Kechika is the largest and most innovative package of protected areas and special management zones in British Columbia.

from British Columbia Land Use Co-ordination Office (1999)

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- where land claim agreements do not exist, explore ways to establish other arrangements such as memoranda of understanding, joint advisory bodies, or other arrangements to provide an interim means of maintaining ecological integrity, without prejudice to future land claim agreements.
- initiating studies of habitat protection opportunities outside park boundaries in greater park ecosystems and beyond. Co-operate with neighbouring jurisdictions to provide supplementary wildlife habitat outside of park boundaries;

9-5. We recommend that Parks Canada increase its participation in specific local resource management arrangements with provincial or territorial agencies that have jurisdiction in greater park ecosystems. Systematically participate in municipal and regional government planning and regulatory processes. Adopt a supporting role in the conservation of lands around national parks by:

- working with neighbouring jurisdictions and industry to develop co-ordinated access management plans (such as road and trail density standards) on lands in and around the park;
- working with neighbouring jurisdictions and industry to develop resource use or operating conditions on lands around national parks that support the maintenance of ecological integrity and address industry requests for secure tenure.

## Supporting Partnerships

As we discuss above, successful regional co-operation depends on long-term support for management partnerships with other governments — the provinces, territories, First Nations and municipalities. Improved partnerships with non-government organizations, private landowners and industry also have key roles to play.

Although the Panel found successful national and local examples of such efforts, we generally observed a lack of capacity within Parks Canada to maintain regional co-operation efforts over the long term. Little financial support is available nationally to sustain citizen or agency participation in greater ecosystem partnerships.

Elk Island is the only national park in Canada that is fenced off from the surrounding landscape, preventing free movement of wildlife, livestock and people. Parks Canada



## Rural Economies

According to the federal government, the Canadian economy *“is an economy in which rural Canada also benefits from value-added activity, environmentally astute land management, and new skills and job opportunities”* (federal Speech From the Throne, October, 1999). This vision is entirely consistent with maintaining the ecological integrity of national parks and other protected areas.

The economic impact of national parks and other conservation lands has been well documented during the last decade. For example, the programs of Parks Canada are estimated to contribute \$2 billion to Canada’s gross

domestic product, create 50,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and add \$425 million to the national balance of payments though expenditures made by international visitors (Attridge, 1999). According to Environment Canada, Canadians spent \$11 billion on nature-related activities in 1996 (Environment Canada, 1999). While these economic impacts are significant, so too is the potential for degradation of park ecosystems through over-use. (Chapter 11.)

In spite of the economic impacts at a national scale, small communities may face significant changes from the establishment of national parks and other protected areas. In a submission to the Panel, the Canadian Nature

settings are growing much faster than communities dependent on resource extraction alone. These new economies are driven by service industries and non-labour income. People are moving to beautiful communities to enjoy a high quality of life. While this growth has its own effects on the ecological integrity of protected lands, it points to economic changes that must be understood in order to manage rural land use — and in turn the ecological integrity of protected areas.

The resource industry role in the Canadian economy may change, but will remain important. Industrial land uses in the greater ecosystems around many parks will also continue — but with improved partnership arrangements, the ecological integrity goals of national parks will be better met. To be successful, co-operative partnerships between industry, communities and parks must consider both economics and ecology.

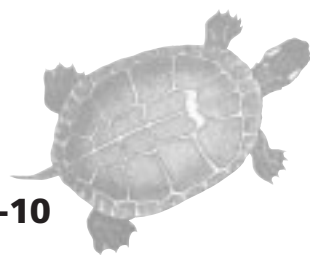


Coal strip mining near  
Jasper National Park  
P. Wright

Federation has observed that:

*“The support of local communities and native people is critical to achieving new national parks. The federal government should provide local communities with the necessary resources to help them secure the benefits of new national parks, and to make the transition to a more sustainable future, as does the Sirmilik National Park agreement. Too often, local communities only start the process after the park agreement has been signed. Val Marie is still waiting for the regional tourism strategy promised under the 1988 Grasslands National Park agreement.”*

Recent research by the Sonoran Institute on the Rocky Mountains of Canada and the United States shows that many communities in protected wilderness



## Working with Industry

Many national and provincial industry organizations support the goals of protected areas, but the Panel heard that industry seeks security of tenure and a stable investment climate outside of parks. Industry also seeks an efficient and timely permit approval process to ensure that investment dollars are wisely spent. At the national

level, industry has made progress in supporting the goals of protected area establishment and ecosystem-based management in three key areas:

- forestry, through the National Forest Accord. The Accord recognizes the Canadian commitment to biodiversity conservation, including the establishment of a system of protected areas;

- mining, through the Whitehorse Mining Initiative. Signed in 1994, the Initiative states industry support for a network of representative protected areas. This endorsement is strengthened with an agreement that the conservation of biodiversity depends on the establishment of core protected areas that are free of mining, in combination with enhanced environmental stewardship in the remainder of the landscape. Unfortunately, application of the WMI principles on protected areas has been uneven across the country. One positive example is the co-operative working arrangement between the Manitoba Mining Asso-

ciation and the World Wildlife Fund on the establishment of new protected areas through the Endangered Spaces Campaign;

- oil and gas, through the work of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP). CAPP has publicly supported the national Endangered Spaces Campaign goals and the completion of protected areas strategies in Alberta and the Yukon. In Alberta, CAPP was instrumental in developing an agreement with environmental non-governmental organizations on completion of the protected areas system. CAPP has also endorsed far-reaching conservation visions such as the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative and the recently created mosaic of core protected areas and special management zones in the Muskwa-Kechika region of British Columbia. These initiatives are based on the principle of core protected areas coupled with land use management measures to protect wildlife habitat, movement routes and species populations between protected areas. In this way, industry can support the maintenance of ecological integrity in greater park ecosystems.

These examples show how industry leaders are co-operating on achieving ecological integrity goals. Improved support for greater ecosystem partnerships will result in improved compliance by local industry operators in meeting the guidelines set by industry leaders.

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## Mining Association of Canada Endorses Protected Areas

The Mining Association of Canada, on behalf of the mining industry, helped advance a multi-stakeholder process to improve the conditions for mining and resolve land access and environmental issues. The Association took the proposal to the mines ministers of all senior governments at their annual conference in Whitehorse in September 1992. The ministers agreed to become co-sponsors and trustees of the process and named it the Whitehorse Mining Initiative (WMI). Representatives of five sectors of society agreed to participate: the mining industry, senior governments, labour unions, Aboriginal peoples, and the environmental community.

The 1994 Leadership Accord which resulted from the WMI, adopts a strategic vision for a healthy mining industry in the context of maintaining healthy and diverse ecosystems in Canada, and for sharing opportunities with Aboriginal peoples. It calls for: improving the investment climate for investors; streamlining and harmonizing regulatory and tax regimes; ensuring the participation of Aboriginal peoples in all aspects of mining; adopting sound environmental practices; establishing an ecologically based system of protected areas; providing workers with healthy and safe environments and a continued high standard of living; recognition and respect for Aboriginal treaty rights; settling Aboriginal land claims; guaranteeing stakeholder participation where the public interest is affected; and creating a climate for innovative and effective responses to change.

summarized from the Mining Association of Canada Web site



## Non-governmental and Volunteer Organizations

It is fitting that 2001 will mark the International Year of the Volunteer. The Panel observed many examples of conservation initiatives led by volunteers across the country. Non-governmental organizations play a key role in regional integration of national parks and other protected area systems. For example, the national Endangered Spaces Campaign led by the World Wildlife Fund is a 10-year national strategy to complete a representative protected areas network. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the Canadian Nature Federation, as well as a variety of provincial and regional groups, have supported national park establishment and management for ecological integrity for many decades. Many of these organizations have also made major contributions to the Endangered Spaces Campaign. Other organizations, such as the Canadian Parks Partnership, have contributed to park operations, interpretation and outreach. On balance, the Panel found that there is much room for enhanced partnership arrangements between Parks Canada and national environmental non-governmental organizations.

At Waterton Lakes National Park, the Panel observed great success by the Nature Conservancy of Canada in working with landowners willing to conserve their ranchlands adjacent to the park using conservation easements. Once protected, these lands provide important wildlife habitat around the park, contributing to the survival of large mammals and other species.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is Canada's leading non-profit organization in securing ecologically significant land through the purchase and donation of conservation lands, conservation

easements and other interests in land. By the end of 1999, the Conservancy had secured the conservation values of more than 645,000 hectares of land. The Conservancy works closely with various federal departments, provincial and municipal governments, national and provincial non-governmental organizations, and local land trusts. Outside the conservation community, the Nature Conservancy has established relationships with numerous private foundations and corporations. These arrangements have allowed the Conservancy to engage all land interests in habitat conservation, providing both a leadership and a supporting role as circumstances warrant.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada has expressed interest in making a substantial matching contribution to the Panel's proposed Parks Canada Partnership Fund in support of regional co-operation. (Recommendation 9-7.)

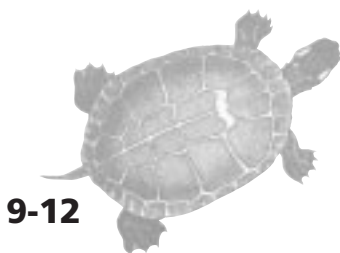
In 1999, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy assessed a variety of approaches to protecting our natural heritage including completing and protecting the national park system, exempting ecological land gifts from capital gains, leveraging habitat conservation through a stewardship fund, and enhancing ecological decision-making. A background paper prepared for the Round Table recognized the value of co-operative agreements around national parks and identified the need for a special Partnership Fund.

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*"The Ontario protected areas system has benefited from the Ontario Parks Legacy 2000 program, a strategic partnership between Ontario Parks and the Nature Conservancy. Under the program, Ontario Parks provides the Conservancy with yearly venture capital to invest creatively in the expansion and creation of provincial nature reserves. In return, the Conservancy delivers many times the provincial investment in value of land protected. A jointly developed conservation strategy guides the Conservancy's land acquisition efforts."*

Nature Conservancy of  
Canada, submission  
to the Panel

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From the many presentations made to the Panel across the country, it became clear that the need for sustained partnership support is great, and the scope of important tasks varied and complex. For example, a Partnership Fund is required to sustain, expand and improve the effectiveness of Biosphere Reserves, Model Forests around national parks, charitable land trusts, and innovative industry initiatives. A Partnership Fund would also enhance citizen-led efforts such as the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, private landowner conservation, "Friends of the Parks" groups, and provide improved means for communities to benefit from parks.

The federal government has set out a strategy to ensure the quality of Canada's environment, build stronger communities and strengthen the relationship with Canada's Aboriginal peoples. The government "recognizes the need to build partnerships with communities and to renew its relationship with voluntary organizations that serve and sustain them" (1999 federal Speech From the Throne). Ensuring the ecological integrity of greater park ecosystems through enhanced support for regional partnerships is one of the most promising ways to implement these commitments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

9-6. We recommend that the Minister launch a national partnership program to protect the ecological integrity of national parks, by establishing a Partnership Fund of \$20 million per year.

Apply the Partnership Fund to a broad range of co-operative agreements to help maintain the ecological integrity of national parks and other federally administered conservation areas, such as Canadian Heritage Rivers. The Panel recommends that the Fund be administered by Parks Canada and that:

- a board be appointed to make recommendations on the criteria for the Partnership Fund, the annual distribution of grants, and performance measurement;
- the Fund include support for a full range of co-operative arrangements, acquisition of wildlife habitat, conservation easements, industry and private landowner partnerships, participation by Aboriginal peoples and non-governmental organizations;
- the government of Canada seek matching private funding, for

example through private land trusts or industry;

- the Fund be competitive in nature and focused on measurable results toward maintaining the ecological integrity of the national park system and other federally-administered protected areas;
- as part of the Partnership Fund initiative, publish national guidelines for establishing co-operative management arrangements, including co-financing, that support the maintenance of ecological integrity.

We recommend that the key target for the \$20 million Partnership Fund be to support co-operative agreements for all existing and proposed national parks. The Fund could secure key supplementary habitat around national parks and also help sustain co-operating associations. Following new park establishment, the Partnership Fund could help secure appropriate community benefits from new parks, for example training or development of services that support the maintenance of ecological integrity.



9-7. We recommend that Parks Canada use the full range of existing regional co-operation models to enhance maintenance of biodiversity and ecological processes in the greater ecosystem of each national park. Evaluate the effectiveness of each model for its potential contribution to land use change in support of maintaining ecological integrity. Example models include:

- Biosphere Reserve (such as Waterton and Riding Mountain);
- special management zones (Muskwa-Kechika region of British Columbia);
- Model Forest (such as Fundy and Jasper);
- "Inhabited Forest" (La Mauricie);
- greater ecosystem planning projects (Fundy);
- regional planning commissions or advisory boards.

9-8. We recommend that Parks Canada develop and support partnerships with First Nations, conservation groups, co-operating associations and the business community to assist in a variety of research, monitoring and public education activities in support of maintaining ecological integrity in greater park ecosystems.

9-9. We recommend that Parks Canada develop partnerships with charitable land trusts to secure habitat adjacent to Canada's national parks, in co-operation with private landowners to acquire critical habitat adjacent to national parks or using conservation easements to create zones of co-operation around parks.

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## Economic and Legal Implications

### The National Parks Act and Regional Co-operation

Canada's National Parks Act endorses the ecological integrity of national parks as the paramount concern of planning and human use management, but makes no specific provision to enable regional integration in support of ecological integrity. Support for regional integration is implied through co-operative management with First Nations where a national park is established through land claims agreements.

While the National Parks Act is not explicit on regional integration due to the Act's focus on federally-owned lands within parks, Parks Canada's operational policies clearly support collaborative management to achieve greater park ecosystem conservation goals:

*Parks Canada will take the lead role in establishing integrated and collaborative management agreements and programs with adjacent landowners and land management agencies. Parks Canada will seek mutually satisfactory solutions to trans-boundary concerns associated with the management of shared ecosystem components, the effects of adjacent land use practices on park ecosystems, or the effects of park management practices on the use of adjacent lands. Parks Canada will also participate in regional land use planning and management initiatives sponsored by other jurisdictions to encourage the understanding and co-operation of other agencies in protecting park ecosystems, and for Parks Canada to better understand the management concerns of those other agencies.*

Parks Canada, Guiding Principles and Operational Policies (1994)



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*“Protecting habitat on private lands is the key to conserving Canada’s biodiversity and ensuring that Canada’s protected areas — public and private — continue to serve the purpose for which they are intended. Canada’s national parks system is still 40% incomplete and individual parks are not necessarily protecting the full complement of species as planned. Measures are needed to establish new parks and protect the ecological health within and surrounding existing national park borders. An important component of ensuring the integrity of Canada’s national parks will be enlarging existing parks through land acquisition and creating protective buffers around parks through co-operative arrangements with landowners”*

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Nature Conservancy of Canada,  
submission to the Panel

The current National Parks Act and proposed amendments do not incorporate specific regional co-operation provisions upon which park managers could rely to justify their work on

issues relating to the surrounding landscape. The Panel found, however, that existing Parks Canada policies encourage park managers to get involved in issues beyond the park boundaries that affect ecological integrity, even though the organization’s current culture is not always supportive of such actions.

More systematic and effective regional integration efforts are held back by park managers who are concerned about moving beyond their mandate. Adding a clarification of statutory duties, powers and responsibilities with respect

to regional integration under the National Parks Act is one option to make regional integration efforts more commonplace. (See Appendix C for

legal options on regional co-operation.) Within Parks Canada, stronger policy and management direction is needed to ensure more effective regional co-operation.

Significant projects and activities, such as forestry roads, are not always subject to environmental assessment unless they trigger a federal environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. In other instances, certain activities may be covered by a conditional exemption or class environmental assessment that does not adequately predict or mitigate the anticipated effects of a project on surrounding landscapes, including national parks. In such instances, park managers should have the ability to require that an environmental assessment be done. At present, the most that can typically be done is a “request” to the appropriate provincial minister under provincial legislation (as was done recently by Pukaskwa National Park staff) or the federal Environment Minister under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. However, requests for specific environmental assessments are rarely granted under the discretionary powers usually included in existing legislation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

9-10. We recommend that the Minister require Parks Canada to maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of the parks by working in co-operation with adjacent landowners, and by participating in regional land use planning, environmental assessments, and other decision-making processes where outcomes are reasonably expected to affect the ecological integrity of a national park.

9-11. We recommend an amendment to the National Parks Act to incorporate a consequential amendment to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, requiring the Minister responsible

for national parks to undertake an environmental assessment when adverse environmental impacts on a national park are expected to occur. (Such an assessment could be done on the initiative of a request by a provincial or territorial government, members of the public, or on the Minister’s own initiative. The federal Environment Minister would retain authority to require an environmental assessment under an existing provision of Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.) Suggestions for specific wording of the National Parks Act are contained in Appendix C.



## Canadian Tax Laws

Canadian tax laws continue to impede voluntary participation in local conservation efforts on private lands. The Panel heard this same message from ranchers in Alberta to private woodlot operators in the Maritimes. Landowners showed how they would be penalized through the tax system for main-

taining land uses favourable to maintaining ecological integrity around national parks. For example, these barriers contribute to the conversion of ranchlands to residential properties which in turn fragments wildlife habitat. The tax system also leads to liquidation of timber on private woodlots that may have significant habitat conservation value.

Capital gains tax is now levied when property or conservation easements are donated for conservation purposes. According to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, 75 per cent of the increase in the value of the land is deemed under the Income Tax Act to be included in the landowner's income when property or land rights are donated, even though the landowner receives no actual funds for the transfer. Incurring capital gains tax on a land dona-

tion places that donation in an inferior position compared to selling the land.

In the United States, landowners can donate property through a "bargain sale" when property is sold to a charitable organization for less than fair market value. The difference between the market value and the selling price becomes the charitable contribution to the organization. Charitable tax laws in Canada prohibit tax receipts in such circumstances, as the donation is conditional upon the purchase and therefore not a true gift.

Both capital gains tax and the inability to negotiate bargain sales present significant disincentives for private land conservation in Canada. Removing these barriers is essential to promoting conservation on lands adjacent to national parks. The Nature Conservancy of Canada estimates that with a capital gains exemption for ecological gifts, the federal government would only forego approximately \$11 million in annual tax revenue, compared to the annual protection of land worth \$40 million. Over 30 years, this tax measure would secure 250,000 hectares of lands in fee simple ownership by conservation charities, and 250,000 hectares more to be protected by conservation easements.

The Panel heard an urgent call to create economic and other incentives to improve private land use practices around parks and to support the retention, rehabilitation and management of natural habitats in greater park ecosystems. A recent report by the Senate Subcommittee on the Boreal Forest (1999) echoed these concerns and recommended tax incentives to encourage the reforestation of marginal agricultural land adjacent to national parks and other protected areas. The Senate Subcommittee further suggested tax incentives for landowners who forego cutting of woodlots adjacent to national park or other protected area boundaries.

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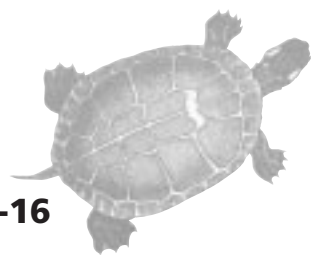
## New Trust Fund Sets a Precedent for Co-operative Management

A special trust fund will be created for the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area in British Columbia. The provincial government will contribute to the trust annually. Private sector donations to the trust fund will be encouraged; a company or interest group may "champion" or support a project. Proposed expenditures from this fund will be reviewed by an advisory board before being recommended to government for approval.

The fund will not replace government budgets but will support planning initiatives and special projects. These include: enhancing wildlife populations and habitat; conducting research into wildlife biology and ecology; supporting wildlife, recreational, and cultural inventories and mapping; supporting planning initiatives for resource development activities, wildlife, recreation and parks; developing and producing public education materials and programs about the Muskwa-Kechika area and its management; and supporting programs aimed at involving and training youth from local communities in resource-related career opportunities.

from British Columbia Land Use  
Co-ordination Office (1999)

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## RECOMMENDATION

9-12. We recommend that the Minister advise the government of Canada to amend the Income Tax Act to exempt ecological gifts from capital gains tax and allow for the part sale/part donation (“bargain sale”) of land.

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### **Biodiversity Commitments**

According to the 1998 Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Canada’s biological diversity is increasingly threatened by pollution and the loss of wildlife habitat. The Commissioner reported that Canada has been slow to meet its obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy of 1995, Canada’s contribution to the International Convention on Biodiversity, refers to mechanisms such as the Biosphere Reserve Program as a way to work with local governments, landowners and community interests. The Parks Canada policy says that:

*By administering protected heritage areas, Parks Canada plays a major role in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity, adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In fulfilling its mission in this regard, Parks Canada promotes the protection of ecosystems and natural habitats, the maintenance and recovery of viable wild populations of species in natural settings,*

*as well as the environmentally sound management of surrounding or adjacent areas.*

Parks Canada, Guiding Principles and Operational Policies (1994)

One key action step of the Strategy is to “*Support and promote the development of agreements between governments and local indigenous communities, property owners and/or private corporations for the voluntary allocation of land for conservation purposes*” (Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, 1995).

Although Canada is a signatory to the Convention, and Parks Canada policies support implementation of the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, action has been uneven across the country. The Panel found that provincial and territorial land use legislation and policies around national parks are frequently in conflict with the goals of the Biodiversity Strategy and park objectives. With respect to Parks Canada’s contribution, there are no deadlines for action steps and annual progress is not measured in the State of the Parks Report.

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## RECOMMENDATION

9-13. We recommend that Parks Canada use the State of the Parks Report to measure progress toward the implementation of those portions of the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy that are within Parks Canada’s mandate.

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