

Discussion - Working Paper

DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROGRAM Prince Albert National Park of Canada

Our Role: We are Guardians, Guides, Partners, and Storytellers

Our Commitments: We Protect, Present, Celebrate and Serve

1.0 Introduction

Established in 1927, the purpose of Prince Albert National Park of Canada is to:

Protect for all time the ecological integrity of a Natural Area of Canadian Significance representative of the Southern Boreal Plains and Plateaux; and,¹

To encourage public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the park's natural ecosystems and cultural heritage so as to leave them unimpaired for future generations.

The National Parks System of Canada describes Prince Albert National Park as being representative of the natural region of the Southern Boreal Plains and Plateaux. In terms of the Saskatchewan Eco-regions definition, the park's southwest corner is located in the boreal transition eco-region while the remainder of the park is Mid-Boreal upland.

2.0 Planning Context

2.1 Current State of the Park

Prince Albert National Park is at the approximate geographic center of Saskatchewan. PANP plays an important role in central Saskatchewan's tourism industry, offering quality visitor experiences. Each year more than 220,000 visitors, mainly Saskatchewan residents who have visited and enjoyed the park for multiple generations, participate in a range of activities in a variety of settings. Visitors to this 3,875 km² park enjoy solitude, nature, outdoor recreation, culture and history. They learn, first-hand, about Canada's

National parks and the natural and cultural region Prince Albert National Park encompasses.

The community of Waskesiu with its combination of culture, history and environmental stewardship welcomes visitors to take advantage of many services and recreational activities – swimming, boating, golfing, interpretive programs, dining, wildlife viewing and hiking along the shore or one of the other townsite trails.

A recent assessment of the state of ecological integrity in PANP indicated an overall stable to improving situation. The park has taken steps to remove dams which were barriers to fish movement, and restricted angling for lake trout. In addition, research has shown stable to increasing populations of important biodiversity measures such as migratory birds and plains bison. Areas of concern include the state of lake trout in Crean Lake, energy consumption by park operations and community of Waskesiu, and levels of spruce budworm infestation. In the long term effects of climate change may significantly impact hydrologic systems as well as the forest fire regime.

Surrounding the park are a number of communities, resort villages, First Nation reserves, Métis communities, private agricultural lands, provincial forest and grazing lands and forest harvesting leases.

Communities include Big River, Debden, Canwood, Shellbrook, Christopher Lake, and the rural communities of Mayview, Cookson, Foxdale, Stump Lake, Park Valley and Ladder Valley. Resort areas include Anglin Lake, Emma Lake, McPhee Lake and Elk Ridge Resort.

First Nation reserves and Métis communities include Lac La Ronge Indian Band, Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Little Red River Reserve, Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Wahpeton Dakota Nation, Big River First Nation, Ahtahkakoop First Nation. Métis communities include Weyakwin and Timber Bay.

2.2 Recent Progress

The review of the 1995 Management Plan was initiated in 1999. Several specific issues dominated discussions and park management determined that consensus on the scope of the plan was not likely to be achieved. In 2003, park management decided that wider more inclusive collaboration was required and management planning consultation was consequently placed on hiatus.

Public involvement in the scoping exercise is intended to refocus the planning exercise and encourage public involvement and support. For the first time in Parks Canada Agency's history, the scoping exercise at Prince Albert National Park of Canada was done as a public exercise. To ensure a greater participation, the park undertook

extensive public consultation which included: a mail out of over 600 letters sent to park stakeholders inviting comments, two presentations made to park staff, four public open houses held in Waskesiu, one on one consultation with approximately 35 First Nations bands and Métis locals in Saskatchewan and a telephone survey of over 800 Saskatchewan residents. All scoping and summary documents were posted on the Internet and widely circulated. The public was welcome to contribute and comment on all aspects of the planning exercise and provided input into identifying the issues and vision included in the scoping document.

2.3 Current Environment

In addition to the public's involvement in the scoping exercise, PANP established positive, productive working relationships with stakeholders and within the community of Waskesiu. These relationships are an essential foundation for future collaboration and progress.

Park Management invested a considerable amount of time and effort to increase greater understanding and support for the park management activities over the last two years. Increased public and stakeholder understanding and support is evident in partnerships made with Prince Albert Model Forest, Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, Waskesiu Townsite Vegetation Management Committee, Saskatchewan Tourism/Northern Saskatchewan Tourism DMO, and the Coalition of Park Supporters. The establishment and nurturing of important communications, education and decision-making forums enhanced understanding among staff and stakeholders such as the Paspiwin Cultural Heritage Committee, which is establishing a cultural heritage site in the old bison paddock

A new approach to consultation with Aboriginal people, direct one-on-one approach to all First Nation and Métis communities in the area, was initiated as part of the scoping process.

3.0 Vision 2020

Prince Albert National Park will continue to be the leader in the protection, presentation and enjoyment of a representative area of the Southern Boreal Plains and Plateaux and will remain a renowned destination where visitors can appreciate nature, cultural history and recreation.

By the year 2020, Prince Albert National Park of Canada will be well known as a place that:

- is a living example of the way nature and culture are protected while appropriate human activity is welcome.

- includes a full complement of predator and prey species representative of the southern boreal plains and plateaux natural region, with relationships between these species functioning naturally and remaining unaltered by human activities.
- operates in cooperation with PANP stakeholders and adjacent land managers to protect for all time healthy functioning ecosystems representative of the Mid-Boreal Upland Eco-region and Boreal Transition Eco-region of Canada. This will be done by maintaining and/or restoring natural processes (such as fire and flooding), plants, animals and physical features that have shaped this region.
- integrates park management with the larger ecological and cultural landscapes through partnerships with organizations such as the Prince Albert Model Forest and Prince Albert Grand Council. Principles of precaution are exercised when the effects on the ecosystem are uncertain.
- the cultural features and artefacts representing the diversity of the Aboriginal people, European colonization, and their descendants are protected and communicated to visitors.
- works with its partners and stakeholders to welcome all Canadian and international guests and is one of the premier visitor destinations within Saskatchewan.
- promotes the value and importance that Canadians place on our National Parks and National Historic Sites and provides opportunities for education and awareness about national park and national historic site values, ethics, natural and cultural heritage within and beyond the boundaries of the Park. This knowledge is fundamental in effecting the stewardship of and advocacy for these values.
- works with Aboriginal people partners, to preserve, present and protect the unique rich aboriginal history of the park, while incorporating Aboriginal people's knowledge into science and decision-making process.

4.0 Issues

4.0.1 Wildlife Management

Prince Albert National Park has a diverse wildlife population that includes species designated as threatened or of special concern under the Species At Risk Act. The park must address the long-term management of wildlife in and around Prince Albert National Park.

4.0.2 Aquatic Management

Prince Albert National Park sits at the height of land. The water that flows within and from the park affects many native species, ecological processes and recreational opportunities. Management within this holistic context is complex and needs to be addressed on a long-term basis.

4.0.3 Vegetation Management

Prince Albert National Park contains large areas of boreal forests which are primarily renewed through large high intensity fires, but is surrounded by forests managed for regional economic objectives. Non-native species have been introduced which threaten the integrity of native communities, including the fescue grasslands. The park needs to address the long-term management of non-native species and forest fires within Prince Albert National Park.

4.0.4 Protection and Presentation of Heritage Assets/Buildings

Prince Albert National Park must address its heritage assets and building that will achieve understanding and long-term protection.

4.0.5 Incomplete Knowledge of Park History

Prince Albert National Park has a rich history featuring Aboriginal people, traditional land uses, logging, commercial fishing, tourism development and recreational settlement. The history of Prince Albert National Park must be documented and completed.

4.0.6 Increasing Public Understanding of the Role of Prince Albert National Park in the National Park System.

Encourage and promote an environmental ethic and increase public understanding of the role of Prince Albert National Park in the national park system.

4.0.7 Provision of appropriate services and facilities

Prince Albert National Park is dealing with a legacy of heritage recreational facilities and services based on historic opportunities – it currently does not meet the dynamic visitor needs within the sustainable operation of the park.

4.0.8 Holistic Park Management

Prince Albert National Park must work with its partners/stakeholders and the public to address issues or opportunities of concern.

4.0.9 Increasing Participation of Aboriginal people in Park Management

The participation of Aboriginal people in the management of Prince Albert National Park is not adequate.

4.1 Potential Controversial Issues

4.1.1 Wildlife Management - Potential Controversial Issues

Plains Bison Management

Context

- Although plains bison were not reintroduced to the area by Parks Canada, the bison are often perceived by the public to be park bison and therefore, responsible for the problems they may cause.
- Wild plains bison outside the Park are considered a big game species without a hunting season and are, therefore, protected by provincial legislation. First Nations people can hunt bison on unoccupied crown land or on private land with landowner's permission.
- Federal/provincial Crop Insurance and Wildlife Depredation Plans do not include bison as one of the species they cover. Therefore, landowners who suffer damage from bison currently have no recourse for compensation.
- The bison population continues to grow and without active management to influence their movements and habitat use, will likely increase the amount of damage caused on neighboring private agricultural lands.
- Plains bison are likely to be listed in 2006 as threatened in Schedule I of the Species at Risk Act (SARA)

Plains Bison Issue: Stakeholders have continued to support PANP in spite of increasing financial costs, but the good will is eroding quickly and landowners will become increasingly vocal in calling for damage compensation and/or population control.

4.1.2 Aquatic Management - Potential Controversial Issues

Context

- The dominance of water-based activities within the Prince Albert National Park makes aquatics management one of the most significant issues for park management to address. The aquatic systems will feature high water quality,

biological diversity, and intact ecological process such as naturally reproducing fish populations and naturally fluctuating water levels. Water bodies cover approximately 10% of the park's surface, with approximately 1,600 lakes in seven watersheds. All watersheds but the MacLennan originate within and flow out of the park and ultimately flow to the Hudson's Bay via either the Churchill or North Saskatchewan Rivers.

Fish Management Issue

- Allowing for a quality fishing experience while maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems with a natural diversity of species and trophic structures.
- Any controversy will focus around the conflicting views of some of the stakeholder groups.

Water Control Structures Issues

- Water flow management that supports fish spawning and protects current lakeshore assets while allowing for natural fluctuating lake levels. By 2006 only one dam will be operating in PANP, the Anglin Lake dam as part of the Spruce River Diversion Project, which is operated by the Saskatchewan Water Authority.
- Any controversy will focus around the conflicting views of some of the stakeholder groups.

Tran boundary Lakes Management Issues

- Any controversy will focus around the conflicting views related to different practises/approaches to motor boat use, fishing limit, water control structures usage, winter access, exotic species access, and fragmentation of habitats.

4.1.3 Vegetation Management - Potential Controversial Issues

Context

- The goal of PANP forest fire management is to achieve a natural fire regime (number of and area burnt) through prescribed and natural fires. PANP is situated in the boreal forests adjacent to land leased by Weyerhaeuser for forest harvesting. Adjacent to the community of Waskesiu forests have been partially harvested to provide fire protection. This will be proposed for other areas of high value and risk such as along the boundary near Elk Ridge Resort.

Fire Management Issues

- Any controversy will focus around the conflicting/differing policies (resourced based industries) related to the park fire management practises, and fire protection actions around high value areas such as Elk Ridge Resort.

4.1.4 Communication and Education

Objectives for communication and education are based on the Engaging Canadians strategy and developed with stakeholder involvement.

Communication and education issues include:

- Parks Canada and Prince Albert National Park is relevant to the student population across Canada.
- Parks Canada and Prince Albert National Park is relevant to visitors, 84% of whom reside in Saskatchewan.
- Regional integration opportunities such as education outreach to educators and youth in Saskatchewan are enhanced.
- Engage and involve Aboriginal people in communication and education, and partnerships are established.
- Prince Albert National Park collaborates with the public and stakeholder groups.

4.1.5 Visitor Experience

Prince Albert National Park was created so generations of people could experience unimpaired wilderness, wildlife, cultural and aesthetic beauty. The 2001/2002 visitor survey indicates the park exceeded the national target of 85% for visitor satisfaction; overall, 93.3% of the visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with the facilities and services. Prince Albert National Park developed good working relationships within the tourism industry and received Saskatchewan Tourism 'designation' status, which enhances the park's position in the tourism industry.

To maintain visitor satisfaction and financial sustainability, issues include:

- Prince Albert National Park provides relevant and appropriate visitor experiences that inspire appreciation and protection.
- The park's service offering and facilities are financially sustainable.
- Through highways and other roads are safe and are maintained at an appropriate level of service given financial constraints.
- Revenue is reinvested back into services and facilities visitors enjoy.
- Public safety concerns are addressed.

4.1.6 Zoning and Wilderness Designation

The concept of legislated wilderness areas was controversial during the last plan review, due in large part to a lack of understanding and support. The following will occur during this plan review:

- To inform the general public, especially stakeholders, of the zoning system and the wilderness designation concept

- The importance to address the issue
- The proposal for zoning and legislated wilderness is presented to the public.
- The opportunity to consider its implementation at the park level.

Any controversy will focus around the conflicting views of some of the stakeholder groups.

4.1.7 Community of Waskesiu Lake

The Minister approved the Waskesiu Community Plan in 2000 following a lengthy and comprehensive consultation process.

5.0 Public Engagement Program

Prince Albert National Park continues the consistent and meaningful public engagement procedure developed during the scoping process.

Meaningful engagement means that Prince Albert National Park provides stakeholders and Aboriginal people partners with sufficient information to understand material so they may provide Parks Canada with meaningful input before any decisions are made.

This consultation process engages a number of stakeholder groups and individuals, including Cabin Owners Association, Coalition of Park Supporters, Cottage Owners Association, Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), Friends of Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES), Outfitters Association, Waskesiu Community Council, West Side Residence Group, park staff, local politicians (municipal, provincial and federal, federal), provincial agencies and departments, regional and municipal governments, and the general public.

This public engagement process includes:

- Open houses, general correspondence, mailings, newsletters, information bulletins, articles in media and a website
- Presentations and meetings
- Continuation of the Prince Albert National Park annual general meeting as a tool to report on progress of park in relation to its goals, targets and operations.

The park will continue its parallel engagement process with neighbouring Aboriginal people.

Science Liaison Committee will be requested to evaluate science components during the planning process.

6.0 Timeline

The timeline for the planning program is under development.

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*Timeline may be adjusted depending upon scoping document approval, time involved to provide the public/Aboriginal people with adequate time to review and comment.

7.0 Financial Issues

The management plan is achievable within the existing allotment of resources. The commitments made in the sustainable business plan are consistent with the context and actions outlined in the Prince Albert National Park management plan.

The park would be open to explore options that would engage interested organizations, individuals and stakeholders in some form of partnership or joint ventures to complement or to achieve the outcomes.