

Parks under threat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's 21st annual Parks Day takes place on July 21, 2012. The date is an opportunity for Canadians to celebrate our spectacular national, provincial and territorial parks, and to reflect on how well we are doing at protecting these natural treasures for the benefit of current and future generations.

Since 2008, CPAWS has issued an annual report on the state of Canada's parks around Parks Day.¹ In 2008, we lauded the rapid rate of park establishment that year. In 2009 we noted that park establishment was slowing and problems facing our parks were growing. In 2010, we focused on both the good and bad news for many wild species within our parks. In this year's report, our review of the past 12 months has led us to focus on the growing threats facing Canada's national, provincial and territorial parks.

Our key concerns this year can be summarized as follows:

- **Federal budget cuts** will significantly reduce scientific research and monitoring essential to protect our national parks. And provincial spending on parks continues to be well below what is needed, leaving them vulnerable to threats from inside and outside their boundaries. Examples include the growing problems facing national parks including New Brunswick's Fundy and Nova Scotia's Kejimikujik, and BC's provincial parks.
- **A growing trend of inappropriate tourism and recreational developments** within our national parks threatens the well-being of ecosystems within their borders, and will do little to foster a deep appreciation among visitors for our parks' special

¹The only exception was 2011 when CPAWS did not release an annual state of Canada's parks report.

natural qualities. Examples include new developments approved or proposed for Alberta's Jasper and Banff, and Manitoba's Riding Mountain national parks.

- **Growing industrial development pressures** within or adjacent to many of our most famous parks threaten their ecological integrity. Examples include threats to Yukon's Tombstone, NWT's Nahanni, Ontario's Algonquin, Quebec's Gatineau, Newfoundland's Gros Morne and Saskatchewan's Prince Albert parks.
- **Proposed boundaries for new parks** are too frequently designed to maximize industrial development opportunities in the adjoining areas, rather than to ensure the ecosystems of the area are adequately protected. Examples include Nunavik, Quebec's proposed Tursujuq, Quebec's proposed Dumoine and Manitoba's recently announced Little Limestone Lake parks.

While this year's report focuses primarily on threats to parks, we also acknowledge that there has been some progress towards creating new parks over the past year: for example Sable Island National Park Reserve in Nova Scotia is in the final stages of designation; funding has been allocated for a Rouge National Urban Park in Ontario; and a large new protected area has been created in Nova Scotia². However, in our view, this progress is overshadowed by the growing threats to the long term health of our parks.

Why do Canada's parks really matter?

Canada's natural parks are among our most iconic symbols and the cornerstones of our nature conservation programs. They protect wilderness areas, and help maintain healthy, diverse and resilient ecosystems upon which our own health ultimately depends. They provide refuges for wild plants and animals, particularly those that cannot survive in intensely managed landscapes. And they provide opportunities for Canadians to spend time with family and friends, to connect with and learn about nature, and to enjoy healthy outdoor activities, supporting our physical and mental health. They provide outdoor classrooms for scientific research and citizen learning. And for a growing number of Indigenous peoples, parks offer a means to maintain and share their cultural traditions.

Canada's parks also provide direct and indirect benefits to the Canadian economy. For example, in 2009, the \$800 million spent by Canada's governments on provincial, territorial and national parks generated \$4.6 billion to Canada's GDP and supported 64,000 full time jobs across the country, including many in rural and remote communities.³

Canada has about 20% of the world's remaining intact forests, 25% of the world's wetlands, and 9% of the world's renewable freshwater supply. Parks are one of our most important tools for protecting these globally significant natural resources. But the future of our parks as healthy, well-functioning ecosystems is by no means certain.

CPAWS is calling on all levels of government to recognize the full extent of environmental, social and economic values of our parks as protected natural ecosystems, and to invest in them adequately to ensure that we can both enjoy the current benefits of our parks, and keep them healthy for generations to come.

²In the past year, two new protected areas were established at Chignecto, Nova Scotia: Kelley River Wilderness Area is the largest new protected area in NS in over a decade; and Raven Head Wilderness Area includes one of the longest stretches of undeveloped coastline remaining in NS.

³The 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 <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/cpc/economic.php>

SECTION I

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

PUT PARKS AT GROWING RISK



Fundy National Park, NB - Steve Reid
Kejimikujik National Park, NS - Sunetra Ekanayake
Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida
Heritage Site, BC - Sabine Jessen

The 2012 federal budget dramatically cut Parks Canada's funding, while provincial and territorial park systems continue to be woefully underfunded in this era of fiscal constraint.

This year's federal budget cut close to \$30 million annually from Parks Canada's budget, which has resulted in 638 jobs being declared surplus within the Agency. The people who will lose their jobs include experts with years of experience in protecting park ecosystems and ensuring visitors appreciate their natural wonders, and who have built trusted relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal peoples and local communities. Losing these staff represents a huge loss in human capacity that threatens to reverse a decade of progress in how our parks are managed.

Investing in parks has generally been considered by governments as "nice to do" but not a top priority for government spending. Decision-makers do not widely recognize that parks generate significant economic returns to the Canadian economy. For example, in 2009, \$800 million spent by Canada's 14 park agencies generated \$4.6 billion towards Canada's GDP, supported 64,000 full time equivalent jobs across the country, and returned \$300 million (or 44% of the expenditure) in tax revenues (excluding income tax) to government coffers.⁴ These impacts supported employment and spin off benefits in cities as well as many rural and remote communities. Parks provide valuable ecosystem goods and services to society, including purifying water, producing oxygen, regulating the climate, and protecting against erosion and damage from flooding. All of these services have significant value. For example, the total economic value of carbon stored in Canada's national parks is estimated to be in the area of \$75 billion⁵. However, these values are not well understood and are usually taken for granted.

⁴The 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 <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/cpc/economic.php>

⁵Kulthreshtha, S.N., Lac, S., Johnston, M., Kinar, C. (2000). Carbon Sequestration in Protected Areas of Canada: An Economic Valuation. Canadian Parks Council. Available at: <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/pdf/549.pdf>

This undervaluing of the benefits of parks and protected areas means governments have been under-investing or cutting back on park budgets, putting the health of the ecosystems parks were intended to protect at risk, and providing fewer opportunities for Canadians to experience nature in our parks, even as the “nature deficit” among our population continues to rise.

Although, on the surface, the cutting of \$30 million per year from the Parks Canada budget appears to be a less than 5% cut⁶, the impacts on staffing have been much more severe. Parks Canada’s ecosystem science capacity is particularly hard hit. Of the approximately 150 ecosystem science positions in Parks Canada, 25 to 30% will be lost. More than a quarter of the technical specialists who support science and management, including geographic information specialists, remote sensing specialists, monitoring technicians and human-wildlife conflict specialists will also be lost.

Just over a decade ago, a blue ribbon panel of experts -- the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada’s National Parks⁷ -- advised that our national parks were being degraded across the country, and recommended greater investment in ecological science capacity to address the significant challenges in conserving the parks’ natural values. In response, successive federal governments invested and Parks Canada built a world-class science-based program to measure and monitor the health of park ecosystems and provide the information needed for park managers to protect and restore them.

Last summer, a Globe and Mail article lauded Parks Canada’s national park science program as “The latest Canadian export” and noted Parks Canada’s ecological monitoring program was becoming a model for parks systems around the world, including in the United States, South Korea and Finland⁸. The recently announced cuts to scientific and technical capacity put this leading edge program at risk, and raise serious questions about how Parks Canada will be able to deliver on its mandate of protecting the ecological integrity of our national parks. In 2005, the Auditor General of Canada reviewed Parks Canada’s progress towards implementing its first priority of protecting ecological integrity and reiterated that :

“Good monitoring, restoration, and public education programs are essential for Parks Canada to meet its mandate of maintaining or restoring ecological integrity and fostering public awareness and enjoyment of national parks. Without them, national parks are at risk of losing species and biodiversity, and Parks Canada will be limited in its ability to restore ecosystems and protect the natural heritage of national parks.”⁹



Golden Ears Provincial Park, BC - Elyse Curley

⁶This represents Parks Canada’s anticipated 2012-13 budget, prior to the 2012 budget cuts, according to Parks Canada’s Corporate Plan for 2011-12, available at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/docs/pc/plans/plan2011-2012/index.aspx>

⁷Parks Canada Agency. 2000. “Unimpaired for Future Generations”? Protecting Ecological Integrity with Canada’s National Parks. Vol.1 “A Call to Action.” Vol. II “Setting a New Direction for Canada’s National Parks” Report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada’s National Parks. Ottawa, ON.

⁸The latest Canadian export: park-management know-how.” The Globe and Mail: A10, Wednesday, July 27, 2011.

⁹http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_200509_02_e_14949.html#ch2hd3d

Beyond the impact on ecosystem science capacity, the Parks Canada funding cuts will also cause hardship in local communities across the country that rely on jobs and economic spin offs from national parks to support their local economies. And the cutbacks will limit opportunities for Canadians to visit and enjoy their parks, because of the service reductions and shorter visitor seasons that are being implemented across the country.

The federal budget implementation bill also included a change to the Canada National Parks Act that will reduce the frequency of park management plan reviews from every five years to every ten. Reviewing the plans every ten years will not only make it difficult to ensure management actions effectively protect our parks in the face of changing ecological and social conditions, it will also limit public input by reducing the frequency of public consultations on the direction of park management.

Why Science Matters

Twenty years ago, elk were over-running the town of Banff which is surrounded by its famous namesake national park. Native aspen and willow that provide important habitat for songbirds and beaver were disappearing from the town's surrounding Bow Valley, because the quickly multiplying elk were eating the vegetation faster than it could regenerate.

Why were the elk overpopulating? Careful scientific research and monitoring revealed that over-development around the town was cutting off movement corridors for wolves and cougars, their main predators. The elk were also using the Banff townsite as a refuge, hanging out where they were safe from predators, and a growing public safety challenge for town managers.

Ecosystems are extremely complex, and strong scientific research and monitoring is what enabled park managers to restore a better balance within this park between the elk and their predator populations. First park managers removed some facilities in the Bow Valley, enabling wolves and cougars to move back into the lower reaches of the valley, restoring a more natural predator-prey relationship and starting to reduce elk numbers.

Scientists further reduced the elk population by re-locating the habituated "town elk" out of Banff townsite using "aversive conditioning" techniques. Once out of town, the elk could be preyed upon by wolves and cougars. These strategies also helped restore more natural elk migration behaviour.

Finally, scientists prescribed a series of prescribed burns to bring natural fire back into the ecosystem. With more wolves and cougars and less elk in the valley, aspen and willow began to regenerate, restoring habitat for songbirds and beaver, and improving the overall health of the ecosystem. Conflicts between humans and elk in Banff townsite were also dramatically reduced.

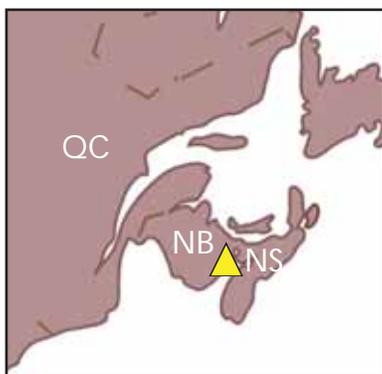
The success of this program, like many others across the country, could not have happened without a strong scientific research and monitoring program that allowed park managers to understand the complex ecosystem dynamics at play. This restoration program in Banff required an understanding of the interactions of fire, wetlands, beavers, elk, wolves, cougars and humans. Today, park managers worldwide consider it a global model for understanding ecological complexity and the importance of science to successful resource management.

SECTION I CASE STUDY

Cuts increase risks to wildlife

Fundy National Park, NB

Budget cuts to the ecosystem science program in Fundy National Park could jeopardize already underfunded efforts to protect and restore populations of at-risk wildlife in this relatively small park. Fundy National Park is only 206 km² and is surrounded by a landscape that is intensively managed by the forest industry. The park faces the challenge of being an isolated “island” of wild nature in a “sea” of clearcuts and tree plantations. Many wide-ranging wildlife species, including black bears, American marten and the endangered Inner Bay of Fundy salmon, rely on habitat both inside and outside the park for their survival. This poses significant challenges for park managers who are tasked with maintaining and restoring native wildlife populations.



Parks Canada's 1997 "State of the Parks Report" noted that Fundy had experienced the second highest number of wildlife extirpations (the loss of a species from a region) of all national parks, behind only tiny Point Pelee in southern Ontario. Bringing back extirpated species, and preventing further losses of species, requires considerable ecological research

and monitoring to understand the threats to their survival, and to ensure the necessary conditions exist to support their return to the ecosystem. It also requires working closely with a broad range of partners in the surrounding region to ensure enough quality habitat is protected for wildlife that roam beyond park borders.

Parks Canada ecologists had been working for years, with inadequate staff and resources, to lead and collaborate on regional projects to conserve flying squirrels, black bears, Inner Bay of Fundy salmon and their critical river habitats, and old-forest dwelling American marten. We are concerned that the added pressure of these most recent staff cuts, on top of previous cuts to ecological research, may mean the Park is unable to continue to participate in this research that is so crucial to understanding, protecting and restoring the park ecosystem.

The federal government should restore ecosystem science capacity to implement the wildlife and ecosystem research needed to protect and restore the park's fish and wildlife populations. 🌿



American marten - US Fish and Wildlife Service

SECTION I CASE STUDY

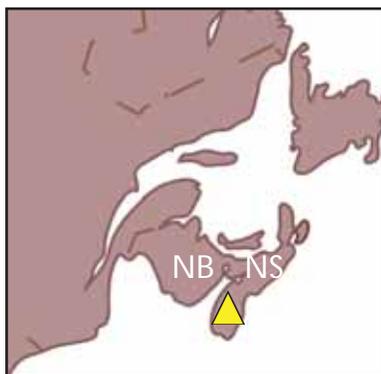
Nova Scotia's Kejimkujik National Park turned into seasonal park

Kejimkujik National Park, NS

Parks Canada's budget cuts will result in Nova Scotia's cherished Kejimkujik National Park (Keji --as it is referred to locally) being turned into a "seasonal park", open for only four and a half months each year. There will be no services provided outside of the summer season and its 'shoulders'. Toilets will be locked, campgrounds closed, ski trails won't be groomed, and roads won't be cleared of snow. Unsupervised closed-season visitation will largely prevent Canadians from experiencing the national park for most of the year, and could open the park to threats from illegal hunting and trapping, fire, and other potential problems that could compromise visitor's health and safety.

For a long time Keji has been a favoured destination for Nova Scotians. The park has been well managed and the level of use appears to be sustainable. In addition to its role in outdoor education and healthy living, Kejimkujik has also developed a very active science program, providing crucial research for a wide range of ecological studies on songbirds, species-at-risk, acid rain, climate change and other issues. Budget cuts have put these studies at risk, along with long term ecological integrity research and monitoring programs necessary to guide park management. For example, the park has been participating in collaborative research to better understand the regional ecosystem of the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve, which has Keji at its heart. This work will be seriously curtailed and may cease due to elimination of the relevant staff position at the park. Understanding the natural environment of Keji is crucial to ensuring the park is managed for ecological integrity.

In the Kejimkujik Seaside component -- a spectacular coastal addition to the park which includes one of the last undisturbed nesting beaches of the endangered piping plover, there will no longer be any staff stationed there to manage and protect the park.



Communities in Nova Scotia have not been adequately consulted about the cuts to Parks Canada and the closure of Kejimkujik for the majority of the year. CPAWS- NS Chapter is very concerned about the negative effects of these cuts on the future of the park ecosystems as well as the health,

education, tourism, economy, and general well-being of the local community near Keji. We are recommending that the federal government restore a sufficient budget to maintain the park science and monitoring program, and keep the park open year round, with levels of services that will ensure its long term protection and availability for core traditional uses. 

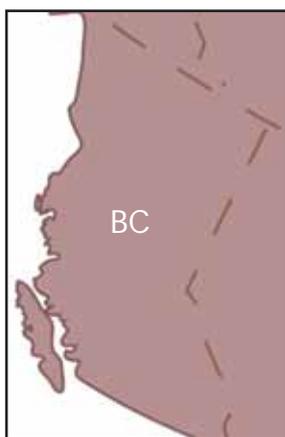


Kejimkujik National Park, NS - Sunetra Ekanayake

SECTION I CASE STUDY

The woes confronting BC provincial parks

BC's provincial parks comprise Canada's second most extensive parks system, after our national parks. BC Parks stewards 130,000 km² of park wilderness including some of North America's most spectacular and diverse landscapes and seascapes. Almost 20 million people visit BC's provincial parks each year, making them extremely important not only for conservation, but also for the province's identity, health and economy. The Province of BC has done an admirable job adding new parks and conservancies to the system. But they have done a very poor job of funding this internationally important parks system – compared to other provincial parks, BC has the lowest funded provincial park system, on a per hectare basis, in Canada.



Highlights of the BC Parks system include the world's most productive sockeye salmon run at Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park; Khutzeymateen Provincial Park, which has the highest known grizzly bear concentration along the BC coast; and Anne Valley (Triangle Island) Ecological Reserve which protects the largest seabird colony in BC and the largest Steller sea lion rookery in Canada.

But BC Parks' budget is far too small to ensure the long term ecological health of the provincial parks or even the safety of its visitors. In 2010/11, the BC Parks operating budget was \$31.7 million, the same as it was in the early 1970s when BC's parks system was one-fifth of its current size. This lack of funding means:

- BC is the only province in Canada without a provincial park interpretation program to inspire and educate current and future generations of visitors about the importance of nature and wilderness;
- There is one park ranger for every 20 parks. This shocking inadequacy in enforcement capacity means that illegal activities such as poaching have increased.

In May 2012, the BC government allocated an additional \$3 million to BC Parks' capital budget (bringing the capital budget to \$13.98 million per year). While this additional funding is welcome, it is nowhere near enough to ensure the future health of BC's ecologically rich parks system, or the safety of visitors. We recommend that BC Parks' annual budget be increased to at least \$100 million per year, which, based on the Canadian Parks Council study of the economic impact of parks in Canada, would likely contribute approximately five times that amount to the province's GDP¹⁰. 



Bowron Lakes Provincial Park, BC

¹⁰The 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 <http://www.parks-parcs.ca/english/cpc/economic.php>

SECTION II

INAPPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES IN NATIONAL PARKS GROW



Mountain goat - Ashley Hockenberry
Mount Rundle, Banff National Park, AB - Kolin Friske
Riding Mountain National Park, MB - Richard Magleo

In addition to budget cuts, in recent years CPAWS has noted a worrying shift in emphasis in the management of our national parks, away from a primary focus on protecting ecological integrity. While Parks Canada is investing in some laudatory projects that promote "nature-focused" activities, such as learn-to-camp programs and wildlife-focused festivals, it is also allowing commercial, pay-for-use activities that focus on infrastructure, not nature, to attract people to parks.

Parks Canada argues that we need new attractions in our parks to appeal to more urbanized Canadians who aren't interested in "traditional" park activities. But there is no evidence that this is the kind of activity that Canadians want for their parks. In fact, to the contrary, the recent outcry about the Jasper "walkway" (see page 10) reinforces CPAWS' long-held view that Canadians love their parks as wild places, protected for themselves and their grandchildren. There is no evidence that they support new infrastructure-focused, theme park-like attractions.

This is not the first time inappropriate recreational and commercial development has posed a threat to our national parks. Nearly 50 years ago, CPAWS (then known as the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada) was formed in response to a plea in Parliament from the minister responsible for national parks that Canadians stand up to defend them against recreational and tourism development pressures. Over the years CPAWS has fought many inappropriate developments in national parks. For example, in the early 1970s, CPAWS led the charge to fend off a massive development project at Lake Louise. In the 1990s, when out-of-control development was putting wildlife at risk in the mountain national parks, we helped secure limits to commercial development.

By the turn of the century, in response to growing public concern about the state of our national parks, the tide within government had begun to shift towards a stronger "nature first" approach to national park management. In 2000, a blue ribbon panel of experts -- the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks -- completed a study that concluded that national park ecosystems were at risk across the country, and the federal government accepted a comprehensive suite of recommendations to reverse the decline.¹¹

Shortly thereafter, the federal government amended the Canada National Parks Act to clarify that ecological integrity was the first priority in park management, and boosted investment in creating new parks and protecting and restoring park ecosystems. Over the next decade, Parks Canada made significant progress, rolling out a science-based ecological integrity monitoring and reporting system for national parks, and using the information they collected to inform their work to restore park ecosystem health.

But recent management decisions regarding national parks including Alberta's famous Jasper and Banff and Manitoba's Riding Mountain, suggest the tide is reversing once again.

¹¹Parks Canada Agency. 2000. "Unimpaired for Future Generations?" Protecting Ecological Integrity with Canada's National Parks. Vol.1 "A Call to Action." Vol. II "Setting a New Direction for Canada's National Parks" Report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks. Ottawa, ON.

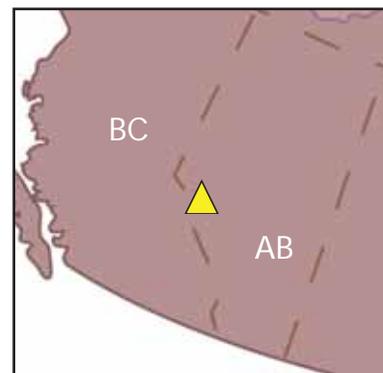
SECTION II CASE STUDY

Theme park-like development for Jasper = wrong direction

Jasper National Park, AB

In February, 2012, in the face of enormous public opposition, the federal government announced a decision to allow Brewster Travel Canada, a commercial tour operator owned by VIAD -- a US-based multi-national company, to build a massive glass-bottomed viewing platform along the Icefields Parkway in Jasper National Park. This "Glacier Discovery Walk" (similar to a controversial project that was built *outside* the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona) flies in the face of Canada's national park policy that limits recreational activities to those that require minimal infrastructure. The decision was made in spite of the inadequate scientific information about its impact on wildlife, and with no evidence that Canadians want this kind of development in their national parks. Nor is there any evidence that this kind of infrastructure-focused experience will help connect visitors to nature.

CPAWS is recommending that any new activities or developments in parks should maximize the opportunity for visitors to directly interact with the intrinsic natural values of the park. As required by federal legislation and policy, decisions should place ecological integrity as the first priority, minimize infrastructure, and maintain parks in their natural state for future generations. And when considering development proposals in national parks, Parks Canada should consult Canadians directly, rather than delegating consultations to the private project proponent. Finally, a more solid, social science-based understanding of how to effectively connect Canadians to nature is needed to guide and direct the future management of visitor activities in our national parks. 🌿



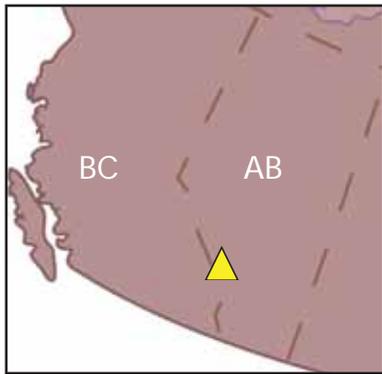
Mountain goats in BC could be impacted by the Glacier Discovery Walk.
Ashley Hockenberry

SECTION II CASE STUDY

Mt. Norquay summer use in Banff puts grizzlies at more risk

Banff National Park, AB

There are less than 60 grizzly bears in Banff National Park. The park's grizzly bears have the lowest reproductive rate of any population in North America, making them particularly



vulnerable. With bears dying each year on the railway and highway that run through the park, it is all the more important to ensure the rest of the bears' habitat in the park remains secure.

However, last year Parks Canada announced it will consider proposals to allow new, large-scale summer visitor use at the Mt. Norquay ski hill in Banff. CPAWS is deeply

concerned about the impact thousands more summer visitors will have on the grizzly bears and other sensitive wildlife that use the area as summer habitat. This decision is particularly troublesome since it reversed a previous agreement between the ski hill operator and Parks Canada to allow for expanded winter use in return for giving up summer use – because of its potential impact on grizzly bears and other wildlife.

Thousands more people visiting the slopes of Mt. Norquay in summer further decreases habitat security for grizzlies

and increases the chances for encounters between grizzly bears and humans, reducing the bears' chances of survival in the area. Unfortunately the home ranges of bears living in and around Mt. Norquay are already too fragmented by human development such as roads, railways and the town of Banff to ensure their security. In our view, management decisions resulting in further reductions for grizzlies' security in this area clearly contravene the mandate of Parks Canada to put priority on ecological integrity in park management decisions.

CPAWS is recommending that the summer use restrictions be restored for Mt. Norquay, and future management decisions in Banff focus on increasing habitat security for grizzly bears and other wildlife. Parks Canada should also develop and implement a recovery plan for grizzly bears in Banff, in collaboration with other agencies in the region. And the Agency should re-invest in ecological research and monitoring of sensitive wildlife populations like grizzly bears, to ensure park management decisions are based on sound scientific information. 🌿



Grizzly bear - Michael Wieser

SECTION II CASE STUDY

Re-developing downhill ski area is a step backward

Riding Mountain National Park, MB

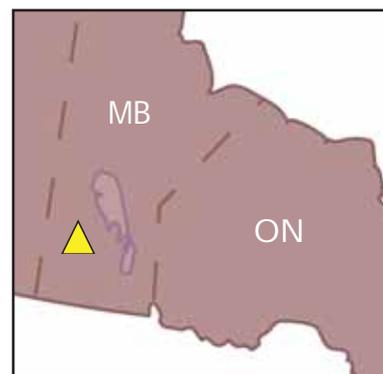
Riding Mountain National Park is one of Manitoba's most treasured parks. With a diverse landscape consisting of rolling hills and valleys, boreal forest, meadows, lakes and dramatic gorges, it is home to elk, wolves, moose, black bears, and hundreds of bird species. The park receives about 300,000 visitors per year of whom approximately 75% are Manitobans.

Parks Canada recently amended the Riding Mountain National Park Management Plan to allow proposals from commercial operators to re-develop the long-closed Mount Agassiz Ski Area. This decision reverses the park management plan's previous commitment to remove the aging infrastructure from the bankrupt ski hill, and restore the area's ecosystem.

The Canada National Parks Act does not allow new ski areas to be developed in national parks, because downhill skiing requires infrastructure that we now recognize as inappropriate in our national parks because of its ecological impacts. With most of the equipment and buildings at the Mount Agassiz hill in need of replacement, and after a decade of ecosystem regeneration at the abandoned hill, re-developing this site

would essentially mean developing a new ski area and losing an ecologically important area. Also, the feasibility study for the project casts serious doubt on its viability, citing an inadequate market, re-development requirements and competition from other ski areas in the region.

CPAWS is recommending that Parks Canada follow through on its original commitment to ecologically restore the long-closed Mount Agassiz Ski Area. Further, the Agency should work with local communities to develop nature-based tourism experiences that focus on the intrinsic values of the park. 



Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba - Richard Magleo

SECTION III

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT THREATS TO PARKS GROW



Many species of wildlife require more habitat than is available in parks, and move across park boundaries, relying on habitat in the surrounding area for their survival. Over time as land outside the park is developed, it is often altered so that it no longer supports a full range of wildlife species. Small parks often become “islands” of wilderness within a “sea” of development, and vulnerable wildlife species decline and can eventually disappear.

This is what has happened in tiny Point Pelee National Park in southern Ontario which has lost over half of its amphibian and reptile species.¹² This famous haven for migratory birds is simply too small and disconnected from other protected natural areas to maintain its full complement of species.

What happens on lands surrounding our parks is important to their long-term ecosystem health.

In recent years, industrial resource development pressures have intensified in Canada, with the footprint of mining and oil and gas exploration and development activities expanding across more of the Canadian land and seascape. This is placing more parks at risk from development activities on adjacent lands and waters. A number of our parks are also threatened by forestry activities occurring inside or around their boundaries.

In a time of shrinking park budgets and weakened federal environmental laws, protecting our parks will be more difficult than ever. With fewer park managers and scientists to monitor the impacts of industrial activities on our parks, and weakened environmental review processes, industrial development activities pose even greater threats to the long term health of park ecosystems.

¹²Point Pelee has lost 6 of its 11 amphibian species and 11 of 21 species of reptiles.

Tombstone Territorial Park, YT - Robert Postma
 Prairie Creek Mine, NWT - Harvey Locke
 Algonquin Park, ON - Chung-Ying Chou

Gatineau Park, QC - Michael Lait
 Gros Morne National Park, NL - Jim Cornish
 Caribou - Ted Simonett

SECTION III CASE STUDY

Unresolved mining claims threaten Yukon's Tombstone Territorial Park

Tombstone Territorial Park, YT

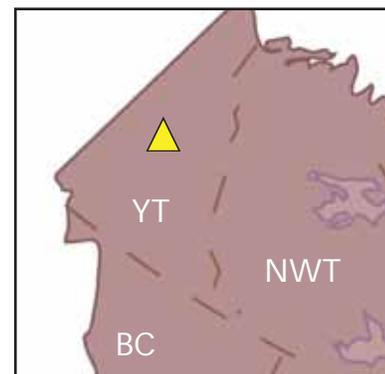
Tombstone Park, with its stunning geological formations, and important conservation and cultural values has been called the flagship of the fledgling territorial park system in the Yukon. Yet for more than a decade, this 2,000 km² "wilderness" park has been marred by on-going mining exploration on a block of mining claims in the heart of the ecosystem.

The Yukon's free entry mining system, coupled with a government that was unwilling to resolve the mining claims during the park planning process, resulted in a festering land use conflict that has consumed park management efforts. Blasting, trenching, drilling, persistent helicopter activity and the mess left by mining exploration work has affected the visitor experience, degraded conservation values, and had an impact on Dall's sheep and caribou habitat. In effect, Tombstone Park is more akin to a multiple use landscape than a protected area.

Over the past year permit applications have been brought forward once again by a mining exploration company to expand exploration activities within the park. And once again the proposals were rejected. While this continued rejection by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment

Board is good news, the repeated applications for permits to actively explore for minerals in the park represents an on-going threat to park ecosystems, and an enormous and inefficient use of resources by government and NGO's as the debate over the future of Tombstone is repeated on a near-annual basis.

To resolve this on-going issue once and for all, and uphold the park's conservation values and intent of the First Nation Final Agreement, CPAWS is recommending that the government or a third party buy out the existing mining claims or persuade the mining company to voluntarily relinquish the claims, possibly in exchange for other considerations. 

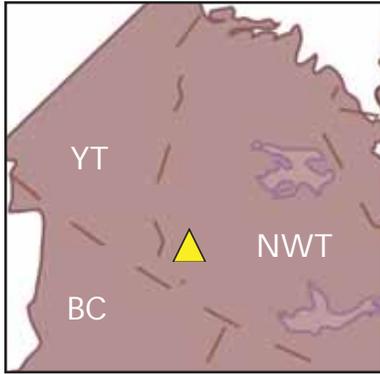


Tombstone Territorial Park, YT - Robert Postma

SECTION III CASE STUDY

Mine still threatens Nahanni

Nahanni National Park Reserve, NWT



For many years, CPAWS worked with the local Dehcho First Nations, ecotourism businesses, and thousands of other Canadians to expand Nahanni National Park Reserve to protect the entire South Nahanni watershed. In 2009, the Park Reserve was massively expanded, protecting 90% of the watershed in the Dehcho region, including vast expanses of important habitat for grizzly

bears and woodland caribou. But 10% of the watershed was left out of the park to accommodate mining activity, including

a “donut-hole” around the proposed Prairie Creek mine site in the heart of the Nahanni watershed.

In the past year, the proposed Prairie Creek Mine has passed through the environmental assessment process and is now in its final permitting stages. This proposed mine poses a serious threat to water quality, fish and wildlife, and ecosystem health in the Nahanni. CPAWS has long believed this mine proposal poses too high a risk to be allowed to operate in this iconic and sensitive northern watershed, which is also a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site. However, if the project is permitted to operate, strong, enforceable environmental measures of the highest standard are required of the company to minimize its impact on the Nahanni ecosystem. 🌿



Prairie Creek Mine, surrounded by Nahanni National Park Reserve, NWT

SECTION III CASE STUDY

Algonquin Park still facing logging threats

Algonquin Provincial Park, ON



Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park is one of Canada's best known parks. It has been immortalized by Tom Thompson and the Group of Seven artists and loved by generations of Canadians from coast to coast. When visitors from around the world arrive at Toronto's Pearson International Airport, a huge billboard lets travelers know

they are only 250 kilometres away from Ontario's park – Algonquin.

But there's a hidden story behind the park that belies the magnificent images created by our country's most famous painters. Unbeknownst to most Canadians, over 70% of its 7,600 km² has been open to "management" for logging.

Less than one quarter of Algonquin is legally protected from industrial activity. Until recently, there was little indication that this would change.

The 2007 Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act singled out Algonquin as the only Park in Ontario to allow logging and highlighted the small percentage of the park that was actually under protection. As a result of this attention, in the spring of 2010 the Ontario government committed to reducing the logging footprint in Algonquin and increasing the amount of the park that is fully protected from industrial development from 22% to 49%. Current forestry operations are temporarily respecting this change. However, the Algonquin Park Management Plan amendment to legislate this has still not been posted.

CPAWS recommends that the government complete this immediately to bring further security for the park's beloved forests, lakes and rivers. 🌿

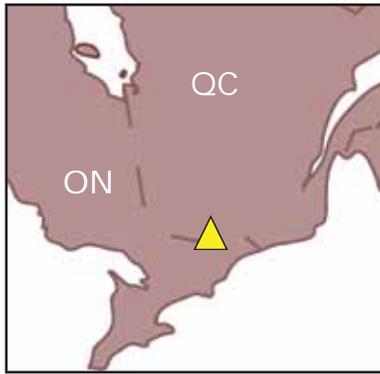


Logging truck leaving Algonquin Park, ON - Chung-Ying Chou

SECTION III CASE STUDY

Highway and near urban development threats grow for Gatineau Park, QC

Gatineau Park, QC



Gatineau Park -- the "jewel" in the National Capital Region's "crown", remains a "park" in name only, with no legal protection under the law. Park lands may be sold, developed or otherwise altered and disposed of at the sole discretion of the park manager, the National Capital Commission (NCC). The latest assault on the park's ecological integrity -- the extension of a four lane divided highway along the park's eastern boundary, is under construction in 2012 with few mitigation measures planned to allow

for the movement of species between the park and other natural areas.

Gatineau Park contains an impressive variety of species, including many that are at risk. As the cities

of Ottawa and Gatineau continue to grow, suburban development is creeping around the park, threatening to completely surround it within 50 years. Moreover, like many natural areas near a large city, the park suffers from the impacts of intensive visitor use, and is crossed by several major roads serving growing communities, causing fragmentation of park habitats.

In the face of growing development pressures, legal protection is all the more critical to give park managers the tools they need to take action to protect the park's natural values. CPAWS continues to recommend that the federal government provide legal protection for Gatineau Park. The legislation should identify the park's boundaries and require any changes to them to be approved by Parliament. It should also confirm that the overriding management principle is the maintenance and restoration of the park's ecological integrity, as is the case in our national parks. 

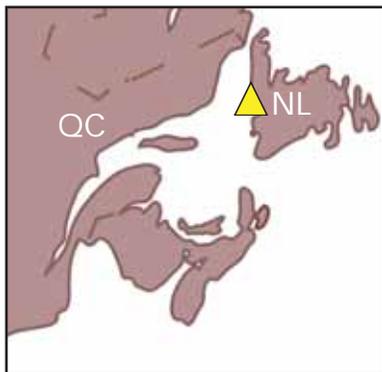


Highway 5 construction through Gatineau Park, QC - Michael Lait

SECTION III CASE STUDY

Gros Morne National Park faces threat of offshore oil and gas development

Gros Morne National Park, NL



Newfoundland's iconic Gros Morne National Park is facing a new threat from beyond its shores, where the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (CNLOPB), a federal-provincial regulatory board, has granted oil and gas exploration licenses to a company that has until January 2014 to start drilling an exploratory well. Potential threats to the park's ecosystems include seismic testing in the marine area

immediately adjacent to the park, which could harm marine mammals, fish and other ocean organisms. If the project proceeds beyond exploration, the threats would grow to include increased marine transportation in and around the site, and the possibility of hydrocarbon spills either from the drilling site or from the increased shipping.

An oil spill of any magnitude would be extremely detrimental to Gros Morne's coastal habitats and the species they support,

as well as to the local economy which relies heavily on tourism.

Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, Gros Morne has a fascinating and ancient geological history, and a rich variety of scenery, wildlife and recreational opportunities. Visitors thrill to the site of whales, seals and birds in the park's coastal waters, and caribou, moose and Arctic hare in the park's interior.

The creation of the park sparked a large rise in tourism, turning it into the region's number one employer and contributor to the economy. The region's tourism industry is valued at \$35 million and provides employment for 1,320 annual and seasonal workers. Between 1992 and 2007, visitation to the Gros Morne area increased by 60%, from 100,000 to 160,000 people per year.

CPAWS is very concerned about the potential ecological impacts of oil and gas development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. As part of the St. Lawrence Coalition, we are calling for a moratorium on oil and gas exploration and development in the region. 🌿

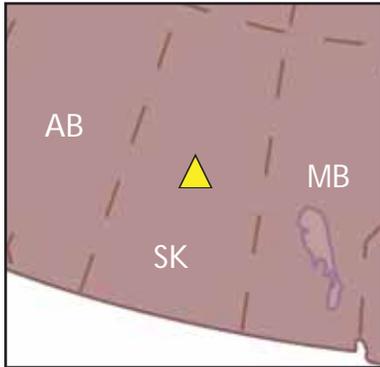


Gros Morne National Park, NL - Jim Cornish

SECTION III CASE STUDY

Commercial forestry threatens Prince Albert's wildlife

Prince Albert National Park, SK



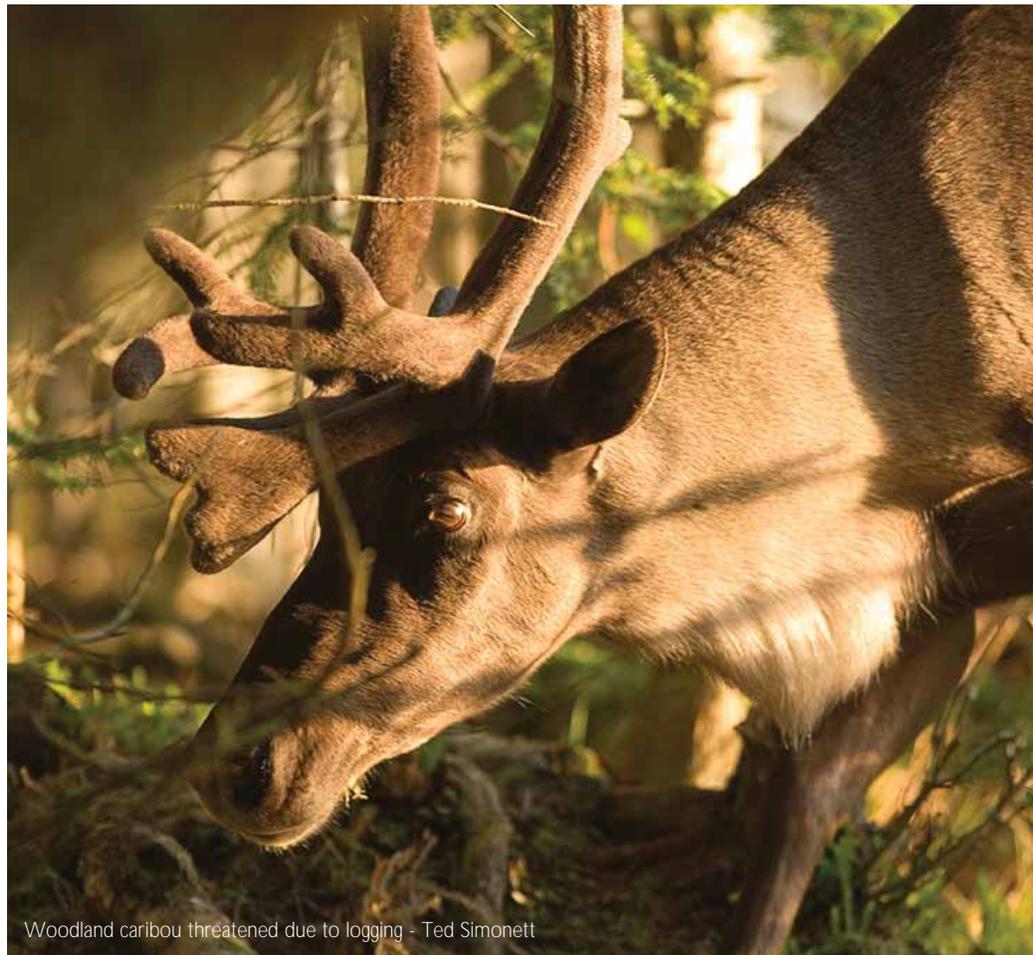
Saskatchewan's Prince Albert National Park is home to an abundance of wildlife, including Canada's only herd of free ranging Plains bison within their historic range, as well as woodland caribou.

However, the park's caribou population is now in serious jeopardy because of logging and road building activities in the surrounding areas. If the

current land use practices continue around the perimeter of the park, caribou could disappear from Prince Albert National Park within a decade.

Forestry companies operating in the area have failed to develop a management plan that places conservation ahead of harvesting, which is essential if caribou are to survive both outside and within the park. CPAWS is engaged in formal discussions with government and industry to develop measures that will offer hope for the future of the park's caribou and other wildlife at risk such as wolverine.

We are seeking higher forest harvest standards for all of the local companies under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), as well as immediate development of a Woodland Caribou Recovery Action Plan for the area in and around Prince Albert National Park. In the meantime, we are recommending that industry and the government take a more precautionary approach to forest harvest activities. 🌿



Woodland caribou threatened due to logging - Ted Simonett

SECTION IV

SIZE OF NEW PARK BOUNDARIES RAISES CONCERN



Rivière Nastapoka, QC - Brad Bassi
 Grand Chute, Dumoine River, QC - CPAWS - OV
 Little Limestone Lake, MB - Chanda Hunnie

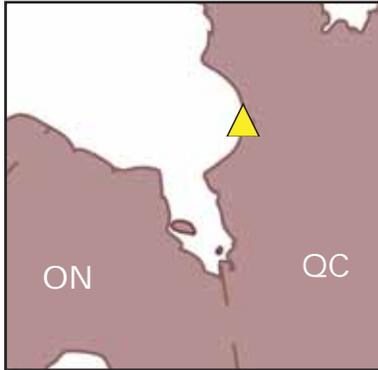
Conservation biologists now clearly understand that to effectively protect ecological integrity parks need to be big, and they need to be connected together as a network so that they can sustain viable populations of wildlife and other ecological features like clean water. This requires park boundaries to be designed with the needs of nature as a priority.

However, more often than not when parks are established, ecological values that overlap with resource development interests lose out, and park boundaries are drawn to avoid the areas of resource potential. This reflects the continued failure of decision-makers, when they are making land use decisions, to fully incorporate the value of the environmental, social and economic benefits that parks provide to society.

SECTION IV CASE STUDY

Endangered seals need larger park

Nastapoka River, QC



The proposed Tursujuq (Quebec) National Park¹³ will be one of the crown jewels of the growing Quebec park network. However, in spite of its great potential, the proposed Tursujuq Park is missing a key area of habitat in the Nastapoka River watershed, along its northern border, which shelters an endangered

and unique landlocked seal population. The main hurdle to including this important area in the park has been Hydro Quebec's interest in potentially developing hydroelectricity on the Nastapoka River.

Located in Nunavik, northern Quebec, the current proposal would protect nearly 15,000 km² of northern lands and waters. Including more of the Nastapoka River watershed in the park would increase its size by approximately 10,000 km² and protect the complete range of the only landlocked harbour seal population in the world. At less than 100 seals, this population is considered endangered. Protection of the Nastapoka River watershed would also help conserve the only salmon population on the eastern coast of Hudson Bay and the Eastern Hudson Bay's endangered beluga whales.

From the beginning of the park creation process, the Inuit community of Umiujaq, as well as the Kativik Regional Government, has been asking for the protection of the Nastapoka watershed.

CPAWS Quebec is supporting the Inuit request to expand the proposed park boundary, encouraging the provincial government to protect the area as part of their commitment to protect 20% of northern Quebec by 2020. 🌿

¹³Parks run by the Quebec government are known in the province as National Parks.



Freshwater seal - Mike Baird

SECTION IV CASE STUDY

Wild forests of Dumoine should be within new park's boundaries

Dumoine River, QC

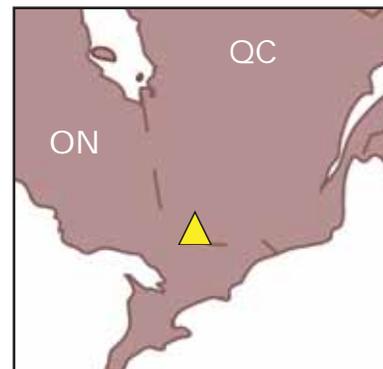
The Dumoine River flows south from the boreal forest of western Quebec into the Ottawa River just north of Algonquin Park. A sacred place to local Algonquin First Nations and a vital ecological connection between the forests of the Ottawa Valley and those to the north, the Dumoine is also a well-loved paddling destination for whitewater enthusiasts.

In 2008, CPAWS welcomed the Quebec government's announcement that it would protect 1,445 km², or about one third, of the Dumoine River watershed as an Aquatic Reserve. This is a great step forward, but the headwaters of the countless streams that flow into the Dumoine will remain unprotected. Important stands of very rare old-growth and undisturbed forests currently excluded from the protected area could be lost to forestry and cottage development if not protected.

Protecting the Dumoine watershed would not only maintain a continentally significant connection for plant and wildlife movements, it could also help to revitalize local communities

struggling to recover from the collapse of the forest industry. The Dumoine is known as one of the best whitewater rivers in Quebec, and a protected area could generate new local investment in ecotourism opportunities.

CPAWS is recommending that the protected area be expanded to cover approximately two thirds of the watershed, or about 3100 km². The expanded protected area should include the headwaters of the Dumoine River's tributaries; rare stands of old-growth forest found just outside the current boundaries; and connections to other natural areas like the headwaters of the neighbouring Kipawa and Noire Rivers. 



Canoeing on the Dumoine River - Marie-Eve Marchand

SECTION IV CASE STUDY

Small park size puts Manitoba's Little Limestone Lake at continuing risk

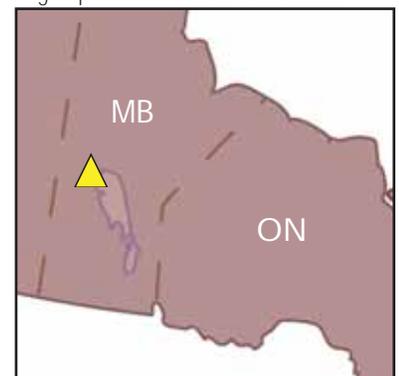
Little Limestone Lake, MB

In June 2011, a new provincial park was announced at Little Limestone Lake, Manitoba. At the announcement of the new park, the Province and the Mosakahiken Cree Nation signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing the Province to consider enlarging the park to protect areas deemed critical to the lake's ecological well-being. At the time of the announcement these areas were left out of the park because of mining claims in the surrounding area.

Experts consider Little Limestone to be the biggest and best marl lake in the world. Marl is created when calcite, a constituent of limestone, is chemically precipitated from warm water. The marl mixes with the water and changes the lake's colour from turquoise to a Caribbean-blue¹⁴. Contrary to its name, Little Limestone Lake is not petite. It is about 15 km long and averages around 4 km in width. Analysis by Dr. Derek Ford, an international marl lake expert, indicates that more of the surrounding lands require protection. Little

Limestone Lake's shallow basin and geographic location is sustained by a very delicate balance of water recharge and drainage almost exclusively from rainwater and snowmelt. The lake is highly sensitive to disturbances in the surrounding area, which could irreparably impact the coloration of the lake and its ecological stability. A larger protected area is needed to ensure the surrounding landscape stays intact.

CPAWS is continuing to work in full partnership with Mosakahiken Cree Nation and others to ensure the park is expanded to include a big enough area to forever protect Little Limestone Lake. 



¹⁴The lake's changing colour phenomenon can be viewed in real time at www.limestonelakevideo.ca



Little Limestone Lake, MB - Chanda Hunnie



Parks for future generations - Evan Ferrari

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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