



# Ducks Unlimited Canada

## Conserving Canada's Wetlands

### **Boreal Forest Conservation Framework**

The Annual Action Plan is a high level summary of actions that signatories to the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework commit to undertake in support of fulfilling the shared vision to sustain the ecological and cultural integrity of the Canadian Boreal region, in perpetuity. It is meant to help identify strategic milestones along the way to the vision.

The Action Plan outlines how a signatory to the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework commits to show leadership to support the Framework through a range of both individual and collaborative actions for the next year. To underline the integrated nature of the Framework vision, Action Plans should include a range of initiatives including:

- scientific and traditional ecological knowledge research;
- land use planning;
- protected areas designations;
- innovative policy development supporting Framework principles; and,
- promotion of economic and cultural sustainability in the boreal region.

Actions should be linked to the Framework organizational baseline report (as identified in the signatory process), and reference collaborations and key partnerships that are being formed or need to be formed to achieve the actions as described. Identifying actions in all areas, while not required, is encouraged.

#### ***Proposed Action Plan Sections***

##### **1) Link between actions and core organizational/business strategies**

Briefly describe how the planned Framework-related actions are connected to your organization's overall strategy and development. The purpose of this section is to gain insight into how a commitment to the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework will create value for the organization in its mission and purpose.

Wetland/water systems help define the boreal and are fundamental to sustaining critical ecological goods and services and continental migratory bird populations, including waterfowl. The Ducks Unlimited family (DU) has identified the boreal as a continental

conservation priority with the protection and maintenance of boreal wetland systems and watershed health being our core business. The Framework and associated activities are critical components to achieving our corporate Mission and Goals.

## **2) Short term plans nested within long term actions**

Briefly describe how the short term, annual action plans presented here fit within the long term planned actions of the company/organization. (*e.g. land use planning and designation of protected areas with provincial government to take place this year, long term plans in all provinces to be completed in 3 years.*)

Our annual activities which include inventory, research and conservation planning projects have been developed to provide the necessary building blocks and foundation for credible approaches to boreal conservation that is based on western science and traditional land use information.

Our long-term goal is to have 100% of the boreal in some form of conservation status. We are currently active in seven boreal jurisdictions (Yukon, NWT, B.C., AB, Man, Sask and Que.) working with government, industry, Aboriginal partners and others to advance boreal conservation by helping sustain watershed health and conserve wetlands, water quality and supply. Our goal is to help protect critical wetland/water based landscapes, advance world leading sustainable development and develop better management practices around water and wetlands for all land users. Individual partnership projects serve as a basis for how additional areas can be managed to achieve conservation objectives. Over time, and through the adaptive management process, additional areas will be progressively added to the conservation network.

## **3) Scientific and traditional ecological knowledge research**

What research actions are you planning that will inform better conservation planning? (*e.g. Participation in the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Program*)

- Habitat mapping: Providing earthcover classification maps of priority areas using TM satellite imagery. Development of enhanced wetland classification.
- Hydrology related research: providing a fundamental understanding of processes that drives the hydrologic cycle and how water drives the boreal ecosystem.
- Industrial development: how does industrial activity impact hydrology and wetland systems? Development of best management planning and operating practices.
- Boreal Wetland Function: understanding the processes that are essential to intact wetland systems. (*e.g. Where does the water come from and go and what are the sources of nutrients?*)
- Boreal Wetland Classification: an ecologically based classification system which provides a greater insight as to how water moves across the boreal will be a critical component to ensuring wetland conservation where industrial development occurs.
- Riparian Bird Research – baseline research to generate an enhanced understanding of the value of riparian systems to birds and how natural and anthropogenic disturbance can influence riparian bird populations.

- Traditional Land-use mapping, Big Stone Cree: Will provide the base information on TLU in the Big Stone Traditional Territory that will help this First Nation identify and protect key cultural areas and inform industrial land-users.
- Cavity Nest Web Study – Research will provide key information on the multiple values that tree cavities provide. Results of this research. This information will be valuable in the development of Forestry Best Management Practices.
- Distribution of water birds: Intensive water bird surveys will provide a comprehensive understanding of the value of a variety of water features (lentic and lotic systems) in the boreal to waterbirds (breeding and non-breeding). This research is critical to the development of habitat use models that will help inform industrial land-use planning.
- Scaup and Scoter breeding biology: Studies of the breeding period of scaup and scoter to understand their breeding biology and vital factors. North of 60 is the core breeding area of both species which have been in decline since the 1970's.
- Natural disturbance and Water bird communities: A study comparing the effect of forest fire and forest harvest on water bird communities.
- Impact of harvesting on wetlands: Study examining the impact of harvesting an entire catchment on the function of wetlands and waterfowl use.
- BMPs in Québec. Collaboration with the Québec Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife (QMNRW), other ministries, NGO's and academics to develop new BMPs regarding wetland conservation, riparian management and upland ecological services.
- Barrow's Goldeneye Conservation Plan: In partnership with the CWS in the Côte Nord region develop an integrated Goldeneye management plan that includes both wetland habitats (feeding and brood rearing habitats) and riparian and upland habitats (snags and other nesting sites).

#### 4) Land use planning

What actions are being undertaken to improve land-use planning and the designation of areas for sustainable development and preservation? (*e.g. undertake assessments of High Conservation Value Forests concurrent with FSC certification on company forest licenses.*)

- Kaska Resource Planning, Yukon: Working with the Stewardship Council we will lead a watershed/wetlands workshop that will provide insight and guidance on watershed-based approaches to land-use planning. This information and continued DU input will be integrated into the Land-use Plan that will be completed in 2006.
- North Yukon Planning: Working with the North Yukon Planning Commission to identify areas for protection (e.g. Peel, Old Crow, Whitefish)
- Sahtu Land Use Planning Board: engaged with Sahtu Land Use Board to identify areas of interest to enter the Protected Area Strategy of the NWT.
- Deh Cho land use planning: engaged with Deh Cho Land Use board to identify areas of interest to enter the Protected Area Strategy of the NWT
- Nisbet Land-use Plan, Saskatchewan: Provide key information on waterbird use and wetland/ water systems and input into the establishment protection and conservation strategies for this working forest in the boreal transition zone.
- North Central Land-use Plan, Saskatchewan: Develop planning tools that will profile key and sensitive water/wetland systems to be used to inform this ongoing planning process.

Key outputs will be valuable information in determining the establishment of protected areas and sites that require special conservation strategies.

- Pinehouse Dipper Land Use Planning, Saskatchewan: Develop planning tools that will profile key and sensitive water/wetland systems to be used to inform this ongoing planning process. Key outputs will be valuable information in determining the establishment of protected areas and sites that require special conservation strategies.
- Al-Pac Boreal Conservation Project, Alberta: Development of watershed-based forest management for the Al-Pac FMA area. This project is undertaking relevant research projects to integrate wetland/watershed protection as a key conservation strategy for this working boreal landscape and the development of enhanced best management practices.
- Louisiana Pacific Canada (LPC) Boreal Conservation Project, Manitoba: Development of watershed-based forest management for the Duck Mountains. This project (5 years commencing in 2005) will undertake relevant research projects and utilize the results of these other research projects to integrate wetland/watershed protection as a key conservation strategy for this working boreal landscape.
- Weyerhaeuser Boreal Conservation Project, Alberta: Development of watershed-based forest management for the Weyerhaeuser Alberta FMA areas. This project is undertaking relevant research projects to integrate wetland/watershed protection as a key conservation strategy for this working boreal landscape and the development of enhanced best management practices.

##### **5) Protected areas designations**

What actions will you undertake to identify deferrals and protected areas? (*e.g. establish areas of protection or benchmark areas through special designations through legislation or other programs.*)

- NWT: Working through the Protected Area Strategy to designate areas of interest to DU and local communities. Previous participation saw the formation of a new Wildlife Management Area – the Edehzhie Wildlife Area.
- Yukon: Working through Land Use Planning, Special or Wildlife Management Planning processes to designate Habitat Protection Areas. Working with Kaska Land Use Planning process to designate protected areas.
- NE British Columbia: Working with CANFOR towards protection of critical hydrological zones such as source water areas and water bird habitat.
- Alberta – Within the Al- Pac BCP working towards protection of critical hydrological zones such as source water areas and water bird habitat.
- Saskatchewan: Through the Provincial Land-use Planning process we have been asked to help identify potential protected areas. DU will be providing direct input into this process by recommending key wetland/water based systems that need to be considered for protection.
- Manitoba: Through our participation on the Integrated Science Advisory Committee for the Manitoba Protected Areas Initiative we will be a key supporting agency by participating and contributing information on key wetland/water based systems that need to be included in boreal protected areas.
- Quebec: Via our partnership agreement with the Quebec Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment, and Parks (QMSDEP) on the Quebec Strategy for Protected

Areas to: (1) help identify new candidate areas with wetland/water systems of high importance; (2) recommended boundary adjustments to existing protected areas in order to follow watershed boundaries and to maintain ecological integrity of watersheds; (3) help identify and select the watersheds with lowest levels of human alteration; (4) help implement multiple use frameworks for the unprotected watersheds that are upstream of existing protected areas .

#### **6) Innovative policy development supporting Framework principles**

Provincial and federal policy development that supports the vision of the Framework signatories is critical to the long-term success of the Boreal initiative. What policy and regulatory actions have been undertaken to advance Framework goals? (*e.g. Advocacy to provincial officials for land uses planning on unallocated lands.*)

- We have signed formal agreements with two boreal government jurisdictions to better position ourselves as credible source of information to help inform and influence appropriate public policy. We have agreements pending with two other jurisdictions and hope to develop agreements with three more over the next year.
- We continue to actively support the development of science-based information that profiles the Ecological Goods and Services (EG&S) that the boreal contributes society, Canada and the globe. This information will inform policy instruments that recognize and support activities that promote boreal stewardship and sustainable EG&S.
- We are working with industry partners to help change industry policy that will influence government policy through the industry's planning processes.

#### **7) Promotion of economic and cultural sustainability in the boreal region**

What actions will you undertake to support sustainable economic benefits to boreal communities? (*e.g. Supporting sustainable community development opportunities, or creating market demand for Boreal products*)

- Though our Boreal Conservation Projects (AI-Pac/LPC/Weyerhaeuser) we will be engaged in developing conservation strategies for the working forest. This, in turn, will profile and promote the value of sustainable forest management and the wood products produced from these forestlands.
- NWT/Yukon: Working with local communities to develop conservation strategies and protection of critical habitat to sustain traditional values. Partner with industry to engage local aboriginal communities to provide technical expertise as identified by the communities (e.g. spatial mapping, GIS)

#### **8) Recognition of aboriginal rights**

Will any actions affect aboriginal lands or involve an issue of aboriginal rights? Please describe how your actions will address/support aboriginal rights and what types of collaboration are planned. (*e.g. Support for full consultation with affected groups and incorporation of local and traditional knowledge prior to resource allocation or permitting*)

- Continue to support the ongoing land-use planning in the NWT and Yukon in recognition of the rights and privileges of aboriginal peoples. This will include contributing DU

generated information to Aboriginal communities, our participation and support for the planning process, community consultation, Traditional Land-use projects and identification of protected areas designations.

- Continue to pursue aboriginal partnerships in ongoing and future projects in the southern boreal communities to provide information, technical expertise, and training to address needs identified by the communities (e.g. spatial mapping, GIS).

#### **9) Actual or potential impediments and problem solving**

Briefly summarize areas of concern where other signatories may be of assistance in addressing. (*e.g. need collaboration across of group of signatories and non-signatories to advocate for provincial policy change on protected area designation.*)

- Lack of knowledge on the critical processes of a naturally functioning boreal ecosystem. Require more research and research funding.
- Current inability of (all) third party forest certification systems to be able to provide/ensure sustainable ecosystem functions along with forest management.
- Lack of third party certification systems for other forest development (e.g. hydro, mining, oil and gas)
- Meaningful relationships with the energy sector (oil & gas/hydroelectric power) that will encourage this sector to undertake appropriate research, planning models and Best Management Practices that promote long-term boreal sustainability.
- Lack of capacity (interest?) of industry to engage in conservation and meet government regulations.
- Protected Areas: Lack of funding to sponsoring government agencies to engage in protected areas designation. Lack of recognition by governments of the need for benchmark areas to measure sustainable development. Lack of capacity of local communities to engage in conservation process.
- Lack of capacity of local communities to engage in conservation planning.
- Capacity of research community is limited by number of academic institutions in the north and funding.
- Capacity of conservation community is limited by expertise and funding.

#### **10) Planned communications around Boreal issues**

If actions are planned around communicating results or progress please broadly describe them. Please include any anticipated support being sought from other Framework Partners. (*e.g. once mapping of HCVFs is completed, planning a press conference and desire assistance of CBI and other partners to be there in support.*)

- Communicate boreal conservation issues, activities and solutions through various media including: internal and external magazine publications and periodicals, scientific journals, conferences, the internet. This will include activities undertaken by DU and DU's partners with the objective of profiling boreal issues and solutions and to encourage greater support for boreal conservation.