



Proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve

Conservation plan



Modified
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1. Plan and description

1.1. Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The plan of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve and its location are shown on the maps in Schedules A.1. and A.2.

The proposed biodiversity reserve is located in the Côte-Nord administrative region, between 51°38' and 52°00' north latitude and 57°15' and 58°32' west longitude. It is situated approximately 30 km north of the coastal village of Rivière-Saint-Paul, near the Labrador border.

It lies within the unorganized territory of Petit-Mécatina, in Municipalité régionale de comté de la Minganie.

The proposed biodiversity reserve covers a total area of 2,022 km². It corresponds to the physiographic units of the Guernesé lake foothills and Bujeault river, except in the east, where the boundary runs along the eastern slope of the Nord-Est river valley, including Capannan and Mont Rye lakes. In the north, the boundary is the delineation established by the 1927 Privy Council decision (not final).

1.2. Ecological overview

The protected area is in the Lower North Shore Plateau natural province. It protects a landscape and habitats characteristic of the natural region of the middle Saint-Augustin hills.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Climate: The Guernesé lake foothills are characterized by a subpolar, humid continental climate, with a short growing season. They belong to the bioclimatic field of mossy spruce stands.

Geology and geomorphology: The entire reserve is in the Grenville geologic province of the Canadian Shield. The basement rocks are mainly felsic rock, particularly granite and pegmatite. They are also formed of metamorphic rock, in this instance gneiss, paragneiss and granulite.

In terms of its geomorphology, the dominant landscape is that of a highly dissected plateau the surface of which is formed by hills separated by encased valleys. The substratum of the foothills, with outcroppings in some areas, is covered by a thin layer of well-drained till. The few knolls at their periphery are covered by well-drained moraine or till deposits. Colluvial deposits are found at the foot of the steepest slopes while the valley bottoms are covered with glaciofluvial sand and gravel. The altitude varies from 25 m to 550 m.

Hydrography: The drainage system is well-developed and comprised mainly of small watercourses, the largest being the Saint-Paul river, a Strahler 5 river. The collector watercourses are subparallel, relatively straight and in a general north-south orientation. The protected area also has 44 lakes which cover 40 km² or 2% of the total area. The lakes are small and mostly concentrated in the southern part of the area. The largest are Gallet and Guernesé lakes, which cover an area of 5.5 km² and 4.2 km² respectively.

Vegetation: To the west of the Beaver-House and Uahatu streams, the territory is essentially covered by a softwood forest. To the east, the slopes and peaks of the foothills are mainly occupied by dry heathland, a plant formation almost devoid of trees that develops in poor, shallow and well-drained soils. These plant formations make up 64% and 28% of the vegetation respectively. Most of the forest communities are over 90 years old, the dominating species being black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*). The poorly-drained valley bottoms are occupied by peat bogs which cover 6% of the area of the protected area.

1.2.2. Outstanding elements

The waters of the Saint-Paul river provide spawning and rearing habitat for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*). The river has salmon river status.

1.3. Occupation and main land uses

The land occupations and uses in the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve are shown on the map in Schedule A.3.

The territory lies within the Saguenay beaver reserve in which the Native communities have special rights regarding the hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals.

The territory of the proposed biodiversity reserve lies wholly within fur-bearing animal management unit (FAMU) 66.

An outfitting operation with exclusive rights is established on the lower portion of the Saint-Paul river, approximately 2.5 km south of its confluence with Kuekuatsheu stream. Club de pêche au saumon Saint-Paul inc. is the leaseholder.

No land rights have been granted within the perimeter of the protected area.

2. Protection status

The proposed biodiversity reserve offers a mosaic of habitats (softwood forests, dry heathland, peat bogs, lakes and rivers, etc.) of exceptional value, both from an ecological perspective and for their beauty.

Biodiversity reserve status would allow the pursuit of the following conservation objectives:

- ✓ the conservation of a representative landscape of the natural region of the middle Saint-Augustin hills;
- ✓ the protection of favourable habitat for Atlantic salmon;
- ✓ the protection of biodiversity in the various ecosystems;
- ✓ the ongoing sustainable management of fur-bearing animals;
- ✓ the acquisition of new knowledge concerning natural and cultural heritage.

3. Activities framework

§1. — Introduction

Activities carried on within the proposed reserve are governed mainly by the provisions of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act.

This Division prohibits activities in addition to those prohibited under the Act and provides the framework for the various activities permitted so as to better protect the natural environment in keeping with the conservation principles and other management objectives established for the proposed reserves. Accordingly, certain activities require the prior authorization of the Minister and compliance with the conditions determined by the Minister.

As provided in the Natural Heritage Conservation Act, the main activities prohibited in an area to which status as a proposed biodiversity or aquatic reserve has been assigned are

- mining, and gas or petroleum development;
- forest management within the meaning of section 3 of the Forest Act (R.S.Q., c. F-4.1); and
- the development of hydraulic resources and any production of energy on a commercial or industrial basis.

The measures in the Natural Heritage Conservation Act and in this conservation plan apply subject to the provisions of the agreements under the Act approving the Agreement concerning James Bay and Northern Québec (R.S.Q., c. C-67) and the Act approving the Northeastern Québec Agreement (R.S.Q., c. C-67.1).

§2. — Prohibitions, prior authorizations and other conditions governing activities in the proposed reserve

§2.1. Protection of resources and the natural environment

3.1. Subject to the prohibition in the second paragraph, no person may establish in the proposed reserve any specimens or individuals of a native or non-native species of fauna, including by stocking, unless the person has been authorized by the Minister and complies with the conditions the Minister determines.

No person may stock a watercourse or body of water for aquaculture, commercial fishing or any other commercial purpose.

No person may establish in the proposed reserve a non-native species of flora, unless the person has been authorized by the Minister and complies with the conditions the Minister determines.

Before issuing an authorization under this section, the Minister is to take into consideration, in addition to the characteristics and the number of species involved, the risk of biodiversity imbalance, the importance of conserving the various ecosystems, the needs of the species in the ecosystems, the needs of rehabilitating degraded environments or habitats within the proposed reserve, and the interest in reintroducing certain species that have disappeared.

3.2. No person may use fertilizer or fertilizing material in the proposed reserve. Compost for domestic purposes is permitted if used at least 20 metres from a watercourse or body of water measured from the high-water mark.

The high-water mark means the high-water mark defined in the Protection Policy for Lakeshores, Riverbanks, Littoral Zones and Floodplains, adopted by Order in Council 468-2005 dated 18 May 2005.

3.3. No person may, unless the person has been authorized by the Minister and carries on the activity in compliance with the conditions the Minister determines,

- (1) intervene in a wetland area, including a marsh, swamp or bog;
- (2) modify the reserve's natural drainage or water regime, including by creating or developing watercourses or bodies of water;
- (3) dig, fill, obstruct or divert a watercourse or body of water;
- (4) install or erect any structure, infrastructure or new works in or on the bed, banks, shores or floodplain of a watercourse or body of water, although no authorization is required for minor works such as a wharf, platform or boathouse erected for private purposes and free of charge under section 2 of the Regulation respecting the water property in the domain of the State made by Order in Council 81-2003 dated 29 January 2003;
- (5) carry on any activity other than those referred to in the preceding subparagraphs that is likely to degrade the bed, banks or shores of a body of water or watercourse or directly and substantially affect the quality of the biochemical characteristics of aquatic or riparian environments or wetland areas in the proposed reserve, including by discharging or dumping waste or pollutants into those areas;
- (6) carry out soil development work, including any burial, earthwork, removal or displacement of surface materials or vegetation cover, for any purpose including recreational and tourism purposes such as trail development;
- (7) install or erect any structure, infrastructure or new works;
- (8) reconstruct or demolish an existing structure, infrastructure or works,
- (9) carry on an activity that is likely to severely degrade the soil or a geological formation or damage the vegetation cover, such as stripping, the digging of trenches or excavation work, although no

authorization is required for the removal of soapstone by beneficiaries within the meaning of section 1 of the Act respecting the land regime in the James Bay and New Québec territories (R.S.Q., c. R-13.1);

(10) use a pesticide, although no authorization is required for the use of personal insect repellent;

(11) carry on educational or research-related activities if the activities are likely to significantly damage or disturb the natural environment, in particular because of the nature or size of the samples taken or the invasive character of the method or process used; or

(12) hold a sports event, tournament, rally or similar event if more than 15 persons are likely to participate in the activity and have access to the proposed reserve at the same time; no authorization may be issued by the Minister if the activity involves motor vehicle traffic, unless it has been shown to the Minister that it is impossible to organize the activity elsewhere or that bypassing the proposed reserve is highly unfeasible.

The conditions determined by the Minister for the authorization may pertain to the location of the authorized activity, the methods used, the areas that may be cleared or deforested, the types of material that may be used including on-site materials, and the presence of ancillary works or facilities. The conditions may also include a requirement to ensure periodic follow-up or to report to the Minister, in particular as regards the results obtained from the research to which subparagraph 11 of the first paragraph refers.

3.4. Despite subparagraphs 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the first paragraph of section 3.3, no authorization is required to carry out work referred to in subparagraph 1 of this section when the requirements of subparagraph 2 are met.

(1) The work involves

(a) work to maintain, repair or upgrade an existing structure, infrastructure or works such as a camp, cottage, road or trail, including ancillary facilities such as lookouts or stairs;

(b) the construction or erection of

i. an appurtenance or ancillary facility of a trapping camp, rough shelter, shelter or cottage such as a shed, well, water intake or sanitary facilities; or

ii. a trapping camp, rough shelter, shelter or cottage if such a building was permitted under the right to use or occupy the land but had not been constructed or installed on the effective date of the status as a proposed reserve; or

(c) the demolition or reconstruction of a trapping camp, rough shelter, shelter or cottage, including an appurtenance or ancillary facility such as a shed, well, water intake or sanitary facilities.

(2) The work is carried out in compliance with the following requirements:

(a) the work involves a structure, infrastructure or works permitted within the proposed reserve;

(b) the work is carried out within the area of land or right-of-way subject to the right to use or occupy the land in the proposed reserve, whether the right results from a lease, servitude or other form of title, permit or authorization;

(c) the nature of the work or elements erected by the work will not operate to increase the area of land that may remain deforested beyond the limits permitted under the provisions applicable to the sale, lease and granting of immovable rights under the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State (R.S.Q., c. T-8.1) and, if applicable, the limits allowed under an authorization for the structure, works or infrastructure; and

(d) the work is carried out in compliance with the conditions of a permit or authorization issued for the work or in connection with the structure, infrastructure or works involved, and in accordance with the laws and regulations that apply.

For the purposes of this section, repair and upgrading work includes work to replace or erect works or facilities to comply with the requirements of an environmental regulation.

3.5. No person may bury, abandon or dispose of waste, snow or other residual materials elsewhere than in waste disposal containers, facilities or sites determined by the Minister or in another place with the authorization of the Minister and in compliance with the conditions the Minister determines.

Despite the first paragraph, an outfitting operation does not require an authorization to use a disposal facility or site in compliance with the Environment Quality Act and its regulations if the outfitting operation was already using the facility or site on the effective date of the protection status as a proposed reserve.

§2.2. Rules of conduct for users

3.6. Every person staying, carrying on an activity or travelling in the proposed reserve is required to maintain the premises in a satisfactory state and before leaving, return the premises to their natural state to the extent possible.

3.7. Every person who makes a campfire must

(1) first clear an area around the fire site sufficient to prevent the fire from spreading by removing all branches, scrub, dry leaves and other combustible material;

(2) ensure that the fire is at all times under the immediate supervision of a person on the premises; and

(3) ensure that the fire is completely extinguished before leaving the premises.

3.8. In the proposed reserve, no person may

- (1) cause any excessive noise;
- (2) behave in a manner that unduly disturbs other persons or interferes with their enjoyment of the proposed reserve; or
- (3) harass wildlife.

For the purposes of subparagraphs 1 and 2 of the first paragraph, behaviour that significantly disturbs other persons and constitutes unusual or abnormal conditions for the carrying on of an activity or for the permitted use of property, a device or an instrument within the proposed reserve is considered excessive or undue.

3.9. No person may enter, carry on an activity or travel in a vehicle in a given sector of the proposed reserve if the signage erected by the Minister restricts access, traffic or certain activities in order to protect the public from a danger or to avoid placing the fauna, flora or other components of the natural environment at risk, unless the person has been authorized by the Minister and complies with the conditions the Minister determines.

3.10. No person may destroy, remove, move or damage any poster, sign, notice or other types of signage posted by the Minister within the proposed reserve.

§2.3. Activities requiring an authorization

3.11. No person may occupy or use the same site in the proposed reserve for a period of more than 90 days in the same year, unless the person has been authorized by the Minister and complies with the conditions the Minister determines.

- (1) For the purposes of the first paragraph,
 - (a) the occupation or use of a site includes
 - i. staying or settling in the proposed reserve, including for vacation purposes;
 - ii. installing a camp or shelter in the proposed reserve; and
 - iii. installing, burying or leaving property in the proposed reserve, including equipment, any device or a vehicle;
 - (b) "same site" means any other site within a radius of 1 kilometre from the site.

- (2) Despite the first paragraph, no authorization is required if a person,

- (a) on the effective date of the protection status as a proposed reserve, was a party to a lease or had already obtained another form of right or authorization allowing the person to legally occupy the land under the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State or, if applicable, the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife (R.S.Q., c. C-61.1), and whose right to occupy the land is renewed or extended on the same conditions, subject to possible changes in fees;

(b) in accordance with the applicable provisions of law, has entitlement under a sublease, an assignment of a lease or a transfer of a right or authorization referred to in paragraph a, and whose right to occupy the land is renewed or extended on the same conditions, subject to possible changes in fees; or

(c) elects to acquire land the person legally occupies on the effective date of the protection status as a proposed reserve, pursuant to the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State.

3.12. (1) No person may carry on forest management activities to meet domestic needs or for the purpose of maintaining biodiversity, unless the person has been authorized by the Minister and carries on the activities in compliance with the conditions the Minister determines.

The conditions determined by the Minister for the authorization may pertain, among other things, to species of trees or shrubs, the size of the stems that may be cut, the quantities authorized and the places where the activities may be carried on.

(2) Despite subsection 1, the authorization of the Minister is not required if a person staying or residing in the proposed reserve collects wood to make a campfire.

An authorization is also not required if a person collects firewood to meet domestic needs in the following cases and on the following conditions:

(a) the wood is collected to supply a trapping camp or a rough shelter permitted within the proposed reserve if

i. the wood is collected by a person in compliance with the conditions set out in the permit for the harvest of firewood for domestic purposes issued by the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife under the Forest Act;

ii. the quantity of wood collected does not exceed 7 apparent cubic metres per year;

(b) in all other cases if

i. the wood is collected within a sector designated by the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife as a sector for which a permit for the harvest of firewood for domestic purposes under the Forest Act may be issued, and for which, on the effective date of the protection status as a proposed reserve, a designation as such had already been made by the Minister;

ii. the wood is collected by a person who, on the effective date of the protection status as a proposed reserve or in any of the three preceding years, held a permit for the harvest of firewood for domestic purposes allowing the person to harvest firewood within the proposed reserve;

iii. the wood is collected by a person in compliance with the conditions set out in the permit for the harvest of firewood for domestic purposes issued by the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife under the Forest Act.

(3) Despite subsection 1, an authorization to carry on a forest management activity is not required if a person authorized by lease to occupy land within the proposed reserve in accordance with this conservation plan carries on the forest management activity for the purpose of

(a) clearing the permitted areas, maintaining them or creating visual openings, or any other similar removal work permitted under the provisions governing the sale, lease and granting of immovable rights under the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State, including work for access roads, stairs and other trails permitted under those provisions; or

(b) clearing the necessary area for the installation, connection, maintenance, repair, reconstruction or upgrading of facilities, lines or mains for water, sewer, electric power or telecommunications services.

If the work referred to in paragraph *b* of subsection 3 is carried on for or under the responsibility of an enterprise providing any of those services, the work requires the prior authorization of the Minister, other than in the case of the exemptions in sections 3.13 and 3.15.

(4) Despite subsection 1, an authorization to carry on a forest management activity to maintain a sugar bush and harvest maple products for domestic needs is not required if

(a) the activity is carried on by a person who, on the effective date of the protection status as a proposed reserve or in any of the three preceding years, held a sugar bush management permit issued by the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife under the Forest Act allowing the person to carry on within the proposed reserve the activities associated with operating a sugar bush;

(b) the activity is carried on within a zone for which the permit obtained allowed the carrying on of sugar bush operations on the effective date of the protection status as a proposed reserve or in any of the three preceding years; or

(c) the activity is carried on by a person in compliance with the conditions set out in the sugar bush management permit issued by the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife under the Forest Act.

§ 2.4. Authorization exemptions

3.13. Despite the preceding provisions, an authorization is not required for an activity or other form of intervention within the proposed reserve if urgent action is necessary to prevent harm to the health or safety of persons, or to repair or prevent damage caused by a real or apprehended disaster. The person concerned must, however, immediately inform the Minister of the activity or intervention that has taken place.

3.14. The members of a Native community who, for food, ritual or social purposes, carry on an intervention or an activity within the proposed reserve are exempted from obtaining an authorization.

For greater certainty, the provisions of this conservation plan also apply subject to the authorization exemptions and other provisions in the Act respecting hunting and fishing rights in the James Bay and New Québec territories (R.S.Q., c. D-13.1).

3.15. Despite the preceding provisions, the following activities and interventions involving the transmission, distribution or production of electricity carried out by Hydro-Québec (Société) or by any other person for Hydro-Québec do not require the prior authorization of the Minister under this conservation plan:

(1) any activity or intervention required within the proposed reserve to complete a project for which express authorization had previously been given by the Government and the Minister, or only by the Minister, in accordance with the Environment Quality Act (R.S.Q., c. Q-2), if the activity or intervention is carried out in compliance with the authorizations issued;

(2) any activity or intervention necessary for the preparation and presentation of a pre-project report for a project requiring an authorization under the Environment Quality Act;

(3) any activity or intervention relating to a project requiring the prior authorization of the Minister under the Environment Quality Act if the activity or intervention is in response to a request for a clarification or for additional information made by the Minister to the Société, and the activity or intervention is carried out in conformity with the request; and

(4) any activity or intervention by the Société, if the conditions for the carrying out of the activity or intervention have been determined in an agreement between the Minister and the Société and the activity or intervention is carried out in compliance with those conditions.

The Société is to keep the Minister informed of the various activities or interventions referred to in this section it proposes to carry out before the work is begun in the reserve.

For the purposes of this section, the activities and interventions of the Société include but are not restricted to pre-project studies, analysis work or field research, work required to study and ascertain the impact of electric power transmission and distribution line corridors and rights-of-way, geological or geophysical surveys and survey lines, and the opening and maintenance of roads required for the purpose of access, construction or equipment movement incidental to the work.

§2.5. General provisions

3.16. Every person who applies to the Minister for an individual authorization or an authorization for a group or a number of persons must provide all information or documents requested by the Minister for the examination of the application.

3.17. The Minister's authorization, which is general or for a group, may be communicated for the benefit of the persons concerned by any appropriate means including a posted notice or appropriate signage at

the reception centre or any other location within the proposed reserve that is readily accessible to the public. The Minister may also provide a copy to any person concerned.

§3. *Activities governed by other statutes*

Certain activities likely to be carried on within the proposed reserve are also governed by other legislative and regulatory provisions, including provisions that require the issue of a permit or authorization or the payment of fees. Certain activities may also be prohibited or limited by other Acts or regulations that are applicable within the proposed reserve.

A special legal framework may govern permitted activities within the proposed reserves in connection with the following matters:

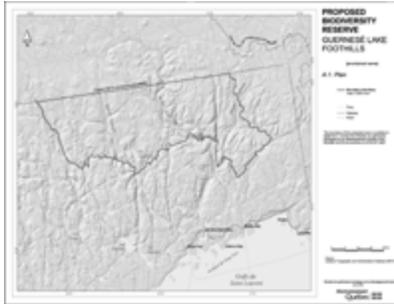
- Environmental protection: measures set out in particular in the Environment Quality Act (R.S.Q., c. Q-2) and its regulations;
- Removal of species of flora designated as threatened or vulnerable: measures set out in the Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species (R.S.Q., c. E-12.01) prohibiting the removal of such species;
- Development and conservation of wildlife resources: measures set out in particular in the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife (R.S.Q., c. C-61.1), including the provisions pertaining to outfitting operations and beaver reserves and the measures contained in applicable federal legislation, in particular the fishery regulations; in Northern regions: special measures set out in the Act respecting hunting and fishing rights in the James Bay and New Québec territories (R.S.Q., c. D-13.1);
- Archaeological research: measures set out in particular in the Cultural Property Act (R.S.Q., c. B-4);
- Access and land rights related to the domain of the State: measures set out in particular in the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State (R.S.Q., c. T-8.1) and in the Watercourses Act (R.S.Q., c. R-13) and, in Northern regions, in the Act respecting the land regime in the James Bay and New Québec territories (R.S.Q., c. R-13.1);
- Operation of vehicles: measures set out in particular in the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State (R.S.Q., c. T-8.1) and in the regulation respecting motor vehicle traffic in certain fragile environments made under the Environment Quality Act;
- Construction and development standards: regulatory measures adopted by regional and local municipal authorities under the Acts applicable to them.

4. Permanent protection status

The permanent protection status envisaged for the reserve is “biodiversity reserve” status under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*.

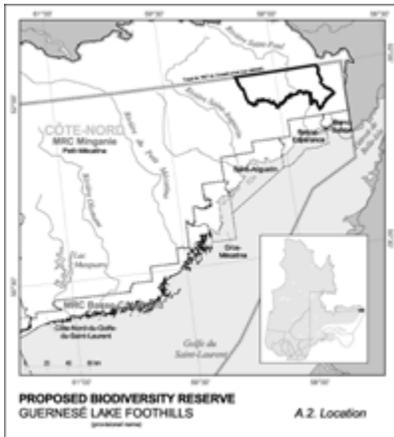
Schedule

A.1. Plan of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve



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A.2. Map showing the location of the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve



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A.3. Map showing land occupation and uses in the proposed Guernesé lake foothills biodiversity reserve



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