



**STATE OF
CANADA'S PARKS
REPORT 2013**

**ONE STEP
FORWARD / TWO
STEPS BACK**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: YEAR IN REVIEW 3

THE GOOD NEWS FOR PARKS 5

HUGE SUCCESS IN QUEBEC 6

 Quebec's Tursujuq Park Reserve will be biggest provincial park in Canada! 6

 Nova Scotia takes major steps towards big expansion of parks and protected areas system 7

 New provincial park in Saskatchewan hopeful sign of more to come. 8

 Manitoba commits to expanding park system and protecting ecosystem health 8

 Jasper plan important first step to recovering Rocky Mountain park caribou 9

 Banff — Bow Valley Parkway wildlife closures to start in spring 10

THE DANGER SIGNS FOR PARKS 11

 Gros Morne National Park threatened by oil drilling and fracking 12

 Banff's grizzlies at greater risk due to ski area summer use 12

NATIONAL PARK BUDGET CUTS BEING FELT ACROSS THE COUNTRY 14

 Seasonal national park closures hit most provinces 14

CHALLENGES IN PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL PARKS 16

 Yukon government reverses path towards protecting the Peel watershed 16

 Manitoba parks still open to mining 17

 Ontario backs away from Algonquin Park conservation commitments 17

 New Brunswick waffles on expanded protected areas system 18

BEACONS OF HOPE FOR PARKS 19

EXPANDING CANADA'S NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM 20

 Protecting Thaidene Nene – the Land of the Ancestors, East Arm of Great Slave Lake, NWT 20

 The Rouge: An opportunity to get it right with Canada's first National Urban Park 21

 Sable Island National Park Reserve, NS created — more work needed to close door to oil and gas exploration 22

 Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, NWT — Better boundary would complete protection
 of world-renowned Nahanni watershed 22

 New national park in BC's South Okanagan Similkameen would protect unique Canadian ecosystem 23

NEW PROVINCIAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS 24

 Alberta's Castle Special Place— is protection finally within reach? 24

 Quebec's Dumoine River Aquatic Reserve could protect vital watershed. 25

INTRODUCTION

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Canada's annual Parks Day takes place on July 20, 2013. Since 2008, CPAWS has issued an annual report reviewing how well Canada has done over the past year in both creating parks and protecting these natural treasures for the benefit of current and future generations of Canadians.

Over the years the review has ranged from celebrating significant progress on new parks, to noting a slowdown in progress, and highlighting emerging problems. Last year the report focused on the significant threats our parks are facing, from federal budget cuts to inappropriate tourism and recreational developments to growing industrial development pressures within or adjacent to our parks.

This year's report concludes that over the past 12 months, the story of how Canada's parks are faring has been mixed. Overall, our assessment this year is that progress on creating and protecting Canada's parks has taken one step forward and two steps back.

There have been some major highlights, including the creation of Tursujuq Park in Quebec, now eastern North America's largest protected area and Canada's largest provincial park, a major proposed expansion of the parks and protected areas system in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, and announcement of the first new park in Saskatchewan in 20 years.

Unfortunately though, danger signs are still flashing for Canada's parks in too many areas. In Newfoundland's Gros Morne National Park, a proposal to drill and "frack" for oil within metres of the park boundary presents a serious risk to the park's ecosystems, UNESCO World Heritage status, and the sustainable tourism industry that relies on

its pristine natural beauty. In the Rocky Mountain national parks inappropriate commercial developments continue to move forward. In Banff the decision to allow large scale summer use of the Mt. Norquay ski area could put grizzly bears and other wildlife at increased risk. In New Brunswick, the provincial government is long overdue on meeting its commitment to create new parks and protected areas, while in the Yukon the territorial government has completely walked away from recommendations of a First Nations and territorial government-appointed planning commission to

protect the Peel River watershed – one of the most spectacular wild watersheds left in the world. Meanwhile, budget cuts to Parks Canada are being felt on the ground: many national parks are now essentially closed for much of the year and science and monitoring programs are shrinking.

There are also many important beacons of hope across the country for the year to come in the form of opportunities to create magnificent new parks, and to take positive steps to better protect the parks we have. In an area around the NWT's East Arm of



Photo - Evan Ferrari

Great Slave Lake known as Thaidene Nene, or the "land of the ancestors", an innovative partnership is emerging between the local Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and Parks Canada to protect the heart of a vast wild homeland where caribou and Muskoxen still roam freely, and where the lives of community members are still very much tied to the land. Further west in the NWT, a national park called Nááts'ihch'oh is being created that, with a boundary amendment, would secure the headwaters of the famed South Nahanni River.

Moving south, public support is growing notably for protecting the endangered grasslands and desert landscape of the South Okanagan in a new national park. In southwest Alberta, after years of public campaigning, a regional land use planning process could provide an opportunity to finally protect the spectacular mountain landscape of the treasured Castle wilderness as a provincial park. Further east, the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park in the Greater Toronto Area, and a proposed provincial protected area in the Dumoine River watershed of southwestern Quebec will offer great opportunities for urban Canadians to visit and experience protected nature. 🌿

THE TRUE VALUE OF PARKS

We all know parks as places where nature is protected and we can escape busy lives and have fun with family and friends. Less well-known are the myriad of other benefits parks and protected areas offer to society.

Did you know, for example:

- Canada's national, provincial and territorial parks **CONTRIBUTE ALMOST \$5 BILLION** each year to the Canadian economy, more than \$5 for every dollar spent by governments;
- Parks support **64,000** full-time jobs across Canada;
- Parks provide clean, plentiful water for some of Canada's largest cities. For example, Banff National Park protects the headwaters of the Bow River Basin, providing clean drinking water to **1.2 MILLION** people;
- Parks are a **"NATURAL SOLUTION"** to climate change, helping nature adapt to changing conditions and storing biological carbon in their soils and vegetation that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere, exacerbating climate change. 🌿

THE GOOD NEWS FOR PARKS

While the past year has been a challenging one for parks in most parts of Canada, there have been some remarkable successes in several provinces in creating new parks and protected areas. The most striking announcement came in December 2012, when the Quebec government announced Canada's biggest provincial park in northern Quebec, called Tursujuq.

Further east, CPAWS also welcomed major progress in Nova Scotia, where the provincial government announced a quarter million hectares of new protected areas and is on track to meet and exceed the commitment to protect at least 12% of the provincial landmass.

In Saskatchewan, where no new provincial parks have been created for decades, the government took a small step forward, announcing a recreation park adjacent to Prince Albert National Park and also committing to create more parks in the future.

In Manitoba, the provincial government has committed to creating up to 10 new or expanded parks by 2020 and to explore expanding Fisher Bay and Little Limestone Lake Provincial Parks.

Tursujuq Park, Quebec - Robert Fréchette



Nastapoka River, Quebec -
Josée Brunelle



TURSUJUQ PARK,
QUEBEC

Huge Success in Quebec!

QUEBEC'S TURSUJUQ PARK RESERVE WILL BE BIGGEST PROVINCIAL PARK IN CANADA!

At over 26,000 km² (four times the size of Prince Edward Island) Quebec's new Tursujuq National Park Reserve¹ will be the biggest provincial park in Canada and the largest protected area in eastern North America. The announcement of this new park last December was great news for the northern Quebec Inuit community of Umiujaq, the Grand Council of the Crees, and the Kativik Regional Government who had worked with CPAWS and other partners for many years to protect this magnificent landscape.

Tursujuq will protect a vast wilderness ecosystem stretching inland from Hudson Bay and straddling both boreal forest and tundra that has been home to Inuit and Cree for thousands of years. Highlights of this new park include the Nastapoka River, home to a unique population of landlocked freshwater harbour seals, Atlantic salmon and beluga whales; the 700 km²

Lake Guillaume-Delisle — a brackish body of tidal water home to seals and belugas; Lac à l'Eau Claire (Clearwater Lakes) — a double meteoritic crater which, at over 1200 km², forms Quebec's second largest lake; as well as wild rivers and waterfalls, and a spectacular northern landscape.

Last year, CPAWS' parks report flagged that the Nastapoka River watershed, an important area of habitat for endangered landlocked seals and other species, had been left out of the Tursujuq park proposal. CPAWS joined local Aboriginal communities and governments calling for the park proposal to protect the Nastapoka. So when the park was finally announced in December 2012, CPAWS welcomed the news that the park boundary had been amended to include over 11,000 square kilometres — most of the Nastapoka watershed.

Creating Tursujuq Park will mean that the remarkable beauty of this northern landscape, as well as its unique wildlife and geological features, will be protected forever, and can host adventurers seeking to experience the natural and cultural wonders of the North.

¹ Parks run by the Quebec government are known in the province as "national parks"



Port Bickerton, Nova Scotia -
Irwin Barrett

NOVA SCOTIA TAKES MAJOR STEPS TOWARDS BIG EXPANSION OF PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM

In February, the Nova Scotia government unveiled a plan that will create hundreds of new parks and protected areas and conserve an additional 250,000 hectares of the province, including 700km of wilderness coastline and critical habitat for species at risk. These are big numbers for a small province and would increase the percentage of land protected in Nova Scotia by more than one third, moving it from ninth to second position among the 13 provinces and territories in the percentage of land protected.

The areas proposed for protection span the province, and include some of the best-remaining wilderness in Nova Scotia. Sites to be protected include St. Mary's River, Eastern Shore Islands, Kelly's Mountain, Humes River, Chignecto Isthmus, Fourchu Coastline, Liscomb River, Wentworth Valley, Medway Lakes, and Tusket River, among many others.

The final round of public consultation wrapped up in May, and the province will soon be making final decisions about implementing the plan.

CPAWS played a lead role in identifying the lands proposed for protection and working with industry and government to ensure their protection. We are encouraging provincial officials to move quickly to finalize protection for these important ecological areas.





Ron Thiessen

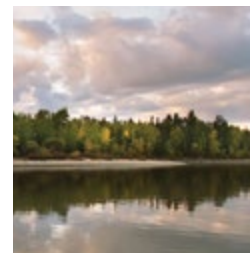
MANITOBA



MANITOBA COMMITS TO EXPANDING PARK SYSTEM AND PROTECTING ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

In April 2013, the Manitoba government announced a new parks strategy as part of its “Green Plan”. The strategy commits the province to strengthening protection for many of Manitoba’s provincial parks, creating or expanding up to 10 parks, and honours CPAWS’ request to make “maintaining ecosystem health” the fundamental principle of parks. The plan also strongly promotes connecting people with nature through parks and recognizes the significant health benefits from time spent outdoors in nature.

CPAWS was particularly pleased that the new strategy commits to work with Aboriginal communities and stakeholders to consider expanding Little Limestone Lake and Fisher Bay provincial parks: two of CPAWS’ top parks conservation priorities in Manitoba.³



Fisher Bay, Manitoba - Ron Thiessen

GREAT BLUE HERON PROVINCIAL PARK, SASKATCHEWAN



NEW PROVINCIAL PARK IN SASKATCHEWAN HOPEFUL SIGN OF MORE TO COME

For the first time in almost 20 years, the Saskatchewan government has announced the creation of a new provincial park. At 112 km², Great Blue Heron Provincial Park will protect an area of the southern boreal plain around Anglin and Emma Lakes on the eastern boundary of Prince Albert National Park. Anglin Lake has one of the highest populations of mating common loon pairs in North America. This area has been under threat in recent years by uncontrolled ATV use. The new park will stop logging in the area, and lead to better management of recreational activities.

The Saskatchewan government has also committed to creating more provincial parks, noting them as a cornerstone of the tourism industry.² Caribou are in serious decline near Prince Albert because forestry activities are encroaching on their habitat. CPAWS hopes that creating this park is a first step towards a concerted effort to protect much more boreal habitat in Saskatchewan, starting with critical woodland caribou habitat further north, adjacent to the national park.

² For more information see: <http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=b02112db-3d0d-4ea9-948c-dafbc44a79d2>

³ CPAWS’ 2012 Parks Report highlighted why Little Limestone Lake needed to be expanded. See <http://cpawsmb.org/campaigns/little-limestone-lake> for more details.



CPAWS MB

JASPER PLAN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP TO RECOVERING ROCKY MOUNTAIN PARK CARIBOU

In April, Parks Canada announced a plan to delay opening dates for backcountry skiing in a number of important winter caribou habitat areas in Jasper National Park, as part of a strategy to help the park's struggling caribou herds. Jasper is one of the few protected places in the Rocky Mountains where threatened woodland caribou still survive. But, even within the national park sanctuary, caribou are in steep decline. Twenty-five years ago there were 800 caribou in the Rocky Mountain national parks. That number has dropped to less than 250 and continues to decline. Three of four herds in Jasper have dropped to critically low numbers. Urgent management actions are needed if caribou are to survive in the park.

Scientists have documented wolves using ski tracks in Jasper National Park to travel into remote winter caribou habitat. By delaying the opening of important winter caribou habitat to backcountry skiing, this "facilitated predator access" can be diminished. This pro-active management action is just one of many that Parks Canada has identified in their strategy for conserving woodland caribou

in the Rocky Mountain national parks.⁴ CPAWS has expressed our strong support for these changes to winter recreational access and is urging Parks Canada to monitor results and to ensure that the other measures in the strategy are also implemented.

JASPER NATIONAL PARK, ALBERTA



⁴ More information about Parks Canada's Conservation Strategy for Southern Mountain Caribou can be found at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/mtn/caribou/index.aspx>.



Ron Thiessen

BANFF NATIONAL PARK,
ALBERTA



BANFF — BOW VALLEY PARKWAY WILDLIFE CLOSURES TO START IN SPRING 2014

After a significant delay, Parks Canada is now on track to implement a seasonal travel restriction on Banff National Park's Bow Valley Parkway which runs parallel to the Trans Canada Highway between the Town of Banff and Lake Louise. In December 2011, after two years of consultation, Parks Canada announced that it would implement this seasonal travel restriction to protect wildlife. Each year, from March 1 to June 25th, a 17-kilometre stretch of the parkway will be closed from dusk to dawn. This decision is important to protect grizzly bears, wolves and moose, and to allow animals to feed and protect their young undisturbed during the critical spring months. 🌿

THE DANGER SIGNS FOR PARKS

Despite some good news this year, there are a number of new worrying developments, and on-going threats to parks. Of serious concern is the threat to Gros Morne National Park posed by proposed oil exploration and fracking within metres of the park boundary within the enclave community of Sally's Cove. In the Rocky Mountain national parks, commercial development pressures continue to cause serious concern, and across the country, budget cutbacks are reducing national park services and science and monitoring capacity. Meanwhile in the Yukon, the territorial government is ignoring the conservation – focused recommendations of a land claims mandated planning commission that would have seen the protection of much of the Peel River watershed. This is a magnificent northern wilderness area that CPAWS, First Nations and other partners have worked hard to protect for over a decade.

In the East, the New Brunswick government is still lagging behind, and long overdue on meeting its commitment to a small increase in protected areas. In Ontario, the province is retreating from commitments it made to improve the ecological integrity of Algonquin Park.

In this time of economic uncertainty and balancing budgets, parks are losing ground in many areas. And yet, as described in the first section of this report, parks and protected areas provide enormous benefits to governments and citizens alike, contributing to the economy, conserving clean air and water, and acting as cornerstones of both our conservation programs and tourism industries.



Gros Morne National Park -
Michael Burzynski

GROS MORNE NATIONAL
PARK, NEWFOUNDLAND



**GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK
THREATENED BY OIL DRILLING
AND FRACKING**

Newfoundland's iconic Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is facing a new threat from controversial hydraulic fracturing (commonly known as fracking) for oil within metres of the park's boundary. Exploration licenses have been granted to a company that has until January 2014 to start drilling an onshore-to-offshore exploratory well.

While the current proposal focuses on Sally's Cove, one of the park's small enclave communities, at least four other sites in park enclave communities could also be drilled and fracked in the coming years. These proposals, if they proceed to full-scale production, could lead to major industrialization of the park's surroundings.

Potential threats to the park include the pumping of huge amounts of water to be used in the fracking process, the injection of toxic chemicals deep into the ground with possible groundwater contamination, intense trucking activities on park roads, the production of massive amounts of contaminated water that needs to be disposed of, as well as potential flaring of natural gas.

Industrializing the Gros Morne coastline would put at risk the substantial regional and provincial tourism economy that relies on the pristine natural beauty of Gros Morne's coast and mountains

to attract visitors from across Canada and around the world. Gros Morne National Park was designated as a World Heritage Site in recognition of its fascinating and ancient geological history as well as for the exceptional natural beauty of its wilderness environment.⁵

In June 2013 the World Heritage Committee formally expressed concern about the fracking proposals near Gros Morne, and recommended a monitoring mission be sent to assess the situation. World Heritage Sites can be de-listed if the values for which they are designated are compromised.

Gros Morne National Park attracts 185,000 visitors per year, and is western Newfoundland's number one employer and contributor to the economy. Surveys have shown that 96% of Gros Morne visitors come primarily for the scenery, so any industrialization of the park's surroundings by oil and gas activities is likely to have a negative impact on tourism and the region's economy.

To ensure the park's pristine natural beauty and ecosystems and the region's sustainable tourism industry are protected for future generations, CPAWS is calling for the area around the park to be kept permanently free of industrial development, including any oil and gas exploration and development.⁶

⁵ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/419>

⁶ See www.savegrosorne.ca for more information.



Banff's grizzlies at risk -
Michael Wieser

BANFF'S GRIZZLIES AT GREATER RISK DUE TO SKI AREA SUMMER USE

Last year CPAWS reported on a proposal to allow extensive summer visitor use of Mt. Norquay ski area in Banff, which is important summer habitat for grizzly bears and other wildlife. This May, the federal government announced approval of a long range plan for Mt. Norquay, including provisions for large-scale summer use. Under the plan, summer use could increase from about 300 to as many as 10,000 visitors, increasing the risk of encounters between wildlife and humans.

CPAWS remains very concerned about the impact of the plan on grizzly bears and other wildlife that use the area in summer, particularly female grizzly bears and their young. With less than 60 grizzlies in Banff National Park, and the lowest reproductive rate of any grizzly population in North America, Banff's precious grizzlies are vulnerable to any further development in their habitat.

The home ranges of bears in the narrow Bow Valley, in and around Mt. Norquay, are already heavily fragmented by the Trans-Canada Highway and other roads, a major railway line, and the town of Banff. Bears die every year on the railway and roads. The mortality rate of the bears in Banff is higher than in any other national park.

In CPAWS' view, any management decisions that result in further reduction in the security of wildlife habitat in Banff contravene Parks Canada's responsibility to prioritize ecological integrity.

Now that this unfortunate decision has been made, CPAWS is urging that a comprehensive scientific monitoring system be put in place to track the cumulative impacts of this and other development on park wildlife. If negative impacts are detected, the decision should immediately be reversed to try and prevent irreversible harm to the grizzly bears and other wildlife that call Mt. Norquay and Banff's Bow Valley home.

**BANFF
NATIONAL
PARK,
ALBERTA**



National park budget cuts being felt across the country

Last year CPAWS highlighted how the 2012 federal budget cuts of about \$30 million per year were dramatically decreasing Parks Canada's science capacity. About 30% of ecosystem scientist positions were declared "surplus", jeopardizing the ability of park managers to track and report to Canadians on the state of our national parks.

A year later, while many details about the impact of the cuts on science and monitoring remain unknown, some information is beginning to emerge and some major, high profile ecological restoration programs have already been put on hold due to lack of funding.

SEASONAL NATIONAL PARK CLOSURES HIT MOST PROVINCES

Last year's budget cuts also resulted in many national parks reducing their hours and seasons. For example, Kejimikujik National Park in Nova Scotia now only offers services to visitors for 4.5 months per year. The visitor centre, campgrounds and other basic services are now closed for the other 7.5 months, and the roads are no longer ploughed in winter. Last year the park was closed for the best of the fall colours, resulting in a shorter canoe and kayak season.

Nova Scotians are very upset by the loss of access to their treasured Keji Park. In response, one Halifax resident gathered almost 6,000 names on a petition calling on the prime minister to reverse the seasonal closures in Kejimikujik National Park, citing the park's importance to Nova Scotia's culture and enjoyment of the great outdoors.⁷

Operating seasons have also been dramatically shortened in other national parks including Riding Mountain in Manitoba, Prince Albert in Saskatchewan and Forillon in Quebec, leaving park visitors, local communities and businesses upset and protesting. In Riding Mountain, a group of local citizens mounted a campaign called "Occupy Winter" to draw attention to the magnificent park experiences that are being lost by turning our national parks into seasonal destinations.⁸

CPAWS believes that these budget cuts and associated loss of ecosystem science capacity and visitor services is short-sighted given the enormous benefit our national parks bring to all Canadians. CPAWS continues to recommend that the Government of Canada better recognize the enormous economic, ecological and social benefits of our national parks by adequately investing in their long term protection and enjoyment.⁹

⁷ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2012/09/26/ns-keji-petition.html>

⁸ <http://www.theadvance.ca/Opinion/Columnists/2013-01-16/article-3156086/Occupy-Kejimikujik-this-weekend/1>
<https://www.facebook.com/OccupyWinterSurvival>

⁹ CPAWS is a member of the Green Budget Coalition. See <http://www.greenbudget.ca> for more information.

Ted Simonett



BANFF CARIBOU AND BISON REINTRODUCTIONS NEED FUNDING

Two high profile conservation projects on hold in the wake of last year's budget cuts to Parks Canada are a proposed captive rearing program for woodland caribou and the reintroduction of bison to Banff National Park.

Banff's last few caribou were killed in an avalanche in 2009. The caribou captive breeding program would provide animals to reintroduce into the park and augment steeply declining caribou herds in other national parks in the Rockies. A partnership between Parks Canada, the Calgary Zoo and the BC provincial government, the captive breeding program was promoted as a cornerstone of Parks Canada's *Conservation Strategy for Southern Mountain Caribou in Canada's National Parks* when it was announced in 2011 by the federal Minister of the Environment.

Plains bison used to roam freely in the area that is now Banff National Park, but disappeared in the mid-1880s, before the park was created in 1885. The 2010 Banff park management plan included a commitment to reintroduce bison. Reintroducing bison would help reach the goal of having a full complement of native species in the national park, and provide visitors with the rare opportunity to experience one of Canada's most iconic species in the wild, on their natural range.

Both of these projects will contribute to the restoration of ecological integrity in Canada's national parks, and require additional funding to proceed. 🌿

Alison Woodley





Snake River, Yukon -
Theresa Gulliver

PEEL WATERSHED,
YUKON



Challenges in Provincial and Territorial parks

YUKON GOVERNMENT REVERSES PATH TOWARDS PROTECTING THE PEEL WATERSHED

The Yukon's Peel Watershed is one of the world's great remaining intact wilderness areas. Roughly the size of Scotland, this spectacular mountain landscape is rich in rare and endemic species, and home to woodland and barren-ground caribou, grizzly bears, wolverine, and a dizzying number of migratory waterfowl and songbirds. The region is of enormous spiritual and cultural value as the homeland of the Na-Cho Nyak Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin, and Tetlit Gwich'in First Nations. Adventurers cherish the Peel's iconic landscapes and wild rivers, such as the famous Wind, Snake and the Bonnet Plume rivers as prized destinations for white water paddling and wilderness hiking.

Sadly, the enormous natural and cultural values of the Peel watershed have never been more at risk. Mining and other resource extraction activities threaten to fragment and destroy the

ecological balance of this globally significant wilderness. This risk rose substantially in 2012 when the Yukon government completely abandoned the recommendations of the joint First Nations and territorial government-appointed Peel Watershed Planning Commission, which, after seven years of careful analysis and consultation, had recommended that fully 80% of the Peel watershed be conserved – 55% in permanent protected areas and 25% in some form of renewable protection that would be revisited over time.¹⁰ During the final public consultation on the future of the Peel watershed in winter 2012-13, the territorial government tabled its own proposal for the Peel that would open the entire watershed to industrial development.

A moratorium on mineral staking in the Peel is in place until the end of 2013, while the Yukon government consults with affected First Nations. What happens after that will depend on whether the Yukon government listens to the public and First Nations who strongly support protecting the Peel's magnificent wilderness.

¹⁰ Peel Watershed Planning Commission, Final Recommended Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan, July 2011



Little Limestone Lake, Manitoba -
Ron Thiessen



MANITOBA PARKS STILL OPEN TO MINING

While Manitoba’s new parks strategy has many positive attributes, it fails to deal effectively with the Achilles’ heel of the province’s park system – mining. Unlike most Canadian jurisdictions, Manitoba has not yet fully banned mining in its provincial parks, in spite of persistent calls from CPAWS and others to do so. Some recent success was achieved when peat mining was banned in all provincial parks, but mineral extraction is still allowed in many. Mining in parks contradicts the fundamental purpose of these special natural treasures, which is to maintain ecosystem health. It is also inconsistent with what citizens expect in our public parks and protected areas.

The provincial government claims that compensating companies for work performed on mining claim areas and shutting down operations would be too expensive for taxpayers to bear. CPAWS believes the solution lies in finding a middle ground where mining companies can work with the province to make the financial costs reasonable for all involved.

ONTARIO BACKS AWAY FROM ALGONQUIN PARK CONSERVATION COMMITMENTS

In our past few reports CPAWS has urged Ontario to live up to the commitment it made in 2010 to reduce the logging footprint in Algonquin Park — the crown jewel of the provincial parks system, yet the only one where logging is still allowed. Sadly, three years after the province committed to increase the area of Algonquin fully protected from industrial development from 22% to 49%, this promise remains unfulfilled.

Meanwhile, in the past year Ontario has also backed away from its long-standing commitment to phase out cottage leases on ecologically sensitive shorelines in the park, contradicting the park management plan and the province’s own advisory council, which unanimously approved the plan to discontinue the leases over the next five years after thorough review of the issue.

In 2007 the new Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act entrenched in law the requirement that parks and protected areas in Ontario be managed in a way that prioritizes ecological integrity. CPAWS is concerned that the still-unfulfilled commitment to reduce logging in the park, along with the recent reversal of the policy direction on cottages, signal a disturbing shift away from the requirement to prioritize ecological integrity in provincial park management.

CPAWS recommends that Ontario act immediately to implement its longstanding commitment to reduce logging in the park. At the same time the province should initiate a rigorous assessment of the overall impact of all park uses and develop a plan for managing park use in a way that will maintain and restore the park’s long-term ecological integrity.

MANITOBA



ALGONQUIN PROVINCIAL PARK, ONTARIO





Restigouche River -
Steve Reid, CPAWS New Brunswick

NEW BRUNSWICK




**NEW BRUNSWICK WAFFLES ON
EXPANDED PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM**

With only 3% of the province protected, New Brunswick lags way behind other jurisdictions in the proportion of land designated in parks and protected areas. Creating more parks and protected areas would not only help sustain healthy populations of wildlife like lynx, marten, and Atlantic salmon, it would also help to diversify New Brunswick's economy by building a more robust tourism industry, protecting iconic attractions and wildlife like the Restigouche River and its famous salmon.

In 2012 the province committed to a small increase in the percentage of land protected, from 3% to 4.5%. This would have been a step in the right direction but would still have left New Brunswick in second to last place compared to other provinces and territories in Canada. Now, even that small step forward may be in jeopardy, with the province delaying protection of their candidate areas while they consider how to deal with vocal opposition from the mining sector.

This inaction is in sharp contrast to Nova Scotia, where the province is in the final stages of completing a major expansion to the parks and protected areas system that will result in over 12% of the province being protected.

Globally, countries including Canada have committed to protect at least 17% of their lands and freshwaters by 2020. Clearly New Brunswick is not pulling its weight in nation-wide efforts to meet this target.

As a step forward, CPAWS recommends that at least 17% of Crown land (8.5% of the province), including the largest patches of old growth forest, be designated in permanent protected areas by 2015, where no logging or mining would take place. We believe creating more parks and protected areas would result in significant environmental, social and economic benefits for New Brunswick. 

BEACONS OF HOPE FOR PARKS

In spite of the bad news, there are many amazing opportunities across Canada over the next few years to protect remarkable places in partnership with Indigenous peoples and other Canadians. There are also many opportunities to implement projects to protect and restore wildlife in some of our most treasured parks, like Banff and Jasper. Embracing these opportunities will require a careful focus on the ecological science underpinning these proposals, as well as relatively modest but essential investments in science and monitoring and consultations with Indigenous peoples, stakeholders and the Canadian public. The return on investment of expanding our parks systems and properly protecting the parks that we have will be significant.

Looking today at parks like Banff, Gros Morne, Nahanni, Forillon, Mont Tremblant and Killarney, it would be hard to find a Canadian who would argue that these special places shouldn't have been protected. And yet in each case, it took strong determination by decision makers and Canadians to insist that they be maintained in a natural state, rather than used for short term profit from resource development. The same will be true for future generations of Canadians looking back on the decisions we make today. Protecting Canada's wilderness is an investment in future opportunities for all Canadians, and a legacy that we can leave our grandchildren.

St. Mary's River, Nova Scotia -
Andrew Chow



Red Cliffe Island River -
Tracey Williams

GREAT SLAVE LAKE,
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



Expanding Canada's National Park System

PROTECTING THAIDENE NENE – THE LAND OF THE ANCESTORS, EAST ARM OF GREAT SLAVE LAKE, NWT

CPAWS is supporting the creation of a huge new protected area by the local Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and Parks Canada around and beyond the shores of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, Northwest Territories.

Thaidene Nene, meaning "Land of the Ancestors" in Denesuline (the Dene language), is a 33,000 square kilometre wilderness area at the heart of the Lutsel K'e Dene homeland. This vast northern landscape has sustained people and wildlife for thousands of years. Located approximately 250 km east of Yellowknife, at the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, Thaidene Nene presents an amazing opportunity for the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories to work in partnership with the Lutsel K'e Dene to create a spectacular new national park reserve.

The lands of Thaidene Nene are home to muskoxen, wolves, bears, wolverines and some of the last free-ranging herds of migratory barren-ground caribou. Spanning the transition zone between boreal forest and tundra, Thaidene Nene has many spectacular lakes, whitewater rivers, and spectacular waterfalls. The East Arm of Great Slave Lake has remarkable cliffs and islands and some of the deepest freshwater in North America.

The vision for Thaidene Nene is of a protected area that will conserve Thaidene Nene's natural and cultural values and support sustainable livelihoods and new tourism opportunities for the local community based on sharing their homeland and culture with other Canadians.

After many years, this exciting project is entering the final stages of negotiations. Currently the area of interest for this park is protected on an interim basis until March 2014. If no permanent protection is in place by then, this incredible conservation opportunity could be lost.

CPAWS is working with the Lutsel K'e Dene to raise awareness of this amazing place, and to encourage Canadians to support the creation of the national park reserve. Over the coming year a park boundary and an agreement to create the park needs to be finalized.

**THE ROUGE: AN OPPORTUNITY
TO GET IT RIGHT WITH CANADA'S
FIRST NATIONAL URBAN PARK**

In 2012 the federal government made progress on the proposed Rouge National Urban Park within the Greater Toronto region, announcing funding for the park and consulting on a draft “park concept”. In June 2013, the federal and provincial governments announced a transfer of some lands for the Rouge Park from the province to the federal government. Unfortunately, at the same time the federal government announced that a long-dormant proposal for a major new airport would proceed on lands neighbouring the Rouge, some of which are currently in Toronto’s Greenbelt. CPAWS has been calling for the permanent protection of these lands, either by including them in the park, or through a permanent protective designation as part of the Greenbelt, to ensure wildlife can move between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Creating the Rouge National Urban Park presents a unique opportunity to protect and restore an important ecosystem in Canada’s largest urban centre, and to provide millions of Canadians with the chance to directly experience wild nature without leaving the city. In such a busy urban landscape, assuring the long-term health of the park will require strong management tools that prioritize the protection of ecosystem health and provide clear guidance for visitor use.

It will be important to “get it right” for Canada’s first national urban park. The draft Rouge National Urban Park Concept released last summer does not clearly prioritize ecosystem health, instead including conservation as one of a list of many priorities for the park. It also leaves the door open to a full range of activities that may or may not be compatible with conserving the park’s special natural and cultural values.

As one of the best examples of Carolinian forest and one of the last intact watersheds in the Western Lake Ontario basin, the natural heritage of the Rouge is irreplaceable. Over 1,000 species of plants and animals inhabit the Rouge, including 23 species at risk.¹² The area also has a rich cultural heritage, important to Aboriginal peoples and to European settlers whose legacy of farming continues in parts of the Rouge today.

Creating the Rouge National Urban Park is just the latest step in a decades-long effort to protect the unique and rich ecosystem of the Rouge. The Rouge was saved from urban sprawl through the efforts of dedicated local citizens who, for decades, fought to protect the Rouge Valley, and by the Ontario provincial government who responded by creating the present-day Rouge Park. As responsibility for the Rouge passes to Parks Canada, it is important that the management model reflects the ecological significance of the area, and honours the conservation legacy of the citizens who fought to protect the Rouge.

CPAWS is recommending that the legislation and policies for the Rouge National Urban Park very clearly prioritize ecosystem health as the overarching management goal within which nature-focused visitor experiences will be encouraged. Education and stewardship activities that directly connect people with nature, such as volunteer restoration and monitoring programs, should be prioritized, rather than a broad suite of recreational activities widely available elsewhere in the city. This approach will help distinguish the National Urban Park from other urban parks and green space, and establish a solid precedent for future National Urban Parks.¹³

To ensure adequate ecological connectivity from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine, CPAWS is recommending that important ecological lands adjacent to the current Rouge National Urban Park study area also be permanently protected from urban development.

PROPOSED ROUGE
NATIONAL URBAN PARK,
ONTARIO



Proposed Rouge National
Urban Park, Ontario -
Jennifer Berney

¹² Species at risk found in the Rouge include red shouldered hawk, Blanding’s turtle, American ginseng, Atlantic salmon (Lake Ontario population), and bashful bulrush (which, living up to its name, has not been seen in recent years).

¹³ CPAWS detailed recommendations for the Rouge National Urban Park can be found at http://www.cpaws.org/uploads/Rouge_Submission.pdf



Sable Island, Nova Scotia -
Green Horse Society

**SABLE ISLAND NATIONAL
PARK RESERVE,
NOVA SCOTIA**



**NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH
NATIONAL PARK RESERVE,
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**



**SABLE ISLAND NATIONAL PARK
RESERVE, NS CREATED – MORE
WORK NEEDED TO CLOSE DOOR TO
OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION**

In June 2013, Sable Island was officially established as Canada's 43rd national park. Located approximately 200km off the coast of Nova Scotia, on the edge of the continental slope, Sable Island is a Canadian treasure. Made entirely of sand, the island is well-known for its population of wild horses and rich cultural history involving shipwrecks and a lifesaving station, but it's also significant for other conservation values as well. These include the largest sand dunes in Eastern North America, the largest grey seal population in the world, the only known breeding location in the world for the Ipswich savannah sparrow, a rich diversity of flora and fauna including a critical staging area for migratory birds, and several species at risk including the roseate tern.

CPAWS first proposed a national park for Sable Island in 1971 and welcomes the creation of Canada's newest national park. We have concerns, however, that the door remains open for "low impact" oil and gas exploration occurring on the surface of the island. On Canada's East Coast, the Offshore Petroleum Accord Implementation Acts take precedence over all other pieces of legislation pertaining to the offshore, including the National Parks Act. This creates a special circumstance where the Offshore Acts needed to be amended to prevent oil and gas exploration and development in the national park.

The legislation that created Sable Island National Park Reserve amended the Offshore Acts to prohibit drilling on the island and out to one nautical mile, but allows continued "low impact" exploration activities on the island. CPAWS and other environmental groups proposed several amendments to the Bill to prevent any oil and gas activity in the national park, but these proposed changes were rejected. This means there is more work to do to fully protect Sable Island from oil and gas activities.

Moving forward, Parks Canada needs to develop an effective management plan for Sable Island National Park Reserve that puts ecological integrity first and develop visitor experiences that are primarily focused off-island, including the development of a state-of-the-art pavilion in downtown Halifax that can bring Sable Island to the people. The federal and provincial governments also need to develop clear directives to the offshore petroleum board that the national park is entirely off-limits to oil and gas exploration.

**NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL
PARK RESERVE, NWT—BETTER
BOUNDARY WOULD COMPLETE
PROTECTION OF WORLD-
RENOWNED NAHANNI WATERSHED**

In August 2012, the Prime Minister announced the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve, in the headwaters of the famed South Nahanni Watershed, upstream and adjacent to the Nahanni National Park Reserve and World Heritage Site. Protecting the headwaters of the Nahanni is the final step needed to secure this world renowned wilderness watershed forever. CPAWS welcomed this new national park, but expressed serious concern that the park boundary, as announced, would leave caribou calving and breeding grounds, important habitat for grizzly bears and Dall's sheep, as well as a major tributary of the South Nahanni River unprotected and vulnerable to the impacts of mining development. According to the government's own public documents the boundary that was announced provides "minimal protection to important conservation values"¹⁴

Prior to the final establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh park under the National Parks Act, there is still an opportunity to improve the boundary for Nááts'ihch'oh to ensure it reflects the scientific evidence of what habitat is needed to conserve wildlife, protects the source waters of the Nahanni, and respects the interests of the Sahtu Dene and Metis and the Canadian public.

¹⁴ http://cpaws.org/uploads/Boundary_options_FINAL_ENG_2010-02-16.pdf



American Badger -
Tom Tietz

CPAWS has worked for more than four decades to protect the Nahanni watershed, first to establish the original Nahanni National Park Reserve in the early 1970s and then working with the Dehcho First Nations to expand the park. In 2009, CPAWS welcomed the six-fold expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve, a decision that reflected the needs of wildlife, and the interests of the Dehcho First Nations and the Canadian public. Establishing Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve with an appropriate boundary would complete protection of the Nahanni — one of Canada's greatest treasures — forever.

NEW NATIONAL PARK IN BC'S SOUTH OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN WOULD PROTECT UNIQUE CANADIAN ECOSYSTEM

Over the past few years there has been a groundswell of local support building for the creation of a national park in the spectacular and endangered South Okanagan –Similkameen area of British Columbia.

This area of unique natural beauty and rare ecosystems is home to 58 species at risk – one-third of the province's total. Unfortunately the fragile grasslands and desert-like ecosystems of the South Okanagan are rapidly being lost to urban encroachment, agriculture and other development, leaving only tiny fragments left.

Parks Canada has long expressed interest in establishing a national park in the South Okanagan area to conserve its significant ecological values, and to include an example of Canada's "Interior Dry Plateau" natural region in the national park system. In 2003 Parks Canada and the BC government initiated a study to determine the feasibility of a national park. Following many years of extensive consultation and analysis, the findings were released in 2011. The study concluded that a national park was indeed feasible and recommended that the Governments of Canada and BC sign a Memorandum of Understanding to move forward on the establishment of a national park reserve. Unfortunately, the BC government

declined to proceed to this next stage, citing a lack of local support. Since then the park proposal has been on hold.

CPAWS has gathered evidence that there IS strong local support for the park and has been working with local partners to highlight this finding. We have been meeting with local governments, business and tourism associations, discussing the likely economic benefits of a park, including local employment, visitor spending, and tax revenue.

Since the province's decision to withdraw from talks in January 2012, many local organizations, including the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, several local town councils and chambers of commerce and the Thompson-Okanagan Tourism Association have written supportive letters to the provincial and federal governments, encouraging them to re-engage in negotiations to establish the park.

In February 2013 local First Nations publicly announced their support for the park based on results of their own study which concluded that a national park is feasible. They have called on the Governments of Canada and BC to re-engage in discussions to create the national park.

CPAWS is encouraging the Government of BC to examine the growing evidence of support for the creation of the national park, to consider the economic and conservation benefits that it would deliver, and to initiate a new conversation with the Government of Canada and local First Nations about creating the national park.

SOUTH OKANAGAN, BRITISH COLUMBIA





Castle Special Place, Alberta -
Charles Truscott

CASTLE SPECIAL
PLACE, ALBERTA



New Provincial Parks and Protected Areas

ALBERTA'S CASTLE SPECIAL PLACE— IS PROTECTION FINALLY WITHIN REACH?

After decades of effort, the soon-to-be-released draft land use plan for this part of southern Alberta could open the door to legal protection of the 1,000 km² Castle Special Place as a Wildland and Provincial Park – especially if the Government of Alberta listens to the thousands of citizens and organizations who have supported this direction during public consultations on the plan.

The Castle is a ribbon of forested wilderness running along the spine of the Rocky Mountains in southwestern Alberta and is incredibly rich in biodiversity. It includes important habitat for threatened grizzly bears and “pure-strain” west-slope cutthroat trout, as well as many other species. It is also a botanical hotspot, home to 824 vascular plant species — over half of Alberta's flora and part of a wildlife corridor that connects wilderness areas in Alberta with those in British Columbia and the United States, providing

safe passage for wildlife to move through the landscape on their daily and seasonal rounds. This wilderness area supplies nearly one third of the Oldman River Basin's water, providing a vital supply of drinking and agricultural water to 70 municipalities across Southern Alberta, and it is a cherished recreation area for many people in southern Alberta, contributing to the economies of local and regional communities.

In spite of its enormous environmental and social value, the Castle continues to be threatened by logging, oil and gas development, and off-road vehicle use, and its current status as a Forest Land Use Zone fails to address the on-going environmental degradation caused by these activities. It is the only site identified under the Alberta Government's Special Places 2000 Program that remains unprotected.

The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, which aims to balance social, economic and environmental goals in the region, and will direct land use for the next decade, provides Alberta with an opportunity to legally designate the Castle as a Wildland and Provincial Park.



Dumoine River, Quebec -
Marie-Eve Marchand

QUEBEC'S DUMOINE RIVER AQUATIC RESERVE COULD PROTECT VITAL WATERSHED

The Dumoine River flows south from western Quebec's boreal forest into the Ottawa River just north of Algonquin Park. As the last undammed major river in southern Quebec, the Dumoine is a prized destination for white water paddlers. The river and its watershed are also sacred to local Algonquin First Nations and forms a vital ecological connection between the forests of the Ottawa Valley and the boreal forest further north.

For many years CPAWS has been working to protect the Dumoine. A proposal announced by the Quebec government in 2008 would protect 1,445 km², or approximately one third of the Dumoine watershed, but leaves out the important headwaters of the river basin, as well as significant areas of old growth forest.

In January 2013, the Quebec government took the important next step of holding public hearings on the final boundaries and level of protection for the Dumoine River Aquatic Reserve. During these hearings CPAWS presented extensive scientific analysis highlighting the need to expand the proposed Reserve to approximately 3,000 km² – two-thirds of the watershed – to include the river's

headwaters and rare stands of old-growth forest, as well as to maintain ecological connections with other natural areas including the Dumoine's sister rivers, the Kipawa and the Noire.

Creating this Aquatic Reserve would help revitalize local communities struggling to recover from the collapse of the forest industry by encouraging new local investment in ecotourism opportunities.

A final recommendation from the commission holding the public hearings is expected by December 2013 after which CPAWS will be urging the Quebec government to proceed to permanently protect the Dumoine. 🌿

DUMOINE RIVER AQUATIC RESERVE, QUEBEC





ABOUT CPAWS

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is Canada's voice for wilderness. Since 1963 we've led in creating over two-thirds of Canada's protected areas. That amounts to about half a million square kilometres – an area bigger than the entire Yukon Territory! Our vision is that Canada will protect at least half of our public land and water. As a national charity with 13 chapters, over 50,000 supporters and hundreds of volunteers, CPAWS works collaboratively with governments, local communities, industry and indigenous peoples to protect our country's amazing natural places. We're also on guard to ensure that our parks are managed to protect the nature within them.

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