

Species at risk

While the Budget 2021 Enhanced Nature Legacy investment added \$377 million over five years to support recovery actions for priority species, renewal of the main program in Budget 2023 was at a much lower level and shorter time frame compared to 2018 levels – \$184 million over three years. Meanwhile populations of species at risk continue to decline, threats to wildlife populations across the country are increasing, and the list of Schedule 1 species under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) continues to grow. A top-up of resources is needed in the 2024 budget, along with stronger action at the political level, to fulfill legal responsibilities under SARA and commitments in the KMGBC.

Recommended Investment:
\$313 million over two years, then
\$293 million per year, ongoing
 [ECCC, DFO, PC]

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Ecological connectivity

Ecological connectivity is vitally important to ensuring effective protected area networks that conserve nature. It is also critical to tackle top threats to biodiversity: habitat loss, fragmentation, and climate change. A number of goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Framework emphasize the fundamental contribution that ecological connectivity makes to healthy functioning ecosystems and species, and achieving the framework’s objectives. Federal investment is needed for a nation-wide connectivity fund to support work by Crown and Indigenous governments, NGOs, and private interests to conserve areas identified as important for ecological connectivity, create effective mitigation measures to improve connectivity of fragmented landscapes, and to advance connectivity conservation.

Recommended Investment:
\$500 million over five years [ECCC, PC]

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Key Biodiversity Areas

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity, and are essential to meeting targets in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.¹⁰³ Many KBAs will be in southern Canada, including in and around urban areas, and their conservation will provide benefits to Canadians (Targets 11 & 12). An initiative to identify KBAs in Canada began in 2019, and work to identify additional ecosystem KBAs will continue until December 2025. As the identification period of the program winds down, efforts to develop and implement national monitoring and stewardship plans for KBAs will increase. Canada’s Nature Legacy renewal should include funding to finalize the identification of Canada’s Key Biodiversity Areas. It should also implement a monitoring and stewardship

¹⁰³ KBAs are a critical component of spatial planning (Target 1) to ensure that we direct conservation action to the most critical places for nature. The identification of KBAs will support the strategic design of protected and conserved areas (Target 3), focus restoration efforts to priority ecosystems (Target 2), and support the recovery of threatened species (Target 4) by conserving critical habitats.



Photo: Jeremy Hines

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program to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030 (Target 1).

Recommended Investment:
\$3 million over six years [ECCC, PC]

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Endowment fund to strengthen private land conservation sector

The land trust sector plays an important role in implementing the KMGBF's goals and the protection of land in the most threatened areas of Canada. The Green Budget Coalition recommends establishing a Canada Conservation Endowment Fund, modelled on the Canada Cultural Investment Fund¹⁰⁴ or the Green Municipalities Fund, to strengthen the private land conservation sector by providing long-term financial stability for land trusts and other organizations that hold conserved private land in perpetuity. Such a fund would help meet KMGBF Targets 1, 3, and 4 and propel the acquisition and effective stewardship of protected lands.¹⁰⁵

Recommended Investment:
\$300 million over three years, that would be matched 1:1 by private sources. [ECCC]

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¹⁰⁴ The Canada Cultural Investment Fund (CCIF) encourages private sector investment, partnership, and sound business practices to help arts and heritage organizations be better rooted and recognized in their communities through Endowment Incentives.

¹⁰⁵ Canada's land trust sector has shown its ability to conserve and steward lands effectively. A 2019 revision of the Canadian Land Trust Standards & Practices has seen renewed support and endorsement to build the sector's long-term success and capacity. Similar to the culture sector, the land trust community must exist organizationally – it must have long-term offices, legal expertise, communications, education, and outreach to successfully steward protected lands and acquire more lands while combating the impacts of climate change and the immediate threat of biodiversity loss.

Conserving Canada's ocean

Marine protected area (MPA) network planning and marine spatial planning (MSP) are essential tools to implement Target 1 of the KMGBF for coasts and oceans. Target 1 seeks to “[e]nsure that all areas are under participatory, integrated and biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land-and sea-use change” and aims to stop the loss of areas of high ecological importance and integrity.

If the current serious declines in ocean biodiversity are to be halted and reversed, it is critical that Marine Protected Area networks are the first priority in any spatial planning initiatives. MSP can enhance the performance of MPA networks by ensuring that the management of any marine uses outside of MPAs is complementary to the conservation objectives, thereby supporting connectivity between MPAs and providing for buffer zones around MPAs.

Marine protected area network planning

The Government of Canada has committed to completing marine protected area (MPA) networks in five priority marine bioregions though none have yet been completed. By ensuring ecological connectivity between protected areas, MPA networks amplify conservation benefits and more effectively address climate impacts by allowing species to move between sites while remaining protected. MPA network planning processes in BC's Northern Shelf Bioregion and the Scotian Shelf-Bay of Fundy region are furthest ahead, but there remains considerable work to do and significant funding will be needed to support successful implementation. MPA network planning is an integrated and inclusive process that requires considerable investment to ensure effective stakeholder engagement, science support, and capacity building and engagement of partner organizations, including other federal agencies, Indigenous, provincial and territorial governments.

Recommended Investment:
\$160 million over five years to complete MPA network planning processes already underway and to start MPA network planning in four additional bioregions by 2030. [DFO, PC, ECCC]