

CONSERVATION RESERVES

HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE 1, QUESTION 6

Does the forest lie within, adjacent to, or contain a conservation area: a) designated by an international authority, b) legally designated or proposed by relevant federal/provincial/territorial legislative body, or c) identified in regional land use plans or conservation plans?

BACKGROUND

Documenting protected areas and other conservation reserves would appear to be rather straightforward. However, there are two main issues of confusion. First, it has been debated whether permanent protected areas need to be identified as HCVFs since they are off limits to industrial resource extraction. That is, they are removed from the industrial land base and need not be identified for management or monitoring activities. An alternative position leading to the same conclusion argues that HCVF status should be determined based on the significance and level of threat to the conservation attributes. In this case, the argument is that if no significant threats exist, or if a threat is expected at only low intensity, then the HCV does not need to be formally recognized. The ProForest document and the National HCVF framework are also somewhat inconsistent around this issue. In general, WWF recommends areas should be designated as HCVFs based on the values present, regardless of the existing management or protection status. Management prescriptions and monitoring programs should be considered subsequent to and independent of HCVF identification.

Second, the HCVF framework does not explicitly address the issue of identifying candidate conservation areas to complete a protected areas network. Such candidate areas can be legitimately interpreted as HCVFs if they need to be safeguarded to maintain conservation values until legal protection is confirmed and provided. This is most easily recognized if a protected areas planning exercise has been undertaken

and, as an outcome, candidate areas have been identified and documented.

DATA SOURCES

See Table 6.1 below.

INTERPRETING GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Conservation areas can be categorized according to global, national and regional significance (see examples Table 6.1) and thematic maps can show the designations accordingly. For those sites not already included in a legally designated protected area, a site-by-site evaluation is likely required to determine whether attributes comprising the site meet HCVF thresholds. For example, World Heritage sites, RAMSAR sites and Biosphere Reserves will likely meet HCVF thresholds since rigorous criteria are used in their identification and designation. International Biological Program sites, on the other hand, were identified as representative or significant examples of habitat types or ecosystem dynamics and may not always meet HCVF thresholds. Similarly, candidate protected areas identified by various conservation agencies or regional planning authorities need to be evaluated to determine if HCVF thresholds are met.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Are the conservation areas recognized in government legislation or policy?

Table 6.1 Examples of conservation area designations of global, national and regional significance and data sources.

DESIGNATION	SIGNIFICANCE
World Heritage Sites ¹	International
Wetlands of international importance ²	International
World Biosphere Reserves ¹	International
International Biological Program sites ⁵	International
National Parks and Heritage Sites ^{3,6}	National
Migratory Bird Sanctuaries and National Wildlife Areas ^{4,6}	National
Provincial Parks and Ecological Reserves ⁶	Provincial
Environmentally Significant Areas ^{7,*}	Provincial/Regional
Candidate protected areas ⁸	Provincial/Regional

1. UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/>

2. RAMSAR: <http://www.wetlands.org>

3. Parks Canada

4. Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada

5. Conservation Data Centres

6. CARTS – Conservation Areas Reporting and Tracking System

7. Regional or municipal land use plans

8. Government parks or wildlife agencies or non-government conservation agencies.

* Examples of ESAs include Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs) in Ontario, significant woodlands, significant wetlands, water source protection areas, special features protection areas for old growth and/or unique phenomenon.

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In the past, WWF has recommended that legally protected areas and conservation areas with a clear policy basis related to biodiversity protection should be automatically identified as HCVFs. This argument was based on the need to be consistent in addressing landscapes that are not part of the forest management land base.

This interpretation differs from the intent of the guidance in both the ProForest HCVF toolkit and the National HCVF framework in which conservation areas judged to be effective for biodiversity protection (*e.g.* with legal protection) need not be designated as HCVFs. WWF also recognizes arguments that the focus of the HCVF designation should be on the conservation attributes and not necessarily on the designation of a site. As a result, we do not feel the need to continue the recommendation that legally protected areas are automatically HCVFs.

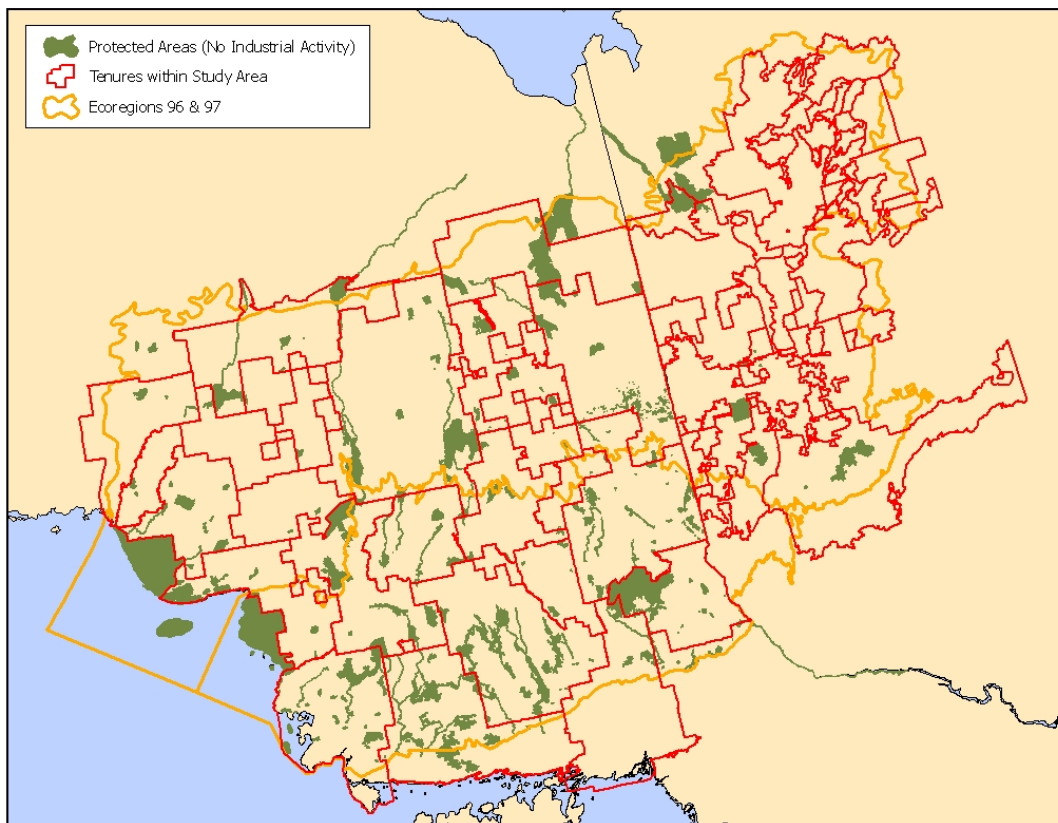
However, it is important that all conservation areas are identified, mapped, and evaluated for HCVs in order to identify possible adjacent or connecting habitats, and to ensure that any HCVs within the protected areas are recognized, maintained or enhanced (Figure 6.1). The specific guidance provided in the National HCVF framework addresses the presence or absence of HCVs,

habitat connectivity, and buffer areas for existing PAs. Although this likely requires a site-by-site evaluation of the relevant conservation attributes, some categories of parks may be efficiently removed from screening if the purpose of the designation is more related to recreational opportunities rather than biodiversity conservation.

For conservation areas of interest not recognized by legislation or policy, it is recommended that each site or category of sites be evaluated for consistency with other aspects of the HCVF framework to determine HCVF status (Figure 6.2), especially in cases where protected areas networks are likely to be added to our completed in the near future. Examples include:

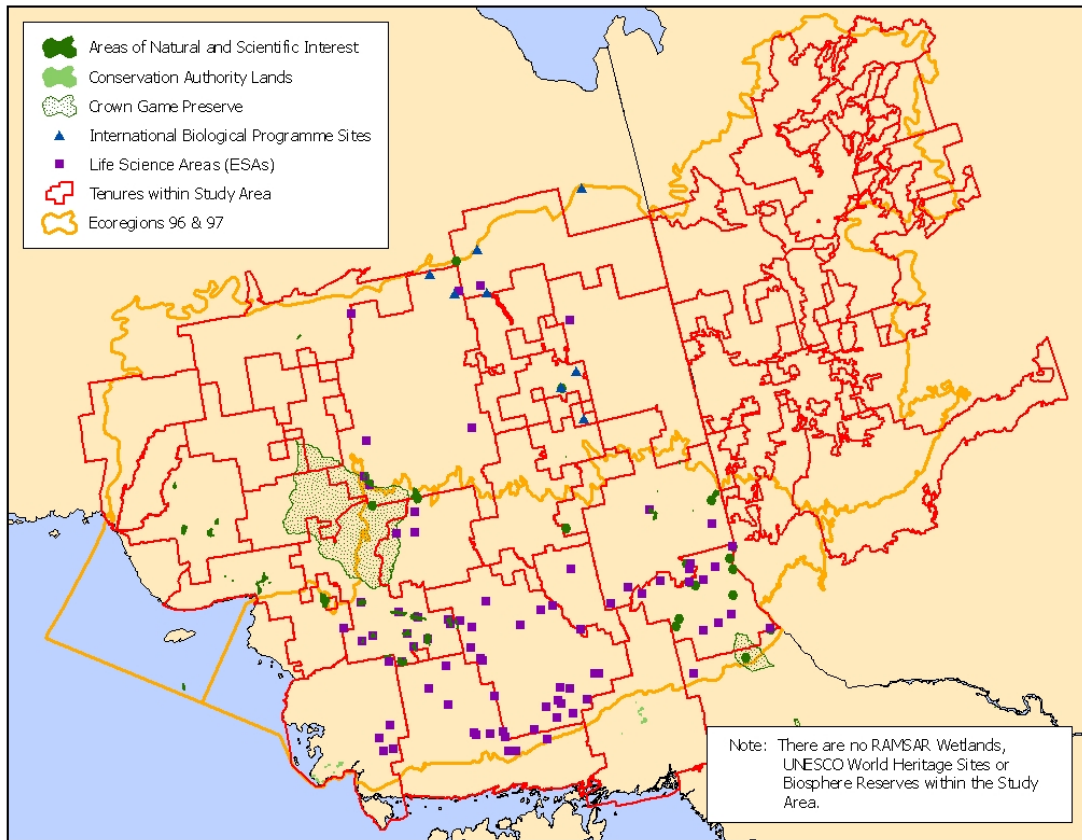
- Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) in Alberta. AI-Pac, in their HCVF Summary document, selected to interpret ESAs under Question 11 (regionally/nationally significant forest ecosystems), although these could be considered under Question 6.
- Class 1-3 wetlands in Ontario.
- Designated old growth red and white pine sites in Ontario.
- Hazard lands identified in regional land use plans. These areas may also be evaluated under the HCV4 questions (*i.e.* basic services of nature).

Figure 6.1 Legally designated conservation areas from which industrial activity is excluded.



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Figure 6.2 Conservation areas identified through scientific and land-use studies and recognized in government policy.



- Natural heritage designations in regional land use plans. These areas are not legally protected, but are usually identified because of environmental sensitivity. Areas should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

For example:

- Deferral areas identified using a gap analysis to meet the requirements of Criterion 6.4.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended in response to this question that all designated and identified areas derived from, but not limited to, the sources listed in Table 6.1 above should be shown on a map.

Legally protected areas and conservation areas with clear policy basis and effective biodiversity protection mechanisms do not *need* to be identified as HCVFs. However, each should be evaluated for HCVs. Consideration of the distribution of protected areas together with other conservation areas may also identify significant opportunities for conservation network connectivity.

For conservation areas of interest not recognized by legislation or policy, it is recommended that each site or category of sites be evaluated for consistency with other aspects of the HCVF framework to determine HCVF status.

Are there features that occur in the forest that are not represented in the protected areas network (representation gaps)?

A simple quantitative analysis can be undertaken to measure the extent to which ecological features are represented in protected areas – ideally, a known gap analysis methodology can be applied. In cases where the protected areas network is largely incomplete from this perspective, it is strongly recommended to engage in an appropriate protected areas planning or conservation planning exercise with relevant stakeholders. Features or attributes that are unique and not represented in the protected areas system are best addressed through HCV3. Common or widespread features that are not adequately represented are best identified as potential HCVs until further analysis identifies best options for protection. Identification of these candidate protected areas can be greatly informed by HCV investigations in general, and spatial overlay suggested in Question 19, specifically.

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It is recommended that a measure of protected areas completion (*i.e.* gap analysis results) be illustrated and include a discussion of types of areas and/or features required to complete representation. If candidate protected areas have been previously identified (such as deferral areas through Criterion 6.4), then these sites should be designated as HCVFs until confirmed as protected areas through an appropriate land use planning exercise.

Lack of representation alone is not a criterion for HCV status. However, in cases where the protected areas network is mostly incomplete from this perspective, then it is strongly recommended to engage in an appropriate protected areas planning or conservation planning exercise with relevant stakeholders. In addition, Question 19 is intended to look at the spatial coincidence of HCVFs. Assessing the level of spatial coincidence of HCVFs with unrepresented features will assist in defining candidate protected areas in the absence of such an exercise having been completed. Therefore, we recommend that a completed HCVF assessment and, in particular, the guidance offered in Question 19, can be used as part of a conservation planning effort to complete a network of protected areas.

METHODOLOGY

Figures 6.1 and 6.2

Data Sources

- WWF-Canada. Designated Areas Database
- CCEA. Canadian Conservation Areas Database (CCAD)
- OMNR. Natural Resource Value layers
 - Regulated Provincial Parks layer
 - Regulated Conservation Reserves layer
 - Crown Game Reserves layer
 - Conservation Authority Lands layer
 - ANSI layer
- Ontario Natural History Information Centre (NHIC)
 - ANSI-ES Sites
 - ANSI-LS Sites
 - ANSI-LSC Sites
 - Life Sciences (ESA) Sites
 - International Biological Programme (IBP) Sites
- Global Forest Watch. Forest Tenures in Canada.
- Terrestrial Ecoregions of Canada.

Methodology

- All data was clipped to the study area boundaries (Terrestrial Ecoregions of Canada 96 and 97) and displayed without modification
- Figure 6.1 illustrates all protected areas identified as free of industrial development by the WWF-Canada Endangered Spaces project, as well as more recent data obtained from OMNR
- Figure 6.2 illustrates the sum total of ANSI, ESA, Conservation Authority Lands and IBP Sites, including the Chapleau Crown Game Preserve identified by NRVIS, NHIC, and CCAD.