Consultation Document

Summary

An Ecological Recovery Plan for Canada

Creating a Healthier Environment and Economy Through Effective Stewardship

Prepared for the Canadian Stewardship Coalition

By the Centre for Environmental Stewardship and Conservation

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The natural environment in Canada—upon which our very health and economy depends—is deteriorating. And it will continue to decline, unless immediate action is taken.

“Over one million Canadians are actively involved in community-based stewardship and conservation activities. Yet, in Canada we continue to lose wildlife habitat at a rate of 23,000 hectares a year, and biodiversity at a rate of over 60 species per year. And those numbers are increasing.”

Centre for Environmental Stewardship and Conservation, 2010

A recent (June 2010) UN report on the environment states that the world’s ecosystems, from forests and freshwater to coral reefs and soils, deliver essential services to humankind estimated to be worth over USD 72 trillion a year—comparable to the value of the entire Gross World Product (GWP).

In Canada, this means that our ecosystems—sometimes referred to as our ‘natural capital’—deliver essential ecological services (water and air purification, food sources, erosion control, etc.) worth about $1.5 trillion a year.

Yet the report states that today “nearly two-thirds of the globe’s ecosystems are considered degraded as a result of mismanagement, the effects of climate change and a failure to invest and reinvest in their productivity, health and sustainability.”

Across our country, governments—federal, provincial, territorial, First Nations—are attempting to address some of the ecological challenges Canada is facing. What has been missing is a unifying coherent vision for how Canada can steward its incredible natural capital to:

- Slow down its degradation
- Speed up its recovery
- Stimulate the economy
- Address climate change
- Preserve it for future generations

An Ecological Recovery Plan for Canada would provide that vision.

www.EcologicalRecovery.ca
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Stewardship actions and community-based conservation initiatives form an important part of the recovery plan. It has been widely recognized that stewardship provides a flexible, cost-effective and sustainable approach to maintaining and restoring our natural capital and the integrity of ecosystems.

Stewardship actions slow degradation and speed recovery, restoring balance. These actions also:

- Create jobs and develop critical skills at a lower cost
- Protect human health thereby reducing health care costs
- Empower local communities and volunteer groups to work at the local level

Economic investments in stewardship initiatives and conservation actions have a proven track record of leverage through volunteerism and partnerships.

This means more jobs/action per dollar compared with investments in the built infrastructure. Stewardship projects provide greater return on investment than many other projects.

How do we move from ecological degradation to ecological recovery?

- Increased recognition – by all Canadians – of the value of stewardship and its role in ecological recovery in Canada
- Strategic focus within the stewardship and conservation community to encourage synergy and symbiosis.
- Increased investment in stewardship policies, partnerships and programs that give incentive to restorative actions and disincentive to degrading activities.

With its strong base of support, its focus on building long-term capacity and its emphasis on partnerships, the plan will facilitate ecological recovery through effective stewardship.

The time to act is NOW!

- Prevention is much cheaper than rehabilitation – think health care, energy conservation, pollution
- Without the environment there is no economy – our economic health depends on the health of our environment
- Best way to preserve economic growth and stability – is to invest comparably in stewardship actions and capacity

To learn more, and to find out how you can support the plan, please visit

www.EcologicalRecovery.ca
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