



# Establishment of the Wiinipaakw Indigenous Protected Area and National Marine Conservation Area

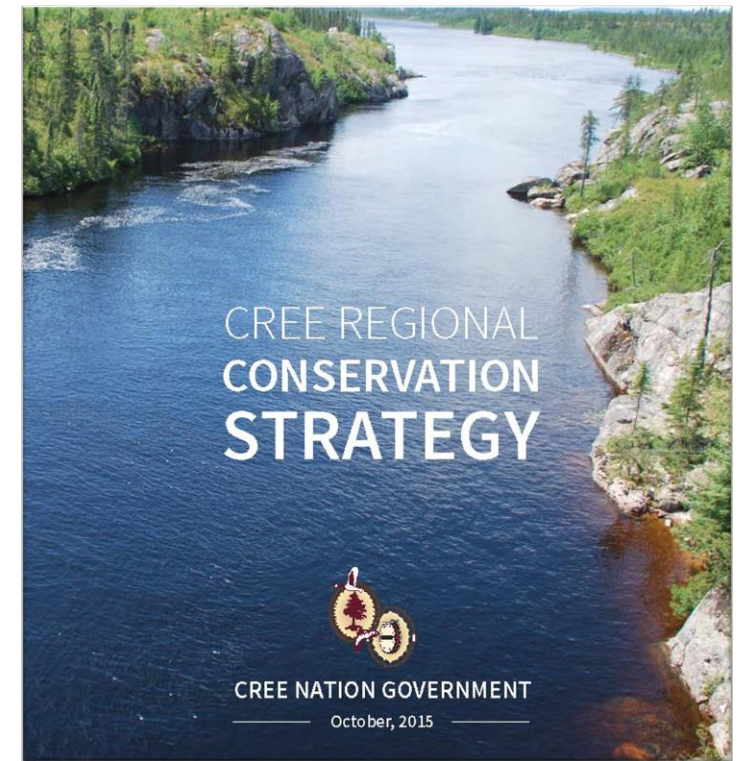
Cree Nation Government

August 2024



# Protected Areas: From Land to Sea

- The *Cree Regional Conservation Strategy* - developed by the Cree Nation in 2014 - set the stage for Cree driven, regional scale protected area planning in Eeyou Istchee
- A large network of protected areas has since been established across Eeyou Istchee. The CNG will continue to work with the Cree First Nations, the Government of Québec, and others to further build and improve this network
- Protected area planning in the offshore or Wiinipaakw part of Eeyou Istchee began with the Wemindji-McGill Protected Area Project in the 2000s, which led to the first discussions of a potential National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA)
- A collaboration between the Cree Nation and Parks Canada is now underway to establish an NMCA in the Eeyou Marine Region (EMR) or Wiinipaakw



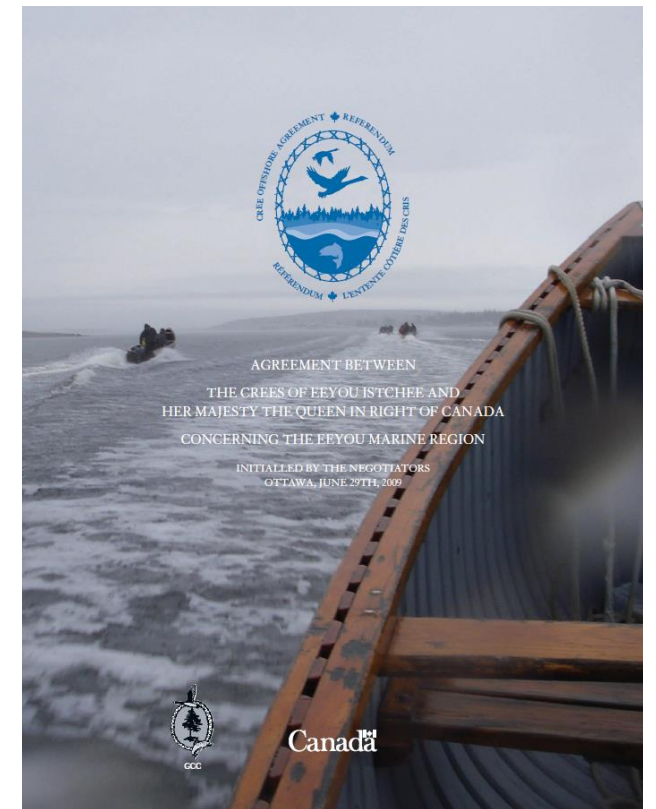
# National Marine Conservation Area – Key features

- A NMCA is a marine protected area that is managed to **protect and conserve marine ecosystems**, and to ensure the sustainable use of marine resources
- Activities such as **ocean dumping, undersea mining, and oil and gas exploration and development** are **prohibited**
- **Commercial fisheries and shipping are permitted**, but they are managed with conservation of the ecosystem as the main goal
- In NMCAs, **Indigenous rights are respected**, and **traditional activities continue**. They are designed to provide **lasting benefits** for Indigenous peoples



# NMCA Feasibility Assessment Process

- The *Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement (EMRLCA)* includes provisions for establishing and managing protected areas in the Eeyou Marine Region (EMR), including National Marine Conservation Areas (NMCAs)
- In 2019, the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Government of Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for an assessment of the feasibility of establishing an NMCA in the EMR.



# NMCA Feasibility Assessment Process

- Over 2023 and 2024, **engagement and consultation with Cree communities**, partners and stakeholders took place. Information sessions, open houses and focus groups were held in winter and spring of 2024 in the coastal Cree communities. The overall **response to the project was very positive**.
- The Cree-Canada Steering Committee has completed the feasibility assessment process and has prepared the final report. The report recommends the establishment of the **Wiinipaakw Indigenous Protected Area and National Marine Conservation Area (or Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA)**



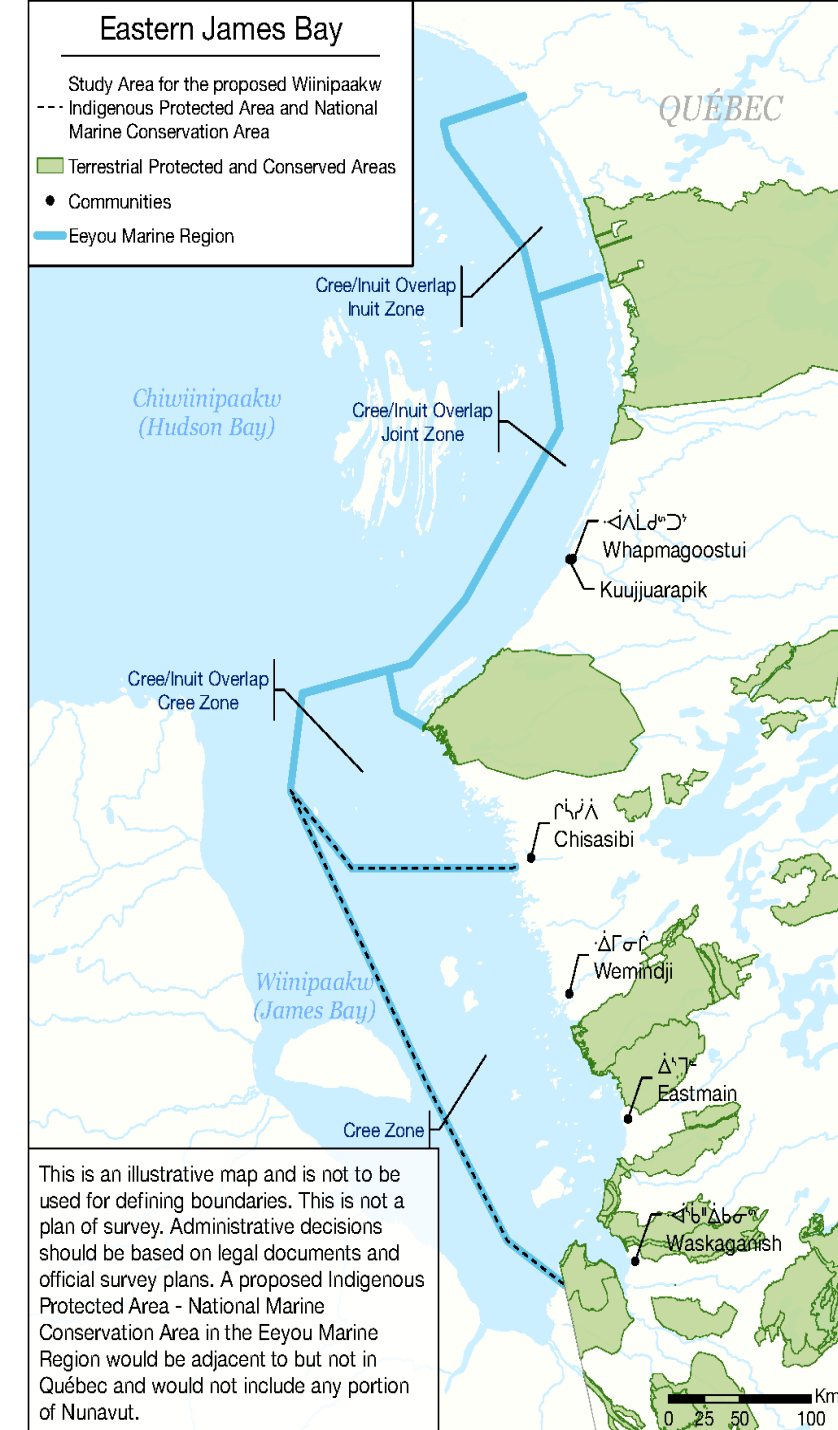
# Feasibility Assessment Report: Key Recommendations

- The Steering Committee considers that the **establishment** of the Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA is **feasible and desirable**
- The Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA should have **no negative impacts on Cree rights**, benefits, privileges and guarantees under the JBNQA and the EMRLCA, including:
  - Cree ownership of Cree Lands;
  - Cree harvesting rights; and
  - Cree participation in co-management regimes already established under the EMRLCA
- The Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA will be **legally established** under the **EMRLCA** and the **Canada NMCA Act**



# Key Recommendations (cont'd)

- The **boundary** of the Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA would follow the EMR boundary (south of the mouth of Chisasibi – Big River). It would include approximately **27,000 Km<sup>2</sup> of offshore waters and Crown Lands**. Cree owned lands (islands) would not be included
- The Crees and Canada wish to explore the possibility of **extending the Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA north** of the mouth of the Chisasibi – Big River in collaboration with the Nunavik Inuit (Makivvik), in a second phase of the project
- In parallel to the Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA Establishment Process, The Crees, Canada and Québec will **continue discussions on the protection of coastal waters** outside of the EMR, in Québec

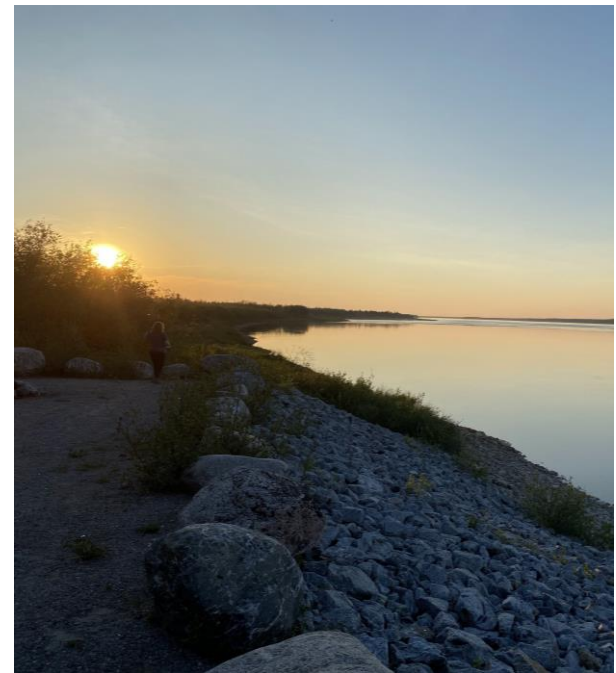


# Key Recommendations (cont'd)

- A joint **Cree-Canada Management Board** would govern and manage the Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA:
  - Operating within a Cree-led agreed-upon framework; and
  - Equal representation from the Crees and Canada.
- Governance of the NMCA should respect special **Cree-Canada Nation to Nation and Treaty relationship**, as well as the spirit and intent of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**.
- Canada to ensure that federal **funding** is adequate to support the **establishment and long-term operation** and management of the Wiinipaakw IPA-NMCA.







# Next Steps

- **CNG Board/Council accepted** and endorsed the findings of the **Feasibility Assessment Report** in July 2024
- The **next step** after feasibility assessment is the **negotiation of an Establishment Agreement**. The Crees and Canada have drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to guide these negotiations
- CNG and Canada wish to **begin the negotiations in fall 2024**

## *Parks Canada's steps for NMCA Establishment*

1. Identify representative marine areas

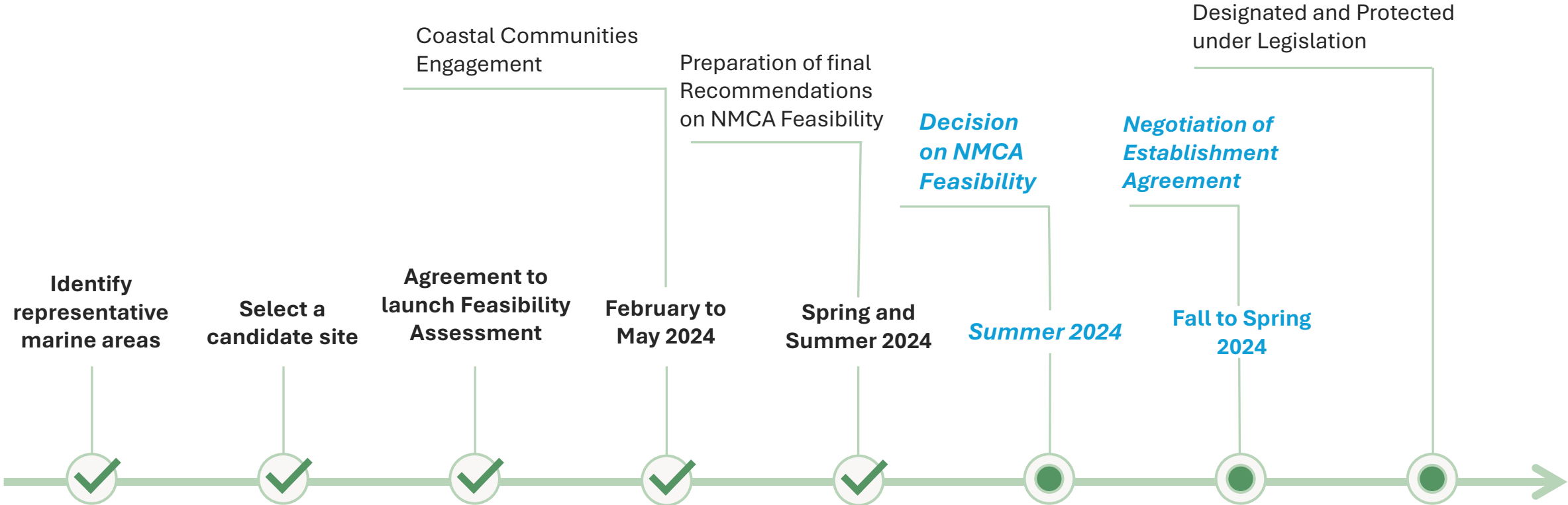
2. Select a candidate NMCA

3. Assess feasibility of an NMCA

4. Negotiate establishment agreements

5. Designate and protect NMCA in legislation

# Timeline for Establishment





*For more info:*

**Christopher Beck**

**Coordinator of Marine Conservation**

**Cree Nation Government**

**[christopher.beck@cngov.ca](mailto:christopher.beck@cngov.ca)**

**514-919-5484 [www.eeyouconservation.ca](http://www.eeyouconservation.ca)**