

Gouvernement du Québec

O.C. 297-2009, 25 March 2009

Natural Heritage Conservation Act
(R.S.Q., c. C-61.01)

Authorization to assign the status of proposed ecological reserve to a portion of Mont Gosford and approval of the plan of that area and its conservation plan

WHEREAS, under the first paragraph of section 27 of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act (R.S.Q., c. C-61.01), for the purpose of protecting land to be established as a new protected area, the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks may, with the approval of the Government, prepare the plan of that area, establish a conservation plan and assign temporary protection status to the area as a proposed aquatic reserve, biodiversity reserve, ecological reserve or man-made landscape;

WHEREAS the upper portion of Mont Gosford is the habitat of two types of forest mixtures considered rare in Estrie and a portion of the habitat of certain wildlife species likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable;

WHEREAS it is expedient to authorize the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks to assign the status of proposed ecological reserve to the upper portion of Mont Gosford;

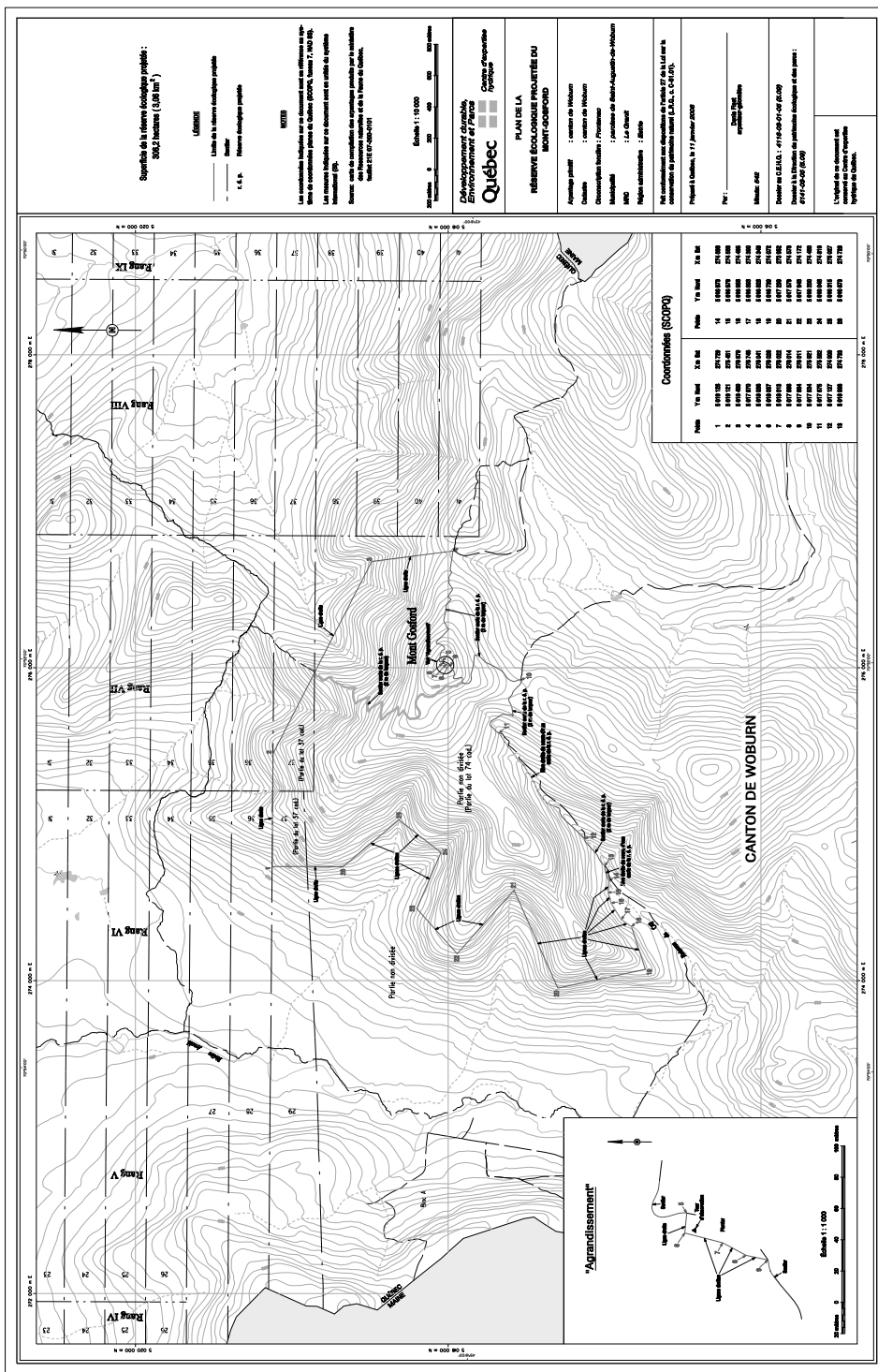
WHEREAS it is expedient to approve the conservation plan for the proposed ecological reserve and the plan attached to it;

IT IS ORDERED, therefore, on the recommendation of the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks:

THAT the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks be authorized to assign the status of proposed ecological reserve to the upper portion of Mont Gosford;

THAT the conservation plan for the proposed ecological reserve and the plan attached to it, which are attached to this Order in Council, be approved.

GÉRARD BIBEAU,
Clerk of the Conseil exécutif



QUÉBEC STRATEGY FOR PROTECTED AREAS



Réserve écologique projetée du Mont-Gosford

Conservation plan



February 2008

1. Plan and description

1.1. Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The boundaries of the Réserve écologique projetée du Mont-Gosford and its location are shown on the map in the Schedule.

The territory of the proposed ecological reserve is located in Municipalité de Saint-Augustin-de-Woburn, in Municipalité régionale de comté Le Granit. With an area of some 306 hectares, the reserve mainly covers the north and west slopes of the Mont-Gosford massif. The boundaries of the proposed ecological reserve extend from the peak of Mont Gosford, culminating at about 1,183 metres, to an approximate altitude of 720 metres.

1.2. Ecological overview

The Réserve écologique projetée du Mont-Gosford is part of the White Mountains natural region in the Appalachians natural province, as described in the Cadre écologique de référence du Québec. Once permanent status is granted, the reserve will make it possible to consolidate the representation of forest ecosystems typical of the border mountains in Estrie within the Québec network of ecological reserves and the protection of forest stands that are rare in Québec and Estrie.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Bioclimate

The territory covered by the proposal belongs to the bioclimatic field of sugar maple – yellow birch stands.

Geology

The Mont-Gosford massif has a particular geology, different from that of the rest of Estrie. It is part of the Chain Lake massif and is formed of Proterozoic (between 950 and 1,500 million years) meta-sedimentary rocks (metasandstone, metagreywacke). It lies along the continuation of the New Hampshire White Mountains.

Archaeology

The territory of the proposed ecological reserve does not include inventoried archaeological sites. A potential for the discovery of archaeological sites has nonetheless been recognized in respect of several territories near the protected area.

Vegetation

The territory is characterized by the presence of balsam fir and common wood sorrel stands and balsam fir and red spruce stands, two types of forest mixtures considered rare for that area.

Only peaks of more than 950 metres are colonized by balsam fir and common wood sorrel stands. The tree stratum is composed almost exclusively of balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) with the occasional presence of white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and red spruce (*Picea rubens*). At the herbaceous level, common wood sorrel (*Oxalis montana*) dominates by forming a continuous mat. The most abundant herbaceous species are *Dryopteris austriaca* var. *carthusiana*, Northern starflower (*Trientalis borealis*), large-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago macrophylla* var. *thyrsoides*), yellow clintonia (*Clintonia borealis*) and goldthread (*Coptis trifolia*).

Balsam fir and red spruce stands occupy the upper slopes of the massif and colonize the steep gradients (50% or more). They constitute a characteristic grouping of high-altitude balsam fir stands in the U.S. Appalachians. The limited flora complex of those stands is composed of balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), red spruce (*Picea rubens*) and white birch (*Betula papyrifera*) for the tree stratum. No shrub species covers more than 5% of the area. *Dryopteris austriaca* var. *carthusiana*, common wood sorrel (*Oxalis montana*), yellow clintonia (*Clintonia borealis*) and Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) are the main species of the poorly developed herb layer.

Situated lower on the slope, balsam fir – white birch stands and white birch – balsam fir stands are also notable for that region and considered rare in Estrie.

1.2.2. Outstanding elements

In addition to containing the rare forests described above, the proposed ecological reserve constitutes one of the rare nesting areas inventoried in southern Québec for certain Arctic-alpine birds such as the spruce grouse (*Dendragapus canadensis*), fox sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*) and blackpoll warbler (*Dendroica striata*).

Bicknell's thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*), the Canada lynx (*Felis lynx*) and the bobcat (*Felis rufus*), 3 wildlife species likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable, are found in the territory of Mont Gosford.

1.3. Occupation and land uses

The territory is public property. It overlaps part of the territory of the Louise-Gosford Controlled Zone (Zec) and a portion of a trapping ground (51A). The boundaries of the Zec and trapping ground must therefore be modified to allow for the creation of the ecological reserve. A hiking trail 2 m wide crosses the territory of the proposed ecological reserve, but is excluded from the reserve.

2. Protection status

The aim of the Réserve écologique projetée du Mont-Gosford is to protect two types of exceptional forest ecosystems and part of the habitat of certain wildlife species likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable.

3. Activities framework

The activities carried on within the Réserve écologique projetée du Mont-Gosford are governed by the Natural Heritage Conservation Act.

This conservation plan does not specify any prohibited activity other than those prohibited in proposed ecological 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

— General prohibitions under the Act

It is important to note that under the Natural Heritage Conservation Act, the main activities prohibited in an area designated as a proposed ecological reserve are

- mining, and gas or petroleum development;
- forest management 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;
- mining, gas and petroleum exploration, brine and underground reservoir exploration, prospecting, and digging or boring where those activities necessitate stripping, the digging of trenches, excavation or deforestation;
- any new allocation of a right to occupy land for vacation resort purposes; and

- earthwork or construction work.

3.2. Activities governed by other statutes

Activities likely to be carried on within the Réserve écologique projetée du Mont-Gosford are also governed by other applicable legislative and regulatory provisions, including those that require the issue of a permit or authorization or the payment of fees. Certain activities may also be prohibited or limited by other Acts or regulations that are applicable within the proposed ecological reserve.

A special legal framework may govern permitted activities within the proposed ecological reserve in connection with the following matters:

- Archaeological research: measures set out in particular in the Cultural Property Act (R.S.Q., c. B-4);
- Environmental protection: measures set out in particular in the Environment Quality Act (R.S.Q., c. Q-2) and its regulations;
- Threatened or vulnerable plant species: measures prohibiting the removal of the species under the Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species (R.S.Q., c. E-12.01);
- Development and conservation of wildlife resources: measures set out in the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife (R.S.Q., c. C-61.1) and its regulations;

— Access and land rights related to the domain of the State: measures set out in the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State (R.S.Q., c. T-8.1) and the Watercourses Act (R.S.Q., c. R-13);

— Operation of vehicles: measures set out in particular in the Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State (R.S.Q., c. T-8.1) and in the regulation on motor vehicle traffic in certain fragile environments made under the Environment Quality Act (R.S.Q., c. Q-2).

3.3. Supervision of activities

The Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks is responsible for the application of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act and is therefore responsible for proposed ecological reserves and those established under that Act and has authority over these lands, which form part of the domain of the State. The Minister supervises and monitors the measures contained in the

Act with regard to activities permitted in protected areas. In the management of the reserve, the Minister works collaboratively with other government partners, such as the Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife, who have specific responsibilities with respect to the reserve or adjoining lands. In the exercise of their powers, the ministers will take into consideration the protection sought for these natural environments and the protection status that has been granted. No additional conservation measure is envisaged at this stage. As for zoning, its application does not seem appropriate in a protected area for which integral protection is intended.

4. Permanent protection status

The permanent protection status envisaged for the reserve is that of “ecological reserve” under the Natural Heritage Conservation Act. The activities permitted or prohibited during the period following the granting of permanent status by the Government are those provided for in section 48 of the Act.

SCHEDULE
MAP OF THE RÉSERVE ÉCOLOGIQUE PROJÉTÉE DU MONT-GOSFORD

