



# Gulf Islands National Park Reserve Management Plan Newsletter #7

November 2013

This newsletter provides a summary of the comments received during the public review period for the draft management plan that took place earlier this year.

## Background

Parks Canada produced a draft management plan for Gulf Island National Park Reserve (GINPR) in early April 2013. Between April 20 and June 9, the public and other stakeholders were then invited to provide feedback on the draft plan at a number of public meetings, online and via e-mail. Participants included island residents, business owners, local government officials, representatives from recreational, educational and environmental non-governmental organisations, and the general public.

## What Was Heard

Feedback received during the review period indicated strong support for the overall direction of the management of the park reserve. Many specific suggestions were made for actions in targeted areas. The following is a summary of the main messages that were heard:

**1. Maintain ecological integrity while increasing visitation:** Participants value protection, habitat restoration and species at risk as important elements of park management. It is also recognised that the park reserve is in a good position to attract more visitors by harnessing the growing population of BC's Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and the Gulf islands. Many are interested in the potential for local economic development opportunities that would accompany this growth.

**2. Improve intra- and inter-island alternative transportation routes and**



Island residents would like to see more visitors to the park reserve while ensuring that natural and cultural heritage values are maintained.

**infrastructure:** Participants expressed a desire to see improvements to connectivity within park reserve lands and between islands. A number of comments suggested the expansion of existing trails and the development new ones for multiple-use including hiking, cycling and horseback riding. This is seen as a means of reducing the need for visitors to bring cars to the islands. Island residents are particularly interested in the development of walk-on and bike-friendly inter-island marine transportation such as ferries and water taxis. Maintaining access for people with disabilities was also noted as important.

**3. Improve access for kayaks:** Improving access to and from various locations, including more kayak-friendly parking, is seen as important.





**4. Develop and expand facilities and programs, especially campgrounds:** There were numerous suggestions for creating and expanding campgrounds and improving access by foot and kayak. Rain shelters, more interpretive programming and signs, and child-oriented content and activities were also recommended. First Nations involvement and local history were identified as important components of interpretive programs.

**5. Increase local involvement:** Island residents are very interested in actively supporting the park and contributing to its activities in a number of ways. This includes gathering and sharing their local knowledge to enhance visitors' experiences, and volunteering on ecological restoration and other projects that support the protection and presentation of the park reserve.

**6. Develop cross-border collaboration and promotion with the US:** Good opportunities exist to partner with US-based parks in the San Juan Islands because of their proximity, complementary visitor experiences and the potential for attracting more visitors from the US .

**7. Address increasing pressure on public safety services:** Concern was expressed over the recent reductions in park reserve staffing levels, including trained public safety staff, coupled with growing visitation to the park. This creates pressure on local island emergency services and the costs of these must be considered by the park reserve. The local fire protection authority on one island noted that inconsistencies exist between federal and local fire regulations which create mixed messages and increased risk of fire. Parks Canada should continue to collaborate with local agencies to ensure that public safety programs are responsive to increasing demand for these services.

### Next Steps

Engagement with First Nations in the review of the draft plan is underway and is expected to be completed soon. The management plan will then be finalised and sent for approval by the CEO of Parks Canada and the Minister of Environment before tabling in Parliament.



There is strong support for expanded camping facilities and improved access for kayaks within the park reserve.

### For more information:

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