John Haselmayer  
Park Superintendent  

Thousand Islands National Park of Canada  
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By email: pc.pnmille-illes-thousandislandsnp.pc@canada.ca  

June 28, 2019  

RE: CPAWS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE THOUSAND ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN  

Dear Sir,  

In response to Parks Canada Agency’s request for public input on the draft Management Plan for Thousand Islands National Park (the Park) The Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-OV) has prepared the following recommendations.  

This letter first sets out background information and a review for our submission on the draft Management Plan and then details our recommendations for the draft Management Plan.  

CPAWS is interested in the Park because of its strategic location in the Frontenac Arch, rich biodiversity, populations of species at risk, position in connecting the Adirondack and Algonquin Parks and role as a tool to work towards reconciliation with local Indigenous groups. Furthermore, successfully achieving our goal of protecting biological diversity can only be done by connecting people to nature and easy to access protected areas, such as National Parks are essential to our work. As such, we would like to use our experience to offer some advice and issue a few recommendations on the Park’s Draft Management Plan.  

REVIEW OF THE THOUSAND ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN  

CPAWS-OV mostly agrees with the strategies outlined in the Thousand Islands National Park Draft Management Plan, although we do have some concerns which we will address in this review.  

Key Strategy 1, Working together to achieve conservation goals in a fragmented and developed landscape, and its objectives describe a compelling plan to foster conservation.  

Objective 1.1 is particularly strong as it recognises the importance of working in collaboration with stakeholder outside of the Park to improve its ecological integrity. However, the targets set for this objective, although hopefully achievable, may be unrealistic with the political context. Also, because the plan acknowledges that some
species at risk will move outside of the Park to complete their life cycle, the creation of buffer zones around the boundaries of the protected area should be considered.

Objective 1.2 is concerning to CPAWS-OV because key ecosystems should be improved rather than maintained. Furthermore, although we can use habitat quality as an indicator of biodiversity, it does not represent the actual condition of an ecosystem.

Parks Canada should reduce encroachment in the boundaries of the Park as quickly as possible.

Regarding the second strategy, we appreciate the efforts the management plan will make to connect people to nature, and we agree that the Park is in a strong position to introduce protected areas to youth, urban-dwellers and new Canadians. However, we are concerned that some objectives may impede conservation efforts, limit local access or reduce visitor experience.

Objective 2.1 and the Management Areas section of the plan are proposing to promote more the use of Landon Bay and Jones Creek and to offer day trips to the islands. Although diverting visitors may reduce pressure on the highly used Mallorytown Landing, it could also have an impact on species that are shy of human and have taken refuge in these areas. Furthermore, we are concerned that the local community may have reduced access to Landon Bay, and that visitors wanting to experience the wilderness of the islands will be disappointed because of the changes in the landscape.

CPAWS-OV believes in connecting people with nature and, therefore, we agree with Objective 2.2. We also hope that these programs could be used to inform visitors about the strategies used by the Park for nature conservation as it may increase awareness and compliance with the Park’s regulations.

Objective 2.3 is a significant step for reconciliation, and we strongly approve. We, however, suggest that the management plan addresses traditional use of the Park by the local Indigenous communities.

Regarding strategy 3, we appreciate the need to modernise some infrastructures to reduce their environmental impact, especially when they cannot adequately respond to visitor demand. Still, the draft management plan fails to tackle the issue of increased risks of invasive species being brought in by amplifying the number of boats in the Park. Furthermore, it does not include a traffic management plan, yet we know it is a problem in many highly visited parks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Management Plan should be prepared and reviewed every five years, as per the Minister’s Promise from the Minister’s Roundtable 2017 that management planning is to be conducted every five years.
2. The National Park should implement an outreach, communication and marketing strategy on connectivity directed at local stakeholders to gather public and, therefore, political support from all levels of government.

3. Objective 1.1 should include a target regarding the creation of buffer zones through collaboration with local stakeholders.

4. Objective 1.2 should be to improve the ecological integrity of all the ecosystems in the Park; each should attain a good condition rating.

5. Data such as the number of populations of native species and, where possible, their genetic variability should be measured and monitored to ensure ecological integrity.

6. Target 2 of the Objective 1.4 should be: "The boundaries of the Park will be marked in the two years following the implementation of this plan".

7. Adaptive management plans with systematic reviews of targets and yearly plan adjustments should be implemented to monitor ecological integrity, visitor satisfaction and relationships with the community. These plans should involve the participation of local Indigenous groups.

8. Each boat launch should have mandatory boat washing stations to reduce the spreading of invasive species.

9. The park should prepare a traffic management plan to address issues such as parking, road mortality and conflict between users.

Thank you for providing CPAWS the opportunity to comment on the Thousand Island National Park Draft Management Plan. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about our recommendations for the Draft Management Plan.

Sincerely,

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About CPAWS
The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) is Canada’s national community-based voice for public wilderness protection. The Ottawa Valley Chapter
of CPAWS (CPAWS-OV) works to protect public lands located in and around the Ottawa River watershed. We were established fifty years ago when a group of concerned citizens learned about development plans for Gatineau Park, and we have since become involved in many issues of wilderness protection in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec.

Our mission is to protect the biodiversity of the Ottawa Valley and surrounding areas through legislation and public education. CPAWS-OV has multiple active campaigns and programs; each has a designated committee working with local, provincial and federal government officials, industries and other environmental groups to find solutions to conservation issues, and provide input for management of public lands.