



Kelly Torck
CBD National Focal Point
Director General, Biodiversity Policy and Partnerships, Canadian Wildlife Service
Environment and Climate Change Canada
351 St-Joseph Blvd., 15th Floor
Gatineau, QC, KIA OH3

David Cooper
Acting Executive Secretary
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
United Nations Environment Programme
E-mail: secretariat@cbd.int

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Dear Dr. Cooper,

In response to CBD Notification 2023-121 "Submission of information on best practices for sustainable wildlife management and views on areas that require complementary guidance", please see below Canada's submission.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,

Kelly Torck
CBD National Focal Point



SEVEN KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE POLICY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF WILD SPECIES

CANADIAN BEST PRACTICES

1. INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING

In Canada, there are various initiatives and programs supporting sustainable use of wild species. Given Canada's large land and coastline area, expertise from a wide range of actors is needed to inform decision-making. For example, the status of species at risk at the national level is determined by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), a national arms-length expert advisory body established under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA, 2002). Members of this committee include wildlife biology experts from academia, government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector responsible for designating wildlife species in danger of disappearing from Canada. COSEWIC also has an Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee, whose role is to facilitate access to the best available Indigenous Knowledge and to integrate that knowledge into the assessment and classification of species at risk. As required under the SARA, COSEWIC makes its assessment on biological status based on best available scientific information, community information, and Indigenous Knowledge.

Inclusive and participatory decision-making can also be found in the recently signed tripartite Nature Agreement between Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Leadership Council. Under the *Species at Risk Act*, and through commitments made in the Nature Agreement, Canada and First Nations are working with British Columbia to support the recovery of the spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*). Another goal of this Agreement is to ensure that an actively managed, connected network of land, such as rare ecosystems, enduring features, biological diversity, and high cultural or ecological value persists in British Columbia (e.g., old growth forests).

Furthermore, programs like the Indigenous Forestry Initiative (IFI) support Indigenous preparation and participation to better influence the sustainable management of forests in Canada.

2. THE INCLUSION OF MULTIPLE FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE RECOGNITION OF RIGHTS

Canada recognizes that Indigenous Peoples, who have long been stewards of nature with inherent rights in their traditional territories, are carriers of ancestral knowledge and wisdom about biodiversity. Their effective participation in biodiversity conservation programs as experts in protecting and managing biodiversity and natural resources result in more comprehensive and cost-effective conservation and management of biodiversity worldwide.

At the national level, Canada is building on important work that has already occurred, to recognize, elevate, and incorporate Indigenous science into Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)



scientific inquiry. ECCC recently established its first Indigenous Science Division. Standing up this permanent division at ECCC is part of Canada's commitment to reconciliation and follows the call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada that Indigenous ways of knowing be included in both government and academia.

NRCan funds the Indigenous Seed Collection Program, which is Indigenous-led and focused on species that are of cultural, medicinal, spiritual, and economic importance to Indigenous communities. Centered on Indigenous values, it will develop a seed collection strategy with and for indigenous communities based on existing Indigenous Knowledge, to support sustainable use and enable restoration of those species of interest. Indigenous Knowledge will be recorded (where appropriate) and incorporated into seed collection and conservation.

Indigenous Peoples provide knowledge and input into the development of Standing Non-Detrimental Finding (NDF) reports for listed species of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Canada. Depending on the species involved, Indigenous Peoples could be involved either as individual experts, as members of expert management committees or during the review process. The intent is for the NDF to be informed by Indigenous Knowledge and involvement. Involvement of Indigenous Peoples in NDF processes could be discussed here or this group could urge its consideration in the CITES NDF Working Group on Traditional Knowledge.

Customary Sustainable Use

Customary use of biological resources is protected by Aboriginal and Treaty rights, which are recognized and affirmed by Section 35 of the *Constitution Act (1982)*. Modern treaties covering over 50% of Canada's land mass also recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples in wildlife harvesting, the establishment and management of national parks, national park reserves, national marine conservation areas and conservation areas, and natural resource management. A growing number of agreements with Crown governments establish Indigenous-led structures for co-managing biological resources, including decisions over customary use.

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are actively involved in various activities that promote customary practices compatible with conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Among these are various types of food harvesting, instruction on customary skills and knowledge, and ecosystem management practices. Many Indigenous Peoples rely on traditional foods such as land- and water-based mammals, freshwater fish, game birds and berries.

Canada continues to support traditional hunting and harvesting through the [Harvesters Support Grant](#) and the [Young Hunters Program](#). Developed in collaboration with Indigenous partners, the Harvesters Support Grant increases access to country foods by providing funding to support traditional hunting, harvesting and food sharing in isolated communities. The Harvesters Support Grant is part of the Nutrition North Canada program and was initiated in 2020, providing \$40 million over 5 years and \$8 million per year in ongoing funding, to Indigenous governments and organizations representing eligible communities. The Young Hunters Program is a community-based initiative led by the Aqqiumavvik Society in Arviat, Nunavut. The program connects youth with Elders to learn hunting and survival skills, while learning how to monitor and adapt to the impacts of climate change. In 2020, \$1.2 million was allocated for up to 4 years under climate change adaptation funding.



Initiated in 1992, Canada's Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (AFS) is ongoing and has provided for negotiated arrangements with Indigenous communities and organizations on the management of Indigenous food, social, and ceremonial fisheries, and facilitates participation in local management initiatives such as seasonal fishery planning, stock assessment, monitoring, and habitat restoration. Annual funding of the AFS is \$35 million, with about 125 AFS agreements signed each year. The AFS and other Fisheries and Oceans Canada Indigenous collaborative management programs contribute to the employment of over 1,600 Indigenous people, working as biologists, fisheries managers, technicians, and designated Aboriginal Fishery Guardians.

The [First Nations Food, Nutrition & Environment Study](#) (FNFNES) was the first comprehensive study to address knowledge gaps about the nutritional adequacy, quality, and safety of traditional foods. Declines in the health of the environment can affect the quality of Indigenous foods and combined with social, economic, political, and cultural factors, can restrict availability, or curtail access.

The study is based on household interviews of First Nations adults living on reserves south of the 60th parallel and covers: tap water sampling for metals; surface water sampling for pharmaceuticals; hair sampling for mercury; and traditional food sampling for contaminants. The findings showed systemic problems relating to food, nutrition and the environment affecting First Nations. Recommendations were put forward based on the study results and input from Indigenous peoples and Indigenous health organizations. In addition to supporting Indigenous leadership, the use of Indigenous Knowledge and capacity building, the recommendations emphasize the need to address climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and other environmental stresses.

3. THE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF COSTS AND BENEFITS

Canada is currently in the process of developing its response to the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework. It is important that the benefits from implementing this response are distributed equitably and do not reinforce existing inequalities (e.g., urban greening initiatives should not ignore lower-income communities). Likewise, any trade-offs must not consistently and disproportionately impact one community. To this end, all new federal initiatives under the 2030 Strategy will undergo a Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) Plus—as has been done with all existing federal initiatives since 1995—to evaluate how women, men, and gender-diverse people may experience those programs and policies. GBA Plus assessments are also intersectional, considering how other identity factors like age, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, geography, and disability come into play. There will be a challenge in terms of monitoring and reporting on our progress, as existing data will need to be broken down, or new data gathered, to better reflect and report on those who are underrepresented or not traditionally involved in biodiversity-related activities.

4. POLICIES TAILORED TO LOCAL SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

Partnerships and Collaboration with Provinces and Territories

Canada has almost a quarter of the Earth's wetlands, boreal forests and fresh water, and the longest coastline in the world. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments, Indigenous Peoples, and other partners, including municipalities, have important roles to play in conserving and restoring nature,



protecting biodiversity and species at risk, fighting climate change, and rebuilding a strong and sustainable economy.

The Government of Canada is in the process of working with provinces and territories to establish Nature Agreements that identify, advance, and support shared biodiversity priorities. The first Nature Agreement was signed with the Government of Yukon and announced at COP15. Since then, a Nature Agreement has been signed with Nova Scotia, and a tripartite Nature Agreement has been signed with British Columbia and the First Nations Leadership Council.

Partnerships and collaboration across jurisdictions and among all actors will be crucial to making progress towards Canada's upcoming 2030 Biodiversity Strategy. In addition, action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss must embrace a broad range of perspectives and values. Different communities see and value nature differently, and incorporating these different perspectives will ensure our efforts are robust, respectful, equitable, reflect the full diversity of Canadian society, and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous leadership

Indigenous Peoples have deep relationships and cultural connections with the lands, waters, and ice. They have successfully stewarded their environments since time immemorial and are leaders and experts in conservation and have specific rights and capacity to determine how best to conserve biodiversity on their lands. [In Canada, lands and waters that are stewarded or co-managed by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis have higher levels of biodiversity than protected lands without Indigenous co-management](#) (PDF). Indigenous Peoples have an abundance of valuable knowledge and expertise related to biodiversity, conservation, and stewardship that has been accumulated and adapted over time.

Programs like the Indigenous Forestry Initiative (IFI) advance reconciliation in the forest sector by supporting Indigenous-identified priorities to accelerate Indigenous awareness, influence, inclusion, and leadership. The IFI provides financial support to inclusive, Indigenous-led activities in the forest sector, such as: gathering, developing, using, and protecting Indigenous knowledge and science; Indigenous leadership and participation in forest stewardship and the identification, consideration, and pursuit of economic development opportunities.

5. THE MONITORING OF SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND PRACTICES

Canada is home to about 80,000 of wild species. The first step in preventing the loss of species is to know which species we have in Canada, where they occur and what their status is. The mandate of the **program on the General Status of Species in Canada** is to provide this overview. The main product of the program is the report series *Wild Species: The General Status of Species in Canada*.

The *Wild Species* reports represent the most comprehensive look at the state of Canada's species and contain the general status assessments for a broad cross-section of species, from all provinces, territories, and ocean regions. Originating from the collaboration of all provincial and territorial governments in Canada, and of the federal government, reports from the *Wild Species* series represent a huge accomplishment that summarizes the monitoring efforts of species in the country.



Wild *Species* reports are released every five years. The most recent report, *Wild Species 2020*, is now available and represents the fifth report of the series, after the 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015 editions. This series embodies the commitment of all Canada's ministers responsible for wildlife under the **Accord for the Protection of Species At Risk**.

6. COORDINATED AND ALIGNED POLICIES

Coordinating across many levels of government is a complex task, especially given the number of departments and agencies that must be involved in each government. Canada's Milestone document toward Canada's 2030 National Biodiversity Strategy recognizes that there is a need to strengthen policy coherence across all government departments by fostering active participation and ensuring that they are not working at cross-purposes when it comes to nature. As a first step, the federal government will lead by example, coordinating a whole-of-government approach across all agencies and departments. Finding better ways of working together, such as new or adjusted governance models, may also be helpful.

7. ROBUST INSTITUTIONS, FROM CUSTOMARY TO STATUTORY

The significant impacts of historic, unsustainable harvest on some wild species in Canada have prompted the development of, or updates to, modern conservation and management legislation, including federal legislation such as the amended *Fisheries Act* (2019) and *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (1994). While the harvesting of wild species has been part of Indigenous Peoples' ways of living for millennia, it has been (and continues to be) sustainable and has not contributed to overexploitation. Approximately one-third of First Nations (living off reserve) and Métis, and two-thirds of Inuit, participated in hunting, fishing, or trapping activities in recent years. Similarly, between one-quarter and one-half of Indigenous Peoples reported gathering wild plants or berries, [demonstrating the importance of wild species in meeting nutritional needs and food security](#). The customary use of wild species is protected by Aboriginal and Treaty rights, which are recognized and affirmed by Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982. Modern treaties, comprehensive land claims, and final agreements also recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples to harvest wild species. Canada's coastal communities also depend substantially on fishing and the ecosystems that support fish stocks, whether the fish are harvested for commercial, recreational, food, social, or ceremonial purposes.

Fisheries: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) implements the Sustainable Fisheries Framework (SFF), a set of policies that aims to ensure that Canada's federally managed fisheries are sustainable, support economic prosperity in coastal areas and fishing communities, promote sustainable harvesting critical to the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples, and apply a precautionary approach to fisheries management. DFO continues to implement the SFF in more fisheries and on more key fish stocks. DFO is also committed to increasingly employ an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), which promotes a sustainable, economically viable, internationally competitive fishing industry that is responsive to climate change and other ecosystem-level changes on fish stocks. DFO is currently developing an implementation plan to support the application of EAFM. While EAFM has been and remains a departmental direction, it has yet to be undertaken comprehensively or systematically across federally managed fisheries. Changes in fish stock status are often dependent on many factors, such as on the biology of the stock, prevailing environmental conditions, and the extent of management actions.



Migratory bird populations: ECCC is responsible for the conservation of migratory birds in Canada and the management and risk-based enforcement of the sustainable hunting of migratory game birds. On a regular basis, ECCC assesses the population status of migratory game birds, and reviews and amends the hunting regulations for migratory game birds, with input from provinces and territories, rights holders, and stakeholders.

Management of terrestrial wildlife: Harvest activities in Canada occur under programs established for game species, and management decisions are guided by planning processes, policy, and legislation, trends in historical and recent use, and western and Indigenous science. In some instances, management of species is a shared responsibility among federal, provincial, and territorial governments, wildlife management boards or advisory councils, land claim organizations representing Indigenous rights holders, and other countries as appropriate. The federal government has been working in partnership with provincial and territorial governments to conserve biodiversity through the Pan-Canadian Approach to Transforming Species at Risk Conservation in Canada. Provinces and territories monitor and regulate the harvest of their game species.

International Trade of Wild Species: Canada is a Party to the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES). Canada meets its legislative obligations under CITES through the *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* (WAPPRIITA, 1996) and the *Wild Animal and Plant Trade Regulations* which are administered by ECCC in cooperation with other federal departments as well as provinces and territories.

Canada's decisions, actions, and positions with respect to CITES promote the conservation of species and reflect Canada's philosophy of conservation, adaptive management, and sustainable use. Canada supports international legal trade in specimens of wild species when it does not threaten their survival in the wild. Canada's CITES policies and decisions are based on the best available scientific information, Indigenous knowledge and are founded on principles of conservation and sustainable use, consistent with our [Canadian Principles for CITES](#). While imports of CITES species are enforced through WAPPRIITA, Canada still lacks a comprehensive system to enforce the legality of non-CITES wildlife products.

In Canada, WAPPRIITA Annual Reports are submitted to Parliament and contain information on the administration of the Act and our responsibilities under WAPPRIITA. It contains information on, legislative and regulatory amendments management of wild animals and plants in trade, including permitting overview and trade partners, assessment of risk to species from trade, compliance promotion and enforcement of CITES and WAPPRIITA, and international cooperation.