

Hunting and Fishing Outfitters

Hunting and fishing outfitters depend on pristine wildlife and fish habitat, and as such are exceptionally vulnerable to habitat encroachment, pollution and resource depletion, and other negative ecological impacts. By embracing best practices, companies, guides and clients can take an active role in securing the future of both the industry and the planet.

Quick Start



If you are a member of your provincial outfitting association, promote yourself by showcasing the conservation policies you already have in place. Let your customers know whether or not your association has a code of ethics that its members must follow. For example, create a "Code of Ethics" section on your company's website and outline the actions that you take to abide by them. If you have a lodge or other structure, create a large poster of the code and display it in a public area.

Habitat Conservation

The primary cause of wildlife extinction is loss of habitat, along with risks posed by habitat degradation, fragmentation and poaching. Here are a few things you can do to help safeguard wetlands, forests and other natural areas.

- ◆ Support conservation groups such as [Ducks Unlimited Canada](#) and [The Nature Conservancy of Canada](#). These organizations work on your behalf to conserve the habitat and resources that you rely on for your business.
- ◆ Support and share scientific research related to habitat protection and conservation.
- ◆ Tread as carefully as possible while transporting clients to hunting or fishing spots-always use existing roads or trails. For guidelines, check out [Tread Lightly](#), a US hunting and fishing organization focusing on ecosystem stewardship issues.
- ◆ Clean your boots and gear after a hunting trip to ensure that you and your clients do not inadvertently carry an invasive plant species from one area to another.

Client Education

As an outfitter, you are in a unique position to teach your clients about best practices, as the majority of your product is based in nature and experienced in small group settings. Pass the time while sitting around in your blind, on a boat or around the campfire by acting as an information source for your clients.

- ◆ Ensure that you and your guides are well informed about endangered or threatened wildlife or plants. Where possible, point out examples to your customers-be sure to observe and not disturb. Take the opportunity to explain their significance and status under provincial and national species at-risk acts.
- ◆ Showcase specific conservation programs for species or habitats in your area. Look into partnerships with local parks, conservation zones and wildlife reserves that may provide knowledgeable experts that can enhance your clients' experience with presentations on the natural heritage of the region.

Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) is a national panel of experts that assesses and designates wild species in danger of disappearing. COSEWIC categories of risk include:

- ◆ **Extinct.** A species that no longer exists.
- ◆ **Extirpated.** A species no longer existing in the wild in Canada, but occurring elsewhere.
- ◆ **Endangered.** A species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.
- ◆ **Threatened.** A species likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.
- ◆ **Special Concern.** A species that is particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events but is not an endangered or threatened species.
- ◆ **Data Deficient.** A species for which there is inadequate information to make a direct or indirect assessment of its risk of extinction.
- ◆ **Not At Risk.** A species that has been evaluated and found to be not at risk.

Definition of "species": any indigenous species, subspecies, variety, or geographically or genetically distinct population of wild animals and plants.

For more information and lists of species at risk, check out [COSEWIC](#)

- ◆ Take time to learn about diseases that may affect the animals your clients hunt. Chronic wasting disease, tuberculosis and brainworm infections are just some of the many diseases that you may encounter. By being able to spot the symptoms, you can assist provincial wildlife officials in containing disease outbreaks and ensure that your hunting resource continues to thrive

Try This!

Consider inviting an expert along for the trip—university researchers, Native elders and park employees might be suitable candidates. Area conservation groups may also have experts who would be interested in sharing their knowledge.

Keeping It Local

By supporting and involving the small communities within your region of operation, you can help to ensure their economic viability. For hunting and fishing outfitters that operate in rural and remote areas, these towns can be a lifeline of supplies and staff. The [Giving Back](#) section has more information about how to make a contribution to your local community.

- ◆ Maintaining open lines of communication with local officials in small, remote communities can be key to your success there. Community support can raise your company's profile, which in turn brings more people to the community and helps to sustain the local economy.
- ◆ Look to the local community for employees. Locals typically have the best knowledge of the area and can ensure that your customers reach the best hunting or fishing grounds.
- ◆ Consider instituting an apprenticeship program to encourage local youth to become guides. Passing on information and techniques from older, experienced guides can ensure that younger, new employees can become accomplished guides as well.

Respect The Regs

The future success of your hunting or fishing business relies upon a healthy environment that sustains healthy wildlife-population levels. Provincial and federal regulations help maintain these conditions, but even more can be done. At a minimum, ensure that you and your customers abide by all federal and provincial laws for hunting seasons, bag limits and size of catch.

- ◆ Be familiar with all applicable laws and guidelines in your province and region. Inform your customers about catch sizes, bag limits and any other applicable laws before they head out to hunt or fish. Explain that these laws exist to ensure that there will be good populations for clients to be able to return to hunt or fish in the area in future years.

Try This!

Don't know what the local laws are in your region? Try a Google search of the name of your province or territory and "hunting or fishing regulations" to find your area's current laws and regulations. Or go to your provincial or territorial government website and look for the conservation, wildlife or environment department. For fish, check out the [Department of Fisheries and Oceans](#).

- ◆ Practice safe catch-and-release fishing. For guidelines on proper fish handling with catch-and-release fishing, check out [Wild Trout Streams](#).
- ◆ Try practicing barbless fishing. Barbless fishing offers a greater challenge to fishers, as barbless hooks are harder to catch fish on. When practicing catch-and-release fishing, using a barbless hook can ensure easier removal of the hook from the fish, causing less damage to their mouths.

Leave No Trace

- ◆ Cart out all wastes, including spent shotgun shells and rifle cartridges. Your next group of clients will not be impressed if they come across a small landfill in the middle of pristine wilderness.
- ◆ Check out other sections of this toolkit-[Transportation](#), [Accommodations & Lodging](#), [Food Services](#)-for tips on how to make other aspects of your business sustainable.