

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
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A PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ECOLOGICAL SITES  
IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

International Biological Programme  
Conservation of Terrestrial Ecosystems  
Panels 9 and 10

June, 1974

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Some areas of the Canadian North contain rare plants and animals or combinations of species found nowhere else in the world. Other localities are essential seasonal habitats for migratory animals, or are distinctive as examples of particular arctic ecosystems. These biological sites may also have geological or historical values. Because of the vastness of the Canadian North, the need for special protection of these areas may not always be recognized. Only Canada can safeguard these natural values for Canadians and the rest of the world.

IBP

The United Nations' (UNESCO) International Biological Programme (IBP) was formed in 1966 to safeguard biological and related values of the world as important cultural, scientific, and economic resources. Canada, through the Canadian Committee for IBP, Conservation of Terrestrial Ecosystems (CCIBP-CT), has been a member since its inception. In 1968-69, the Canadian Committee, supported by the National Research Council, established panels of volunteer scientists for 10 geographical regions. The members of the two northern panels (9 and 10) were to locate each area and describe its biological values, and then to aid the Northwest Territories in providing for their preservation.

### The Program

Initially, the task of identifying and describing important areas was done by biologists knowledgeable in such fields as plant and animal ecology, wildlife management, fisheries, forestry, ornithology, geography, soils science, and geology. The N.W.T. Game Management Division provided useful advice at this stage. The two panels have now identified 112 sites in the N.W.T., varying in size from several acres to hundreds of square miles, conducted the necessary research on these sites, and have described them in standard reports. Ten sample sites will be submitted for initial consideration by the N.W.T. Council.

The northern panels are now in the process of informing all interested government agencies (Federal and Territorial), industry, the Native Brotherhood, and other special interest groups about IBP in the North and are asking for their support and recommendations. We have so far received support in principle from Inuit Tapirisat, Ecology North, and representatives of the oil and mineral industries.

The boundaries of proposed ecological sites in the North should encompass biological areas most important to the Northwest Territories and should protect the life systems they represent. They should also protect the hunting and fishing resources of the North and acknowledge the necessary considerations for development. In many areas, such as nesting sites, ecological sites can be

small and still protect the components for which they are concerned. In nearly all areas, current hunting, fishing and trapping activities by native people within site boundaries will not conflict with IBP goals.

Ecological sites could, under controlled conditions: (1) serve as important laboratories for scientific research on northern ecosystems or on areas disturbed during development; (2) offer man a unique opportunity to explore the many still unsolved mysteries of evolution and adaptation; and (3) shield the traditional uses and values of native people in certain sites from the rapid changes now being experienced in the north. Space and natural resources may be worth more to the people of the Northwest Territories over the long term than are the quickly used non-renewable resources now being developed.

The urgency at present is for the recognition by government of biological values as important natural resources, and for the creation of a system to protect these resources. British Columbia passed an Ecological Reserves Act in 1972, and now has 43 Reserves. Quebec has recently passed a similar act, and has authorized 4.5 million dollars to establish and manage such a system.

We feel that your approval and support of IBP is a prerequisite to its success. We therefore ask for your agreement in principle, with the understanding that each site will be discussed further in detail with Council or your representatives by the appropriate panel of scientists or members.