



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF)

SUBJECT CATEGORY:
Biodiversity / Ecosystems

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:
Multilateral

FORM:
Voluntary international framework

STATUS:

- CAFF established pursuant to the *Declaration on the Protection of Arctic Environment*, June 14 1991, which included a joint action plan of the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy.
- Policy framework documents for CAFF (1992, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2013)
- *Declaration of the establishment of the Arctic Council*, September 19 1996, which recognizes the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and commits to providing oversight and coordination of CAFF
- Ongoing - Arctic Council Ministerial *direction and endorsement of CAFF's work plan every 2 years*.

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:
Lead: Environment and Climate Change Canada

Partners: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Polar Knowledge Canada (PKC), Parks Canada Agency, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Transport Canada

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Web Links:
[Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna](#) web site
[Arctic Council](#) web site

Contacts:
[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:
February 2022

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

The Canadian Arctic covers 40% of Canada's landmass and is home to more than 130,000 people. It includes varied landscapes, rich wildlife populations and unique habitats; its protection is important to Canadians. CAFF is the biodiversity working group of the Arctic Council. It provides a forum where the eight Arctic countries and six permanent participants representing the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic can collaborate to address the conservation of Arctic plants and animals. CAFF initiatives such as Arctic Biodiversity Assessment shine a light on the threats to the Arctic, and the actions we collectively need to take to protect this unique environment.

OBJECTIVE

Cooperation for the conservation of Arctic biodiversity. Interdisciplinary forum for coordinated Arctic biodiversity research and activities to inform decision-making.

Develop common responses to issues of importance to Arctic including research, sustainable utilization and conservation.

Communicate findings to promote practices that ensure the sustainability of the Arctic's living resources.

KEY ELEMENTS

Like the Arctic Council, CAFF is comprised of representatives of the 8 Arctic States and 6 Permanent Participants. Observer States and organizations are also active.

CAFF is governed by a Chair and Management Board and supported and coordinated by the International CAFF Secretariat.

A work plan is prepared by the CAFF Management Board, and approved by Senior Arctic Officials every 2 years. There are six main elements to CAFF's work:

- Monitoring: vehicle is the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program, which harmonizes and integrates monitoring efforts to facilitate more rapid detection, communication, and response to biodiversity-related trends and pressures. Includes community-based monitoring, indicators and ecosystem-based monitoring plans.

- Data Management: vehicle is the [Arctic Biodiversity Data Service](#), an interoperable online data portal to access, integrate, analyze and display biodiversity data and maps.
- Assessment: to synthesize and assess status and trends of Arctic biodiversity using science and traditional knowledge. Key assessment is the [2013 Arctic Biodiversity Assessment](#) and corresponding [policy recommendations](#) and [implementation plan](#).
- Strategies: provide frameworks for effective management response to assessments and provide scientific and conservation recommendations on how to implement them.
- International cooperation: strategic partnerships with key international and regional organizations to deliver timely, accurate information informing processes of mutual interest.
- Communication, education and outreach.

EXPECTED RESULTS

CAFF is expected to implement its work plan and report formally to the Ministers through the Senior Arctic Officials biennially. This includes delivering priorities as directed in the Ministerial Declarations and projects described in the work plan.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

This agreement is important to Canada because a very large percentage of the Arctic is within our borders. The Arctic is home to globally significant and unique biodiversity, iconic wildlife such as polar bear, narwhal, caribou, millions of breeding migratory birds, some species at risk and National Wildlife Areas and Migratory Bird Sanctuaries. There are also many human settlements in the Arctic and indigenous people rely on its biodiversity for food security and maintenance of their culture. The Arctic is facing rapidly increasing pressures including climate change, resources development and shipping. It is critical for decision-makers to understand the environment and what is happening to biodiversity in order to ensure sustainable resource development while maintaining the biodiversity and cultures upon which it depends. CAFF provides the best forum to ensure the most up-to-date information is available and to develop joint collaborative approaches to addressing common problems. CAFF's approach is consistent with Canada's approach to conservation and sustainable use (e.g., promotes integration of economic,

environmental, social and cultural objectives) and it promotes inclusiveness and recognition of indigenous interests.

CAFF helps to support Canada's priorities in the Arctic Council. With increasing interest in the Arctic from many perspectives, the Arctic Council and its working groups are becoming more and more relevant.

Environment and Climate Change Canada provides the Head of Delegation for the CAFF Working Group, with support from other Federal departments, particularly with respect to science networks and monitoring. DFO provides the Canadian lead for the marine monitoring group and ECCC Science & Technology does the same for terrestrial group and for seabirds. CWS provides the lead for the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiatives. Many biologists and scientists across government agencies are involved in networks and projects. Canada plays a particularly strong role with respect to migratory birds in the Arctic.

Head of Delegation maintains a network of experts from relevant departments and territorial governments. This group provides advice on Canada's positions and provides comments on various CAFF proposals and reports. Canada is active in all CAFF meetings, including inter-sessional meetings, and provides leadership to key projects.

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Key Activities in the past two years

Canada is actively involved in the development of the new CAFF Action Plan 2023-2030 to ensure that the action plan is aligned with Canadian priorities.

Canada co-chairs the C-Bird Expert Group and the Americas and Circumpolar Flyways working groups of the Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative.

Canada is a strong contributor to the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme. Canada co-chaired the Marine expert group and continues to co-chair the Freshwater and Coastal expert groups. Canadian experts remain active in all aspects of this Arctic biodiversity monitoring program and contribute to the preparation of State of Arctic Biodiversity Reports.

Canada provides comments on all CAFF proposals, projects and reports and actively participates in any negotiations on policy recommendations.