



North Harricana river aquatic reserve

Conservation plan



March 2003

1. Plan and description

1.1 Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The plan of the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve and its location are shown on the maps in Schedules A.1 and A.2.

The proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve is located in the Nord-du-Québec region, between 50°11' and 51°00' latitude north and 79°07' and 79°20' longitude west. It is situated to the south of James Bay, roughly 110 km north-north-west of ville de Matagami.

It lies within the territory of municipalité de Baie-James.

The proposed aquatic reserve covers an area of 250.8 km². Its boundaries coincide roughly with what is visible to an observer from the centre of the river. It comprises a corridor between 1.5 km and 4.5 km wide, taking in the main bed of the Harricana river and the slopes of its valley, from km 125 to km 32 from its mouth, in other words the northern section of the river. The proposed aquatic reserve stops at the Ontario boundary, at roughly 30 km from the river mouth.

1.2. Ecological overview

The area is in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands. It protects part of a river that is characteristic of the natural region of the James Bay Coastal Plain and the natural region of the Turgeon River Plain.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Climate: The proposed aquatic reserve is characterized by a cold subpolar, subhumid continental climate, with a middle growing season. It belongs to the bioclimatic field of mossy spruce stands.

Geology and geomorphology: The land in the proposed aquatic reserve is part of the Superior geologic province, whose bedrock is archaic (> 2.5 billion years). The substratum is formed, in the upstream portion, by felsic rock, with an intrusion of mafic rock, namely basalt. The river then runs over a base of mudrock, and then over carbonate rock (limestone and dolomite). During the various phases of the Quaternary, this geological base was covered by thick deposits of silt and clay. The geomorphological formations are of glacial origin in the upstream portion, and of organic origin in the downstream portion. The surrounding landscape is a plain, sloping slightly to the north. The average altitude is 85 m, varying between sea level and 233 m.

Hydrography: The Harricana river is a Strahler 7 river. Along with the Nottaway, Broadback, Rupert and Eastmain rivers, is one of the main watercourses in the natural province. Its source lies in the Blouin, De

Montigny, Lemoine and Mourier lakes, close to Val-d'Or. It flows northward, crosses the Ontario border and empties into James Bay, with a total length of around 533 km. Its course through the proposed aquatic reserve is relatively straight. Its total navigable length of around 170 km makes the Harricana river the second longest navigable river in Canada.

Vegetation: Over one-third of the area of the proposed aquatic reserve is composed of peat bogs, most of which have developed on clays and silt and sometimes cover a large area in a single sweep, especially in the downstream portion of the river. Trees grow sparsely on another third of the reserve; the stands are mostly softwoods, with occasional mixed stands. Black spruce (*Picea mariana*) predominates, usually growing alongside balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*). Jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) is the dominant species in sectors that have been disturbed by fire, especially on the dry sandy terraces. Around one-third of the forest cover is composed of trees over 90 years old.

1.2.2. Outstanding elements

The proposed aquatic reserve is home to two stations of vascular plants living in palustrine habitats that are likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable because of their limited distribution and the loss of their habitat. They are the Prairie Aster (*Solidago ptarmicoides*) and Richardson's Sedge (*Carex richardsonii*).

1.3. Land occupation and use

The land occupations and uses in the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve are shown on the map in Schedule A.3.

The road network comprises only roads unsuitable for road vehicles.

No rights in land have been granted within the perimeter of the proposed aquatic reserve.

The proposed aquatic reserve is classified as Category III land under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement signed in 1975 and the Act respecting the land regime in the James Bay and New Québec territories (R.S.Q., c. R-13.1). Native and non-Native people are entitled to hunt and fish in the reserve, subject to the legislative and regulatory provisions governing wildlife development, including those implemented under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. Native people have special rights regarding the utilisation of certain aquatic species and certain fur-bearing animals. The entire area is part of the Nottaway beaver reserve, in which the Cree community of Waskaganish has special rights concerning the hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals.

2. Protection status

The proposed aquatic reserve safeguards the main bed of the Harricana river and some of the slopes of its valley. The area includes landscapes of high quality. The watercourse is, in addition, a high-quality habitat for the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*).

Aquatic reserve status would allow the pursuit of the following conservation objectives:

- ✓ the conservation of a representative river in the natural region of the James Bay Coastal Plain;
- ✓ the preservation of biodiversity in aquatic and peat-based ecosystems;
- ✓ the preservation of the landscape visible from the bottom of the Harricana valley;
- ✓ the acquisition of new knowledge concerning natural and cultural heritage.

3. Activities within the reserve

All activities carried on within the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve are governed by the provisions of the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act* (S.Q. 2002, c. 74).

Except for the prohibition mentioned in item 3.1.2, this conservation plan does not specify any prohibited activity other than those prohibited in proposed aquatic reserves by the Act; nor does it authorize any other activities, or set any additional constraints on the activities permitted by the Act.

3.1. Prohibited activities

3.1.1. General prohibitions enacted by law

For reference purposes, it is important to note that under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, the main activities prohibited in an area designated as a proposed aquatic reserve are:

- mining, and gas or petroleum development;
- mining, gas or petroleum exploration, brine and underground reservoir exploration, prospecting, and digging or boring, where such activities necessitate stripping, the digging of trenches, excavation or deforestation;
- forest management activities within the meaning of section 3 of the Forest Act (R.S.Q., c. F-4.1);
- the development of hydraulic resources and any production of energy on a commercial or industrial basis;
- any new allocation of a right to occupy land for vacation resort purposes;

- earthwork, backfilling or construction work.

3.1.2. Additional prohibitions

In the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve any type of activity likely to degrade the bed, banks or shores or to otherwise affect the integrity of any body of water or watercourse in the reserve is also prohibited.

3.2. Activities governed by other Acts

All activities carried on within the boundaries of the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve remain governed by the other applicable legislative and regulatory provisions, including those that require the issue of a permit or authorization or the payment of fees. The carrying on of certain activities may also be prohibited or limited by other Acts or regulations applicable within the boundaries of the proposed aquatic reserve.

In particular, within the boundaries of the proposed aquatic reserve, special legal rules may govern permitted and prohibited activities in connection with:

- **Archaeological research** (especially the measures contained in the *Cultural Property Act* [R.S.Q., c. B-4]);
- **Utilisation of wildlife resources** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife* (R.S.Q., c. C-61.1), the regulation on beaver reserves and the *Act respecting hunting and fishing rights in the James Bay and New Québec territories* [R.S.Q., c. D-13.1]);
- **Access** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* [R.S.Q., c. T-8.1]);
- **Land rights** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* [R.S.Q., c. T-8.1] and in leases issued by the Minister of Natural Resources).

3.3. Supervision of activities

The Minister of the Environment is responsible for the application of the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*; and is also responsible for the proposed aquatic reserves established under that Act. The Minister will supervise and monitor the measures contained in the Act with regard to permitted activities in protected areas.

All other government departments and bodies will retain their responsibilities as set out in all the legislative and regulatory texts that apply within a proposed aquatic reserve.

The Minister of Natural Resources will supervise all activities subject to the Minister's authority within the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve, in particular as regards permitted forms of land occupation.

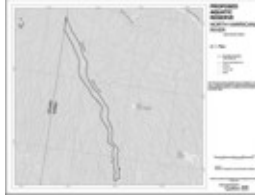
The Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec (FAPAQ) remains responsible for supervising the activities relating to wildlife protection and management that are under its responsibility.

4. Permanent protection status

The permanent protection status envisaged for the reserve is "aquatic reserve" status under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*.

Schedules

A.1. Plan of the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve (provisional name)



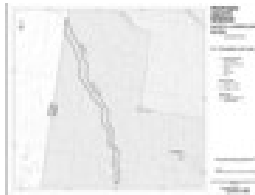
[Click to enlarge](#)

A.2. Map showing the location of the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve (provisional name)



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A.3. Map showing land occupation and use in the proposed North Harricana river aquatic reserve (provisional name)



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