

TECHNICAL SHEET

Consultation of the public on the Saint-Elzéar karst biodiversity reserve and the Bonaventure river estuary aquatic reserve projects**Description of the projects**

The aim of the projects submitted by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs is to create two protected areas in the administrative region of Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, namely the Saint-Elzéar karst biodiversity reserve and the Bonaventure river estuary aquatic reserve. Both are situated in the Appalachians Natural Province.

According to the documentation submitted by this ministry, the proposed Saint-Elzéar karst biodiversity reserve, located some fifteen kilometres north of this municipality, has a surface area of 44.5 km². In addition to the Saint-Elzéar cave, Québec's oldest known cave to date, the proposed reserve comprises all of the known or potential karstic (limestone corrosion) phenomena within the Duval River drainage basin. The project also seeks to protect the biodiversity associated with these phenomena.

For its part, the proposed Bonaventure river estuary aquatic reserve is located on the territory of the Town of Bonaventure and covers 2.4 km². It spans the estuary at the mouth of the river and includes islands that are home to several plant species that are threatened, vulnerable or likely to be so designated. This coastal wetland area is also an important migratory staging area for numerous species of birds and is frequented by various species of fish, including Atlantic salmon.

These two protected areas currently have a temporary protection status in their capacity as proposed biodiversity and aquatic reserves. Under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, the main activities prohibited on these territories are forest management, mining and the development of hydraulic resources. Non-industrial activities such as fishing, hiking and water sports activities would be permitted provided that they do not have a significant impact on the natural environment.

The operational management of these territories would be under the responsibility of the Bas-Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine regional office in charge of analysis and expertise of the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs. Local and regional stakeholders would be invited to take part in the management according to the terms and conditions established by the ministry's regional office.

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