

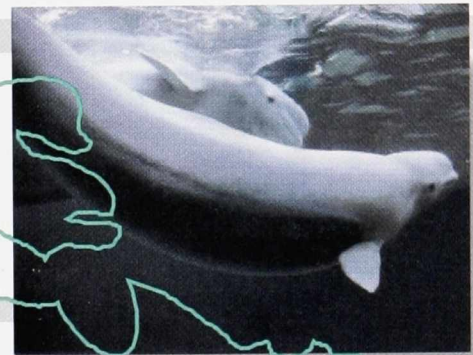
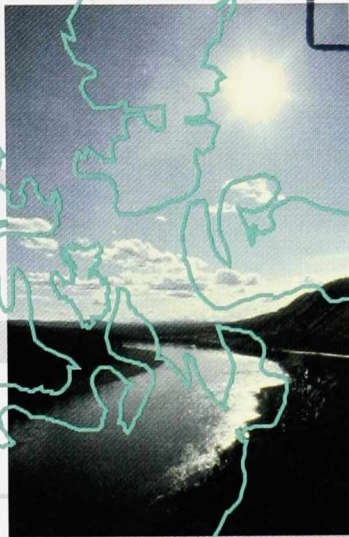
Ecosystem Initiatives

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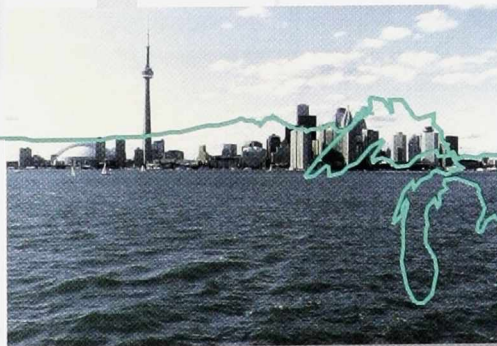
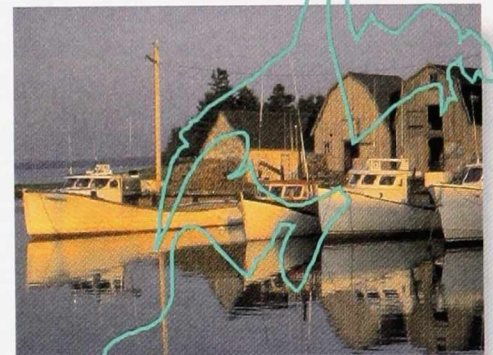
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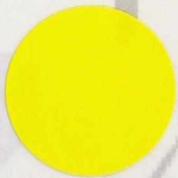
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A Message from the Honourable Christine S. Stewart Minister of the Environment



Canadians share a deep and lasting attachment to nature and the environment. A healthy environment is the foundation of good health, the basis for prosperity, and a source of pride for all.

Environment Canada, with partners from other Government of Canada departments, provincial and territorial governments, communities and community groups, industry, and Aboriginal peoples, is working to achieve concrete environmental results. These partnerships and the shared goal of a clean and healthy environment are seen in the range of ecosystem initiatives from coast to coast to coast.

These initiatives respond to the unique needs of targeted ecosystems across the country. We believe that they are a positive and dynamic way of bringing people together to work cooperatively and constructively toward a common goal and will make a difference in the next millennium.

Ecosystem Initiatives

A CROSS CANADA, individuals, communities, and governments are taking up the challenge of sustainable development. We are working together to ensure that our children benefit from a healthy environment and the full richness of Canada's natural legacy.

Ecosystem initiatives respond to the unique problems of targeted areas and communities and address environmental, economic, and social concerns. They are characterized by a number of principles, including

- an ecosystem approach — recognizing the interrelationships between land, air, water, wildlife, and human activities;
- decisions based on sound science — including natural and social sciences combined with local and traditional knowledge;
- federal-provincial-territorial partnerships — governments working together to achieve the highest level of environmental quality for all Canadians;
- a citizen/community base — working with individuals, communities, Aboriginal peoples, industry, and governments in the design and implementation of initiatives;
- pollution prevention — promoting a precautionary approach.

Ecosystem initiatives help Canadians achieve environmental results through partnerships, pooling resources, focusing science, coordinating efforts,

sharing information and experiences, and generating a broad basis of support. Moreover, they help build the capacity of all the players involved to make better decisions and to effect change.

Environment Canada works with a broad spectrum of partners to achieve environmental results and sustainable development. Through ecosystem initiatives, Environment Canada is able to address priority areas and issues of concern — ensuring that Canadians have clean air and water, protecting and conserving nature, and taking action on climate change.

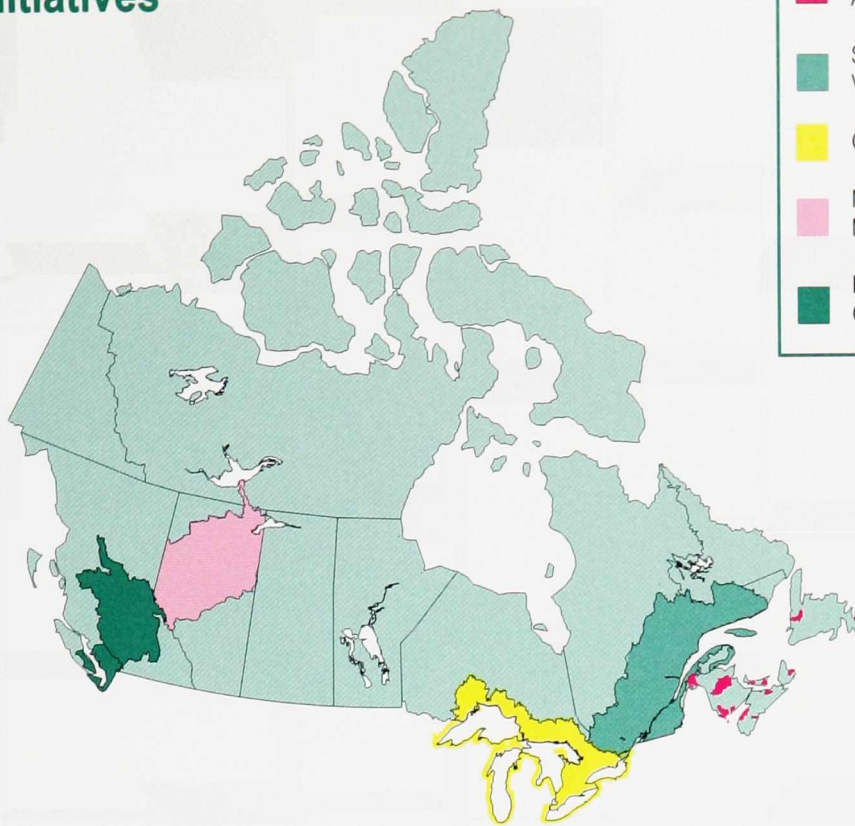
Environment Canada is engaged in a number of initiatives where we promote an ecosystem approach. Large ecosystem initiatives include

- the Atlantic Coastal Action Program
- the St. Lawrence Action Plan Vision 2000
- Great Lakes 2000
- the Northern River Basins Study/Northern Rivers Ecosystem Initiative
- the Fraser River Action Plan/Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative.

Environment Canada recently completed the Fraser River Action Plan, a seven-year initiative in British Columbia, and has also begun consultations on the Northern Ecosystem Initiative.

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/ecosyst/infodoc.html>

Ecosystem Initiatives



- Atlantic Coastal Action Program
- St. Lawrence Action Plan Vision 2000
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Northern Rivers Ecosystem Initiative
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Atlantic Coastal Action Program



The Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) is a network of 13 community-driven, watershed-based ecosystem initiatives located across the four Atlantic provinces. Since 1991, citizens, community organizations, private sector organizations, municipalities, universities, First Nation representatives, and a number of federal and provincial government departments have been collaborating to develop broadly supported strategies for the restoration and sustainable use of their watersheds. This is a shared responsibility, and everyone contributes, learns, and benefits.

To date, over 400 projects have been undertaken involving hundreds of organizations and thousands of volunteers. Science and monitoring projects have supported informed decision making, linking scientists with communities and science with other forms of information. Results have included pollution prevention, restored habitats, reduced waste, upgraded sewage treatment facilities, improved energy efficiency, the establishment of new parks, the

creation of artificial wetlands, reduced risks to human health, and increased employment.

Phase II of ACAP is focusing on implementing individual site strategies, expanding the ACAP network, and collaborating with others to better understand the science and achieve measurable ecosystem goals.

http://www.ns.ec.gc.ca/acap/index_e.html

St. Lawrence Action Plan Vision 2000



Photo credit: Jean-Pierre Sylvestre

The St. Lawrence Action Plan was launched in 1988 and is now entering its third phase. Its objectives are to achieve a healthy St. Lawrence ecosystem, healthy communities, and greater access to the St. Lawrence.

Results from the first 10 years of the plan include a 96 percent reduction in toxic effluent discharges by 50 priority industrial plants; the creation of the first federal-provincial marine park in the Saguenay; the protection of 12 000 hectares of wildlife habitat; and

an increase in the population of beluga whales, one of the most well-known symbols of the St. Lawrence, from 500 to approximately 800. Ten community groups, or "ZIP" committees (Zones of Priority Intervention), have been set up along the St. Lawrence.

The success of the plan is due, in large part, to a close working relationship between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec. Both governments have responsibilities in the basin and recognize that cooperation on environmental problems is essential. Other partners involved in this initiative include the private sector, universities, environmental groups, research centres, and local organizations.

The third phase of the St. Lawrence Action Plan emphasizes a preventative approach in biodiversity, agriculture, industry, health, and navigation. Community organizations will also play an increasingly active role in improving the St. Lawrence ecosystem.

<http://www.slv2000.qc.ec.gc.ca/slv2000/english/indexeng.htm>

Great Lakes 2000



Great Lakes 2000 (GL2000) was formally launched in 1989 as the Great Lakes Action Plan to fulfill Canada's commitments under the 1972 Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to protect and sustain the world's largest freshwater ecosystem. GL2000 integrates diverse programs across seven federal departments and involves close partnerships with community organizations, individual citizens, industry groups, academics, municipal governments, and the province of Ontario. Eighty percent of the pollution in the Great Lakes originates in the United States, making successful Canada-U.S. partnerships essential to deal with binational problems.

Through a Canada-Ontario Agreement, targets for improving the environment focus on restoring degraded areas, reducing and preventing pollution, and protecting human and ecosystem health. Community-based action is a central element in developing and implementing Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) for Canadian "Areas of Concern". A RAP program exists in each of 17 Canadian Areas of Concern, and to date, more than 50 percent of the

necessary actions to restore these areas have been implemented. Collingwood Harbour has been fully restored.

Progress in the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem has included reductions in environmental levels of targeted pollutants, leading to a decline in contaminant levels in humans; the recovery of wildlife populations such as the peregrine falcon and the bald eagle; the development and implementation of recovery plans for 14 threatened species; the protection of 3000 hectares of natural areas; and a reduction by 4500 tonnes of emissions of toxic substances.

GL2000 has also contributed to leading edge environmental research on toxic substances and to the advancement of the concept of virtual elimination in national policy development. GL2000 research indicates that there is a continuing need to measure the effects of pollution on wildlife and humans and to further reduce contaminant levels.

<http://www.cciw.ca/glimr/metadata/gl2000/intro.html>

Northern River Basins Study/Northern Rivers Ecosystem Initiative



The Northern River Basins Study was launched in 1991. Its findings improved our understanding of the impacts of the growing number of industrial developments in these northern watersheds, particularly pulp and paper and oil sands projects, as well as the effects of human activity on these ecosystems. The study focused on the Peace, Athabasca, and Slave river systems.

Partnerships and cooperation between governments, industry, universities, and northern residents were critical to the success of the study. Community consultations and the use of traditional knowledge collected from First Nations helped ensure that the study responded to northerners' concerns and identified priorities for follow-up.

Environment Canada, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories are working together through the Northern Rivers Ecosystem Initiative (NREI) to address the recommendations of the Northern River Basins Study. Building on the success of the study and working with

individuals, industry, Aboriginal peoples, communities, and others, the NREI will focus on priority issues and areas of concern, including promoting pollution prevention to maintain the long-term quality of the ecosystems within these river basins.

Fraser River Action Plan/ Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative



Fraser River Action Plan

Environment Canada, with a wide range of partners including Fisheries and Oceans Canada, completed the Fraser River Action Plan (FRAP) in March 1998. Results included the protection of almost 65 000 hectares of wild bird habitat; a reduction in the release of toxic wood preservatives by 90 percent; and the implementation of best management practices and pollution prevention plans in many business and industry sectors. The Fraser Basin Council, a long-term and broadly representative nongovernmental organization, has been established to promote a balance between social, economic, and environmental well-being within the Fraser Basin.

<http://www.pwc.bc.doe.ca/ec/frap/index.html>

Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative

The successes, knowledge, and lessons learned from FRAP have helped shape the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative (GBEI), which is being launched in 1998.

The geographic focus is on the Georgia Basin (which includes Puget Sound in the state of Washington), where the population is projected to double in the next 20 years. Growth pressures are already imposing high levels of physical, chemical, and biological stress on the ecosystem. Left unchecked, these stresses will affect the foundation of the region's economy, the health of individuals, and the overall quality of life. The vision for the GBEI is "managing population growth to achieve healthy, productive, and sustainable ecosystems and communities".

The GBEI is a federal-provincial program based on results and science. It focuses on priority environmental issues for British Columbia residents: air and water quality, including the reduction of urban smog, the clean-up and prevention of pollution from non-point sources, and the identification of impacts of toxic substances; and the conservation and protection of nature. It will strive for a cooperative programming approach to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government and will partner with others to enhance the ability of individuals, communities, and the private sector to make decisions that promote sustainable development. The GBEI also provides a context for working with the United States to address shared challenges, including the effective management of airsheds, watersheds, and wildlife populations within the transboundary Georgia Basin/Puget Sound region.

Under Development



Northern Ecosystem Initiative

Northern Canada is a geographically and politically diverse area. The northern coastline and oceans represent about 80 percent of the marine area in Canada. The North is rich in biodiversity and natural resources, sensitive to environmental impacts, and sparsely populated. Predominantly Aboriginal, the population in the North is the youngest and fastest growing in Canada.

The North is undergoing significant economic, socio-political, and environmental change. Resource development is rapidly accelerating and will have an increasing impact on Canada's economy. The North is also affected by global environmental problems including the long-range transport of toxic substances and climate change. These challenges are global and require international cooperation to find solutions.

We must improve our scientific knowledge of northern ecosystems to promote sustainable development in the North. Environment Canada has begun discussions on the Northern Ecosystem Initiative (NEI), which will engage a number of partners, including northern populations and communities, in setting priorities for action in the North.

