

# At a Glance



## Evaluation of the Canada Nature Fund

### About the program

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Budget 2018 announced a historic investment of \$1.35 billion over five years for A Nature Legacy for Canada to conserve 17% of its land and inland waters by 2020, transition the Species at Risk program from planning to recovery, contribute to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and deliver effective management and expansion of federal protected areas. ECCC received \$730 million, Parks Canada Agency \$199 million, Fisheries and Oceans Canada \$159 million and Natural Resources Canada \$4 million, for a total of \$1.09 billion, with \$260.6 million in unallocated funding to be sought in FY 2020 to 2021.

The announcement included a \$500 million investment in grants and contributions under the CNF. The CNF aims to make progress in reaching Canada's goals for protected and conserved areas, protecting and recovering species at risk and maintaining biodiversity.

The CNF is a two-stream contribution fund that includes \$500 million grants and contributions over five years (FY 2018 to 2019 to FY 2022 to 2023). This funding is divided between the Spaces Stream (\$284 million) and Species Stream (\$215 million). The CNF was designed to leverage provincial and territorial resources and those of other organizations, including the philanthropic foundation sector, and to align federal funding with other stakeholders' conservation disbursements.

### What the evaluation found

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The CNF aligns strongly with federal objectives, priorities and roles and responsibilities including wildlife management, environmental protection, conservation and protection of species at risk and biodiversity and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

- There has been a high degree of interest in the CNF in general and in the open Call for Proposals processes in particular. Funding recipients encompass a wide variety of organizations, including provincial and territorial (P/T) governments; Indigenous governments, communities, and organizations; non-governmental and philanthropic organizations; and resource-based private sector industries. Indigenous governments, communities and organizations lead almost half of the funded projects.
- The overall design of the CNF is consistent with the Pan-Canadian Approach to the species at risk and Target 1 of Canada's 2020 Biodiversity Goals. However, for the Species Stream, the multi-component structure may be causing challenges for project tracking and reporting with existing databases. There is evidence that the CNF open Call for Proposals process has been challenging to navigate for some applicants, due



to communication issues as well as technical and procedural challenges associated with the Target 1 Challenge application process.

- There is limited integration and coordination between the Spaces and Species Streams of the CNF and there is a need for better communication and coordination across CNF streams and components. Efforts are currently underway to enhance performance measurement by improving the integration of the CNF streams and components into the performance measurement approach.
- The CNF has made progress towards its expected results.
  - Funded projects have facilitated formal and informal collaboration and partnerships among a wide variety of stakeholders. CNF projects have fostered improved relationships between P/T governments and Indigenous peoples and supported nation-to-nation engagement through shared Crown-First Nations governance and other co-management arrangements with Indigenous communities.
  - The CNF has helped to secure the protection of terrestrial land and inland waters and appears to be on track to surpass its target for Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area establishment.
  - The CNF is contributing to advancing the protection and recovery of species at risk and biodiversity by funding efforts to secure and restore critical and core linkage habitats and in implementing recovery actions.

## **Recommendations and management response**

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The following recommendations are directed to the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Canadian Wildlife Service, as the senior departmental official responsible for the CNF.

**Recommendation 1: Review existing formal governance structures to ensure that these structures support improved communication and coordination across the Spaces and Species Streams at both the senior management and working levels.**

**Management response:** The Canadian Wildlife Services is revising its governance structures with more integrated Director and Director General-level Nature and Operations Committees. This will ensure that governance structures and committees can enable a more coordinated and integrated approach between the Species and Spaces Streams.

**Recommendation 2: Ensure that information about requirements related to the CNF Call for Proposals is clear and easily accessible and that ways to streamline future application processes are examined.**

**Management response:** CWS will review and update information to ensure it is clear for interested applicants for open Call for Proposals processes. CWS will also review how current application processes are examined and identify areas for improvement for future processes.

**Recommendation 3: Examine how to better support Indigenous communities in participating in CNF funding opportunities.**

**Management response:** CWS will review how it supports Indigenous communities under the Spaces and Species Streams of the Canada Nature Fund and identify areas to better support Indigenous communities for future funding opportunities. CWS will also try to align how Indigenous communities are engaged and supported between the Spaces and Species Streams where possible.

## **About the evaluation**

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This evaluation was conducted in FY 2019 to 2020 and FY 2020 to 2021. It focused on the period from FY 2018 to 2019 to FY 2019 to 2020. The evaluation examined issues related to relevance, design and delivery and effectiveness. The evaluation also provided insights into the ongoing relevance of the Pathway Initiative post-2020 and identified opportunities for improvement.