

# PROVINCIAL, TERRITORIAL AND MUNICIPAL POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Federal, Indigenous, provincial, territorial and local (municipal and regional) governments are responsible for different components of coastal blue carbon ecosystems. This complex and fragmented multi-jurisdictional and inter-departmental policy landscape impedes a holistic approach to blue carbon conservation. Integration and collaboration among jurisdictions and Indigenous Nations and communities are necessary for the effective protection, restoration and management of blue carbon ecosystems in Canada.

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**Fragmented planning at provincial, territorial and municipal levels leaves blue carbon ecosystems vulnerable to degradation.**

## PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS

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Generally, blue carbon is not explicitly recognized in the laws and policies of Canada's provinces and territories and so it remains an under-developed aspect of provincial and territorial climate change mitigation strategies. Nevertheless, there are many provincial and territorial laws that may provide indirect protection (e.g., B.C.'s Wildlife Act) or could be enhanced (e.g., wetland policy) to safeguard blue carbon ecosystems more explicitly and effectively. In addition to a legislative gap, coordinated approaches among governments and departments are rare. For example, in Atlantic Canada, while each of the four provinces has a unique approach to stewarding protected areas, only Nova Scotia has attempted to coordinate protection, restoration and management plans for existing and potential regions that include blue carbon ecosystems.

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

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Municipal governments can influence and regulate the protection, restoration and management of blue carbon systems. Local governments can use land-use, infrastructure, climate action and environmental planning processes to reduce the threats to blue carbon ecosystems, ensure long-term stewardship and, in some cases, provide resourcing and incentives for habitat creation. Local governments in British Columbia have started to incorporate some of these tactics into their long-term strategies and planning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- ✓ Explore treaty and Indigenous rights frameworks as a mechanism to protect blue carbon ecosystems and develop partnerships to facilitate government-to-government agreements for sustainable blue carbon management and development of natural climate solutions.
- ✓ In collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities, increase support for blue carbon research and revise applicable legislation and policy to consider the climate change mitigation and adaptation implications of blue carbon ecosystem disruption, alteration and/or destruction.
- ✓ In collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities, enhance existing policies and legislation to more explicitly integrate blue carbon ecosystems and ensure their long-term protection.



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