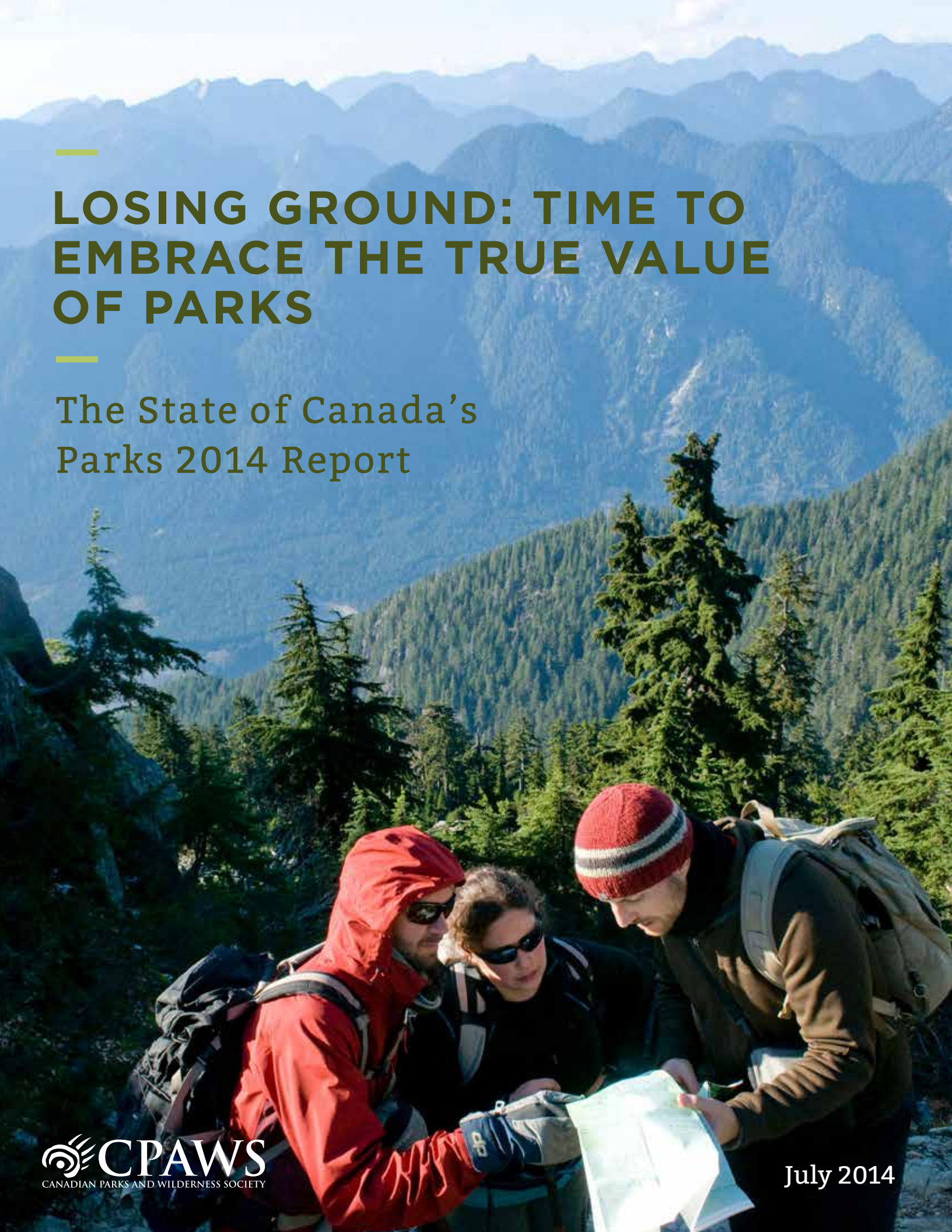


A photograph of three hikers in a mountain landscape. In the foreground, three people are looking at a map. On the left, a man in a red hooded jacket and sunglasses. In the center, a woman with curly hair and sunglasses. On the right, a man in a red and white striped beanie and a brown jacket, holding the map. They are all wearing backpacks. The background shows a vast mountain range with dense evergreen forests under a clear blue sky.

LOSING GROUND: TIME TO EMBRACE THE TRUE VALUE OF PARKS

The State of Canada's Parks 2014 Report

INTRODUCTION	2
THE BAD NEWS FOR PARKS	7
CHALLENGES FACING PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL PARKS	8
Changes to BC Park Act threaten integrity of provincial park system	8
Future of Yukon's Peel River Watershed in court	9
New forestry rules jeopardize future New Brunswick protected areas	9
DEVELOPMENTS IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARKS OUT	
OF STEP WITH POLICY, SCIENCE AND PUBLIC OPINION	11
Jasper hotel proposal risks opening commercial development	
floodgates in Rocky Mountain national parks	11
Theme park-like "Glacier Skywalk" opens in Jasper	12
FUNDING CHALLENGES PUT NATIONAL PARKS' ECOLOGICAL	
INTEGRITY AT RISK	13
NAHANNI PARKS THREATENED BY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS	15
DELAYS & UNCERTAINTIES PLAGUING PARKS' ESTABLISHMENT	18
ALBERTA'S CASTLE WILDERNESS REMAINS UNPROTECTED	19
PATH FORWARD UNCLEAR FOR ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK	20
NEW QUEBEC PARKS STALLED IN PAST YEAR	22
Boreal protected area proposal faces continued delays	22
Southwestern Quebec's Dumoine River protection remains incomplete	23
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR NATURAL AREAS SYSTEM	
PLAN MISSING IN ACTION	24
THE GOOD NEWS FOR PARKS	25
MANITOBA POISED FOR LARGE PARK GAINS	26
Polar Bear park great step in implementing new "green plan"	26
Protected Areas Strategy in the works for Manitoba	26
NOVA SCOTIA THINKS BIG ON CONSERVATION	27
BUFFER ZONE FOR GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK GAINS MOMENTUM	29
NEW NATIONAL PARK AT EAST ARM OF GREAT SLAVE	
LAKE MOVING FORWARD	30
PROGRESS ON SEVERAL PARKS IN YUKON	31
Kusawa Park	31
Whitehorse Regional Parks	32
NEW BRUNSWICK PARKS ACT IMPROVED	33



INTRODUCTION

Canada's annual Parks Day takes place on July 19th, 2014. Since 2008 CPAWS has issued an annual report reviewing how well Canada has done over the past year in both creating new parks and protecting our existing parks 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. Unfortunately, for the third year in a row, while there were some good news stories, our overall conclusion is that Canada continues to lose ground in creating and protecting our cherished parks.

Decision-makers need to better recognize the true value of parks

A common thread we found in reviewing progress on Canada's parks this year is that many governments are making short-sighted decisions to prioritize industrial and commercial interests over the long term ecological, social and economic benefits that come from conserving nature in well-designed, well-protected parks.



Given the overwhelming evidence of the value and benefits of nature conservation, for humans and every other species on the planet, government policy decisions to protect more of our public land and water and ensure existing parks are well-protected should be an easy choice. Unfortunately, as this year's report demonstrates, creating and protecting parks continues to be an uphill battle in much of the country.

1 **Calgary students learn about local nature** *Kate Semrau*

2 **Thaidene Nene, Northwest Territories**

THE VALUE OF PARKS: ECONOMIC ENGINES AND A LIFEFORCE!

The Canadian Parks Council, whose members include all of the provincial, territorial and federal government parks agencies, has published a series of reports documenting the socio-economic benefits of parks.¹ In the most recent report called *Connecting Canadians with Nature* the authors found that not only are parks important for conserving nature, which is the foundation of all life, they offer some of the best opportunities for people to connect with nature, which in turn leads to better physical and mental health, child development, safer communities and a stronger economy.²

A 2011 report found that Canada's parks support more than 64,000 full-time jobs, generate \$2.9 billion in labour income, and \$337 million in tax revenue for governments.³

At the international level agencies like the World Bank recognize that well managed parks and protected areas are cost effective ways to conserve biodiversity and provide a suite of economic and other benefits to people⁴, for example:

- Ecotourism – supporting a growing sector of one of the largest industries in the world, which depends on healthy ecosystems;
- Human health – providing natural spaces that support recreation and enhance physical and mental health;

- Water – protecting clean, plentiful supplies for drinking, agriculture and other uses;
- Fisheries – enhancing fish stocks in marine and freshwater environments;
- Natural disasters – helping prevent floods, stabilize soils, protect coastlines;
- Climate change – maintaining carbon stored in oceans, forests, soils and wetlands to help combat climate change, and helping ecosystems and communities adapt to climate change;
- Cultural values – protecting cultural and spiritual values of indigenous peoples and others;
- Knowledge – supporting education, scientific research and monitoring.

¹ www.parks-parcs.ca/english/cpc/publications.php

² Parks Canada. 2014. *Connecting Canadians with Nature – An Investment in the Well-Being of our Citizens*. Ottawa, ON: Parks Canada. 36 pp. www.parks-parcs.ca/english/ConnectingCanadians-English_web.pdf

³ The Outspan Group Inc. 2011. *The Economic Impact of Canada's National, Provincial and Territorial Parks in 2009*. A technical report prepared for the Canadian Parks Council. Available at www.parks-parcs.ca/english/cpc/economic.php

⁴ The World Bank. 2010. *Valuing Protected Areas*. Washington, D.C. 62 pp.; Dudley, N. et al. (eds.) 2010. *Natural Solutions: Protected areas helping people cope with climate change*, IUCN-WCPA, TNC, UNDP, WCS, The World Bank and WWF, Gland Switzerland, Washington DC and New York, USA.; Stolton, S. and Dudley, N. (eds). 2010. *Arguments for Protected Areas: Multiple Benefits for Conservation and Use*. Earthscan, London, Washington DC.



Bad news for parks

In British Columbia, a huge threat to the integrity of the province's cherished parks emerged in March when the provincial government amended the *Park Act* in a way that allows industrial research to be conducted in parks and facilitates boundary adjustments to make way for the development of pipelines and other industrial uses.

In Alberta's famed Jasper National Park, a proposed new resort development at iconic Maligne Lake is being considered this year by the federal government. The development would violate park policy and, if approved, could open the floodgates to more commercial development throughout the Rocky Mountain national parks.

In the NWT's globally significant South Nahanni Watershed, where now two national park reserves are located, new active threats have emerged due to mining and road building interests.

There has also been no reversal in the major funding reductions to Parks Canada made two years ago, and their negative impact on park ecological integrity is a growing concern, as the federal Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development highlighted in his bi-annual report released last November.

Delays in parks establishment

This year's report also notes continuing slow progress on creating new parks. Proposed parks in important wilderness areas like Alberta's Castle Wilderness and Quebec's Dumoine River watershed have been plagued by continuing delays over the past year.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, a province-wide plan for creating new parks has effectively been "sleeping" inside government for almost two decades, hidden from public view. Releasing this plan is clearly long overdue.

In Quebec, the province will need to immediately act on long-delayed protected area proposals if it is to deliver on its commitment to protect 12% of the province by 2015.

1 Black bear cub Terri Shaddick



Good news for parks

The report also highlights good news in some regions. The areas with the most significant overall progress on parks continue to be in Manitoba and Nova Scotia, where the major protected area commitments we reported on last year have been finalized and are now being rolled out on the ground.

In November, Manitoba announced a proposal to create a massive new provincial park to protect polar bears and other northern species along the coast of Hudson Bay.

In August, Nova Scotia released a final protected areas plan that will conserve an additional quarter million hectares of land in the province and is now making steady progress on implementing the plan.

Newfoundland's Gros Morne National Park — a UNESCO World Heritage Site threatened last year by nearby oil drilling and fracking proposals — won a reprieve due to a provincial moratorium on fracking announced in November and the rejection of a petroleum exploration license renewal in December. This leaves the door open to creating a permanent buffer zone around the park, an idea that is gaining traction and now has the formal endorsement of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.

There is also continuing momentum to create a large new protected area at the East Arm of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories, where a draft agreement in principle was initialled between the local first nation and Parks Canada in the past year.

Embracing Canada's opportunity

Under the international Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada has committed to protect at least 17% of the landscape by 2020. Currently, only 10% is protected.

Canada has a globally rare opportunity to protect large intact wilderness ecosystems, wildlife, free flowing rivers and unpolluted lakes in a way that can help prevent and help us adapt to global climate

1 **Thaidene Nene, Northwest Territories**
Tessa Macintosh



change, provide clean water and air, support jobs, and nurture the well-being and health of all Canadians.

This year's federal government announcement of the new *National Conservation Plan for Canada*, while mentioning the 17% target, did not include a plan to get there, nor did it mention creating new national parks.⁵ A roadmap to achieving this protected areas target is urgently needed.

In November 2014 thousands of people will gather in Sydney, Australia, for the once-a-decade IUCN World Parks Congress.⁶ A key focus of the Congress will be to assess progress towards achieving 2020 protected areas targets. In the lead-up to the Congress, CPAWS is encouraging all jurisdictions in Canada to commit to doing their part towards achieving the 2020 protected areas target. Within this report are many recommendations for positive actions to create and protect Canada's parks that would help reverse the negative trends noted this year. If implemented, Canada's governments could demonstrate progress and celebrate these advances at this global event.

1 **Peregrine Falcon**
Ashley Hockenberry

⁵ www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/ncp/

⁶ www.worldparkscongress.org

THE BAD NEWS FOR PARKS

Overall this year, the worrying reversal of fortune for parks we began noting in 2012 continues at provincial, territorial and federal levels.

In British Columbia, troubling changes to the *Park Act* threaten the integrity of the province's cherished parks system. The fight to protect the Yukon's iconic Peel River watershed is now in front of the Courts. New forestry rules introduced this year in New Brunswick will reduce opportunities to create new protected areas in the future.

In national parks, commercial development pressures continue to build, particularly in the Rocky Mountain national parks. Funding challenges pose growing risks to maintaining and restoring ecological integrity in all national parks. And the boundary for a new national park in the Northwest Territories ignores conservation science and public input.



CHALLENGES FACING PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL PARKS

Changes to BC *Park Act* threaten integrity of provincial park system

In March 2014, without any public consultation, the British Columbia government rushed through changes to the provincial *Park Act* that undermine the integrity of these magnificent and famous parks. These amendments allow the government to issue permits for feasibility studies related to constructing roads, highways, transmission lines and pipelines through provincial parks, or for “research” – a broad term that isn’t defined in legislation. Under the previous *Park Act*, use permits could only be issued for activities that were consistent with maintaining the values that a park was created to protect.

These changes undermine the fundamental principle that parks are to be protected from industrial development in perpetuity. They also contradict Canada’s commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure protected areas are effectively and equitably managed. More than 167,000 Canadians have voiced their opposition to these amendments so far, and over 5,000 people have written personal letters to the Minister.

Recommendation:

The BC government should repeal the *Park Amendment Act* and strengthen the Boundary Adjustment Policy to ensure BC’s provincial parks are well-protected and remain free from industrial activities forever.



Future of Yukon's Peel River Watershed in court

The effort to protect the Yukon's 68,000 km² Peel River watershed is now at the heart of a court battle with local First Nations and conservation groups (including CPAWS Yukon Chapter) challenging the territorial government's plan for the region. Thomas R. Berger, O.C. Q.C. is representing the First Nations and conservation groups in the case, which had its hearing in early July.

At the heart of the case is the effort by the First Nations and conservationists to convince the territorial government to uphold the recommendations of a joint First Nations and territorial government-appointed *Peel Watershed Planning Commission* which, after six years of study and consultation, had recommended that 80% of this extraordinary wilderness be protected, with the remaining 20% left open to carefully controlled development. The Yukon Government subsequently announced their own unilateral plan for the region which would open 71% of the watershed to mineral and oil and gas staking.

If successful, this legal action would force the Yukon Government to implement the *Peel Watershed Land Use Planning Commission's* recommended plan, protecting 80% of this vast and spectacular wild watershed.



New forestry rules jeopardize future New Brunswick protected areas

In a surprise move this spring, the New Brunswick government announced it had signed a new agreement with forestry company J.D. Irving Ltd that provides the company with guaranteed wood supply well into the future. To secure this supply the provincial government agreed to open areas previously conserved for wildlife and water to increased logging.



The agreement and associated 10-year forestry strategy, signed with no public consultation, will limit options for using public lands for purposes other than logging, including for the establishment of more parks and protected areas. With only three percent of land protected, New Brunswick lags behind all other jurisdictions in Canada except Prince

1 Snake Rapids, Yukon Peter Mather

2 Wind River, Yukon Juri Peepre



Edward Island. So far it has protected far less of the landscape than is needed to conserve the province's precious forests, rivers and lakes, and the fish and wildlife that depend on them for survival.

The new 10-year forestry strategy will make it difficult for the province to make progress on protecting its valued natural areas, including areas in the Restigouche watershed which CPAWS has long identified as a prime location for protecting ecologically valuable lands.

Recommendations:

1. The New Brunswick government should immediately reverse the recent forest agreement, and the associated 10-year forestry strategy, in order to expand the province's protected areas system and safeguard the forests and wildlife that will sustain New Brunswick's culture, tourism and regional economies into the future.
2. The province should commit to protecting at least 20% of the province's Crown lands by 2020 (to contribute to meeting Canada's international target), and begin identifying new candidate areas for protection.



1 Kedgwick River, Restigouche Wilderness *Roberta Clowater*



Jasper National Park,
Alberta



DEVELOPMENTS IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARKS OUT OF STEP WITH POLICY, SCIENCE AND PUBLIC OPINION

Jasper hotel proposal risks opening commercial development floodgates in Rocky Mountain national parks

A proposal for a new hotel development at Maligne Lake in Jasper National Park violates Parks Canada's policy prohibiting any new commercial accommodations outside park town sites. This policy was put in place specifically to limit commercial development in the parks. Allowing the hotel to proceed could open the floodgates to commercial development in all the Rocky Mountain national parks.

In the late 1990s an expert panel concluded that outlying commercial accommodations were having a significant impact on the ecological integrity of the Rocky Mountains national parks. In response Parks Canada negotiated with each commercial lodge, cabin and hostel operator to establish limits to development. The resulting policy documents these limits in great detail, and also clearly states that no new outlying commercial accommodations will be permitted.⁷ Allowing an exception to these rules for Maligne Tours, the company proposing the new hotel, would jeopardize Parks Canada's ability to adhere to this policy with other operators in the future.

The hotel proposal also poses a threat to park wildlife, particularly the Maligne Valley mountain caribou herd that has declined precipitously to just five remaining animals over the past 15 years. The Maligne herd is part of a population that has recently been assessed as endangered by scientists advising the federal government on endangered wildlife in Canada.⁸ For these caribou to recover, less development is needed in their habitat — not more.

⁷ s 2.6 of Parks Canada's *Redevelopment Guidelines for Outlying Commercial Accommodations and Hostels in the Rocky Mountains National Parks*

⁸ www.cosewic.gc.ca/rpts/detailed_species_assessments_e.html

1 Spirit Island, Maligne Lake, Jasper
National Park, Alberta



Jasper National Park,
Alberta

In April 2014 three former Parks Canada senior managers sent a strongly worded letter opposing the Maligne Lake hotel to the federal Minister of Environment⁹, and over 5,000 Canadians have now sent letters and signed petitions opposing the proposal.

A decision is expected soon about whether or not the hotel will be considered, or whether the federal government will heed its own policy along with the voices of thousands of Canadians and parks experts calling for the proposal to be rejected.

Recommendation:

Parks Canada should uphold its policy and legislation and protect park wildlife by rejecting Maligne Tours' proposal for overnight commercial accommodation at Maligne Lake in Jasper National Park.



Theme park-like “Glacier Skywalk” opens in Jasper

In 2012 CPAWS raised the alarm about this proposed “theme park-like” commercial development inside Jasper National Park, noting its inconsistency with park policy, concern about its potential impact on wildlife, and that it could set a precedent for other commercial infrastructure developments.¹⁰

In spite of significant public opposition, including an 180,000 signature online petition and thousands of letters, the federal government approved the development and in May 2014 the “Glacier Skywalk” officially opened along the Icefields Parkway. Built and operated by Brewster Travel Canada, the “Skywalk” charges \$25 per adult to walk along a 400 metre concrete and metal interpretive walkway and onto a massive glass and metal built structure overhanging the Sunwapta Valley. The Glacier Skywalk is often compared to a similar “skywalk” located *outside* Grand Canyon National Park.

⁹ The letter and petition can be found at www.standupforjasper.ca

¹⁰ For more information about CPAWS perspective on the “Glacier Skywalk”: <http://cpaws.org/news/federal-approval-of-glacier-discovery-walk-threatens-jasper-national-park>

1 Glacier Skywalk, Jasper National
Park, Alberta David Hatto



One of the rationales often put forward for building new “attractions” in national parks is that visitation to the parks is dropping dramatically so new activities are needed to entice more visitors. However, Parks Canada’s attendance figures show that between 2008 and 2013 there was

an approximate **7% increase in visitation to Canadian national parks**, including Banff and Jasper.¹¹ Also, Parks Canada survey evidence shows that unspoiled nature, beautiful scenery and wildlife are the main attractions of national parks, not built infrastructure.¹²

1 Glacier Skywalk, Jasper National Park, Alberta *Jill Seaton*

FUNDING CHALLENGES PUT NATIONAL PARKS’ ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY AT RISK

While the federal government’s 2014 budget included a commitment to invest \$391 million over five years for Parks Canada to “*protect and preserve Canada’s rich natural heritage by making improvements to Canada’s national parks*”, the fine print confirmed that this funding is for repairing roads, bridges and dams in national parks, historic sites and historic canals, and will not support science and monitoring or other conservation priorities.

Most of this funding is allocated for future years. According to the detailed budget allocation tables, only \$1 million is identified for 2014-15, \$4 million for 2015-16, with the rest allocated for 2016 and beyond.

Parks Canada certainly needs funding to repair roads, bridges and dams in the parks. These repairs, if they are done well, can lessen the impact of infrastructure on park ecosystems by installing fencing and overpasses or underpasses for wildlife, or by installing fish-friendly culverts that re-connect aquatic ecosystems. Parks Canada has taken this approach in the past, and will hopefully prioritize ecological integrity with this

¹¹ Parks Canada Agency. 2013. *Parks Canada Attendance 2008-09 to 2012-13*. Available at www.pc.gc.ca/eng/docs/pc/attend/index.aspx

¹² Parks Canada. 2010. *Attitudes and Barriers to Visiting Parks Canada Places*. POR # 093-09.

new funding as well. However, this funding will not address concerns raised last November by the federal Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development that national parks could be jeopardized by inadequate funding for Parks Canada's ecological integrity monitoring and reporting program.¹³

Our concern in this area has been mounting since dramatic Parks Canada budget cuts were announced in 2012. As we reported in 2013, budget cuts have decreased Parks Canada's science capacity by one third, led to shortened visitor seasons and reduced services in many national parks across the country.

Noting Parks Canada's findings that less than half of national park ecosystems are in good condition, and 43% are in a declining state of health, the Environment Commissioner concluded last fall that *"there is a significant risk that the Agency could fall further behind in its efforts to maintain or restore ecological integrity in Canada's national parks."*

Recommendation:

CPAWS and other Green Budget Coalition members¹⁴ recommend that the federal government invest an additional \$40 million per year in our national parks: \$20 million per year for Parks Canada's conservation program, including full implementation of the ecological integrity monitoring and reporting program, and \$20 million per year to establish and manage new national parks in partnership with local communities and indigenous peoples.

¹³ This chapter of the report can be found at www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_201311_07_e_38677.html#hd3b

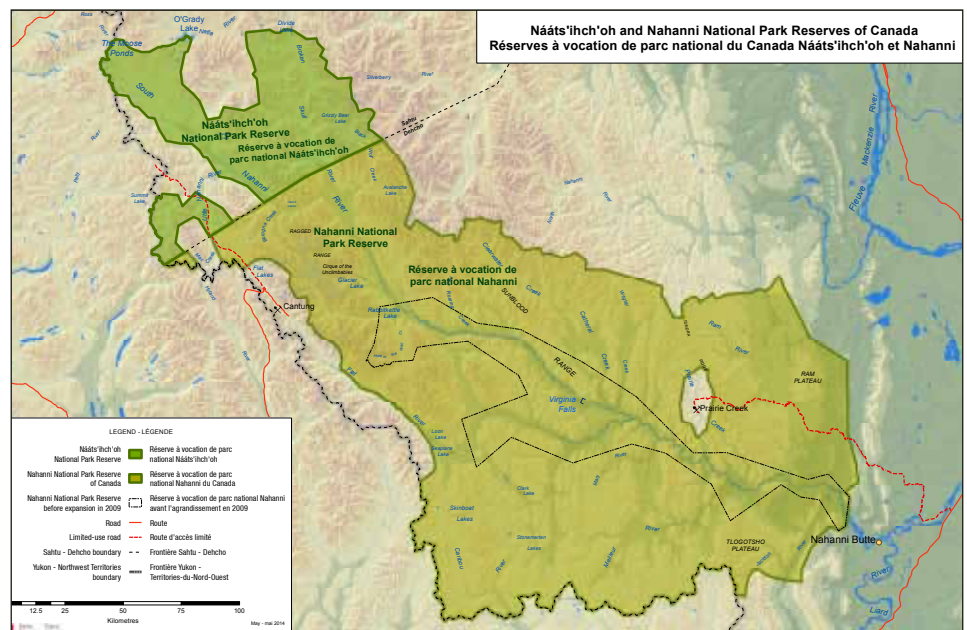
¹⁴ For information on the Green Budget Coalition and its recommendations see www.greenbudget.ca/main_e.html



NAHANNI PARKS THREATENED BY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

One of the most frequently touted recent environmental accomplishments by the federal government is the massive expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve in 2009. Lesser known but equally important has been the slow winding progress in establishing an adjacent park, called Nááts'ihch'oh, to protect the South Nahanni River's headwaters. Together, these two parks were intended to protect the South Nahanni watershed.

Today both park reserves are threatened by actions designed to provide access to the area for industrial development. In the case of Nahanni National Park Reserve, permission is now being sought to upgrade an old winter road to the proposed Prairie Creek mine situated within a “donut-hole” in the park to an all-season road.¹⁵ In the case of Nááts'ihch'oh,



1 Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve,
Northwest Territories *Blackfeather*

Nááts'ihch'oh and Nahanni National Park Reserves of Canada,
Northwest Territories *Parks Canada*

¹⁵ This new proposal to change the winter road to the Prairie Creek Mine Site to an all-season road has just been sent to environmental assessment. For more information see www.reviewboard.ca/registry/project.php?project_id=680

in June 2014 the federal government introduced Bill S-5 in Parliament to create the new park reserve. However the park boundary in the Bill excludes the area's most important wildlife habitat, including critical calving and breeding grounds for mountain caribou and some of the best habitat available for grizzly bears and Dall's sheep.¹⁶

The government's own documents had described the boundary option now contained in the Bill as providing "minimal protection to important conservation values".¹⁷ The overwhelming response during public consultations was that much more protection was needed.



1 Virginia Falls, Nahanni National Park Reserve, Northwest Territories
Bill Mason Productions

¹⁶ To see CPAWS's response to the tabling of Bill S-5 see: www.cpaws.org/news/disappointing-boundary-for-new-naatsihchoh-national-park-in-nahanni-headwat

¹⁷ Documents used during the public consultation as well as the final consultation report are available at www.cpaws.org/news/new-naatsihchoh-national-park-reserve-leaves-critical-wildlife-habitat-and

If this Bill passes through Parliament without amendments more work will be needed to protect the globally significant South Nahanni Watershed. CPAWS will continue to support efforts by the Sahtu Dene and Metis to protect these important ecological lands.

Recommendation:

The federal and territorial governments should include critical caribou calving and breeding areas and other important wildlife habitat in Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve to secure globally significant natural and cultural values of the South Nahanni Watershed.

DELAYS & UNCERTAINTIES PLAGUING PARKS ESTABLISHMENT

Many park proposals that have been profiled in CPAWS reports year-after-year continue to show little or no progress. Often, chronic delays in advancing new parks appear to be linked to a reluctance to designate any areas as off-limits to industrial development.

This reluctance is out-of-step with the clear evidence that parks are economic engines in their own right, and win-win opportunities to support a healthy environment, the economy and many social objectives. It also fails to recognize the enormous public support that exists for parks across the country. CPAWS is urging governments to take more heed of the value and benefits of parks; to commit to creating more parks; ensuring they are well designed and managed; and completing long-standing park proposals quickly.

Castle Special Place,
Alberta



ALBERTA'S CASTLE WILDERNESS REMAINS UNPROTECTED

Despite decades of calls to designate this 1,000 km² spectacular ribbon of forest along the spine of Southwestern Alberta's Rocky Mountains as a wilderness park, there has been no progress in the past year. The Alberta government's draft South Saskatchewan Regional Plan released in October 2013 proposed only including the harsh windswept mountaintops of the Castle in a Wildland Park. If adopted, this recommendation would leave the area's ecologically important lower slopes and valleys open to continued intense off-highway vehicle use, road building and logging, all of which risk seriously degrading its natural values.

Public support for protecting the Castle has exploded over the past decade, with over 100,000 people contacting the Premier's office to ask for full protection in the past few years alone. A 2011 poll found that three out of four area residents support designating the Castle as a provincial Wildland Park.

In 1998 the Castle was identified by the Alberta government as one of 81 areas to be added to the provincial protected areas network. Sixteen years later the Castle is the only one of these "special places" that is not yet protected by law.

The Castle provides significant benefits to Albertans. It is a cherished outdoor recreation area. It supplies almost 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 the Castle's forested headwaters absorb water and moderate the impact of flooding. Unfortunately these important ecological services are at risk because on-going development pressures are degrading the Castle's natural values.

After consulting the public on the 2013 draft plan, the Alberta government is reviewing the input and a final plan is expected this summer.

1 Castle Peak, Alberta Charles Truscott

Rouge National Urban
Park, Ontario



Recommendation:

In recognition of the enormous value of the Castle Wilderness and the overwhelming public support for its protection, the Alberta government should designate the entire 1,040 km² Castle Wilderness as a provincial Wildland Park in the final South Saskatchewan Regional Plan.

PATH FORWARD UNCLEAR FOR ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK

A year after Ontario and Canada announced a boundary for the proposed Rouge National Urban Park, the federal government tabled draft legislation in Parliament on June 13th and released a draft management plan on June 21st. The introduction of these documents is an important next step in creating the park, and CPAWS is closely examining them to ensure that they will adequately protect this remarkable urban-based ecosystem.

The Rouge Valley is home to over 1,000 species of plants and animals including 23 species at risk. It is one of Ontario's best remaining examples of Carolinian forest and the last intact watersheds in the area.

The Rouge National Urban Park has an important role to play in connecting urban Canadians to nature and encouraging them to become nature stewards. However, with seven million people living around the Rouge it is imperative that conservation is prioritized in the park's legislation and management plan to ensure this remarkable natural area and its wildlife are not "loved to death" over time. Putting nature conservation first is also consistent with the international definition and guidance for protected areas.

On first glance, it is not clear that these documents accomplish this goal as the Bill only requires the Minister to take the health of park ecosystems and wildlife "into consideration" in park management, and the draft management plan does not prioritize nature conservation. Also, there is very little information provided about how agriculture will be managed in the park.

1 Rouge River, Ontario Jennifer Berney

**SECTION 02 /
DELAYS & UNCERTAINTIES
PLAGUING PARKS ESTABLISHMENT**

To protect the Rouge, it is also critically important to ensure federally owned “Pickering Lands” that lie adjacent to the park and within Ontario’s Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine remain protected. In 2013 Transport Canada announced potential commercial and industrial development for these lands. If they are developed, one of the last intact wildlife corridors running from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine would be compromised, which would pose a serious problem for wildlife in the Rouge, and in the entire region. Better intergovernmental cooperation is required to ensure that these “Pickering Lands” remain permanently protected from urban development.

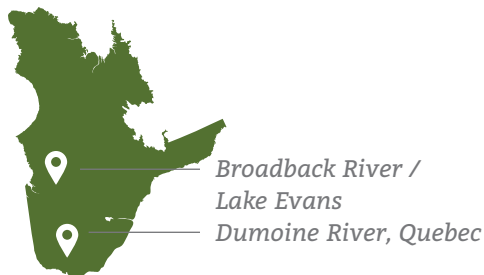
Recommendations:

To protect the Rouge National Urban Park’s natural values and ensure future generations can continue to experience wild nature in the city:

1. The park legislation and management plan should clearly prioritize the protection and restoration of ecosystem health;
2. Adjacent federal “Pickering Lands” that lie within the Ontario Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine should be permanently protected from urban and industrial development to allow wildlife to move freely through the landscape from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine.



1 2 Rouge River, Ontario
Jennifer Berney



NEW QUEBEC PARKS STALLED IN PAST YEAR

Despite notable conservation progress in the past few years, Quebec is still far from reaching its commitment of protecting 12% of the province by 2015, and achieving the internationally agreed-to target of protecting at least 17% of the landscape by 2020.

In the past year, the lack of political will to move forward on many protected area projects appeared to be linked to concerns about lost industrial development opportunities. Given the growing evidence of the need for, and significant long term economic, environmental and social benefits of parks and protected areas, these concerns and the delays they are creating are clearly misplaced. Combined with broad public and First Nations' support for new protected areas, there is ample rationale for moving forward immediately to implement these commitments.

In its latest budget, the Quebec government reaffirmed its commitment to protecting 50% of the province's landscape north of the 49th parallel. CPAWS clearly supports this measure, and notes that implementation must begin immediately if Quebec is to reach the protected area objectives outlined above.

Boreal protected area proposal faces continued delays

The James Bay Cree have been proposing the creation of a large protected area in the Broadback River and Lake Evans sectors of northern Quebec for many years. Known for its high cultural and ecological values, including important habitat for threatened boreal woodland caribou, this area includes some of the last intact tracts of Boreal forest in the Crees' traditional territory. In an effort to temporarily protect these forests from imminent development in the absence of progress on the protected area, the Grand Council of the Crees and CPAWS Quebec first called for a logging moratorium in the area in 2009.

When combined with the adjacent Assinica national park, protecting the Broadback/Evans would mean more than 10,000 km² of Boreal wilderness would be permanently protected – a good first step towards meeting the province's 2015 protected areas commitment.



1

1 Woodland Caribou Bruce Peterson



Recommendation:

The Quebec government should act immediately to complete the proposed protected area in the Broadback / Evans region.

Southwestern Quebec's Dumoine River protection remains incomplete

In response to CPAWS Ottawa Valley Chapter's science-based recommendations¹⁹, the report of the Commission studying the proposed Dumoine protected area released in summer 2013 encouraged the Government of Quebec to seriously consider expansion proposals. However a final boundary for the Dumoine still has not been announced by the Quebec government.

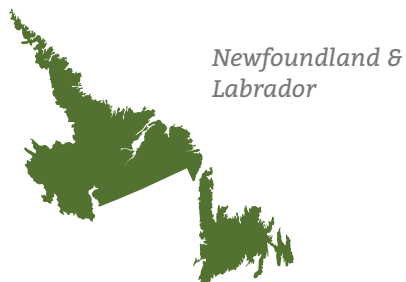
CPAWS recommended that the proposed protected area be expanded to include the headwaters of the river's tributaries, rare stands of old-growth forest located just outside the proposed boundary, and connections to other natural areas such as the headwaters of the Dumoine's sister rivers, the Kipawa and the Noire. This would require doubling the size of the proposed protected area to cover approximately two thirds of the watershed – about 3,100 km².

The Dumoine River watershed rises in the Boreal forests of the La Vérendrye Wildlife Reserve and flows south to the Ottawa River just north of Algonquin Park, providing an important ecological connection between the forests of the Ottawa Valley and the Boreal forest further north. Protecting the Dumoine could help revitalize local communities that are suffering as a result of the collapse of the forest industry by creating new tourism and recreation-focused jobs for local residents and by attracting new investment to the region.

¹⁹ <https://cpaws-ov-vo.org/campaigns/dumoine-river>

1 Dumoine River, Quebec
Marieve Marchand

2 Dumoine River, Quebec



Recommendation:

The Government of Quebec should expand the final boundaries of the proposed Dumoine protected area to include approximately two thirds of the watershed (about 3,100 km²) to better protect the area's natural values.



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR NATURAL AREAS SYSTEM PLAN MISSING IN ACTION

Newfoundland and Labrador's Natural Areas Plan has been "sleeping" for almost two decades. Candidate protected areas around the province were originally identified by a provincial government committee in the mid-1990s through a rigorous science-based assessment. When the committee submitted its final report in 1996, they recommended the immediate release of the plan for public and industry review, yet almost two decades later the plan and the candidate areas have still not been publicly released. Having a plan hidden from public view creates a situation where important candidate protected areas could be removed from protection, or boundaries changed, without public knowledge or accountability.

Newfoundland and Labrador is three times the size of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island combined. And while the province is perhaps best known world-wide for its once-proud marine fish stocks and the scenic beauty and geological features of Gros Morne National Park, it has many other globally significant natural features as well. These include up to 40 million seabirds every year, rare and endemic plants, and vast areas of Boreal forest which are home to herds of caribou and other sensitive species of plants and animals. Yet, many of these important ecological areas remain unprotected and vulnerable to logging, mining and other land uses that put their natural values at risk.

Recommendation:

After decades of delay it is time for Newfoundland and Labrador to finally release its Natural Areas Systems Plan for public review and implementation.

1 Great Horned Owl Wayne Lynch

THE GOOD NEWS FOR PARKS

While the past year has been a challenging one for parks in most of Canada, there has been good news in some regions. The most significant progress has been in Manitoba and Nova Scotia, where provincial governments continue to move forward on big expansions to their systems of parks and protected areas.

In Canada's north, progress continues on creating a big new national park reserve around the East Arm of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories in partnership with the local First Nation. While the battle to save the Peel River watershed in the northern Yukon rages on, further south the City of Whitehorse is demonstrating leadership by protecting much of its land in a network of municipal parks. There has also been progress on creating Kusawa Territorial Park in the southern Yukon.

In the east, Newfoundland's iconic Gros Morne National Park has secured a reprieve, at least for now, from the threat of proposed oil drilling and fracking, and momentum is growing for a permanent protective buffer around the park. And while New Brunswick faces serious backsliding on conservation due to its new forestry plan, in a positive move the province amended its Parks Act to strengthen the conservation mandate for its small system of provincial parks.



MANITOBA POISED FOR LARGE PARK GAINS

Polar Bear park great step in implementing new “green plan”

Last year’s report highlighted the release of Manitoba’s *TomorrowNow* green plan which sets a goal of establishing up to 15 new parks and protected areas by 2020 and recognizes the important role parks play in protecting the environment and in supporting the economy.

In November 2013, the provincial government announced an important step towards implementing this commitment with the start of consultations on creating a large new provincial park along the Hudson Bay coast. The park would be by far the largest in Manitoba (potentially up to 2.9 million hectares), protecting critically important denning areas for polar bears now facing an uncertain future as climate change alters their winter sea ice hunting grounds. The park would also protect important habitat for caribou, arctic fox, and thousands of migratory ducks and birds that flock there to breed in summer.

Protecting this area would also help to secure vast amounts of carbon stored in the peatlands and natural wild forests of the northern Boreal, in turn helping to moderate global climate change.

This is great news for wildlife, local communities and all Manitobans. As the central draw of an increasingly popular eco-tourism industry, polar bears are a critical component of Manitoba’s northern economy. Once established, the park would help to enhance and balance the northern economy while significantly increasing protection for its treasured polar bear population. Through a process that includes full consultation with local First Nations, CPAWS views this initiative as a wise path to integrating healthy environmental and economic values.

Protected Areas Strategy in the works for Manitoba

Through their *TomorrowNow* plan, the province has made a commitment to develop a new Protected Areas Strategy. The plan states that Manitoba “will be unmatched in park proximity, the number and hectares of park,

1 Polar Bears Ron Thiessen



ecological reserves, wildlife management areas and protected areas per capita, ecological diversity, and visitor services.”

According to CPAWS’ analysis, a strategy based on science and traditional knowledge with an initial target of protecting 20% of Manitoba from industrial developments by 2020 will help to achieve this laudable goal. By doing so, Manitoba would be the first Canadian jurisdiction to achieve and exceed the international target of protecting at least 17% of land and freshwater by 2020.

Manitoba also aims to develop a plan for its Boreal region, which covers approximately 80% of the province. As the majority of this region is still intact, the provincial government has the opportunity to work with First Nations and all Manitobans to design its future now before development proposals are in place.

Recommendations:

1. Manitoba should continue implementing the *TomorrowNow* plan, including the creation of the Polar Bear Provincial Park to protect an important northern Boreal area along Hudson Bay.
2. In delivering on its *TomorrowNow* plan, Manitoba should commit to protecting at least 20% of lands and freshwater by 2020, thus demonstrating global leadership on protected areas.
3. Manitoba should commit to a balanced approach, based on science and traditional knowledge, to land use planning and management in the Boreal region that includes protecting at least half of the landscape.

NOVA SCOTIA THINKS BIG ON CONSERVATION

Nova Scotia, Canada’s second smallest province, has become a leading jurisdiction in Canada for the creation of new protected areas – not just in words, but in real action on-the-ground. Since releasing the final protected areas plan in August of last year, the province has continued

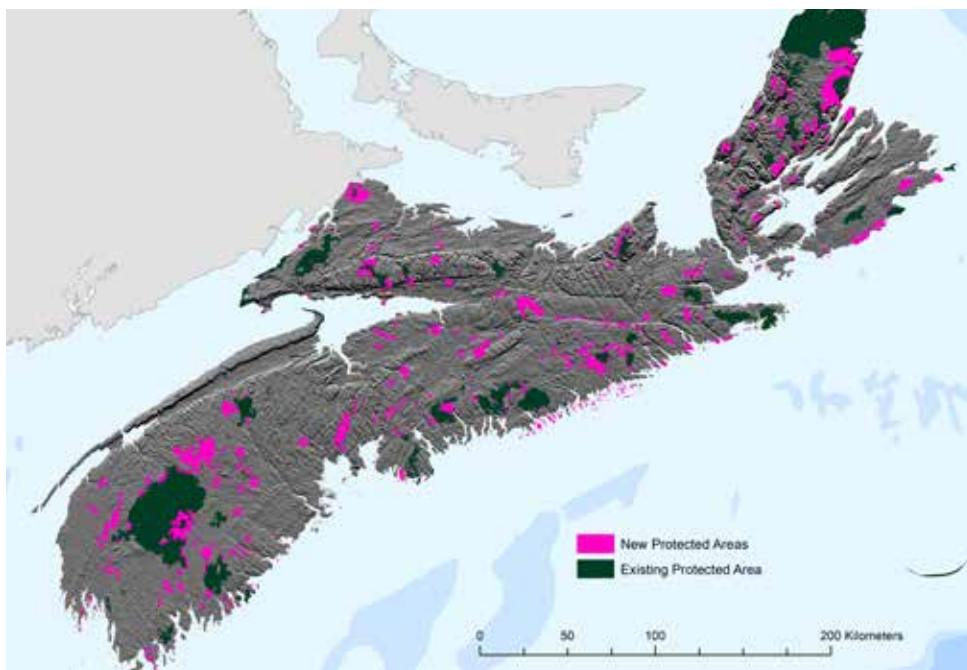
1 Coyote Nadine Wagner

Nova Scotia



to make steady progress on implementation, including the time-consuming work of land surveying and developing property descriptions for over 100 new protected areas as well as expansions to many existing ones. When fully implemented, the final protected areas plan will protect an additional quarter million hectares of wilderness in the province, raising the percentage of land legally protected in Nova Scotia from the current level of 9.5% to 13% initially, and then up to 14% over the next few years.

The new protected areas in the final plan contain some of the best remaining wilderness sites in the province, including ecologically-significant areas along the St. Mary's River and Eastern Shore coastline, as well as large intact forests in the Cape Breton Highlands, and species-at-risk habitat in southwestern Nova Scotia. Conservation areas near Halifax are also helping to provide a wilderness greenbelt for the city.



Map of Protected Areas, Nova Scotia *Global Forest Watch Canada*

1 St. Mary's River, Nova Scotia
Irwin Barrett

2 Birch Cove, Nova Scotia
Irwin Barrett



Gros Morne National
Park, Newfoundland
& Labrador

The province is now within reach of achieving the international target of protecting at least 17% of the landscape, and is well ahead of neighbouring jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada. Nova Scotia has a tremendous opportunity right now to shrug-off any temptation to rest-on-its-laurels for what has already been achieved, and instead continue to be ambitious and become the leading jurisdiction in Canada that protects the highest percentage of land in the country.

Recommendations:

The province of Nova Scotia should:

1. Fully implement the final protected areas plan released last year;
2. Commit to the international target of 17% protection;
3. Invest in land acquisitions for future protected areas.

BUFFER ZONE FOR GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK GAINS MOMENTUM

In June 2014 the UNESCO World Heritage Committee formally recommended that a protective buffer zone be established around Gros Morne National Park, an iconic World Heritage Site on the west coast of Newfoundland.²⁰

This followed a year of significant progress in the effort to permanently protect Gros Morne from oil drilling and fracking. In response to an outcry of public concern from Newfoundland and across Canada in November 2013 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced a fracking moratorium in the province to allow for more study and public discussion. Then in December the federal-provincial regulatory board responsible for offshore petroleum development rejected the company's request for an extension of their exploration license off the coast of Gros Morne.



1



2

1 Gros Morne National Park,
Newfoundland & Labrador
Alison Woodley

2 Gros Morne National Park,
Newfoundland & Labrador *Jim Cornish*

²⁰ www.whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/38COM

While this stopped the immediate threat of fracking, it did not eliminate the risk of similar threats emerging in the future.

CPAWS and local concerned citizens are recommending that a buffer zone be established around the park to keep the Gros Morne area permanently free of oil drilling and fracking, and welcomed UNESCO's recent recommendation. Not only will this protect the precious ecosystems and natural beauty of the park area, it will also protect the Newfoundland's tourism economy, which relies on the park's spectacular natural beauty.

Recommendation:

The provincial and federal governments should act now to create a permanent buffer zone around Gros Morne National Park to protect its globally significant natural beauty and ecosystems from industrialization.



NEW NATIONAL PARK AT EAST ARM OF GREAT SLAVE LAKE MOVING FORWARD

In late 2013, Parks Canada and the local Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation initialed a draft establishment agreement for Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve, potentially protecting over 30,000 km² of spectacular wilderness around the East Arm of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories. The federal and territorial governments have extended the interim protection order for the park area of interest for two more years until March 2016 to allow the boundary and the agreements necessary to create the park to be finalized.

A public consultation about the park is expected to take place in the next year, providing an opportunity for all Canadians to express their views on this proposed new national park reserve.

Spanning the transition zone between the Boreal forest and tundra, Thaidene Nene – “Land of the Ancestors” in Denesoline, the local Dene



language – would protect habitat for muskoxen, bears, wolverines and some of the last free-ranging herds of migratory barren-ground caribou on the planet, as well as pristine rivers and lakes with some of the deepest freshwater in North America.

A key part of this innovative new national park reserve proposal is the opportunity for the federal and territorial governments to work in partnership with Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation to ensure the park supports sustainable livelihoods for community members. Lutsel K'e is actively and successfully building a trust fund to deliver on their partnership responsibilities in managing this innovative protected area once it is established.

Recommendation:

The federal and territorial governments should continue to actively work with Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation to finalize the establishment of the 30,000 km² Thaidene Nene protected area, including completing a public consultation this year.

1 East Arm, Great Slave Lake,
Northwest Territories *Julian Morse*



Kusawa Park &
Whitehorse Regional
Parks, Yukon

PROGRESS ON SEVERAL PARKS IN YUKON

Kusawa Park

While the battle for the future of the Peel River Watershed continues in northern Yukon, progress on creating Kusawa Territorial Park in the southern part of the territory recently re-gained momentum after stalling for several years.

The 3082 km² Kusawa Park falls within the traditional territory of three First Nations – Carcross/Tagish, Kwanlin Dun, and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. The objectives of Kusawa Park and a commitment to its establishment are embedded within First Nations Land Claim Agreements signed in 2005. However the park has not yet been formally established in law.



The Kusawa Lake watershed is set in the Coast Mountains and supports a high diversity of wildlife, including important populations of Dall's sheep, mountain goats, raptors, moose, black bears and grizzly bears. The watershed supports lake trout, whitefish, grayling and salmon. The park's location 60 km from Whitehorse and close to the Alaska Highway, makes it a popular wilderness recreation destination for Yukon residents and tourists.

In October 2008, the park area was withdrawn from mining and oil and gas exploitation. A Steering Committee made up of representatives from three First Nations and the territorial government is now assessing management options for the park. CPAWS is heartened by this renewed effort and eagerly anticipates the next steps.

Whitehorse Regional Parks

The City of Whitehorse encompasses 41,900 hectares, and much of it is still in a wilderness state. In June 2014, the city announced it would move forward on creating five new regional parks identified in the 2010 Whitehorse Community Plan with the goal of protecting environmental and recreational values in the city. Together, this regional park system will encompass 30% of the city's total area (12,655 hectares), granting Whitehorse the distinction of having one of the highest amounts of parkland of any Canadian municipality by percentage and total area. The City is in the process of implementing the Whitehorse Regional Parks Plan, and will then move on to create management plans for each of the five parks.

Recommendation:

The City of Whitehorse and Kusawa Park Steering Committee should continue their recent positive progress by working to establish park management plans for these areas in a timely fashion.

1 Hidden Lake, Whitehorse, Yukon
Keith Williams



NEW BRUNSWICK PARKS ACT IMPROVED

In early 2014 the New Brunswick government revised its *Parks Act* to strengthen the conservation mandate for the natural areas within provincial parks. The revised Act also requires 10-year public reviews of the legislation and enables public consultation on park management plans. It outlines different classes of parks, as well as zoning within parks to help manage recreation and conservation actions.

This upgraded park legislation reflects many of the changes CPAWS and conservation partners had been requesting for over a decade, and the extensive public input gathered during a 2013 public consultation. CPAWS believes this will set the stage for improved conservation of the nature within New Brunswick's provincial parks and allow for better involvement of the public in future park management.

Recommendation:

The government needs to work with the public and interested groups on park management plans for all the provincial parks—plans that will conserve the natural areas in the parks, while encouraging valuable sustainable recreation and outdoor education opportunities.



1 Mount Carleton Provincial Park
LeeAnn Haggerty



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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