

Benefits of OECMs and their recognition

Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) are geographically defined areas that achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes equivalent to those of a protected area, but do not necessarily have conservation as their primary objective. OECM recognition is a means of highlighting the contributions that “atypical” conservation managers make to biodiversity conservation and helping to proliferate these good management practices.

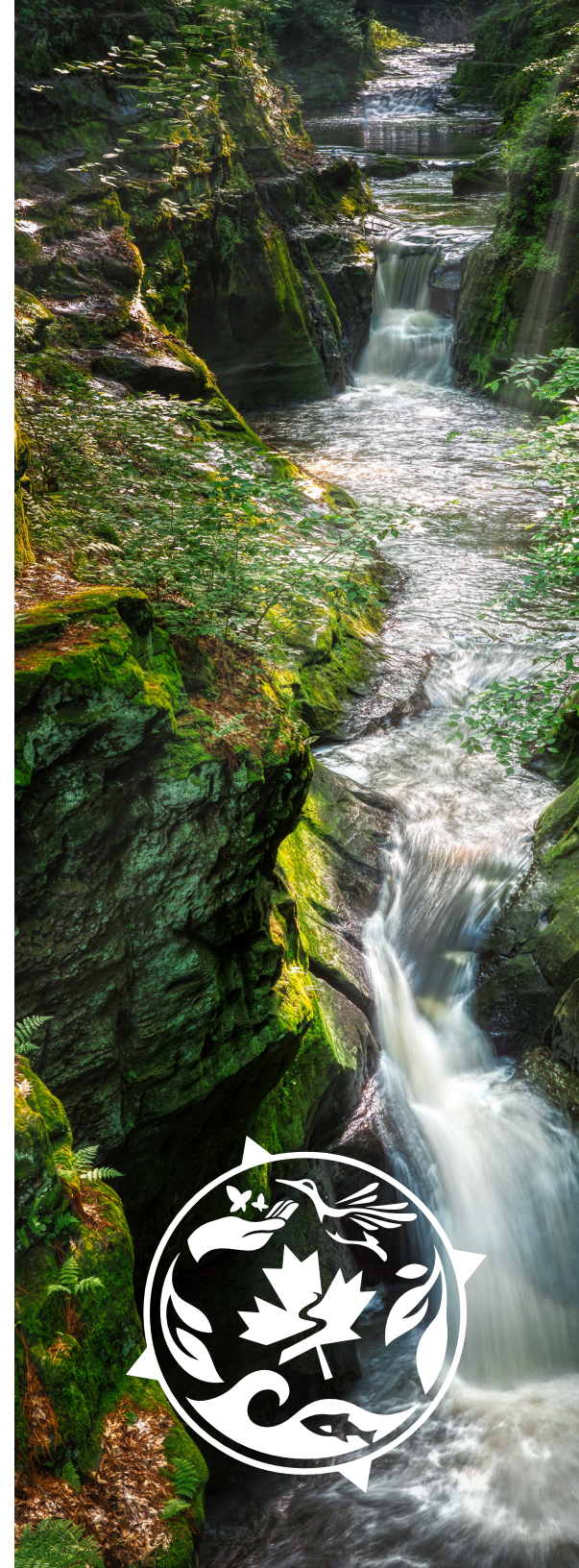
Some of the benefits of this tool include:

CREATING POSITIVE BIODIVERSITY OUTCOMES

- OECM are complimentary to Protected Areas and, by definition, are areas managed in ways that achieve biodiversity benefits equal to those of a protected area. Recognized alongside protected areas, OECM can help to create a network of Canadian protected and conserved areas that will contribute to halting and reversing biodiversity loss in Canada.
- OECM recognition can both increase the amount of area in Canada that is contributing to Canada’s biodiversity conservation, and help us understand the complete network of areas that achieve the conservation of biodiversity. The goal of recognizing OECM is to help create a network of protected and conserved areas that is composed of ecologically representative and well-connected systems integrated within wider landscapes and seascapes. This network should be resilient to climate change, secure ecosystem services, and support the recovery of species at risk.

AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO CONSERVATION

- OECM recognition highlights that good conservation action, or actions that align with good conservation outcomes, can be undertaken by “atypical” conservation land managers – in other words those that don’t have a primary conservation mandate – and this can be done for many different reasons. This means that stewardship and conservation work can be highlighted, emulated and proliferated.
- New and novel partnerships are being created in the discussions about OECM and their recognition by exploring opportunities to highlight and promote good management that is creating positive biodiversity outcomes – regardless of their primary objective. This brings new players into the biodiversity conservation conversation; helping to move conservation from being a ‘government’ discussion to being a Canadian-wide discussion.
- For example, existing OECM in Canada highlight the conservation actions of natural resource departments, law enforcement agencies, the military, forestry companies, ranchers, and non-governmental organisations including cultural or religious organisations.





SHOWCASING GOOD CONSERVATION ACTION

- Through recognizing OECM, the responsible authority (the landowner or land manager) brings to the attention of the world an area that is effectively achieving the conservation of biodiversity. As a result, conservation leadership is promoted, providing an example to others.
- This recognition allows responsible authorities to demonstrate to partners, consumers, customers, investors, and others their leadership in adopting nature-positive management practices recognized domestically and around the world.

SUPPORTING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS CUSTOMIZED TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT

- Canada is vast and varied. As such, the tools that support creating conservation outcomes need to be flexible and adaptable to the realities of different landscapes and partnerships.
- OECM can be customized to the varying Canadian contexts in ways that align with local values, governance and traditional knowledge systems.

IS THERE A DOWNSIDE TO RECOGNIZING AN OECM?

- In short, no. Recognizing an OECM means highlighting practices that are already in place. It means acknowledging that the site is part of a national network of areas that are achieving positive biodiversity outcomes. Recognition does not create any additional encumbrances or constraints. It does not create any new requirements or management regimes for the landowners or land managers. Recognition of an OECM does not give rise to additional regulatory requirements.
- While OECM recognition requires some time and effort to determine if a potential site meets the pan-Canadian definition and criteria for an OECM, Environment and Climate Change Canada is ready to support in this effort should capacity or experience using this pan-Canadian tool be a limiting factor for the landowner or governing authority.
- Should a site be evaluated and not meet the pan-Canadian criteria as an OECM, it is up to the discretion of the landowner or governing authority whether or not to make changes to address any gaps. Should those gaps be addressed, the site can then be reported.

