



# BRIEFING NOTE: Protected Areas Goal

Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act  
March 2022

## GOAL IN EGCCRA:

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# 10 The Government's goals with respect to the protection of land are (a) to conserve at least 20% of the total land and water mass of the Province by 2030 as protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, in a manner consistent with national reporting criteria;

(b) to support the goal in clause (a) with a collaborative protected areas strategy to be released by December 31, 2023;

## OUR ANALYSIS OF THE GOAL:

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This is an excellent and achievable goal, and it will ensure Nova Scotia will meaningfully contribute toward Canada's international commitment to protect at least of 30% of land by 2030. There is still so much we can do through protecting land that would substantially aid with the climate and biodiversity crises, and would help to advance reconciliation. Protected areas are a part of nature-based climate solutions, and produced co-benefits beyond climate change mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.

Protected areas and lands cared for by Indigenous Peoples are areas where biodiversity loss, while still occurring, is happening at a slower rate. Lands and waters where Indigenous Peoples have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems should be recognized in Western-defined protected areas systems moving forward, including through Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.



## ACHIEVING THE GOAL:

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1. Inclusive planning for a new protected areas strategy is the necessary next step. This means engaging the Mi'kmaq as rightsholders with deep knowledge and experience in conserving the biodiversity of Nova Scotia, as well as working from the get-go with stakeholders who work in land conservation. The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia and land conservation groups have experience with past protected areas planning strategies – please draw upon this experience. We look forward to working with government on this laudable work.

2. There is a lot of work to do in order to protect freshwater sources, including wetlands, and groundwater resources. Fortunately, we have many institutions and people whose knowledge and experience can guide planning to protect water, and we call on the government to collaborate with nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, Indigenous Nations and organizations, and other water-centered community groups when creating a protection strategy and making decisions on freshwater protection.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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- The value of protected areas as offering vital ecological functions, such as protecting watersheds and soils, storing carbon, improving air quality, and shielding human communities from natural disasters, is well understood and documented.
- Global trends that have pushed us in the direction of biodiversity collapse. Fortunately, protected areas have been shown to play a critical role in reversing biodiversity loss.
- Protected areas in Nova Scotia not only deliver critical ecosystem and climate change mitigation services, they contribute immensely to the very identity of our province and its ability to attract visitors who come here to see the natural beauty of our inland and coastal landscape.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (CONTINUED):

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- The co-benefits of protected areas are many. They include:
  - Improving individual and community wellbeing,
  - Safeguarding sites of cultural importance, and
  - Bringing positive economic impacts to local and regional settings including new jobs. Details on specific commercial benefits of protected areas in Nova Scotia can be found in the 2017 report commissioned by the Government of Nova Scotia entitled, Commercial Benefits of Nova Scotia's Protected Areas.

## CONTACT:

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