

## COMMUNIQUÉ

**The BAPE is consulting the public on the Lac Opasatica, Lac des Quinze, Forêt Piché-Lemoine and Réservoir Decelles Biodiversity Reserve projects in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region**

**Québec, March 8, 2007** – Claude Béchar, Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, has entrusted the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) with the mandate of holding a public consultation on the *Lac Opasatica, Lac des Quinze, Forêt Piché-Lemoine and Réservoir Decelles Biodiversity Reserve projects in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands*. These territories have been set aside and have been assigned a temporary protection status as proposed biodiversity reserves. This mandate begins today, March 8, 2007. The commission in charge of examining the project and consulting the public will be chaired by Mr. John Haemmerli.

**Documentation made available**

The BAPE is making available effective today, **March 8, 2007**, the documentation pertaining to the protected areas in question, including notably the draft conservation plans of the territories concerned as well as the draft protection and management frameworks for the four biodiversity reserve projects in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands.

This documentation has been put at the disposal of the public at the BAPE office in Québec City, located at 575, rue Saint-Amable, bureau 2.10 and in Montréal, at the Central Library of Université du Québec à Montréal, Pavillon Hubert-Aquin, located at 1255, rue Saint-Denis, local A.M. 100, as well as in the following regional consultation centres:

Municipal library of Rouyn-Noranda, 201, avenue Dallaire;

- Municipal library of Val-d'Or, 600, 7<sup>e</sup> Rue;
- Municipal office of Angliers, 14, rue de la Baie-Miller;
- Municipal office of Rémigny, 1304, chemin de l'Église;
- Council of the Anishnabe Nation of Lac-Simon, 1026, boulevard Cicip, Lac-Simon;
- Anicinapek of Kitcisakik Band Council, C.P. 5206, Val-d'Or;
- Long Point First Nation, 112, Kakinwawigak mikana, Winneway;
- Timiskaming First Nation, 18, avenue Algonquin, Notre-Dame-du-Nord.

The documentation may also be consulted at any time on the BAPE web site at the following address: **[www.bape.gouv.qc](http://www.bape.gouv.qc)** under the heading "*Mandates in progress*".

**Work of the BAPE**

The BAPE will soon be holding a public hearing in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region with the objective of closely associating the public and the partners of the community. The data concerning the holding of the hearing will be announced later.

Once the public consultation has ended and the Commission's report has been drafted, the BAPE will submit its report to the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, who will send the government his recommendation concerning the possibility of conferring on the set aside territories a permanent protection status and the applicable conditions, if any. Finally, it will be up to the Cabinet to rule on the permanent nature of the proposed biodiversity reserves.

**To receive information**

To be informed of the BAPE's activities in the specific case of the four biodiversity reserve projects in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands, you can register by e-mail at the following address: [4reserves-abitibi-temiscamingue@bape.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:4reserves-abitibi-temiscamingue@bape.gouv.qc.ca).

However, if you wish to receive information on each of the protected area projects for which the BAPE will hold a public consultation, you can register at the following address: [aires-protegees@bape.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:aires-protegees@bape.gouv.qc.ca).

In both cases, you can also register by calling 418 643-7447 or, toll-free, 1 800 463-4732.

Persons wishing to obtain more information can contact Rosemary Al-Hayek, communications advisor, by calling the aforementioned telephone numbers or by e-mail at the following address: 4reserves-abitibi-temiscamingue@bape.gouv.qc.ca.

- 30 -

SOURCE: Rosemary Al-Hayek  
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418 643-7447, extension 425  
Toll-free: 1 800 463-4732

## TECHNICAL SHEET

### Description of the projects

The aim of the projects presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) is to create four biodiversity reserves in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, namely those of Lac Opasatica, Lac des Quinze, Forêt Piché-Lemoine and Réservoir Decelles. The main conservation objectives sought by the Department are the protection of representative environments of the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands, the safeguarding of the biodiversity of ecosystems, as well as the acquisition of additional knowledge on the natural and cultural heritage.

The proposed Lac Opasatica Biodiversity Reserve runs partly alongside the border with Ontario . It is located approximately 25 kilometres south-west of Downtown Rouyn-Noranda. Its territory covers an area of 245 km<sup>2</sup> and includes, among other things, two old-growth forests having the status of exceptional forest ecosystem. In both cases, the forest is a balsam fir-white birch-Eastern white cedar forest . The sector targeted by the Department would also make it possible to protect eight sites of interest from a cultural or archaeological standpoint. Most of these sites are located on the shores of Lac Opasatica which has played an important role in aboriginal history.

The proposed Lac des Quinze Biodiversity Reserve is located about 35 km north-east of Ville-Marie and covers an approximate area of 159 km<sup>2</sup>. This territory is home to a few mature stands of tolerant hardwoods, in particular sugar maple-yellow birch stands. Such stands are rare in this natural province . In addition, the territory has a very great archaeological potential related to the aboriginal occupation.

The proposed Forêt Piché-Lemoine Biodiversity Reserve is located less than ten kilometres south-west of Downtown Val-d'Or and covers an area of close to 95 km<sup>2</sup>. The protection of this territory would make it possible to preserve old-growth stands of yellow birch at the northern limit of their distribution area. This peri-urban forest is of great social interest owing to its recreational vocation .

The proposed Réservoir Decelles Biodiversity Reserve is located approximately 25 kilometres south-west of Val-d'Or and covers an approximate area of 81 km<sup>2</sup>. This territory comprises the domains of the balsam fir-yellow birch forest and balsam fir-white birch forest. The conservation of this territory would consolidate the protection of the dunes of the Harricana moraine.

Under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, the main activities prohibited on these territories are forest management, mining and the development of hydraulic resources. Existing uses and rights such as hunting, fishing, vacationing and aboriginal traditional activities are maintained.

The MDDEP would like stakeholders from the community to participate in the conservation and development activities associated with these territories. Moreover, local stakeholders could contribute to the planning of these activities, which will have to be compatible with the biodiversity objectives identified in the conservation plans and comply with the regulations in effect.