

Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework

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MINISTÈRE DES FORÊTS, DE LA FAUNE ET DES PARCS



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Introduction

Wildlife sanctuaries are part of the collective heritage. They host hunting, fishing and outdoor activities in an extensive, attractive natural framework, have earned an excellent reputation and are perceived very favourably by many citizens.

The wildlife sanctuaries have undergone many changes since the first hunting and fishing park was created in Québec in 1895, in terms of both their mission and the way they are managed. The first sanctuaries were created mainly to protect sporting game and fish through rigorous management of hunting and fishing. Over time, their mission has changed to include the provision of fair access to hunting and fishing activities for the people of Québec.

Growing numbers of citizens practise outdoor activities and observe wildlife in the sanctuaries, and members of the Aboriginal communities also use these areas for their traditional ritual, social and sustenance activities, including hunting, fishing, trapping and harvesting.

Emerging priorities such as sustainable development, natural heritage protection and the fight against climate change have influenced the way people see the environment and how they perceive land development and planning.

Land and resources are used in many different ways, and the groups that engage in hunting, fishing and outdoor activities have changed as a result of the Québec Government's treaties, duties and other commitments towards the Aboriginal people. It has therefore become necessary to harmonize all these activities and to consider a wide variety of issues and information in the land use planning and development process. At the same time, it is important to make sure the activities are compatible with the dedicated purpose of the wildlife sanctuaries, namely to conserve and develop wildlife and, by extension, to preserve habitats.

It is against this background that the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs (MFFP) undertook the task of preparing the Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework. Its purpose in doing so was to update its vision of the sanctuaries' mission by reasserting and clarifying their social, environmental and economic role for Québec's regions. With this in mind, the Management Framework is designed to:

- clarify the Québec Government's intentions and describe the management methods, orientations and objectives to be applied when using and developing the wildlife sanctuaries;
- bring together the main provisions relating to wildlife sanctuaries in legislative, regulatory and administrative instruments;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Government departments and agencies involved in the task of overseeing and managing the wildlife sanctuaries.

This Management Framework applies only to hunting and fishing wildlife sanctuaries. It does not apply to salmon fishing wildlife sanctuaries, which face different issues.

Vision and field of application of the Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework

Under section 111 of the *Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife* (CQLR, chapter C-61.1; hereinafter the ACDW), the wildlife sanctuaries are dedicated¹ “to the conservation, development and utilization of wildlife and to the carrying on of recreational activities incidental thereto”. They must also be managed in such a way as to give all citizens an opportunity to access them, in particular for hunting and fishing.

The Management Framework sets out the principles underlying current management methods. It identifies good practices and describes the division of responsibilities between the Government departments concerned and the operators (Société des établissements de plein air du Québec and other delegates) responsible for managing the sanctuaries. Its aim is to reflect the values and aspirations of Québécois with regard to the way in which these areas are managed.

The Management Framework is respectful of the Northern agreements² entered into by Aboriginal nations or communities and the Québec Government, and of the Government’s duties towards the Aboriginal people.

Vision

The wildlife sanctuaries are areas of land made available to the people of Québec in order to practise wildlife-related activities and meet their needs for contact with nature. The sanctuaries, by helping to maintain wildlife populations and habitats, satisfy social expectations and play a role in the economic vitality of the regions. They also serve as models of sustainable development and integrated resource management.

¹ In the text of the Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework, the term “vocation” in French has been translated by “dedication” as in the *Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife*, section 111 (see page 6 of this document) and not by “destination” as in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* (s. 21; ALDS), except where it refers specifically to the Public Land Use Plan.

² The James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement and the Northeastern Québec Agreement are examples of the agreements referred to in this document. In case of incompatibility, agreements of this type take precedence over this document. Agreements and contracts whose main aim is to delegate the management of all or parts of wildlife sanctuaries to Aboriginal communities or organizations may, however, be influenced by this Management Framework.

Profile of Wildlife Sanctuaries in Québec

The origins of the wildlife sanctuaries

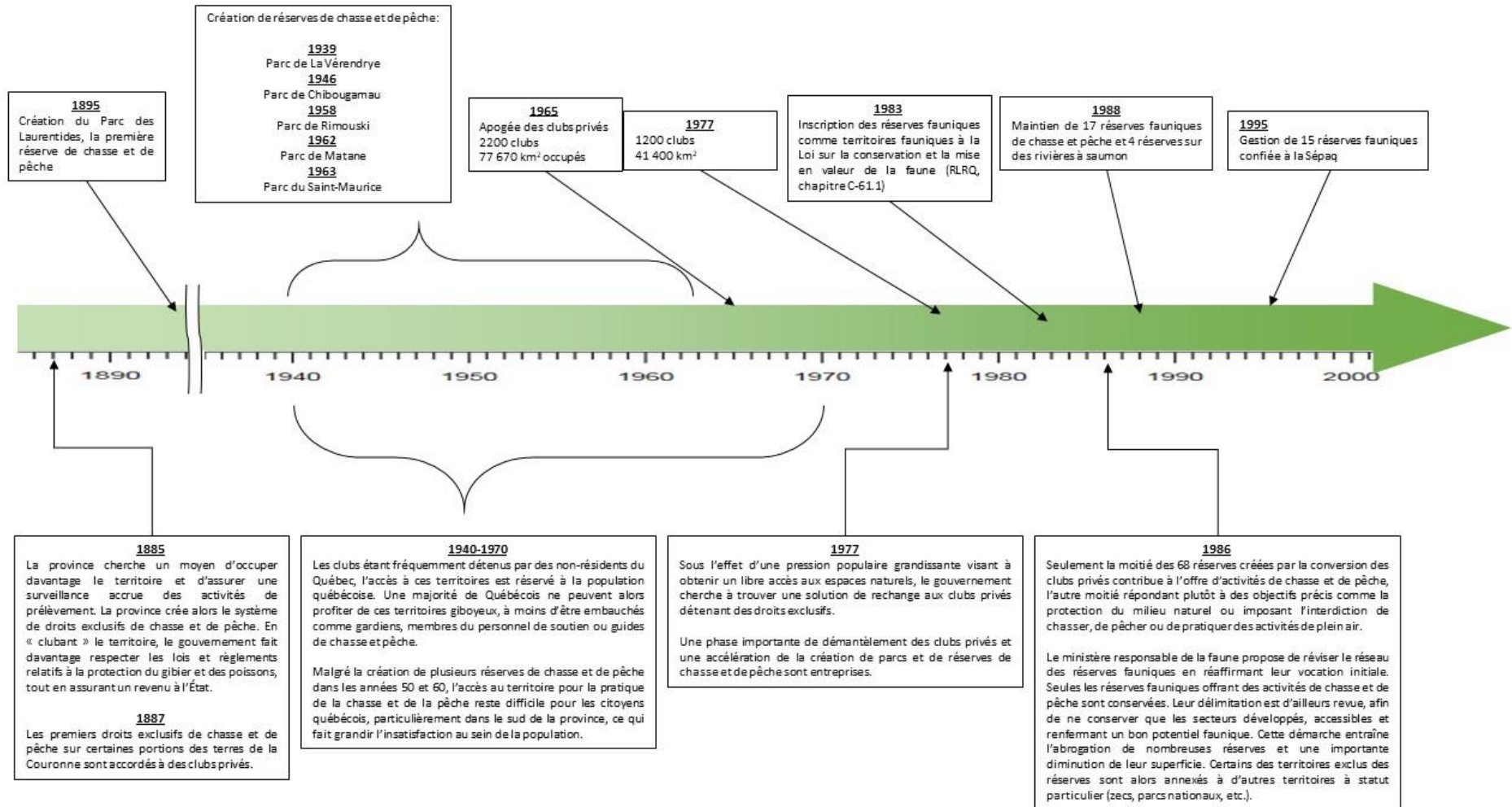
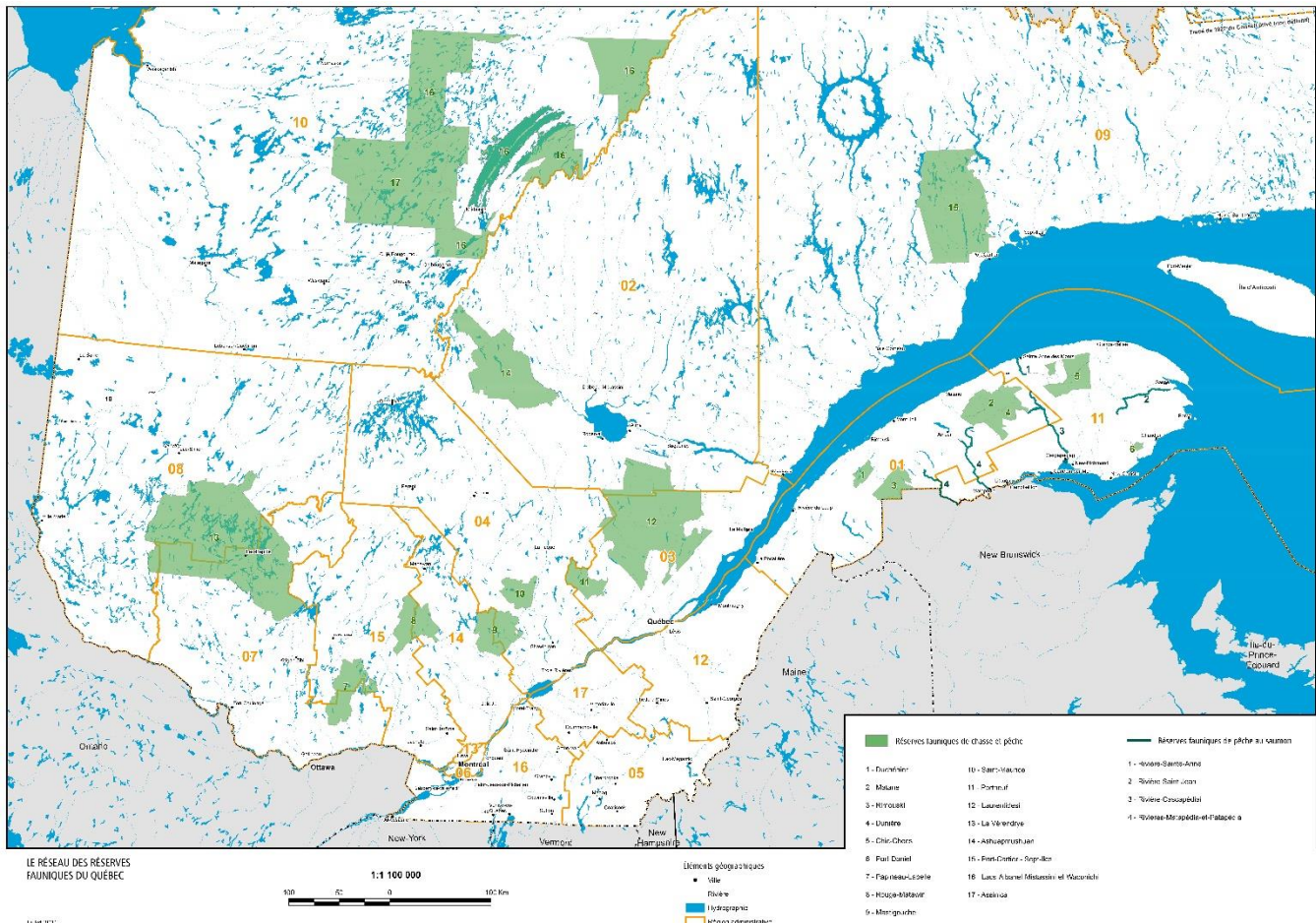


Figure 1 : Chronology of the Wildlife Sanctuaries

Wildlife sanctuaries today

In 2020, the network was composed of 17 wildlife sanctuaries dedicated mainly to hunting and fishing, and covering a total area of nearly 66,885 km².

Figure 2 : The network of wildlife sanctuaries in Québec (Figure given as an example)



Stakeholders in the stewardship of wildlife sanctuaries

The wildlife sanctuaries are structured wildlife territories, located mostly on lands in the domain of the State, and fall under the authority of the Minister responsible for wildlife. The task of providing wildlife development activities and services, along with the related facilities, is delegated by contract to operators or to the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SÉPAQ) under a provision of its constituting Act, the *Act respecting the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec* (CQLR, chapter S-13.01).

The activities that may be authorized in a wildlife sanctuary are not just wildlife-related; development activities for other natural resources may also take place. Stewardship of wildlife sanctuaries requires coordinated action by the various stakeholders who share that responsibility, in order to achieve sustainable management of both wildlife and habitats.

The Québec Government

The Minister responsible for wildlife is tasked with managing wildlife on all lands in the domain of the State, including the wildlife sanctuaries. This involves implementing protection measures, preparing management plans and acquiring information on invasive species and on populations of threatened or vulnerable species that are hunted or fished. The Minister also issues leases granting exclusive trapping rights on public land. In the case of the wildlife sanctuaries, and in compliance with section 118 of the ACDW, the Minister is responsible for preparing contracts to delegate the management of activities, and for authorizing third parties to organize wildlife development activities for profit. The Minister must also play a role in preparing and implementing protection plans, establishing fishing and hunting quotas, preparing profiles of wildlife in the sanctuaries and evaluating the impacts of certain land development plans or projects on wildlife and habitats. Under the ACDW, the Minister responsible for wildlife must also create a provincial wildlife table (“Table nationale de la faune”) and regional wildlife tables (“Tables regionales de la faune”) through which to consult the member wildlife organizations on wildlife-related subjects. The table members, which include wildlife sanctuary operators, advise the Minister on the topics presented to them.

The Minister responsible for forests manages Québec’s public forests, including those in the wildlife sanctuaries. This task involves ensuring the long-term survival and sustainable development of the forests, and supporting the development of the wood products industry. Under the *Sustainable Forest Development Act* (CQLR, chapter A-18.1), the Minister must manage the forests in a sustainable way, among other things through ecosystemic development. To fulfill this task, the Minister is responsible for forest planning, which is carried out by means of a process involving regional and local participation through local integrated land and resource management panels. This ongoing consultation process ensures that the interests of panel participants can be taken into account. The Minister produces the integrated forest management plans using information from a variety of sources, including the recommendations made by the panels. The Aboriginal communities affected by the plans are also consulted.

The Minister responsible for lands in the domain of the State, on which most of the wildlife sanctuaries are located, produces public land use plans in collaboration with the Government departments and agencies concerned. These plans set out the Government’s public land use and protection orientations pursuant to the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* (CQLR, chapter T-8.1). The plans guide the stakeholders’ interventions and constitute the main multi-sector planning tool for public land, under which the conditions for harmonious coexistence of natural resource development activities are established. The plans are approved by Government order. They set out the Government’s intentions along with destinations and aims for each section of land, and encourage consistency of action. The Minister also administers rights of occupation on lands in the domain of the State.

The Minister responsible for energy and mines is tasked with developing natural resources (mining, petroleum, gas, hydro-electricity, etc.). These developments may take place in wildlife sanctuaries.

Lastly, the Minister responsible for the environment may propose that a protected area be created on the territory of a wildlife sanctuary, to form part of a network of protected areas that are representative of Québec’s biodiversity.

Operators

In the wildlife sanctuaries, non-profit organizations known as delegates are entrusted by section 118 of the ACDW with the task of providing activities and services with a view to the development or utilization of wildlife, or for the purposes of recreational activities. Section 118.0.1 also grants the SÉPAQ the power to organize activities or provide services in a wildlife sanctuary. Trapping activities are not delegated to operators, but are assigned through leases granting exclusive trapping rights.

The SÉPAQ operates 13 wildlife sanctuaries (Table 1) under the provisions of the *Act respecting the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec* (CQLR, chapter S-13.01), which sets out its mission and general operations. Non-profit organizations are responsible for managing the other four hunting and fishing wildlife sanctuaries. Following a commitment made by the Québec Government and included in the *Paix des braves*, management of the Assinica and Lacs Albanel-Mistassini-Waconichi wildlife sanctuaries was delegated to the Crees in 2017. The expectations of the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs and the respective rights and duties of the parties are specified by contract. Most of Québec's wildlife sanctuaries are located on public land, but some may also include private land. This is the case for the Dunière wildlife sanctuary, which is located entirely in the private forest. These private territories are subject to the same legal obligations for wildlife as all the province's other wildlife sanctuaries.

Table 1: Québec's wildlife sanctuaries

Hunting and fishing wildlife sanctuary	Size (km ²)	Operator
Ashuapmushuan	4 488	SÉPAQ
Assinica	8 885	Nibiischii Corporation
Chic-Chocs	1 134	SÉPAQ
Duchénier	273	Le territoire populaire Chénier inc.
Dunière	565	Matapédia River and Patapédia River management corporation
Lacs-Albanel-Mistassini-et-Waconichi	16 400	Nibiischii Corporation
Laurentides	7 934	SÉPAQ The Huron-Wendat nation operates the Tourilli sector
La Vérendrye	12 589	SÉPAQ
Mastigouche	1 557	SÉPAQ
Matane	1 275	SÉPAQ
Papineau-Labelle	1 628	SÉPAQ
Port-Cartier–Sept-Îles	6 423	SÉPAQ
Port-Daniel	62	SÉPAQ
Portneuf	774	SÉPAQ
Rimouski	729	SÉPAQ
Rouge-Matawin	1 388	SÉPAQ
Saint-Maurice	782	SÉPAQ

Through their presence, the wildlife sanctuary operators help to ensure that wildlife is protected and managed properly. The operators' reports are important in monitoring wildlife harvests and the health of wildlife populations. They also sit on the regional wildlife tables.

In addition, the sanctuary operators are members of the integrated land and resource management panels, where they present their comments and concerns with respect to proposed forest management activities, set local sustainable forest management objectives and suggest usage harmonization measures. Because of their knowledge of local ecosystems, they are well-placed to make recommendations for the conservation and development of wildlife.

The Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal communities. The lands on which the wildlife sanctuaries are situated are covered by existing or claimed ancestral or treaty rights. Members of Aboriginal communities use these lands for their social, ritual or sustenance hunting, fishing and trapping activities. The Québec Government has a duty to consult and, where applicable, accommodate the Aboriginal communities concerned in cases where the actions it is considering may hinder those rights.

In addition, the Québec Government is authorized to enter into agreements with the Aboriginal communities under section 24.1 of the ACDW. The purpose of those agreements is to reconcile management and wildlife conservation needs with Aboriginal social, ritual and subsistence activities, and to facilitate the development and management of wildlife resources by the Aboriginal communities. Among other things, this type of agreement makes it easier for the Aboriginal communities to play a role in the management and development of the wildlife sanctuaries and also helps to foster shared use of the land.

Many wildlife sanctuaries overlap into beaver reserves, where the Aboriginal people have exclusive rights to hunt and trap fur animals (except in the Saguenay beaver reserve). Lastly, the wildlife sanctuaries located in the area covered by the Northern agreements with the Cree, Inuit and Naskapi are subject to special rules arising from these and other agreements with signatory nations.

Development and maintenance of good relationships with the Aboriginal communities

The Québec Government wishes to establish and maintain relationships with the Aboriginal communities based on dialogue, collaboration and mutual respect, with a view to ensuring that the communities' rights, interests and needs are taken into consideration in the management and development of wildlife sanctuaries. In particular, the Québec Government wishes to engage in dialogue and encourage collaboration with the Aboriginal communities in order to reconcile wildlife management and conservation needs with their social, ritual and subsistence activities, to facilitate wildlife resource development and management by the Aboriginal communities, and hence to ensure harmony and coexistence within the area. Accordingly, the Government and the wildlife sanctuary operators have the following responsibilities:

- *to talk to the Aboriginal communities concerned about the community members' social, ritual and subsistence activities in the wildlife reserves, and to seek to agree with them on certain objectives or conditions;*
- *to ensure that any proposed measures are compatible with the Northern agreements and with the Québec Government's other agreements with and commitments to the Aboriginal people;*
- *to consult the Aboriginal communities concerned when considering a measure that may impact an existing or claimed ancestral or treaty right and, where applicable, accommodate them;*
- *to encourage the development and maintenance of partnerships or other means of involving the Aboriginal communities in the management of wildlife sanctuaries, or support hiring of and skills development for members of the Aboriginal communities.*

Enjeux Issues relating to the management of wildlife sanctuaries

The wildlife sanctuaries face a number of issues resulting from their dedicated purpose, the way in which they are managed and how they are used. The Management Framework's orientations are designed to provide guidelines that will help Government actors and stakeholders to address these issues.

Issue 1: Reconciliation of different land and resource uses

The wildlife sanctuaries are located mainly on lands in the domain of the State, where all natural resources can be developed (wildlife, forestry resources and minerals, petroleum and natural gas, hydraulic and wind energy), and where vacation activities are permitted. Because they are used for so many different purposes, they must be managed in an integrated way with due regard for their mission of conserving and developing wildlife.

The Public Land Use Plan (PLUP) generally grants a designation of "multiple use with conditions" for wildlife sanctuaries when they are not otherwise assigned. This designation is defined as multipurpose use of lands and resources, subject to terms or rules that are adapted to specific environmental, landscape, cultural, social or economic conditions. The specific condition for the wildlife sanctuaries is the wildlife conservation and development mission legally ascribed to them by the ACDW. Activity plans must be adjusted to ensure that wildlife populations and habitat quality are maintained. This is done in accordance with the provisions of the Public Land Use Plan, and also in accordance with the

Government's intentions and the specific aims prepared by the Minister responsible for public land use planning, jointly with the Government departments and agencies concerned.

In a wildlife sanctuary, uses must also be reconciled with public activities, including the social, ritual and subsistence activities of Aboriginal communities.

Issue 2: The expectations of users and the general public

The wildlife sanctuaries were created to provide the population with areas in which to hunt, fish and engage in outdoor activities. The Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework therefore reflects the population's values and needs and translates them into a set of orientations. It is also respectful of Québec's agreements with and duties toward the Aboriginal nations and communities.

One of the wildlife sanctuaries' basic tasks is to provide Québec's residents with fair access to wildlife territories and resources.

Social changes and changes to user groups must be considered when managing the wildlife sanctuaries. The number of hunters and anglers is expected to decline in future, due among other things to population ageing and the lack of interest in nature shown by younger generations. The wildlife sanctuaries are therefore facing a generational challenge with respect to wildlife-related activities. However, outdoor activities are becoming more popular and are attracting new types of users to the sanctuaries. The wildlife sanctuaries must therefore address the emerging issue of satisfying these new users and coordinating their activities with hunting and fishing.

A number of factors play a role in determining the quality of the user experience in a wildlife sanctuary, including the abundance of game and fish, landscape quality, safety, peace and quiet, and a sense of being alone in the forest. The network of wildlife sanctuaries must also preserve high quality infrastructures, roads and facilities. The concerns of citizens and Aboriginal communities must also be taken into account when organizing activities and developing resources with a view to making the wildlife sanctuaries accessible to the general public.

Issue 3: Understanding of roles and responsibilities

The Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework published by the Ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche dates back to 1991. Since then, the network of wildlife sanctuaries has evolved significantly and some notable changes have taken place, in terms of Government responsibility for wildlife and the delegation of wildlife sanctuary management.

Today, it has become necessary to strengthen the spirit of partnership between the Government departments and agencies concerned and the operators of hunting and fishing wildlife sanctuaries, to ensure that the sanctuaries are managed effectively and sustainably, with a view to the network's long-term survival. This Framework clarifies the roles and the division of responsibility between the Government and the operators.

Orientation 1: Contribute to regional economic vitality

Wildlife, habitats and nature tourism contribute significantly to Québec's economy. Expenditures by hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts, along with revenues from wildlife sanctuary operations, help to make regional economies more dynamic. They support a wildlife industry composed of partners, tradespeople and manufacturers, based among other things on a network of structured wildlife territories including outfitters, ZECs and wildlife sanctuaries. In Québec, this network is one of the major stakeholders of the green economy that is considered to be a pillar of sustainable development.

Objective 1.1 – Participation in local and regional economic activity

The wildlife reserves are of significant economic importance to Québec's regions. They serve as major levers for tourism, by contributing to the supply of activities and creating a ripple effect for companies seeking additional tourism products and services.

The tourists who use the wildlife sanctuaries generate economic activity that directly benefits local and regional communities. To maintain and increase this activity and the ensuing economic impacts, the operators must:

- join forces with local and regional enterprises where possible, in order to complete and diversify the supply of activities and services. However, the operators cannot delegate the responsibilities entrusted to them by the Government;
- where possible, encourage local and regional hiring and procurement;
- continue to adapt the supply of products to the nature tourism and recreational market, while taking regional priorities and local communities into account.

The Minister responsible for wildlife can also entrust the organization of activities and the supply of services to local or regional organizations, through contracts. These activities must, however, be compatible with the area's other activities, including those provided by wildlife sanctuary operators.

Objective 1.2 – Renewal and diversification of user groups

The wildlife sanctuaries provide opportunities to trigger the interest of new wildlife users and outdoor enthusiasts. In 2015, 13 % of anglers who reserved lodging with the SÉPAQ were fishing for the first time. This shows how attractive the sanctuaries are for new users.

Wildlife sanctuary operators must continue to implement measures that will encourage new users, including:

- fees and services targeted at specific groups, such as family packages, products aimed at youth, or access for users with special needs;
- small game hunting, if the resource is available, since this is often an ideal introductory activity for new and younger hunters;
- other types of recreational and outdoor activities (canoeing, camping, hiking, interpretation, etc.) to attract different types of users to the wildlife sanctuaries. These activities must be compatible with wildlife conservation and development, and remain incidental to it.

Objective 1.3 – Integrated land management in the wildlife sanctuaries

The many different and overlapping ways in which wildlife sanctuaries are used, combined with the environmental concerns of citizens, the desire to offer a high-quality experience and the importance of economic spinoffs, pose a real challenge in terms of harmonizing the various stakeholders and their activities.

To maximize wealth creation in the wildlife sanctuaries, it is important to consider the area's overall planning. Wildlife development plays a role in local and economic development and in renewable wealth creation, as does the development of natural resources, including the forests, which are a major source of economic spinoffs. Integrated, coordinated activity management must help to create synergy in social and economic impacts. For example, specific forest management actions may be preferred in order to encourage wildlife species that are of social and economic value. In addition, the construction and maintenance of forest roads can be of benefit to the wildlife sanctuaries by providing access to new sectors.

To ensure integrated management of land and resources and to foster harmonization of uses, the Government departments concerned are responsible for the following actions:

- consulting the wildlife sanctuary operators, through the integrated land and resource management panels, on forest harvesting conditions, with a view to harmonizing wildlife and forestry issues with the sanctuaries' activities, as far as possible;
- developing lands in the domain of the State and other natural resources, including mineral and energy resources, by using current processes to encourage harmonization with other activities taking place in the wildlife sanctuaries;
- carrying out environmental analyses of projects that are likely to alter environmental quality and, where applicable, imposing specific production, operational and restoration conditions that will help to keep environmental impacts at an acceptable level.

The wildlife sanctuary operators are responsible for:

- informing the Government department responsible for forest plans of any forest management concerns they may have;
- working with the other members of the panels to establish local forest management objectives and agree on usage harmonization measures;
- identifying and proposing strategic sectors for wildlife conservation and development, maintenance of good quality landscapes or concentration of logging operations.

Objective 1.4 – Longevity of the wildlife sanctuary network

Longevity is a dynamic concept that is part of a long-term process. For the wildlife sanctuaries, it means:

- developing the wildlife resource, which is a source of renewable and sustainable income when properly managed;
- renewing the user base and providing a wide variety of products adapted to market trends;
- reinvesting the wildlife sanctuaries' revenues in operations, consolidation and development with a view to maintaining their assets and making their activities more dynamic;
- promoting the wildlife sanctuaries (promotion can be carried out by the operators themselves, the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs and regional tourism associations).

Orientation 2: Ensure ecosystem conservation

The mission of the wildlife sanctuaries is to conserve and develop wildlife. They must help to ensure the longevity of wildlife populations in good quality habitats through sustainable wildlife management combined with forest development activities.

Objective 2.1 – Maintenance or improvement of habitat quality

The presence of wildlife species is highly dependent on habitat availability and quality. Wildlife conservation therefore necessarily involves habitat maintenance.

Wildlife and recreational facilities and other resource development activities in the sanctuaries, including forest management, must aim to maintain a sufficient quantity of good quality habitats, limit fragmentation and minimize disturbances in productive or key wildlife habitats.

Accordingly, the Québec Government's forest planners must:

- focus on ecosystem-based forest development in their forest plans, as provided for in the forest regime introduced by the *Sustainable Forest Development Act* (CQLR, chapter A-18.1). In the wildlife sanctuaries, the plans must take into account certain wildlife conservation, development and utilization issues specific to these areas;
- evaluate and authorize forestry work carried out by wildlife sanctuary operators in order to construct and develop roads and infrastructures.

The Québec Government's wildlife managers must:

- evaluate the repercussions of the operators' building construction projects on wildlife habitats; this does not apply to the SÉPAQ, which is legally authorized to carry out projects;
- evaluate and authorize wildlife development, habitat restoration and fish stocking projects, among other things through a stocking plan.

Wildlife sanctuary operators must:

- where applicable, carry out wildlife development and habitat restoration projects and any other interventions approved in advance by the Government;
- make sure their activities, and the work and facilities needed for them, are not harmful to wildlife; this involves informing the Government and complying with wildlife and habitat conservation guidelines and administrative agreements signed by the Minister;

- where applicable, carry out work on habitats with a view to encouraging species that are highly valued from a social or economic standpoint (e.g. ruffed grouse, moose or brook trout) or that are vulnerable. However, these activities must not be detrimental to biodiversity and must be approved by the Government.

Objective 2.2 – Maintenance of wildlife population health

The wildlife sanctuaries are areas in which wildlife conservation and development activities are carried out to ensure the longevity of wildlife populations in harmony with their environment. Special efforts are made by the Québec Government to prevent populations from declining or becoming overabundant. Populations and harvesting activities are monitored. Fishing and hunting quotas established by the Government must be strictly applied by operators, to maintain natural productivity and protect the environment's carrying capacity.³

In the wildlife sanctuaries, harvesting is managed according to the sustained yield principle. In other words, only the surplus animals, over and above the population that the habitat can support, are available for harvesting by hunters or anglers.

Accordingly, the Québec Government must:

- establish the level of wildlife harvesting that it may authorize, by setting fishing and hunting quotas;
- analyze annual harvests and harvest attempts within the territory, to identify abnormal fluctuations in wildlife populations;
- train and supervise wildlife protection assistants;
- assist operators with the task of preparing, implementing and assessing protection plans;
- agree with the Aboriginal communities concerned on a set of objectives or conditions for the exercise of certain social, ritual or subsistence activities.

The wildlife sanctuary operators must:

- rigorously compile harvest and visitor data and submit them to the Government;
- enforce fishing and hunting quotas;
- where necessary, add to the fish population that will be fished. This must not endanger species diversity or the genetic diversity of populations, and must be done in compliance with the area's stocking plan, or if no such plan exists, be done only with Government approval;
- report all sightings of invasive species or unusual behaviour by animals with altered physical condition;
- identify people who can be trained to act as wildlife protection assistants or land wardens;
- prepare and implement an annual wildlife protection plan and monitor and evaluate the plan's results.

Objective 2.3 – Knowledge acquisition and education on wildlife and habitats

When managing wildlife sanctuaries, information on land and wildlife populations is essential. Reliable, accurate data can be used to improve wildlife conservation and development measures, as well as forest

³ A habitat's carrying capacity is its ability to meet the needs of the wildlife populations that use it, without any significant or irreversible deterioration that would threaten its ecological integrity.

management and territorial development practices. When the wildlife sanctuaries were first created, the Québec Government referred to them as control sectors because they were ideal locations at which to obtain the information and expertise needed for exemplary wildlife management.

The various activities that take place in the wildlife sanctuaries provide unique opportunities for research, in particular with regard to integrated land and resource management. Accordingly:

- Government, university and other research institutions are invited to continue to carry out wildlife research projects aimed at understanding animal population dynamics and habitat functions, with a view, for example, to fostering the resiliency of these populations to change.
- Where resources are available, operators are encouraged to assist and support the research institutions in the field, since additional knowledge is important when making informed decisions.
- The Aboriginal communities are invited to take part in the information acquisition process and to contribute their own knowledge so that it can be taken into account.
- All research activities must be respectful of other activities in the area, and the necessary authorizations must be obtained from the Government and the operator.

The wildlife sanctuaries are also perfect locations for teaching and training activities. Their use by educational institutions and training organizations is encouraged and facilitated through partnerships or authorizations for pedagogical activities. Operators, through services such as observation and interpretation, play a role in educating users on topics connected with wildlife, animal behaviour and habitats. As people come into contact with nature in the wildlife sanctuaries, they learn to respect the environment and to understand the importance of preserving it.

Objective 2.4 – Synergy with the network of protected areas

Québec's internationally recognized protected areas serve as biodiversity conservation tools. In these areas, industrial activities likely to disturb ecosystems are prohibited. The wildlife sanctuaries do not meet the criteria for designation as protected areas because forestry, mineral and energy resource development is permitted. However, they are still dedicated to the conservation and development of wildlife (and, incidentally, to recreational activities), and can therefore work in synergy with the network of protected areas.

Some protected areas, or areas in the process of being protected, already exist in the wildlife sanctuaries. Creating protected areas adjacent to, near or within the boundaries of wildlife sanctuaries improves habitat connectivity and also helps to mitigate the impacts of wildlife harvesting or natural resource development on the rest of the wildlife sanctuary.

Orientation 3: Encourage citizens to develop a closer relationship with nature

The wildlife reserves are generally accessible and meet the public's need for contact with nature. These areas form part of the collective heritage, and generate a sense of public pride and belonging.

Objective 3.1 – A diversified supply of wildlife-related activities and services

Wildlife development is one of the main missions of wildlife sanctuaries. The sanctuaries help to meet the needs of a public in search of wildlife-related activities. Their operators therefore play a role by:

- offering a broad range of wildlife development activities;
- adapting the supply of activities and services to the needs of different user groups (families, experienced hunters and anglers, newcomers to the sports, etc.);
- developing activities without causing irreversible prejudice to wildlife or habitats, while ensuring that the area's wildlife potential is put to the best possible use.

The Government is responsible for issuing leases granting exclusive trapping rights, in order to develop fur animals.

Objective 3.2 – A quality nature experience for users

The wildlife sanctuaries are highly sought-after by the people of Québec, among other things for their visually attractive landscapes, safety, peace and quiet and sense of isolation. By meeting the public's need for contact with nature, they play a positive social role and promote public health and well-being. To ensure the quality of the nature experience for users, the Government and wildlife sanctuary operators must:

- manage the number of hunters and manage access to certain sectors during the hunting season;
- use existing land or resource planning tools (public land use plan, integrated forest management plan, etc.) to harmonize activities taking place in the wildlife sanctuaries so as to limit any temporal or spatial interference, where possible;
- maintain a good quality visual setting⁴ around specific locations, such as lodging facilities, reception offices, organized or semi-organized campsites, picnic areas and observation sites;
- take into account the condition of the road network during wildlife sanctuary activities and forest planning, to foster access to the area and enhance user satisfaction.

Objective 3.3 – Fair access to land and activities for residents of Québec

The wildlife sanctuaries were created after the abolition of the private clubs with exclusive rights, and a core element of their mission is to provide fair access to land and wildlife. To fulfill this fundamental task, the wildlife sanctuary operators must:

- provide services that are aimed at as many users as possible, with due regard for the conservation of wildlife and Québec's duties to the Aboriginal communities;
- offer a fee structure that facilitates affordable access to land and activities; the Québec Government shares some of the responsibility for this, because it passes regulations to set the fees for wildlife harvesting activities;
- guarantee equality of opportunity for everyone in the supply of wildlife harvesting activities. Products subject to quotas are therefore offered by various types of random draws. Residents of Québec receive priority for the allocation of activity days where the demand for hunting and fishing activities exceeds the supply. Non-residents have access to the wildlife sanctuaries once the demand from residents has been met.

Like all citizens who wish to hunt and fish, the holders of existing vacation leases are subject to selection rules for activities with quotas, and must pay the appropriate fees for wildlife harvesting activities.

⁴ As stipulated in the *Regulation respecting the sustainable development of forests in the domain of the State* (CQLR, chapter A-18.1, r. 0.01), a visual setting is a part of the landscape visible from a site of interest at a height of 1.5 m from the ground and whose limits are given by the surrounding topography.

Objective 3.4 – Involvement of local and regional communities

To ensure that the wildlife sanctuaries are firmly rooted in their respective communities, operators must maintain ties with local, regional and Aboriginal authorities. Each region and each wildlife sanctuary has its own context and situation that must be taken into account.

Wildlife sanctuary management and development must include participation by local and regional stakeholders, including regional county municipalities, regional tourist associations, the Aboriginal communities concerned, and the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs.

The local coordination structures set up for the wildlife sanctuaries help to ensure that the community's concerns are taken into consideration, and that the sanctuaries are included in the regional economic development strategy.

Implementation

The Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework sets out the vision of the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs for the conservation and development of wildlife in the sanctuaries.

The Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs, on behalf of the Government, is responsible for taking steps to normalize relations with operators and support their ability to apply the Management Framework. Among other things, it will:

- set up a liaison committee with the SÉPAQ;
- modernize and standardize the content of the authorization contract for wildlife sanctuaries whose management has been entrusted to non-profit organizations;
- review the structure of commercial authorizations.

Actions directly related to or arising from integrated resource management fall under the authority of various players. The Wildlife Sanctuary Management Framework covers Government sustainable development issues and issues relating to protected areas and integrated resource management that affect the wildlife sanctuary operators. Government actors and wildlife sanctuary operators are therefore required to apply the orientations set out in this Management Framework during their respective activities.

Conclusion

The population of Québec has a strong sense of belonging to the wildlife sanctuaries, and considers them to be natural environments in which conservation of biodiversity, wildlife development and fair access to land and wildlife are of particular importance.

This Management Framework, through the orientations it sets out, will help the wildlife sanctuary network to become a showcase for sustainable development and integrated resource management.

The wildlife reserves will continue to play a vital role by providing the population with opportunities to enter into contact with nature and enjoy the ensuing benefits. They will also help to educate the public about wildlife development and the challenges of preserving Québec's biodiversity.

This Management Framework reasserts the Government's intention to ensure a high standard of conservation for the broad range of wildlife found in these outstanding natural areas. Through it, the Government will uphold the wildlife focus of the sanctuaries, ensure supply quality and play an active role in the economic and social development of Québec and its regions.



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