

Background / Rationale:

NCC's policies with respect to its core conservation activities (here meant to include science, securement and stewardship) were primarily drafted in the late 1990s and clearly reflected the organizational emphasis on land securement as the primary focus of conservation activity. Several key factors have changed since then, including the emergence of science and stewardship as essential program areas complementing securement, and increased staff capacity in same, that warrant a revisiting of NCC's conservation policies to bring them up to date with the current reality of the organization.

With this in mind, NCC's Board of Directors mandated the Conservation and Stewardship Committee to review existing policies and strategies with respect to science and with respect to the identification, securement and stewardship of NCC lands and conservation agreements, and to recommend Board policies on these matters. The Committee kept in mind a few key principles in approaching its task including the need to a) focus on governance and the establishment (and monitoring) of broad policies to ensure the integrity and appropriate management of the organization, b) enable efficiency through delegation of certain responsibilities to professional staff while ensuring governance and fiduciary responsibilities are met and c) integrate NCC's core conservation activities of science, securement and stewardship and address cross-cutting issues where applicable.

In the fall of 2006, the Board approved the *Conservation Policy Framework* containing three policies in the areas of science and conservation planning, approval requirements for Natural Area Conservation Plans and securement activities, and stewardship and reporting obligations.

In 2008, an integrated approach for Board, management and business unit policies, procedures, guidelines and standards was adopted by management. It is now appropriate to reorganize the *Conservation Policy Framework* into its three constituent policies and to update them as necessary.

The following policy articulates NCC's commitment to the application of conservation science in support of its mission, realized through science-based conservation planning to guide on-the-ground activities.

Scope: This policy applies to all NCC staff and Business Units (National departments and Regions).

Definitions:

For the purpose of this policy:

"Conservation Agreements" include covenants, servitudes and easements.

"Conservation Blueprints" mean the ecoregional assessments (or ecoregional plans) that NCC and its partners are completing for all the ecoregions in southern Canada. The Blueprints document the biological diversity present across natural regions,

including native species and natural ecosystems, and identify the highest-priority areas for conservation.

“National Board” means the National Board of Directors of the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

“Regional Board” means a committee of the National Board so named in regard to the respective region in which it operates.

“Scientific Advisory Network” or “SAN” means a regional advisory network consisting of external science professionals, including one or more members of the Regional Board with a science background. The Regional SAN is included in the governance structure of the Region and could be satisfied through an existing Regional Board committee.

Board Policy:

1) Resources for Conservation Planning

NCC will dedicate resources (both human and financial) to ensure its position as a leader in science-based conservation planning in Canada.

2) Conservation Planning to Direct Activities

- a) NCC will use science-based conservation planning to direct its conservation activities within its regions and to ensure that its work is focused effectively to conserve biodiversity.
- b) The development and implementation of Conservation Blueprints will be the primary mechanism to support NCC’s science-based conservation planning.

3) Validation by Conservation Science Professionals

- a) NCC will seek validation of its conservation activities by soliciting review by conservation science professionals, in addition to NCC staff.
- b) To facilitate such validation, each NCC Region will have in place a regional SAN that meets the following standards:
 - i) Has a mandate from the Regional Board to provide timely assistance and advice regarding matters of conservation science and program activity.
 - ii) Meets or corresponds at least twice a year.
 - iii) Has at least one (1), and ideally more, Regional Board members serving on the SAN, preferably with one as SAN Chair.
- c) NCC will have at least two (2) science professionals as members of the National Board. Two (2) of these Board members will also serve on the National Board’s Conservation Committee and provide advice on national science matters.

**Application of Science in Support of
NCC Mission**

- d) National Board and Regional Board members with science expertise will be invited to participate in major cross-country NCC conservation gatherings where its conservation programs and practices are discussed.
- 4) Application of Science to Planning and Stewardship
- a) NCC will promote, within its financial ability, the application of conservation science to testing the effectiveness of its planning and stewardship, including site-specific management and/or restoration practices and, based on the results of such “experiments”, will adaptively modify its approaches to better achieve its biodiversity goals.
 - b) NCC may invest, in support of its mission, in science and stewardship research projects or partnerships related to biodiversity conservation, stewardship, education, data management and related topics.

Key Words: National Board, Regional Board, Scientific Advisory Network, Conservation Blueprint, Science, Securement, Stewardship

Responsible Business Unit / person / job title: Vice President Conservation

Authorized By: National Board

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Associated Documents: *Conservation Policy Framework, 29 September 2006*
Conservation Framework
The Conservation Blueprint:
Recognizing Nature’s Design

Associated Forms: