

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

Federal organizations worked cooperatively with Indigenous partners to protect ecologically significant 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 Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Parks Canada worked with Indigenous governments and organizations to implement cooperative management models for protected areas in a manner consistent with reconciliation.

Protecting ecologically significant terrestrial and marine areas helps preserve biodiversity, safeguard ecosystems, and support the continuity of Indigenous culture. The audit found that the 3 federal organizations supported long-term objectives for cooperatively managed protected areas by providing annual funding and resources such as training to Indigenous partners. The 3 federal organizations also worked together in meaningful ways to weave Indigenous Knowledge, values, and priorities into the management of protected areas.

The audit highlighted risks that could hinder the ability of the 3 organizations to further strengthen relationships with Indigenous partners. For instance, current funding allocations are unlikely to meet the longer-term needs of the programs and policies that support the cooperative management processes. Existing federal legislation also gives the responsible minister final authority over certain matters in protected areas, which can make it challenging for the 3 organizations to meet Indigenous peoples' expectations for shared decision making and self-determination.

“To achieve its goal of building a resilient network of protected and conserved areas that covers 30% of Canada by 2030, the federal government will need to continue prioritizing cooperative management models,” Mr. DeMarco said. “Advancing federal-Indigenous cooperation supports reconciliation, protects biodiversity, and fosters sustainable economies.”

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The 2025 Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Federal-Indigenous Management of 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 Establishing Marine Protected Areas.

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