



Point Pelee

National Park of Canada

Management Plan Review

July 2010

Sharing the Passion, Sharing the Leadership

Management Plan Review Communications & Consultations Summary 2010

The park management plan review for Point Pelee National Park was formally initiated by the Chief Executive Officer for Parks Canada with his endorsement of the *Point Pelee National Park: Management Plan Scoping Document* (2009). The scoping document informed the communications and consultations program, and was developed with direction and information from the following:

- the *Parks Canada Agency Corporate Plan* (2009-2014);
- the *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operating Policies* (1994);
- the *Parks Canada Guide to Management Planning* (2008);
- the *Point Pelee National Park: State of the Park Report* (2007);
- a review of the *Point Pelee National Park Management Plan* (1996);

- recommendations from the *Parks Canada Management Plan Review Workshop* (December 2008);
- the *Parks Canada Visitor Experience Assessment* (September 2009);
- consideration of current social, economic and ecological research; and
- input from the Caldwell First Nation and the Walpole Island First Nation.

The ideas, views and comments received through the communications and consultations program were reviewed and carefully considered. Overall, the input gathered confirmed the proposed vision, key strategies and area management approaches. The themes of the comments communicated by partners, stakeholders, neighbours, park visitors and interested Canadians were reflected in the objectives and



actions detailed within each of the key strategies and area management approaches which make up the new management plan for Point Pelee National Park. At the Toronto sessions, there was some discussion which focused on the legislative and policy framework under which Parks Canada operates. This input is outside the scope of the management plan review. However, these comments were captured and are included as part of the record for the communications and consultations program. In addition, many valuable operational considerations were presented over the course of the consultations. These were not included in the management plan, as the plan provides strategic direction. There will however be further consideration of this input as part of park operational reviews.

CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

A newsletter, comment form and presentation were developed for the communications and consultations program, which was conducted over a four week period from January 18, 2010 to February 12, 2010.

Communications and Consultation Meetings

Two advertised public sessions were held in Leamington, Ontario on January 20 and 21, 2010. Four 'by invitation' multi-stakeholder and partner meetings, two in Leamington, Ontario on January 20 and 21, 2010 and two in Toronto, Ontario on January 26, 2010 were conducted. Sessions were held with the Caldwell First Nation on January 19, 2010 and the Walpole Island First Nation on January 18, 2010.

Each session consisted of a presentation which:

- outlined the significance of Point Pelee National Park;
- provided an overview of the Parks Canada legislative framework and mandate;
- summarized the management planning program, including the role of the park management plan;
- introduced elements of a vision for the park; and
- presented proposed strategies and area management approaches for protection, visitor experience and public education.

The remainder of the session turned the floor to participants and focused on gathering the views, opinions, ideas, suggestions and comments of participants.

Seventy-four partner and stakeholder organizations/groups were sent invitations to the meetings. As well, the Leamington Chamber of Commerce forwarded the invitation to three hundred local businesses. A Public Notice was placed in the major daily regional newspaper as well as several key community weekly newspapers throughout the region. Information Bulletins announcing the meetings were sent to all regional media - newspapers, TV and radio.

Fifty-seven people attended the public and multi-stakeholder/partner meetings in Leamington and sixteen organizations/groups were represented. Sixteen people, representing ten organizations/groups attended the multi-stakeholder/partner meetings in Toronto. Many of the Toronto participants attended both sessions.

Management Plan Review Newsletter and Comment Form

A newsletter was developed as a handout for the meetings, for mailing and posting to the park website as well as for distribution at the park Visitor Centre and Administration Build-

ing. The newsletter:

- introduced the management plan review, inviting readers to share their views, opinions and ideas;
- highlighted the significance of the park, including achievements of the current management plan;
- summarized the management plan review program, including key issues and challenges;
- presented proposed elements for a park vision;
- laid out proposed management strategies and area management approaches; and
- explained how to submit comments for the management plan review.

A notice of the Communications and Consultations program for the management plan review was sent to two thousand and fifty-eight annual park pass holders. The newsletter and comment form were posted to the park website. In addition, the Public Notice and the Information Bulletin advertized an e-mail address and telephone number to contact the park to receive the newsletter and comment form. Twenty-six Management Plan Review Comment Forms were received and six individuals submitted letters and emails with their comments and suggestions.

SUMMARY OF FIRST NATIONS AND PUBLIC INPUT

Point Pelee National Park

Overwhelmingly, the comments received revealed a strong connection to Point Pelee National Park, which was described as “our home”, “our house”, “a place like no other”. People strongly supported the protection of the

park for its natural beauty, its role as a “home and haven for birds and many other plants and animals”, its importance as a place for people to relax and connect with nature and each other, and its role as a “four season tourist destination for our county”.

Main Themes

Visitor experience, First Nations engagement and active resource management to maintain ecological integrity were three main themes that emerged from the many ideas, views, suggestions and comments received.

Many suggestions were made with regard to how Parks Canada could enhance and revitalize the visitor experience at Point Pelee National Park. There was interest and enthusiasm for engaging the Caldwell First Nation and the Walpole Island First Nation as this will, as noted by one participant, “...balance where the park is, was and plans to be”.

Active resource management was another area which prompted specific discussion during the consultations. There was strong interest both in ensuring that active resource management activities in the park continue to be effective at maintaining ecological integrity and in exploring ways to utilize those activities as opportunities for public education and visitor experience. The two consultation sessions in Toronto focused on the legislative and policy framework for Parks Canada. Questioned specifically was the policy of active resource management to maintain ecological integrity. There was also questioning of the ecological integrity mandate and an expressed view to no resource management and to “let nature take its course”.

Vision Elements

A strong majority of the comments confirmed that the proposed vision elements captured the

special nature of Point Pelee National Park and reflected what people hoped the park will be like in the future. People supported the presentation of the ongoing story of Point Pelee National Park in order to engage all Canadians with the successes and challenges of protecting this living legacy. While there was support for the three core elements of the Parks Canada mandate as reflected in the vision elements, a number of individuals and organizations felt protection should be paramount, especially in a small, fragile and isolated park like Point Pelee National Park.

Key Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

The comments confirmed that Parks Canada is focusing on appropriate issues, challenges and opportunities for park management and operations but there were some concerns about striking the “right balance” of the mandate elements. It was also noted that “in such a small, isolated site, many factors are out of Point Pelee National Park’s control”.

There were animal welfare/rights advocates at the multi-stakeholder/partner sessions in Toronto who oppose Parks Canada’s active resource management actions in Point Pelee National Park, specifically the culling of hyper-abundant species. It was highlighted that regular opportunities for dialogue, improved public access to scientific research and ongoing communications with Parks Canada would contribute to better understanding of these issues as well as others.

Key Strategies and Area Management Approach

Overall, the five key strategies and the three area management approaches proposed received broad support.

Most comments on “Respecting the Seventh

Generation: Honouring First Nations Connections to Point Pelee National Park” reflected enthusiasm for the strategy. There were a couple of comments expressing concern over ownership of the park and allowable activities.

There was significant support for the strategy “Redefining Point Pelee National Park as a Place to Relax, Enjoy and Connect” but also questions regarding the appropriateness of the title. Comments indicated that Point Pelee National Park was already a place to relax, enjoy and connect and, therefore, redefinition was not necessary. As a result, this strategy has been refocused to “Discovering, Enjoying and Connecting with Point Pelee National Park” to better reflect the intent and direction of the strategy to revitalize the visitor experience program and services including the supporting infrastructure.

The strategy “Restoring the Carolinian Habitat Mosaic” received broad support and useful suggestions for how Parks Canada can promote research while facilitating visitor experience and public education opportunities.

The strategy, “Protecting Cultural Resources” received significant support, with agreement that both visitors and the park would benefit from an improved presentation of the human history of Point Pelee. As a result, the strategy has been re-titled to “Six Thousand Years of Stories: Protecting and Presenting Cultural Resources”, which better defines the intended scope of the strategy.

There was strong support for the strategy, “Collaborating for Conservation”, along with suggestions for how Parks Canada could expand partnering and improve its ability to utilize volunteers. As one participant noted in comparison to the “tremendous use” of volunteers by the US National Parks Service, “Parks Canada is missing the boat”.

The area management approach for the Mainland: Western Shore received support and suggestions for improving the Visitor Centre.

Specific mention was made of the tremendous opportunity for a legacy project to recognize and celebrate the upcoming 100th anniversary in 2018 of the establishment of Point Pelee National Park.

The area management approach for the Mainland: Eastern Shore and Marsh also received broad support, along with questions regarding shoreline erosion, the continuation of sport fishing in the marsh, and declining water quality in the marsh.

The area management approach for Middle Island received support and, although it did not generate discussion at the sessions in Leamington, the *Middle Island Conservation Plan* and specifically the active resource management of double-crested cormorant was a focus of discussion during the meetings in Toronto.

Management Plan Review and Consultations Program

There were some comments received concerning the condensed timeline for the communications and consultations program and completion of the park management plan, particularly concerning the opportunity to comment on a draft of the park management plan. This was recognized. Consultations overall did confirm support for the park vision elements presented as well as the key strategies and area management approaches proposed. Of the comments gathered, an overwhelming majority elaborated on the proposed long term vision and strategic direction to guide management and operations of the park presented in the communications and consultations presentation during the meetings and as outlined in the newsletter. Thus submission of the new park management plan for approval by the Honourable Jim Prentice, Canada's Environment Minister and Minister responsible for Parks Canada proceeded for March 31, 2010 as planned and indicated during the communications and consultations program. The *Point Pelee National Park Management Plan* was tabled in Parliament on

June 15, 2010. A copy of the plan is available in PDF format at

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/on/pelee/plan.aspx>. Should you require an alternate format, contact us by:

Email: pelee.info@pc.gc.ca

Mail: Point Pelee National Park
407 Monarch Lane, R.R.#1
Leamington, ON N8H 3V4

Telephone: 519-322-2365

Fax: 519-322-1277

Parks Canada is committed to further involving interested parties during the implementation of the *Point Pelee National Park Management Plan*. To maintain connections and to encourage opportunities for ongoing engagement with First Nations, local communities, partners, stakeholders, neighbours, residents and Canadians on the implementation of the *Point Pelee National Park Management Plan*, Parks Canada will deliver a progress update annually. In addition, Parks Canada will explore other opportunities for the public to influence and contribute to the management of Point Pelee National Park.

Other Comments

Among the numerous other ideas, suggestions and comments raised during the communications and consultations program, some of note included:

- Accommodating mobility-challenged birders and others (eg. wheelchair and walker access to shuttle, the Tip, washrooms).
- Slowing the speed limit in the park to 30kph to improve visitor enjoyment and to protect wildlife.
- Creating a Welcome Centre for the park in downtown Leamington, which would enable people to park their vehicles at the Welcome Centre and take a park transit or bicycle to

the park, thus reducing vehicle traffic and air pollution; bring visitors into Leamington at the beginning and end of day-trips to the park, where they could go to restaurants and shop at local businesses; and make the park better integrated with and more relevant to the people of Leamington.

- Providing programs that increase public access to the park at night, so that people can experience and appreciate the night sky.
- Highlighting federal legislation regarding Species at Risk and how that guides Parks Canada.
- Parks Canada's position on wind turbines in Lake Erie.

CONCLUSION

The communications and consultations program for the *Point Pelee National Park Management Plan* review generated an impressive number of views, opinions, suggestions and ideas. These were extremely useful as they confirmed support for the proposed park vision, the five key strategies and the three area management approaches and provided much of the detail for completion of the new management plan. As well, the input will be of continued assistance to Parks Canada as the *Point Pelee National Park Management Plan* is implemented.

A sincere thank you to all who participated in the communications and consultations program, as 'Sharing the Passion, Sharing the Leadership' has helped to ensure Parks Canada is on the right track for protecting and presenting Canada's southern most national park.