



Press Release

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**Over 20% of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay area officially protected
as part of the Grande Alliance**

An important step toward increased protection of this territory

Québec, May 21, 2021 — The Gouvernement du Québec and the Cree Nation Government wish to acknowledge the official designation of the 23 territorial reserves for protected area purposes (TRPAP), announced in December 2020, with their inclusion in the Québec Register of Protected Areas. This is an important milestone toward the legal protection of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay region network of protected areas that will promote responsible economic development. It is also an important step toward the establishment of mechanisms to preserve, by 2035, 50% of the northern territory for environmental protection, the preservation of biodiversity and the growth of various types of development. It should be noted that the 23 TRPAPs increase the proportion of protected areas in this territory from 12% to 23%.

The formal inclusion of these territories in the Québec Register of Protected Areas confirms the willingness of the signatories of the Grande Alliance to protect the environment, promote responsible economic development and resource management, and foster collaboration between government agencies and indigenous stakeholders. As such, this step is beneficial to all stakeholders and confirms their determination to protect the territory while ensuring predictability for the economic and social development of this northern region.

The partners of the Grande Alliance are aware that despite the progress made to date, efforts will continue to ensure the preservation and sustainable development of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay region. Neither the successes achieved to date nor the protection objectives would be possible without collaboration between land users and residents, the Cree Nation Government and the Gouvernement du Québec. That is why the Grande Alliance will continue to support cooperation among interested parties, facilitate dialogue and encourage mutually beneficial relations.

Please note that the International Day for Biological Diversity will take place on Saturday, May 22. The theme — “We’re part of the solution”—reflects the mandate of the Grande Alliance, which is to strike a balance between development and environmental protection.

Quotes:

“We can be proud of the work we have done with our Grande Alliance partners. We will keep working together to achieve our preservation objectives in northern regions. I would also point out that a new target to preserve 30% of the territory by 2030 is currently under discussion within the framework of the UN Convention of Biological Diversity to which Québec stated it was bound. This ambitious target is part of our commitment to preserve natural environments. Together,

we're part of the solution by restarting the economy following the pandemic while protecting nature!"

Benoit Charette, Minister of the Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change, Minister Responsible for the Fight Against Racism, and Minister Responsible for the Laval Region

"I welcome this important announcement of the enhanced preservation of the network of protected areas in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay region, which will have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the region. Our growing collaboration with our Grande Alliance partners demonstrates our government's commitment to protecting northern regions."

Jonatan Julien, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Minister Responsible for the Côte-Nord Region, and Minister Responsible for the Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine Region

"This addition of 23 new protected areas to the Register achieves our common desire to protect the territory and its resources. As a result of these new protected areas, more than 20% of the Eeyou Istchee territory will be protected for future generations. I am very pleased to see the extent to which our nation-to-nation agreements are enabling us to make such progress."

Ian Lafrenière, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs

"These areas, which were carefully selected by community members and land users, are now officially listed in the Register. They bear witness to the importance given to prioritizing social and environmental protection within the wider framework of the Grande Alliance. Community engagement and inclusion of these exchanges, as we continue our concerted efforts to protect Eeyou Istchee, remain fundamental for designing a potential development scenario that accounts for the practice of traditional activities. In addition to protecting these areas, the Cree Nation is proud to contribute to the global effort to preserve biodiversity and is pleased to continue to do its part and to provide the rest of the province with a successful cohabitation model for protection and development."

Dr. Abel Bosum, Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees

"The official designation of these 23 protected areas and the methodology by which they were selected is precisely how the Grande Alliance is supposed to function: community members and land users leading with their expertise and traditional knowledge transmitted from generation to generation to support the process. The Cree Development Corporation looks forward to the contributions of communities and municipalities that will provide input for a plan designed to prioritize our rights and interests while benefiting our region."

Davey Bobbish, President of Cree Development Corporation

Highlights:

- The 23 TRPAPs in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay region are officially recorded in the Québec Register of Protected Areas as of March 31, 2021. Their official designation allows for the protection of the territories concerned, in particular by prohibiting any natural resource exploitation activities (forest, mining, and energy activities).
- The following steps will be launched shortly:

- knowledge acquisition and public consultations to finalize the delimitation of the territories;
- the drafting of conservation plans;
- the completion of the procedure to assess and examine impact on the natural and social environments stemming from the obligations under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement.
- The ultimate objective is to establish biodiversity reserves in the TRPAPs. In some instances, portions of the territory could receive the protected status of a national park.
- Inspired by the Paix des Braves Agreement and made possible through the collaboration of the Gouvernement du Québec and the Cree Nation Government, the Grande Alliance represents a Nation-to-Nation partnership vision that will, over a period of 30 years, support infrastructure development in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay region, better connect communities, and protect the territory.
- In particular, the realization of these protected areas helps to achieve the joint objectives of the parties as agreed to in the 2015 agreement to resolve the Baril-Moses forestry dispute.

Related Links

To learn more about TRPAPs in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay region:

www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/biodiversite/reserves-territoires/index-en.htm

To learn more about the Québec Register of Protected area (In French):

www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/biodiversite/aires_protegees/registre/index.htm

To learn more about the Cree Regional Conservation Strategy:

www.lagrandealliance.quebec/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/cree-regional-conservation-strategy-e.pdf

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