



Boreal Forest Conservation Framework Action Plan for 2007-2008

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a large non-profit organization, based in the United States with conservation programs in 30 countries. Our mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. TNC has significant conservation interests across North America, and one of TNC's primary goals in Canada is to maintain the ecological integrity of the boreal forest region across the country. TNC will accomplish this goal by working with partners, in particular the companies, non-governmental organizations and First Nations aligned with the Canadian Boreal Initiative and the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework.

TNC has entered into a MOU with the Canadian Boreal Initiative, committing to work cooperatively on issues of interest to both parties to take action to support the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework. TNC's expertise in conservation science and land use planning methodologies, its relationships with key industry entities such as major purchasers of forest products sourced in the Canadian boreal, and its reputation as an organization that helps develop the capacity of in-country partners through the transfer of technical and financial resources, can contribute to the vision and goal outlined within the Canadian Boreal Framework to conserve the cultural, sustainable economic, and natural values of the ecoregion.

The following Action Plan identifies the work that TNC will undertake in the coming year in support of fulfilling the shared vision to sustain the ecological and cultural integrity of the Canadian Boreal region, in perpetuity.

1) Link between actions and core organizational/business strategies

TNC's Canada/US Partnership program was formally established 10 years ago to provide a bridge for scientific and financial support to the work of conservation partners in Canada. In the initial years of the program work, this support was focused on the shared ecoregions along the southern Canada border with the lower 48 states in the US. In 2004, TNC began to explore ideas for redirecting its program support to larger landscapes within Canada, with particular focus on the boreal forest region. Between January and May 2005, building off of existing knowledge and experience of its Canada program staff, The Nature Conservancy conducted an analysis of the ecological, political and social context for working in the Canadian boreal forest. A team of Conservancy staff, trustees and partners was formed as a steering committee and oversaw a comparative analysis of the goals and strategies proposed by the Canadian Boreal Initiative with those of "Conservation by Design" (TNC's official methodology for applying its conservation work). It evaluated the capacity of the Conservancy and reviewed the findings of science, philanthropy, and operational working groups.

TNC's strategic plan for the Canadian boreal work builds off the findings of the analysis, and proposes a well-managed and sequenced approach to Conservancy involvement in the boreal over the next five years. TNC will invest \$4.75 million (US) in philanthropic funds over five years (FY06-FY10) to staff and operate a program to address this opportunity. Private funds provided to the Conservancy for this purpose will complement investments made across the boreal by the Canadian Boreal Initiative, World Wildlife Fund, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ducks Unlimited, ForestEthics and other partners; will catalyze increased involvement from industry players in Canada and the United States; and will add leverage to investments from the Canadian government – including \$9 million (CAN) already committed in the Northwest Territories for new protected areas in the Mackenzie River Valley.

In addition to the specific strategic planning within the Canada/US partnership, the proposed work in Canada's boreal forest strongly supports The Nature Conservancy's 2015 Goal. The 2015 Goal states that TNC shall work with others to ensure the effective conservation of places that represent at least 10% of every Major Habitat Type on Earth. Such an aggressive conservation goal can only be achieved through strong collaborations and partnerships. The Boreal Forest Conservation Framework provides an invaluable link to conservation partners in Canada to help TNC reach its goal relative to the Boreal Forest major habitat type.

To help make progress toward the shared Framework vision in which 50% of the Canadian boreal is conserved in a network of protected areas and the remaining 50% is sustainably managed, TNC will invest in two focal program areas:

1. Abating the threats from unsustainable forest management practices in the southern commercial portion of the boreal (through a pilot project and other activities centered on integrating High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) identification, management and formal protection); and
2. Abating multiple threats on one large landscape through strategies derived from comprehensive conservation planning, including implementation of a protected areas network (through focus on Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy (NWT PAS) and land use planning in the Mackenzie Valley).

2) Scientific and traditional ecological knowledge research

What research actions are you planning that will inform better conservation planning?

1. Work with NWT PAS partners to use the hydrologic model TNC recently completed for the Mackenzie River Basin to identify ecologically important and representative freshwater environments in the NWT.
2. Build on the foundation of the coarse scale NWT climate change analysis we developed for the August 2006 Joint Review Panel hearings and develop more detailed analyses using newly available, finer scale data and integrating dynamic permafrost models. We will use this analysis to make recommendations on the location and extent of protected areas and on land management practices and thresholds, with the goal of integrating resilience to climate change into the final protected areas design.

3. Integrate fine filter and special elements data (e.g., caribou and grizzly bear models) into the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) Goal 2 analyses as they become available.
4. Develop and apply methods for successful integration of Goal 1 and Goal 2 outcomes (integrated sufficiency analysis approach) for the NWT PAS.
5. Provide conservation science support (as needed) to WWF and other partners testifying at Joint Review Panel hearings on the Mackenzie Gas Project.
6. On the request of the NWT PAS Managing Director, we will develop and propose a framework for ecological monitoring on candidate and existing protected areas in the NWT.
7. Develop improved methods for quantifying and spatially delineating forests that provide basic services of nature at or above HCVF thresholds.
8. In partnership with WWF and others continue work on the NE Ontario HCVF pilot project. Specific activities to include:
 - Compile and spatially delineate the conservation landscape composed of HCVFs, protected areas, other conservation reserves identified in the existing provincial regulations and forest management guidelines (e.g. riparian reserves, Areas of Concern), and additional management zones identified in the FSC process outside of HCVFs and protected areas that have a conservation intent;
 - Document and/or recommend suitable management prescriptions to maintain the attributes for which HCVFs were selected;
 - Provide stronger scientific support for select HCVF identification and management.
 - Work with select tenure holders on protected areas issues that have expressed a specific interest to address this issue in collaboration with local government staff

3) Land use planning

What actions are being undertaken to improve land-use planning and the designation of areas for sustainable development and preservation?

1. Work with WWF Canada, Wildlands League, Domtar, Tembec, and other First Nations and local NGO partners to implement the NE Ontario HCVF pilot project. This pilot project will demonstrate integrated HCVF identification, management, and formal protection on multiple forest tenures within one region. We will work with the provincial government and other partners to further demonstrate how HCVFs can be formally protected and integrated into regional conservation and land use plans. We will establish partnerships with First Nations, industry, government, and conservation groups to identify the forest tenures to serve as the pilot project site.
2. Continued fundraising support and collaboration with the Conservation Biology Institute, Global Forest Watch and other Advisory Group partners to expand the Boreal Information Center. This year we will make the BIC resources publicly available to support conservation planning throughout the boreal region. We will also further develop the BIC business model to foster a stable financial future and ensure that the BIC's information resources remain up-to-date and highly relevant to various forms of conservation planning.

3. Encourage forest product producers to participate in certification and HCVF assessments via our corporate partnerships, and engage wood products customers to design appropriate company procurement policies, including ecologically responsible certification.
4. Develop and disseminate tools that help forest practitioners apply and implement the HCVF framework, including the WWF/TNC HCVF support document, the Boreal Data Center, and guidance on HCVF management.
5. Complete on-going research on special management zone conditions for the Sahtu in support of their land use planning process.
4. Work with the NWT PAS Ecological Working Group to develop a communication strategy and tools around PAS Goals 1 and 2 integration.

4) Protected areas designations

What actions will you undertake to identify deferrals and protected areas?

1. The primary focus of our work in the Mackenzie Valley is to identify ecologically representative, candidate protected areas for all of the Mackenzie Valley ecoregions outside of the Inuvialuit Settlement Area. Evaluate and combine areas identified through the Goal 2 process (ecological representation) with areas identified through the Goal 1 process (culturally/community important areas) and produce a complete, integrated draft set of candidate protected areas.
2. Work with partners to inform the GNWT Joint Review Panel hearings with conservation science, and support partners' request that existing candidate protected areas be formally protected and interim areas moved to candidate status in advance of pipeline construction.
3. Launch HCVF pilot project which will in part focus on securing formal protected areas designations for HCVFs.

5) Innovative policy development supporting Framework principles

Provincial and federal policy development that supports the vision of the Framework signatories is critical to the long-term success of the Boreal initiative. What policy and regulatory actions have been undertaken to advance Framework goals?

As part of the HCVF pilot project we will work through partners with provincial officials to advocate for a establishing a system through which identified HCVFs within forest tenures can more easily be moved from deferral status to formal provincial protection.

As we add our Canadian-based staff to our team (see # 8 below) we hope to be able to support our Canadian partners in the policy arena.

6) Promotion of economic and cultural sustainability in the boreal region

What actions will you undertake to support sustainable economic benefits to boreal communities?

TNC has long recognized that successful conservation cannot be accomplished by separating land protection from sustainable economic and community development in a region. TNC's direct mission and skill set is not in the economic development arena, or in shaping market demand for certain products. But we do have experience in working collaboratively on

community based conservation planning that addresses identification and protection of ecological services for a community or region. We also support well managed lands that sustain both the conservation goals for an area as well as the long term protection of resources relied upon by the community.

Our recent partnership with groups seeking protection of the “Great Bear Rainforest” on coastal British Columbia provides an innovative model of matching science-based identification of critical protected areas with economic development opportunities for local communities. While none of our 2007-8 planned activities directly address economic and cultural sustainability, we hope to apply the Great Bear model in the boreal in the future.

7) *Recognition of aboriginal rights*

Will any actions affect aboriginal lands or involve an issue of aboriginal rights? Please describe how your actions will address/support aboriginal rights and what types of collaboration are planned.

1. The Mackenzie Valley planning work centers on evaluating and combining areas identified through the Goal 2 process (ecological representation) with areas identified by First Nations through the Goal 1 process (culturally/community important areas) to produce a complete, integrated draft set of candidate protected areas.
2. We will work with partners to provide conservation science support and integrate ecological information and conservation science methods into the Sahtu land use planning process; and to help build capacity for long-term conservation implementation by the Sahtu community.
3. We anticipate working with the appropriate First Nation(s) within the HCVF pilot project as we work to advocate for final decisions on new protected areas.

8) *Actual or potential impediments*

Briefly summarize areas of concern where other signatories may be of assistance in addressing.

As a US based NGO, TNC faces hurdles in working with different levels of government in Canada around strategy implementation. For this reason, it's very important that we work in partnership with others on the Boreal Leadership Council and elsewhere to effectively integrate our work with others, and to reach audiences within NWT, the federal government, and in the location for the HCVF pilot project. The complex nature of the conservation work within the Mackenzie Valley, and the number of NGO participants working there, highlights the ongoing need for consistent NGO coordination and communication. This is a role that CBI can very effectively play in convening and facilitating coordination around the Mackenzie PAS work. Without this coordination, investment of our resources and staff time becomes more challenging.

This year we expect to hire 3-4 staff that will be based in Canada (a forest ecologist based in Ontario, 1-2 conservation science/GIS staff based in Yellowknife, and an external affairs position, location to be determined). We will continue to look to our partners for guidance on how we can best complement and support their activities with this added staff capacity. Finally, we will need to rely on the expertise and connections of our partners to help us build relationships with First Nations to best support their conservation needs.