



**CANADIAN
WETLANDS
ROUNDTABLE**

February 6, 2019

The Honourable Catherine McKenna
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi
Minister of Natural Resources Canada

The Honourable Navdeep Bains
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development

Dear Ministers,

Re: Federal Government Investment in the Canadian Wetlands Inventory

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable (CWR) is a multi-stakeholder partnership of conservation and resource sector organizations committed to advancing the sustainability, health, and responsible management of Canada's wetlands. We are writing to you in regards to a key national wetland conservation priority - the development of Canada's Wetlands Inventory.

Canada is home to approximately 25 percent of the world's remaining wetlands. Our wetlands generate benefits to Canadians in excess of \$25 billion annually. Along with maintaining soil moisture, carbon sequestration and other ecological services, wetlands also support an abundance of animal and plant diversity, as well as improve the quality and quantity of Canada's precious groundwater supplies. Yet approximately 15 percent of Canada's total wetland base has been drained or lost to other uses. The estimated losses in densely settled and cultivated areas have reached upwards of 90 percent. Each year we lose upwards of 29,000 acres or more of our remaining wetlands.

While some progress has been made at a regional scale and in the development of indicators, the absence of a national wetland inventory remains a major impediment to Canada's ability to understand, monitor and manage our wetlands. Reliable inventory information is fundamental to our understanding of wetland function, our ability to quantify wetland benefits, and the conduct of needed landscape-based conservation policies and programs.

A national wetland inventory is critical to the successful delivery of Canada's international commitment to the wise use of wetlands.

Target 8 of the 2016-2024 strategic plan of the 1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, to which Canada is a signatory, calls for the updating and completion of national wetlands inventories. Canada's report to COP 13 describes current efforts. But more needs to be done.

The development of a national wetland inventory is critical to the delivery of Canada's national strategies and international commitments for sustainable development, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. Canada's 2020 biodiversity goals for wetlands (Target 3) call for Canada's wetlands to be conserved or enhanced to sustain their ecosystem services through retention, restoration and management activities. At the same time, wetland conservation contributes to Canada's biodiversity goals for protected areas (Target 1) and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Equally important, Canada's ability to predict and effectively respond to the impacts of climate change requires detailed knowledge concerning the geographical distribution and type of Canadian wetlands – knowledge that can only be obtained through a national inventory. As the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) reported last September, the financial impacts of climate change and extreme weather events are being felt by a growing number of homeowners and communities across Canada. The IBC also stated that wetlands and other natural infrastructure can be a cost-effective way to mitigate material financial losses that would otherwise result from flooding.

For these compelling reasons, we propose the development of Canada's Wetlands Inventory on a priority basis and offer these recommendations for consideration:

1. An effective wetland inventory must be able to deliver four key services:
 - Report regularly on the status and trends of permanent, seasonal and temporal wetland basins;
 - Support ongoing monitoring and management of wetlands including their environmental and societal benefits;
 - Inform landscape-level resource management by employing national standards that are compatible with other land-cover initiatives; and
 - Enable easy access to digital delineated and classified wetland data using standardized data structure.
2. To ensure cost-efficiencies, Canada's Wetlands Inventory should be developed within the broader context of an integrated system of national science and information data management – as proposed by the Green Budget Coalition's recommendations for Budget 2019.
3. Timely completion of the inventory can best be assured by leveraging Canada's recent investments in satellite capacity, as well as our extensive expertise in wetland inventory data, survey standards and methodology, geographical mapping and remote sensing.
4. Early action is paramount to the success of this nation-wide project. CWR recommends the inclusion of a wetland foundational database layer as one of Canada's national ecosystem data investments for the 2019-2024 period,

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable looks forward to working with you and your colleagues to secure a better future for Canada's wetlands and to sustain our international reputation for wetland conservation.

Your support for these recommendations, and their implementation through needed interdepartmental collaboration, will help ensure the successful development of Canada's Wetlands Inventory. As a next step, ask that you identify a lead official so that we may follow-up on our recommendations and business case for the needed investment in Canada's Wetlands Inventory.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Honourable William Morneau, Minister of Finance Canada

The Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada

Ms. Julie Gelfand, Commissioner of the Environment and sustainable Development

Mr. Craig Stewart, Insurance Bureau of Canada

For more information about Canadian Wetlands Roundtable, please visit our new website:
<https://wetlandsroundtable.ca/>