

PARKS CANADA'S MANAGEMENT PLANNING FRAMEWORK

FRANÇOIS MARINEAU

Manager, Heritage Planning

Parks Canada, Planning and Business Management

111 Water Street East

Cornwall, Ontario, K6H 6S3

Phone: (613) 938-5727

E-Mail: francois.marineau@pc.gc.ca

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this paper are to: 1) raise the awareness of the Parks Canada Agency and its programs; 2) describe in general terms the planning framework and processes at Parks Canada; and, 3) identify some of the functional challenges and opportunities the planning community will be addressing over the next few years. Workshops such as this provide an important opportunity to renew collaborative relationships with other conservation stakeholders.

THE PARKS CANADA AGENCY

The Parks Canada Agency (PCA) is a key instrument for the Government of Canada to achieve its sustainable development and heritage conservation goals. The Agency plays a leading role in federal government activities related to recognizing places representative of Canada's natural heritage and places of national historic importance, and in protecting and presenting these places to the public. With an annual budget of approximately \$500,000,000 and 4,000 full-time employees, Parks Canada protects and presents Canada's natural and cultural heritage in every region of the country.

In 1998, Parliament passed the *Parks Canada Agency Act* (Government of Canada, 1998) establishing Parks Canada as a separate Government of Canada agency. In 2000, Parliament passed the *Canada National Parks Act* (Government of Canada, 2000). This *Act* modernized Parks Canada's historic role, and established ecological integrity as its first priority. In a similar fashion, the *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act* (Government of Canada, 2002) calls for the creation of a system of marine conservation areas representative of the country's oceanic and Great Lakes waters. Responsibility for the PCA rests with the Minister of the Environment.

PARKS CANADA MANDATE

The Parks Canada mandate states: "*On behalf of the people of Canada, Parks Canada protects and presents nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and fosters public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.*" (Parks Canada Agency, 2004a: 17) Parks Canada also contributes to an international heritage agenda through its leadership role in, or participation in international conventions, programs, agencies and agreements. These include, among others, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) *World Heritage Convention*, the *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Significance*, the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and the *UNESCO Biosphere Reserves Program*.

Because heritage areas and sites cannot be managed in isolation, cooperative working relationships are ac-

tively sought with agencies and individuals involved in the management of surrounding or adjacent landscapes, ecosystems and communities. Agreements with provincial and territorial governments, as well as with allied non-governmental organizations and Aboriginal peoples, can be significant means of ensuring recognition, establishment and protection of heritage places.

The Agency's top priorities during 2004-2005 were to:

- Maintain or improve the ecological integrity of national parks, the commemorative integrity of national historic sites and cultural resources, and the sustainability of national marine conservation areas;
- Establish new national parks and new national marine conservation areas in regions which are not yet represented in the systems of national parks and national marine conservation areas of Canada;
- Designate new national historic sites of Canada, with an emphasis on women, Aboriginal peoples and ethnocultural communities;
- Engage Canadians by sharing with them our passion for the preservation of the protected heritage areas of Canada and fully involving them in all aspects of our mandate;
- Maintain and improve visitor services and visitor experiences; and,
- Ensure adequate long-term funding and financial sustainability of Parks Canada's programs.

THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK AT PARKS CANADA

The planning framework at Parks Canada consists of three key planning processes that are implemented at three organizational levels: 1) multi-year corporate strategic planning; 2) five-year protected heritage area management planning; and, 3) annual business planning. These planning processes allow Parks Canada to plan, monitor and report on the state of Parks Canada's system of protected heritage areas over a five-year cycle.

The *Canada National Parks Act* (Government of Canada, 2000) requires that all national parks have a management plan approved by the Minister and tabled in both houses of Parliament within five years of park establishment, and that the plan be reviewed every five years. The *Parks Canada Agency Act* (Government of Canada, 1998) sets out the same requirements for national historic sites and other protected areas.

For both national parks and national historic sites, management planning starts with the preparation of a *Scoping Document* that identifies the main issues to be addressed and the proposed time frame to complete the plan. Once the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Parks Canada approves the scoping document, formal management planning is launched. Appropriate public participation at the national, regional and local levels is an essential part of the development of management plans. Once a plan is completed, it is submitted to the Minister for approval, on the recommendation of the CEO.

The process typically takes one to two years to complete, depending on the complexity of the issues involved. The national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas management planning activities fall under the responsibility of a Field Unit Superintendent. The planner provides a professional planning service in support of planning programs. Multi-disciplinary teams are the basis for all Parks Canada planning programs. Multi-disciplinary input is ensured to account for the wide range of factors considered in developing the long-range direction central to a management plan.

THE PURPOSE OF A MANAGEMENT PLAN

A management plan is a strategic guide to future management of a national park, national historic site or national marine conservation area. It is the primary public accountability document for these heritage places. They are also commitments to the public of Canada from the Minister regarding the use and protection of these places.

National park management plans must be consistent with national legislative and policy requirements, such as the PCA *Corporate Plan* (Parks Canada Agency, 2004b) direction, and be tailored to address regional requirements and circumstances. For national parks, the primary goal of a management plan is to ensure that there is a clearly defined direction for the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, understanding that maintaining ecological integrity is essential to the quality of visitor experiences. Heritage presentation programs are also described as a fundamental means of achieving both protection and use objectives.

In partnership with neighbouring communities and organizations, the plan sets a long-term vision and identifies strategies that will be implemented to ensure that the vision can be realized. The plan also guides subsequent actions and operations for the park that are implemented on a yearly basis.

LINKAGES BETWEEN MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND OTHER PLANNING AND REPORTING PROCESSES

The management plan is not an end in itself. Rather, it sets out a framework within which subsequent management, planning and implementation will take place. The *Field Unit Business Plan* sets out the implementation strategy for the management plan, and allocates resources according to the management plan priorities. An annual reporting process assesses progress towards implementing a management plan.

The *Canada National Parks Act* (Government of Canada, 2000) requires that a management plan be reviewed every five years to assess progress toward achieving long-term goals and to set new management priorities and actions for the next five years. The five-year plan review begins with consideration by Parks Canada staff (along with others in the case of cooperatively managed parks, national historic sites and marine conservation areas) of progress in implementing the current plan.

The *Minister's Action Plan in Response to the Report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks* (Parks Canada Agency, 2000) directs that there will be a five-year *State of the Park Report* for each national park. Since then, the management planning process for national parks includes the preparation of a state of the park report prior to the scoping document. The report is focussed on the state of ecological integrity in the park in the context of the greater park ecosystem. Its findings are a key consideration in evaluating the effectiveness of the park's current management plan, and the magnitude of adjustments that may be required. This in turn will influence the nature of the subsequent plan review process to be proposed in a scoping document. In essence, for national parks the state of the park report is the first step in the five-year plan review process.

The overall status of management plans for the systems of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas is reported to Parliament every two years through the *State of the Protected Heritage Areas Report*. Accomplishments related to management planning are also reported in the *Parks Canada Annual Report* (e.g., Parks Canada Agency, 2004a).

CONCLUSIONS

The Parks Canada planning community has evolved over the years to fulfill new legislative requirements, address changing corporate directions, and ensure it continues to offer a high quality, professional planning expertise and advice to its clients in the field. We find that both Parks Canada and Ontario Parks share common professional and heritage protection challenges. We are both public agencies managing and protecting systems of heritage areas systems for the benefit of future generations. While facing similar greater ecosystem human use stressors, we are both challenged to report on the state of our protected heritage areas. This context offers many opportunities for engaging in professional networking, sharing lessons and experiences, and building a closer relationship between our respective team.

REFERENCES

- Government of Canada. 1998. *Parks Canada Agency Act*. C. 31.
- Government of Canada. 2000. *Canada National Parks Act*. C. 32.
- Government of Canada. 2002. *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act*. C.18.
- Parks Canada Agency. 2000. "Unimpaired for Future Generations"? *Protecting Ecological Integrity with Canada's National Parks*. Volumes 1 & 2. Report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks. Parks Canada Agency: Ottawa, Ontario.
- Parks Canada Agency. 2004a. *Parks Canada Agency Annual Report: 2003-2005*. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada: Ottawa, Ontario.
- Parks Canada Agency. 2004b. *Parks Canada Corporate Plan: 2004/05-2008/09*. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada: Ottawa, Ontario.