



## Research finds Canada Lagging on Permanently Protected Areas

*Canada below global average, but recent progress has been made and planned conservation areas are achieving some overall major conservation objectives*

**Edmonton, June 29 2011.** A recent report by Global Forest Watch Canada (GFWC), *Canada's Terrestrial Protected Areas Status Report 2010: Number, Area and Naturalness*, finds that Canada is well below the global average on permanently protecting wilderness, having set aside only 8.5 percent (84.5 million hectares) of its land mass in permanent Protected Areas. This is more than four percent lower than the global average of 12.9 percent and more than six percent lower than the United States at 14.8 percent.

The report offers the first assessment of progress in protecting Canada's wilderness between 2000 and 2010, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Peter Lee, lead author and executive director of Global Forest Watch Canada stated, "There is an increasing global reliance on protected areas as cornerstones of conservation due to the widespread and increasing impacts of human activities, such as agriculture, forestry, mining, energy developments and urbanization. Protected areas are now considered fundamental to preserving and conserving natural areas, and reducing biodiversity loss. So, despite differences in how data is reported internationally, it is odd that Canada is so far below the global average."

Lee further stated, "It is noteworthy that in 2000 only 6.6 percent of Canada was either permanently protected or under interim protection. Large additions of interim protected areas, which now make up 3.7 percent of the country, along with new parks and wilderness areas have nearly doubled this figure to 12.2 percent since 2000. And more progress is being made regularly. In June 2011, the Poplar River First Nation and the Province of Manitoba jointly approved a land use plan that ensures the protection of the 8,600 km<sup>2</sup> (2.1M acre) Poplar River Anishinabek Traditional Territory. Also in June 2011, the Nova Scotia government has announced its intention to reach a 12% target for protected areas, releasing a proposal to expand protection from the current level of 8.6%."

However, creating new parks and placing areas under interim protection does not guarantee the ecological integrity of those regions will be preserved forever. The report found that more than half of Canada's protected areas are at least 25% disturbed or affected by industrial developments such as mining, logging, hydropower developments and oil and gas developments. These activities can endanger wildlife and disrupt healthy ecological processes. In addition, some areas placed under interim protection are not ending up with full, permanent protection.

Several large conservation initiatives being developed in the boreal forest could provide a huge boost to Canada's conservation efforts. In 2008, the governments of Ontario and Quebec followed the advice of 1,500 international scientists by announcing commitments to protect at least half of their northern boreal regions. Last year's Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, which saw the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) strike a deal with environmental groups, could also lead to more large-scale protection. FPAC member companies agreed to suspend logging on 290,000 square kilometres of caribou habitat within the boreal so that scientific monitoring and conservation planning can occur.

As an organization focused on using the best information and data to monitor Canada's forest regions, Global Forest Watch Canada made five data-related recommendations. Many of these recommendations were related to the challenges of gathering and analyzing Canada-wide up-to-date data on protected areas and how various governments can improve the public's accessibility to accurate information on Canada's vast network of protected areas.

Lee concludes, "Despite the challenges, Global Forest Watch Canada has compiled and accurately reported on the status of Canada's network of protected as of the end of the first decade of this millennium. Similar regular reporting now needs to be undertaken by Canada's governments."

*Download the "Report at a Glance" and full research report at: [www.globalforestwatch.ca](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca)*

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