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FREDERICTON (CNB) --

## **Protected areas committee report released**

Ten sites around New Brunswick are proposed to be set aside as protected areas, according to a report released today by Natural Resources and Energy Minister Jeannot Volpé.

In its report, the New Brunswick Protected Areas Stakeholders' Committee recommends more than 157,000 hectares be set aside as protected areas in New Brunswick. This represents two per cent of the provincial land base, or four per cent of Crown lands.

The stakeholders' committee was created in January to review the Protected Areas Strategy proposed by Dr. Louis LaPierre. In his final report, LaPierre proposed eight protected area sites covering 161,000 hectares.

The committee report recommends that seven of the original eight proposed sites be retained as protected areas and proposes three additional sites: Spednic Lake and Canoose Flowage in western New Brunswick and an area bordering on Kouchibouguac National Park.

"I thank all of the members of the committee for their hard work in delivering such a comprehensive report on protected areas," Volpé said. "The report is currently being reviewed and we expect to make a final decision concerning New Brunswick protected areas before the end of the year."

Protected areas are viewed around the world as key tools to protect biological diversity, act as refuges for wildlife, and to provide society with natural areas free from commercial usage and urban development.

"The primary objective of the stakeholders' committee was to minimize the social and economic impact of Dr Lapierre's original proposals, while maintaining the ecological integrity and an appropriate level of biodiversity in deciding on the final list of protected areas," Volpé said.

The minister also announced that effective today, the moratorium on timber harvesting imposed on the previously-recommended sites will be extended to cover the three new sites. Industrial activities will now be permitted in the areas that were not retained by the committee.

"The committee has addressed concerns of the forest industry and its workers by recommending a limited, short-term harvest on three sites," Volpé said. "This will help mills continue to operate during a limited supply of wood forecasted in the next few years."

The Protected Areas Stakeholders' Committee Report is available on the Natural Resources and Energy Web site at: <http://www.gnb.ca/0078/index.htm>. Copies of the report are also available from the Department of Natural Resources and Energy. Please call 506-453-2614 for more information.