

2025 Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Parliament of Canada on behalf of the Auditor General of Canada

Canada is not meeting its commitments in establishing protected and conserved marine and coastal areas

Ottawa, November 6, 2025—A report released today by Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development Jerry V. DeMarco on behalf of the Auditor General of Canada concludes that Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, and Environment and Climate Change Canada were not on track to establish protected and conserved areas covering 25% of marine and coastal ecosystems by 2025. As well, the 3 organizations did not develop a plan to establish an ecologically based network that covers 30% of marine and coastal areas by 2030.

To help safeguard the critical role that oceans play to support biodiversity and climate stability, Canada committed to conserve 25% of marine and coastal areas in Canada by 2025. Progress in completing the network of protected and conserved areas will also help provide certainty for decision-making on projects of national importance. However, as of March 2025, only 15.5% of Canada's marine and coastal areas had been protected and conserved.

Canada further committed to conserve 30% of marine and coastal areas by 2030, such as areas important to biodiversity and the healthy functioning of ecosystems while respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples. The audit found that the 3 federal organizations had completed important steps toward the 2030 target, such as identifying candidate areas and engaging with Indigenous peoples. However, the organizations had not updated their collaborative framework to achieve the quantitative and qualitative targets.

The audit also found that the 3 federal organizations had not developed clear guidance to implement the federal marine protection standard prohibiting harmful activities such as oil and gas exploration, mining, and bottom trawling.

“Urgent action is needed to sustain the health of marine and coastal areas, which play a critical role in addressing the biodiversity and climate crises,” Mr. DeMarco said. “The federal government can still complete a network that protects and conserves 30% of marine and coastal areas, even if it misses the 2025 target.”

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The 2025 Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Establishing Marine Protected Areas, is available on the Office of the Auditor General of Canada website. This audit is 1 of 3 reports focused on protected and conserved areas across Canada. The 2 other audits are Establishing Terrestrial Protected Areas and Federal-Indigenous Management of Protected Areas.

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