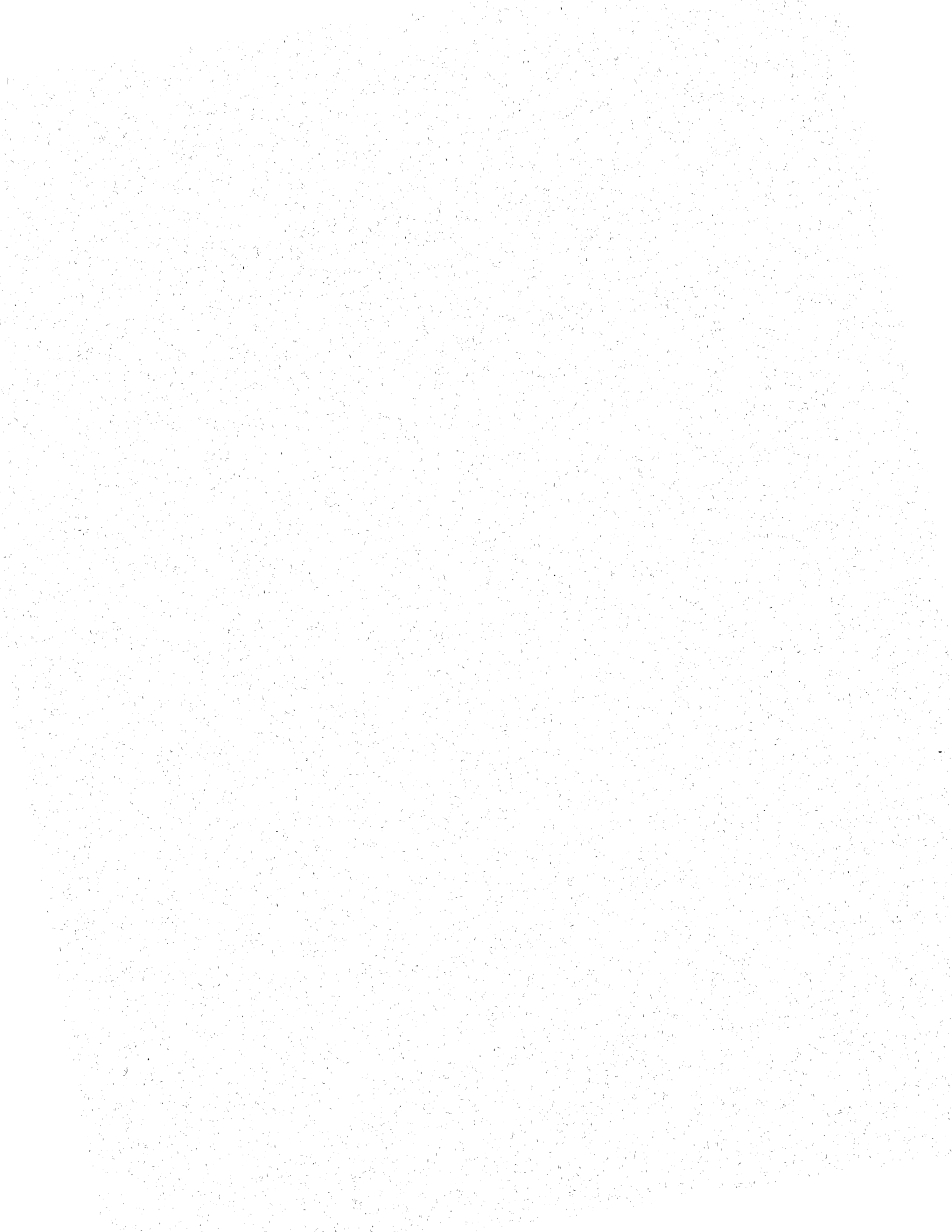


Sustainable Development
in the Northwest Territories

BALANCING CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

October 1990



Sustainable Development in the NWT

Background Information

Sustainable development is a new term to describe an old belief which many industrialized societies have forgotten: "We do not inherit the land and its resources from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children." In the Northwest Territories, this interdependence between development and conservation is particularly clear given our traditional lifestyles and cultures which are closely tied to the land.

In 1980, the World Conservation Strategy advanced the concept of sustainable development and encouraged its use around the world. The strategy recognized that a sound economy depends on a healthy environment. Since that time, sustainable development has been the central theme of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) and has received widespread support in Canada.

The Government of the Northwest Territories, along with governments in other jurisdictions, recognized the need to re-examine the link between the environment and economic development. It began work on the development of a conservation strategy to ensure the wise use and management of our natural resources.

The conservation strategy has developed into the Sustainable Development Policy to reflect the fact that the policy addresses both resource conservation and economic development.

An Interdepartmental Working Group was established to develop the Sustainable Development Policy. In September 1989, a public discussion paper on the proposed policy was released for review and comment. The paper received solid support from the public, indicating a new era for resource management in the Northwest Territories.

With the adoption of this policy, the Government of the Northwest Territories officially recognizes the interdependence between conservation and development. The policy will apply to all decisions and actions of the Government related to natural and heritage resources in the Northwest Territories.

A NWT Round Table On Environment and Economy

The concept of a Round Table on Environment and Economy was first developed in 1987 by the National Task Force on Environment and Economy in response to recommendations of the Brundtland Commission. The Task Force recommended the creation of a Round Table in every province and territory in Canada.

Earlier this year, Government Leader Dennis Patterson announced a commitment to establish a Northwest Territories Round Table on Environment and Economy. The Sustainable Development Policy formally recognizes the Round Table as an advisory body to the Executive Council. Chaired by the Government Leader, the Northwest Territories Round Table will provide a valuable forum for government, industry, native groups and public interest groups to work together towards sustainable development in a creative and cooperative atmosphere.

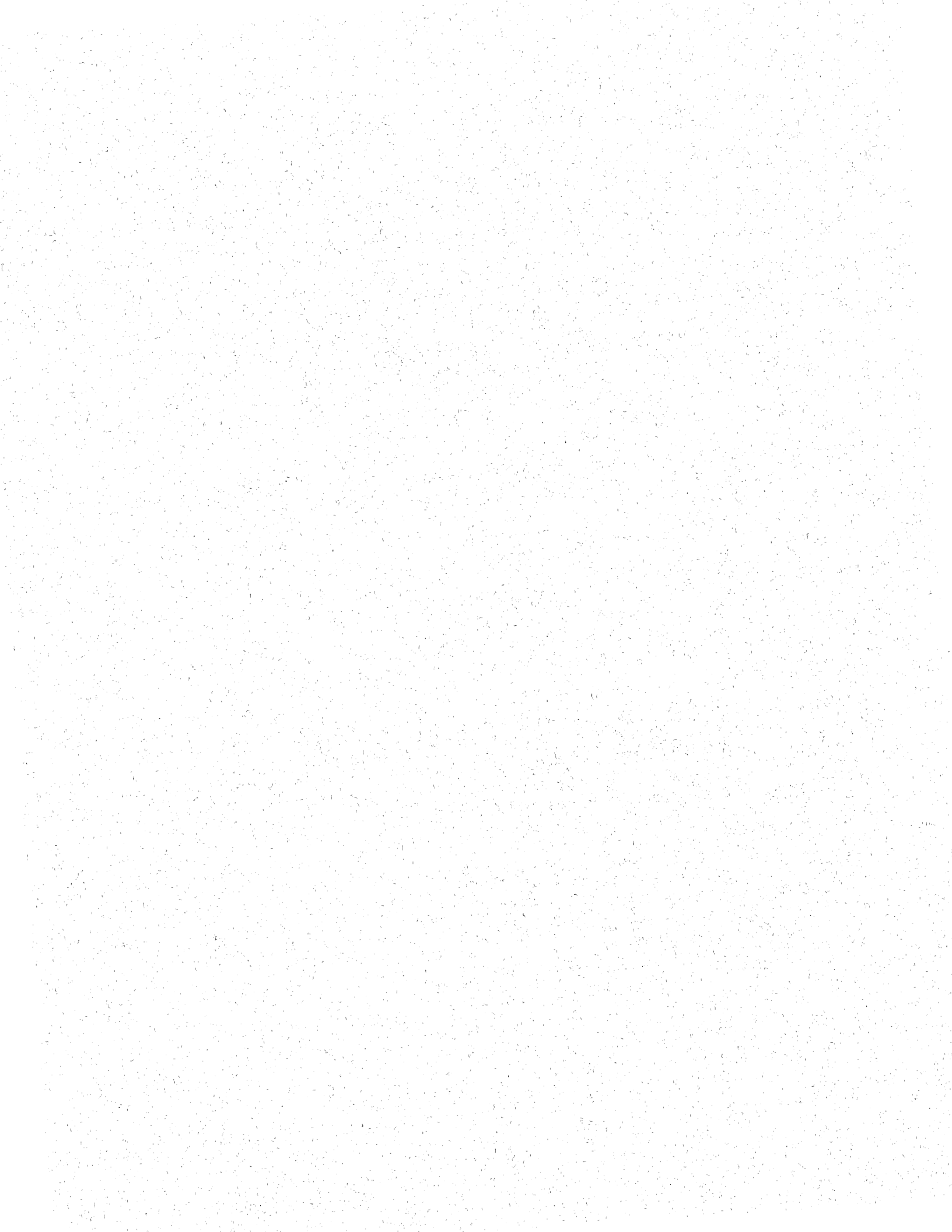
The work of the Round Table will complement and support existing processes dealing with resource development and conservation in the Northwest Territories.

Implementation Initiatives: Sustainable Development At The Community Level

The successful implementation of sustainable development depends on cooperation. It will involve significant efforts by government, industry, and the general public.

Sustainable development is an opportunity for northerners to create long term economic options that meet future as well as present needs. This means recognizing and including traditional knowledge and expertise in developing policies on renewable resources and managing development activities. It also means community-based development projects which produce local jobs and training and educational opportunities.

The link between environment and development has been recognized. Now we must work together to establish the harmonious relationship between a healthy environment and a prosperous economy. We have borrowed the land from our children; we should make sure that it is returned to them in better condition than when we got it.

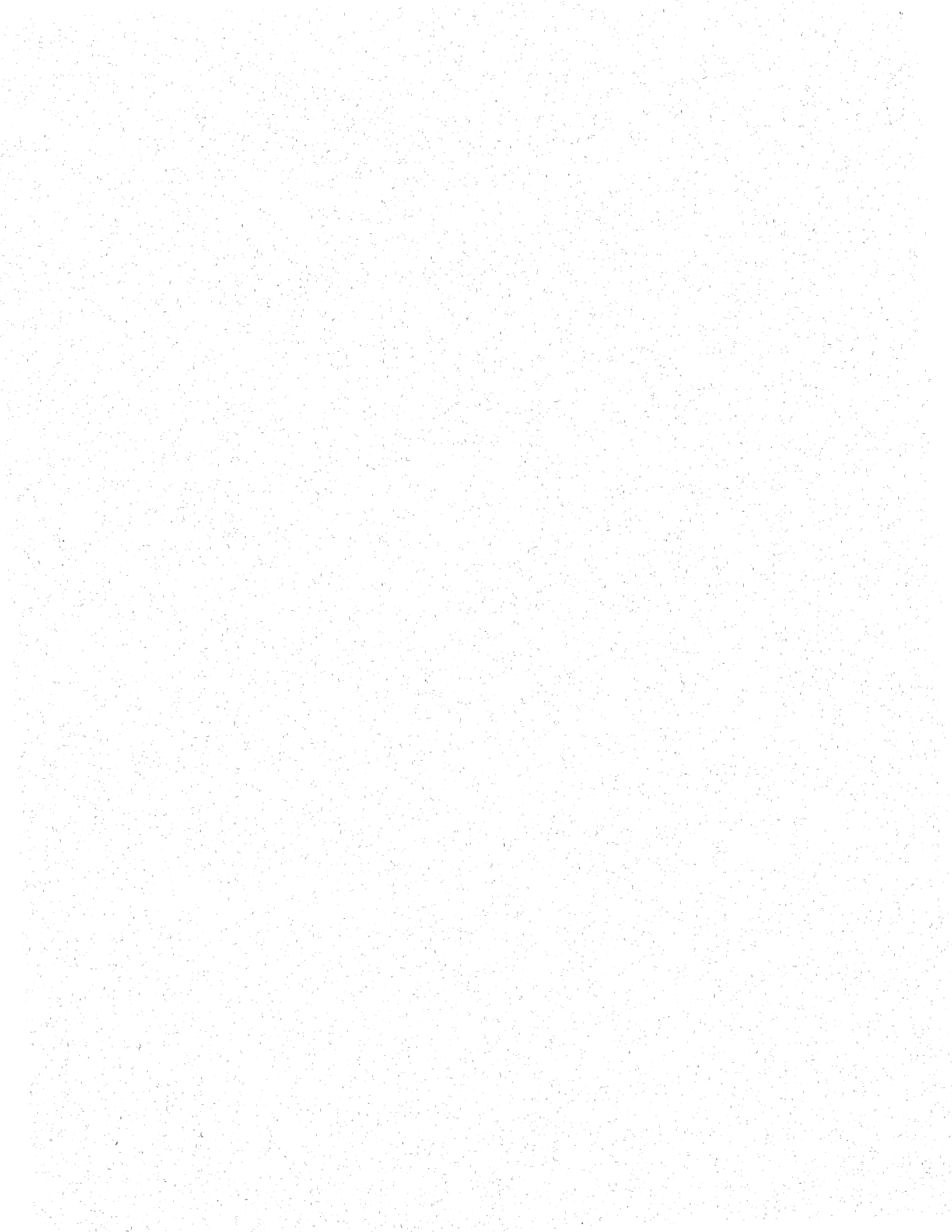


Northwest Territories Sustainable Development Policy

Government of the Northwest Territories

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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The Government of the Northwest Territories (G.N.W.T.) recognizes that environmental conservation is essential to long term economic prosperity while at the same time economic development can contribute significantly to the achievement of conservation goals. This interdependence between conservation and development will be officially recognized by the Government of the Northwest Territories through the application of the concept of sustainable development to all its decisions and actions related to natural and heritage resources in the Northwest Territories.

This policy is based on the following principles:

1. *The G.N.W.T. shall promote economic development which maintains harvestable resources at sustainable levels, essential ecological processes and natural diversity.*
2. *The G.N.W.T. shall routinely combine and equally weigh conservation and development factors in decision-making processes for the use of resources.*
3. *Sustainable development of resources is essential to the long term economic, cultural and social well-being of northern residents.*
4. *Northern residents shall be assured meaningful input and participation in decisions related to conservation and resource development.*
5. *Initiatives associated with this policy shall be consistent with or complement, all agreements, policies and legislation related to the settlement of aboriginal claims as they relate to conservation and development of resources.*
6. *Conservation and development practices shall take into account the local knowledge, values and experience to be found among the regular users of the environment as well as the information developed in academic institutions, industry and government.*
7. *Natural resources should be managed so that opportunities for future resource uses are maximized and maintenance of ecosystems is ensured.*
8. *Conservation commitments in resource development proposals shall be a major consideration in determining the degree of G.N.W.T.'s political and financial support.*

9. The G.N.W.T. recognizes the need for conservation areas to maintain special values related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific, and aesthetic resources. The G.N.W.T. shall support human activities in such areas where they are compatible with the values being protected.
10. Enhanced cooperation with other circumpolar and neighbouring jurisdictions is important in addressing transboundary concerns related to resource management and the maintenance of environmental quality.
11. As far as possible, implementation of this policy will rely primarily on existing mechanisms and processes or those already under development through land claims or other processes.

Reference

For elaboration of this Policy refer to Directive

SCOPE

This policy applies to all decisions and actions of the Government of the Northwest Territories related to resource development in the Northwest Territories.

DEFINITIONS

1. Conservation

Means the wise use of renewable, non-renewable and heritage resources so that long term benefits can be enjoyed by present and future generations

2. Conservation Area

Means an area of land or water that provides special management measures to maintain outstanding values related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific, and aesthetic resources.

3. Environment

Means the air, water, ice, snow, land, animal and plant life, and heritage resources of the Northwest Territories.

4. Environmental Quality

Means the environment's capability to support the well being of all life forms.

5. Heritage Resource

Means the material remains or places of past human use or occupancy. They consist of sites and artifacts of historical, archaeological, ethnological and ongoing cultural or religious significance.

6. Integrated Resource Management

Means a coordinated process in which all components of resource management (policy development, land and water use planning, environmental assessment, legislative and regulatory mechanisms) are formally linked and complementary. The process is characterized by the sharing of values, information and advice among various interests.

7. Natural Diversity

Means the naturally occurring variety of living and nonliving elements in the environment.

8. Non-Renewable Resource

Means resources which cannot be replaced or renewed following extraction including all minerals, aggregates, and fossil fuels.

9. Renewable Resource

Means land and water resources, such as fisheries, wildlife and their habitat; forestry; and agriculture.

10. Resource Development

Means those activities including the exploration, construction and operational phases of non-renewable resource extraction, and commercial renewable resource use activities, plus other supporting activities.

11. Round Table on Environment and Economy

A multi-sectoral body providing the Government of the Northwest Territories with advice on sustainable development matters. Its membership includes representatives from government, native organizations, private industry, and public interest groups.

12. Sustainable Development

A way of managing natural resources and the environment so that economic, social and cultural needs are met while maintaining ecological processes and natural diversity.

PROVISIONS

1. Authority and Accountability

a) Executive Council

The Executive Council may approve plans and programs related to this Policy, its Action Plan and the activities of the NWT Round Table on Environment and Economy.

b) Ministers

The Minister responsible for the Department of Renewable Resources, in consultation with the Ministers of Economic Development and Tourism and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, shall coordinate implementation and periodic review of this policy.

c) NWT Round Table on Environment and Economy

The NWT Round Table on Environment and Economy shall advise the Executive Council respecting sustainable development in the Northwest Territories.

2. Sustainability Guidelines

The G.N.W.T. shall promote conservation and resource development projects, or combinations of projects, which support the achievement of the following guidelines:

a) Ecological

- *maintain essential ecological processes*
- *maintain or enhance natural diversity*
- *maintain harvestable resources at sustainable levels*

b) Economic

- *promote economic self-reliance at the local level*
- *increase employment opportunities for the resident labour force through education, training and job creation*
- *maximize opportunities for local retention and investment of profits*
- *influence the pace of development to promote long term benefits from the use of resources*

c) Social

- *maintain or strengthen community values and identity*
- *build a sense of meaningful participation and responsibility into project development and implementation*

d) Cultural

- *support and maintain traditional activities and relationships*
- *maintain or enhance heritage resources*

3. Sustainable Development Objectives

The G.N.W.T. recognizes that sustainable development of resources is essential to the long term economic security, self-sufficiency and social well-being of northern residents. The G.N.W.T. shall therefore adopt the principles of sustainable development to guide all its decisions and actions related to resource use in the Northwest Territories.

Five main objectives shall provide the focus for pursuing this goal. These objectives shall be implemented through G.N.W.T.'s own programs and through collaboration with other governments and organizations.

a) Promote Integrated Resource Management

Recognizing that resource development decisions usually involve numerous management objectives and interest groups, the G.N.W.T. shall promote an integrated approach to managing the environment and its resources.

b) Maintain and Enhance Environmental Quality

Recognizing that the Northwest Territories' economy and cultures are deeply rooted in the environment, the G.N.W.T. shall ensure that environmental quality is maintained to support the long term stability of northern society.

c) Establish Conservation Areas

Whereas the G.N.W.T. will promote the consistent application of sustainable development principles to all lands and waters within the Northwest Territories, it recognizes the need for conservation areas to protect special values related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific and aesthetic resources.

d) Develop Non-renewable Resources in Ways that Contribute to a Sustainable Economy

The G.N.W.T. will promote exploration, development and use of mineral, aggregate and fossil fuel resources in ways that provide lasting social and economic benefits while maintaining ecological processes and natural diversity.

e) Promote Cooperation in the Management of Transboundary Resources

The G.N.W.T. recognizes that bilateral or multilateral cooperation with other circumpolar and neighbouring jurisdictions will greatly help to prevent or abate transboundary environmental or socio-economic impacts.

4. Action Plan

The Minister of Renewable Resources, in consultation with the Ministers of Economic Development and Tourism, and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources shall:

- a) prepare an Action Plan outlining specific objectives and implementation strategies for achieving the G.N.W.T.'s Sustainable Development Objectives, and
- b) present an annual report to the Executive Council on progress in implementing the Action Plan.

5. Implementation

The provisions of this Directive shall be implemented through:

- a) Joint coordination by the Departments of Renewable Resources, Economic Development and Tourism and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources in implementing the Action Plan.

b) **Collaboration on joint programs or projects, and regular consultation with:**

- native organizations
- other governments
- industry and business organizations
- environmental organizations
- the public

c) **Periodic reviews of G.N.W.T. programs, policies and legislation to ensure that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development;**

6. Prerogative of the Executive Council

Nothing in this Directive shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take actions with respect to conservation and resource development in the Northwest Territories outside the provisions of this Directive.