HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT CONSERVATION IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Harold Albrecht
Chair

FEBRUARY 2014

41st PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT CONSERVATION IN CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Harold Albrecht
Chair

FEBRUARY 2014

41st PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION

41st Parliament – Second Session

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CHAIR

Harold Albrecht

VICE-CHAIRS

François Choquette
Hon. John McKay

MEMBERS

Dennis Bevington
Colin Carrie
Mylène Freeman
Robert Sopuck
Brian Storseth
Lawrence Toet
Stephen Woodworth

OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO PARTICIPATED

Robert Aubin
Charmaine Borg
Rob Clarke
Fin Donnelly
Megan Anissa Leslie
James Lunney

CLERK OF THE COMMITTEE

Christine Holke David

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Information and Research Service

Penny Becklumb, Analyst
Tim Williams, Analyst

41st Parliament – First Session

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CHAIR

Harold Albrecht

VICE-CHAIRS

Kirsty Duncan
Megan Anissa Leslie

MEMBERS

François Choquette
James Lunney
François Pilon
Anne Minh-Thu Quach
Michelle Rempel
Robert Sopuck
Brian Storseth
Lawrence Toet
Stephen Woodworth

OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO PARTICIPATED

Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe
Corneliu Chisu
Linda Duncan
Pierre Jacob
Chungsen Leung
Laurin Liu
Hon. John McKay
Costas Menegakis
Joyce Murray
Hon. Geoff Regan
Mark Strahl
Lise St-Denis
Mike Wallace

CLERKS OF THE COMMITTEE

Christine Holke David
Guillaume La Perrière

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Parliamentary Information and Research Service

Penny Becklumb, Analyst

Tim Williams, Analyst

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

has the honour to present its

SECOND REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) the Committee has studied Terrestrial Habitat Conservation in Canada and has agreed to report the following:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT CONSERVATION IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada announced its intention to develop a national conservation plan in its 2011 Speech from the Throne. Since this announcement, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (the "Committee") has completed three studies to support the federal government's development of the plan, including a study to provide recommendations to the Minister of the Environment regarding the development of the plan,[1] as well as a study on urban conservation practices in Canada.[2] This report summarizes the Committee's findings from its third study, which focussed on terrestrial habitat conservation in Canada.

Habitat is defined as "the place or type of site where an organism or population naturally occurs. Species may require different habitats for different uses throughout their lifecycle."[3] Habitat degradation and loss is widely recognized as the single largest threat to biodiversity in Canada and globally.[4]

One of the leading causes of habitat loss and degradation is conversion of "natural" lands for agricultural or urban purposes, which generally results in less biodiversity. However, agricultural lands are important habitat for some species, providing living space for about half of the terrestrial vertebrates that have been assessed as at risk nationally.[5]

Conservation of habitat must therefore be viewed in the historical context of human impact. Given this complexity, in its study to provide recommendations regarding the development of the National Conservation Plan, the Committee concluded that:

> …the definition of conservation ultimately adopted for the [National Conservation Plan] should include protection of both natural resources (defined to include ecological goods and services, for example, flood control through protecting wetlands) as well as ecological systems, and it should incorporate the notion of sustainable use as well as working landscapes.[6]

---

1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development [ENVI], *Study to Provide Recommendations Regarding the Development of a National Conservation Plan*, Third Report, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, June 2012.

2 ENVI, *Urban Conservation Practices in Canada*, Seventh Report, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, April 2013.

3 Environment Canada, *Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, Canada's Response to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 1995*.

4 Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Global Biodiversity Outlook 3*, 2010 and Government of Canada, *Canada's 4th National Report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity*.

5 Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments of Canada, *Canadian Biodiversity: Ecosystem Status and Trends 2010*.

6 ENVI (2012).

On 14 February 2013, the Committee agreed to undertake a study on terrestrial habitat conservation in Canada to find ways in which the National Conservation Plan can complement and enhance current habitat conservation efforts. Further, the Committee agreed that the focus of the study would be on terrestrial ecosystems and be scoped to respond to the following questions:

a. What types of stakeholders are involved in habitat conservation and how much does this account for total efforts in Canada?

b. Does Canada have publicly available knowledge and expertise on habitat conservation? What are the sources of this information and how is it disseminated?

c. What are the most effective habitat conservation groups or organizations and what actions do they take?

d. How is "conserved land" defined and accounted for in Canada and is that definition different from other countries?

e. When it comes to recovering a species, how do best management practices and stewardship initiatives compare to prescriptive, government-mandated measures?

f. How can the federal government improve habitat conservation efforts in Canada?[7]

In addition, given the importance of wetlands, the Committee decided to hold two meetings on wetland conservation in particular.

The Committee subsequently conducted the study in the spring of 2013, hearing from dozens of witnesses over the course of 13 meetings. The Committee is now pleased to present its findings and recommendations responding to the six questions that were asked regarding habitat conservation in Canada.

A. Stakeholders Involved in Terrestrial Habitat Conservation

To understand how habitat conservation efforts can be improved in Canada, it is important to know who is involved in these efforts. The first of six questions the Committee asked witnesses related to identifying the types of stakeholders involved in habitat conservation. At the most general level, every Canadian is a stakeholder in habitat conservation. As was noted by one witness:

> It's important to go beyond the stakeholders we know to involve all of society. While it may sound trite, simply stated, each person has to understand that if they breathe air,

7 ENVI, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 14 February 2013.

> drink water, and consume agricultural and natural resource products, then they are a stakeholder.[8]

Although all citizens have a stake in habitat conservation, for the purposes of this report, the Committee focussed on stakeholders that are actively involved in habitat conservation. Governments at all levels clearly are involved because of their roles in regulating, providing expertise and delivering programs. However, many other organizations, hunters and anglers, farmers and ranchers, Aboriginal communities, rural communities, community groups, landowners, businesses, industries and scientists are also active in habitat conservation.

Not surprisingly, many witnesses discussed conservation organizations and the important work they do at a local, regional, national and even international scale. Groups such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nature Canada, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, David Suzuki Foundation, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Ambioterra, Ontario's conservation authorities, Quebec's conseils régionaux de l'environnement, and national and provincial wilderness associations were among the numerous such organizations mentioned. These organizations are important for implementing on-the-ground projects, but also may advocate in support of better legislation, policies or programs related to habitat conservation.[9]

Other stakeholders include those who have a direct interest in conserving wildlife and their habitat, such as hunters and anglers. As stated by a representative from Wildlife Habitat Canada:

> It should also be recognized that the original stakeholders who founded the conservation movement in North America and paid for the bulk of habitat conservation were the anglers and hunters. They continue to provide funds through licence and permit fees and voluntary contributions of both time and money to conservation projects and fundraising events.[10]

Ducks Unlimited Canada is an example of a conservation organization that was founded by waterfowl hunters who recognized the importance of conserving wetlands. Today, Ducks Unlimited Canada has nearly 139,000 grassroots supporters, including over 6,200 volunteers.[11] The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is another such organization that provided information for this study. That group testified that more than 100 of its members or affiliate-based clubs are actively involved in "on-the-ground, in-the-

---

8 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 16 April 2013 (Mr. Len Ugarenko, President, Wildlife Habitat Canada).

9 See ibid. (Mr. Bill Wareham, Science Project Manager, David Suzuki Foundation).

10 Ibid. (Ugarenko).

11 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 2 May 2013 (Mr. Greg Siekaniec, Chief Executive Officer, Ducks Unlimited Canada).

water fish and wildlife conservation projects."[12] Such people who are personally invested in wildlife provide a significant base of support for habitat conservation in Canada.

Aboriginal peoples and communities also rely directly on healthy functioning ecosystems and habitats. For many Aboriginal people, sustainable use of the natural world — which implies habitat conservation — is their constitutionally protected way of life. As expressed by one Aboriginal witness, "habitat" means home, and protecting it implies using it and sharing it.[13] In addition, some First Nations are among the leaders in advocating for better protection of the wildlife and lands that sustain their way of life.[14]

Many other communities are also significant stakeholders involved in habitat conservation. From groups of schoolchildren cleaning up a stream bank to groups working locally in their neighbourhoods,[15] community groups donate their time, energy and expertise in support of habitat conservation.

The scientific community is another group of stakeholders the Committee heard from during the course of this study. Scientific information is an important aspect of the knowledge-base required for effective conservation efforts.

Stakeholders who are also connected with the land include private landowners and those who work on the land, including agricultural producers and ranchers. According to one witness, agricultural land provides habitat for 550 species of terrestrial vertebrates, 220 species of which have been assessed as being at risk.[16] Farmers, ranchers and other landowners can help create habitat in which these species live, and protect them by adopting best practices.

Finally, many businesses and industries also have a stake in habitat conservation. To obtain the support of people from the communities in which they operate, individual businesses and industries need to produce responsibly. The Committee heard from various industry associations including the Mining Association of Canada, the Canadian Electricity Association and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers regarding their habitat conservation efforts, examples of which are given in the section of this report entitled "Most Effective Habitat Conservation Groups and the Actions They Take," on page 6.

---

12 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 7 May 2013 (Dr. Terry Quinney, Provincial Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters).

13 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 18 April 2013 (Mr. Joshua McNeely, Ikanawtiket Executive Director, Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council).

14 See ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 April 2013 (Ms. Lisa King, Director, Industry Relations Corporation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation).

15 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Ugarenko).

16 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Mr. Ron Bonnett, President, Canadian Federation of Agriculture).

B. Publicly Available Information on Terrestrial Habitat Conservation

The many stakeholders involved in habitat conservation in Canada work with different habitats at different scales and follow various approaches, such as carrying out direct projects on the ground or influencing policy and practices. Regardless of the location or approach, effective habitat conservation action requires knowledge of the specific conservation needs that must be addressed and best practices to apply in the circumstances.

In response to the second question included in the study's scope, which related to the availability of knowledge and expertise on habitat conservation, witnesses described various sources of information and how they can be accessed. Governments clearly have considerable information. Some examples of federal habitat information sources, such as the *Species at Risk Act* registry, were noted.

Many other organizations also have information that is publicly available. Some sources that were mentioned include:

- businesses that maintain databases of best practices;[17]
- non-governmental organizations that maintain information on biodiversity, such as the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute;[18] and
- non-governmental organizations that maintain information on best practices, such as Nature Serve Canada[19] and the Ontario Invasive Plant Council.[20]

Witnesses conveyed the idea that, although there is much knowledge held by multiple organizations, it may not be readily accessible and in a format that is practical to apply in habitat conservation planning and implementation. A representative of Environment Canada told the Committee that "[t]here have been some promising developments in new programs and online geospatial[21] tools that will help" to make "information accessible on a scale and in a form that's practical for conservation planning and implementation at the working landscape level."[22] In particular, he drew the

---

17 ENVI (7 May 2013) (Mr. Luc Robitaille, Chair, Holcim Canada Inc., Canadian Business and Biodiversity Council).

18 Delta Waterfowl, written brief, 2 May 2103, p. 4.

19 ENVI (7 May 2013) (Robitaille).

20 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013 (Ms. Kim Barrett, Senior Terrestrial Ecologist, Conservation Halton).

21 Geospatial data is "data that has a reference to a geographical location." Numerous federal government departments and agencies collect and use geospatial data to support various objectives. See Natural Resources Canada, *The Federal Geospatial Platform*.

22 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 26 March 2013 (Mr. Robert McLean, Executive Director, Wildlife Program Policy, Environment Canada).

Committee's attention to the Federal Geospatial Platform initiative and work around earth observation and geomatics lead by Natural Resources Canada.[23] However, it was noted that there remains the related challenge of "building capacity of conservation planners to apply these emerging tools."[24] It was recommended that new data available from these technological advances be incorporated into habitat conservation efforts and made available to build capacity within the conservation planning community.

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to work with multiple levels of government and stakeholders, recognizing that they have knowledge and a key role to play in support of habitat conservation planning and in sharing and implementation of best practices.

C. Most Effective Terrestrial Habitat Conservation Groups and the Actions They Take

The third question asked of witnesses was aimed at identifying the most effective habitat conservation groups and the actions they take.

As was pointed out to the Committee, the definition of "effective" varies depending on the desired outcomes. Effectiveness could be assessed in terms of acres of land conserved, return on dollars invested, or number of people participating, for instance.[25] Judging best practices therefore depends on what outcomes are achieved. While everyone might agree with pursuing the outcome of increased biodiversity, as one witness noted, "the definition of biodiversity changes depending on where you are, and it's really driven by personal values around the biodiversity that people have … grown up with."[26]

Notwithstanding these complexities, various witnesses pointed to general characteristics of effective conservation organizations. It was noted that habitat "conservation is ultimately a local issue" and that effective groups are those that "have first-hand knowledge of the issues and pressures" facing habitat conservation.[27] Testimony stressed that voluntary, community-driven stewardship initiatives are very effective in designing long-lasting solutions.[28] Groups that are able to minimize their overhead costs while carrying out tangible projects were identified as effective,[29] as were groups that include Aboriginal communities and perspectives and incorporate

---

23 Ibid.

24 Robert McLean, Executive Director, Wildlife Program Policy, Environment Canada, opening statement, 26 March 2013, p. 3.

25 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Ugarenko).

26 ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean).

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Ugarenko).

traditional knowledge. As an example, traditional knowledge of sockeye salmon in the Okanagan system was key to planning and implementing successful recovery efforts for that species.[30]

Two organizations that were singled out by other witnesses as being effective are Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Both of these organizations appeared before the Committee.

Ducks Unlimited Canada provided seven qualities of effective organizations to the Committee:

- They are science-based;
- They have strong bases of grassroots support;
- They lever resources to deliver their programs;
- They target conservation programs to priority habitats;
- They take a landscape approach to conservation;
- They reach out and collaborate with other conservation stakeholders; and
- They employ adaptive management to continuously improve their programs.[31]

Ducks Unlimited Canada noted the importance of its work in terms of quantifiable societal benefits:

> Consider again the fact that the acres [Ducks Unlimited Canada] secures in one year provide over $4 billion in societal benefits: flood control, climate regulation, water purification, tourism, recreation, and so on. Now imagine those benefits being wiped out, nullified, because we are being outpaced by wetland loss that could be prevented.[32]

Ducks Unlimited Canada's actions include holding conservation easements that prevent landowners from draining and breaking up wetlands on their properties, as well as purchasing land in order to restore wetlands and apply a conservation easement before reselling the land. [33]

---

30 ENVI (18 April 2013) (Chief Byron Louis, Representative, Chief, Okanagan Indian Band, Assembly of First Nations).

31 Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, 2 May 2013, p. 2.

32 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Siekaniec).

33 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 28 May 2013 (Ms. Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Canada).

For its part, the Nature Conservancy of Canada noted the following results stemming from the federal government's 2007 investment of $225 million in the Natural Areas Conservation Program:

- [The Nature Conservancy of Canada] along with [Ducks Unlimited Canada] and 17 land trusts have now conserved more than 875,000 acres[34] across all ten provinces;

- Natural habitat has been conserved for 148 species at risk; and

- Individual, corporate and other supporters have leveraged federal funds on the order of almost $2 for every dollar.[35]

As was noted by numerous witnesses, effective conservation organizations, such as Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, often work in partnership with private landowners and others.

Ducks Unlimited Canada was noted for its work developing environmental farm plans with dairy farmers to keep the effluent from dairy farms out of the wetlands while preventing the cattle from getting hoof rot stepping into wetlands and streams.[36] Another example given was Ducks Unlimited Canada's partnerships with grain farmers in support of sowing winter wheat, which allows for wildlife to nest in fields that are not worked in the spring.[37] Ducks Unlimited Canada's partnerships with ranchers were also noted by witnesses.[38]

The Nature Conservancy of Canada also works to build partnerships with landowners and communities. The president of that organization, John Lounds, stated:

> We know that some of the best stewards of the land are the people who live on it. Innovative agreements with ranchers and farmers help us support working landscapes where conservation and agriculture coexist. Using voluntary measures and working with willing landowners, we have consistently been able to deliver wins for nature.[39]

Effective conservation organizations such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada also often multiply the impact of their projects through leveraging. A good example of leveraging was provided by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. That organization's Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program started with an investment of $1 million per year from the Ontario government, which was leveraged to

---

34 One acre is 0.004 km^2; 1 km^2 is 247 acres.

35 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Mr. John Lounds, President, Nature Conservancy of Canada).

36 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Ugarenko).

37 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Mr. Richard Phillips, Executive Director, Grain Growers of Canada).

38 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 30 April 2013 (Mr. Bob Lowe, Vice-Chair, Environment Committee, Canadian Cattlemen's Association).

39 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Lounds).

realize a total value of $20 million per year in support of the program. Dr. Terry Quinney of the Ontario Federation of Hunters and Anglers testified that "over 35,000 community-based volunteers contributed over 200,000 person-years in support of 600 projects across the province, including: habitat restoration, fish culture and stocking, tree planting, and stream bank fencing and stabilization."[40]

Mr. Bob Bleaney of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers summarized the success of these groups and others as follows:

> Conservation organizations with an on-the-ground focus — such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Alberta Conservation Association — are effective because of their ability to collaborate with multiple stakeholders. They also recognize the need to manage landscapes over time, and the value of working landscapes as one of the many tools for habitat conservation. As well, they are effective because of their technical capacity to prioritize, implement, and assess the efficacy of habitat conservation projects; their priorities being consistent with national or provincial habitat conservation objectives; their capacity to leverage resources; and their excellent reputations with Canadians.[41]

Effective habitat conservation actions are not carried out exclusively by conservation groups, however. Industry is also involved in habitat conservation. For instance, forestry companies manage diverse habitats or forest stages of large tracts of natural areas over long time horizons.[42] Members of the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) manage about 90 million hectares of land, roughly double the size of Sweden. As a condition of membership in FPAC, companies must certify their forestry operations under an approved sustainable forest management certification system. The most significant requirement to become certified is to conserve biodiversity. Forestry operations on about 150 million hectares of forest across Canada are managed to recognized certification standards. FPAC members are also signatories to the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement.[43]

Other industry associations have also adopted habitat conservation-related practices. The Mining Association of Canada requires its members to publicly report on a suite of performance indicators including biodiversity as part of its Towards Sustainable Mining initiative.[44] The Canadian Electricity Association noted that one of its members, Ontario Power Generation (OPG), has invested in significant habitat conservation and restoration where it operates. For example, since 2000, OPG through its conservation partners "has planted over five million native trees and shrubs on over 2,500 hectares of

---

40 ENVI (7 May 2013) (Quinney).

41 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 9 May 2013 (Mr. Bob Bleaney Vice-President, External Relations, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers).

42 ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean).

43 ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 30 May 2013 (Mr. Mark Hubert, Vice-President, Environmental Leadership, Forest Products Association of Canada).

44 Ibid. (Mr. Pierre Gratton, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mining Association of Canada).

land … to promote the recovery of wildlife at risk as a result of habitat fragmentation."[45] OPG has also incorporated habitat for amphibians and for the northern redbelly dace into its settling pond at Clarington.[46] The Canadian Nuclear Association described some habitat conservation projects its members have taken on. For example, Cameco Corporation has developed a woodland caribou monitoring program in the area of northern Saskatchewan where it operates.[47]

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers is another industry organization that described for the Committee some of the measures that its members take to conserve habitat. For example, the petroleum industry has been investing in research through third-party entities to understand the ranges and ecology of species such as caribou, sage grouse, swift fox and grizzly. Information gathered from this research is used in project planning to avoid certain areas at particular times, such as when calving is occurring, while still enabling industry to do its work.[48]

Not all effective conservation groups are involved strictly in on-the-ground projects; some groups specialize in information campaigns and efforts to inform policy. For example, the recently created Canadian Business and Biodiversity Council helps "Canadian businesses understand and incorporate conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and the ecosystem services it provides into their long-term planning and everyday business activities."[49] Other groups work to inform policy and legislation at a broader scale.[50]

1. The Importance of Partnerships

As mentioned earlier, effective conservation groups often work in partnerships. Different stakeholders and groups bring different skills, knowledge, resources and perspectives to the table, which, when combined in a single project or initiative, often results in a better outcome for habitat conservation.

The successful reintroduction of the black-footed ferret to Grasslands National Park in southern Saskatchewan provides a good example of the need to work in partnerships. In that case, the Toronto and Calgary zoos bred the animals before they were released into the park. Veterinary colleges throughout Canada provided expertise regarding the identification and control of threatening diseases and parasites. Scientists conducted studies on various aspects of ferret biology in support of the reintroduction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided expertise in rearing, releasing and monitoring reintroduced

---

45 Ibid. (Mr. Dan Gibson, Senior Environmental Scientist, Hydro Environment Division, Ontario Power Generation Inc., Canadian Electricity Association).

46 ENVI (9 May 2013) (Ms. Heather Kleb, Acting President, Canadian Nuclear Association).

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid. (Dr. David Pryce, Vice-President, Operations, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers).

49 ENVI (7 May 2013) (Robitaille).

50 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Wareham).

animals. Foundations and individuals donated money. Individuals also donated their time (for example, a number of people spent nights on the prairie monitoring the nocturnal ferrets after their release). A representative from Parks Canada stated that "no single organization … possesses that range of expertise. …[T]his accomplishment would never have been possible without the active involvement of many."[51]

The Committee heard about numerous other successful partnerships among conservation stakeholders. For example, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, which is a continental effort to conserve habitat for waterfowl, is guided and implemented by local partners, including private landowners, waterfowl hunting organizations, federal and provincial governments, industry funding partners, and others who contribute their knowledge, skills and time. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan has resulted in the permanent securement of over 8 million hectares of habitat, with another 41 million hectares being influenced through stewardship activities.[52]

Another example that was raised a number of times by witnesses throughout the study is Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS), a program that compensates farmers for the environmental services that their habitat stewardship provides to society. This popular program, which was described by witnesses as being highly effective, is the result of partnerships among farmers, conservation organizations, funding foundations and government.[53]

A final example is from Ontario, where conservation authorities form partnerships with municipalities to manage the water and natural resources across municipal boundaries within a watershed. A representative of the Grand River Conservation Authority described for the Committee that group's partnership with federal and provincial agencies, the private sector, and local communities in order to protect the Luther Marsh wildlife area, which is "one of the richest habitats in southern Ontario" and provides habitat for 250 bird species.[54]

The evidence heard over the course of this study supports the conclusion encapsulated by one witness: "[t]he most effective groups … are those who forge partnerships at the community or landscape level."[55]

---

51 ENVI (26 March 2013) (Mr. Rob Prosper, Vice-President, Protected Area Establishment and Conservation, Parks Canada).

52 Ibid. (McLean).

53 See ENVI (2 May 2013) (Mr. Jonathan Scarth, Senior Vice-President, Delta Waterfowl Foundation), ENVI (25 April 2013) (Mr. Doug Chorney, President, Keystone Agricultural Producers) and ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett).

54 ENVI (30 April 2013) (Mr. Joe Farwell, Chief Administrative Officer, Grand River Conservation Authority).

55 Robert McLean, Executive Director, Wildlife Program Policy, Environment Canada, opening statement, 26 March 2013, p. 3.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada's habitat conservation efforts take into consideration local and regional habitat conservation efforts and acknowledge the habitat conservation practices of Canadian businesses and industry.

D. Defining and Accounting for Conserved Land in Canada

The fourth question the Committee included in the scope of the study related to the definition of conserved land. The definition is relevant because the parties to the *Convention on Biological Diversity,* which includes Canada, set an aspirational global target of conserving at least 17% of terrestrial areas and inland waters, and 10% of coastal and marine areas, by 2020. This is the essential part of the 11th Aichi biodiversity target, adopted in October 2010 as part of the Convention's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. Canada is now in the process of translating this and the other Aichi targets into domestic targets.[56]

In its accounting of conserved land for the purposes of Aichi target 11, Canada currently includes only protected areas such as national and provincial parks and national wildlife areas. The Government of Canada uses the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition of protected area, which is "a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."[57] Following this definition, the government has reported that, so far, approximately 10% of Canada's terrestrial area is protected.[58]

Notably, this 10% figure does not include privately protected lands, such as those protected under the Natural Areas Conservation Program, which was discussed earlier, although it appears that the wording of Aichi target 11 allows for the inclusion of such lands.[59] According to the government, if Canada were to include privately conserved lands within it national reporting, the total land area conserved in Canada would increase by as much as 2%.[60] Another witness was more optimistic, suggesting that Canada would likely rank first in the world in terms of the amount of area protected if all types of conserved land were included in the national reporting.[61]

---

56 ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean).

57 Environment Canada, *Report on Plans and Priorities 2013–2014*, p. 17, note 3. See also Nigel Dudley ed., *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gland, Switzerland, 2008, p. 8.

58 See ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean) and Environment Canada, *Protected Areas, International Comparison*.

59 See Stephen Woodley et al., "Meeting Aichi Target 11: What Does Success Look Like for Protected Area Systems?," *Parks*, Vol. 18.1, 2012, p. 23.

60 ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean).

61 For further discussion see ENVI (2 May 2013) (Lounds) and Mr. Stephen Woodley, Senior Advisor, Biodiversity and Climate Change Protected Areas Program, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Letter to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, 16 May 2013.

Nor does the 10% figure include lands under Aboriginal protection, which a witness suggested should also be included in Canada's reporting.[62] As pointed out by another witness, Aboriginal protection models emphasize that "conservation" is inseparable from "sustainable use," a tenet underscored in the *Convention on Biological Diversity*.[63]

However, measuring the "input" of the number of acres of land conserved might be less important than measuring the "output" of how healthy the landscape is and the extent to which it supports increased biodiversity.[64] As expressed by one witness, "putting Ellesmere Island into a protected category does little to preserve pronghorn antelope in the southern prairies. We need to be more sophisticated in our way of thinking about what Canada has done in conservation, based on the extent of our geography and the wonder of our ecosystems."[65]

The Committee received correspondence from an advisor to IUCN stating that private protected areas may be counted as "protected areas" under the IUCN definition and that the IUCN definition does not require protected areas to hold subsurface rights.[66] Additional correspondence from Nature Conservancy Canada pointed out, however, that "an IUCN recommendation from 2000, '[c]alls on all IUCN's State Members to prohibit by law all exploration and extraction of mineral resources in protected areas corresponding to IUCN protected area management categories I – IV.'"[67] The same correspondence also quoted the "Canadian Guidebook for the Application of IUCN Protected Area Categories" by the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas as follows:

> For sites owned by an ENGO [Environmental Non-Governmental Organization], the ENGO must have a clearly stated charter to purchase or own properties for the purpose of protecting biological diversity and a policy to prevent, by all means within its power (e.g. not granting landowner consent), prospecting, exploration and extraction of subsurface resources from its lands.[68]

There appears to be a lack of clarity about whether private lands conserved by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited and others should be counted under the definition of "protected lands," and that inability to hold subsurface rights should not exclude lands from the definition of "protected lands," given that subsurface rights are held

---

62 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Ms. Alison Woodley, National Conservation Director, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society).

63 ENVI (18 April 2013) (McNeely).

64 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Scarth).

65 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Mr. Michael Bradstreet, Vice-President, Conservation, Nature Conservancy of Canada).

66 Stephen Woodley, Senior Advisor, Biodiversity and Climate Change, Protected Areas Program, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Letter to the Clerk of ENVI (Re: Evidence Provided to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on Thursday, May 2, 2013), 16 May 2013.

67 Bradstreet, Letter to the Clerk of ENVI, 14 June 2013, quoting N. Dudley, ed., "Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories," IUCN, Switzerland, 2008, p. 12–13.

68 Ibid., citing Canadian Council for Ecological Areas, "Canadian Guidebook for the Application of IUCN Protected Area Categories," 2008, p. 7.

by the provinces due to the peculiarities of Canada's division of powers and given that such lands may still address the Aichi target definition of "effective area-based conservation measures."

This approach is consistent with the wording of Aichi target 11, which emphasizes the need to conserve "areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services."[69] That target also requires that conserved lands form systems that are "ecologically representative and well connected."[70] For the purposes of the target, conserved lands may be protected natural areas, or they may be conserved through "other effective area-based conservation measures."[71] A federal government representative explained that such natural areas could include both untouched areas and areas that have been developed and then restored, as long as they are biologically productive and sustain desired species.[72] Finally, as expressed in Aichi target 11, conserved lands must be "integrated into the wider landscapes."[73]

The National Conservation Plan is the natural vehicle for developing an overarching plan to create such a system of conserved lands, including protected areas and lands conserved by other means, that is integrated into the working landscape. This development must be carried out in consultation with multiple levels of government and other partners.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada develop a more inclusive definition of "conserved areas" which accounts for all areas in Canada where species habitat has been effectively conserved; and that the Government of Canada work with other levels of government, private landowners, and other stakeholders to identify areas for habitat conservation and ensure that all such conserved areas are fully acknowledged and accounted for.

E. Effective Management of Terrestrial Habitat and Species Recovery

The fifth of the six questions that the Committee used to scope this study asked, in the context of recovering a species at risk, how best management practices and stewardship initiatives compare to prescriptive, government-mandated measures. Numerous witnesses were of the opinion that incentive programs are the more efficient, fair and effective means of ensuring that private land is managed in an ecologically sound manner for the public good.[74]

---

69 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, *Aichi Biodiversity Targets*.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean).

73 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, *Aichi Biodiversity Targets*.

74 For example, see ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett), ENVI (2 May 2013) (Scarth), and ENVI (30 April 2013) (Lowe).

Several representatives in the agricultural industry described how regulating or outright banning certain practices on private land is not an effective means of gaining the cooperation of landowners.[75] At least one witness equated regulating what owners can and cannot do on their own land with expropriating their private property rights without compensation.[76]

As expressed by one witness, many farmers "have been stewards of the land for years. They know what they should be doing. They want to do the right thing, but oftentimes the only piece of the puzzle that's missing is the financial resources to actually implement habitat conservation projects on their properties."[77]

In contrast to regulation, programs that provide economic incentives to landowners to adopt specified practices in support of habitat conservation help build partnerships among government, conservation groups and landowners. They create a willingness on the part of landowners to cooperate, and therefore they lead to real results on the ground rather than illusory goals set out in law.[78]

Further, government incentives can be leveraged to help raise private support with even greater results for the initial investment.[79] As one witness described it, "[m]odest amounts of government funding can incent tremendous conservation outcomes from conservation groups."[80]

Witnesses provided several examples of successful incentive programs that have been developed in Canada. Environmental farm planning programs were mentioned numerous times. Under these cost-shared, provincially delivered programs, farmers voluntarily assess environmental risks of their operations and may receive funding to adopt eligible best management practices to address risks. As described by one witness, "[t]he Environmental Farm Plan program promotes the use of land and also provides financial incentives and beneficial management practices to accommodate environmental objectives."[81]

The Alternative Land Use Services or "ALUS" program was also described a number of times by witnesses as being an "excellent template."[82] ALUS is a conservation program for the working landscape that was established in the late 1990s by Delta

---

75 For example, see ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett) and ENVI (25 April 2013) (Chorney).

76 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Scarth).

77 ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett).

78 See ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett) and ENVI (25 April 2013) (Chorney).

79 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Lounds).

80 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett).

81 ENVI (25 April 2013) (Chorney).

82 Ibid.

Waterfowl Foundation and Keystone Agricultural Producers.[83] Farmers who choose to participate in ALUS may be reimbursed for restoring portions of their lands to provide habitat for wildlife and natural services, such as water filtration and storage. A representative of Delta Waterfowl Foundation described ALUS as "a politically sustainable, private-public partnership to deliver conservation incentives analogous to, and every bit as important as, the new generation of infrastructure programs that attract support from all three levels of government and the private sector."[84]

An example of an "extremely successful" local incentive program was provided by the Grand River Conservation Authority.[85] That group has worked with the farming community and municipal partners to develop a rural water quality program. The program funds farmers to adopt best management practices, such as buffering streams, building manure storages and carrying out conservation tillage, to protect water resources throughout the watershed.[86] A representative of the Grand River Conservation Authority testified that "municipal partners provide funding for financial incentives, and in little more than a decade close to $34 million has been invested in 5,000 water protection projects. Of that total, grants amounted to $13 million, with farmers contributing more than $20 million in labour, materials, and cash."[87]

Existing programs such as environmental farm planning programs, ALUS and the Grand River Conservation Authority's rural water quality program provide excellent examples of incentive programs working to support habitat conservation on private land in Canada. However, as one witness cautioned, "[d]ifferent tools are useful in different areas. Communication can help with some landowners. Different incentives work with different landowners. … There is a wide range of potential stewardship tools. All work in some situations better than others."[88]

While a majority of witnesses preferred incentive-based programs for promoting habitat conservation on private land, numerous witnesses testified that incentive-based programs and regulations are complementary tools, and that both are needed for effective habitat restoration and conservation in Canada.[89]

In particular, one witness suggested to the Committee that it is appropriate to use incentives to restore lost wetlands, but to use regulations as a "backstop" to retain

---

83 Keystone Agricultural Producers is Manitoba's general farm policy group, representing 7,000 farm families and 19 commodity groups across the province. See ENVI (25 April 2013) (Chorney).

84 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Scarth).

85 ENVI (30 April 2013) (Farwell).

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Mr. Rick Bates, Executive Director, Canadian Wildlife Federation).

89 For example, see ENVI (28 May 2013) (Mr. Jim Brennan, Director of Government Affairs, Ducks Unlimited Canada), ENVI (2 May 2013) (Siekaniec), ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley), ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 23 May 2013 (Ms. Andréanne Blais, Biologist, Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec), ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett) and ENVI (30 May 2013) (Gratton).

wetlands that have not yet been lost.[90] Another witness described a need to establish a regulatory framework to "set the bar on what's needed" and then to use incentives to facilitate actions required to reach that bar.[91] One witness summarized how regulations and incentive programs work together as follows:

> Most on-the-ground work is accomplished through local stewardship efforts, but these are often facilitated by government-mandated measures and programs, especially when those programs include financial assistance. For example, both the federal and provincial governments have funding programs for species at risk that provide much needed support for habitat conservation efforts. Best management practices are good, but they're not usually enough to stop the decline of species at risk that are impacted by habitat factors. You need prescriptive, government-mandated measures to go over and above the status quo and actually recover species at risk.[92]

The National Conservation Plan may be the appropriate vehicle to stimulate the development of innovative incentive programs that complement appropriate regulation in support of habitat conservation on private lands.

Recommendation 4: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to invest in, and partner with, conservation groups that produce meaningful conservation outcomes.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the National Conservation Plan be an appropriate vehicle to stimulate the development of innovative incentive programs that complement appropriate regulation and support habitat conservation on private lands.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with all levels of government, industry and private conservation organizations to implement a nation-wide, incentive-based ecological goods and services program for the privately-owned agricultural and forestry landscapes.

Recommendation 7: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to encourage voluntary stewardship through its programs.

1. Wetlands

The importance of conserving wetlands was underscored throughout testimony. In order to better understand current efforts to improve the conservation of wetlands, the Committee held two meetings specifically on the topic.

---

90 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Siekaniec).

91 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley).

92 ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett).

As the Committee heard, there are different types of wetlands, including bogs, swamps, marshes, fens and riparian wetlands.[93] Each provides a valuable suite of ecological goods and services such as filtering contaminants; reducing floods, soil erosion, and run-off; storing water; and recharging groundwater.[94] Wetlands provide recreational opportunities, including for hunting and fishing, and they effectively sequester and store carbon.[95]

However, wetlands are under threat across Canada. The loss of wetlands in many parts of the country has been substantial. As was noted in testimony, "[a]pproximately 45% of wetlands in the St. Lawrence lowlands in Quebec and Ontario have been lost, and 65% of the remaining natural environments have been disturbed. Sixty-eight percent of ...wetlands have been lost in [southern] Ontario."[96] The Prairies have seen significant wetland loss,[97] and the Arctic and boreal wetlands in northern Canada are under threat from climate change.[98]

Witnesses made various suggestions to the Committee about ways, not just to reduce the rate at which wetlands are being lost, but to stop the loss or even to regain lost ground. Many of these are similar to other more general recommendations mentioned elsewhere in this report, but some were specific to wetlands.

One of the factors identified that contributes to the loss of wetlands is a lack of appreciation of their value among Canadians. Wetlands are often seen as "mere swamps,"[99] and therefore not targeted for conservation. Accordingly, there is a need to educate the public of the value of wetlands and to change the "psyche of society about what wetlands mean, that they're not simply wastelands and they do provide benefits to all of society."[100] Towards this end one witness recommended that the government develop an education framework built around a network of high-profile wetlands across Canada.[101]

Another suggestion made to the Committee relates to the existing Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation, which was established in 1991. One witness testified that the policy has failed to achieve standardized wetland conservation objectives across Canada.

---

93 ENVI (28 May 2013) (Dr. Abimbola Abiola, Olds College).

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid. (Guyn).

96 ENVI (23 May 2013) (Blais).

97 ENVI (28 May 2013) (Abiola).

98 ENVI (23 May 2013) (Blais).

99 Ibid. (Ms. Marie-Christine Bellemare, Project Officer, Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval).

100 ENVI (28 May 2013) (Guyn).

101 ENVI (23 May 2013) (Blais).

She believed that implementing a framework with specific major policy directions would allow provinces to compare their conservation work with each other.[102]

Other ideas for improving wetland conservation in Canada that were raised include addressing conservation on a watershed scale rather than looking at each wetland individually,[103] and adopting a target of no net loss.[104] Finally, it was stressed that managing wetlands across Canada would be greatly aided by first identifying existing wetlands and then monitoring them. To this end, there was a call for the creation of a comprehensive national wetland inventory[105] along with a national wetland monitoring process.[106]

Recommendation 8: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada work with all levels of government, private landowners and other stakeholders to establish incentives that work alongside regulations in order to retain and restore wetlands.

2. Evidence regarding the *Species at Risk Act*

In discussing and comparing various means of supporting the recovery of species at risk, numerous witnesses provided their views on the *Species at Risk Act* and made suggestions to improve its functioning. While it is not within the scope of this study to recommend specific changes, or no changes, to the Act, the government may find the following summary of testimony given on this topic useful in the event that it may be contemplating introducing legislation to amend the Act in the near future.

Witnesses expressed differing views about whether the *Species at Risk Act* requires legislative amendment, policy development or regulatory reform.[107] Some witnesses attributed problems under the Act to the relatively short period of time during which the Act has been in force.[108] Some suggested that the Act needs to be better resourced;[109] one witness specified that such funding should be directed at

---

102 Ibid. (Bellemare).

103 Ibid.

104 ENVI (28 May 2013) (Siekaniec).

105 Ibid. (Guyn) and ENVI (23 May 2013) (Bellemare and Mr. Guy Garand, Managing Director, Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval).

106 ENVI (28 May 2013) (Abiola).

107 For example, see ENVI (30 April 2013) (Ms. Mary Granskou, Senior Advisor, Canadian Boreal Initiative), ENVI (16 April 2013) (Wareham and Mr. Stephen Hazell, Senior Conservation Adviser, Nature Canada), ENVI (25 April 2013) (Dr. Arne Mooers, Professor of Biological Diversity, Department of Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University, as an individual), ENVI (9 May 2013) (Dr. Sarah Otto, Director, Biodiversity Research Centre, Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, as an individual and Dr. Jeannette Whitton, Associate Professor, Department of Botany, University of British Columbia, as an individual), ENVI (18 April 2013) (Louis), and ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett and Woodley).

108 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Hazell), ENVI (25 April 2013) (Mooers), and ENVI (9 May 2013) (Whitton).

109 ENVI (7 May 2013) (Mr. Cliff Wallis, Vice-President, Alberta Wilderness Association) and ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 6 June 2013 (Ms. Priscilla Gareau, Director, Ambioterra).

enforcement.[110] The Committee received a précis of testimony received by this Committee during its 2009–2010 review of the *Species at Risk Act* from 20 witnesses with 36 recommendations for amendments to the *Species at Risk Act*. The Committee notes that the *Species at Risk Act* was not amended to include the updated enforcement provisions of the 2009 *Environmental Enforcement Act* because it was under study by the Committee when these were enacted.

Other witnesses were more specific about which aspects of the Act they believe need to be implemented. It was suggested that the compensation mechanism should be implemented;[111] that the socio-economic analyses carried out under the Act should take into account Aboriginal interests;[112] and that a policy should be developed under the Act to clarify what "effective protection" means.[113] One witness suggested that such a policy should specify that, along with legal protection, voluntary actions can achieve the standard of effective protection.[114]

Some witnesses suggested that the provisions of the *Species at Risk Act* that require implementation are those meant to promote stewardship and collaboration, including through conservation agreements.[115] One witness suggested that an obstacle preventing more use of conservation agreements would be overcome by having "an umbrella organization, such as a farmers' association, be able to be a third party [to conservation agreements] and be able to deliver the conservation agreements to each individual landowner," which, in his opinion, would "facilitate your landowners' being able to enter into [the agreement], but also promote… compliance."[116] Another witness believed that taking steps such as defining the terms "protection" and "effective protection" of critical habitat would "allow innovative and effective conservation and stewardship programs to thrive in the *Species at Risk Act.*"[117] Another alternative to conservation agreements was suggested by witnesses: "safe harbor agreements" used in the United States are similar to conservation agreements "but they allow a landowner or a project developer to enter into an agreement with [a non-governmental organization], where the property owner or

110 Ibid. (Gareau).

111 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett), ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley), and ENVI (18 April 2013) (Louis). Note that Chief Louis suggested that the Act should be "completely implemented," but he singled out the compensation mechanism as one tool under the Act that was not implemented, to the detriment of the Osoyoos Indian Band, in a specific example he raised.

112 ENVI (18 April 2013) (Louis).

113 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Bates) and ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett).

114 Ibid. (Bates).

115 Ibid. (Gratton), ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley), ENVI (18 April 2013) (Dr. Peter Ewins, Senior Species Conservation Specialist, Arctic Conservation Program, World Wildlife Fund (Canada)), and ENVI (30 April 2013) (Lowe).

116 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Mr. James Page, Manager, Species at Risk Program, Canadian Wildlife Federation).

117 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett).

developer receives assurances that if they fulfill the conditions of that agreement, they won't be required to do any additional management activities."[118]

Several witnesses spoke of a need to provide proper recognition of those parties who take habitat conservation measures, or at least not to prosecute them if a species they are attempting to recover is inadvertently harmed in the process.[119] There was no consensus as to whether this could be done by using other provisions of the Act or whether legislative amendments would be needed to provide a connection "between industry conservation and stewardship activities and the Act's compliance mechanisms."[120] It was noted that providing such a connection might assist in the uptake of such agreements.[121]

Witnesses criticized prohibitions in the *Species at Risk Act* that automatically apply in relation to a species and its critical habitat when the species is listed under the Act and its critical habitat identified, respectively. One witness said that such prohibitions have not been effective in the past;[122] other witnesses went further and suggested that prohibitions may have a detrimental effect on species and habitat in certain circumstances.[123] One witness described the effect of prohibitions succinctly: "if a species at risk is viewed as a liability to the land manager it will always be at risk. … [I]f a species at risk is found on a rancher's land it must be assumed that the land manager is doing things right."[124] Prohibitions enforced on private land without compensation were also criticized as being a form of expropriation.[125] The Committee was told that prohibitions should not be automatic, but only put in place after consultation with landowners.[126]

Witnesses also criticized the "prescriptive" nature of the *Species at Risk Act*. It was suggested that the Act would be improved if it were amended to provide flexibility for organizations to achieve desired outcomes following different approaches.[127] One witness suggested that the government's efforts to fulfill prescriptive requirements of the Act are detracting from the Act's real objective of protecting species and supporting recovery.[128]

---

118 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Bates).

119 ENVI (18 April 2013) (Ewins) and ENVI (30 May 2013) (Mr. Jim Burpee, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Electricity Association).

120 Ibid.

121 ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett).

122 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Scarth).

123 ENVI (18 April 2013) (Louis) and ENVI (30 April 2013) (Lowe).

124 Ibid.

125 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Scarth).

126 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Bonnett).

127 ENVI (9 May 2013) (Bleaney and Mr. Alex Furguson, Vice-President, Policy and Environment, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers) and ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett).

128 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Gratton).

On a related point, several witnesses criticized the Act's species-by-species approach, which, in at least one witness's view, adds to the cost of administering the Act and limits the potential for following ecosystem-based approaches "that hold the promise of greater effectiveness, lower costs, and lower impacts on land users."[129] A witness gave a practical example where the current single-species approach is not appropriate: the sage grouse (a bird) and the swift fox occur in the same habitat and are both listed as species at risk. Because foxes eat birds, reintroducing these two species requires consideration of the needs of both species at once.[130] The Committee was told that the key to managing such competing interests is to protect or enhance the ecosystem, which will then be able to meet the needs of the species that occur within it.[131]

Finally, several witnesses advocated for enhanced and clearer consideration of socio-economic factors throughout the Act's process, and specifically in recovery strategies.[132]

F. How the Federal Government Can Improve Terrestrial Habitat Conservation Efforts in Canada

The last question posed to witnesses under this study was how the federal government can improve terrestrial habitat conservation efforts in Canada. The Committee received numerous suggestions, including: complete a national protected areas network; provide flexibility in mitigation measures; develop and expand incentive programs; provide funding; gather and provide information; support habitat conservation planning; maintain a leadership role; and complete the National Conservation Plan.

1. Complete a National Protected Areas Network

Protected areas established and managed by the federal, provincial or territorial governments form the core of Canada's conserved lands. Such protected areas include national parks, national wildlife areas, migratory bird sanctuaries, provincial parks, ecological reserves, and other such areas.[133] National parks account for a significant portion of these conserved lands. Parks Canada has developed a plan to expand the national parks system to include areas that represent each of Canada's 39 terrestrial natural regions.[134] However, this system is only about 60% complete.[135] Some witnesses recommended that the federal government complete the national parks system and lead a

---

129 Ibid.

130 See ENVI (16 April 2013) (Mr. Ian Davidson, Executive Director, Nature Canada).

131 See ENVI (30 April 2013) (Farwell).

132 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Hubert and Burpee). Also see ENVI (18 April 2013) (Louis).

133 ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean).

134 See Parks Canada, "National Park System Plan," 3rd ed.

135 Parks Canada, *National Parks of Canada*.

nationwide effort to complete a national protected areas network as the cornerstone of the National Conservation Plan.[136]

2. Provide Flexibility in Mitigation Measures

Under the federal environmental assessment process, federal approval to carry out a project is often conditional on the project proponent implementing mitigation measures.[137] One witness advocated for a greater degree of flexibility for project proponents to be able to carry out different types of mitigation or rehabilitation work, or to create habitat elsewhere than within the physical footprint of the project in question.[138] This flexibility would potentially maximize the benefits of habitat creation or enhancement work for dollars invested.[139] Such flexibility would also allow proponents "to work more closely with local communities, including First Nations, to identify and collaborate on local priorities, which also helps to foster social licence."[140]

A possible means of providing flexibility is through a system of habitat banking, which many witnesses discussed.[141] In a system of habitat banking, developers may offset their impacts on the landscape by purchasing credits. Funds raised through credit purchases may be used to create, enhance or protect habitat. When funds raised from multiple developments are pooled, they may finance bigger habitat conservation projects that could potentially have more of an impact than multiple, disparate restoration projects. As one witness stated "its strength is that it provides certainty to the development community while facilitating opportunities to strengthen and support significant core habitats that have a higher probability of retaining their long-term conservation values."[142]

However, as one witness pointed out, care must be taken in defining what constitutes compensation for loss of one type of habitat in a specific area, because different types of habitats have different functions.[143] That witness also cautioned against focussing too much on compensation in relation to development; avoiding and minimizing habitat loss in the first place is preferable to compensating for it afterwards.[144]

---

136 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley). Also see ENVI (16 April 2013) (Davidson).

137 See s. 53 of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*, S.C. 2012, c. 19, s. 52.

138 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Gratton).

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

141 ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett), ENVI (9 May 2013) (Otto and Kleb), ENVI (23 May 2013) (Bellemare), ENVI (30 May 2013) (Bates), and ENVI (2 May 2013) (Lounds).

142 ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett).

143 ENVI (23 May 2013) (Bellemare).

144 See Ibid.

3. Develop and Expand Incentive Programs

Habitat conservation on private land provides ecological goods and services that benefit the public at large. As such, there is justification for using public funds — through incentive programs or direct funding — to help private landowners conserve habitat on their properties.[145] More importantly, as was noted many times by witnesses, incentives work. As stated by John Lounds of the Nature Conservancy of Canada:

> Our ability to deliver effective, on-the-ground conservation is sustained by a variety of government incentives. Whether through tax credits for charitable donations or the ability to match individual contributions to federal funding, these programs are critical in encouraging Canadians to engage in the protection of our natural heritage.[146]

A representative of Environment Canada described some existing government incentive programs of which the department is particularly proud. The Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk provides funding to groups to implement activities that protect or conserve habitats of species assessed as nationally at risk. The Ecological Gifts Program offers tax benefits to landowners who donate land or a partial interest in land to a qualified recipient so as to ensure that the land's biodiversity and environmental heritage are conserved in perpetuity.

As discussed earlier in this report, numerous witnesses supported the development of new incentive programs, and the expansion of existing programs, as an effective means of achieving habitat conservation on private property. In addition, one witness compared incentive payment amounts made in Canada to those made in the United States and implied that Canadian levels should be raised.[147]

> **Recommendation 9: That the Government of Canada continue to build on the success of private land conservation programs such as the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk and the Ecological Gifts Program.**

4. Provide Funding

Numerous witnesses recommended direct funding as a means by which the federal government could improve habitat conservation efforts in Canada. For example, one witness suggested that funding provided to non-governmental groups enables them "to use their volunteer capacity to add to the effort toward habitat conservation."[148] Another witness suggested that a portion of the funding provided under the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk should be earmarked for agriculture, and should

---

145 ENVI (30 April 2013) (Lowe).

146 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Lounds).

147 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Bates).

148 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Wareham).

be directed to programs supported by agricultural producers.[149] Ducks Unlimited Canada recommended a national wetland conservation fund of $50 million per year, with participation conditional on 1:1 matching funds provided by non-governmental organizations.[150] The use of grants was suggested as a means of inspiring innovation in habitat conservation.[151]

Some witnesses called for the government to provide sufficient funding to satisfy existing obligations, including the implementation of the *Species at Risk Act*,[152] as well as to the Canadian Wildlife Service and Parks Canada to complete Canada's system of national wildlife areas and national parks.[153]

The timing of funding was also discussed. One witness suggested that Environment Canada should let applicants know whether they will receive funding from the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, and how much they will receive, within five months of the department receiving the funding applications "out of consideration for the intrinsic characteristics of the work related to collection of conservation data, which has to be conducted mainly in the spring and summer."[154]

Recommendation 10: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada build on the successes of the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk by improving its performance targets and the efficiency of program delivery for responding to funding applications.

5. Gather and Provide Information

The federal government carries out and funds research applicable to habitat conservation. It also gathers data and related information, which are made available to the public. Many groups rely on government-provided knowledge and information in designing their habitat conservation programs and practices.[155] As well, the government develops and promotes best management practices used by companies in a range of sectors, including forestry, agriculture, mining and energy.[156]

Witnesses strongly supported the government's generation and provision of knowledge and information. As expressed by one witness: "science in the public good … is a defensible and sound investment that can and will contribute to sound

149 ENVI (30 April 2013) (Lowe).

150 Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, 2 May 2013, p. 8.

151 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Bates).

152 Ibid. (Gratton).

153 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Davidson).

154 ENVI (6 June 2013) (Gareau).

155 For example, see ENVI (30 April 2013) (Ms. Fawn Jackson, Manager, Environmental Affairs, Canadian Cattlemen's Association).

156 ENVI (26 March 2013) (McLean).

policy, and ultimately must be central in informing our conservation policy."[157] Several recommendations were made regarding the government's role in this regard.

In particular, witnesses highlighted the importance of Aboriginal traditional knowledge a number of times. Currently, the government collects and applies some Aboriginal traditional knowledge for purposes related to the *Species at Risk Act.* One witness recommended that opportunities to apply and share Aboriginal traditional knowledge and practices be expanded.[158]

Also, the federal government plays a key role in environmental monitoring. Monitoring is essential for measuring whether programs are working and whether objectives are actually being met. Several witnesses recommended that the government establish a national monitoring system to better understand what is happening on the land.[159] In particular, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society recommended that the federal government lead "the development of a nation-wide ecosystem health monitoring and reporting program linked to our protected areas system so that Canadians can better understand the conditions of wildlife habitat in Canada."[160]

Recommendation 11: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada utilize the knowledge and experience of those Canadians who live closest to the land including Aboriginal peoples, farmers, ranchers, hunters, and the entire conservation community.

Recommendation 12: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to invest in targeted research that will improve habitat conservation outcomes and ensure that the results of this research be made available to the public.

6. Support Terrestrial Habitat Conservation Planning

The value of large-scale habitat conservation planning was a recurring theme during the study. Whether it is carried out under the auspices of strategic environmental assessment,[161] regional conservation planning,[162] or land-use planning,[163] there was widespread agreement that large-scale planning can be of great value, particularly in ensuring that habitats are connected.

---

157 ENVI (9 May 2013) (Whitton).

158 ENVI (18 April 2013) (Louis).

159 For example, see ENVI (30 April 2013) (Farwell).

160 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley).

161 ENVI (18 April 2013) (Ewins).

162 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Bates).

163 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley).

In most cases, such planning falls under provincial jurisdiction, as was acknowledged in testimony. Therefore, several witnesses called on the federal government simply to support planning by other jurisdictions.[164] Specifically, it was noted that the federal government could offer support in the form of technical expertise and capacity, as well as by facilitating participation in planning by stakeholders, local, agricultural and natural resource communities, Aboriginal peoples, and various other groups.[165]

7. Maintain a Leadership Role

Numerous witnesses called on the federal government to show leadership in habitat conservation. As expressed by one witness, the federal government could make wildlife habitat conservation a national priority. It could lead the way in building "a wildlife constituency by educating youth, enhancing nature education and outdoor guidance, and reaching out to all citizens to recognize the value of natural capital, to make stewardship a core value and improve the public's connection to nature and wildlife."[166]

Another witness testified that "[a] full-on cultural shift is necessary to understand and accept the connection of our own well-being to that of the natural world around us."[167] The federal government could promote and facilitate Canadians in making that shift.[168]

Other witnesses made more specific calls for the federal government to show leadership: in creating a vision and committing to broad stakeholder engagement;[169] establishing checks and balances for resource development and how Aboriginal and treaty rights are to be respected;[170] ensuring consistency across jurisdictions and providing funding;[171] establishing aggressive targets for habitat conservation;[172] conserving wetland;[173] and investing in landscape-scale conservation and science.[174]

---

164 Ibid. and ENVI (30 April 2013) (Granskou).

165 ENVI (23 April 2013) (Woodley).

166 ENVI (7 May 2013) (Quinney).

167 ENVI (25 April 2013) (Barrett).

168 See ENVI (16 April 2013) (Ugarenko).

169 Ibid. (Wareham).

170 ENVI (18 April 2013) (McNeely).

171 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Siekaniec).

172 ENVI (7 May 2013) (Wallis) and ENVI (6 June 2013) (Gareau).

173 ENVI (28 May 2013) (Brennan).

174 Ibid. (Siekaniec).

8. Complete the National Conservation Plan

Related to the issue of showing leadership in habitat conservation is the federal government's commitment to developing a national conservation plan. The Committee's initial report providing recommendations for the development of the plan concluded with a quote from Ducks Unlimited Canada challenging the Government of Canada to continue showing strong leadership and support, including funding, for the creation and implementation of the plan.[175] Establishing a strong national conservation plan will send a strong signal that habitat conservation is a national priority.

In addition to urging that the National Conservation Plan be completed as soon as possible,[176] witnesses provided specific recommendations with regard to the plan's content. One common recommendation was that the plan should include clear, numerical targets or outcomes that are accompanied by long-term commitments[177] and that progress towards these outcomes should be monitored using systems that account for both habitat gains and losses.[178]

The idea of establishing a national "no net loss" principle in relation to terrestrial wildlife habitat was also discussed. Under a "no net loss" principle, proposed developments are reviewed to ensure that they do not damage habitat; in cases where a loss of habitat is unavoidable, the principle requires habitat to be created elsewhere to compensate for the loss. A version of the principle is included in the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation, which was approved by Cabinet in 1991, as well as in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat. Several witnesses suggested importing the principle into federal management of habitat for terrestrial wildlife.[179] Because it is not practical to require people to create new terrestrial habitat, the principle may be adapted to the terrestrial context by requiring the enhancement of terrestrial habitat to compensate for habitat loss or degradation elsewhere.[180]

Some witnesses went beyond supporting a "no net loss" principle and suggested that the National Conservation Plan could do better by following a net habitat gain approach.[181] In the context of mitigating for wetland loss, one witness called for three acres of wetlands to be restored for every acre lost.[182]

---

175 ENVI, *Study to Provide Recommendations Regarding the Development of a National Conservation Plan*, Third Report, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, June 2012.

176 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Ugarenko).

177 ENVI (30 May 2013) (Bates).

178 Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, 2 May 2013, p. 8.

179 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Davidson and Hazell).

180 See Ibid. (Wareham).

181 ENVI (2 May 2013) (Lounds).

182 Ducks Unlimited Canada, written brief, 2 May 2013, p. 8.

The National Conservation Plan could also be a means of improving the coordination of conservation activities among jurisdictions. One witness noted that, in addition to the federal government, provinces and conservation organizations also have developed species recovery plans and biodiversity plans. He suggested that if governments and organizations worked together more closely, a lot of duplication, expense and competing interests could be eliminated.[183] With an emphasis on partnerships, the National Conservation Plan is a natural vehicle for achieving this goal.

Recommendation 13: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to work with willing partners to improve the coordination of conservation activities among jurisdictions.

Recommendation 14: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to show leadership in protecting Canada's rich natural heritage by continuing to expand Canada's national parks system and by completing the National Conservation Plan.

Recommendation 15: The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to work in partnership with all levels of government, and other stakeholders to ensure efficient delivery of habitat conservation programs across Canada.

CONCLUSION

Conserving habitat will be at the heart of the National Conservation Plan. The Government of Canada can show leadership by making habitat conservation a national priority and finalizing the plan. In doing so, the federal government cannot act alone, but must proceed in partnership with all levels of government, engaging with all stakeholders to inspire Canadians to action.

183 ENVI (16 April 2013) (Ugarenko). Also see ENVI (18 April 2013) (Louis).

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX A
LIST OF WITNESSES

41st Parliament – First Session Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Department of the Environment	2013/03/26	67
Robert McLean, Executive Director, Wildlife Program Policy		
Parks Canada		
Rob Prosper, Director General, Protected Area Establishment and Conservation		
David Suzuki Foundation	2013/04/16	68
Bill Wareham, Science Project Manager		
Nature Canada		
Ian Davidson, Executive Director		
Stephen Hazell, Senior Conservation Advisor		
Wildlife Habitat Canada		
Len Ugarenko, President		
Assembly of First Nations	2013/04/18	69
William David, Senior Policy Analyst, Environmental Stewardship		
Byron Louis, Representative, Chief, Okanagan Indian Band		
Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council		
Joshua McNeely, Ikanawtiket Executive Director		
World Wildlife Fund (Canada)		
Peter J. Ewins, Senior Species Conservation Specialist, Arctic Conservation Program		
Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation	2013/04/23	70
Larry Innes, Legal Counsel		
Lisa King, Director, Industry Relations Corporation		
Canadian Federation of Agriculture		
Ron Bonnett, President		
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society		
Alison Woodley, National Conservation Director		
Grain Growers of Canada		
Richard Phillips, Executive Director		
As an individual	2013/04/25	71
Arne Mooers, Professor of Biological Diversity, Department of Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University		
Conservation Halton		
Kim Barrett, Senior Terrestrial Ecologist		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Keystone Agricultural Producers	2013/04/25	71
Doug Chorney, President		
Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation		
Darrell Crabbe, Executive Director		
Canadian Boreal Initiative	2013/04/30	72
Mary Granskou, Senior Advisor		
Canadian Cattlemen's Association		
Fawn Jackson, Manager, Environmental Affairs		
Bob Lowe, Vice-Chair, Environment Committee		
Grand River Conservation Authority		
Joe Farwell, Chief Administrative Officer		
Delta Waterfowl Foundation	2013/05/02	73
Jonathan Scarth, Senior Vice-President		
Ducks Unlimited Canada		
Jim Brennan, Director of Government Affairs		
Greg Siekaniec, Chief Executive Officer		
Nature Conservancy of Canada		
Michael Bradstreet, Vice-President, Conservation		
John Lounds, President		
Lisa McLaughlin, Conservation Compliance Manager		
Alberta Wilderness Association	2013/05/07	74
Cliff Wallis, Vice-President		
Canadian Business and Biodiversity Council		
Reginald Melanson, Executive Director		
Luc Robitaille, Chair, Holcim Canada Inc		
Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters		
Terry Quinney, Provincial Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services		
As individuals	2013/05/09	75
Sarah Otto, Director, Biodiversity Research Centre, Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia		
Jeannette Whitton, Associate Professor, Department of Botany, University of British Columbia		
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers		
Bob Bleaney, Vice-President, External Relations		
Alex Ferguson, Vice-President, Policy and Environment		
David Pryce, Vice-President, Operations		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canadian Nuclear Association	2013/05/09	75
Heather Kleb, Acting President		
Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval	2013/05/23	76
Marie-Christine Bellemare, Project Officer		
Guy Garand, Managing Director		
Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec		
Andréanne Blais, Biologist		
Ducks Unlimited Canada	2013/05/28	77
Jim Brennan, Director of Government Affairs		
Karla Guyn, Director of Conservation Planning		
Greg Siekaniec, Chief Executive Officer		
Olds College		
Abimbola Abiola, Director of Applied Research and Lead Scientist		
Canadian Electricity Association	2013/05/30	78
Jim R. Burpee, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Dan Gibson, Senior Environmental Scientist, Hydro Environment Division, Ontario Power Generation Inc.		
Canadian Wildlife Federation		
Rick Bates, Executive Director		
James Page, Manager, Species at Risk Program		
Forest Products Association of Canada		
Mark Hubert, Vice-President, Environmental Leadership		
Kate Lindsay, Advisor, Conservation Biology		
Mining Association of Canada		
Ben Chalmers, Vice-President, Sustainable Development		
Pierre Gratton, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Ambioterra	2013/06/06	80
Priscilla Gareau, Director		

APPENDIX B
LIST OF BRIEFS

41st Parliament – Second Session

Organizations and Individuals

Nature Conservancy of Canada

APPENDIX C
LIST OF BRIEFS

41st Parliament – First Session

Organizations and Individuals

Ambioterra

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

Canadian Boreal Initiative

Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Canadian Wildlife Federation

Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval

Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec

Conservation Halton

David Suzuki Foundation

Delta Waterfowl Foundation

Department of the Environment

Ducks Unlimited Canada

Grain Growers of Canada

International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council

Mining Association of Canada

Mooers, **Arne**

Moran, **Tom**

Olds College

Otto, **Sarah**

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meetings Nos. 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78 and 80 from the 41st Parliament, First Session and Meetings Nos. 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 from the 41st Parliament, Second Session) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Harold Albrecht

Chair

SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY ON HABITAT CONSERVATION IN CANADA

The New Democrat members of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development would first like to thank all witnesses who appeared during this study for their testimony.

While we support the findings of the report in a general sense, we feel there are a number of important issues to add to the discussion.

To preserve and enhance Canada's biodiversity will require a forward-thinking approach, which is why New Democrats support the creation of a National Conservation Plan that includes the completion of the National Parks network. Part of this forward-thinking approach includes the greater use of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in all regions, something that is missing from the current federal environmental assessment regime. Enhanced SEA will help guide decision-making regarding resource development and improve the analysis of cumulative impacts on ecosystems, while incorporating important socio-economic considerations. SEA informs habitat conservation planning, by identifying and predicting strains on ecological integrity.

There is no greater threat to our ecosystems or barrier to habitat conservation than climate change. There was significant consensus from witnesses on the need to address climate change issues in order to protect our biodiversity, but also to design strategies for habitat conservation and the preservation of biodiversity in the context of a changing climate.[1] One witness suggested that the committee do a study on the effect of climate change on biodiversity,[2] an idea that the NDP supports as part of the development of a National Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy.

During the study the committee heard compelling testimony from First Nations representatives. This testimony surveyed the ways in which traditional knowledge can be used in habitat conservation, in particular with respect to the preservation of overall ecological integrity and the recognition of habitat conservation as different from species conservation.[3]

New Democrats support the provisions respecting indigenous peoples and their communities within the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. New Democrats believe that incorporating

---

[1] ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 16 April 2013 (Mr. Len Ugarenko, President, Wildlife Habitat Canada), ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 18 April 2013, (Mr. Peter Ewins, Senior Species Conservation Specialist, Arctic Conservation Program, World Wildlife Fund (Canada)), ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 25 April 2013 (Dr. Arne Mooers, Professor of Biological Diversity, Department of Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University, as an individual), ENVI (25 April 2013) (Mr. Doug Chorney, Keystone Agricultural Producers), ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 2 May 2013 (Mr. Greg Siekaniec, Chief Executive Officer, Ducks Unlimited Canada), ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 9 May 2013 (Dr. Sarah Otto, Director, Biodiversity Research Centre, Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, as an individual)

[2] ENVI (25 April 2013) (Mooers).

[3] ENVI, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 41st Parliament (Chief Byron Louis, Representative, Chief, Okanagan Indian Band, Assembly of First Nations)

traditional knowledge into conservation practices requires robust consultation with First Nations at the project assessment level, but also in the development of environmental legislation and the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Any National Conservation Plan must respect aboriginal and treaty rights and must be developed within the framework of enhanced nation to nation dialogue.

New Democrats do not support recommendation 3 of the report, which recommends modifying the definition of protected land adopted at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. In the new interpretation, the Canadian government is modifying the rules of the game to their advantage by accepting that the prospecting, exploration and extraction of subterranean resources are an integral part of the conceptualisation of protected land.

New Democrats oppose the attempt to enlarge of the definition that would improve the Canadian position, despite the flawed foundation of this definition and the discrepancies in comparison to other signatory countries. In brief, we perceive these changes as a way to manipulate the real targets of Aichi.

Finally, the role of parliamentarians is to ensure the transparency and accountability of government spending. To that end, we raise a concern we have with the handing over of federal responsibility for conservation, as well as significant funds, to private conservation organizations.

Currently, parliamentarians are not able to adequately monitor how these funds are used by these private organizations, nor is there sufficient means to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives.

This is not to denigrate the work being done by private conservation organizations – quite the contrary - it is simply a recommendation that tax-payer money be spent as transparently as possible. Further, this funding cannot replace the important role of the federal government in conservation.

In addition, cuts to funding for departments which have a critical role in ensuring habitat protection and restoration have resulted in the systematic dismantling of Canada's science capacity. Without robust scientific research and monitoring, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to assess the status of natural ecosystems or to evaluate whether or not conservation programs are producing results.

A truly National Conservation Plan would recognize the interdependence of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, and would incorporate strengthened legislative measures to ensure adequate protection for both. Recent changes to the Fisheries Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Species at Risk Act, and the repeal of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act have left gaping holes in ecosystem and habitat protection in Canada, and must be reversed immediately, and the legislation strengthened as soon as possible.