



NCC - Government of Canada

Natural Areas Conservation Program

2017-2018 Annual Progress Report

April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018

**NCC – Government of Canada
Natural Areas Conservation Program**

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NCC - Government of Canada Natural Areas Conservation Program 2017-2018 Annual Progress Report

Introduction

The previous Natural Areas Conservation Program (the “Previous Program¹”) was a \$245M federally funded program formalized between The Nature Conservancy of Canada (“NCC”) and the Government of Canada, commencing April 1, 2007 to May 31, 2015. Under the Previous Program, NCC and partners (including Ducks Unlimited Canada and Other Qualified Organizations) were successful in securing 393,224 hectares, of which 299,099 hectares provided habitat for 173 COSEWIC-assessed species at risk and 291,470 hectares provided habitat for 143 SARA listed species at risk.

The Natural Areas Conservation Program (the “Program”) was formalized once more through the signing of an additional Federal Funding Agreement (the “Agreement”) for \$100M between NCC and the Government of Canada on February 20, 2015 for the period covering September 11, 2014 through to March 31, 2019. As per Section 7(b)(iii) of the Agreement, NCC is pleased to present the 2017-2018 Annual Progress Report, reporting accomplishments achieved under the Program during the period of April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

The aim of this public-private partnership between NCC and the Government of Canada is to secure over 130,000 hectares of ecologically sensitive lands, implement Property Management Plan Actions on an estimated 120,000 hectares of lands secured under the Program and Previous Program, monitor the compliance of Conservation Agreements on an estimated 100,000 hectares of lands secured under the Program and Previous Program, and provide for capacity development within the land trust community to enable future involvement in securing and stewarding conservation lands.

Through the ongoing efforts of NCC and its various Canadian partner organizations [including Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and Other Qualified Organizations (OQOs)]²; this unique program continues to successfully leverage the federal government’s significant financial investment by delivering cost-effective, focused and successful conservation results.

In the 2017-2018 period, NCC and its partners (DUC and OQOs) expensed a total of \$22.5M in Program funds³. Approximately \$21.3M of the \$22.5M in Program funds was used to acquire 16,222 hectares of ecologically sensitive land, implement stewardship activities⁴ on 208,975 hectares of land, and achieve communication activities; the remaining \$1.2M in Program funds was utilized for the purposes of Program Coordination and Capacity Development.

¹ “Previous Program” is defined throughout this report as the Agreement executed in 2007 and the Amended Agreement executed in 2013 between NCC and the Government of Canada.

² The term “OQO”, which is referenced throughout this report, is not inclusive of DUC.

³ “Program funds” refers specifically, and is limited to, the financial investment of monies from the Government of Canada under the Natural Areas Conservation Program.

⁴ The term “stewardship activities” refers to Property Management Plan Actions (or Management Plan activities) that occurs on fee simple lands, and Conservation Agreement compliance monitoring that occurs on Conservation Agreement lands.

The details of this Annual Progress Report are divided into two main sections, each consisting of several sub-sections to address the various reporting elements required under the Agreement. The detailed information for all the content in this report can be found in the accompanying appendices.

Section A: The Natural Areas Conservation Program - Financial Statements: This section reports on the investment and management of the Natural Areas Conservation Program funds.

Section B: The Natural Areas Conservation Program - Program Deliverables: This section highlights conservation achievements and results against the deliverables and purposes set out in the Agreement.

SECTION A - The Natural Areas Conservation Program – Financial Statements

As required under Section 7(b)(iii) of the Agreement, the following presents the financial results of the Program.

1. The Financial Statements of the Natural Areas Conservation Program.

NCC's auditors, Ernst & Young LLP (E&Y), have submitted their financial report, which reports expenses incurred by both NCC and OQOs in the 2017-2018 period, and also cumulatively (September 11, 2014 - March 31, 2018). DUC's auditors (E&Y) have also submitted a financial report for the 2017-2018 period. These reports are attached as Appendix 1A and 1B.

1.1 The Financial Statements of the Program for the 2017-2018 Period.

In the 2017-2018 period, as seen on page 5 of Appendix 1A, total expenditures incurred under the Program amounted to \$22.5M in Program funds (\$19,643,432 incurred by NCC, \$1,514,730 incurred by DUC, and \$1,341,838 incurred by OQOs). An amount of \$20.25M in Program funds was advanced from the Government of Canada to NCC after the 2017-2018 Work Plan was submitted and approved. As per the Agreement⁵, the outstanding \$2.25M will be issued to NCC upon receipt and acceptance by the Government of Canada of this Annual Progress Report, which is accounted for on page 6 (Note 3) of Appendix 1A.

1.2 The Financial Statements of the Program from September 11, 2014 to March 31, 2018.

NCC, DUC, and OQO projects are extensively documented and rigorously assessed to ensure all projects meet the requirements of the Program before contributions of Program funds are approved and disbursed. Once NCC projects are approved, Program funds are accounted for by NCC regions as deferred funds, and are then expensed as the project proceeds; however, Program funds are not drawn and disbursed until NCC has confirmed that the project will close. Any unused Program funds are allocated to other eligible projects. In the case of OQO projects, project applications are reviewed by an OQO Project Review Committee, and successful organizations are required to submit appropriate documentation to NCC prior to the release of Program funds. DUC projects are submitted to NCC for pre-approval by way of a Conservation Project Summary (CPS) to ensure that all DUC projects meet the requirements of the Program prior to the disbursement of Program funds at the end of the period. Both OQO and DUC fee simple projects are required to have landholding agreements registered on title in NCC's name to protect the conservation values of the project in perpetuity.

⁵ Section 6(c): During each Fiscal Period, EC shall withhold a minimum of 10% of EC's funding allocated to that Fiscal Period. EC shall issue the final payment upon receipt and acceptance by EC of the reports as required in Section 7 [Funding Agreement – Pg. 10].

From inception of the Program (September 11, 2014) to March 31, 2018, a total of \$77.5M in Program funds has been expensed under the Program by NCC, DUC and OQOs, of which approximately \$73.4M has been expensed on direct Program delivery and almost \$4.1M on Program Coordination (as recorded on page 5 of Appendix 1A).

2. Statement of Expenditures for Program Coordination in the 2017-2018 Period.

In accordance with Section 5(c)(vii) of the Agreement, NCC is permitted to charge up to \$5M under the Program to support Program Coordination. NCC may charge up to 1.5% of this \$5M (\$75K) to develop capacity to better situate NCC to secure and steward land in the future, specifically to complete a self-assessment against the *Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices* (CLT S&Ps).

Table 1 below summarizes the amount of Program Coordination expensed with Program funds by NCC, DUC and OQOs in the 2017-2018 period (as seen on page 5 of Appendix 1A). OQOs are not awarded Program funds for the purposes of Program Coordination.

Table 1: Summary of Program Coordination for the 2017-2018 Period.

Organization	Program Coordination
NCC	\$1,125,000 ⁶
DUC	\$72,130
OQO	<i>Not Applicable</i>
Total:	\$1,197,130

3. Consolidated Direct Program Expenditures in the 2017-2018 Period.

Conservation work under the Program continues to be conducted for NCC within NCC Priority Natural Areas (PNAs); for DUC within North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) Priority Areas; and for OQOs within PNAs, NAWMP Priority Areas, or other Conservation Planning Frameworks. Table 2 summarizes direct Program delivery expenses by Organization. Additionally, Appendix 2A, 2B and 2C record the amount of Program funds expensed under direct Land Securement Activities and Stewardship Implementation Actions, listed by PNA for NCC, NAWMP Priority Area for DUC, or by region for OQOs. A breakdown of total Program expenditures (including both matching funds and Program funds) by expense category is recorded in Appendix 5.

⁶ As per section 5(c)(vii) of the Agreement, NCC's Program Coordination includes both Program Coordination costs and also Capacity Development costs. In the 2017-2018 period, \$17,240 of the \$1,107,760 was used to expense NCC's Capacity Development costs incurred under the Program.

Table 2: Summary of Total Direct Program Expenditures by Organization Financed with Program funds in the 2017-2018 Period⁷.

Org.	Purchase Price of Land or Interest in Land ⁸	Securement Acquisition and Support Costs	Stewardship Implementation Activity Costs	Communication Activity Costs	Capacity Development Costs	Total (\$)
NCC	\$12,444,982	\$1,547,695 ⁹	\$3,861,871	\$663,884	\$-- ¹⁰	\$18,518,432
DUC	\$1,303,316	\$95,316	\$16,368	<i>Not Applicable</i>	\$27,600	\$1,442,600
OQO	\$1,195,648	\$102,193	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	\$43,997	\$1,341,838
Total:	\$14,943,946	\$1,745,204	\$3,878,239	\$663,884	\$71,597	\$21,302,870

4. Matching Contributions

Under the Program, NCC is expected to match the \$100M of federal investment on a 2:1 basis with non-federal contributions. This commitment is managed within NCC at the overall Program level (rather than at the individual project or organizational level), and is achieved by way of contributions from other levels of government and other conservation organizations, as well as through private-sector donations from foundations, corporations and individuals.

NCC is pleased to report that in the 2017-2018 period, NCC and its partners (OQOs and DUC) have matched the \$22.5M in Program funds with approximately \$58.6M in contributions to the Program from other sources (\$44.4M from NCC, and approximately \$10.4M from OQOs and \$3.8M from DUC), resulting in a match ratio of 2.60:1. This match ratio is higher than the 2:1 match ratio anticipated in the 2017-2018 Work Plan. Of this \$58.6M in matching contributions, NCC, DUC, and OQOs were successful in raising approximately \$7.9M in endowment capital from their donors across the country to finance stewardship endowment requirements for properties acquired under the Program. Landowners continue to be a significant source of matching contributions through donations of land, conservation agreements, and development rights. Matching contributions come from various sources, with approximately 33% coming from donations of land, conservation agreements, and development rights. The total match ratio incurred from September 11, 2014 to March 31, 2018 is 2.52:1. NCC and partner organizations will continue to raise and contribute matching funds in order to meet the overall 2:1 match requirement by the end of the Program. See Appendix 5 for a complete breakdown of total expenditures under the Program by expenditure category in the 2017-2018 period.

⁷ All figures within this report have been rounded.

⁸ The term 'land' refers to fee simple land, conservation agreements, and/or development rights.

⁹ Also includes expenses related to the development and renewal of landscape level conservation plans, other planning approaches, and also interest expenses on borrowed funds.

¹⁰ NCC incurred \$17,240 in Capacity Development expenses in the 2017-2018 period; however, Capacity Development expenses are not considered Direct Program expenditures as per the Agreement, but are instead considered Program Coordination.

SECTION B - The Natural Areas Conservation Program – Program Deliverables

This section of the report provides a summary of the Program results achieved by NCC and its partner organizations (DUC and OQOs) in the 2017-2018 period. In addition to conservation accomplishments, communication aspects of the Program and its accomplishments are also profiled herein as these media opportunities continue to be an important means by which the results of the Program are made known to the public.

5. Priority Natural Areas (PNAs)

Since inception of the Program, conservation work has been focused within a select group of PNAs identified by NCC across the country.

A current list of NCC's 95 approved PNAs and DUC's 74 approved NAWMP Priority Areas is contained in Appendix 3A, and are also mapped in Appendix 3B¹¹ and 3C respectively. There are 6 new PNAs (Beaufort Sea, Tallurutiup Imanga, Center of Quebec, Lower St. John River, Thaidene Nënë, and Scott Islands) added to the list since the last list of PNAs was last updated and approved in the 2018-2019 Work Plan. OQOs continue to work within NCC's PNAs, DUC's NAWMP Priority Areas, or OQO-adopted Conservation Planning Frameworks.

6. Conservation Activities

6.1 Landscape Level Conservation Planning Results (i.e. Natural Area Conservation Plans and other planning approaches)

As per section 5(c)(i) of the Agreement, NCC is permitted to expense up to 2.5% (approximately \$1.55M) in Program funds to complete landscape level conservation plans (i.e. Natural Area Conservation Plans and other planning approaches). In the 2017-2018 work Plan, NCC anticipated the renewal of 15 landscape-level conservation plans and the creation of 5 new landscape-level conservation plans. In the 2017-2018 period, NCC expensed \$478,347 in Program funds to complete the renewal of 14 existing landscape-level conservation plans¹² and 2 new landscape-level conservation plans. The renewal of 2 landscape-level conservation plans (Rainy Lake to Lake of the Woods and Gatineau Valley) and 3 new plans (Mingan Archipelago, Clayoquot Sound, and Prairie Pastures) that were originally anticipated in the 2017-

¹¹ Boundaries for NCC PNAs portrayed in Appendix 3B (map) as subject to change as a result of the development and renewal of landscape level conservation plans.

¹² There were 15 NCC PNAs that were planned for renewal for the 2017-2018 period; however, two of these NCC PNAs (Rainy Lake to Lake of the Woods and Gatineau Valley) were not completed. The Moose Mountain NCC PNA, which was not originally listed in the 2017-2018 work plan, was completed in the 2017-2018 period. Therefore, in total, 14 NCC PNAs were renewed in 2017-2018 period.

2018 work plan were delayed, and will instead be completed in the 2018-2019 period¹³.

As of March 31, 2018, 86¹⁴ of the 95 approved PNAs have corresponding landscape level conservation plans; the nine¹⁵ remaining PNAs will have corresponding landscape level conservation plans developed in the 2018-2019 period.

6.2 Land Securement Activity Results within PNAs, NAWMP Priority Areas and/or Conservation Planning Frameworks

Within NCC, each proposed securement project is extensively reviewed in a Conservation Project Summary (CPS) to ensure that all NCC projects meet the requirements of the Program. Once approved, this initial property securement plan is further refined as the project moves forward to closing. This approval process provides clear and consistent decision making and ensures corporate accountability once a commitment has been made to a landowner.

In the 2017-2018 period, NCC secured 10,859 hectares of land within 37 PNAs, (13,249 hectares less than originally anticipated in the 2017-2018 Work Plan), due, in part, to a 15,000 ha. project in Alberta that was acquired in the 2018-2019 period (Birch River Wildland Park¹⁶). Of NCC's total hectares secured during the 2017-2018 period, 3,180 hectares were also Ecological Gifts under Environment and Climate Change Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. For further details regarding land securement activity results in the 2017-2018 period, see Appendix 4A.

DUC was also successful in securing 3,285 hectares of land within 12 NAWMP Priority Areas in the 2017-2018 period (728 hectares less than what was originally anticipated in DUC's 2017-2018 Work Plan due, in part, to several project delays and the unsuccessful acquisition of the St. Luke's project (485 ha.). None of the hectares acquired by DUC in the 2017-2018 period were Ecological Gifts under Environment and Climate Change Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. For further details regarding DUC's land securement activity results in the 2017-2018 period, see Appendix 4B.

Ten properties were secured by eligible organizations under the third round of the OQO Program (launched in December 2016), which resulted in the securement and protection of 2,078 hectares of ecologically sensitive land in the 2017-2018 period. Of

¹³ Prairie Pastures is a conservation plan which spans both Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and commenced in 2017 will be completed by October 2018 (spanning two fiscal years under the Program). In the 2017-2018 period, \$289,505 in Program funds was expended to partially complete the plan. It's estimated that another \$276,000 will be expended in the 2018-2019 period to complete the plan.

¹⁴ Please note that the 2016-2017 Annual Progress Report contained an error with regards to the number of approved PNAs that had corresponding landscape level conservation plans. The 2016-2017 Annual Progress Report originally reported that 85 PNAs had corresponding landscape level conservation plans, when in the fact the number of PNAs with corresponding landscape level conservation plans was 84 in the 2016-2017 period.

¹⁵ The following eight landscape level conservation plans will be developed in the 2018-2019 period: Mingan Archipelago (QC), Clayoquot Sound (BC), Prairie Pastures (MB/SK), Beaufort Sea (North), Scott Islands (BC), Center of Quebec (QC), Lower St. John River (NB), Thaidene Nënë (North) and Tallurutiup Imanga (North).

¹⁶ The Birch River Wildland Park was originally thought to be much smaller in scale (15,000 ha.) when the 2017-2018 Work Plan was drafted. This project was acquired instead in the 2018-2019 period, at a much larger scale (88,922 ha.)

OQO's total hectares, 1,556 hectares were also Ecological Gifts under Environment and Climate Change Canada's Ecological Gift Program¹⁷. For further details regarding OQO's land securement activity results in the 2017-2018 period, see Appendix 4C.

Table 3 below provides a breakdown of hectares secured by both acquisition type and transaction type in the 2017-2018 period by all three organizations (NCC, DUC, and OQOs).

¹⁷ This total (1,556) will increase by 93 hectares in the 2018-2019 period, as one OQO project acquired in the 2017-2018 period is still waiting for official Ecogift certification.

Table 3: Summary of Land Securement Activity by Acquisition Type in the 2017-2018 Period.

Org.	Fee Simple Ha.		Conservation Agreement Ha.		Other Development Rights Ha.		Total Ha. ¹⁸	Transactions
	P	D	P	D	P	D		
NCC	7,846	849	774	1,390	0	0	10,859	62
DUC	503	61	2,721	0	0	0	3,285	30
OQO	528	191	380	978	0	0	2,078	10
TOTAL	8,877	1,101	3,875	2,368	0	0	16,222	102

P = Purchase; D = Donation

6.3 Stewardship Implementation Actions (SIAs) by PNAs and NAWMP Priority Areas in the 2017-2018 Period.

An aim of the Program (Section 3(b) of the Agreement) is to implement Property Management Plan (PMP) actions on an estimated 120,000 hectares of fee simple land secured under the Program or Previous Program by NCC. NCC is pleased to report that in the 2017-2018 period, PMP actions were implemented on 150,728 hectares of fee simple land owned by NCC across 62 PNAs (33,328 more hectares than anticipated in the 2017-2018 Work Plan). DUC implemented Management Plan activities on more than 2,108 hectares of land (within 2 NAWMP Priority Areas) secured under the Program or Previous Program on fee simple land owned by DUC (1,508 more hectares than originally anticipated in the 2017-2018 Work Plan). Under Section 5(c)(iv) of the Agreement, OQOs are not awarded funds under the Program for the purposes of implementing stewardship actions. For further details regarding the implementation of PMP actions and Management Plan activities by NCC and DUC in the 2017-2018 period, please see Appendix 4A and 4B respectively.

An additional aim under Section 3(b) of the Agreement is to complete, by the end of the Program, Conservation Agreement Compliance Monitoring on an estimated 100,000 hectares of land secured under the Program and Previous Program. In the 2017-2018 period, NCC successfully carried out Conservation Agreement Compliance Monitoring on more than 56,139 hectares of land (within 36 PNAs) secured by NCC under the Program and Previous Program (which is 5,236 hectares more than was originally anticipated in the 2017-2018 Work Plan). DUC did not use any Program Funds in the 2017-2018 period to complete Conservation Agreement Compliance Monitoring, although DUC had originally anticipated completing Conservation Agreement Compliance Monitoring on 300 hectares in the 2017-2018 Work Plan. Under Section 5(c)(iv) of the Agreement, OQOs are not awarded Program funds to complete Compliance Monitoring on Conservation Agreement properties. Please see Appendix 4A and 4B for more information regarding Conservation Agreement Compliance Monitoring completed in the 2017-2018 period.

¹⁸ The sum of each Org.'s hectares recorded in the appendices may not equal the exact amount of hectares recorded under Table 3 due to rounding. Please see Appendix 4A, 4B, and 4C for further details.

6.4 Species at Risk¹⁹

As part of the implementation of Property Management Plans and general stewardship of NCC's protected lands, species identified to be at risk using various measurements remain an extremely important metric tracked by NCC and are reported under the Program. NCC first confirms species at risk that are known to exist on NCC properties. Identification and confirmation of species at risk occur prior to acquisition, during the Baseline Inventory, and through ongoing monitoring of properties. NCC reviews reports from each region of the country based on calendar-dated information in order to identify species at risk with confidence. With regards to NCC properties secured only in the 2017-2018 period, 23 COSEWIC-assessed species at risk were observed on 2,641 hectares of land; and 22 SARA listed (schedule 1) species at risk were observed on 2,641 hectares of land²⁰. For NCC properties secured under the Program and Previous Program as of March 31, 2018, a total of 210 different COSEWIC-assessed species at risk were identified on 318,841 hectares of land. Additionally, for NCC properties secured under the Program and Previous Program as of March 31, 2018, a total of 179 different SARA listed species at risk were identified on 317,636 hectares of land secured by NCC²¹. Although species at risk observations that occur on Program and Previous Program properties are tracked and reported on a cumulative basis (since 2007 through to March 31, 2018), the list of COSEWIC-assessed and SARA (schedule 1) listed species is updated annually, and changes to these lists can result in an increase/decrease of species and hectares reported under the Program each year.

DUC focuses on securement, restoration, and management activities on wetland and upland habitats, which provide important breeding, foraging, resting, brood rearing and migratory/stopover locations for many species including at-risk and vulnerable species. DUC assesses the number of COSEWIC-assessed and SARA listed species (restricted to birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles) that potentially occur on DUC secured, restored and managed lands based on the best available species range maps based on data from Birdlife International for birds and NatureServe for other species. DUC does not conduct property specific surveys of COSEWIC- assessed and SARA listed species.

As per the terms of the funding agreement, OQOs do not report species at risk information for properties acquired under the OQO Program.

¹⁹ "Species at Risk" includes only species listed under SARA (schedule 1) or COSEWIC-assessed as Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern on properties acquired under the Program or Previous Program.

²⁰ Species at risk observed on properties secured in the 2017-2018 fiscal year does not necessarily contribute to an increase in the overall total number of different species at risk observed on NCC properties, in part because the different species at risk observed on a property secured in 2017-2018 may have already been observed on properties secured previously under the Program or Previous Program (and, therefore, have already been accounted for in the total number of species at risk observed).

²¹ It is possible that the hectares of land for which SARA-listed species at risk had been observed are also accounted for in the hectares of land for which COSEWIC-assessed species at risk have been observed. However, hectares and the number of species at risk can fluctuate (increase and decrease) year over year, particularly if a species' SARA-listed status or COSEWIC-assessed status has changed.

7. Communications Activities

In the 2017-2018 period, NCC was able to undertake communications and promotional activities at a more energetic pace, which allowed NCC to deliver more communication activities than projected in the work plan. In the 2017-2018 work plan, NCC anticipated the completion of 60 communication activities and DUC anticipated the completion of 10 communication activities. Communication activities for OQOs were not anticipated in the work plan. In the 2017-2018 period, NCC successfully completed 181 communications activities (such as installing property-based recognition signage, holding formal/informal events, and promoting the Program through social media, etc.) and DUC was successful in completing 21 similar communication activities. OQOs completed 14 communication activities in the 2017-2018 period, which included a successful event attended by a Member of Parliament in relation to a Quebec OQO project. In total, the Program was successful in producing more than 210 communication activities in the 2017-2018 period. Further details pertaining to NCC, DUC and OQO communication activities are shown in Appendix 6.

Media exposure for the Program was exceptional throughout the year. Proactive media relations yielded almost 1,200 media “hits”, which represents approximately 22% of all of NCC’s media exposure.

7.1 Communications with Government Stakeholders.

To support its government stakeholders, NCC’s activities have focused on informing Members of Parliament (MPs) of conserved properties in their ridings and building awareness of the Natural Areas Conservation Program among Parliamentarians.

Notification letters were sent to 49 Members of Parliament (MPs) informing them of newly conserved properties in their ridings. Over the course of the 2017-2018 period, NCC received correspondence from two MPs (or their staff), inquiring about conserved properties in their ridings. These inquiries were responded to promptly and in all cases additional materials and information were sent. Often an NCC staff member was able to engage directly with the MP’s constituency office.

As required under Appendix E - Section 6.3 of the Agreement, a full-colour Impact Report, outlining the Program’s cumulative results and regional stories since April 1, 2007 - March 31, 2017, was prepared and produced in fall 2017. It was distributed to all Parliamentarians and many Program stakeholders. The Impact Report is available online ([What We Do: Natural Areas Conservation Program](#)). The next Impact Report (1 April 1, 2007 - 31 March 2018) is in production and will be ready for distribution in the fall of 2018.

7.2 Project Announcements.

Twenty-six NCC projects were announced during the 2017-2018 period, which are included in the number of communication activities recorded in Appendix 6. Local Members of Parliament (including 1 Cabinet Minister) participated in-person in project announcements. Quotes from the Minister of Environment and Climate

Change and local MPs were included in all news releases (English and French), relating to property announcements.

These announcements provided an opportunity for significant media outreach and public awareness building of the Natural Areas Conservation Program.

7.3 General NACP Awareness.

Aside from project announcements, NCC has generated exposure by placing stories that promote the cumulative impact of the Program on our corporate website, in donor-focused publications, and in traditional and social media. In particular, NCC is very active in the social media space and has ensured virtual word-of-mouth recognition of the Program. NCC has nearly 111,600 followers on Facebook and nearly 40,000 on its two Twitter accounts.

NCC's corporate website (English and French), which includes a large section dedicated to the Program, incorporates the Environment and Climate Change Canada logo on both the home page and program-specific pages. Environment and Climate Change Canada is also recognized in the Partners section of the website. The OQO program has a separate subsection of the NACP chapter on NCC's corporate website.

NCC produced and placed a two-page full-colour editorial supplement in *The Globe and Mail* on November 20, 2017, designed to generate awareness of the Program. An editorial in the supplement cites the importance of the Natural Areas Conservation Program. The Program was also promoted via advertisements in *The Hill-Times* on December 4, 2017 and again on January 29, 2018, which are also reflected in the communication activities recorded in Appendix 6. NCC also took the opportunity to mention the Program in eight, issue-specific op-eds distributed to major newspapers throughout the 2017-2018 period.

NCC contracted an independent evaluation firm to evaluate the effectiveness of the NACP from 2012-2017. The evaluator found that the program is managed efficiently and effectively, and provides value for money, and is directly aligned with Government of Canada priorities. The report was shared with NACP stakeholders and is available in both official languages on NCC's corporate website <http://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/conservation-program/>.

NCC coordinated a request from the International Land Conservation Network (ILCN) for the Environment and Climate Change Canada Minister to provide a recorded video greeting at the ILCN 2018 Global Congress in Santiago, Chile, which was attended by 160 people representing 24 countries. In her recorded greeting, the Minister highlighted the importance of conservation and how Canada is conserving habitat through partnerships like the NACP.

NCC continues to promote the Program in general to the public through media relations, as well as in NCC's own donor-focused publications. The Program and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change were featured in NCC's Magazine, Fall 2017, with a distribution to more than 35,000 supporters. The Program has also been

profiled in other NCC internal and external publications, including NCC's *Annual Report* (print and online).

NCC hosted a speakers' series in 10 major cities across Canada. Each event featured local, conservation-focus speakers who presented their unique perspectives on the importance of conservation. The NACP was mentioned at each event and peripheral materials referencing the NACP were made available at each event.

8. Capacity Development

8.1 NCC's Capacity Development Project ("Assess Your Organization")

NCC is permitted to expense up to a maximum of 1.5% (\$75,000) of its \$5M Program Coordination allocation (as per Section 5(c)(vii) of the Agreement) to complete an assessment of NCC's standards and practices against the Canadian Land Trusts Standards and Practices (CLT S&Ps), determine areas of improvement, and take necessary action to increase compliance with the CLT S&Ps.

Similar to the 2016-2017 period, NCC is making improvements to procedures, policies, standards and guidelines in order to ensure NCC is in full compliance with the CLT S&Ps by March 31, 2019. The majority of the changes underway involve improving internal tracking mechanisms and standardization of existing processes, and to a lesser extent, updating selected policy documents. A few examples of areas that need improvement include clarifying criteria for engagement in public issues beyond land conservation, adapting NCC's appraisal policy to better reflect changes in legislation, and further documenting Conservation Agreement drafting guidance.

In the 2017-2018 period alone, \$17,240 in Program Funds was expensed to make improvements to NCC stewardship policies, in particular, NCC's annual property inspection procedure. The total amount of Program Funds spent on NCC's assessment against the CLT S&Ps increased to \$74,976 (the remaining \$24 will be used instead in 2018-19 for Program Coordination, as is permitted under the Agreement). Although there are no further funds available under the Agreement to for this project, NCC will continue to implement the organization-wide work plan with matching funds to achieve full compliance with the CLT S&Ps by March 31, 2019.

8.2 DUC's Capacity Development Project

DUC is also permitted under the Program to expense up to a maximum of 1.5% (\$75,000) of its \$5M allocation on developing capacity and adhering to the CLT S&Ps. In the 2017-2018 period, DUC expensed \$27,600 in Program Funds to increase compliance with Standard 6 (Financial and Asset Management) – Practice E (Internal System for Handling Money) of the CLT S&Ps.

A document was produced in the 2016-17 period by DUC's Finance & Risk Committee, which identified the need to enhance their financial record keeping practices in order to fully achieve compliance with Standard 6 of the CLT S&Ps. The need for increased functionality and improved accountability led DUC to launch its Business System Transformation (BST) project. To build on this initiative, in the 2017-2018 period, DUC staff had utilized \$27,600 in Program Funds to make improvements to Practice E (Internal System for Handling Money) by developing policies, procedures and training modules with regards to handling cash receipts and tracking account receivable activities.

8.3 OQO Capacity Development Funding Program

OQOs are also permitted to expense up to 2.5% (\$125,000) of the \$5M OQO allocation under the Program to increase compliance with the CLT S&Ps. In the 2017-2018 period, NCC launched the second round of the OQO Capacity Development Funding Program, which continued to provide financial assistance to eligible organizations that made improvements to a subset of practices selected from the CLT S&Ps. Eligible organizations were permitted to choose any number of practices (minimum of one to maximum of 15) to improve from a sub-set of 15 practices listed below:

1. Practice 4A - Dealing with Conflicts of Interest
2. Practice 3F - Board Approval of Land Transactions
3. Practice 9J - Purchasing Land
4. Practice 9H - Title Investigation and Subordination
5. Practice 9G - Record Keeping
6. Practice 9E - Conservation Agreement Drafting
7. Practice 8B - Project Selection and Criteria
8. Practice 12D - Monitoring Land Trust Properties
9. Practice 12C - Land Management
10. Practice 12A - Funding Land Stewardship
11. Practice 11I - Conservation Agreement Amendments
12. Practice 11E - Enforcement of Conservation Agreements
13. Practice 11C - Conservation Agreement Monitoring
14. Practice 11B - Baseline Documentation Report
15. Practice 11A - Funding Conservation Agreement Stewardship

Overall, the OQO Capacity Development Funding Program generated much attention and was overall well-received by the land trust community. NCC continues to receive inquiries from conservation organizations as to whether or not more funding will be available in the future to fund this type of activity. In the 2017-2018 Work Plan, NCC anticipated the disbursement of the remaining \$50,769 of the \$75,000 to successful recipients. The results of the program were once again successful. In the 2017-2018 period, 10 application forms were received and \$43,997 in Program funds were disbursed to 10 organizations. Any remaining funds of the \$75,000 will be utilized in the 2018-2019 period. Table 4 outlines (by province) the number of organizations that

were successful in completing practices in the 2017-2018 period under the second round of OQO Capacity Development Funding Program, the amount of funds disbursed, and the number of practices completed in total.

Table 4: Number of successful eligible organizations (by province) under the OQO Capacity Development Funding Program (2017-2018).

Province	Number of successful Organizations	Amount of Program Funds disbursed	Number of practices completed
BC	1	\$3,600	2
ON	4	\$17,359	10
QC	4	\$18,038	11
NB	1	\$5,000	2
TOTAL:	10	\$43,997	25

9. Conclusion

In reviewing the conservation results achieved by NCC and its partners (DUC and OQOs) under the auspices of this unique public-private partnership program, it is clear that much has been achieved as of the fourth year of the Program. Between September 11, 2014 and March 31, 2018, over 53,000 hectares of land have been protected by NCC and partner organizations (DUC and OQOs) through land securement activities and these lands are being managed for their best conservation outcomes. Property Management Plan actions and Management Plan activities have been implemented on more than 165,000²² hectares secured by both NCC and DUC under the Program and Previous Program in order to restore property and mitigate threats to biodiversity. Additionally, compliance monitoring has been completed by NCC and DUC on more than 179,000²³ hectares of Conservation Easement properties secured under the Program and Previous Program, to monitor restrictions and conservation purposes.

NCC also continues to make every effort to ensure the Program is recognized publicly for the on-the-ground results that have been achieved. The Program will continue to focus on securement activities within PNAs, NAWMP Priority Areas, and Conservation Planning Frameworks, already identified as critically important to the conservation of Canada's biodiversity, through to the end of the Program (March 31, 2019). The leveraging of significant private investments, in addition to the use of public monies, to directly acquire and steward some of Canada's most ecologically important and at-risk land, has proven to be a valuable tool for conservation.

²² 165,000 hectares represents the number of hectares on which both NCC and DUC implemented PMP Actions and DUC Management Activities. Ongoing stewardship actions and management activities may occur on the same hectares year over year. The number of hectares for which PMP Actions and Management Activities are implemented may fluctuate each year as NCC and DUC continue to complete surveys and update the size (ha.) of properties.

²³ 179,000 hectares represents the number of hectares monitored cumulatively year-over-year between Sept 11, 2014 and April 1, 2018.