

POLICY ON THE
PROTECTION
AND ENHANCEMENT
OF NATURAL HABITATS



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SOMMET DE
MONTRÉAL

*The Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of
Natural Habitats* honours a commitment made at the
Montréal Summit



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PREFACE BY HUBERT REEVES

The City of Montréal's Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats.

This welcome initiative by the City of Montréal is cause for celebration for a number of different, yet equally important reasons.

First, as it provides citizens across the island with nearby places where they can reconnect with nature and discover the wonders of the City's natural surroundings, this Policy is no less than a splendid gift for Montréalers one and all. For without adequate protection, these spaces would quickly transform into unsanitary wastelands. Studies have indeed demonstrated that natural urban spaces are oftentimes invaluable areas of biodiversity where species eliminated in other locations owing to the use of chemical pesticides are able to survive. In the context of the current biodiversity crisis, the enhancement of these important tracts of land may well prove, in certain instances, to be the key to their sustainability.

Second, this initiative is exemplary from the social standpoint. By including all users in the process, namely builders, ecologists and outdoor enthusiasts, and by advocating a participative approach, the City is seeking to foster cooperation among all partners and stakeholders. This Policy is thus an excellent antidote to the all too frequent radicalization of attitudes – ecologists on the one hand and commercial enterprises on the other – and ensuing rigid, dead-end conflicts which leave little or no room for compromise or reconciliation of differing points of view.

Third, the Policy is in perfect keeping with the principle of the three P's. Not the much talked about three P's, rather those used to define the framework of sustainable development initiatives:

The first 'P' is for 'Profit': What are the expected economic spinoffs? After all, people must make a living for themselves.

The second 'P' is for 'People': What will the impact be on citizen quality of life?

The third 'P' is for 'Planet': What will the long term impact be on planetary balance, air and water pollution, natural resource preservation and biodiversity?

There can be no doubt that this *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats* will inspire considerable numbers of organizations. My heartfelt thanks to the City of Montréal and partners for making it a reality.

Hubert Reeves
Astrophysicist, Honorary Member of the Québec Biodiversity Institute



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Montréal possesses an identity that combines urban effervescence with the presence of nature. Given the diversity of its natural landscapes, our city already offers an exceptional quality of life, but it is still possible to improve it even further by accentuating the quality of the natural habitats found on its territory.

Over the past few years, we have all become aware of the importance of having nature present in our environment. It contributes to ensuring the quality of the air we breathe and helps beautify our living environment. Together, green and blue spaces constitute a heritage that is an integral part of the feeling of attachment Montrealers have to their city.

The accelerated pace at which our city is developing has led us to ask some serious questions about the fate of these vital areas. Natural habitats are fragile, and their survival depends on the care we give them. That is why we are proposing to Montrealers a number of guidelines to protect and enhance our natural environments. These orientations have already been subject to public consultations and have sparked a great deal of interest, not just from the groups concerned, but from the citizens of Montréal.

Today, I am pleased to present our first-ever *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*. Our goal is not to prevent the development of new, high-quality residential or industrial projects, but rather to provide ourselves with a tool that will allow us to act in a way that ensures that development is not done to the detriment of nature.

This *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats* will soon join the Urban Plan, the Heritage Policy and the Tree Policy, as well as projects in the green and blue networks, in our continuing efforts to make Montréal a true "city of nature".

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gerald Tremblay". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gérald Tremblay
Mayor of Montréal

MESSAGE FROM ALAN DESOUSA AND HELEN FOTOPULOUS

Embracing sustainable development to benefit current and future generations is the cornerstone of our Administration's plan for urban development that cares about the quality of life of our citizens. The adoption of the Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats is one of the first concrete expressions of this direction.

While reconciling its rich industrial history and its status as a metropolis, Montréal, in the near future, intends to reach an objective of protecting 8% of its territory, as established in the Québec Strategy on Protected Areas. In 2004, the protected areas represented about a little over 3% of its territory. This Policy aims to double this area on land. It also recognizes the special ecological value of the riverbanks of our Island, and it intends to ensure that they are preserved.

The identification of ten sectors that are deemed priorities due to their bio-diversity is at the heart of this new Policy. Each of these ten "eco-territories" has the potential for significant conservation projects. Some of these zones are home to major Montréal parks. This new Policy also deals with the protection and enhancement of natural habitats in all parks, as well as riverside areas of ecological value. It resolutely expresses our Administration's desire to increase the points of contact with nature for our citizens. Far from limiting public access, the proposed protection measures will contribute to facilitating the access of Montréalers to these zones of great ecological diversity, all while respecting their equilibrium.

For the City, as well as the boroughs, this new Policy provides stimulating new perspectives on consolidating the green and blue networks, promoting outdoor activities in an urban setting and increasing the public's awareness to environment, all elements to ensure a better living together.



Alan DeSousa, CA
*Member of the Executive Committee
Responsible for Sustainable Development
and Economic Development*



Helen Fotopulos
*Member of the Executive Committee
Responsible for Mount Royal, Green and Blue
Spaces, Parks and Montréal's Nature Museums*

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Rich natural heritage deserving of protection and enhancement

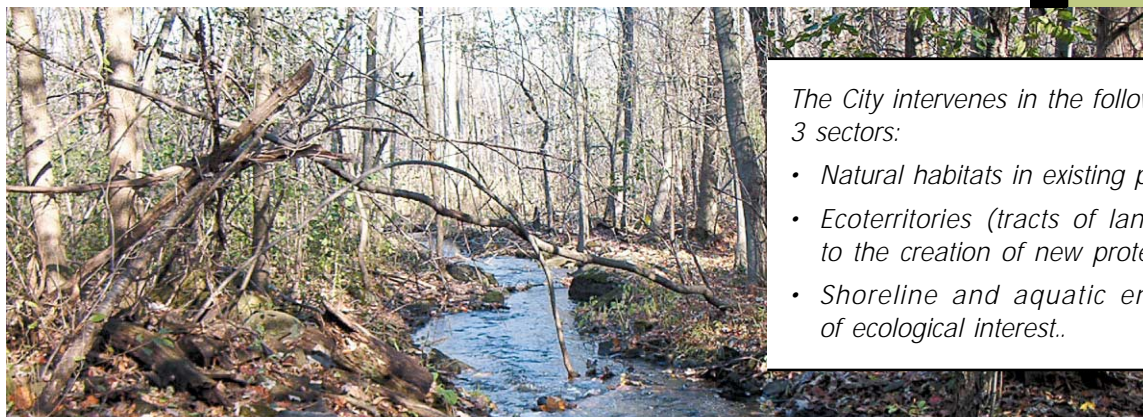
The City of Montréal is particularly well endowed in terms of natural landscapes and green spaces. The waterways surrounding the island, natural wooded areas, tree-lined streets, abundance of parks and green spaces all form a part of the island's green and blue heritage, and together lend the City of Montréal a singular identity.

Each of the aforementioned elements of the natural landscape is important and merits special attention by the municipal administration. The City of Montréal has accordingly instigated a number of initiatives which include the drawing up of the Urban Development Plan, Heritage Policy, Tree Policy, Sustainable Development Policy and Strategic Plan for the Development and Enhancement of the Green and Blue Network. Each of the foregoing defines action the object of which is to protect and enhance the varied components of Montréal's natural heritage.

The drafting of the *Policy and the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats* is one of these initiatives. The thrust behind this policy is to preserve and expand island biodiversity, enhance the quality of the island's living areas, boost Montréal's overall power of attraction, and increase the contact Montréalers enjoy with their natural surroundings.

The Island of Montréal enjoys a broad diversity of natural habitats inside and outside existing parks which together form a mosaic made up of open fields, tracts of unimproved land, wooded areas, lakes, waterways, and wetland marshes and bogs. These spaces ensure and sustain animal and plant biodiversity, and can be distinguished from other green spaces by their physical and biological characteristics which provide for the survival of living organisms and constitute habitat where wildlife can feed and reproduce. Thus although a grassed property planted with trees may be considered a green space, it does not qualify as a component of the natural environment for the purposes of the Policy.

Within the scope of the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*, the City seeks to protect a rich and diverse wealth of large, natural spaces. These spaces indeed represent core areas of biodiversity which are often home to rare species of plantlife. The island's large tracts of wooded land constitute prime habitat for wildlife given the three strata of vegetation present, namely herbaceous plants, brushwood and trees. Wetland and aquatic environments are characterized by the presence of vegetation which provides habitat essential to the proliferation of a variety of wildlife.



The City intervenes in the following 3 sectors:

- *Natural habitats in existing parks;*
- *Ecoterritories (tracts of land conducive to the creation of new protected areas);*
- *Shoreline and aquatic environments of ecological interest..*

Tributary of Rivière à l'Orme running through woods at Sainte-Anne de Bellevue



Stand of sugar maple and hickory in woods at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue



Rivière des Prairies shoreline in vicinity of Cheval Blanc Rapids



Bertrand Stream south of Bois-de-Liesse Nature Park

At year-end 2003, wooded tracts outside existing parks totalled less than 1600 hectares in area. The aggregate market value of these wooded tracts nonetheless amounted to several hundred million dollars. Were the City of Montréal to purchase these natural spaces outright, the cost of full-fledged protection would be prohibitive given the City's limited financial resources. Hence the urgency of taking decisive action of another sort.

City targeting protection of 8% of island land mass

According to an evaluation conducted by the Government of Québec, protected areas¹ on the Island of Montréal account for slightly more than 3% of the total land mass. Drawing inspiration from the provincial Strategy on Protected Areas, this Policy targets protection of a total of 8% of the island area under City jurisdiction, including a full 6% land sites.

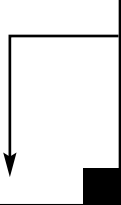
This Policy further seeks to spur community initiative and cooperation, an innovative approach the object of which is to provide for the planned, integrated management of natural habitats of high ecological value, thereby ensuring that future generations enjoy continued access to these viable, sustainable natural spaces.

City intent upon acting upstream of development

The success of this Policy is reliant in equal measure upon the active involvement of all partners concerned and recognition by all Montréalers (citizens, developers and others) of the economic, social and ecological value of the island's natural habitats. In adopting this Policy, the City of Montréal is intent on taking action ahead of time within the overall development process and putting into place a mechanism for cooperatively resolving issues relating to the natural environment.

One the inherent challenges of this Policy lies in seizing opportunities to protect and enhance natural habitats of high ecological value while underscoring attendant added value for new real estate development projects. In short, it is a matter of reconciling environmental, social and economic values and benefits for all parties concerned.

¹ 1 'The World Conservation Union (IUCN) defines protected area as "an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective measures".



TARGET OBJECTIVES

The three key objectives of the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancements of Natural Habitats* are as follows:

OBJECTIVE 1

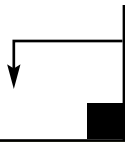
Maximize biodiversity and increase aggregate hectarage of protected natural habitats in Montréal

The City of Montréal plans to develop conservation projects for sectors encompassing natural habitats of high ecological value measuring 15 hectares or more in area. The City seeks to intervene in sectors which are home to natural habitats of ecological value currently threatened by ongoing development (Please see map of sectors of intervention). However, the consolidation of a natural habitats in existing parks or ecoterritory could entail renaturalization work in the areas in question.

For the purposes of this Policy, size is of the essence if only because ecosystem viability hinges largely upon size. Accordingly, the City seeks to create or consolidate natural corridors conducive to wildlife movement, plantlife dispersion, and recreational and educational activities. To the extent possible, the City further wishes to remedy the lack of natural spaces in certain areas of the island, notably the central and eastern sectors.

It is not that smaller natural spaces are lacking in interest from the social or environmental standpoint. It is, however, considerably more difficult to ensure the viability and sustainability of these ecosystems. Spaces of this nature often require silviculture intervention. The Tree Policy, Urban Development Policy and other more localized initiatives such as the drafting of green plans at the borough level provide the wherewithal for focusing specific attention on smaller-sized natural spaces.

Lastly, the waterways in and around the island, shoreline flats, and the hundred or so offshore islands and islets are each fundamental components of the Montréal landscape. It is therefore incumbent upon the City to devote particular attention to the protection and enhancement of shoreline and aquatic environments, especially those of significant ecological interest. These sectors of intervention, found both inside and outside the confines of the island's ecoterritories, are shown on the map included with this Policy.



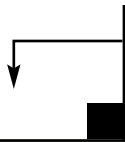
TARGET OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 2

Ensure the sustainability of natural habitats in existing City parks, and promote the consolidation and viability of park ecosystems

Public parks and spaces are home to a number of natural habitats boasting a wealth of biodiversity which the City of Montréal is intent upon preserving. Although these habitats already enjoy a certain protected status, they represent areas threatened by human intervention either inside or outside the boundaries of existing parks. To maintain the integrity of the island's wetlands, sustain flow regimes for area waterways and preserve water quality, it is essential to ensure proper runoff management in new, nearby development projects. To ensure the sustainability of natural habitats in City parks and preserve the integrity of existing ecosystems, Montréal intends also to examine opportunities for ecosystem consolidation when planning new developments on adjacent tracts of land.

An upsurge in recreational activities or overuse by citizens can bring pressure to bear upon the natural spaces found in City parks and, as result, jeopardize the sustainability of these spaces. The City of Montréal has therefore developed a special model for managing the ecosystems and landscapes of the island's nature parks (Anse-à-l'Orme, Cap-Saint-Jacques, Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard, Bois-de-Liesse, Bois-de-Saraguay, Île-de-la-Visitation, Bois-d'Anjou and Pointe-aux-Prairies). This model involves accurately evaluating ecological units present, intervening to protect ecosystems as required, and monitoring subsequent development by means of specific indicators. The City advocates adapting this management model and broadening application to all island parks featuring natural spaces of high ecological value.



TARGET OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 3

Foster enhanced integration of ecosystems and natural landscapes in built-up areas

The *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats* identifies conservation priorities. The Policy also outlines a framework for concerted action and development conducive to the formulation of novel, winning solutions designed to ensure that natural habitats are protected without unduly hampering development.

Although a number of real estate developers have understood the added advantage of preserving natural habitats when planning new development projects, they do not as yet represent the majority. Any number of new developments continue to be built by felling the trees in the vicinity or backfilling marshy areas.

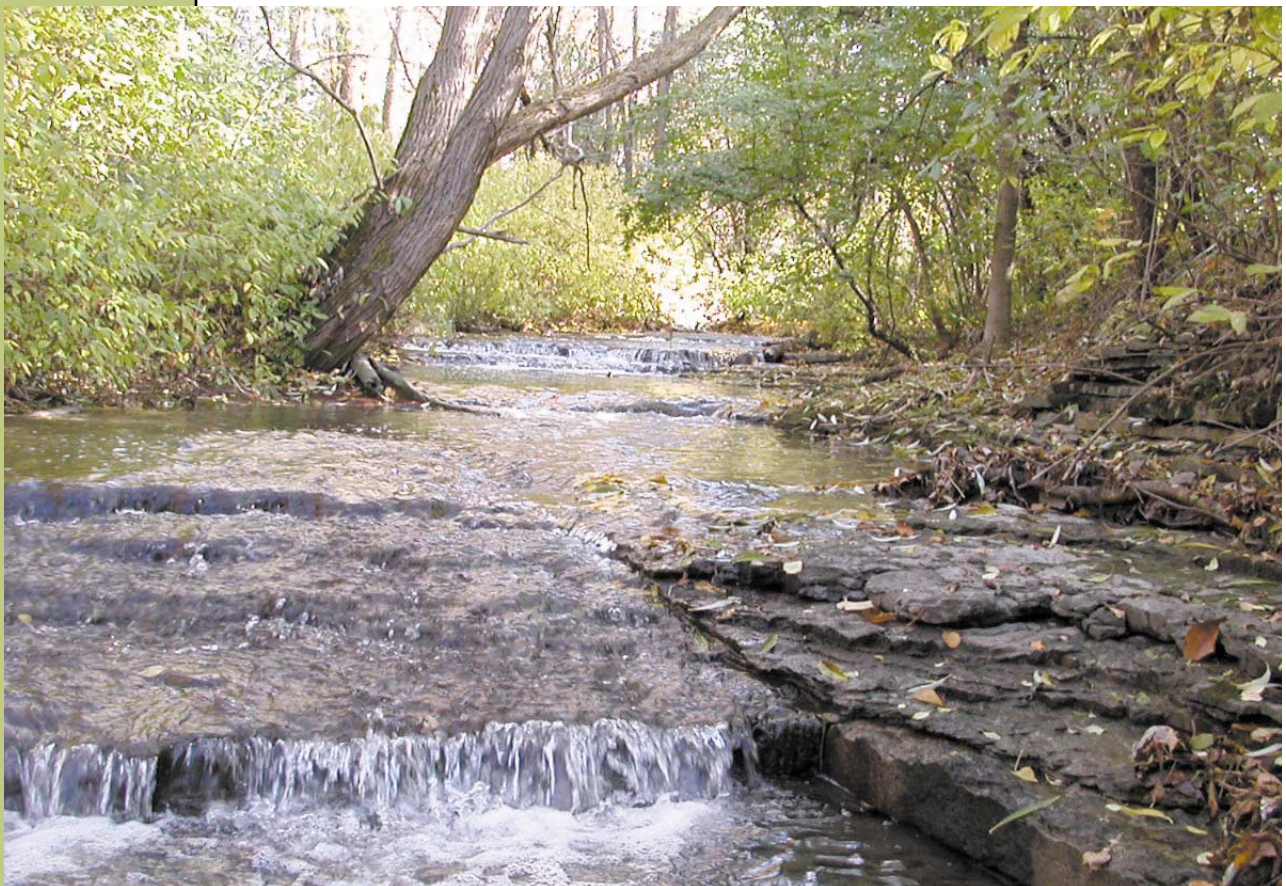
In Montréal, precious few vacant lots remain available for development. Indeed a significant proportion of available land is now found in the more outlying areas of the island in locations endowed with a wealth of natural habitats (woodlots, uncultivated land and marshes). Hence the current social debate over two divergent development visions: on the one hand, that of conservationists who advocate the integral protection of natural habitats at any cost to ensure uncompromised quality of life for generations present and future, and, on the other, that of developers for whom the protection of natural habitats is often perceived as an obstacle to profitability.

One of the greatest challenges of this *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats* involves reconciling these two visions by underscoring that the integration of natural habitats into the urban fabric can promote economic vitality and elevate quality of life.

SIXFOLD STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Given the limited means available to the City and the significant financial resources required to protect and enhance the island's natural habitats, this Policy proposes a sixfold strategy for action. These six measures combined are key to the success of this notable municipal thrust to protect and enhance Montréal's natural heritage. These six measures further constitute the main elements of the action plan which will be drawn up in support of this Policy.

Rather than acting as sole architect, the City of Montréal is counting upon the cooperation and involvement of a number of internal and external stakeholders. The object is to introduce a negotiation process designed to achieve consensus among decision-makers and other partners on protection and development objectives, cooperative agreements, incentive programs, and an appropriate regulatory framework.



Cascading waters of De Montigny Stream

1. Concerted action to sustain viable ecosystems

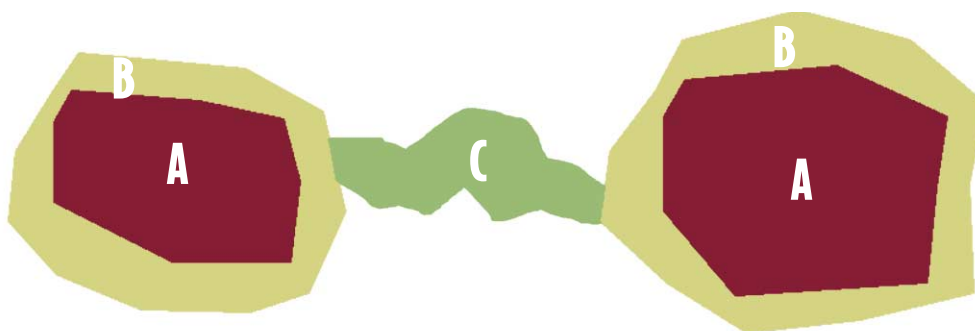
The City has identified 10 sectors, referred to as ecoterritories, in which natural spaces are slated for priority protection and enhancement. These sectors represent considerable tracts of land which include existing protected areas (large parks, nature reserves, etc.) as well as natural spaces in need of protection and enhancement. Together these spaces provide for the creation of a mosaic of natural habitats of broad ecological interest accessible to all Montréalers. In this Policy, there appears a brief profile of each ecoterritory, as well as an outline of the conservation and management objectives specific to each.

In each ecoterritory, the City plans to initiate concerted action leading to the development of a conservation project. Protection and enhancement objectives will then be set out in detail, the aim being to ensure the sustainability of rich, diverse ecosystems which form integral parts of the urban fabric.

Action will be based upon the notion of an ecological network or whole defined as a natural environment comprising three zones: a core zone, a buffer zone and an ecological corridor around which a development project may be designed. This model fosters a better meshing of urban development projects while safeguarding the long term viability of high value ecosystems

ECOLOGICAL NETWORK

- A)** Core zones are pockets of biodiversity which provide the environmental conditions conducive the safeguarding of ecosystems, habitats, as well as significant populations of animals and plants.
- B)** The buffer zones play a number of roles. They protect the core zones from potential external threats and provide habitats which are essential to the survival of the species living in the core zones.
- C)** The ecological corridors provide a linear link from one core zone to another, allowing species to disperse and migrate.



The City will also develop a similar technique to be used to identify the objectives specific to the protection of shoreline and aquatic environments of ecological interest, the object being to safeguard these environments.

A multidisciplinary technical committee made up of representatives from the City, the boroughs, the municipalities concerned, as well as the federal and provincial governments will be set up for each sector of intervention (ecoterritory and shoreline environment of interest). These technical committees will be commissioned to draft an optimal conservation project or development/intervention plan designed to protect and enhance elements of the natural environment. These committees will further examine issues linked to protection and conservation, and propose appropriate solutions.



Stand of sugar maple and beech south of Anse-à-l'Orme Nature Park



Boutin Island offshore from De Montigny Stream



Marsh south of Heritage Woods in Pointe-aux-Prairies Nature Park



Bertrand Stream in the vicinity of the industrial park, Borough of Dorval–Dorval Island



Stand of silver maple in treed swamp in the vicinity of Cheval Blanc Rapids.



St Paul Woods on Nuns' Island

A management committee will be set up to oversee the workings of the technical committees and address issues pertaining to the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*. This committee will comprise a mix of elected officials from the City of Montréal, the boroughs and the municipalities concerned. An annual report, to be approved by the committee, will support the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*, detail action taken and outline action planned for upcoming years.

The citizenry will also have the opportunity to voice their opinions on conservation projects during public consultation sessions organized by the technical committees or during annual consultation conducted by the City respecting the action plan to be drawn up in support of the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats* (See Strategy 6 outlining citizen participation).

2. Regulatory framework, policies and municipal action to support protection of natural habitats

The City of Montréal plans to harmonize all policies and action with a view to protecting and enhancing the island's natural habitats. Already, the Urban Development Plan makes specific mention of the City's willingness to take action to protect and enhance its natural habitats, and encourages the incorporation of initiatives into the plan. In further support of this Policy, the Urban Development Plan incorporates the conservation and management objectives specific to the ecoterritories.

The supplement to the Urban Development Plan outlines the rules and criteria for evaluating a cadastral operation, cut or fill project, or building construction or expansion project planned for a site located within 30 metres of a wooded area, wetland or waterway situated within a designated ecoterritory. These criteria relate to the viability of the natural habitat, preservation of the topography, maintenance of natural site drainage, and enhancement of waterway flow regimes.

The work of the ecoterritory technical committees will assist the boroughs in deciding on the tools they require in light of the directives set out in the supplement to the Urban Development Plan (master development plan, architectural implementation and integration plan, etc.), and in determining the mechanics of regulatory enforcement. In cooperation with the different levels of government, certain technical committees could be called upon to assess the pertinence of other tools necessary for the proper protection and preservation of the island's ecosystems (conservation status: natural space, wildlife sanctuary, plant habitat, etc.).

Pursuant to the regulatory framework prescribed under the Urban Development Plan, decisions by a borough council regarding a project planned for a given ecoterritory will be subject to notice to such effect by the Urban Development Advisory Committee (UDAC). The Montréal Heritage Council will also enjoy a role in assessing projects planned for the ecoterritories. Prior to initiating the formal project evaluation procedure, developers will be entitled to seek the assistance of the technical committees in designing projects that adequately comply with established objectives and criteria.

For the purposes of this Policy, the City of Montréal is of the opinion that the 10% contribution required of developers for parkland, playgrounds and natural spaces will be in addition to other government regulations pertaining to the protection of natural habitats, notably Québec's Environment Quality Act.

In the instance of City-sponsored funding initiatives (infrastructure, housing, etc.), Montréal seeks to make the protection and enhancement of natural habitats a condition essential to the acceptance of development projects planned for sectors of high ecological value.

The City of Montréal will further rely on the support of applicable laws and regulations enforced by other levels of government.

Lastly, the City plans to develop an overall vision for all wetlands and hydrous environments with a view to identifying ecological value, prioritizing sectors to be preserved and determining specific action to be taken. This vision will serve as the foundation of a new regulatory framework to be drawn up in cooperation with the boroughs, the municipalities, the Metropolitan Montréal Community, the Québec Ministry of the Environment and Environment Canada.

3. Ecological management of natural habitats in City parks

The City of Montréal plans to assess natural habitats in island parks and green spaces, and enter key components in a registry of protected areas. These protected areas would be subject to protective measures within the scope of an ecological management process similar to the one applying to nature parks.

Ecological management is essential if the City is to maintain plant and animal biological diversity, restore environments impaired by human development or natural causes, and prevent future degradation. Ecological management makes it possible to understand and monitor ecosystems, and then develop and institute recreational and educational activities for users.

4. Land use strategy: an important lever for ecoterritory protection and enhancement

The drafting of a land use strategy is one of the elements of the action plan underpinning the Policy on the *Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*. This strategy will involve the setup of a land use program designed to provide for public/private financing packages and to seize opportunities as they arise.

Furthermore, in the light of the market value of land of high ecological value and mounting pressures in this respect, the City foresees the creation and utilization of a budgeted fund to protect and develop strategic natural habitats. Provisions in the land use strategy will make allowance for recourse to various mechanisms such as ecological donations, land exchanges (whereby developers would relinquish sites of high ecological value and reorient their designs on alternate properties offered by the City), tangible participation by public organizations and institutions in possession of vast tracts of undeveloped land which could be included in the network of protected areas, multiparty, shared-cost agreements with stakeholders—including the federal and provincial governments, and public/private partnerships.

This strategy is also based on a concerted approach in matters of the utilization of contributions (cash or land) required of developers to provide for parkland when planning new housing subdivisions.



Marsh on Île Bizard



White-tailed deer south of Heritage Woods in Pointe-aux-Prairies Nature Park



Riffle or natural shallows on Lachine Rapids

5. Partner support programs

This Policy provides for the drawing up of various cooperation and support programs for partners seeking to assume a role in natural habitat protection and enhancement initiatives.

These programs will be developed based on criteria and terms specific to the conservation organizations, and other public and private groups and organizations involved. The program could take a number of different forms such as providing project development support, enhancing citizen awareness and supporting funding campaigns. The City intends to certify real estate development projects that meet the objectives set out in this Policy.

6. Citizen participation

The success of this *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats* lies not only in adoption by the City but also in ensuring that the vision and approach advocated herein are shared and defended by Montréalers one and all (citizens, developers, environmental organizations, etc.).

Accordingly, as opportunities impacting the ecoterritories arise, the City intends to foster discussions among citizens, representatives of environmental organizations and developers with a view to planning development projects designed to procure added value for both conservationists and developers.

The City further plans to schedule citizen consultation in conjunction with the tabling of an annual report on the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*. This report will summarize action taken during the year and outline an action plan for the upcoming year.

In addition, the City of Montréal will post information on its website respecting the island's natural habitats, including information pertaining to the implementation of this Policy.

Lastly, in the wake of the Montréal Summit, the City will pursue dialogue with the representatives of environmental organizations concerned about the challenges associated with the protection and enhancement of the island's natural habitats.

Sectors of intervention under this policy *

- Natural habitats in existing parks
- Shoreline and aquatic environments of ecological interest
- Ecoterritories
- Map of sectors of intervention

* These sectors may be subject to re-evaluation.

Natural habitats in existing parks

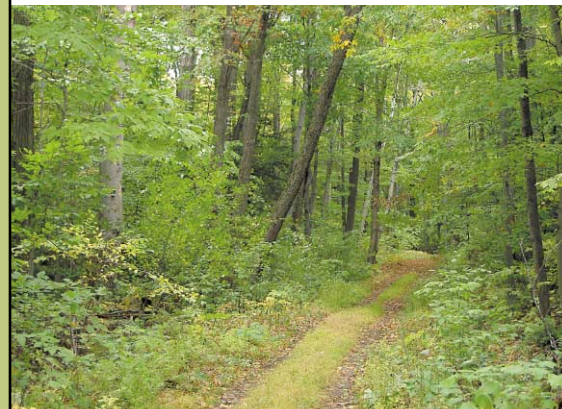
Natural habitats in existing parks

The City of Montréal advocates adapting and applying the ecosystem and landscape management model used for its nature parks to all parks featuring spaces of high ecological value.

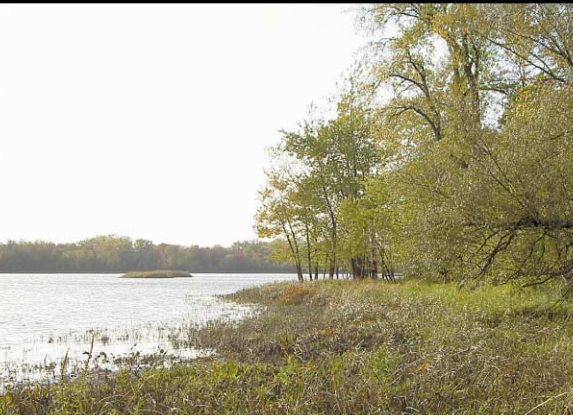
The development of this management model led to a change in nature park status. In 1993, the Regional Parks Division of the Montréal Urban Community drafted an ecosystem and landscape management program based on studies conducted in the 1980s, the object being to provide for the sustainable development of regional parks and park heritage. As a consequence, on 24 March 1994, the Executive Committee of the Montréal Urban Community authorized the name change from *regional park* to *nature park*.

Ecosystem management objectives

- Identify and recognize the natural heritage of existing parks;
- Provide for the protection and enhancement of this natural heritage;
- Bring natural space protection status and Policy objectives into line with one another;
- Maintain biodiversity, both plant and animal;
- Detect, in the field, changes to biophysical resources;
- Propose tangible solutions to the consequences of disturbances—human and natural—to the ecological value of natural habitats.



Shoreline and aquatic environments of ecological interest



Shoreline and aquatic environments of ecological interest

In addition to the wooded areas, tracts of undeveloped land, ponds, bogs and marshland, Montréal's natural heritage includes an abundance of waterways and shoreline environments. These shoreline and aquatic environments are fundamental elements of the Montréal landscape. Shoreline areas are particularly popular with citizens for recreational activities such as fishing, or simply for admiring the scenery and enjoying the ambient peace and quiet. These shoreline and aquatic environments are home to a wealth of unique vegetation which provides habitat essential to the development of a diversity of plant and animal life. Within the scope of the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*—allowance being made for applicable federal and provincial policies, the City of Montréal plans to devise a strategy for protecting and developing shoreline and aquatic environments of considerable ecological potential. .

Conservation and management objectives

- Preserve and enhance the biodiversity of shoreline and aquatic environments;
- Establish an overall vision for shoreline and aquatic environments with a view to identifying ecological potential;
- Protect and enhance shoreline and aquatic heritage (preserve landscape, monitor interventions, ensure that water is physically and visually accessible, etc.)
- Ensure sound ecosystem management in these environments;
- Draw up a communications and educational program to raise citizen awareness of shoreline and aquatic environments of ecological interest.



The 10 ecoterritories

Senneville Woods

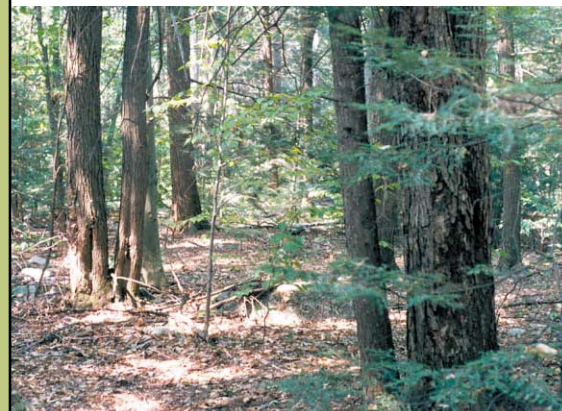


Ecological profile

This territory, which comprises the area surrounding the Morgan Arboretum, is dominated by stands of mature trees and includes several streams and wetland areas (marshes and treed swamps). These natural habitats are home to rare species of plants and contribute to the preservation of a wooded tract some 300 hectares in area, the largest on the Island of Montréal. Found here are rare stands of beech, red oak and eastern hemlock several of which have been selected by the Ministry of Natural Resources for designation as exceptional forest ecosystems (EFEs). Owing to both size and diversity, these woods constitute prime habitat for forest birds, including birds of prey.

Conservation and management objectives

- Preserve the biodiversity and integrity of this wooded area.
- Provide for wildlife corridors linking Lake of Two Mountains, Senneville Woods, the Ecomuseum and Bois-de-la-Roche Agricultural Park without compromising the privacy of lakefront properties.
- Preserve the ponds located north of the Ecomuseum given the rarity of ponds on the island and their potential as wildlife habitat.





Rivière à l'Orme Ecoforest Corridor



Ecological profile

This corridor comprises five distinct natural areas of considerable biodiversity: Angell Woods south of Autoroute 40; Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Woods west of Rivière à l'Orme; the two mature forest stands at each end of Anse-à-l'Orme Nature Park; and, the lowland area at the mouth of Rivière à l'Orme. Each of these areas is characterized by a mosaic of vegetation comprising mixed stands of young and mature forest growth, unimproved land, marshland, bogs and waterways. These natural areas are home to a number of rare species of plants and constitute potential habitat for three endangered species of animal life, namely the red-shouldered hawk, Cooper's hawk and brown snake. The size of the mature wooded areas combined with the proximity of open land favours the presence of populations of birds of prey. *Veronica anagallis-aquatica** or American speedwell, an aquatic plant particularly rare in Québec, can be found in the vicinity of Rivière à l'Orme. This ecoterritory encompasses the entirety of Rivière à l'Orme and its principal tributaries. The forest corridor bordering Rivière à l'Orme serves a strategic link for the fauna and flora of the three neighbouring nature parks (Anse-à-l'Orme, Bois-de-la-Roche and Cap-Saint-Jacques).

Angell Woods are home to eight species of rare plants and a full quarter of the wooded area—dominated by stands of hickory and sugar maple—has been designated as an exceptional forest ecosystem (EFE) by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Woods boast rare stands of yellow birch and cedars which constitute prime habitat for white-tailed deer and birds of prey.

Conservation and management objectives

- Create a sustainable ecological corridor of great biodiversity in the area surrounding the only inland river on the Island of Montréal.
- Create a recreational corridor from Beaurepaire Station to Cap-Saint-Jacques Nature Park and Bois-de-la-Roche Agricultural Park.
- Maintain Rivière à l'Orme water quality and ensure appropriate water levels.
- Consolidate the boundaries of Anse-à-l'Orme Nature Park and Bois-de-la-Roche Agricultural Park by conserving natural spaces of significant ecological interest in the adjoining area.

Île Bizard Ecoforest Corridor



Ecological profile

This corridor is characterized by important networks of wetlands (marshes and bogs) linked by waterways and stands of mature trees. These natural spaces are home to a number of rare plants and constitute prime habitat for herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles), waterfowl and forest birds. Wetlands are particularly abundant in the southwest sector of the island in the vicinity of Pointe Théorêt and in the area north of Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard Nature Park. The high ecological value of the Pointe Théorêt sector led Montréal Urban Community (MUC) officials to shortlist the area for eventual transformation into a nature park. The sector north of Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard Nature Park is characterized by several tracts of open land which serve as feeding grounds for birds of prey that nest in the nature park. The cedar bush also found in the area provides habitat for the white-tailed deer population in winter.

One of the sectors of the nature park is dominated by a prize stand of sugar maple and hickory. Home to seven rare species of plants, the area acts as a buffer for nature park's network of wetlands. These woods provide suitable habitat for two endangered species of birds of prey that live in the nature park, namely the red-shouldered hawk and Cooper's hawk. The black maple woodlot to the northwest of the nature park is extremely rare for Montréal and environs, and infrequently encountered elsewhere in Québec. This woodlot has been designated as an exceptional forest ecosystem (EFE) by the Ministry of Natural Resources, and is home to seven species of endangered plants. The brown snake, also an endangered species, frequents the open land in the vicinity of the black maple woodlot which adjoins the nature park.

Conservation and management objectives

- Preserve the diverse, sustainable ecosystems in the vicinity of the wetlands and forest stands of extremely high ecological value, all of which are located in an area under development.
- Consolidate the boundaries of Cap-Saint-Jacques and Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard nature parks by conserving various natural spaces of intrinsic ecological interest or decided significance in terms of wildlife habitat.
- Create an ecological and recreational corridor linking Pointe Théorêt (extension of Cap-Saint-Jacques Nature Park), Lake of Two Mountains and Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard Nature Park.
- Conserve an important tract of the natural environment north of Bois-de-l'Île-Bizard Nature Park to meet the needs of resident wildlife, especially birds of prey and white-tailed deer.





Cheval Blanc Rapids



Ecological profile

The area in the vicinity of Cheval Blanc Rapids is characterized by a wooded shoreline, ongoing stretches of wet meadowland home to an abundance of *phalaris arundinacea* or reed phalaris and a concentration of treed wetlands adjoining Rivière des Prairies, which are home to large silver maple woodlots. These areas constitute prime breeding habitat for fish, amphibians, reptiles and waterfowl. They also serve as feeding grounds for the great blue heron and other shorebirds. These riparian and wetland areas, as well as adjacent terrestrial tracts—open land and woods—are home to a number of rare plant species. Until recently, one of these species, the pubescent sticklewort, had not been observed in Québec for over 50 years.

The silver maple woodlot found in this area is the largest of all such stands bordering Rivière des Prairies.



Pubescent sticklewort



Conservation and management objectives

- Preserve a viable ecosystem in an area of unique scenic beauty along the banks of Rivière des Prairies which offers potential in terms of regional park development.
- Preserve extensive wildlife and plant biodiversity in the area while maximizing access to the riverbank.
- Maintain a link between the conservation areas and the three riverside parks: Roxboro Island, Cheval Blanc and Des Arbres parks.

Bertrand Stream Basin



Ecological profile

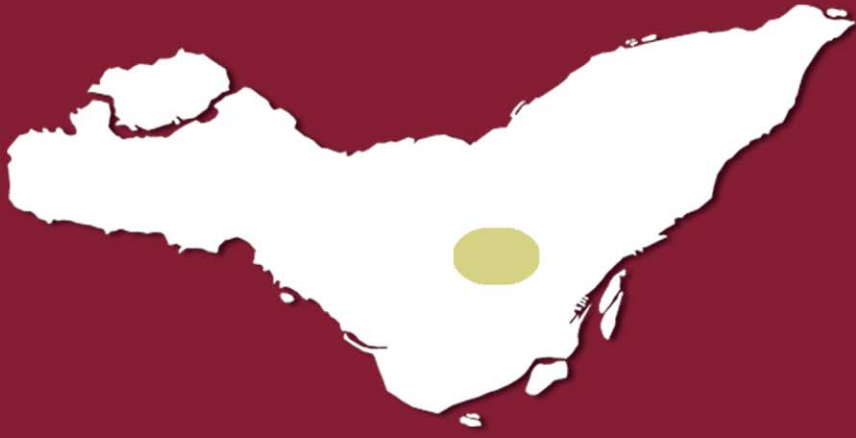
The basin encompasses the entirety of the Bertrand Stream system from the upstream sector of the waterway to Bois-de-Liesse Nature Park. In the upstream sector, Bertrand Stream flows through a bog and marsh area adjacent to Dorval Industrial Park. In the stream's headwater area, on land occupied by the Saint-Laurent Technoparc, is found a natural space comprising a small pond bordered by marsh and treed swampland, as well as a mature stand of beech which is considered a rarity on the island. These aquatic (streams and ponds) and wetland (marshes and bogs) areas provide habitat for fish (cyprinids), migratory waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, beavers and muskrats.

South of the nature park lies a wooded area of considerable ecological interest comprising various types of mature forest stands representative of the Montréal area: sugar maple-beech, sugar maple-hickory, silver maple and an extremely rare stand of black sugar maple. These forest stands are home to rare species of plants and are frequented by two endangered species of birds of prey observed in the park, namely the red-shouldered hawk and Cooper's hawk.

Conservation and management objectives

- Control Bertrand Stream water quality and quantity.
- Redirect runoff from Saint-Laurent Technoparc to Bertrand Stream.
- Develop and enhance the natural environment with a view to recreating a natural ecosystem the length of the stream from the airport to Bois-de-Liesse Nature Park.
- Consolidate the boundaries of Bois-de-Liesse Nature Park by including the stands of trees of ecological interest south of the park.
- Provide for a green belt linking Lake Saint-Louis and Bois-de-Liesse Nature Park.





Summits and Slopes of Mount Royal



Ecological profile

The summits and slopes of Mount Royal are of significant landscape and ecological value. The wooded areas found on the mountain comprise mainly mature, century-old stands of red oak, sugar maple-red oak and sugar maple-hickory. Stands of oak, a rarity in Montréal, are generally concentrated on the slopes of Mount Royal. These wooded tracts have preserved their ecological integrity, constitute prime breeding habitat for birdlife and are possibly home to rare species of plants.

Conservation and management objectives

- Update the Mount Royal Development Plan by incorporating objectives relating to ecological management as currently practised in the nature parks.
- Preserve the emblematic value of the green summits and slopes of the mountain.
- Protect each of the three strata of vegetation (herbaceous plants, brushwood and trees) on the summits and slopes which provide feeding and nesting habitat for a broad diversity of birds.
- Focus particular attention on the preservation of exceptional forest stands on the north slope of the mountain which is home to rare vestiges of the original Mount Royal forest cover.
- Maximize the possibilities for lookouts and contact with nature on all sides of the mountain.
- Foster links between the islands of natural spaces on each of the three summits both inside and outside the limits of existing parks.
- Preserve the wooded corridor bordering Camillien-Houde Way.

De Montigny Stream Basin

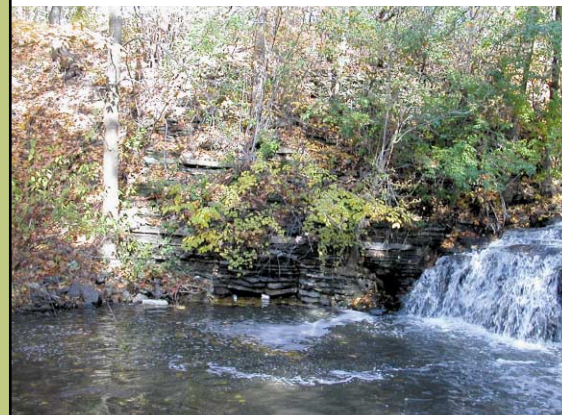


Ecological profile

The De Montigny Stream Basin is unique to Montréal's natural landscape. The stream cascades directly down over the limestone and features a spectacular waterfall. Stream banks are bordered mainly by a mix of young and mature growth northern red ash. The four islands offshore from the mouth of the stream (Boutin, Rochon, Lapierre and Gagné) are almost completely flooded come spring and constitute prime breeding habitat for fish, muskrats, amphibians, reptiles and ducks, as well as feeding grounds for the great blue heron. These islands, where a number of rare plants have been observed, together comprise one of the rare, natural, East Island locations little impacted by urban development and which present considerable interpretive potential.

Conservation and management objectives

- Preserve a viable ecosystem in the area surrounding this exceptional stream located in a highly built-up sector of the City generally lacking in natural spaces.
- Preserve the considerable biodiversity of Boutin, Rochon, Lapierre and Gagné islands by allowing recreational activities in keeping with efforts to protect the natural environment.
- Ensure a sufficient volume of quality water to feed De Montigny Stream.
- Create a linear park linking the area extending from Rivière des Prairies to the retention pond in Anjou.





East Island Greenbelt



Ecological profile

This area comprises mature stands of trees running alongside Autoroute 40, which serve as a visual screen, and those found in the Bois-de-la-Réparation sector outside the boundaries of Pointe-aux-Prairies Nature Park. These wooded areas are home to a number of rare species of plantlife, including the cork elm. The Bois-de-la-Réparation sector is currently being evaluated for designation as an exceptional forest ecosystem (EFE).

The East Island greenbelt, which also encompasses the upstream and central sections of Pinel Creek, features a mix of marsh, new growth forest, wetlands and wooded tracts bordering Pointe-aux-Prairies Nature Park, in particular those located in the headwater sector of Grou Basin and those found in the area south of Heritage Woods. These natural spaces constitute prime habitat for amphibians, reptiles and waterfowl. The white-tailed deer population, estimated at some fifteen or so individuals, frequent the wetlands and open fields to the south.

Bonfoin Island, located off the eastern tip of the Island of Montréal, also forms a part of this ecoterritory. This small island, which boasts a mix of herbaceous prairie cover and central marshland, provides breeding habitat for fish and waterfowl. The island's shoreline is home to a number of rare species of plants.

Conservation and management objectives

- Supplement the deficiency of natural spaces in the eastern sector of the Island of Montréal.
- Preserve biodiversity by protecting the remaining natural spaces of ecological interest.
- Maximize connecting links between and accessibility of natural spaces in the area for both residents and wildlife.
- Consolidate the boundaries of Pointe-aux-Prairies Nature Park.
- Ensure sufficient supply of quality water for Pinel Creek, Grou Basin and headwater marshes.
- Conserve the wooded areas along Autoroute 40 to buffer and reduce traffic noise, and provide a visual element of quality in a heavily industrialized area which serves as one of the main gateways to the Island of Montréal.

Lachine Rapids



Ecological profile

The Lachine Rapids are unique to the Québec landscape. The area is a breeding ground for any number of species of fish (still and fast water spawning sites) and aquatic birds (sterns, ducks and herons). The midstream islands provide sanctuary for several endangered species of plants and represent prime nesting sites for ducks and herons. Heron Island is home to a mixed colony of herons, including the black-crowned night heron, great blue heron and tufted heron. This colony includes the largest nesting population of black-crowned night herons and second largest nesting population of great blue herons in Québec. The midstream islands and Parc des Rapides in the Borough of LaSalle form a part of the Heron Island migratory bird sanctuary and are fast becoming refuges for wildlife as well.

The stand of willow in Parc des Rapides speaks volumes about the highly diverse wetland environment and wealth of wildlife (fish, amphibians and reptiles, aquatic and shore birds, as well as semi-aquatic mammals). This natural environment of demonstrated interest is already subject to certain protective measures. Within the scope of the action plan to be drawn up in support of this Policy, steps will be taken to ensure proper protection of this site.



St Paul Woods on Nuns' Island provide sanctuary for a number of endangered species of plants and are home to a great diversity of birds, including birds of prey. This wet woodland, together with Lac des Battures, constitute important breeding grounds for amphibians and reptiles. This natural space, like the Heron Island heron colony, is listed in the registry of protected areas compiled by the Québec Ministry of the Environment.

Conservation and management objectives

- Conserve ecosystem integrity.
- Preserve cultural heritage.
- Develop recreational and tourism potential.





Saint-Jacques Escarpment



Ecological profile

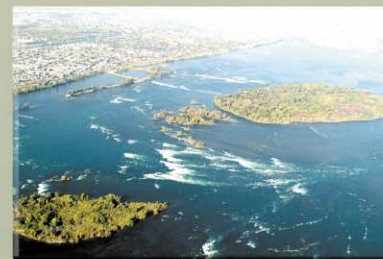
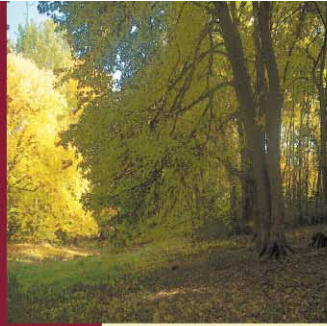
The Saint-Jacques escarpment, together with Mount Royal, are each defining characteristics of the Island of Montréal landscape. This escarpment is dominated by stands of poplar which ensure soil stability. Geographically located between Mount Royal and the Lachine Rapids and extending over an area of more than 20 hectares, the escarpment is of strategic importance for migratory waterfowl.


Conservation and management objectives

- Draw up a protection and development plan for this area in conjunction with the boroughs concerned.
- Identify action required to curb erosion of the escarpment.



POLICY ON THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL HABITATS




SECTORS OF INTERVENTION



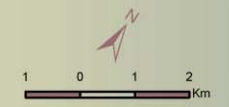
 Existing protected land site (Québec Ministry of the Environment, 1999)

Sectors of intervention (in view of the creation of new protected land sites)

-  existing park or green space
-  ecoterritory
-  shoreline and aquatic environments of ecological interest

- Natural habitats
-  aquatic environment (waterway and lake)
 -  wetland (pond, marsh and bog)
 -  wooded area

Montréal
 Service du développement culturel
 et de la qualité du milieu de vie
 Direction des sports, des parcs et
 des espaces verts



In conclusion

The success of this social initiative hinges upon certain essential conditions deserving of mention. They are as follows:

- Ensuring that everyone (citizens, developers and partners) recognizes the economic, social and ecological value of the island's natural habitats;
- Realizing the necessity of striking a compromise between two visions: on the one hand, total, all-out conservation and, on the other, development without regard for protection and enhancement of natural habitats of high ecological value;
- Cooperating with external partners in drafting objectives relating to protection and development and the regulatory frameworks and ensuring harmonization with other government programs;
- Identifying opportunities for protecting and enhancing natural habitats when planning new development projects;
- Harmonizing all municipal policies and action, inclusive of funding programs, with the *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*;
- Involving the citizenry and City partners in drafting an action plan to underpin this Policy.

In tabling this *Policy on the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Habitats*, the City of Montréal seeks to underscore the importance attributed to natural habitats in the ongoing planning and development of an urban entity which remains both competitive from the economic standpoint and a great place to live in.

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