



CPAWS 2009 PARKS DAY REPORT

PHOTO: EVAN FERRARI

The good, the bad and the ugly | July 18, 2009

OVERVIEW

Now in its 19th year, Canada's Parks Day takes place on the third Saturday in July. It's an opportunity for Canadians to celebrate the largest national park system in the world, to enjoy provincial parks, and to reflect on our progress—and challenges—in protecting more of our irreplaceable wilderness.

In our first annual review of Canada's parks for Parks Day 2008, we congratulated the Federal Government on "extraordinary" gains, predicting that 2008 "could be one of the best years for protecting wilderness the country has seen."

The pace of park creation slowed in 2009, but there is still good news: several major parks were created this year by various governments in Canada, and others further protected from development.

In Canada's two largest provinces, Ontario and Quebec, progress has continued towards meeting 2008 commitments by the respective premiers to protect at least half of their northern

Boreal Forests from industrial activity. This is also good news for the future of new protected area creation in Canada.

However, there is also bad news to report. The pace of new park creation has slowed considerably since last Parks Day. Many ecologically sensitive landscapes and waters remain unprotected. Overall, just under 10% of Canada's lands and less than 1% of our oceans and freshwater is permanently protected—little change since 2008.

And there is ugly news: Despite their official protected status, some park ecosystems are being degraded through improper management.

THE GOOD

We gave a “good” rating to newly created parks, or improved habitat in existing parks.

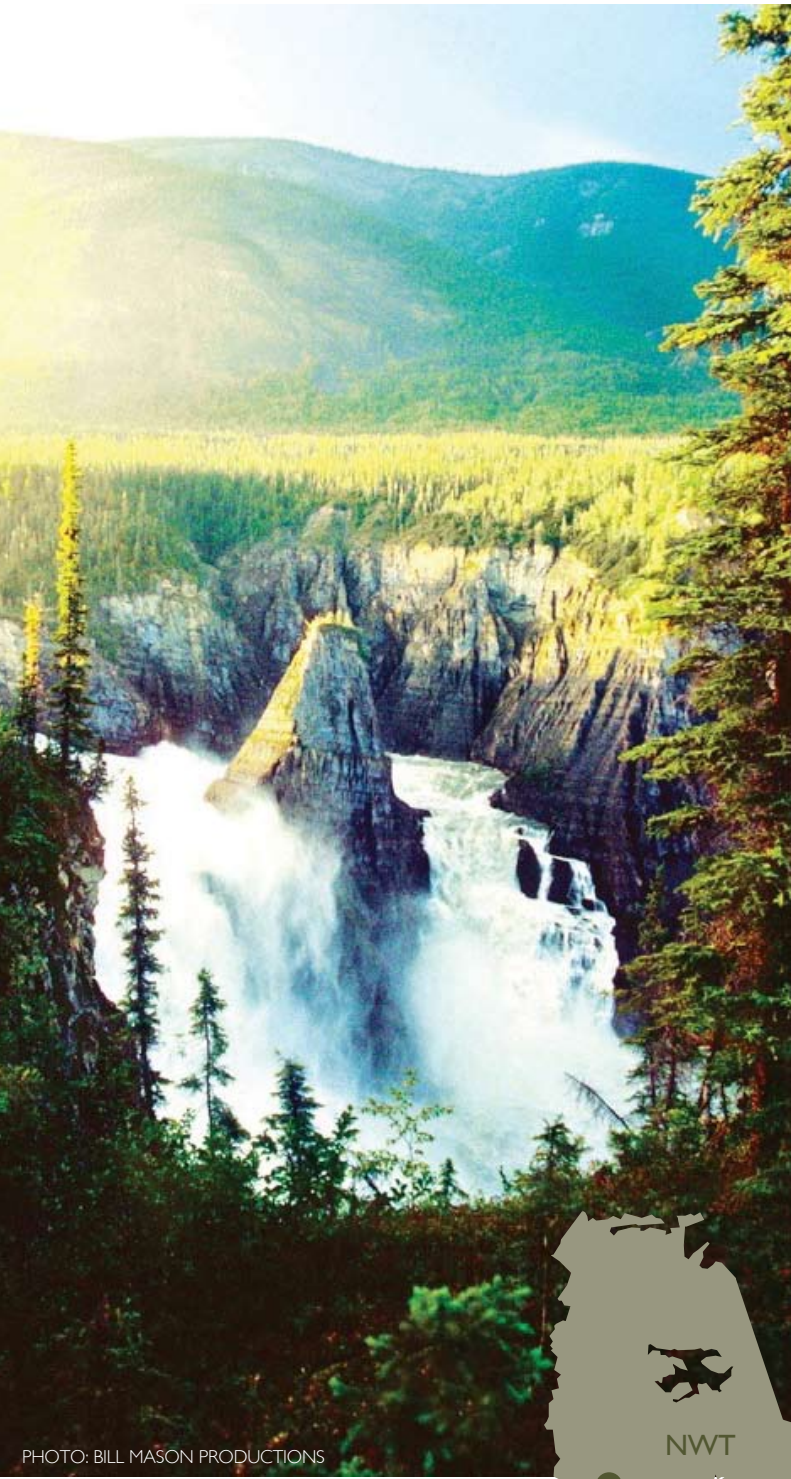


PHOTO: BILL MASON PRODUCTIONS



NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK RESERVE EXPANDED

The world-famous Nahanni Park Reserve in the Northwest Territories is now nearly seven times the size of the original park established in 1972. Final legal protection for the park expansion was passed in June 2009. The expanded park reserve will permanently protect over 30,000 km² of Boreal wilderness—an area the size of Vancouver Island.

With this announcement by Environment Minister Jim Prentice, the federal government has created Canada’s third largest national park —the largest in the Yellowstone to Yukon wilderness corridor—that can take its place alongside Banff and Jasper as one of the world’s great protected areas.

The legalization of final boundaries comes nearly two years after Prime Minister Harper and former Environment Minister John Baird promised a massive expansion of the park, crowning years of work by the Dehcho First Nations to protect this part of their traditional territory and by CPAWS and many others to convince the federal government to permanently protect this iconic wilderness area.

Heritage Rangelands Act protects Alberta ecosystems

OH Ranch and Glenbow ranch now protect significant habitat along the Bow River and in the foothills south of Calgary. The majority of these lands have been privately owned for the past century. However, while Heritage Rangelands provide them a greater degree of protection, these sites are even less accessible to the public for benefit, education, and enjoyment.

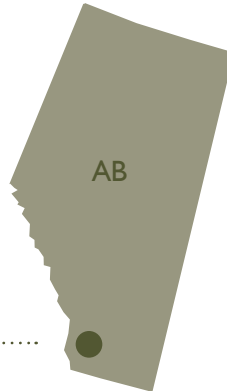


PHOTO: RON THIESSEN

More protected areas for New Brunswick



There were positive steps towards establishing a network of protected natural areas in New Brunswick when the province created 50 km² of new protected natural areas in fall 2008 and expanded the size of Grand Lake Protected Natural Area and Anchorage Provincial Park by acquiring adjacent lands to protect their ecological integrity. Even more promising is the announced expansion of the province's protected natural areas system by 50-100%. This would allow New Brunswick to protect key wilderness areas in the Restigouche watershed and other parts of the province.

It is important that the expansion be at least a doubling of the current protected areas system. Conservation scientists have indicated that even at that rate, New Brunswick will not have protected sufficient amounts of important wild areas and habitats to secure wildlife, forests and rivers for the future.

Protected areas established in Great Bear Rainforest, British Columbia

Following British Columbia's announcement of protection for Great Bear Rainforest in 2007, BC protected more than 1.1 million hectares (11,000 km²) of wilderness by establishing 11 new Class A parks, 82 Conservancies, and 1 protected area and by expanding seven Class A Parks and two Conservancies.



LOGGING BANNED IN MANITOBA PARKS

After years of campaigns by organizations including CPAWS, and tens of thousands of letters from citizens, the Manitoba government finally announced an end to industrial logging in all provincial parks but one last November.



Approximately 5,000 km², an area 14 times the size of Winnipeg, will now be protected from commercial forestry in Manitoba. Industrial logging is now illegal in 79 out of 80 provincial parks, including all future parks.

NEW NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN NWT

The two peninsulas of Saoyú-?ehdacho on Great Bear Lake have been permanently protected as a National Historic Site. The site will be managed cooperatively by the community of Deline and Parks Canada, according to their shared vision for these important cultural landscapes. Set aside for their strong links to the history and culture of the people of Great Bear Lake, Saoyú-?ehdacho's two peninsulas now also protect over 5,500 km² of Boreal



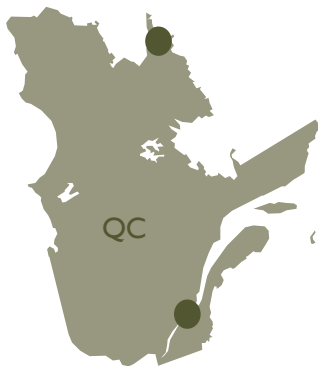
PHOTO: CRAIG SCOTT

forest, which provides important habitat for sensitive wildlife species such as Boreal woodland caribou, grizzly bears, wolverine and peregrine falcons.



Two new parks in Quebec

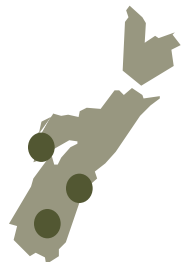
The province created two new provincial parks in the past year. Temiscouata Provincial Park (1753 km²) was created and Kuururjuaq Provincial Park (4461 km²) was permanently protected in May 2009. Kuururjuaq is four times bigger than the previously biggest park in the province (parc du Mont-Tremblant). Kuururjuaq is the second park created in the part of Quebec known as Nunavik.



New parks for Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia government continues to make progress by expanding its system of protected areas, creating three new protected wilderness areas over the past year, including:

- Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area conserves green space on the doorstep of Halifax and helps protect a network of a dozen inter-connected lakes.
- Shelburne River is a nationally significant wilderness area, and the final boundary includes the largest stand of hemlock trees in the Maritimes.
- Chignecto Isthmus Wilderness Area, at the NS/NB border



A number of smaller nature reserves were also created. In total, the province protected 51 km² of sensitive landscapes over the past year.

THE BAD

Despite commitments, these sensitive ecological areas still lack true protection.



CANADA'S COASTAL WATERS AND GREAT FRESHWATER LAKES

Canada has committed to establishing a system of Marine Protected Areas by 2012 to meet part of its commitment under the International Convention on Biodiversity. But to date, less than 1% of our coastal waters have been protected, and the pace of establishing new MPAs is extremely slow. The last Marine Protected Area announced was Bowie Seamount off the British Columbia coast in April 2008.

A Marine Protected Area (MPA) has been discussed for Iles-de-la-Madeleine, Quebec, but the feasibility study has been stalled for five years.



PHOTO: RODERICK HAIG-BROWN; SABINE JESSEN

Gatineau Park, National Capital Region



Gatineau Park offers a unique wilderness experience to residents of the National Capital area: the opportunity to enjoy the sight of a deer, the howl of a wolf and the haunting call of the loon. But unlike other national parks in Canada, Gatineau Park lacks formal protection. Its boundaries have never been set in law, which means that park land may be sold or used to construct roads, colleges and other facilities that are incompatible with a protected area.

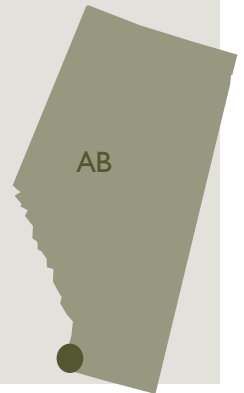
In June 2009, the federal government introduced legislation to recognize the park's boundaries and give its owner, the National Capital Commission (NCC), flexibility to acquire private property within the park. However, under the proposed legislation the NCC could still sell off park land, and unlike the National Parks Act, there would not be a requirement to place priority in management practices on maintaining the park's ecological integrity. CPAWS is supporting amendments to the Bill that would give Gatineau greater protection. The Bill is expected to be reviewed by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment this fall.



PHOTO: A. MAGILL / FLICKR

ALBERTA'S CASTLE CROWN WILDERNESS AREA

This area of Rockies foothills in the southwestern corner of Alberta has been recognized by the provincial government as a biologically significant area. In fact, the government declared it a protected area in 1995. However, it is currently managed by the Alberta Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development, and not the Ministry of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. The area is suffering from rampant unchecked motorized recreation and off-trail camping. In addition, clear-cut logging is slated to begin this winter. Without improved management practices, the ecological integrity of this "protected area" is at serious risk.



Assinica Cree Heritage lands, Quebec



A park proposal by the Ouje-Bougoumou Cree community to protect vast mature Boreal forests, three herds of vulnerable woodland caribou and great cultural value, has been stalled since 2002. By setting up a strong ecotourism industry, the Cree plan would contribute to sustainable economic development for the community and the region of Northern Quebec. The park would be located in the Mistassini Highlands, where less than 5% of the forest is currently protected. However, the park proposal is stalled due to disagreement between the Cree and the Government of Quebec about the

ideal size of the park. The Cree want to protect 6,000 km². A Quebec government proposal though would only protect about half that amount, and would exclude critical caribou habitat as well as many sites of archeological value.

Chignecto Game Sanctuary, Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia government has failed to designate the public lands of the Chignecto Game Sanctuary as a protected wilderness area. As a result, this beloved part of Nova Scotia remains vulnerable to clearcutting, mining, road-building, and seismic testing. The public lands of the Chignecto Game Sanctuary contain some of the most extensive old-growth Acadian forest remaining in Nova Scotia and are home to one of the largest remaining populations of endangered mainland moose in the province.





PHOTO: BOB MCKAY

SOUTH OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Parks Canada is now entering the sixth year of a feasibility study to determine whether a national park should be established in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region of BC. In the meantime, rare grasslands in the area are being converted to grow wine and one of the most endangered landscapes in Canada is slowly disappearing. There is strong public support for creating a national park here that would protect endangered burrowing owls and rare forms of cactus within Canada, and provide a positive economic contribution to the region.



THE UGLY

“Park” doesn’t always mean “protected”. These parks are being degraded by development, industry, and human pressures inside and out.



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

Point Pelee National Park too small for wildlife

Although it’s one of Canada’s smallest national parks, Point Pelee is one of the best places in North America to view the annual songbird migration. But its small size threatens the park’s ecological integrity. Invasive species, agricultural pressures, wind turbine proposals, and 300,000 visitors per year to just over four square kilometres of dry land make park management a challenge. Unless the park is re-connected soon with other natural habitats in the area, it will continue to decline.

LOGGING IN ALGONQUIN PARK

Although logging has been illegal since 2006 in all 630 of Ontario’s other protected areas, cutting continues in Algonquin, Canada’s oldest provincial park. Only 22% of the park is protected from logging and the length of the forestry roads within its borders would stretch to Florida and back.

A 2006 Ontario government report recommended increasing protection from logging within the park to more than half of the park. Nearly 80% of the public opposes logging in parks. However, new regulations to reduce the amount of logging within the park’s borders have not been forthcoming. With the G8 leaders arriving in 2010 in Huntsville, a town bordering the park, a move to reduce logging and improve its future ecological integrity would be timely.



AERIAL SHOT OF LOGGING IN ALGONQUIN
PHOTO: EVAN FERRARI



DEVELOPMENT THREATENS WATERTON AND SURROUNDINGS



Pure water and pristine wilderness make Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park within Alberta and Montana a special place that has been designated a UN World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve. The park is threatened by British Columbia's land use plan that encourages mining and gas extraction in the Flathead River Valley adjacent to the Park. One proposal under consideration by the BC government is an open

pit coal mine 35 kilometres upstream from the Park. Over 325 million tons of overburden rock would be dumped into a tributary of the Flathead River that is critical habitat for threatened bull trout and genetically-pure westslope cutthroat trout. Failure of waste ponds would send toxic sludge into Waterton-Glacier within 24 hours. Other mineral exploration is underway even closer to the Park boundary. Vulnerable populations of grizzlies, wolves, lynx and wolverines are also threatened by these plans.

PHOTO:S HARVEY LOCKE; ERIN SEXTON

Gros Morne threatened by energy proposal

Nalcor Energy, Newfoundland's energy company, is proposing to send 45 to 70 m tall transmission lines through Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. If the proposal were to proceed, the ecological integrity of this spectacular park on Newfoundland's west coast would be compromised.



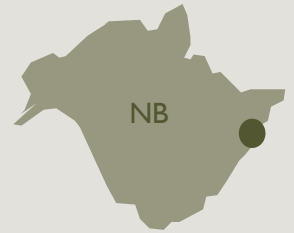
PHOTO: JEREMY CAISSIE

QEI Wildlands Provincial Park at risk

One of the most diverse and least disturbed natural areas in central Ontario is threatened by a proposed quarry on its outskirts and ATV use inside the park. The quarry proposal for this area 35 km north west of Orillia would potentially draw down water tables within a wetland area that is home to several endangered species. Combined with truck traffic and silica dust created by the quarrying process, this form of industrial development would create significant stresses on the ecological integrity of park. In addition, damage caused by excessive ATV use within the park challenges park managers in their attempts at protecting biodiversity and habitats.

BAY OF FUNDY EXPANSION NEEDED

The Bay of Fundy is among the top 77 nominees for the international New Seven Wonders of Nature contest, but its eponymous national park is at great risk. Parks Canada ranks it second only to tiny Point Pelee National Park for risk of extirpation—local extinction of species—within its borders. Fundy National Park is too small to provide sufficient habitat for many species—aquatic and terrestrial. Unless the park's boundaries are expanded, the fate of the natural ecosystems within it is far from certain.



Mont Orford Park lands missing

A 2007 decision to sell part of Mont Orford Park to developers spurred public anger and the largest environmental protest in Quebec's history. Although some new lands were added to the park in mid-2008, the lands removed from the park for development have never been reinstated.

CPAWS is still looking to the Québec government to reinstate the removed lands and move ahead on its 2006 commit-

ment to continue to acquire private lands with the aim of doubling the size of the park to improve the outlook for maintaining its ecological integrity.



APPENDIX: HOW PARKS LAWS ACROSS CANADA STACK UP*

Preserving ecological integrity is the cornerstone of good park management.

A park has ecological integrity when its natural processes and biodiversity remain intact. It is considered healthy when it includes all of the following:

- Large wild areas
- Minimal or no development and roads
- Native species with healthy populations
- Natural processes that persist

Resource extraction and development in and around parks disrupt habitat and natural cycles like floods and fires. Unrestricted recreational use can also harm natural systems in parks.

Creating protected areas is the first major step in protecting ecosystems. But if they don't give priority to protecting ecological integrity, the laws governing these special places may not keep them safe from degradation. Here's how Canada's governments stack up.

Federal government

Canada's National Parks are governed by the *Parks Act of 2000*, which has ecological integrity as its guiding principle. The Act is considered "the gold standard" both nationally and internationally for the protection given to parks' ecological integrity.

In the past year Parks Canada has developed a new activities assessment process in consultation with many stakeholders including CPAWS, which is now used to assess new activities such as hang gliding and ziplining in Parks. The approved process and guidelines have been widely accepted by a large percentage of stakeholders who were involved in their development.

One worrying note is that public events that conflict with EI have recently been approved by Parks Canada, notably two major special events in Banff National Park: the Golf Skins game to be held in 2010, and the Dragon Boat Festival held in 2008 and 2009.

Parks Legislation: Exemplary

Alberta

Albertans have spoken: in a poll on parks, most said the top priority for parks should be to set aside more land and leave it in an undisturbed state. This spring, the province released its *Plan for Parks*. However, the document contained no specific plans to complete or expand the parks system, nor were any new park sites identified.

Parks Legislation: Needs improvement

British Columbia

British Columbia protected more than 11,000 km² of wilderness this year by establishing 11 new Class A parks, 82 Conservancies, and 1 protected area, and by expanding 7 Class A Parks and 2 Conservancies. But due to the economic downturn, the Province of BC has slashed parks funding and cut park staff and conservation programs. It is now the only parks system in Canada with no staff-led interpretation program.

Parks Legislation: Needs improvement

Manitoba

Premier Doer announced an end to industrial logging in Manitoba's existing and future parks, with the exception of Duck Mountain Park where forestry continues. Over 500,000 ha of park area previously available for commercial logging is now legislatively protected from this activity. Mining, Hydro, and other industrial operations are still permitted within many of Manitoba's provincial parks. Due to a lack of human resources, the process to fulfill the province's legislative requirement to develop management plans for each of Manitoba's parks has been stalled for years. The Manitoba Parks Act fails to include Ecological Integrity as a principle for managing parks.

Parks Legislation: Needs Improvement

New Brunswick

Although New Brunswick established some new protected areas in the past year, the *Parks Act* doesn't include a mandate to protect the ecological integrity of provincial park ecosystems, develop conservation plans, or consult the public about potential uses of park lands. The need for park conservation plans was highlighted in summer 2008, when trees around a stream and nature trail at Mactaquac Provincial Park were cut to make way for an aerial obstacle course. This was done without proper environmental permits, no public engagement, and no available evaluation of impacts the development might have on wildlife and ecosystems. CPAWS has recommended that the government develop a public process to establish management plans that detail how park ecosystems and wildlife will be conserved, and the appropriate land uses for zones of each park.

Parks Legislation: Needs improvement

Newfoundland and Labrador

This province requires parks be managed with EI as a guiding principle, but only in policy. Provincial legislation to enforce good management is lacking.

Parks Legislation: Needs improvement

Northwest Territories

The Government of the NWT has shown increasing interest in protecting lands under territorial legislation, though it has not yet indicated that it will sponsor any protected areas. The government has been conducting consultations to develop a NWT Water Strategy which will consist of goals and principles to facilitate sound water management and policies in public water, transboundary waters and aquatic ecosystems. The Water Strategy will respect aboriginal and treaty rights, land claim and self-government agreements.

Parks legislation: Needs improvement

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia expanded its protected area network by 51 square km this year, and most parks in the province are well managed. However, some protected areas are still open to commercial activity. Part of Scatarie Island Wilderness Area has been opened to commercial seal harvest, and Chignecto Game Sanctuary allows clearcutting, mining, road-building, and seismic testing. The province's Wilderness Areas Protection Act contains a loophole allowing ministerial discretion on ATV use in parks.

Parks Legislation: Needs improvement

Ontario

Premier McGuinty introduced legislation this year to protect at least 225,000 square kilometres of the northern boreal forest. The *Far North Planning and Protection Act*, if passed, would help Ontario fight climate change, protect ecosystems and ensure First Nations have control over land-use decisions as they plan for cultural renewal and economic prosperity. The *2006 Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act* enshrines ecological integrity as a priority for parks management. However, the province still has not eliminated logging from Algonquin Park.

Parks Legislation: Good

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Quebec

Premier Charest announced his commitment to protect half of the province's northern Boreal forest in fall 2008 and established two new provincial parks in the past year. The province's parks legislation, however, does not identify ecological integrity as a priority for management plans.

Parks Legislation: Needs improvement

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Yukon

The Yukon Government has done well living up to its protected areas commitments within First Nations Land Claim Agreements. The North Yukon Land Use Plan was signed off resulting in new protection for areas like Summit Lake and Whitefish Wetlands. The Tombstone Territorial Park management plan was approved after several years of negotiation, officially giving the park management direction for no roads into the few existing mineral claims. The challenge in the Yukon continues to be the Government's demonstrated lack of desire to create new protected areas, for example in the spectacular but threatened Peel watershed which CPAWS has been campaigning to conserve for nearly a decade.

Parks Legislation: Needs Improvement

** Some jurisdictions missing due to lack of data in time for report's release.*

NB: Legislation was judged according to whether the jurisdiction had a Parks Act that requires that ecological integrity be given priority in management practices and public consultation on parks management regarding ecological integrity.



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