

Northwest Territories

Territoires du Nord-Ouest

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Front and Back Cover Photo: Thaidene Nëné by Julien Schroder, GNWT





Hidden Lake Territorial Park. Photo: Liam Cowan

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the state of the conservation network in the Northwest Territories (NWT). It meets the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) responsibility to report on conservation efforts in the NWT every five years as a requirement of the NWT *Protected Areas Act*.

The NWT is a vast and rich land that is home to a variety of living things (biodiversity). The GNWT is committed to conserving biodiversity and supporting cultural continuity as a way to maintain the health of the environment and wellness of communities. The GNWT can continue to keep our land healthy for current and future generations by working with partners to plan, establish, and manage protected areas and conservation areas through a variety of mechanisms.

The existing protected areas and conservation areas in the NWT make up the conservation network, which is administered by territorial, federal, and Indigenous governments as well as Indigenous organizations. Together, these areas preserve the land, water, and ways of living more effectively than any single protected area.

The conservation network safeguards ecosystem services (i.e. food, fuel, medicines, raw materials, air, water, land, wildlife, and forests) that contribute substantially to economic and human well-being. Maintaining the conservation network ensures plants and animals have the time and space to adapt to changes in their environment by protecting important habitats and connections between habitats.

In 2024, the conservation network covers 17.6% of NWT land and fresh water. This is an increase of 8.4% since the first State of the Conservation Network Report was released in 2016. This increase largely stems from recognizing conservation areas as part of the conservation network instead of just protected areas, as well as the establishment of new protected areas and a new conservation area. A new marine protected area has also been established.

The conservation network has advanced in other important ways. A few notable successes include:

- 29 out of the 45 ecoregions in the NWT now have a moderate or higher degree of ecological representation;
- more than 60% of NWT watersheds now have portions that overlap the conservation network; and
- the conservation network now protects a portion of habitat for 88% of species considered at risk in the NWT.

Established in 2019, Thaidene Nëné and Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta Territorial Protected Areas are of significant cultural importance to Indigenous Peoples who have cared for these lands since time immemorial. These areas are dually designated as territorial protected areas under the NWT *Protected Areas Act* and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) using Indigenous laws. Making decisions about and taking care of these areas is the shared responsibility of the management partners. Where applicable, these partners can include the GNWT, the Government of Canada, and the Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations that are signatory to establishment agreements or impact benefit agreements.



Red-winged Blackbird. Photo: Liam Cowan





Barn Swallow, a species at risk. Photo: Gordon Court

Le présent rapport vise à défaire le point sur l'état du réseau de conservation aux Territoires du Nord-Ouest (TNO). La *Loi sur les aires protégées* des TNO oblige le gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO) à présenter, tous les cinq ans, un rapport sur les efforts de conservation entrepris aux Territoires du Nord-Ouest.

Les TNO sont un territoire vaste et riche où vivent toute une variété d'êtres vivants (biodiversité). Le GTNO est déterminé à protéger cette biodiversité et à soutenir la continuité culturelle pour maintenir la santé de l'environnement et le mieux-être des collectivités. C'est en collaborant avec des partenaires et en ayant recours à divers mécanismes de planification, de création et de gestion des aires protégées et de conservation que le GTNO pourra continuer de garder les terres saines pour les générations actuelles et futures.

Les aires protégées et les aires de conservation existantes aux TNO forment ce qu'on appelle le réseau de conservation. Celui-ci est géré par les gouvernements territorial, fédéral et autochtones. Conjointement, ces aires permettent de préserver les terres, l'eau et les modes de vie plus efficacement que n'importe quelle aire protégée en elle-même.

Le réseau de conservation protège les écoservices (p. ex. la nourriture, les combustibles, les produits médicinaux, les matières premières, l'air, l'eau, les terres, la faune et les forêts) qui contribuent considérablement au bien-être économique et humain. En protégeant les habitats importants et les liens qui les unissent, nous assurons le maintien du réseau de conservation, ce qui donne aux plantes et aux animaux le temps et l'espace nécessaires pour s'adapter aux changements de leur environnement.

Le réseau de conservation comprend 17,6 % des terres et de l'eau douce des TNO. Il s'agit d'une augmentation de 8,4 % depuis le tout premier Rapport sur l'état du réseau de conservation publié en 2016. Cette augmentation est largement due à la reconnaissance des aires de conservation comme faisant partie intégrante du réseau de conservation plutôt que comme simples aires protégées, et à la création de nouvelles aires protégées et aires de conservation. Une nouvelle aire protégée marine a également été créée.

Le réseau de conservation a évolué sur d'autres plans importants. Parmi les succès les plus remarquables, mentionnons :

- la représentation écologique de 29 des 45 écorégions des TNO est aujourd'hui modérée ou plus élevée;
- plus de 60 % des bassins versants des TNO ont désormais des portions qui chevauchent le réseau de conservation;
- le réseau de conservation protège maintenant une partie de l'habitat de 88 % des espèces considérées en péril aux TNO.

Créées en 2019, les aires protégées territoriales de Thaidene Nëné et de Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta revêtent une importance culturelle significative pour les peuples autochtones qui prennent soin de ces terres depuis des temps immémoriaux. Ces aires ont toutes deux été désignées « aires protégées » en vertu de la *Loi sur les aires protégées* des TNO, et Aires protégées et de conservation autochtones (APCA), selon les lois autochtones. La prise de décisions concernant ces aires protégées ainsi que leur gestion sont sous la responsabilité partagée de partenaires de cogestion qui comprennent, s'il y a lieu, le GTNO, le gouvernement du Canada et les gouvernements autochtones qui sont signataires d'ententes de création ou d'ententes sur les répercussions et les avantages.



Northern Mountain Caribou, a species at risk. Photo: Alasdair Veitch, GNWT



Conservation Network Planning in the NWT



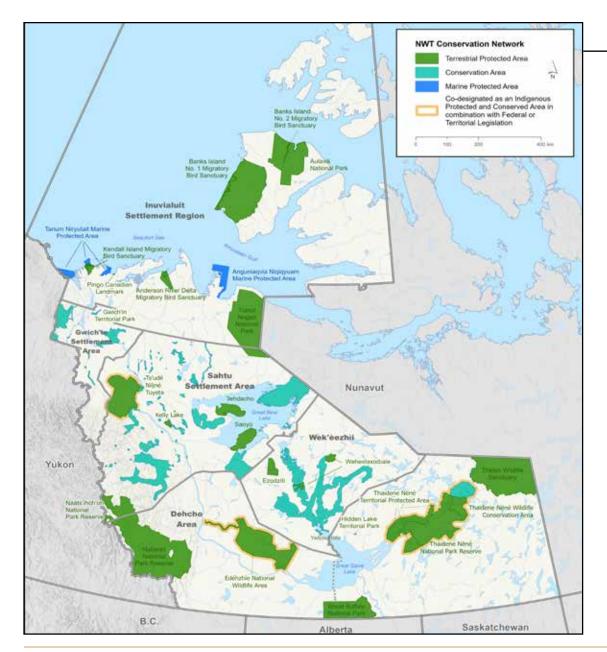
Common Muskrat. Photo: Liam Cowan

What is the conservation network?

The conservation network is a collection of protected areas and conservation areas

The conservation network is comprised of protected areas and conservation areas. Together, these areas preserve NWT's lands, waters, and ways of living more effectively than any single protected area alone.

Currently, the conservation network consists of 26 terrestrial protected areas and conservation areas (7 of which have a marine component), and 2 *Oceans Act* marine protected areas (see Map 1 and Appendix 1). The areas within the conservation network are administered by various territorial, federal, and Indigenous governments.



Map 1: The Northwest Territories conservation network with protected areas shown in green, conservation areas shown in turquoise, marine protected areas shown in blue, and areas co-designated as Indigenous protected and conserved areas outlined in gold.

Protected areas are permanent and free of industrial development

Protected areas ensure culturally significant areas, wildlife habitats, and healthy, functioning ecosystems remain unimpaired for future generations. The establishment of protected areas is internationally recognized as the most effective and proactive way to conserve the land in perpetuity.

Terrestrial protected areas can include:

- Territorial Protected Areas
- Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA¹)
- National Parks / National Park Reserves
- National Historic Sites
- Wildlife Sanctuaries
- Canadian Landmarks
- Migratory Bird Sanctuaries
- Areas protected under a land claim agreement

Marine protected areas can include:

- Areas protected under the *Oceans Act*
- Marine portions of terrestrial protected areas, such as Migratory Bird Sanctuaries

¹ On public land an IPCA designation, on its own, does not add legal protection to an area. If co-designated with a territorial, provincial, or federal protected area or conservation area designation, legal protection exists. On Indigenous owned land, an IPCA designation may, on its own, provide legal protection.



Grizzly Bear, a species at risk. Photo: Gordon Court



Mountains in the Sahtu Region. Photo: Liam Cowan, GNWT

Conservation areas offer complementary, but less restrictive protection

Conservation areas contribute to the conservation network by protecting geographically defined areas with cultural and/or ecological values. Conservation areas provide complementary, but less restrictive, protection than protected areas. For example, conservation areas could include areas such as Territorial Parks that have no subsurface protection or conservation zoning in approved regional land use plans that are subject to periodic review and potential plan amendments. The GNWT reports conservation areas as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).

Conservation areas can include:

- Territorial Parks.
- Wildlife Conservation Areas,
- Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA)
- Conservation Zones in approved regional land use plans

Why is the conservation network important?

The conservation network protects biodiversity

NWT lands are vast and rich with plants, animals, birds and insects (biodiversity). The conservation network helps to safeguard biodiversity, which provide the food, fuel, medicines, raw materials, air, water, land, wildlife, and forests Northerners depend on for social, economic, cultural, and spiritual well-being.

Protecting habitats and connectivity between habitats allows species to become more resilient to changes in their environment. The resiliency of species is especially important in northern landscapes, where changes in climate are occurring more rapidly and with greater ecological impacts compared to landscapes in the south.

The conservation network contributes to national and international targets

In 2022, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention of Biodiversity developed the Global Biodiversity Framework (Framework). The Government of Canada committed to the Framework by developing national targets aimed to help reverse the decline of biodiversity by 2030 and beyond. Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy outlines the vision and roadmap for halting and reversing biodiversity loss in Canada, including Target 3:

Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy Target 3: Protected and conserved areas (30x30)

Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and of
coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and
ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically
representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and
other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing

indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.²

The NWT conservation network contributes to, but is not based on, the national biodiversity target. While the GNWT engages in strategic conversations to support Canada's national biodiversity targets, it continues to collaborate with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, and partners on decisions related to the NWT conservation network.



American White Pelican, a species at risk.

Photo: Liam Cowan



Dınàgà Wek'èhodì. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT

² Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy: Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss in Canada, Page 35



Wolverine, a species at risk. Photo: Liam Cowan

Conservation planning

The GNWT is dedicated to a northern approach to conservation network planning that includes strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new relationships with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations. The GNWT is committed to working on a government-to-government basis to make changes that reflect the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Several planning tools are used to advance the conservation network, including:

- Healthy Land, Healthy People
- The NWT Protected Areas Act
- The State of the Conservation Network Report

Healthy Land, Healthy People

Healthy Land, Healthy People is the GNWT's workplan aimed to advance the conservation network. The workplan sets the priority outcomes and milestones to achieve over a five-year period.

Five priority outcomes were identified in the most recent *Healthy Land, Healthy People: GNWT priorities for NWT conservation network 2023-2028*, including:

- advance planning and decision-making on establishing candidate areas;
- support effective and equitable management of protected areas and conservation areas;
- inform and educate the public about the conservation network;
- pursue sustainable, long-term funding to establish, plan, manage, and operate protected areas; and
- support Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiatives.

The GNWT works collaboratively with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, and other partners to achieve these outcomes.

The NWT Protected Areas Act.

The NWT *Protected Areas Act* came into force in June 2019. It provides a legislative tool to ensure long-term protection of biodiversity, ecological integrity, and cultural continuity through the establishment of territorial protected areas. The Act allows us to protect the land and culture of the NWT in the context of a changing climate for current and future generations.

Two territorial protected areas have been established under the NWT *Protected Areas Act* since it came into effect. These are:

- Thaidene Nëné Territorial Protected Area; and
- Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta Territorial Protected Area.

Both of these protected areas were concurrently designated as IPCAs by Indigenous governments.

NWT State of the Conservation Network Report

The first NWT State of the Conservation Network Report was released in 2016 before the NWT *Protected Areas Act* was enacted. The report described the state of the conservation network as a whole, and the baseline indicators used to assess the health of protected areas. The State of the Conservation Network Report is now a legislated requirement under the NWT *Protected Areas Act*.

Every five years, the GNWT is required to report on:

- the overall state of the conservation network in the NWT;
- the state of protected areas established under the Act; and
- the status of candidate protected areas.

This report builds on the first State of the Conservation Network Report. It provides an update on how the conservation network has grown, and how this growth has affected some of the original baseline indicators. This report also identifies potential new indicators for use in future reports.



Northern Mountain Caribou, a species at risk. Photo: Liam Cowan, GNWT



The State of the Conservation Network



Fireweed. Photo: Liam Cowan

The conservation network has grown

The conservation network has expanded since the last State of the Conservation Network Report was released in 2016. It now covers 17.6% of NWT land and fresh water (see Appendix 1) compared to 9.2% in 2016. This growth of the conservation network is due to the establishment of new protected areas, recognizing conservation areas as part of the conservation network, and the establishment of a new conservation area.

Four new protected areas have been established

Four protected areas have been established in the NWT since 2016 when the first State of the Conservation Report was released. Together, these areas cover 3.5% of the NWT. These new protected areas are:

- Thaidene Nëné Territorial Protected Area;³
- Thaidene Nëné National Park Reserve;3
- Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta Indigenous Protected Area and Territorial Protected Area; and
- Edéhzhíe National Wildlife Area and Indigenous Protected Area.

³ Thaidene Nëné Indigenous Protected Area includes a Territorial Protected Area, a National Park Reserve, and a Wildlife Conservation Area.



Horned Grebe, a species at risk. Photo: Liam Cowan



Hidden Lake Territorial Park, Photo: Liam Cowan

One new marine protected area has been established

Anguniaqvia niqiqyuam Marine Protected Area was established in 2016, after the completion of the last State of the Conservation Network Report. This protected area joins Tarium Niryutait Marine Protected Area as the second *Oceans Act* marine protected area in the NWT. These federally protected areas, along with the marine component of terrestrial protected areas, now protect 5,316 km² of ocean, an increase of 2,315 km² since 2016 (see Appendix 1).

Existing conservation areas are now included

In 2016, the conservation network only included protected areas. Since then, existing conservation areas have been added to the conservation network because they are recognized as effectively safeguarding biodiversity and cultural continuity.

The following conservation areas are now part of the conservation network:

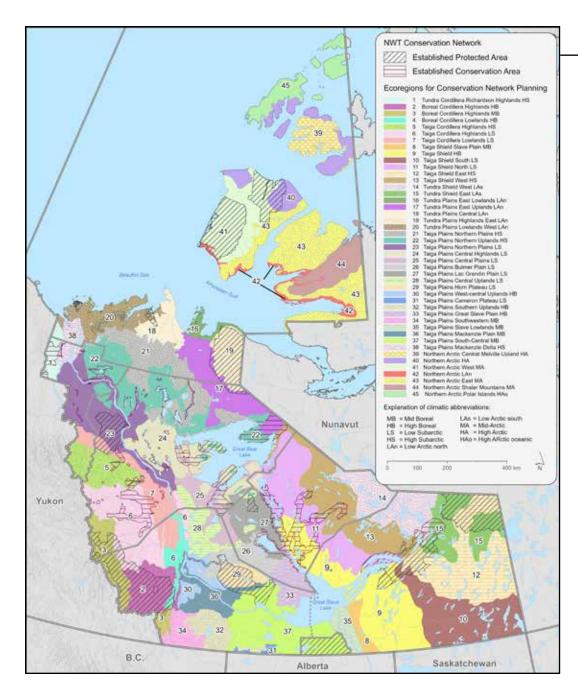
- Conservation and Heritage Conservation Zones in the Gwich'in Land Use Plan;
- Conservation Zones in the Sahtu Land Use Plan (LUP);
- Habitat Management, Traditional Use, and Cultural Heritage Zones in the Tłıcho LUP;⁴
- Gwich'in Territorial Park; and
- Hidden Lake Territorial Park.

One conservation area has been created and another has been enlarged

Thaidene Nëné Wildlife Conservation Area⁵ was established in 2022. The Sahtu LUP was updated, increasing the overall area of Conservation Zones in that plan by 4%.

⁴ Habitat Management, Traditional Use, and Cultural Heritage Zones in the Tłicho LUP have not yet been reported to CPCAD at the request of the Tłicho Government.

⁵ Thaidene Nëné Indigenous Protected Area includes a Territorial Protected Area, a National Park Reserve, and a Wildlife Conservation Area.



Map 2: The location of the 45 different ecoregions identified within the NWT relative to the location of protected areas and conservation areas.

How the GNWT assesses the health of the conservation network

The GNWT is currently using three indicators to assess the overall health of the conservation network. These indicators are described in the sections below.

Average degree of ecological representation

Ecological representation aims to conserve a portion of all landscape features in a region. It is an effective approach to conserving biodiversity because it considers broad landscapes as opposed to just one species at a time. It is based on the theory that the presence of certain plants and animals are dependent on the presence of certain landscape features, such as vegetation, soils, terrain, and climate. Protecting a broad spectrum of landscape features will, therefore, protect a broad spectrum of plants and animals.

Combinations of landscape features are often grouped together and referred to as ecoregions. A total of 45 ecoregions have been identified for conservation network planning (see Map 2), based on groupings of Level IV ecoregions from the revised NWT Ecosystem Classification System. Ecological representation is assessed for each ecoregion in the NWT.

Ecological representation is measured by determining how many of the ecoregion's landscape features overlap with protected areas and conservation areas compared to the total number of landscape features found in the ecoregion. The GNWT uses the average degree of ecological representation because many different landscape features are evaluated for each ecoregion.

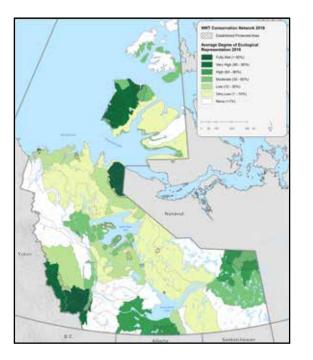
Average degree of ecological representation:

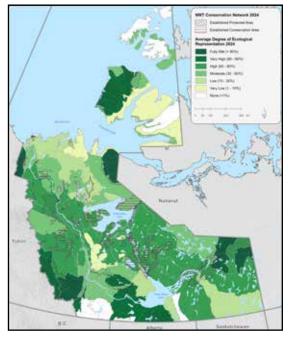
 What percentage of landscape features (e.g., vegetation, soils, and terrain) that comprise NWT ecoregions have a portion protected by the conservation network?

If more than 90% of the landscape features that comprise an ecoregion have a portion protected within the conservation network, then the average degree of ecological representation for that ecoregion is considered fully met. If 30-60% of the landscape features have a portion protected, then the average degree of ecological representation for that ecoregion is considered moderate.

The average degree of ecological representation within the conservation network has improved over time (see Map 3). The ecological representation of 29 ecoregions are now considered to be moderate or higher compared to 11 ecoregions in 2016.

Map 3: The average degree of ecological representation achieved by the conservation network in 2016 (left) and 2024 (right).





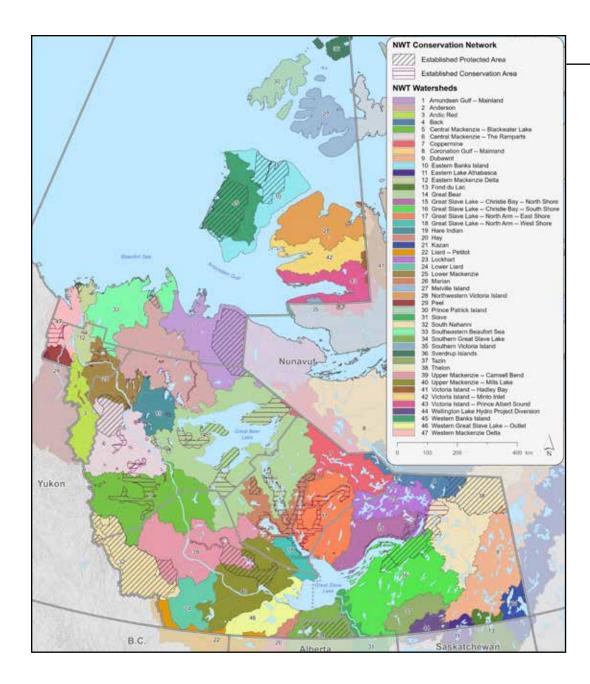
Watershed representation

Watershed representation is a coarse-scale indicator used by the GNWT to determine the percentage of watersheds in the NWT that are protected by the conservation network. It is determined by calculating the portion of an individual watershed that overlaps a protected or conservation area relative to the total area of the watershed in the NWT.

Watershed representation:

• What percentage of NWT watersheds are protected by the conservation network?

There are 47 different watersheds that occur in the NWT (see Map 4).



Map 4: The location of the 47 watersheds that occur in the NWT relative to the locations of protected areas and conservation areas.

Currently, 29 watersheds of the 47 in the NWT overlap with the conservation network. This is an increase from 18 watersheds that overlapped with the conservation network when the first State of the Conservation Network Report was released in 2016 (see Table 1 and Map 5).

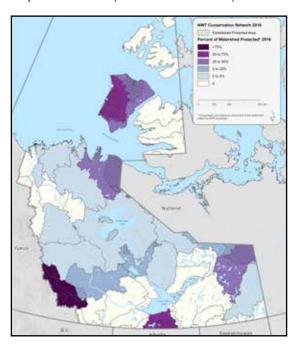
Ten watersheds that were represented in 2016 now have a larger percentage overlapping the conservation network (see Table 1 and Map 5). The watersheds with the largest increases are:

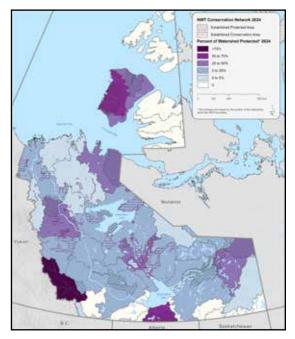
- Marian watershed with 34% more in the conservation network due to the addition of Conservation Zones in regional land use plans to the conservation network.
- Central Mackenzie The Ramparts watershed with 26% more in the conservation network due to the establishment of Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta and the addition of Conservation Zones in regional land use plans to the conservation network.

Table 1: Watersheds in the NWT with a greater percentage protected within the conservation network in 2024 compared to 2016.

	Percentage in conservation network	
Watershed	2016	2024
Anderson	1.1	4.0
Arctic Red	0.0	1.4
Central Mackenzie Blackwater Lake	0.2	11.8
Central Mackenzie The Ramparts	0.2	25.8
Coppermine	<0.1	1.1
Eastern Mackenzie Delta	3.6	6.0
Great Bear	4.1	17.9
Great Slave Lake Christie Bay North Shore	0.0	7.6
Great Slave Lake Christie Bay South Shore	0.0	16.7
Great Slave Lake North Arm East Shore	0.0	19.4
Great Slave Lake North Arm West Shore	0.0	5.9
Hare Indian	0.0	3.2
Lockhart	0.0	12.2
Lower Mackenzie	0.0	15.3
Marian	8.1	42.5
Peel	0.0	9.8
Southeastern Beaufort Sea	0.8	1.5
Thelon	32.5	42.9
Upper Mackenzie Camsell Bend	6.5	18.4
Upper Mackenzie Mills Lake	0.0	14.4
Western Mackenzie Delta	0.0	18.4

Map 5: Watershed representation achieved by the conservation network in 2016 (left) and 2024 (right).







Dehcho Region. Photo: Liam Cowan

Habitat representation for species at risk

The conservation network safeguards wildlife habitat. Expanding the conservation network greatly improves connectivity between habitats, providing wildlife with sufficient space to carry out their life requisites (e.g., finding food and mates). For NWT species at risk, protecting habitat and connectivity between habitats can provide the greatest chance of recovery.

Habitat representation for species at risk:

• What percentage of NWT species at risk habitat are found in the conservation network?

Currently, 46 of the 52 (88%) species considered to be at risk in the NWT have habitat within the conservation network. While there has been an overall increase in the number of species at risk in the NWT, the expansion of the conservation network during this time now protects a greater percentage of species at risk habitat.

The greatest increase in the percentage of protected habitat has occurred for the following species at risk:

- Dolly Varden (17.1%)
- Barn Swallow (11.8%)
- Boreal Caribou (10.8%)
- Barren-ground Caribou (10.1%)
- Northern Mountain Caribou (9.1%)

31 species currently considered at risk in the NWT have a greater percentage of their habitat found within the conservation network now compared to the percentage of their habitat that was protected in 2016 (see Table 2). For a full list of current species at risk in the NWT, please refer to Our Species at Risk | NWT Species at Risk.

Table 2: The 31 species at risk in the NWT with a greater percentage of habitat protected within the conservation network in 2024 compared to 2016.

	NWT Species at Risk	Habitat protected in 2016 (%)	Habitat protected in2024 (%)
Birds	American White Pelican	10.1	15.5
	Bank Swallow	6.7	15.4
	Barn Swallow	9.1	20.9
	Common Nighthawk	10.9	20.6
	Eskimo Curlew	13.4	17.5
	Evening Grosbeak	6.4	14.7
	Harris Sparrow	6.7	16.7
	Horned Grebe	7.4	16.6
	Lesser Yellowlegs	6.8	17.0
	Olive-sided Flycatcher	8.3	19.3
	Red-necked Phalarope	10.0	18.6
	Rusty Blackbird	7.7	17.8
	Short-Eared Owl	9.9	19.3
	Yellow Rail	12.7	14.3
Fish	Bull Trout	16.5	23.2
	Dolly Varden	0.5	17.6
	Shortjaw Cisco	4.9	12.4
Insects	Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee	9.0	18.1
	Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee	9.5	19.1
	Transverse Lady Beetle	6.2	16.9
	Yellow-banded Bumble Bee	4.3	15.2
Mammals	Barren-ground Caribou	7.1	17.2
	Boreal Caribou	3.6	14.4
	Collared Pika	27.7	37.4
	Eastern Red Bat	36.2	44.8
	Grizzly Bear	11.0	20.8
	Hoary Bat	23.6	29.7
	Little Brown Myotis	15.1	20.4
	Northern Mountain Caribou	25.2	34.3
	Wolverine	8.3	17.9
	Wood Bison	12.6	20.3



Dolly Varden, a species at risk. Photo: Neil Mochnacz, DFO



Barren-ground Caribou, a species at risk. Photo: Sophie Clark, GNWT

Future indicators currently in development: climate-change refugia

The GNWT is currently working with Natural Resources Canada to identify and map areas considered to be relatively buffered from the impacts of climate change. "Climate-change refugia" include broad regions of projected climatic suitability for key indicator species, as well as localized landscape features such as wetlands, river corridors, and north-facing slopes that can serve as biodiversity safe havens. Climate-change refugia are also likely to be more resilient to climate-driven stressors such as drought and wildfire, and can be identified with remote-sensing methods. Once completed, climate-change refugia maps can be used as a conservation planning tool to prioritize areas that are projected to maximize the long-term protection of species and their habitats in a changing climate.

Northern landscapes are experiencing rapid and profound climaterelated impacts including:

- extreme weather, including major flood and drought events;
- increased frequency and intensity of wildfires;
- erosion and ground instability;
- unpredictable ice conditions; and
- displacement and/or arrival of species.

As the climate continues to change, the inclusion of climate refugia within the conservation network will become increasingly important to secure ecological health, biodiversity, and cultural continuity in NWT.



Sunset in the Dehcho Region. Photo: Liam Cowan

Initial Stages of Implementation

Every 5 years, the GNWT is required to report on the state of protected areas established under the NWT *Protected Areas Act*. Thaidene Nëné and Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta Territorial Protected Areas were established shortly after this legislation was passed in 2019. Both areas are concurrently designated as IPCAs under Indigenous laws.

Thaidene Nëné and Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta are in the early stages of implementation. It will take time to clarify roles and responsibilities, and determine how best to collaborate to achieve effective and equitable management. Significant progress has been made to implement these areas. Government-to-government relationships are strengthening, as are the foundations for shared decision-making.

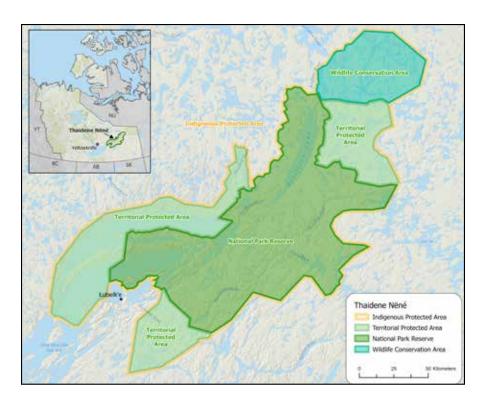
The following sections provide an overview of Thaidene Nëné and Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta, and the collaborative work that has occurred since establishment to manage these areas together.

Thaidene Nëné

Thaidene Nëné or 'Land of the Ancestors' in Dene Yati, is 26,300 km² in size, and located on the East Arm of Tu Nedhé (Great Slave Lake) (see Map 6). Thaidene Nëné is an IPCA as declared by Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation using Łutsël K'é Dene laws.

Thaidene Nëné Indigenous Protected Area includes:

- A Territorial Protected Area, established using the NWT *Protected Areas Act*;
- A National Park Reserve, established using the Canada National Parks Act; and
- A Wildlife Conservation Area, established using the NWT Wildlife Act.



Map 6: Thaidene Nëné Indigenous Protected Area is comprised of a National Park Reserve, a Territorial Protected Area, and a Wildlife Conservation Area.

Thaidene Nëné protects cultural continuity

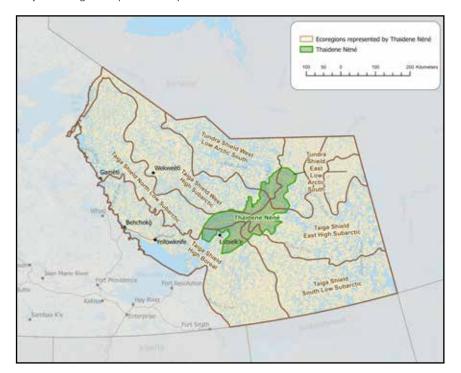
Thaidene Nëné is a living landscape where Dene and Métis continue their cultural ways of living, and NWT residents and visitors continue to experience this unique northern area. The area lies within the territories of the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation. Northwest Territory Métis Nation, Deninu Kué First Nation, and Yellowknives Dene First Nation. The traditional use area of the Tłıcho, Mowhì Gogha Dè Nutlèè, also overlaps a portion of Thaidene Nëné and provides for certain rights under the Tł₁cho Agreement, such as harvesting rights. In addition, the North Slave Métis Alliance has been recognized as having a prima facie right to harvest caribou in Thaidene Nëné.

Carved by glacial erosion, Thaidene Nëné includes several unique landscape features, including archipelagos, eskers, gorges, and waterfalls. Many of these landscape features have profound cultural significance as sacred sites, burial grounds and traditional use areas that Dene and Métis use to this day.

Thaidene Nëné protects ecological integrity

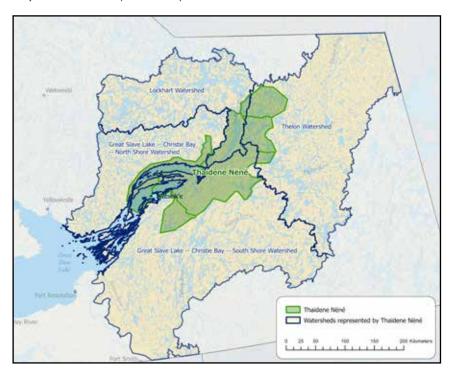
Thaidene Nëné is a largely pristine and healthy landscape because of the countless generations who have cared for the land and water. The area represents the transition from boreal forest to subarctic forest and eventually to tundra, including 7 of the 45 ecoregions identified in the NWT (see Map 7).

Map 7: Ecoregions represented by Thaidene Nëné



Thaidene Nëné protects numerous lakes, rivers, and wetland areas. The area includes parts of Tu Nedhé (Great Slave Lake) and 4 of 47 watersheds found within the NWT (see Map 8). The deepest water in North America can be found in 71dor Bekue Chëlé Tł'ázį (Christie Bay) in Tu Nedhé (Great Slave Lake).

Map 8: Watersheds represented by Thaidene Nëné



Thaidene Nëné protects biodiversity

There are 42 different species of mammals that are known to occur in Thaidene Nëné, including caribou, moose and muskox which are vitally important for traditional harvesting activities. Over 170 species of birds and at least 28 species of fish are also known to occur within the area. Thaidene Nëné currently protects portions of habitat for 14 species at risk: Barren-ground Caribou, Eastern Red Bat, Grizzly Bear, Hoary Bat, Little Brown Myotis, Wolverine, Bank Swallow, Harris's Sparrow, Horned Grebe, Lesser Yellowlegs, Red-necked Phalarope, Rusty Blackbird, Short-eared Owl, and Transverse Lady Beetle.

Formation of Thaidene Nëné Management Boards

Making operational decisions about Thaidene Nëné is the shared responsibility of several governments: Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, Northwest Territory Métis Nation, the Government of Canada (Parks Canada), and the GNWT. These governments, also known as the Partners, appoint non-representative members to sit on the Operational Management Board. The Operational Management Board is called Thaidene Nëné Xá Dá Yáłtı, which means "those who speak for Thaidene Nëné" in Dene Yati.

Formed in 2021, Thaidene Nëné Xá Dá Yáłtı provides direction on planning, operations, monitoring and evaluation with Thaidene Nëné. Through consensus decision-making, Thaidene Nëné Xá Dá Yáłtı makes referrals to the Partners to ensure long-term protection of ecological integrity and cultural continuity.

The Regional Management Board will provide recommendations and guidance, by consensus, to Thaidene Nëné Xá Dá Yáłtı and the Partners who share management of Thaidene Nëné. Members will be appointed by, as applicable, three Akaitcho Dene First Nations (Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, and Deninu Kųę́ First Nation), the Government of the Northwest Territories, and Parks Canada. The GNWT will provide opportunities for the North Slave Métis Alliance to give input on policy recommendations made by the Regional Management Board.



Thaidene Nëné. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT



Thaidene Nëné. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT



Thaidene Nëné. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT

Development of the Thaidene Nëné Management Plan

Thaidene Nëné Xá Dá Yáłtı, with support from the Partners, is in the final stages of completing the first Management Plan for Thaidene Nëné. This plan, called *Thaidene Nëné badı xá*, or "Watching Over Thaidene Nëné", is rooted in the concept of relationships.

If healthy relationships can be sustained, Thadene Nëné will thrive. –Addie Jonasson

Thaidene Nëné badi xá is an expression of how the Indigenous peoples of the area love the land, and the commitments to protect healthy land, water, and wildlife now and for the future. The plan includes guiding principles and goals, with several objectives and targets/indicators for partners who share management of Thaidene Nëné to implement over a 10-year period.

The final draft of *Thaidene Nëné badı xá* is expected to be released in 2025. Extensive feedback and comments from several Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, partners and the public were obtained during various engagement sessions and an online survey. The comments and feedback were reviewed by members of Thaidene Nëné Xá Dá Yáłtı and, as appropriate, incorporated into the plan.

Development of the Thaidene Nëné Regulations

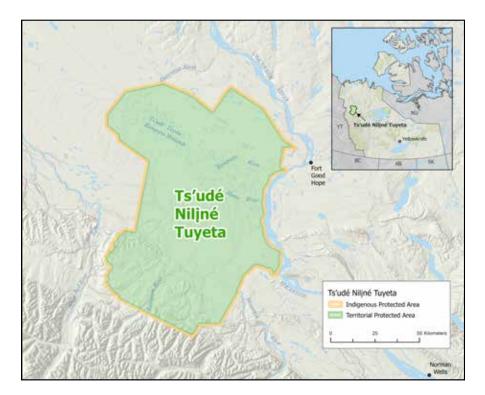
While the 2019 *Thaidene Nëné Territorial Protected Area Regulations* provided for the establishment and protections of the Territorial Protected Area under the NWT *Protected Areas Act*, they do not yet reflect the detailed provisions of the Thaidene Nëné Establishment Agreements and Impact Benefit Agreement. Work is underway to complete comprehensive regulations for Thaidene Nëné Territorial Protected Area, following the cooperative legislative development protocol developed by the Intergovernmental Council on Land and Resource Management.

The regulations for the Thaidene Nëné Territorial Protected Area will compliment other pieces of legislation that are used to protect Thaidene Nëné, including the *Canada National Parks Act* in Thaidene Nëné National Park Reserve and the NWT *Wildlife Act* in Thaidene Nëné Wildlife Conservation Area.

Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta

Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta Indigenous Protected Area and Territorial Protected Area is located west of the community of Fort Good Hope (Rádéyįlį Kóę́) in the K'asho Got'įnę District, Sahtú Settlement Area in the Northwest Territories. The area protects 10,100 km² and the rich biodiversity within it. Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta means "Big Tree River and Wetland" in Dene Kedə and is also known as the "Ramparts River and Wetland" in English.

Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta was identified by the K'asho Got'ine Dene and Métis. Tuyeta was established in September 2019 and is co-managed by the K'asho Got'ine and the Government of the Northwest Territories. The area is both an IPCA protected under K'asho Got'ine law and a territorial protected area protected under the NWT *Protected Areas Act*.



Map 9: Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta



Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT

Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta protects cultural continuity

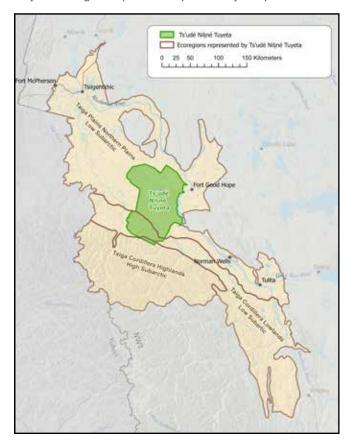
The area continues to be an important hunting, trapping, and fishing area for the K'asho Got'ınę Dene and Métis. Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta is also a good place for teaching hunting skills to youth. The protected area contains 637 documented historical and contemporary sites that are still used by the K'asho Got'ınę Dene and Métis to this day, including burial sites, camp sites, cabins, trails, spiritual sites, harvesting areas, gathering sites, and archeological sites.

Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta protects ecological integrity

The diverse landscape within Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta includes portions of three ecoregions, as shown below in Map 10.

The two watersheds represented within Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta contain three critical features of the protected area: the Ramparts River (Ts'udé Niliné), the Ramparts Wetland (Ts'udé Tuyeta), and the Hume River (see Map 11).

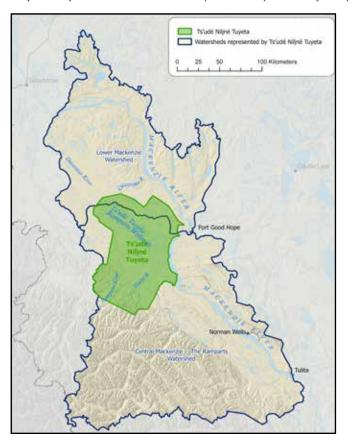
Map 10: Ecoregions represented by Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta



The Ramparts Watershed:

- is a <u>key migratory bird terrestrial habitat site</u> for bird populations such as scaup, scoter, and Pacific Loons;
- is an important hunting area for the K'asho Got'ıne Dene and Métis because of its abundance of ducks, beavers, muskrats, and other food sources; and
- filters millions of litres of water per day.

Map 11: Major rivers and watersheds represented by Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta



Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta protects biodiversity

In 2006, the Canadian Wildlife Service completed an ecological assessment of Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta while it was still a candidate protected area. During this assessment, it was estimated that up to 43 mammal species, 174 bird species, 24 fish species, and one amphibian species occupy the protected area. Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta currently protects 20 species at risk: Boreal Caribou, Collared Pika, Grizzly Bear, Northern Mountain Caribou, Wolverine, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Harris's Sparrow, Horned Grebe, Lesser Yellowlegs, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Red-necked Phalarope, Rusty Blackbird, Short-eared Owl, Bull Trout, Dolly Varden, Gypsy Cuckoo Bumble Bee, Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee, Transverse Lady Beetle, and Yellow-banded Bumble Bee.

Formation of Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta Management Board

The K'asho Got'ıne and the GNWT co-manage Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta through shared decision-making. As part of this process, the K'asho Got'ıne and the GNWT created the Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta Management Board (the Board) in 2020. Collectively, they are creating the foundation for effectively collaborating on planning, managing, stewarding, and operating Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta.

The Board has developed their own operating procedures and meets at least three times a year. The Board members make recommendations to the K'asho Got'ıne and the GNWT on protecting and enjoying the area, research and monitoring activities, visitor use and registration, visitor education, protection of heritage resources, and infrastructure.

Four board members are appointed by K'asho Got'ıne, and two by GNWT; each party also has one alternate member. While these board members are appointed by each party, they collectively represent Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta, not their appointing party. The impartial Board Chair is jointly selected and appointed.

Development of the Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta Management Plan

The Management Plan will guide decisions about managing, stewarding, and operating the protected area over a five-year period. It will include a long-term vision, guiding principles, goals, actions, zoning, and a plan review process to:

- help sustain ecological integrity;
- support the K'asho Got'ınę way of life;
 and
- contribute to reconciliation between the GNWT and K'asho Got'ıne.

While developing the Management Plan, the Management Board will receive advice and input from:

- The Parties;
- Elders and other community members:
- the Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated;
- the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board:
- · the Sathú Land Use Planning Board;
- Renewable Resource Councils; and
- the Public.

The Management Board will lead Indigenous and public engagement with the support of the K'asho Got'ıne and the GNWT. Both the K'asho Got'ıne and the GNWT must approve the Management Plan.



Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT

Development of the Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta Regulations

The K'asho Got'ıne and the GNWT developed the *Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta Territorial Protected Area Regulations* (Regulations), which came into effect in January of 2022. The Regulations contain sections on:

- the boundaries of the protected area;
- the Management Board's composition and functions;
- the Management Plan;
- allowable activities with and without a permit;
- processes for issuing permits; and
- permit issue resolution processes.

For the full Regulations for Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta go to - https://www.gov.nt.ca/ecc/sites/ecc/files/protected-areas.r4.pdf

These regulations established Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta under the NWT *Protected Areas Act* and set out how the area will be managed and operated.



Dınàgà Wek'èhodì Candidate Protected Area

In 2019, Dınàgà Wek'èhodì was designated a candidate protected area under the Act. It is currently the only candidate protected area advancing towards legal protection as a territorial protected area. A five-year review of Dınàgà Wek'èhodì is required under the Act.

The area includes 790 km² of the north arm of Great Slave Lake (see Map 12) and has interim protection through a Land Withdrawal Order under the *Northwest Territories Lands Act* while it is a candidate protected area.

Map 12: Proposed boundaries of Dınàgà Wek'èhodì Candidate Protected Area





Dınàgà Wek'èhodì from the air. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT

Support for protection of Dınàgà Wek'èhodì

In 2010, the Tłįcho Government nominated Dınàgà Wek'èhodì as a candidate protected area and has supported it since. There are other Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations that also support the area:

- Yellowknives Dene First Nation:
- North Slave Métis Alliance: and
- Northwest Territory Métis Nation.

Cultural significance of Dınàgà Wek'èhodì to Dene and Métis

Dınàgà Wek'èhodì is culturally significant to Dene and Métis who have used the area for centuries for activities such as hunting and fishing. It is a place of legends, sharing, teaching, and learning.

Dınàgà Wek'èhodì is a key site for migratory birds and species at risk

Dınàgà Wek'èhodì is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) in Canada and a key migratory bird site in the NWT. Large numbers of Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, and other waterfowl use the area during migrations. Dınàgà Wek'èhodì contains Canada's northernmost recorded breeding range of Caspian and Black Terns. The area also contains important habitat for many species at risk, such as Boreal Caribou, Wood Bison, Wolverine, Rusty Blackbird, Common Nighthawk, Barn Swallow, Short-eared Owl, and more.

Working towards establishment as a protected area

Discussions about the governance of this potential future protected area are complex and are focused on how the area will be co-managed. Meanwhile, the Partners, along with the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board, have defined potential goals, objectives, and actions to manage and monitor the protected area once it is established.

It would be up to a future Dinàgà Wek'èhodì Management Board to decide which goals, objectives and actions should be included in a future management plan for the area. Partners continue to work through the process for establishing Dinàgà Wek'èhodì as a protected area as outlined in the NWT *Protected Areas Act*.



Dınàgà Wek'èhodì. Photo: Julien Schroder, GNWT

Glossary of Terms

Biodiversity: The full variety of life in a given region at all scales.

Climate: The historical record and description of average daily and in seasonal weather events that help describe a region. Statistics are generally drawn over several decades. It differs from weather, which is concerned with short term or instantaneous variations in the state of the atmosphere at a specific time.

Climate-change refugia: Areas that are relatively buffered from the effects of climate change over time and allow ecosystem functions, resources, and species to persist.

Conservation area: Defined by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) as a clearly defined geographical area, that protects natural and cultural values, and contributes to the conservation network by providing complementary, but less restrictive, protection than protected areas. For example, these could include areas such as Territorial Parks that have no subsurface protection or conservation zoning in approved regional land use plans that are subject to periodic review and potential plan amendments. The Northwest Territories (NWT) reports conservation areas as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).

Conservation network: The GNWT defines the conservation network as including protected areas and conservation areas. Collectively, these areas contribute more effectively to maintaining the integrity of ecosystems, biodiversity, and sustaining cultural continuity than individual sites could alone. The GNWT recognizes that the conservation network is one contributor to maintaining biodiversity in the NWT. Land use planning, Indigenous-led stewardship and Guardians programs, wildlife range planning, water stewardship initiatives, the regulatory regime are other examples of the spectrum of tools for stewardship, landscape management and maintenance of biodiversity and connectivity in the land surrounding the conservation network.

Conservation zones: One type of zoning within regional land use plans. They are areas of significant traditional, cultural, heritage and ecological importance in which specified land uses are prohibited and allowable land uses are subject to conditions laid out in the land use plans. Typically, land use plans are reviewed every five years.

Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database

(CPCAD): A national database that Canadian jurisdictions provide spatial and attribute data of their marine or terrestrial protected and conserved areas to annually. The national database is managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and tracks progress towards Canada's area-based conservation targets. Data from the national database feeds into the World Protected Areas Database where progress towards achieving global area-based conservation targets is tracked.

Cultural continuity: The evolving linkages and ongoing relationship between each Indigenous culture and the natural environment. This also encompasses the transmission of knowledge across generations through time.

Ecological representation: Protecting a representative sample of the full variety of habitats in a region to help ensure the long-term persistence of all species and ecosystems.

Ecoregion: Terrestrial ecoregions are large natural regions characterized by distinctive regional climate, physical features, types of vegetation and soil types. There are 45 grouped ecoregions used for conservation network planning in the NWT.

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA): IPCAs are lands and waters where Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance, and knowledge systems⁶. Culture and language are fundamental to these areas. On public land an IPCA designation, on its own, does not provide legal protection to an area; however, if co-designated with a territorial, provincial, or federal protected area or conservation area designation, it does. On Indigenous owned land, an IPCA designation may, on its own, provide legal protection.

Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures

(OECM): As defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and adopted by Canada an OECM is "A geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services where applicable with cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values. The Northwest Territories (NWT) reports conservation areas as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).

Regional land use plans: legally binding documents that balance a range of comprehensive interests to define where certain activities can take place. Regional land use plans include zoning for areas that permit all land use activities subject to regulatory processes and approvals, areas that permit specific land use activities while respecting cultural and ecological values, and areas where key land use activities are prohibited and are intended for conservation. Regional land use plans are reviewed regularly and amended to ensure plans are meeting interests and priorities.

Protected area: A clearly defined geographical area, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

⁶ We Rise Together: Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the spirit and practice of reconciliation. The Indigenous Circle of Experts Report and Recommendations. March 2018

Appendix 1: NWT Conservation Network

PROTECTED AREAS

Туре	Protected Area	% NWT Terrestrial Area
Territorial Designations	Indigenous and Territorial Protected Area (<i>Protected Area Act</i>) • Thaidene Nëné Indigenous and Territorial Protected Area • Ts'udé Nilįné Tuyeta Indigenous Protected Area and Territorial Protected Area	1.4%
-	Wildlife Sanctuary (<i>Wildlife Act</i>) • Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary	1.6%
Protected Through Tłįcho LUP for Tłįcho Lands	Land Use Exclusion • Wehexlaxodiale	0.1%
Protected through Land Claim Agreements	Protected Through Land Claim Agreement Ezodzìti Lugedegíl Tué (Kelly Lake)	0.1%
	Canadian Landmark • Pingo Canadian Landmark	<0.1%
Federal Designations	Migratory Bird Sanctuaries • Anderson River Delta Migratory Bird Sanctuary • Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 1 • Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 2 • Cape Parry Migratory Bird Sanctuary • Kendall Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary	1.6%
	National Historic Site • Saoyú-?ehdacho National Historic Site	0.4%
	National Park or National Park Reserve	6.6%
	National Wildlife Area • Edéhzhíe Indigenous Protected Area and National Wildlife Area	1.1%
Total Terrestrial Protected Areas	3	12.9%

CONSERVATION AREAS

Conservation Area	% NWT Terrestrial Area
Conservation Zoning in Regional Land Use Plans (LUP) Conservation or Heritage Conservation Zone in Gwich'in LUP Conservation Zone in Sahtu LUP Habitat Management, Traditional Use or Cultural Heritage Zone in Tłıçho LUP	4.4%
Territorial Parks	<0.1%
Territorial Wildlife Conservation Area (<i>Wildlife Act</i>) • Thaidene Nëné Wildlife Conservation Area	0.2%
Total Conservation Areas	4.7%

MARINE AREAS

Marine Area Type	km²
Marine Protected Area (<i>Oceans Act</i>) • Anguniaqvia niqiqyuam Marine Protected Area • Tarium Niryutait Marine Protected Area	4095 km²
 Marine portion of Migratory Bird Sanctuary or National Park Anderson River Delta Migratory Bird Sanctuary Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 1 Banks Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary No. 2 Cape Parry Migratory Bird Sanctuary Kendall Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary Aulavik National Park 	1216 km²
Marine portion of Pingo Canadian Landmark	5 km²
Total NWT Marine Areas	5316 km²

For consistency with national Canadian Protected and Conserved Area Database (CPCAD) summaries:

- area calculations in this report are based on spatial data in Albers Equal Area conic projection,
- percentages are based on an NWT area of 1,346,106 Km² (provided by Natural Resources Canada).

Areas have been rounded and are not accurate to legal, surveying or engineering standards.

Different reports may use data in different map projections or rounding resulting in the sizes of the same protected or conservation areas not always matching exactly.

Areas are subject to change due to refinements of the boundary mapping.

Habitat Management, Traditional Use and Cultural Heritage Zones in the Tłicho LUP have not yet been reported to CPCAD at the request of the Tłicho Government.

Appendix 2: Sources and Additional Information

NWT Conservation Planning:

- NWT State of the Conservation Network 2016
- NWT Protected Areas Act
- NWT Protected Areas Act Plain Language Summary
- Healthy Land, Healthy People GNWT Priorities for the NWT Conservation Network 2023-2028
- NWT State of the Environment Report 2022 (Section 20 Stewardship - Protected Areas and Land Use Planning)
- NWT Reporting on the conservation network

Ts'udé Niljné Tuyeta:

- Ts'udé Niliné Tuyeta Territorial Protected Area Regulations
- Sahtú Heritage Places and Sites Joint Working Group. Rakekée Gok'é Godi: Places We Take Care Of. Prepared by John T'Seleie, Isadore Yukon, Bella T'Seleie, Ellen Lee, and Tom Andrews, Yellowknife, 2000.
- Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta Ecological Assessment

Thaidene Nëné:

• Thaidene Nëné Land of the Ancestors Rules and Regulations

Climate Change:

- 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework
- Responding to climate change in the NWT (June 2019)
- Climate Change Refugia (climaterefugia.org)

Species at risk:

• NWT Species at Risk

Ecosystems:

• NWT Ecosystem Classification

Canada Conservation planning:

- Pathway to Canada Target 1
- One with Nature
- We Rise Together
- Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD)
- <u>Canada's Nature Legacy</u>
- <u>Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy: Halting and Reversing</u>
 <u>Biodiversity Loss in Canada</u>



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