

Recognizing Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM) Within Continental Québec

2024 Guidelines, 1st Edition

Coordination and drafting

This publication was developed by the Direction principale du développement de la conservation of Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP).

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Glossary

Incompatible activity: An activity whose effects hinder or compromise *in situ* conservation of biodiversity (*in situ*: within the natural environment) or that undermines the area's objectives.

Protected area: A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. (Dudley, 2008)

Conserved areas: According to these Guidelines, conserved areas encompass zones that fulfill the criteria for "Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures."

Authority responsible for the area: A government, regional authority, institution, individual, Indigenous community or organization, non-profit organization, corporation, municipality, regional county municipality (RCM), community group, or any other body recognized as having partial or complete powers and responsibilities in decision-making and area management. The central authorities accountable are entities responsible for decision-making on the site's objectives and its day-to-day management.

Other Effective (Area-Based) Conservation Measure: A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biological diversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values. (CBD, 2018)

Biodiversity: The variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. (Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity [CBD], 2018)

***In situ* Conservation:** The conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties. (Article 2 of the CBD)

Ecosystem: The dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit. (Article 2 of the CBD)

Habitat: The place or type of site where an organism or population naturally occurs. (Article 2 of the CBD)

Effective means: Regulatory, legal, or other measures to protect or conserve the zone.

Management body: An organization or entity responsible for the ongoing management of a site. The management body may differ from the authority responsible for the area.

Management regime: This refers to how an area is managed and may encompass all the rules outlined in plans, policies, and operational measures.

Sustainable use: The use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations. (Article 2 of the CBD)

Cultural and spiritual values: Cultural and spiritual values include recreational, religious, aesthetic, historic and social values related to tangible and intangible benefits that nature and natural features have for people of different cultures and societies, with a particular focus on those that contribute to conservation outcomes (e.g. traditional management practices on which key species, biodiversity or whole ecosystems

have become reliant on the societal support for conservation of landscapes for the maintenance of their quality in artistic expression or beauty) and intangible heritage, including cultural and spiritual practices. (WCPA-IUCN, 2020)

Acronyms

OECM: Other Effective (Area-Based) Conservation Measure

PA: Protected Area

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

WCPA: World Commission on Protected Areas

COP: Conference of the Parties

IPBES: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

NHCA: Natural Heritage Conservation Act

MELCCFP: Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

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1. Background

Following the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), which took place in December 2022 in Montréal, over 195 governments, including Québec, adopted the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework for post-2020. Among its 23 action targets, one aims to effectively conserve 30% of land, inland waters, and coastal and marine ecosystems by 2030 (Target 3). To achieve this, the Parties must establish an ecologically representative network of protected areas (PAs) and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM), a concept introduced by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2010 and formally defined in 2018.

Box 1. Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework

"Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and 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." (UN, 2022)

Introduced in 2021 under the NHCA (section 2), the OECM aims to acknowledge the contribution of areas that, while not protected, still demonstrate positive, long-term, and effective *in situ* conservation of biodiversity outcomes.

These guidelines outline the criteria for analysis and the process for recognizing OECMs, specifically adapted for Québec, with the aim of incorporating these OECMs into the Québec register of OECMs (section 6.1 of the NHCA). These guidelines interpret the concept of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures as defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in the document titled "*Recognizing and Reporting Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures*." The efforts of the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas and the Pathway to Canada Target 1 approach also inform these guidelines through the *Decision Support Tool for Assessing Areas Against Pan-Canadian Standards for Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMS) for Terrestrial and Inland Waters* (Working Group of the Pathway to Canada Target 1 Initiative, 2021).

This document presents the initial version of the OECM guidelines for Québec. A second edition may be produced based on updates and clarifications from IUCN. Similarly, adjustments may be made by analyzing and recognizing actual OECM cases in Québec.

2. Complementarity Between OECMs and Protected Areas

According to international criteria established by the IUCN, Québec has thirty designations that qualify as protected areas (PAs). These PAs are recorded in the Registre des aires protégées au Québec, as outlined in section 5 of the NHCA. In 2021, this Act introduced a register of OECMs. Consequently, the Minister is now required to maintain a register compiling information on OECMs, as defined by the IUCN.

From its onset, the OECM concept was designed to acknowledge specific areas that produce positive biodiversity outcomes, even though they are not protected areas (PAs). Thus, PAs and OECMs work together to ensure the long-term *in situ* conservation of biodiversity.

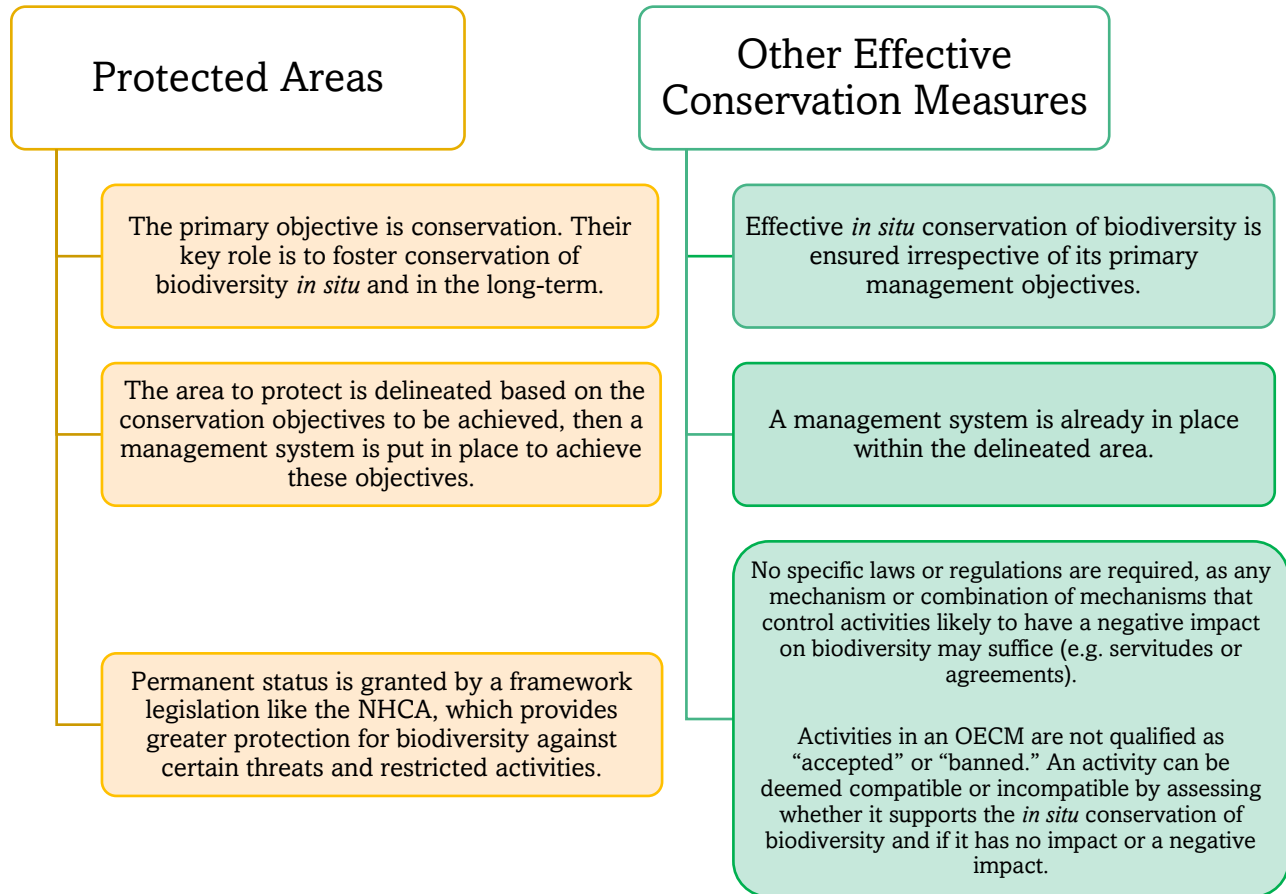


Figure 1. Main elements that distinguish protected areas from OECMs

The IUCN recommends that areas meeting all the elements of the IUCN definition of a protected area (PA) and recognized by the governance authority as such should be classified as PAs instead of other effective OECMs. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume that OECMs and PAs are interchangeable or that areas designated as OECMs in the register would be better suited as PAs. The nature of the area’s management objectives will be carefully evaluated to determine the appropriate status for the area. However, some OECMs may later be acknowledged as protected areas (PAs). For instance, if nature conservation becomes the primary management objective, or if the area already meets the criteria for a PA, the governance authority that initially chose not to recognize the area as a PA may later seek such recognition. Thus, when an area meets all the criteria of a PA, it should be recognized as such.

Additionally, drawing from the Quebec Ecological Corridors Initiative, we can envision a connected and sustainable ecological network that integrates protected areas (PAs) and OECMs, alongside further conservation actions aimed at enhancing or supporting this network (Figure 2). Protected and conserved areas can function as conservation cores, connectivity corridors, or buffer zones within these networks.

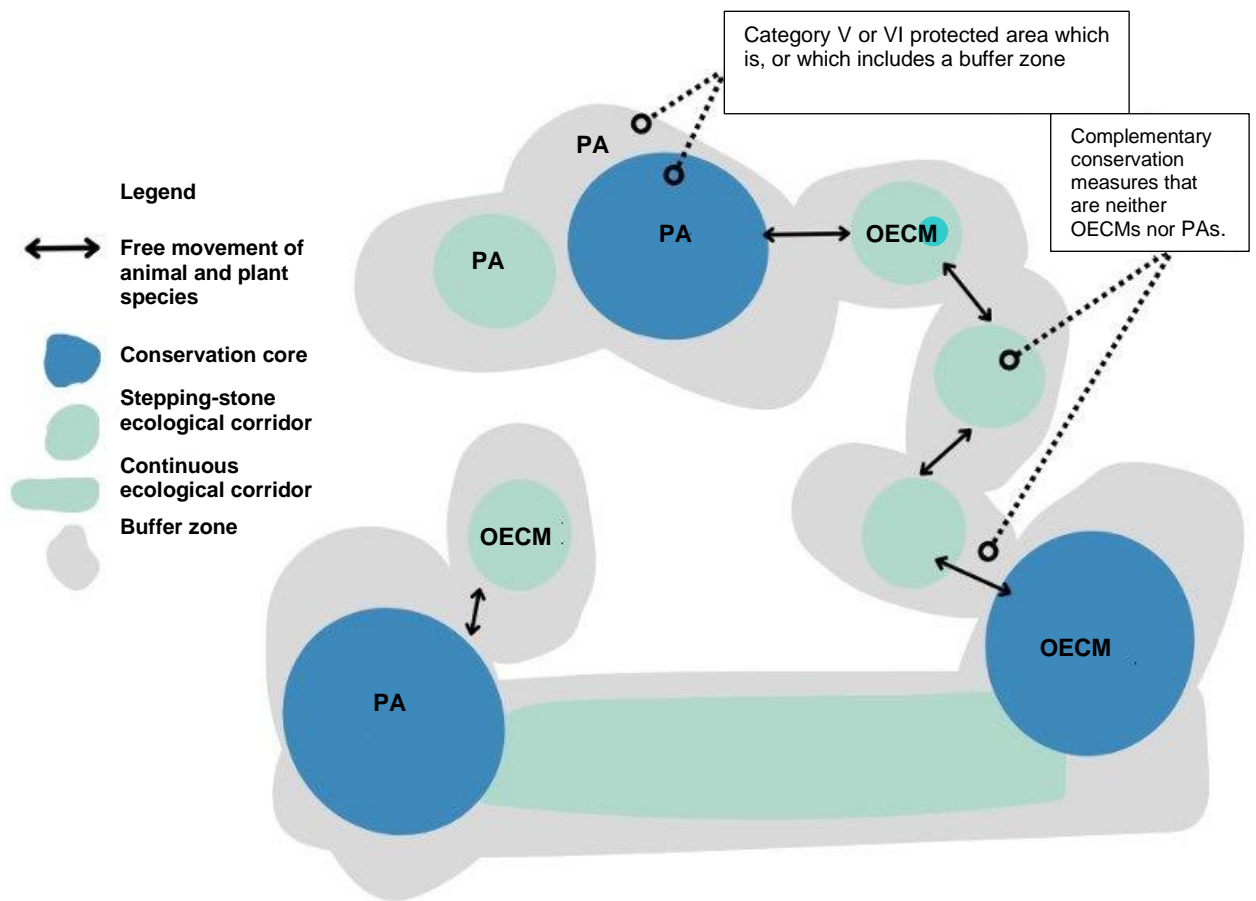


Figure 2. Example of an ecological network comprising PAs, OECMs and complementary conservation measures¹ (Habitat, 2023)

3. Definition of OECMs

The official definition of OECMs, as proposed by the IUCN, is as follows:

Box 2. Definition of Other Effective Conservation Measures as per the IUCN

“A geographically defined area other than a PA, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in situ* conservation of biological diversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values. (CBD, 2018).”

Key terms in the IUCN definition are outlined in Table 1 below to provide a common theoretical understanding of the concept.

¹Complementary conservation measures are a concept under development in Québec, and they will support the conservation network made up of protected areas and OECMs.

Table 1. Key terms in the IUCN definition of OECMs

Key Term	Description
Geographically defined area	A spatially delineated area with agreed boundaries. The size of OECMs may vary. Yet, an OECM should be of a sufficient size to achieve the long-term <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity, including the conservation of all ecosystems, habitats and species communities for which the site is important. “Sufficient size” is highly contextual and is dependent on the ecological requirements for the persistence of the relevant species and ecosystems.
Other than a protected area	Areas already designated as PA, or which are within a PA should not be recognized or reported as OECMs.
	<p>The area is under the authority of a specified entity or an agreed set of entities. OECMs can be regulated by the same governance methods as PAs, that is, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governments (at various levels), individuals, organizations or corporations • indigenous communities or local communities • shared governance (that is, governance by various rights-holders and stakeholders all working together) <p>Unlike PAs, OECMs do not need to be managed with a primary objective of biodiversity conservation. However, there must be a direct causal link between the overriding management objectives of the area, on the one hand, and the long-term <i>in situ</i> conservation of biodiversity, on the other hand. The management system in place must be capable of withstanding new threats and must, therefore, include “effective means” (see Appendix I) of controlling activities through a predefined usage regime. In this respect, the authority managing the area must have the legal and/or regulatory backing to enforce this usage regime. An area without a management regime is not an OECM, even if its biodiversity remains intact.</p>
Positive outcomes	<p>An obvious positive change in biodiversity or at least, maintaining the latter, thanks to governance decisions and management measures applied in the area. Positive outcomes include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preserving essential ecosystems, habitats and ecological corridors • supporting the recovery of endangered species • maintaining the role of ecosystems and safeguarding ecosystem services • improving resilience against threats • preserving and linking the remnants of fragmented ecosystems in degraded landscapes <p>To identify these positive outcomes in biodiversity conservation, the recommended action is to observe the difference between a past reference state of the site and its current conserved state, following ecological monitoring. Recognizing an OECM should involve identifying the various characteristics of biological diversity that highlight the site’s significance and should be grounded in the best available scientific and local knowledge. OECMs should be managed using an ecosystem-based approach and guided by the precautionary principle, with the flexibility to adapt to new challenges and ensure long-term biodiversity outcomes.</p>

Key Term	Description
Long-term sustainability	OECMs should be effective in producing sustainable positive outcomes for the <i>in situ</i> conservation of biological diversity. Specifically, there should be a clear link between biodiversity management and its outcomes, along with mechanisms to address current or anticipated threats. A temporary, intermittent or short-term management strategy is not an OECM. While long-term conservation is always challenging, OECM conservation should be permanent, with mechanisms in place to support conservation outcomes that are difficult to reverse or alter.
<i>In situ</i> conservation of biological diversity	<i>In situ</i> conservation of biological diversity is defined as follows: “ <i>The conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties.</i> ” (Article 2 of the CBD, 2022) OECMs should achieve biological diversity conservation outcomes that are comparable in scale to those obtained by PAs and complementary to them, and so by effectively protecting one or more elements of Indigenous biodiversity (see section 4.1).
Associated ecosystem functions and services	Ecosystem functions constitute an integral part of biodiversity and are defined as the biological, geochemical, and physical processes that occur within an ecosystem and contribute to its proper functioning and resilience. Ecological functions that are beneficial to society encompass ecosystem services and include, provisioning services (of food, water, and other resources), regulating services (such as flood and drought risk reduction through watercourse regulation, prevention of soil erosion and degradation, mitigation of the risk of disease), and supporting services (soil formation, nutrient cycling, etc.). The protection of these ecosystem functions and services can often justify the recognition of OECMs (see Appendix II). Yet, management aimed at improving a specific ecosystem service should not adversely impact the overall ecological values of the area.
Cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic and other locally relevant values	Cultural and spiritual values include recreational, religious, aesthetic, historic and social values related to tangible and intangible benefits that nature has for people of different cultures and societies. These values can contribute to positive outcomes for biodiversity conservation in an OECM (for example, traditional management practices on which key species or entire ecosystems have become dependent or society’s support for conserving landscapes to preserve their beauty) and intangible heritage, which includes cultural and spiritual practices. Socioeconomic values can align with conservation outcomes, and so, a traditional use of biological resources (e.g., entomological, ichthyological, mycological, faunal, floristic, shrub, and tree resources) in a sustainable manner that does not compromise ecological values, can be implemented within an OECM.

Table 2 describes the different types of conservation approaches for OECMs (WCPA-IUCN, 2020) and provides detailed examples of areas for each approach.

Table 2. Approaches that deliver effective conservation within an OECM

Approach	Objectives
Primary conservation	<p>OECMs with a primary conservation approach have biodiversity conservation as their main objective, just like PAs. These are OECMs that are not recognized as PAs, but could be if the governance authority, rights-holders and stakeholders so wish.</p> <p>Examples: conservation servitudes, municipal agreements or regulations</p>
Secondary conservation	<p>An OECM with a secondary conservation approach has a primary management objective that is not expressly aimed at biodiversity conservation, although there is a secondary biodiversity conservation objective. This is the case, among others, with some areas conserved for their ecosystem services or areas managed with the goal of connecting PAs.</p> <p>Examples: parks for recreational activities, a drinking water source protected for its ecosystem services, a natural area with moderate resource use (e.g., a community forest) or an area dedicated to the conservation and development of wildlife.</p>
Ancillary conservation	<p>An OECM with an ancillary conservation approach does not have any management objective to conserve biodiversity. However, its management measures still result in effective biodiversity conservation as a co-benefit. For example, sacred sites, military base security areas or historic sites may be subject to access bans for reasons that have nothing to do with biodiversity conservation, but which are aimed at preserving cultural or religious heritage, or military defence.</p> <p>Examples: sacred sites, heritage, historical or archaeological sites, military zones and other restricted areas.</p>

4. Criteria for Recognizing an OECM Within Continental Québec

The MELCCFP will evaluate areas identified or proposed as OECMs through a decision support tool. This tool, inspired by the one developed by the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas in 2019, has been adapted to the specific realities of Québec. It is [available online](#) (French) and can be used to determine whether an area meets the criteria for designation as a PA or recognition as an OECM. The following sections of this document outline the requirements for recognizing OECMs in Québec and how they are interpreted.

4.1 Biodiversity values of the territory

There must be a reasonable probability that the area within the territory in question is of significant biodiversity value. Reasonable probability means there must be correlations between significant biodiversity values or other concrete evidence that the habitat is suitable. It is essential to ensure that the available information confirms that at least one of the important biodiversity values is involved, specifically:

- rare, threatened, or endangered species and habitats, along with the ecosystems that support them, including species and sites listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the Red List of Ecosystems, or their national equivalents
- representative natural ecosystems
- highly natural areas characterized by a full range of native species and the support of ecological processes. These areas will remain intact or be restored under the proposed management regime
- key biodiversity areas
- ecosystems and species whose distribution area is restricted within natural environments
- large aggregations of species, even during migration or spawning periods
- ecosystems that are particularly important for the different life stages of species, their feeding, resting, moulting and reproduction
- areas that are important for ecological connectivity or to complete a conservation network within a land or seascape
- areas that provide essential ecosystem services, such as clean water and carbon storage, along with the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity (refer to the list of ecosystem goods and services in Appendix II)
- species and habitats essential for traditional human uses, including medicinal plants, along with *in situ* conservation of biodiversity

Generally, OECMs should be natural. Thus, a degraded site with no ecological value would not qualify as an OECM. Sites requiring major restoration work to achieve a higher level of naturalness should only be recognized as OECMs after demonstrating positive outcomes for biodiversity conservation over a specific period. It is important to note that a territory with degraded areas undergoing restoration can still be recognized as an OECM if it is part of an ecosystem with high biodiversity value.

4.2 Geographic boundaries, land tenure, and surface

OECMs are recognized based on clear geographical or legal boundaries, which must be static and defined. For instance, the boundaries may be delineated by geo-referenced maps, survey markers, or physical features recognized as the official boundary.

Any continental area (land or inland water), whether public or private, that is effectively managed to conserve biodiversity in the long term can be proposed and evaluated as an OECM.

Areas of all sizes may be considered, provided they are sufficiently large to support long-term biodiversity. Under certain conditions, small-scale areas can still contribute to the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity by hosting viable populations of native species and supporting essential ecosystem functions. Small areas can sometimes act as the last remaining islands of relatively natural habitats within heavily altered or human-dominated landscapes. They may hold unique cultural significance associated with biodiversity values (such as heritage sites) and can also serve as corridors for species to find suitable patches of habitat as they move about. Since the concept of “sufficient size” is highly contextual and depends on the ecological requirements for the persistence of relevant species and ecosystems, projects will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

4.3 Long-term

While guaranteeing the long-term conservation of an area in all circumstances is challenging, recognized OECMs should be permanently maintained, and mechanisms for managing the outcomes of *in situ* biodiversity conservation should be difficult to reverse or change.

To align with international directives (IUCN, 2020; Fitzsimons et al., 2024), the recognition of OECMs on public land in Québec should depend on their permanent conservation. In contrast, on private land, the existing mechanism should ensure that the territory is conserved for at least 25 years, with the ongoing intention to permanently safeguard the OECM.

In some cases, recognizing an OECM requires a combination of several mechanisms aimed at ensuring long-term effectiveness. For example, to confirm its intention for long-term conservation of a territory, a municipality or organization with a compatible mission could own the area to ensure biodiversity conservation and management of activities. The site in question would be designated as a “conservation” area in the land use and development plan and conservation zoning in the urban plan..

4.4 Effective management resources

As part of the process for recognizing an OECM, an assessment is conducted based on the management resources and practices that have already been adopted. OECMs must establish a direct correlation between their area’s management and biodiversity outcomes, with resources available to address current or anticipated threats while preventing adverse long-term effects on biodiversity.

Québec has established the Standardized Classification of Threats to Biodiversity, which is used to identify potential pressures (MFFP, 2021). Some of these threats are directly linked to current activity regimes. Therefore, resources allocated to manage an OECM must avoid or mitigate these threats to biodiversity in a specific area.

Consequently, activities that do not support the conservation of the area’s biodiversity must be excluded, while those compatible activities should be controlled or managed. Therefore, the owner or the authorities responsible for managing an area recognized as an OECM must be empowered to enforce a regime of activities focused on biodiversity conservation.

These resources could include, among others:

- by-laws, acts or agreements governing authorized activities
- collaboration with bodies and authorities possessing expertise crucial for conserving biodiversity in the area. This collaboration requires that the roles and responsibilities of each partner be clearly defined
- decision-making systems that support the governance authority in its responsibilities to conserve the biodiversity values of the area, such as a board of directors, advisory tables, etc.

-
- registration of the area into several regional planning tools through policies (development policies, municipal policies, etc.)
 - use of plans (management, conservation, financing, etc.)

Examples include laws or regulations that protect a town's drinking water supply, cultural heritage, vulnerable species, and critical natural landscapes. Municipal zoning by-laws could be reinforced, or conservation servitudes could be established. Many options are available, and the combination of suitable mechanisms for direct or indirect *in situ* biodiversity conservation will vary significantly depending on the specific context of the area in question. Appendix I provides examples of effective means that apply to the Québec context.

4.5 Activity regime

Unlike activities managed in protected areas, those within an OECM are neither “authorized” nor “banned.” An activity can be deemed compatible or incompatible by assessing whether it supports the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity and if it has no impact or a negative impact (see Table 3). As part of the assessment to determine if an area qualifies as an OECM, activities are evaluated based on their effect on the site's biodiversity, the extent and likelihood of that effect, and the capacity and willingness of decision-makers to manage these impacts over the long term. The area will not be recognized as an OECM if the activities are found to be incompatible.

It is important to note that assessing different areas within an OECM may be appropriate. For instance, consider a situation where incompatible activities or infrastructure exist in certain parts of the area, where various management mechanisms apply to different sections, or where distinct authorities oversee specific regions. Variations in activity regimes, management objectives, or levels of naturalness in different areas could also justify a separate assessment of regions proposed as OECMs. In cases where only certain portions of an area meet all the selection criteria for designation as an OECM, only those sections may be recognized and included in the register.

Intensive industrial-scale activities and infrastructure development that harm the environment should be avoided in OECMs². Therefore, high-impact exploration and mining activities cannot be permitted within the boundaries of an OECM.

Nevertheless, valid mining titles will not automatically exclude an area from the analysis process. In specific cases, the likelihood of activities damaging the environment is negligible due to mechanisms put in place. An example of this could be private land owned outright by an organization whose letters patent confirm its primary mission of protecting natural environments and ensure that, in the event of dissolution, its assets are devolved to organizations with a similar mission.

Similarly, the ecological impacts of certain commercial natural resource exploitation activities, such as agriculture and forestry, can vary. Recreational use, tourism, and the sustainable use of renewable natural resources may occur within recognized OECMs, provided they are designed to maintain or enhance biodiversity values. Approaches that genuinely aim for sustainable use and that increase or maintain the naturalness of these ecosystems may promote the conservation of a wider range of species, habitat structures, and ecosystem functions than higher-impact methods. However, due to its extractive nature, intensive exploitation of natural resources that overlooks the environment's carrying capacity alters ecosystems and therefore cannot support the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity.

² This is in line with Recommendation 102 of the IUCN (WCC-2016-Rec-102-EN), adopted during the 2016 World Conservation Congress in Hawaii. This Recommendation calls on governments and relevant authorities “to adopt and implement policies that restrict environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development that may have negative impacts on (...) any areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services that are identified by governments as essential to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.”

The proposed areas will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Table 3 lists some examples of activities or infrastructure considered incompatible and examples of activities that may align with conservation objectives.

Table 3. Compatibility of specific activities with conservation outcomes within OECMs

Likely Compatible	Likely Incompatible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observation and interpretation of nature • recreational hunting and fishing • educational activities • scientific activities • monitoring, management and maintenance of existing infrastructure • control of invasive alien species • recreational activities (hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, cycling, all-terrain vehicles or snowmobiles, boat launching, camping without services, etc.) • paths, trails • forestry or agricultural activities with low ecological impact, hence “sustainable use” • local, community or traditional indigenous use of renewable resources and subsistence activities • local energy production projects adapted to conservation objectives while applying best practices • buildings and infrastructure that promote access to nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intensive silviculture • intensive agriculture • hydroelectric dams and the construction of new hydroelectric reservoirs • industrial-scale power generation project • highways, main roads • oil lines • gas lines • exploration and mining activities • waste and chemical discharges • drainage or modification of water bodies, watercourses and wetlands • introduction of non-indigenous species • construction of commercial or residential infrastructure

In conclusion, First Nations and Inuit hold existing rights, whether Indigenous or through treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes and affirms these rights. This means they can carry out their traditional activities, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and plant harvesting, according to certain rules. Recognizing an OECM does not limit the exercise of these rights in any way, and such recognition neither creates, acknowledges, denies, nor affects any Indigenous or treaty rights recognized and affirmed under section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982

4.6. Examples of areas of interest

Considering the criteria presented, here are some examples of areas that could fully or partially meet the requirements for an OECM in Québec:

- voluntary conservation sites not recognized as PAs
- regional parks
- municipal parks managed to preserve biodiversity values
- university or community forests or forests used for research
- sites of sociocultural importance linked to the environment and located in natural areas
- military bases and other national defence land
- protection areas for drinking water sources
- areas within UNESCO biosphere reserves
- wetlands and water bodies under effective conservation means
- national historic sites
- heritage sites
- places of worship or land belonging to religious congregations
- Indigenous conserved areas or areas of Indigenous interest
- outstanding geological sites
- areas dedicated to wildlife conservation and development
- forest servitude
- sites for recreational activities or accommodation and holiday camps
- certain maple sugar bushes under effective conservation means

5. The Process of Recognizing an OECM Within Québec

As outlined in Figure 3, the recognition process involves a series of simple, accessible, and rapid steps that facilitate the transition from a potential OECM to a recognized OECM (IUCN, 2020; Habitat, 2023).

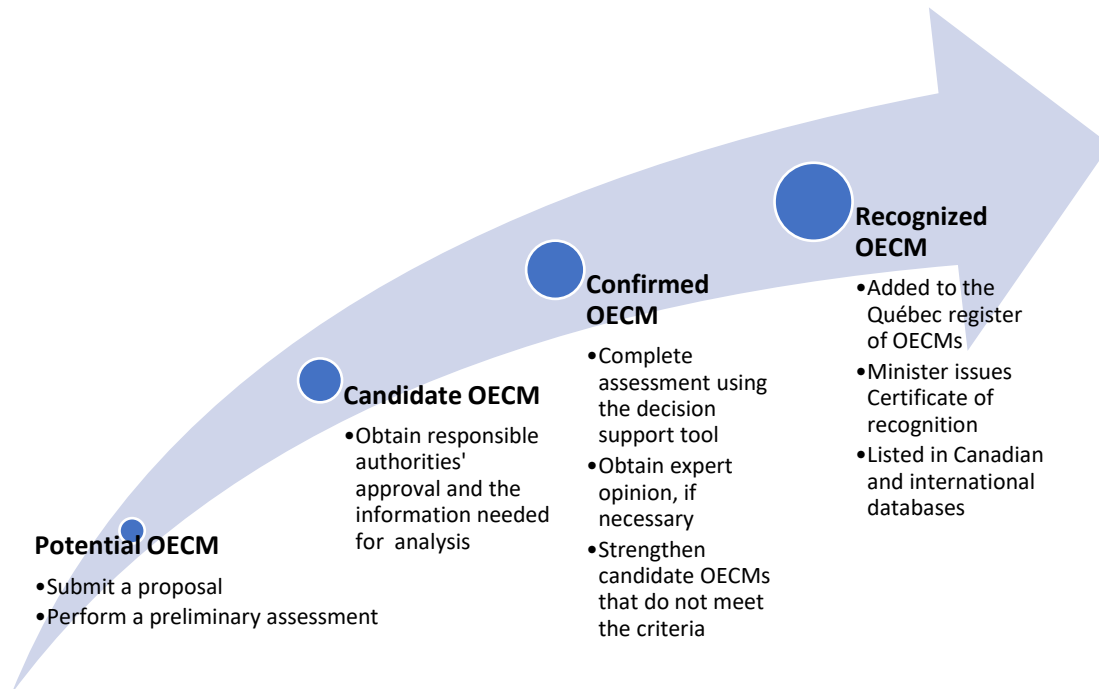


Figure 3. The process of recognizing an OECM within continental Québec

In practical terms, the project promoter (who may be an entity other than the authority responsible for the area) must follow the steps outlined on the [MELCCFP web page](#) to formally submit an OECM project. An online form based on the decision support tool³ will detail how the area meets the recognition criteria mentioned in the previous section. Project developers will receive assistance in completing the form.

Before submitting a project to the MELCCFP for analysis, a project proponent will need the approval of landowners to have their lands evaluated and recognized as part of the network of other effective conservation measures. Additionally, landowners can request an evaluation by the MELCCFP for their lands.

If a project fails to meet all the criteria of an OECM, the MELCCFP allows for a voluntary retroactive process to strengthen the conservation measures that do not align with the OECM criteria. Candidate OECMs that

³ Québec drew from the work of the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas to create a tool for evaluating proposals for protected areas and other effective conservation measures. The decision support tool can be downloaded from the [MELCCFP website](#) (French). They can complete the form in advance to help them gather all necessary information prior to officially submitting a project via the online form.

fulfill nearly all the requirements present opportunities for biodiversity conservation. With some support and reinforcement, these existing management systems could ultimately contribute to effective biodiversity conservation, thereby being recognized as OECMs.

Before recognizing an OECM, the MELCCFP will ensure that the authorities responsible for the area have granted their approval and that any existing conventions and agreements, where applicable, have been adhered to. Once this confirmation is obtained, the Candidate OECM will become fully eligible for recognition. The engagement of governance authorities and other stakeholders from the outset will be essential for gathering the information necessary to analyze the area using the Decision Support Tool. For projects on public land, the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts (MRNF), as the manager of public land, will be consulted prior to the recognition of an OECM. Other relevant departments may also be consulted, depending on the nature of the project. Additionally, where applicable, municipal authorities, Indigenous communities, or other users of the area may be informed by the MELCCFP about the recognition project. The MELCCFP is also committed to respecting the government's obligations regarding consultation with Indigenous communities.

Per the NHCA, the Minister will keep a record of recognized OECMs in the form of a Québec register. The data will be available on an interactive map and shared with national and global databases.

6. OECM Monitoring

Recognition as an OECM does not create any legal obligations or impose additional regulatory restrictions on the area. However, to achieve recognition as an OECM, it must adhere to the established criteria, primarily because its management measures should ensure long-term biodiversity conservation outcomes. Once recognized, the authorities responsible for the OECM must periodically demonstrate that the management resources in place continue to yield positive biodiversity results; otherwise, their recognition may be revoked.

Monitoring OECMs is intended to be straightforward and efficient, using data from the known area once the online self-declaration form is submitted. This form must be completed approximately every five years by the responsible authority or a designated entity, for both private and public land, to inform the MELCCFP of any changes regarding biodiversity threats, activity regimes, and management methods. Any identified lapses must be addressed in the following year to ensure that the area continues to meet OECM criteria. Random field visits may also be conducted to validate the information provided in the self-declaration form, with responsible authorities notified in advance about these visits. For an OECM on public land, relevant departments or other designated entities will also be contacted to confirm whether any changes have occurred.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Examples of management resources that can contribute toward achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes

Although the enforcement of legal tools is indispensable for controlling activities, other management resources can also contribute to the effectiveness of the system put in place. Thus, the list below (non-exhaustive) presents not only examples of legal and regulatory means of controlling threats but also ways of defining and framing the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the management system, as well as ways of confirming the attainment of positive outcomes for biodiversity conservation and ensuring long-term monitoring.

Management measures	Acts, regulations and other relevant instruments	Existing designations or examples
Acts that help govern activities authorized within a given area	Natural Heritage Conservation Act	○ Natural environments designated by the Minister
	Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species	○ Habitat of a threatened or vulnerable plant species
	Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife	○ Areas dedicated to wildlife conservation and development
	Environment Quality Act	○ Flood zone, shoreline and coastal management regime
	Sustainable Forest Development Act	○ Teaching and research forests
	Mining Act	○ Outstanding geological sites
	Cultural Heritage Act	○ Cultural heritage landscapes ○ Heritage sites
	Indian Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. I-5)	○ Natural spaces within Indian reserves
	<i>Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee Governance Agreement Act (S.C. 2018, c. 4, s. 1)</i>	○ Natural spaces on category I land
	<i>Naskapi and the Cree-Naskapi Commission Act (S.C. 1984, c. 18)</i>	
<i>Act respecting the land regime in the James Bay and New Québec territories (ch. R-13.1)</i>		

Management measures	Acts, regulations and other relevant instruments	Existing designations or examples
	Act respecting the preservation of agricultural land and agricultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Natural or semi-natural environments in agricultural areas
	Act respecting land use planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Zoning by-laws ○ By-laws on tree planting and felling ○ Subdivision by-laws
	Municipal Powers Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional parks ○ Municipal parks
	Civil Code of Québec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Properties held in their own right by a conservation body, social benefit trust or NPO ○ Conservation servitudes
	Canada National Parks Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National historic sites Canada
Development plans and municipal by-laws	Land use and development plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Territories incompatible with mining activity ○ Land used for conservation
	Town planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conservation area
	Metropolitan land use and development plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Woodland of interest
Organizing roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in land management	Agreements, management, financing and conservation plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity control ○ Management or administrative committees ○ Stakeholder consultation tables and processes ○ Surveillance of the area ○ Education and awareness activities ○ Partnerships with conservation bodies and universities
Existing monitoring processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tools for measuring Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) – Tool for assessing the governance of PAs and OECMs – Site-level Assessment for Governance and Equity (SAGE) – Standard of the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basic documentation and ongoing monitoring of the biodiversity values of sites ○ Ongoing community monitoring, participatory mapping and integration of traditional knowledge, where appropriate ○ Monitoring conservation actions ○ Monitoring governance, stakeholder involvement and management systems that contribute to biodiversity outcomes

Appendix II: Ecosystem goods and services as per the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

The 18 ecosystem goods and services listed below represent nature's contribution to human well-being, as defined by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019) in its conceptual framework:

Name	Brief explanation
Habitat creation and maintenance	Formation and continued production, by ecosystems, of ecological conditions necessary or favourable for living organisms important to humans.
Pollination and dispersal of seeds	Facilitation by animals of movement of pollen among flowers and dispersal of seeds, larvae or spores of organisms important or harmful to humans
Regulation of air quality	Regulation (by impediment or facilitation) by ecosystems of atmospheric gases, filtration, fixation, degradation or storage of pollutants.
Regulation of climate	Climate regulation by ecosystems (including regulation of global warming) through effects on emissions of greenhouse gases, biophysical feedbacks, biogenic volatile organic compounds and aerosols.
Regulation of ocean acidification	Regulation, by photosynthetic organisms, of atmospheric CO ₂ concentrations and seawater pH.
Regulation of freshwater quantity, location and timing	Regulation, by ecosystems, of the quantity, location and timing of the flow of surface and groundwater.
Regulation of freshwater and coastal water quality	Regulation of water quality through filtration of particles, pathogens, excess nutrients, and other chemicals.
Formation, protection and decontamination of soils	Formation and long-term maintenance of soil, including structure and sediment retention and erosion, maintenance of soil fertility and degradation or storage of pollutants
Regulation of hazards and extreme events	Amelioration, by ecosystems, of the impacts of hazards; reduction of risks and modification of the frequency of extreme natural events.
Regulation of detrimental organisms and biological processes	Regulation, by ecosystems or organisms, of pests, pathogens, predators, competitors, parasites and potentially harmful organisms.
Energy	Production of biomass-based fuel (such as biofuel crops, animal waste, fuelwood and agricultural residue).
Food production	Production of food from wild, managed, or domesticated organisms on land and the ocean; production of feed animals.

Material and assistance	Production of materials derived from organisms in crops or wild ecosystems and direct use of living organisms for decoration, company, transport, and labour.
Medicinal, biochemical and genetic resources	Production of materials derived from organisms used for medicinal purposes; production of genes and genetic information.
Learning and inspiration	Opportunities for the development of capabilities to prosper through education, acquisition of knowledge, and inspiration for art and technological design.
Physical and psychological experiences	Opportunities for physically and psychologically beneficial activities, healing, relaxation, leisure, and aesthetic enjoyment based on the close contact with nature.
Supporting identities	Religious, spiritual, and social-cohesion experiences; a sense of belonging, rootedness or connectedness, associated with different entities of the living world, narratives and myths, rituals and celebrations, satisfaction derived from knowing a particular landscape, habitat or species.
Maintenance of options	Capacity of ecosystems, habitats, species or genotypes to keep human options for the future, in order to support a good quality of life in the long term.



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