



1. Statement of Policy

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that environmental conservation is essential to long-term economic prosperity while at the same time economic development can contribute significantly to the achievement of conservation goals. This interdependence between conservation and development will be officially recognized by the Government of the Northwest Territories through the application of the concept of sustainable development to all its decisions and actions related to natural and heritage resources in the Northwest Territories.

2. Principles

The Government of the Northwest Territories will adhere to the following principles when implementing this Policy:

- (1) The Government of the Northwest Territories shall promote economic development which maintains harvestable resources at sustainable levels, essential ecological processes and natural diversity.
- (2) The Government of the Northwest Territories shall routinely combine and equally weigh conservation and development factors in decision-making processes for the use of resources.
- (3) Sustainable development of resources is essential to the long-term economic, cultural and social well being of northern residents.
- (4) Northern residents shall be assured meaningful input and participation in decisions related to conservation and resource development.
- (5) Initiatives associated with this Policy shall be consistent with, or complement, all agreements, policies and legislation related to the settlement of aboriginal claims as they relate to conservation and development of resources.
- (6) Conservation and development practices shall take into account the local knowledge, values and experience to be found among the regular users of the environment as well as the information developed in academic institutions, industry and government.



- (7) Natural resources should be managed so that opportunities for future resource uses are maximized and maintenance of ecosystems is ensured.
- (8) Conservation commitments in resource development proposals shall be a major consideration in determining the degree of Government of the Northwest Territories' political and financial support.
- (9) The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes the need for conservation areas to maintain special values related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific, and aesthetic resources. The Government of the Northwest Territories shall support human activities in such areas where they are compatible with the values being protected.
- (10) Co-operation with other circumpolar and neighbouring jurisdictions is important in addressing transboundary concerns related to resource management and the maintenance of environmental quality.
- (11) As far as possible, implementation of this Policy will rely primarily on existing mechanisms and processes or those already under development through land claims or other processes.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to all decisions and actions of the Government of the Northwest Territories related to resource development in the Northwest Territories.

4. Definitions

The following terms apply to this Policy:

Conservation - the wise use of renewable, non-renewable and heritage resources so that long-term benefits can be enjoyed by present and future generations.



Conservation Area - an area of land or water that provides special management measures to maintain outstanding values related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific, and aesthetic resources.

Environment - the components of the Earth, including:

- (a) air, land and water;
- (b) all layers of the atmosphere;
- (c) all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms; and
- (d) the interacting natural systems that include components referred to in (a) to (c).

Environmental Quality - the environment's capability to support the well being of all life forms.

Heritage Resource - the material remains or places of past human use or occupancy. They consist of sites and artifacts of historical, archaeological, ethnological and ongoing cultural or religious significance.

Integrated Resource Management – a coordinated process in which all components and disciplines of resource management (policy development, land and water use planning, environmental assessment and protection, legislative and regulatory mechanisms) are formally linked and complementary. The process is characterized by the sharing of values, information and advice among various interests.

Natural Diversity - the naturally occurring variety of living and non-living elements in the environment.

Natural Resources – naturally occurring components of the environment that can be used for human purposes, consisting of flora and fauna and their habitat, including wildlife, forests and agricultural products and resources that cannot be replaced or renewed following extraction, including all minerals, aggregates and fossil fuels.



Resource Development - those activities including the exploration, construction and operational phases of non-renewable resource extraction, and commercial renewable resource use activities, plus other supporting activities.

Sustainable Development – development of natural resources in a manner that ensures economic, social and cultural needs are met while maintaining ecosystem integrity and biological diversity and without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

5. Authority and Accountability

(1) General

This Policy is issued under the authority of the Executive Council. The authority to make exceptions and approve revisions to this Policy rests with the Executive Council. Authority and accountability is further defined as follows:

(a) Minister

The Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (the Minister) is accountable to the Executive Council for the implementation of this Policy.

(b) Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (the Deputy Minister) is accountable to the Minister and responsible to the Minister for the administration of this Policy.



(2) Specific

(a) Executive Council

The Executive Council is accountable for the application of the principles and guidelines outlined in this policy to all decisions and actions of the government regarding resource development.

(b) Ministers

Ministers involved in programs and initiatives related to resource development shall adhere to the principles and guidelines outlined in this Policy.

(c) Minister

The Minister of Environment and Natural Resources will periodically review this Policy.

6. Provisions

(1) Sustainability Guideline

The Government of the Northwest Territories shall promote conservation and resource development projects, or combinations of projects, which support the achievement of the following:

(a) Ecological

- (i) maintain essential ecological processes;
- (ii) maintain or enhance natural diversity; and
- (iii) maintain harvestable resources at sustainable levels.



(b) Economic

- (i) promote economic self-reliance at the local level;
- (ii) increase employment opportunities for the resident labour force through education, training and job creation;
- (iii) maximize opportunities for local retention and investment of profits; and
- (iv) influence the pace of development to promote long-term benefits from the use of resources.

(c) Social

- (i) maintain or strengthen community values and identity; and
- (ii) build a sense of meaningful participation and responsibility into project development and implementation.

(d) Cultural

- (i) support and maintain traditional activities and relationships; and
- (ii) maintain or enhance heritage resources.

(2) Sustainable Development Objectives

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that sustainable development of resources is essential to the long-term economic security, self-sufficiency and social well being of northern residents. The Government of the Northwest Territories will, therefore, adopt the principles of sustainable development to guide all its decisions and actions related to resource use in the Northwest Territories.



Five main objectives shall provide the focus for pursuing this goal. These objectives shall be implemented through the Government of the Northwest Territories' own programs and through collaboration with other governments and organizations.

(a) Promote Integrated Resource Management

Recognizing that resource development decisions usually involve numerous management objectives and interest groups, the Government of the Northwest Territories shall promote an integrated approach to managing the environment and its resources.

(b) Maintain or Enhance Environmental Quality

Recognizing that the Northwest Territories' economy and cultures are deeply rooted in the environment, the Government of the Northwest Territories shall ensure that environmental quality is maintained or enhanced to support the long-term stability of northern society.

(c) Establish Conservation Areas

Whereas the Government of the Northwest Territories will promote the consistent application of sustainable development principles to all lands and waters within the Northwest Territories, it recognizes the need for conservation areas to protect special values related to wildlife habitat, unique or representative ecosystems, prime forests, productive agricultural soils, and heritage, recreational, tourism, scientific and aesthetic resources.



(d) Develop Natural Resources in Ways
that Contribute to a Sustainable Economy

The Government of the Northwest Territories will promote exploration, development and use of mineral, aggregate and fossil fuel resources in ways that provide lasting social and economic benefits while maintaining ecological processes and natural diversity.

(e) Promote Co-operation in the Management
of Transboundary Resources

The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that bilateral or multilateral co-operation with other circumpolar and neighbouring jurisdictions will greatly help to prevent or abate transboundary environmental or socio-economic impacts.

(3) Implementation


The provisions of this Policy shall be implemented through:

- (a) Collaboration on joint programs or projects and regular consultation with:
- (i) aboriginal organizations;
 - (ii) other governments;
 - (iii) industry and business organizations;
 - (iv) environmental organizations; and
 - (v) the public.
- (b) Periodic reviews of Government of the Northwest Territories programs, policies and legislation to ensure that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development.



7. Prerogative of the Executive Council

Nothing in this Policy shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take action respecting sustainable development outside the provisions of this Policy.



Premier and Chairman of the
Executive Council