

# Marine Protected Areas

## MANICOUAGAN

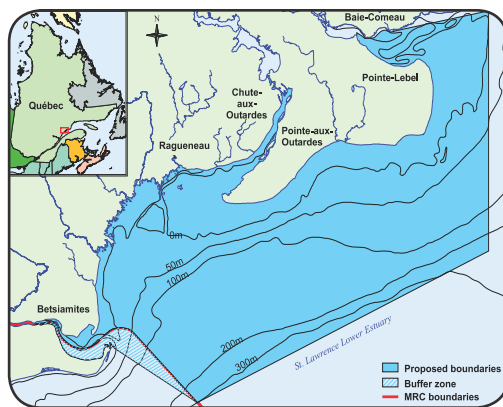
The Manicouagan Peninsula is located on the North Shore of the St. Lawrence Estuary, immediately west of the city of Baie-Comeau. The proposed Marine Protected Area (MPA) includes the coastal area surrounding the Manicouagan Peninsula extending from the Manicouagan river south-westerly to the Betsiamites river. The area extends southward into the Laurentian Channel (to the 300 m isobath) and covers about 700 km<sup>2</sup>.

The purpose of the proposed MPA is to conserve, protect and better understand the peninsula's estuarine and marine ecosystems, including their rich biodiversity and biological productivity, while sustaining those activities taking place in the area that are consistent with this purpose.

The marine environment around the Manicouagan Peninsula area is one of the richest and most productive in the St. Lawrence system. The convergence of freshwater from three rivers (Betsiamites, Outardes and Manicouagan) with salt water from the lower estuary, create ideal conditions for the growth of phytoplankton, microscopic algae that forms the basis of the food chain for the lower estuary and part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It attracts a variety of invertebrate, fish and marine mammal species from vastly diverse habitats extending out into deep waters. The presence of large concentrations of seabirds is also a good indicator of the high biological productivity in the area.



Photo: A.T.R. Manicouagan



The proposed MPA also includes salt marshes which are known to be amongst the most productive habitats on the planet. The area is also rich in eelgrass beds, aquatic plants that colonize sandy tidal flats and which serve as shelter, food source and breeding ground for many marine species. Sand flats in the area harbour the largest clam beds in Quebec and also provide rest and whelping areas for a colony of harbour seals, the only species of seals to reside in the St. Lawrence Estuary year-round.

The site was initially proposed for designation as an MPA by Pointe-aux-Outardes Nature Park, an environmental non-government organization. Following the selection of this Area of Interest by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in 1998, a technical committee including representatives from the Manicouagan Regional Municipal County, Betsiamites Band Council, Pointe-aux-Outardes Nature Park and DFO, was tasked with drafting a preliminary management plan. Public consultations on the plan have reconfirmed popular support for the proposed MPA.

*For further information, please contact:*

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Area of Interest



Fisheries and Oceans  
Canada

Pêches et Océans  
Canada

Canada