



## Keeping the “Know” in Nova Scotia: OECMs (Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures)

With the provincial and federal governments relying increasingly on OECMs to meet protected areas commitments, many people are wondering, what exactly *is* an OECM?

Protected areas like nature reserves, wilderness areas, provincial parks and national parks are the cornerstones of modern land conservation. These sites protect critical wildlife habitats and are designated (legally protected) in perpetuity, primarily for biodiversity and nature conservation.

An OECM, on the other hand, is a geographically defined area that is managed for reasons **other** than biodiversity conservation (like watershed protection, historic significance or cultural heritage) but still protects ecologically significant habitat as a secondary benefit.

**To legitimately contribute to provincial and federal protected areas commitments, an OECM must result in effective and long-lasting biodiversity conservation.**

### **What should (and shouldn't) qualify as an OECM**

To actually be effective, OECMs must be protected from development and resource extraction, including subsurface extraction like mining, quarrying and fracking.

It would be misguided and misleading to count any of the following as genuine OECMs:

- Sites that don't contribute to biodiversity conservation
- Sites that don't have long-term or permanent protection
- Sites that allow development or resource extraction



Doing so would be convenient for certain industry sectors like mining, oil and gas, industrial forestry, etc., but it would be fraudulent for the government to simply count lands as protected just because particular industries are restricted or unable to operate there. We must not allow convenience for government or industry to supersede the integrity of conservation standards.

## **What the Nova Scotia government should do**

While there is a genuine role for OECMs to play, it is limited. There is no way that the provincial government can legitimately reach the legislated 20 per cent land protection target on the strength of OECMs.

Instead, the provincial government should:

- 1.** Legally protect the remaining sites from the [2013 Parks and Protected Areas Plan](#)
- 2.** Legally protect ecologically significant, community-proposed protected areas
- 3.** Work in good faith with Mi'kmaq Rightsholders to identify and protect Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas
- 4.** Ensure that all OECMs in Nova Scotia meet national and international standards
- 5.** Be transparent about which areas they're counting as OECMs and explain how these sites meet the stringent requirements necessary to conserve biodiversity

For more information and references, please see the full version of this factsheet at

**[ecologyaction.ca/Keeping-theKnow-in-NS](http://ecologyaction.ca/Keeping-theKnow-in-NS)**

