

SUMMARY

Manitoba's Hudson Bay Lowlands

Assessing the economic value of ecosystem goods and services

June 2025

Manitoba's Hudson Bay Lowlands at a glance:

- A conservation powerhouse providing a minimum **CAD 250 million in economic value annually** and **CAD 1.2 trillion in carbon storage value**.
- Supports over **250 wildlife species**, including polar bears, beluga whales, moose, seals, and caribou herds.
- Contributes **CAD 131 million in tourism revenue** in northern Manitoba.
- Provides essential social and cultural benefits to community well-being and **preserves important Indigenous cultural and historical connections**.

One of the World's Most Ecologically Intact Landscapes

Located in northeastern Manitoba, the Hudson Bay Lowlands cover an expansive area of over 67,000 square kilometres—roughly 10% of the province. It holds immense value, serving as a habitat for globally threatened species, storing billions of tonnes of soil organic carbon, supporting Manitoba's northern tourism industry, and sustaining Indigenous cultures and identities. In a time when large intact regions worldwide are quickly becoming fragmented and highly modified at a fast rate, Canada and the Province of Manitoba have a special responsibility and opportunity to preserve pristine areas like Manitoba's Hudson Bay Lowlands.

A biodiversity hotspot, the region is home to iconic Canadian wildlife including polar bears, beluga whales, moose, seals, and caribou herds. Each year, thousands of visitors venture to the area for polar bear sightings in Churchill and boat tours to observe beluga whales in Western Hudson Bay. Other popular tourist activities include birdwatching, dogsledding, all-terrain vehicle tours, and boating.



Indigenous Leadership at the Heart of Conservation

The Lowlands are not only ecologically significant—they are culturally vital. Five Indigenous Nations—York Factory First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, and Shamattawa First Nation—are working to conserve a vast expanse of this region as an Indigenous Protected Area and safeguard lands, waters, and ways of life.

Investing in Indigenous-led conservation such as Indigenous Guardians and protected areas provide jobs, strengthen communities, and ensure stewardship traditions are carried forward. Canada and Manitoba need the leadership and support of Indigenous communities to meet their respective conservation targets.

Indigenous Peoples have a historical connection to and knowledge of the land. By taking a leadership role in their territories, they can achieve meaningful conservation outcomes and harness a range of important cultural and social benefits in local communities.

An Economic Case for Conservation

The Hudson Bay Lowlands in Manitoba hold **CAD 1.2 trillion worth of soil organic carbon storage**—having ecological and climate importance for the province and worldwide. Home to one of the largest wetland and peatland systems globally, the region plays a crucial role through carbon storage, with an estimated **7 billion tonnes of soil organic carbon** stored in Manitoba alone. That fact alone makes it a globally significant carbon pool and a strong candidate for protection on carbon-related goals.

In terms of ecosystem goods and services—through the value of biodiversity conservation, hunting, tourism, and mental health—the Hudson Bay Lowlands provide a minimum of **CAD 247.7 million in economic value** to the province and beyond.

A Key to Meeting Manitoba's Conservation Goals

The Hudson Bay Lowlands cover nearly **10% of Manitoba's landmass**. Conserving large areas of this region would significantly advance the federal and provincial governments' commitments to protecting a minimum of 30% of terrestrial and inland water areas by 2030 while ensuring equitable governance and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Conserving the Hudson Bay Lowlands would **increase protected lands and waters for future generations**, a critical step in tackling climate change and biodiversity loss.

Read the full report:

[***Manitoba's Hudson Bay Lowlands: Ecosystem goods and services valuation***](#)

© 2025 International Institute for Sustainable Development
Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development
This publication is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is an award-winning, independent think tank working to accelerate solutions for a stable climate, sustainable resource management, and fair economies. Our work inspires better decisions and sparks meaningful action to help people and the planet thrive. We shine a light on what can be achieved when governments, businesses, non-profits, and communities come together. IISD's staff of more than 200 people come from across the globe and from many disciplines. With offices in Winnipeg, Geneva, Ottawa, and Toronto, our work affects lives in more than 100 countries.

IISD is a registered charitable organization in Canada and has 501(c)(3) status in the United States. IISD receives core operating support from the Province of Manitoba and project funding from governments inside and outside Canada, United Nations agencies, foundations, the private sector, and individuals.

Head Office

111 Lombard Avenue, Suite 325
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3B 0T4

Tel: +1 (204) 958-7700
Website: iisd.org
X: [@IISD_news](https://twitter.com/IISD_news)



iisd.org