



INDICATOR: BIODIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Engage People

TARGET: 5. By 2020, all relevant policies and programs integrate biodiversity values.

THEME: Conservation Response – Programs and Policy

Background Information:

Conserving biodiversity and using natural resources sustainably are fundamental to the health and well-being of all Ontarians, yet despite this knowledge, biodiversity losses continue (OBC 2010). While no single group can deliver the scale of change required to conserve Ontario's biodiversity, governments, Aboriginal People, businesses, conservation groups, and others can develop policies and programs that work towards conserving biodiversity and protecting the long-term sustainability of our natural resources.

Governments are in a unique position to create the policy conditions that can lead to long-lasting solutions to safeguard biodiversity. Ontario's policy framework currently includes a broad range of policies and programs that are directly or potentially relevant to the conservation of biodiversity. Provincial policies and programs guide the protection, stewardship and use of the natural environment; safeguard the air, water and soil; and provide guidance for the production and use of natural resources including energy, and the mitigation of climate change. They also offer direction for land use planning and transportation systems, which are of critical importance to the conservation of biodiversity (OMNR 2012). Building on this framework will, no doubt, result in progress towards halting the loss of Ontario's biodiversity.

This indicator presents results from a 2014 survey of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) Biodiversity Network. It provides an assessment of the number Ontario government programs and policies that integrate, or have the potential to integrate, biodiversity values. This survey provides baseline data that will be updated to assess trends. A companion indicator provides an assessment of [ecosystem services policies and programs](#).

Data Analysis:

Data for this indicator were collected through a survey of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) Biodiversity Network commissioned by the Ontario Biodiversity Council. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the number of Ontario government programs and policies that integrate, or have the potential to integrate, biodiversity values. The OPS Biodiversity Network provides a diverse, cross-Ministry forum for the OPS to strategically plan and implement biodiversity-related activities, policies, processes and projects across the Province. Fourteen ministries are currently represented on the OPS Biodiversity Network: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry; Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Environment and Climate Change; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Health and Long-term Care; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; Ministry of Transportation; and the Treasury Board Secretariat.



To help respondents identify programs or policies that integrate biodiversity values a screening tool was provided (Figure 1). Respondents were asked to limit their responses to strategic level policies (i.e., direct the ministry or government as a whole over an extended period; state overall intent, and provide guidance for subsequent policy and program development. This includes legislation and regulations) or program level policies (i.e., address a specific program area; support the direction established in legislation, strategic policies and other government direction), with the understanding that operational policies and other program guidance follow from these policies. Respondents were also asked to identify opportunities to include biodiversity values in new policies or programs, or updates to existing policies or programs.

Because biodiversity initiatives touch on the mandates of several ministries, they often require an integrated and collaborative approach. Where more than one ministry had a role in the implementation of a policy or program, the policy or program was assigned to the lead ministry. Responses were received from 13 OPS ministries, including one ministry that did not identify any programs or policies that included biodiversity values (Figure 2).



Is biodiversity conservation part of the main goals/objectives/purposes of the policy or program? Conservation of biodiversity includes the protection of genes, species and habitats/ecosystems, as well as ensuring their sustainable use.

If biodiversity conservation is not part of the main goals/objective/purpose of the policy or program, do they include provisions to ensure that biodiversity is not negatively impacted?

Does the effect of the policy or program help to reduce the loss of biodiversity? This may include reducing or mitigating against the main threats to biodiversity including habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, population growth, unsustainable use of biological assets and climate change.

Does the effect of the policy or program help mitigate against the loss of biodiversity by building ecosystem resilience (i.e., the capacity of an ecosystem to adapt to changes and disturbances and still retain its basic functions and structures)?

Does the effect of the policy or program promote the sustainable use of biological assets (i.e., genetic resources, organisms or parts thereof, populations, or any other biotic component of ecosystems with actual or potential use or value for humans)?

Does the policy or program promote awareness and/or understanding of biodiversity?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions include the policy or program as one that integrates biodiversity values.

Figure 1. Screening tool to aid respondents in the identification of programs and policies that integrate biodiversity values.

Results:

Trend: Baseline

Data Confidence: Medium

Geographic Extent: Provincial

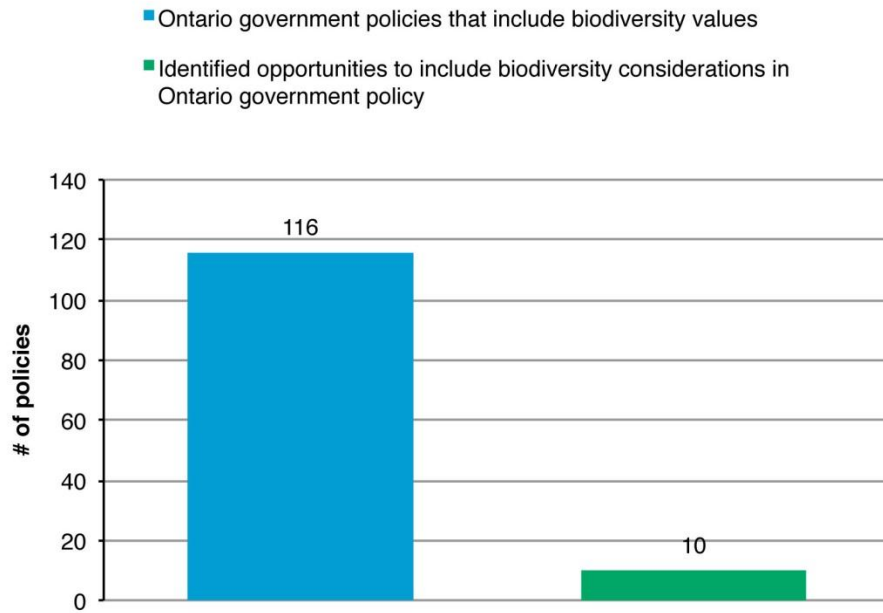


Figure 2. Number of Ontario government policies and programs that include biodiversity values, as well as Ontario government policies and programs that could include biodiversity considerations.

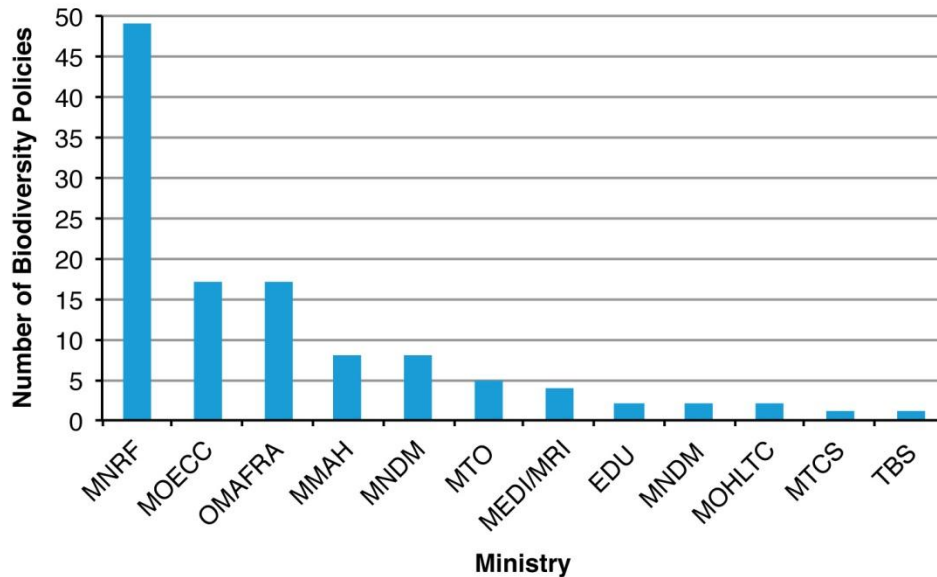


Figure 3. Number of Ontario government policies and programs that include biodiversity values or consideration of ecosystem services by Ministry.

Status:

- In 2014, the OPS Biodiversity Network identified 116 Ontario government policies or programs that integrate biodiversity values. Recently developed policies or programs that integrate biodiversity values include Biodiversity: It's in Our Nature. Ontario Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity,



2012-2020; Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014; Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy; the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 and Achieving Balance: Ontario's Long Term Energy Plan.

- In 2014, the OPS Biodiversity Network identified 10 opportunities to include biodiversity considerations in new policies or programs or updates to existing ones. Examples include integrating biodiversity in the coordinated review of the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as well in the recently proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.
- Overall, the largest number of policies or programs that integrate biodiversity values are administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (49), followed by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (17) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (17). These differences can be attributed to the specific mandates of each ministry, in which some have a larger responsibility for the conservation of biodiversity.

Links:

Related Targets: 14. By 2020, programs and policies are in place to maintain and enhance ecosystem services.

Related Themes: N/A

Web Links:

Biodiversity: It's in Our Nature. Ontario Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity, 2012-2020
<http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/c8f28fef#/c8f28fef/1>

References:

Ontario Biodiversity Council (OBC). 2010. State of Ontario's biodiversity 2010. A Report of the Ontario Biodiversity Council. Peterborough, Ontario.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). 2012. Biodiversity: it's in our nature. Ontario government plan to conserve biodiversity, 2012-2020. Queen's Printer for Ontario. Toronto, ON.

Citation

Ontario Biodiversity Council. 2015. State of Ontario's Biodiversity [web application]. Ontario Biodiversity Council, Peterborough, Ontario. [Available at: <http://ontariobiodiversitycouncil.ca/sobr> (Date Accessed: May 19, 2015)].