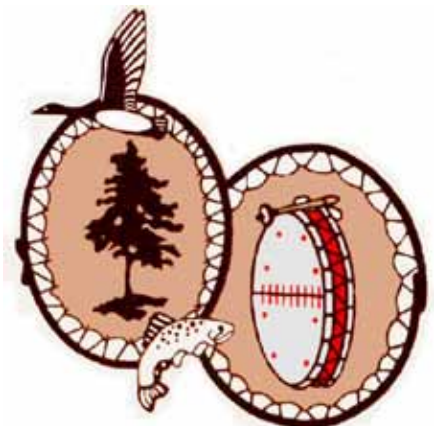
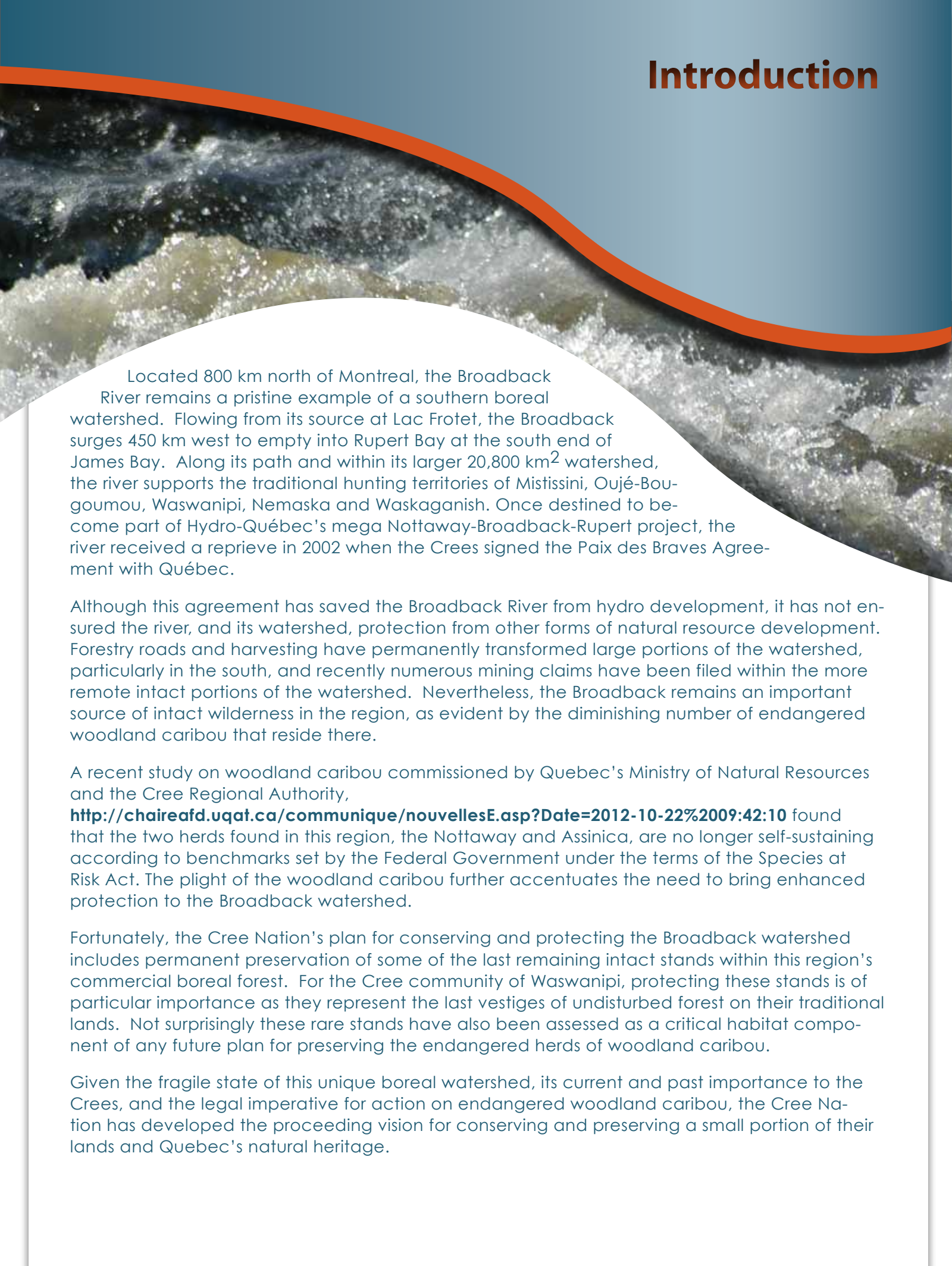




Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan



Introduction



Located 800 km north of Montreal, the Broadback River remains a pristine example of a southern boreal watershed. Flowing from its source at Lac Frotet, the Broadback surges 450 km west to empty into Rupert Bay at the south end of James Bay. Along its path and within its larger 20,800 km² watershed, the river supports the traditional hunting territories of Mistissini, Oujé-Bougoumou, Waswanipi, Nemaska and Waskaganish. Once destined to become part of Hydro-Québec's mega Nottaway-Broadback-Rupert project, the river received a reprieve in 2002 when the Crees signed the Paix des Braves Agreement with Québec.

Although this agreement has saved the Broadback River from hydro development, it has not ensured the river, and its watershed, protection from other forms of natural resource development. Forestry roads and harvesting have permanently transformed large portions of the watershed, particularly in the south, and recently numerous mining claims have been filed within the more remote intact portions of the watershed. Nevertheless, the Broadback remains an important source of intact wilderness in the region, as evident by the diminishing number of endangered woodland caribou that reside there.

A recent study on woodland caribou commissioned by Quebec's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Cree Regional Authority, <http://chaireafd.uqat.ca/communiquenouvellesE.asp?Date=2012-10-22%2009:42:10> found that the two herds found in this region, the Nottaway and Assinica, are no longer self-sustaining according to benchmarks set by the Federal Government under the terms of the Species at Risk Act. The plight of the woodland caribou further accentuates the need to bring enhanced protection to the Broadback watershed.

Fortunately, the Cree Nation's plan for conserving and protecting the Broadback watershed includes permanent preservation of some of the last remaining intact stands within this region's commercial boreal forest. For the Cree community of Waswanipi, protecting these stands is of particular importance as they represent the last vestiges of undisturbed forest on their traditional lands. Not surprisingly these rare stands have also been assessed as a critical habitat component of any future plan for preserving the endangered herds of woodland caribou.

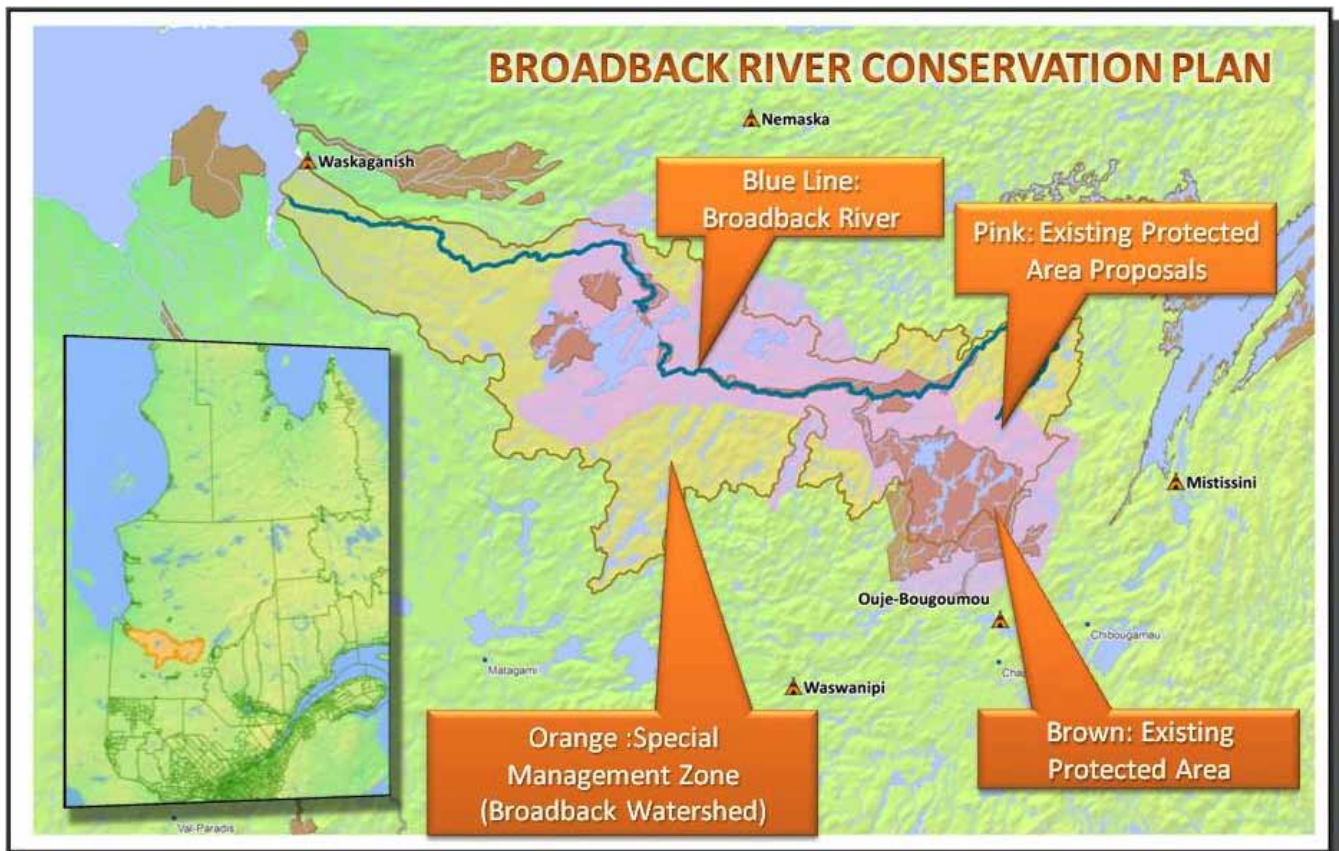
Given the fragile state of this unique boreal watershed, its current and past importance to the Crees, and the legal imperative for action on endangered woodland caribou, the Cree Nation has developed the proceeding vision for conserving and preserving a small portion of their lands and Quebec's natural heritage.

Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan: The Vision

Northern Québec is renowned internationally for its rivers. The La Grande River, the Rupert, Eastmain, Great Whale, Sakami, Caniapiscau and the Nottaway are examples of rivers that not only shape, form and reform the land physically, but also determine where and how people live in northern Québec. The significance of these rivers—obvious to the Crees who have been sustained by their flow within the ebb of history itself—is now evident to all Québécois whose lives have been transformed by the wealth these rivers provide. It would be no exaggeration to say that the image of these wild northern rivers now flows through the fabric of Québec's identity as it has for the Crees for centuries.

This holds true to the Broadback River for the Crees and hopefully for all Québécois. Now that many of Québec's truly great rivers have been interrupted, transformed and in some cases reversed to provide power and wealth, conserving and protecting the Broadback in its entirety represents an opportunity for Québec and the Cree Nation to set aside one of the last remaining iconic rivers in the mid-north. This is the Crees' vision.

Two Levels of Protection



Two Levels of Protection

As indicated by the map, the Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan will consist of two levels of protection from industrial development. The first level, or core protection, will consist of park and protected area designations (comparable to IUCN levels 2 to 4) which afford full protection from industrial development. This would require an additional 9,355 km² of new protection. The watershed plan around these core protection areas will serve as special management buffer zones (comparable to IUCN level 5). This is the second level of protection. These zones (10,866 km²) will seek to establish a balanced interaction between people and nature to maintain and restore the natural integrity of the landscape. In these zones, industrial activities will be permitted within a broadly considered management strategy.

A Sectorial Approach

It is the intention of the Cree Nation, working in collaboration with Québec, regional authorities and local communities to establish a sectorial approach to the management of the Conservation Area. This approach primarily relies on the pre-existing proposals that the Cree communities of Waswanipi, Ouje-Bougoumou and Nemaska have already put forward. They are as follows:

Assinica National Park Reserve and expansion area:

- This existing park will serve as core anchor for Broadback watershed protection;
- It provides key connectivity between different sectors for the watershed conservation concept;
- With Park status, tourism development will play an important role in park management and serve as a launching point for downriver tourism opportunities.

Mishigamish proposed protected area:

- Central to watershed protection, this features proposed protection from industrial development for the last remaining virgin forests in the Waswanipi trapline territory, north of the Broadback River;
- Critical for Waswanipi for the protection and enhancement of the traditional Cree way of life;
- Important woodland caribou habitat



Chisesaakahiikan proposed protected area:

- Features protection from industrial development for Lake Evans, Lake Nemascou and the Old Nemaska gathering site;
- The Mishigamish and Chisesaakahiikan proposals come together at Lake Evans, which is of shared protection interest;
- Important woodland caribou habitat.

Special Management zones.

- North of Assinica Park Reserve in Mistissini sector;
- South of Mishigamish and Chisesaakahiikan in Waswanipi Sector;
- Downstream area, Waskaganish sector.

Under this approach the Cree Nation anticipates that a coordination table consisting of Government and regional stakeholders will be established to ensure harmonization in the management of the sectors in accordance with the Broadback watershed's overall conservation and protection goals.

A Vision for the North with International Relevance

Although the Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan would help protect an important component of the Crees and Québec's mutual heritage, it would also ensure that Québec is meeting its international obligations. Under the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, a 10-year strategic plan was adopted in 2011.

Known as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, this strategy establishes 20 key targets for the signatory nations to meet by 2020. Among those relevant targets for the Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan are the goals of stemming the loss of productive forestlands, preventing further loss of endangered species and achieving a goal of 17% of representative protection of lands rich in biodiversity that deliver important ecological services. Protecting the Broadback watershed would readily fulfill these criteria.

In reference to protection targets, it is worth noting that the Crees supported the bold vision of protection, however imprecise, advocated by the previous Québec Government under the Plan Nord. With the Broadback Watershed Conservation Plan, the Crees hope to restore the momentum for protection targets beyond the status quo and inspire a more sustainable vision for the development of Eeyou Istchee.