

Practical guide

How to involve external stakeholders in a protected area project



First Nations of Quebec and Labrador
Sustainable Development Institute

Introduction

This guide, designed for First Nations, is intended to provide communities and organizations with the tools they need to carry out their own **consultation processes with external stakeholders** concerned by the territory covered by their protected areas project.

It's important to note that other approaches can be considered, but the suggested steps and principles here will help you plan and progress through your process.

The approaches presented here refer only to the consultation of other stakeholders in the territory concerned, thus excluding members of the First Nation(s) carrying the protected area project. They would benefit from a separate community mobilization approach, although it could include some of the steps presented here.¹



What is a consultation process with external stakeholders?

Consultation is a process aimed at establishing a dialogue, then fostering collaboration between the various actors (or stakeholders) in a given territory, in this case, within the framework of a protected area project. Stakeholders may include representatives of the economic sector (such as industry), municipal authorities, the tourism industry, managers of wildlife areas (ZECs, wildlife reserves, outfitters, etc.), as well as civil society.

The creation of a protected area requires a structure to coordinate the project and to make decisions. For the project to succeed, it is essential to begin consultation right from the start. This process brings together the different points of view of the stakeholders involved, takes into account the various interests at stake and responds to the issues raised. Through consultation, common solutions and strategies can be developed, while ensuring the active participation of all stakeholders.

[1] We invite you to consult the [Community Mobilization Kit](#) from the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) for further details.

Planning a consultation made easy: 4 essential steps

We have explored various approaches to stakeholder consultation, particularly for protected area projects, and have identified key steps common to each approach.

1. **Identify the external actors**
2. **Analyze levels of influence, interest and impact**
3. **Interacting with external actors**
4. **Keep people informed**

Step 1. Identify the external actors

The actors concerned in your project are directly involved in some way (legal, relational, contractual, etc.). Their collaboration can be essential to the success of your project.

To identify the key external stakeholders in the project, here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- Who are the external stakeholders present within the boundaries of the protected area project?
- Could this project have an impact on their business?
- Can these stakeholders influence project implementation (for example, with regard to boundaries/areas, management regimes, or project feasibility)?
- Can they approve or reject the project?

Here is a non-exhaustive list of potential stakeholders:

- Regional County Municipality (RCM)
- Municipalities
- Neighbouring First Nations (overlap or proximity to project)
- Natural resource companies (mining, forestry, etc.)
- Departments (e.g. MELCCFP (existing protected areas), MRNF (tinder unit))
- *Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (SÉPAQ)*
- Structured wildlife territories: Outfitters, ZECs, wildlife reserves, etc.
- Tourist associations or organizations (e.g. rafting, snowmobile club)
- Environmental organizations (e.g. Watershed organizations (OBV), ZIP committees, *Conseil régional de l'environnement*, etc.)
- Hunting and fishing associations or organizations
- Vacation leases
- Maple syrup producers



Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify actors

Using GIS tools (e.g. QGIS and ArcGIS) is an effective way of targeting the various actors within the boundaries of your project area. Among other things, this allows you to:

- Visualize the geographical distribution of stakeholders by overlaying layers of information data
- Spatial analysis of areas of interaction between stakeholders and the protected area project

Interactive online map to help identify the main potential stakeholders



We have prepared an **interactive online map** to help you identify the main potential stakeholders concerned by the boundaries of your protected area project. [Click here to view.](#)

Guidelines: This map lets you zoom in on the **geographical area of your project**, and using the integrated open database, you can select various layers of information for your project (e.g. existing protected areas, administrative divisions, leases, structured wildlife territories).

Gather data and analysis on the actors involved

We recommend opting for a detailed analysis table, which will enable you to list the stakeholders concerned by your project and their information, and to assign their level of influence, impact and interest in the project, as well as the strategy to be adopted to interact with them.

Every project is unique, and so is every consultation process!

It's essential to remember that each stakeholder analysis can differ from one protected area project to another. It depends on the territorial context, realities and intersectoral relationships unique to your regions. As a result, the strategy adopted for one stakeholder (e.g. RCM) could vary greatly from one community's protected area project to another.

There are no right answers - you're in the best position to answer these questions.



Table. Analysis of external stakeholders concerned by the protected area project

External actors	Direct or indirect beneficiaries, excluded, supporters, opponents	Contact information	Essential to the project (yes/no)	Level of influence (1 to 5)	Level of interest (low, medium or high)	Anticipated behaviors	Action to be implemented

Categorize external actors

You can also assign each stakeholder a category to reflect their level of commitment to the project. Here are the stakeholder categories proposed by the FNQLHSSC in its community mobilization kit:

- **Direct beneficiaries:** People and organizations for whom the project is developed. The people who will benefit from the project "the clientele or end users".
- **Indirect beneficiaries:** Individuals and organizations that will benefit indirectly from the project.
- **Excluded:** Persons or organizations who could be harmed by the project or who are not considered within the scope of the project.
- **Supporters:** Organizations, companies or individuals who want the project to succeed.
- **Opponents:** Organizations, companies or individuals who have an interest in the project's failure.

Please note that, due to the variability of each project, it is quite possible that you may assign more than one category to an actor. For example, an RCM could act as an opponent, even though your project brings multiple benefits to the RCM, also assigning it the category of indirect beneficiary.

To see a concrete **example of a detailed table**, please refer to the Appendix - Sample table : Stakeholders involved in XYZ First Nation's Petite Truite River protected areas project, **on page 10**.



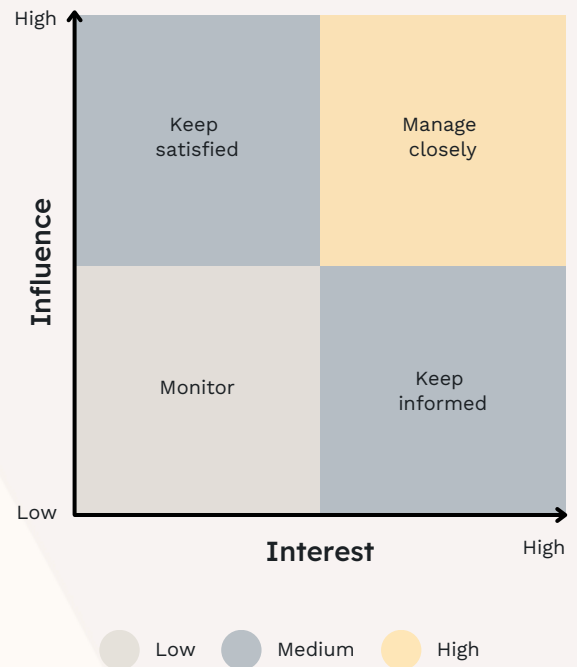
Step 2. Analyze levels of influence, interest and impact

Once stakeholders have been identified, it's time to assess their level of influence, interest and impact on the success of your protected area project.

Stakeholder management refers to the measures put in place to minimize their potential impact. The power/interest matrix provides a clear visual representation of the strategies to be adopted according to their level of interest and influence on the project.

We invite you to anticipate the behaviour of your stakeholders based on your power/interest analysis. This will help you define the best interaction strategies to adopt.

You can integrate these analyses into your detailed table of relevant stakeholders, enabling you to prioritize those to be consulted and choose the most effective approaches, while optimizing your efforts in this sometimes long and demanding process.



Step 3. Interacting with external actors

Once you've completed your table, listing external actors, their level of influence, impact, interest and anticipated behaviours, you can determine the interaction approaches to adopt.



Depending on your power/interest analysis, you could opt for the following means:

- Send an official invitation to an in-person or virtual meeting in your community
- Notify the project by official e-mail, accompanied by a fact sheet explaining the project (context, objective, proposed limits, etc.)
- Disseminate information via various communication channels: community radio, posters, social media, flyers, etc.
- Organize information sessions, open to all or targeted, to present the project, provide explanatory data and share testimonials highlighting its importance

The importance of RAISING awareness and INFORMING stakeholders

Before you start interacting with stakeholders, make sure you have all the information and data you need to raise awareness and inform the stakeholders who will have a potential impact on your project. Among other things, this makes it possible to:

- Foster a shared understanding of the project's needs
- Generate interest and the desire to get involved
- Transform a problematic situation into a common need

Step 4. Keep people informed

This stage is essential for maintaining the communication and interaction processes you have developed and put in place with stakeholders who could become collaborators and/or partners in your project. It's also an opportunity to continue your efforts to raise awareness and promote your project's progress. You can reuse the means of communication listed in step 3.

Also consider setting up a consultation table and inviting stakeholders to sit on it. Coordinated by your community, this table could serve as an important lever in the next decision-making stages related to the establishment of your protected area.

The consultation table is an effective way of avoiding individual meetings with each stakeholder, thereby reducing the risk of overloading your process.

Consultation is an ongoing process, so you need to maintain it throughout your project.



Consultation in the context of the call for protected area projects via direct submission to the Minister

Submit a stakeholder consultation plan

If you have submitted a protected area project in response to the Quebec government's call for protected areas projects, you must submit a stakeholder consultation plan with your proposal. This must include:

- Stakeholders targeted for consultation: RCMs, municipalities, other First Nations (if overlapping), holders of certain rights (e.g., cottagers, mining claims, natural resource development, structured wildlife territories and regional parks) and associations of different types of users (e.g., hunters, fishermen, outdoor activities, etc.);
- Consultation procedures: describe the steps that will be taken to consult the various stakeholders mentioned above, including the processes put in place to inform them of the project and obtain their feedback (e.g. letters, virtual/personal meetings, collaborative working document, planned feedback process, etc.);
- A timetable for the various stages of consultation leading up to the submission of the consultation report.

Please note that the MRCs, municipalities and other First Nations concerned must be consulted.

Submit the final stakeholder consultation report

Once the regional consultation has been completed, you must submit the stakeholder consultation report (due by Fall 2026). This report must include :

- Report on the progress of each stage of the consultation plan.
- Clearly indicate the concerns expressed and how these can be taken into account in project implementation.
- If modifications have been made to the initial proposal, clearly indicate them in a specific section.
- Provide feedback to stakeholders on the content of the report.



Source for the information provided on this page : Appendix of the letter sent to the Chiefs by the Quebec government as part of the announcement of the Call for projects for protected areas in June 2024.



Conclusion

We hope this guide has provided you with the clarity and guidance you need to apply this approach to your protected area projects. Remember that each project is unique and based on specific territorial contexts. This guide is designed to be adapted to your needs and realities. You are in the best position to answer these questions.

Don't hesitate to contact us for personalized support in your consultation process, as well as for any other aspect of your protected area projects.



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Appendix - Example : Stakeholders involved in XYZ First Nation's Petite Truite River protected area project.

External actors	Direct or indirect beneficiaries, excluded, supporters, opponents)	Contact information	Essential to the project (yes/no)	Level of influence (1 to 5)	Level of interest (low, medium or high)	Anticipated behaviours	Action to be implemented
MRC de la Petite truite	Indirect beneficiaries, supporters and/or opponents	Chantal Petite-Montagne, Prefect E-mail : Tel :	Yes	5	High	Acceptance or refusal to support the approach	Careful management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official invitation to an in-person meeting in the community Sending of a document containing all the information required for the project process Later, invite members to sit on the issue table as needed
Petite Truite Fishing Resort	Indirect beneficiaries, supporters and/or opponents	... Senior Manager E-mail : Tel :	Yes	3	High	Opposition due to concerns about the continuity of its activities	Careful management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official invitation to an in-person meeting in the community Sending of a document containing all the information required for the project process Later, invite members to sit on the issue table as needed
ABC First Nation (ancestral territory adjacent to the project)	...	... Director, Territories and Resources Office, Band Council E-mail : Tel :	Yes	3	Medium	Project support : Promotes the conservation of shared values (e.g. species, sacred sites, traditional practices) Possible concerns: Relocation of industrial activities on their territory (e.g. volume of wood harvesting)	Keep informed / manage with care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official invitation to an in-person meeting in the community Sending of a document containing all the information required for the project process
SÉPAQ - Petite Truite Wildlife Reserve	...	Martin PetitLac, Protected Areas Designator - Petite Truite administrative region E-mail : Tel :	Yes	5	High	Possible opposition due to concerns about the continuity of its activities	Careful management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official invitation to an in-person meeting in the community Sending of a document containing all the information required for the project process Later, invite members to sit on the issue table as needed
Local snowmobile club	...	...	Yes	2	High	Possible opposition: Measures applied in the protected area that could limit certain activities	Keeping informed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send an official e-mail with information about the community project Provide contact information for the project coordinator and offer the possibility of a meeting
Petite Truite Saw Mill	...	...	Yes	5	High	Opposition due to concerns about the continuity of these activities	Careful management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official invitation to an in-person meeting in the community Sending of a document containing all the information required for the project process Later, invite members to sit on the issue table as needed
Petite truite Sport Fishing Club	...	...	Yes	2	High	Project support: conservation and management of an important resource for the local economy Possible concerns: Measures applied in the protected area that could limit certain activities.	Keeping informed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send an official e-mail with information about the community project Provide contact information for the project coordinator and offer the possibility of a meeting