

Media release

For immediate release

Nature is gaining ground: 7% (17,800 km²) of Québec's territory will be protected, primarily in the north

Jacques-Cartier Park, October 7, 2008 – Another milestone has been reached today in protecting Québec's natural heritage. An additional 1% of the province has been protected, and Québec is slowly but surely ensuring its green future. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (SNAP Québec), Nature Québec and the Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI) congratulate the Québec government for its decision to add 17,800 km², 35 times the size of the island of Montreal, to its protected areas, and hope that it will continue to work on protecting our wilderness areas.

On the right track

The announcement that the territories of the George River and the National Parks Reserves Monts-Pyramides, Collines-Ondulées and Baie-aux-Feuilles will be protected represents important news for our natural capital. The groups salute the sustained efforts of the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) at a time when pressure is high and resources are limited. They nevertheless admit that there remains a lot to be done to protect our natural resources for the benefit of future generations.

Conserving such abundant ecosystems as the majestic George River, Québec will ensure the preservation of Aboriginal ancestral heritage and culture and protection of one of the world's largest herds of caribou. "The Government is taking the first step to protect barren-ground caribou which, we hope, will lead to the protection of woodland caribou in the Boreal region, a species that is vulnerable in Québec and threatened in Canada," explains Christian Simard, executive director of Nature Québec.

When the next goal of 8% (as promised three years ago) is attained, the groups urge the adoption of a complementary vision aimed at protecting our wilderness for the future. This includes conducting a gap analysis to determine what is missing to create a conservation network rather than isolated parcels of protected lands, in particular in the southern part of the province where logging is underway. "As for the northern part of the province, beyond the northern tree cutting limit, we must absolutely implement an approach based on the realities of the 21st Century, that is conservation-based sustainable development on at least half of the territory and ensuring Aboriginal leadership," adds Marie-Ève Marchand of SNAP Québec.

Culture and nature are intrinsically linked

"We would like to congratulate the Government of Québec as well as the First Nations and Inuit people who have taken the important decision to protect these lands. It represents good progress in the conservation of natural and cultural values, and we look forward to a continuing the conversation about a balanced approach to conservation and sustainable development in Québec," said Harvey Locke, spokesperson for the CBI.

To conclude, SNAP Québec, Nature Québec and the CBI remind all Quebeckers that it is important to

act while we still have the opportunity and abundance to do so. As part of the World Conservation Congress currently underway in Barcelona, yesterday the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) unveiled the results of its updated Red List of species, which confirm the extinction crisis: one species out of four is at risk of disappearing from the face of the Earth. This is a real crisis, and doing nothing to prevent it would prove costly. The time has come to undertake wide-scale action, and Québec has the opportunity to play an important role in protecting biodiversity and fighting climate change at the world level.

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Nature Québec

Nature Québec (www.naturequebec.org) is a national non-profit organization that brings together more than 5000 individuals and 100 affiliated groups working in the environment and sustainable development. Founded in 1981, the organization has spoken out over the years about a number of environmental issues, including protected areas, agriculture, forestry exploitation and energy.

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – CPAWS/SNAP Quebec

Named a top ten charity organization in 2007 by Tides Canada, CPAWS/SNAP is a non-profit, wilderness protection organization founded in 1963. With 13 chapters across Canada, staffed with over 50 people, and hundreds of committed volunteers, CPAWS/SNAP creates consensus for wilderness conservation by engaging citizens, government and industry at the community level through a 10 year vision of preserving at least half of Canada's wilderness.

CPAWS/SNAP-Quebec (www.snapqc.org) came into existence in 2001. It mainly focuses on establishing a true network of protected areas throughout the province's public lands, the protection and management of the Boreal forest and the existing parks and protected areas.

Canadian Boreal Initiative

Established in 2003, the Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI) (www.borealcanada.ca) works with a wide range of conservation organizations, First Nations, industry and other interested parties to link science, policy and conservation activities in Canada's Boreal Forest. Based in Ottawa, the CBI brings together diverse partners to create new solutions for Boreal conservation and acts as a catalyst for on-the-ground efforts across the Boreal by governments, industry, First Nations, conservation groups, major retailers, financial institutions and scientists.