



Management Planning in National Parks

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Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Current Legislation | 1 |
| Parks Canada Policy | 2 |
| What is in a Management Plan? | 2 |
| Zoning | 3 |
| National Park Zones | 4 |
| Designated Wilderness Areas | 5 |
| Steps in Management Planning | 5 |
| Public Consultation | 5 |
| Environmental Assessment..... | 6 |
| Summary: What Should I Look For in a Management Plan? | 6 |
| Appendix 1: Parks Canada Management Planning Timetable | 7 |
| Appendix 2: Examples of Management Plans..... | 9 |

Current Legislation

Management planning in Canada is legislated under section 11 of the *Canada National Parks Act*¹ (the Act):

Management plans

11 (1) The Minister shall, within five years after a park is established, prepare a management plan for the park containing a long-term ecological vision for the park, a set of ecological integrity objectives and indicators and provisions for resource protection and restoration, zoning, visitor use, public awareness and performance evaluation, which shall be tabled in each House of Parliament.

Review of management plans by Minister

¹ SC 2000, c. 32

(2) The Minister shall review the management plan for each park at least every 10 years and shall cause any amendments to the plan to be tabled in each House of Parliament.

2000, c. 32, s. 11; 2012, c. 19, s. 324.

Section 12(1) of the Act further states that the Minister shall provide opportunities for public consultation on the formulation of management plans.

Section 33(2)(a) of the Act states that community plans for parks must be consistent with the management plan for the park in which the community is located.

Parks Canada Agency is the agency responsible for providing management plans to the Minister under the Act; they are also responsible for management planning for National Marine Conservation Areas as well as national historic sites or other protected heritage areas.²

Parks Canada Policy

According to Parks Canada, management plans establish a 15-year vision with a primary goal to ensure a clearly defined direction for the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity (EI) and for guiding appropriate use.³

Management planning provides a framework for decision-making in each park. Part II, section 2.0 of Parks Canada's *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*⁴ states that management plans "are also commitments to the public of Canada from the Minister responsible for Parks Canada regarding the use and protection of national parks."

Under Parks Canada's policy, management plans are supposed to be reviewed every five years for re-tableting in Parliament with any amendments.⁵ This is at odds with the legislation.

What is in a Management Plan?

According to Parks Canada's *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*, Management plans are meant to:

- specify the type and degree of resource protection and management needed to assure the EI of the park and the management of cultural resources;
- define the type, character, and locale of visitor facilities, activities, and services; and
- identify target groups.⁶

² *Parks Canada Agency Act*, SC 1998, c. 31, s. 32

³ <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/agence-agency/bib-lib/docs2b> accessed Feb 14 2018

⁴ <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/docs/pc/poli/princip> date modified 2017-06-12

⁵ 2.1.1 of Parks Canada's *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*

⁶ <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/docs/pc/poli/princip> date modified 2017-06-12

Section 2.1 of the *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* sets out what Parks Canada's obligations are:

2.1 Management Plans

2.1.1 Parks Canada will prepare management plans for the Minister's approval and tabling in Parliament:

- i) within five years after the proclamation of a park under any Act of Parliament; or
- ii) within five years of the transfer of administration and control to Parks Canada of lands proposed for establishment as national parks.

Management plans will be reviewed every five years for re-tabling with any amendments.

2.1.2 In the preparation of a management plan, the maintenance of ecological integrity through the protection of natural resources and processes will be the first priority when considering zoning and visitor use. The protection of cultural resources will receive a high level of consideration subject to this legislated requirement.

2.1.3 Each management plan will contain a statement of park purpose and objectives that will reflect the role of the park in the system of national parks, and in the natural region in which it is located.

2.1.4 Park management plans provide the framework for further detailed sub-plans concerning:

- i) ecosystem management (park conservation plan); and
- ii) interpretation, visitor services and visitor risk management (park service plan).

2.1.5 Parks Canada will inform and involve a broad spectrum of the Canadian public in the preparation, review and amendment of park management plans.

2.1.6 The implementation and effectiveness of each park management plan will be monitored continuously.

2.1.7 Parks Canada will cooperate with other levels of government, private organizations and individuals responsible for the planning of areas adjacent to national parks to maintain ecological integrity and to ensure that services and facilities are integrated in a positive manner with surrounding regions.

2.1.8 Management plans for national parks which have additional international or national designations, such as World Heritage Site, Biosphere Reserve, Ramsar Site, Canadian Heritage River, or National Historic Site, will include strategies for protection and promotion of the values that resulted in the additional designations.

Zoning

Section 2.2 of the *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* sets out the national parks zoning system. The zoning system is meant to reflect principles of EI by protecting park lands and ensuring a minimum of human-induced change. Not all zones are represented in every park. Sites or areas that require special management outside of the zoning system will receive necessary treatment in management plans. Zones may also be temporal rather than simply spatial. Zoning:

- Applies to all land and waters in national parks;
- Does not preclude resource harvesting allowed by NPR's, land claims, or agreements;
- Includes 5 categories.

National Park Zones

| Zone | | Description |
|------|-----------------------------|--|
| I | Special Preservation | Specific areas or features which deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent a natural region. Preservation is the key consideration. Motorized access and circulation will not be permitted. In cases where the fragility of the area precludes any public access, every effort will be made to provide park visitors with appropriate off-site programs and exhibits interpreting the special characteristics of the zone. |
| II | Wilderness | Extensive areas which are good representations of a natural region and which will be conserved in a wilderness state. The perpetuation of ecosystems with minimal human interference is the key consideration. Offer opportunities for visitors to experience, first hand, a park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities which are dependent upon and within the capacity of the park's ecosystems, and which require few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities. Where the area is large enough, visitors will also have the opportunity to experience remoteness and solitude. Opportunities for outdoor recreation activities will be encouraged only when they do not conflict with maintaining the wilderness itself. For this reason, motorized access and circulation will not be permitted, with the possible exception of strictly controlled air access in remote northern parks. |
| III | Natural Environment | Areas which are managed as natural environments, and which provide opportunities for visitors to experience a park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities requiring minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. While motorized access may be allowed, it will be controlled. Public transit that facilitates heritage appreciation will be preferred. Park management plans may define provisions for terminating or limiting private motorized access. |
| IV | Outdoor Recreation | Limited areas which are capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the park's heritage values and related essential services and facilities, in ways that impact the ecological integrity of the park to the smallest extent possible, and whose defining feature is direct access by motorized vehicles. Park management plans may define provisions for limiting private motorized access and circulation. |
| V | Park Services | Communities in existing national parks which contain a concentration of visitor services and support facilities. Specific activities, services and facilities in this zone will be defined and directed by the community planning process. Major park operation and administrative functions may also be accommodated in this zone. Wherever possible, Parks Canada will locate these functions to maintain regional ecological integrity. |

Zones I and II will together constitute the majority of the area of all but the smallest national parks, and will make the greatest contribution toward the conservation of ecosystem integrity. In Zone II, where Parks Canada anticipates much visitor usage, Parks Canada will use a variety of other direct and indirect

strategies for managing public use, and will evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies on a regular basis.⁷

Changes to park zoning requires a management plan amendment and public notice and consultation.⁸

Designated Wilderness Areas

Wilderness areas within a park may be designated by regulation. The boundaries of wilderness areas are meant to be consistent with Zone II boundaries. Zone I areas may also be included in designated wilderness areas but managed separately.

The criteria for designated wilderness mirrors Zone II criteria. Boundaries and appropriate uses of designated wilderness areas are determined with public consultation during preparation or review of the management plan.

An Order in Council places a legislative constraint on development in designated wilderness areas. This prohibits the authorization of any activity that is likely to impair the wilderness character of the area.

Activities that may be allowed include:

- Park administration;
- Public Safety activities;
- Basic user facilities such as trails and rudimentary campsites;
- Traditional resource harvesting activities; and
- In exceptional circumstances, access by air to remote areas.

Changes to the boundary of a designated wilderness area would have to be preceded by public consultation and approved through an Order in Council.⁹

Steps in Management Planning

1. Parks Canada prepares a State of the Park Report
2. Based on the State of the Park Report, a scoping document is prepared to identify the main issues to be addressed and the proposed time frame needed to complete the plan
3. CEO approves scoping document
4. Management planning is launched, including public consultation and environmental assessment
5. Complete plans are submitted to the Minister for approval
6. Annually, Field Unit Superintendents complete an annual implementation report on the management plan and report to the public as well

Public Consultation

Public consultation may include issue identification, generation of solutions and review of draft plans. Public consultation is invited with First Nations, NGOs, local communities, stakeholders and interested individuals. Public consultation may take place in person or via the internet.

⁷ 2.2.3.2 of Parks Canada's *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*

⁸ 2.2.2 of Parks Canada's *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*

⁹ 2.3 of Parks Canada's *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*

Environmental Assessment

Management plans are subject to environmental assessment. A summary of this assessment should be included with the management plan itself.

Summary: What Should I Look For in a Management Plan?

A good management plan should:¹⁰

1. Follow the **legislative and policy guidelines** set out for Parks Canada;
2. Be prepared within **5 years** of park establishment;
3. Be prepared with the guidance of the **State of Park Report**, scoping document, and with sufficient **public consultation**;
4. Affirm that the guiding purpose for the park is the **maintenance and restoration of EI** so that the park is left unimpaired for future generations;
5. Contain a **statement of park purpose and objectives** that will reflect the role of the park in the system of national parks, and in the natural region in which it is located;
6. Identify a set of **EI objectives and indicators**, including identifying species at risk;
7. Identify provisions for **resource protection and restoration**, including species at risk;
8. **Describe and map the various zones** within the park that are delineated through a process that identifies the critical ecosystems and natural values of the park;
9. Identify provisions for **visitor use and public awareness** that ensures use opportunities are appropriate in the context of conserving the integrity, sensitivity, rarity, or significance of the park's ecological values;
10. Where applicable, **reflect additional responsibilities** of Parks Canada due to the park being a UNESCO World Heritage Site, part of a Biosphere Reserve, a Ramsar Site, etc.;
11. Identify provisions for **performance evaluation** and describe how park operations, partnerships, or collaborations will monitor the effectiveness of the management plan in achieving objectives;
12. Be detailed enough that it provides **clear guidance** to park managers as they make operational decisions for the park and includes direction to all park staff on how to manage the park in a way **that deals with stated concerns** of Indigenous communities, NGOs representing civil society, and stakeholders or other rights holders;
13. Describe how other government agencies or researchers will be involved or cooperate in park management, since park ecosystems and their services extend **beyond park boundaries**;
14. Describe the role and **value of indigenous peoples**, partners, the public and interest groups to the ongoing management of the park;
15. Include a copy of the **environmental assessment** completed on the plan; and
16. Incorporate management objectives and directions that will prepare parks to be resilient in the face of **climate change**.

¹⁰ Special thanks to Roberta Clowater

Appendix 1: Parks Canada Management Planning Timetable

| | <u>Region</u> | <u>Park</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|----|---|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Ivvavik NP | 2018 |
| 2 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Prince-Albert NP | 2018 |
| 3 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Gwaii Haanas NPR-NMCA | 2018 |
| 4 | Atlantic | Gros Morne NP | 2019 |
| 5 | Atlantic | Sable Island NPR | 2019 |
| 6 | Atlantic | Terra Nova NP | 2019 |
| 7 | Quebec and Nunavut | Quttinirpaaq NP | 2019 |
| 8 | Quebec and Nunavut | Ukkusiksalik NP | 2019 |
| 9 | Atlantic | Cape Breton Highlands NP | 2020 |
| 10 | Atlantic | Kejimikujik NP | 2020 |
| 11 | Atlantic | Kouchibouguac NP | 2020 |
| 12 | Atlantic | Torngat Mountains NP | 2020 |
| 13 | Quebec and Nunavut | Auyuittuq NP | 2020 |
| 14 | Quebec and Nunavut | Forillon NP | 2020 |
| 15 | Quebec and Nunavut | La Mauricie NP | 2020 |
| 16 | Quebec and Nunavut | Qaussuituq NP | 2020 |
| 17 | Ontario and Waterways | Georgian Bay Islands NP | 2020 |
| 18 | Ontario and Waterways | Thousand Islands NP | 2020 |
| 19 | Ontario and Waterways | Pointe Pelee NP | 2020 |
| 20 | Ontario and Waterways | Rouge NUP | 2020 |
| 21 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Grasslands NP | 2020 |
| 22 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Kluane NP and NPR | 2020 |
| 23 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Nahanni NPR | 2020 |
| 24 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Vuntut NP | 2020 |
| 25 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Wood Buffalo NP | 2020 |
| 26 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Banff NP | 2020 |
| 27 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Glacier NP | 2020 |
| 28 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Jasper NP | 2020 |
| 29 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Kootenay NP | 2020 |
| 30 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Mount Revelstoke NP | 2020 |
| 31 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Pacific Rim NPR | 2020 |
| 32 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Waterton Lakes NP | 2020 |
| 33 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Yoho NP | 2020 |
| 34 | Atlantic | Fundy NP | 2021 |
| 35 | Ontario and Waterways | Fathom Five NMP | 2021 |
| 36 | Ontario and Waterways | Bruce Peninsula NP | 2021 |
| 37 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Elk Island NP | 2021 |

| | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------|------|
| 38 | Mountain Parks & Pacific | Gulf Islands NPR | 2021 |
| 39 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Aulavik NP | 2022 |
| 40 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Riding Mountain NP | 2022 |
| 41 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Tuktut Nogait NP | 2022 |
| 42 | Quebec and Nunavut | Saguenay Saint Lawrence NMP | 2023 |
| 43 | Quebec and Nunavut | Mingan Archipelago NPR | 2024 |
| 44 | Ontario and Waterways | Pukaskwa NP | 2025 |
| 45 | Quebec and Nunavut | Sirmilik NP | 2026 |
| 46 | Ontario and Waterways | Lake Superior NMCA | 2026 |
| 47 | Atlantic | Prince Edward Island NP | 2027 |
| 48 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Wapusk NP | 2027 |
| 49 | Prairies, Yukon & Northwest Territories | Naats'ihch'oh NPR | 2027 |

Appendix 2: Examples of Management Plans

What does a good management plan look like?

Banff National Park

| Good Pieces | Could Be Improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contains a vision for the future of the park• Sets out the mandate of Parks Canada and the planning process• Refers to and summarizes the Park's State of the Parks Report, identifies challenges based on SOPR• Summarizes management priorities and challenges• Sets out concrete key strategies, including dividing the park into ecosystems and identifying directions for each ecosystem• Explicitly states targets for certain EI indicators and different ecosystems within the park• Describes the zones of the park and provides a map• Provides indicators that will be monitored for the SOPRs• Describes the environmental assessment that was completed• Provide a summary of priority actions over first 4 years of the plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting out what was heard during public consultation, who was consulted, how comments and feedback were incorporated into the plan• Most performance measurements do not include anticipated timelines• Does not append the SOPR |

National Park management plans can be found [here](#)