

PROTECT FOREVER

POLICY FOR QUÉBEC NATIONAL PARKS

INSPIRE PRIDE

ENSEMBLE 
on fait avancer le Québec

Québec 

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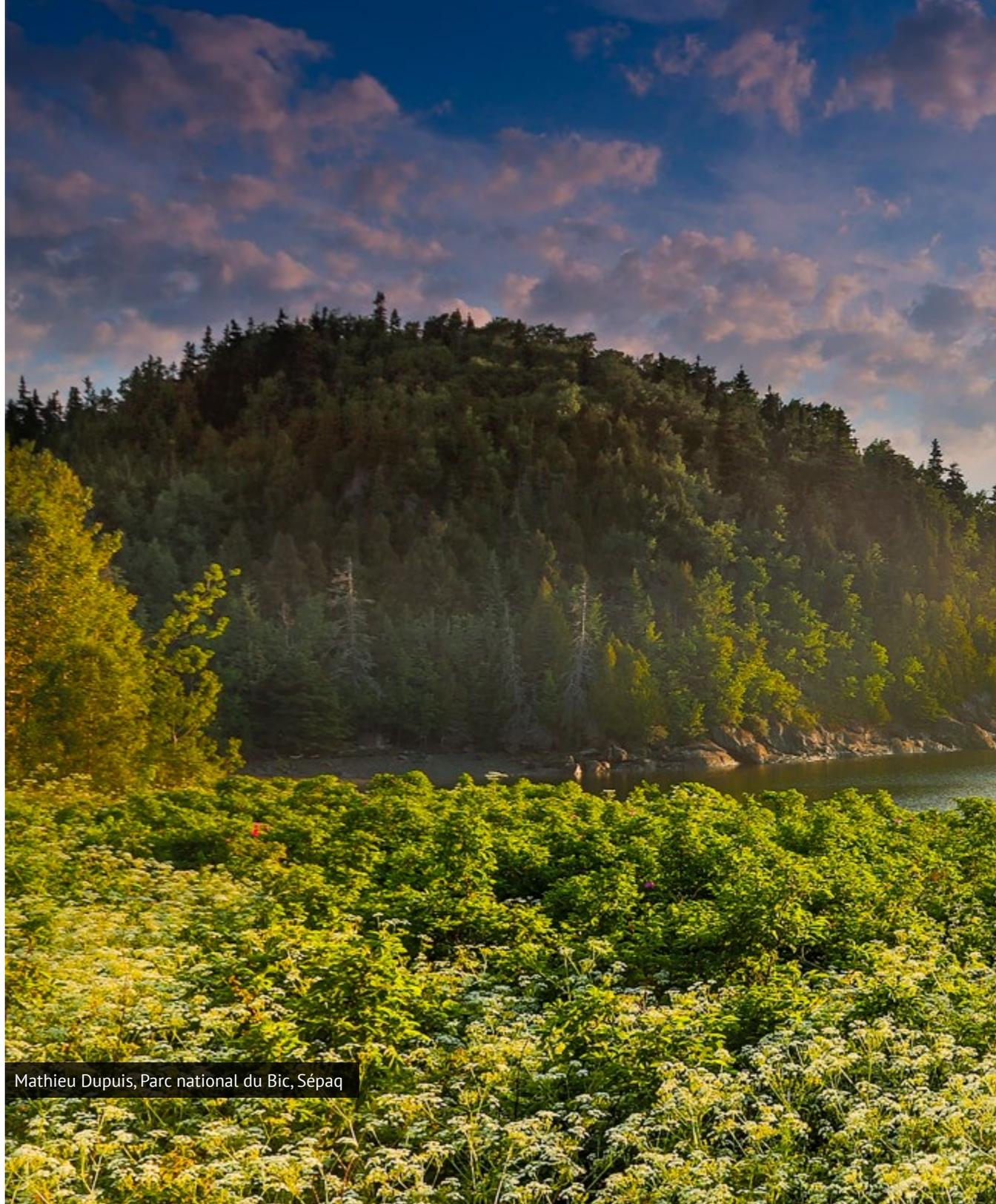
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Mathieu Dupuis, Parc national du Bic, Sépaq

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

An enduring witness to our history and culture, Québec's network of national parks is one of our finest achievements. Comprised of 27 parks, in which natural beauty combines with inestimable richness and collective knowledge, this network is part of the social and economic development of the regions; it also contributes to the support of thousands of high-quality jobs throughout Québec.

From south to north, the national parks are showcases of our most beautiful lands. No word is strong enough to describe the 43,000 square kilometres they cover. You have to see them, feel them and travel in them to take it all in. National parks are yours to enjoy.

And at the heart of this exceptional network, our people. While the first inhabitants have left their mark, today young and old alike visit the national parks to get close to nature, nurture their health and share discoveries. And, thanks to the responsible management of these unique lands, tomorrow's generations will also be able to benefit from this collective and permanent gift.

As the Government, our actions and investments have always been motivated by a will to provide, to everyone, access to nature. This Policy for Québec National Parks, the fruit of collaborative efforts of all stakeholders involved, reaffirms the place of national parks in Québec society. The Policy also confirms the importance we give to the conservation of these exceptional spaces.

The network of Québec national parks is a special, accessible and exceptional heritage. As Quebecers, we have so many reasons to be proud of it.



Philippe Couillard
Premier of Québec

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF FORESTS, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

Québec's natural heritage is a collective treasure which we must preserve, both for its importance to our culture and identity, and for all the services it provides. Québec's national parks contribute to the conservation of natural areas and biodiversity. Many actions have already been taken with this purpose, and the Policy for Québec National Parks, with its emphasis on creating collaborative links which are essential for the mission of the network, will guide all stakeholders. Together, we are the stewards of these magnificent lands!

By offering opportunities for the discovery of natural, cultural and landscape heritage, the national parks encourage a special and respectful contact with nature in Québec. The activities offered, whether wilderness or educational, are accessible to everyone.

Lovers of the great outdoors treasure Québec's national parks. The numbers speak for themselves: the 4.8 million visit-days each year confirm the parks' strong potential for recreational tourism. They provide significant economic benefits in each region where they are located. As a result, all of society benefits from them.

On the 40th anniversary of the Parks Act, which received assent on November 29, 1977, and was revised in 2001, it is an appropriate time to reconfirm our will to protect and enhance these lands, for the benefit of current and future generations.



Luc Blanchette
Minister of Forests,
Wildlife and Parks



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Conservation is defined by a series of practices including protection, restoration and sustainable use of resources that focus on the preservation of biodiversity, the reestablishment of species and the maintenance of ecological services for the benefit of current and future generations (Limoges *et al.*, 2013).

Extensive recreation is defined by a low density of land use, both in terms of time and space, which generally contributes to reducing pressure on natural spaces.





INTRODUCTION

Québec's national parks ensure the permanent conservation of areas that represent Québec's natural regions and natural sites of exceptional character, in particular due to their biological diversity. They provide benefits to current and future generations, through education and extensive recreation.

The goal of the first Policy for Québec Parks, published in 1982, was to establish the basis of development for the network of Québec national parks. At that time, the network included only five parks, today there are 27. During the years, objectives have been expressed differently and responsibilities have been shared with partners, but the intentions of the Gouvernement du Québec have remained the same: conserving our collective natural heritage and giving everyone the opportunity to discover its richness.

In parallel, Québec's society has been transforming, and new issues have appeared, notably with regard to the environment. The national parks have evolved in a world in constant change, which influences management of the network.

In continuity with the national parks' mission of conservation and access, but also in agreement with the context in which the parks are evolving, the Policy for Québec National Parks provides details on the governance of the network of Québec national parks. It is based on three orientations:

1. Continue the development of the network of Québec national parks;
2. Ensure the conservation of natural, cultural and landscape heritage;
3. Contribute to the quality of life of citizens and communities.

Based on the principles of sustainable development, this Policy reiterates the environmental, social and economic roles played by Québec's national parks. The National Parks Policy is also guided by the full respect of agreements and conventions signed between the First Nations and the Inuit, and the Gouvernement du Québec, as well as Québec governmental obligations toward Aboriginal peoples.



The Gouvernement du Québec sets forth its vision for the national parks:

Through the beauty of its landscapes and the richness of the natural and cultural heritage they contain, the national parks constitute an exceptional showcase for Québec and its regions. A place for wonder, self-restoration and discovery, these lands invite citizens to get close to nature. Through mobilization of the entire society, Québec's national parks help in the growth of communities and protect in perpetuity the collective natural legacy of which Québec men and women are so proud.



PORTRAIT OF THE QUÉBEC NATIONAL PARKS NETWORK

Since the creation of Québec's first parks, Laurentides and la Montagne Tremblante, in 1895, the Québec national parks network has never stopped developing and evolving.

Beginning in the 1940s and up until 1970, the Gouvernement du Québec created hunting and fishing reserves to enhance certain areas which were designated as "parks". These very heterogeneous territories did not provide a satisfactory guarantee with regard to conservation of the natural heritage. Sometimes called "parks", other times "reserves", the mission of these entities elicited some confusion. Toward the end of the 1970s, adoption of two laws clarified the status of each affected area: the Parks Act (1977), which provided the framework for the establishment of Québec's national parks, and the Act to amend the Act respecting the conservation of wildlife (1978), which provided the framework for establishment of wildlife reserves.

From that time, the Parks Act gave the Gouvernement du Québec the power to establish parks for conservation and recreation, in which activities to exploit forestry, mining and energy resources are prohibited. Following adoption of this law, certain

forest reserves, hunting and fishing reserves and developed sites became parks.

In 2001, the amendment to the Parks Act abolished the "recreational" and "conservation" classifications, leaving one designation, that of national park. Since that time, the priority objective of conservation and permanent protection of lands applies to all parks in the network.

The Parks Act governs the establishment of national parks and their management. It provides the responsible minister the power to regulate certain aspects of the operation of national parks, including zoning, access, accommodations and the practice of activities, as well as the powers and duties of national park employees.

The Parks Act guarantees the permanence of the lands and the long-term conservation of natural, cultural and landscape heritage.

In parallel, the Gouvernement du Québec develops strategic orientations to provide Québec with a network of protected areas designed to safeguarding the character, diversity and integrity of Québec's natural heritage (Natural Heritage Conservation Act). In 2013, the Gouvernement du Québec revised its targets to respond to international biological diversity objectives. Government orientations are now designed to protect 17% of terrestrial and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020.¹ Québec's national parks help reach these objectives.

As of 2018, there are 27 national parks, which cover 2.6% of the Québec territory. In addition to this network, the Saguenay – St. Lawrence Marine Park, covering an area of 1,246 sq.km, was jointly created by the Gouvernement du Québec and the Government of Canada. The very great majority of Québec national parks represent Category II protected areas according to the international criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).² Four national parks are located north of the 55th parallel, in the Nord-du-Québec region, the northern Québec territory also known as "Nunavik".

The Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Parks has authority on all land included within a national park

and provides management. Operation of national parks located south of the areas of application of Northern Agreements³ is delegated to the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq). For national parks located in Nunavik, management is delegated through an agreement with the Kativik Regional Government. These organizations are designated as operators of Québec national parks.⁴ Additionally, some national parks contain major infrastructure, such as ski hills, a golf course, an art centre and a resort. Operation of these facilities is governed under a lease or contract signed with the Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Parks.

In addition to land conservation, the national parks network encourages diversification of local and regional economies. The amounts spent by visitors to national parks (transportation, accommodations, food, etc.) generate local benefits. For the 2016–2017 year, national parks operated by Sépaq generated economic benefits of \$375 million in gross domestic product, maintained 1307 jobs, and generated fiscal and para-fiscal revenues for Québec of \$120 million. During that period, 4.8 million visit-days were recorded. All revenue generated in national parks is reinvested in the network. That is why economic leverage role played by national parks in Québec communities should be recognized.

In Nunavik, things are different. Currently, visitors number only in the hundreds. However, the national parks still maintain their character as protectors of exceptional sites, places for sharing of traditions and motors of social and economic development in Inuit, Cree and Naskapi communities. In 2017–2018, national parks located in Nunavik received more than 700 visitors, a majority of whom were Nunavik residents, for a total of approximately 3000 visit-days. Additionally, interpretive centres, which are located in the host villages, received 300 visitors. Consequently, the Nunavik national parks created economic benefits of \$1.5 million and offered 25 permanent jobs and approximately the same number of seasonal positions. In addition, most visitors used the services of Inuit organizations and companies located locally (travel agencies, airlines, northern village hotels, etc.), meaning they are contributing all the more to economic development of the communities and the region.

- 1 These objectives meet the "Aichi Biodiversity Targets" adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010 (Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs, 2011).
- 2 Vast natural or near-natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, and to provide spiritual, scientific, educational and recreational visitor opportunities, respectful of the environment and culture of local communities. Only two national parks, i.e. the Parc national de l'Île-Bonaventure-et-du-Rocher-Percé, and the Parc national de Miguasha, are not included as Category II areas. They are in Category III, managed primarily to protect specific natural elements.
- 3 The Gouvernement du Québec has committed to agreements on the development of national parks with the First Nations and the Inuit within the areas covered by the Agreement concerning James Bay and Northern Québec, and the Northeastern Québec Agreement.
- 4 Agreements are projected with the Cree communities of Mistissini and Oujé-Bougoumou for the potential operation of national parks in the James Bay territory. Once the parks are created, operations will be delegated to them.

Les parcs nationaux du Québec

 Parc national (ordre de création)

- 1 - du Mont-Orford
- 2 - du Mont-Tremblant
- 3 - des Grands-Jardins
- 4 - de la Jacques-Cartier
- 5 - de la Gaspésie
- 6 - du Fjord-du-Saguenay
- 7 - de la Yamaska
- 8 - des Îles-de-Boucherville
- 9 - du Bic
- 10 - d'Aiguebelle
- 11 - de Miguasha
- 12 - de l'Île-Bonaventure-et-du-Rocher-Percé
- 13 - du Mont-Saint-Bruno
- 14 - de la Pointe-Taillon
- 15 - de Frontenac
- 16 - d'Oka
- 17 - du Mont-Mégantic
- 18 - des Monts-Valin
- 19 - des Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie
- 20 - d'Anticosti
- 21 - de Plaisance
- 22 - des Pingualuit
- 23 - Kuururjuaq
- 24 - du Lac-Témiscouata
- 25 - Tursujuq
- 26 - d'Opémican
- 27 - Ulitaniujalik

 Parc marin
du Saguenay-Saint-Laurent

0 250 500 km







THE CONTEXT IN WHICH NATIONAL PARKS EVOLVE

Québec has created a vast network of national parks. Maintaining this collective heritage for current and future generations is a constant challenge. On the one hand, national parks are in an environment that is experiencing diverse pressures and inevitable change. On the other hand, the social portrait is undergoing transformation; this influences the relationship with various kinds of clients, as well as the development of activities and services available.

This section describes the principal environmental factors that may influence national parks. These factors represent as much opportunities to be seized and concerns to be taken into account as they represent challenges to be met to ensure the sustainability of these lands.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN QUÉBEC

The face of Québec is changing. Forecast scenarios by the Institut de la statistique du Québec predict that immigration will remain the principal factor increasing Québec's population over the next years (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2014). Moreover, about one quarter of Quebecers (25.9%) will be 65 years old or older in 2036. Note that the

seniors of today and tomorrow are likely to live longer, remain more active and be in better health than were those of previous generations.

Beyond changes in the population profile, the social structure and life habits are also being transformed. In 2016, 24.6% of families with minor children were single-parent households (Statistics Canada, 2016). These transformations are changing the profile of people who visit national parks. In addition, the continued increase of the debt-to-disposable-income ratio of families influences their choices and discretionary budgets related to leisure (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Moreover, the population in Aboriginal communities is growing at a rate much faster than the rest of the Québec population. Also, young people under 30 represent more than 50% of the Aboriginal population (Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, 2017).

THE NATURE DEFICIT

The relationship between humans and the natural environment is weakening, a consequence of urbanization, unequal access to green space and a more sedentary lifestyle. The time spent in outdoor activities is diminishing more and more, supplanted by indoor activities. Among Quebecers aged between 12 and 24 years, almost two out of three (64%) spend 15 hours or more per week in front of screens during recreational time (Du Mays et Bordeleau, 2015). The high number of hours spent by youth in sedentary activities is of concern and has continued to increase over the last few years. In Québec, a survey taken in 2010 among young people aged 10 to 17 revealed that few of them have access to outdoor spaces and the school setting does not appear to compensate for this deficiency (Pronovost *et al.*, 2010). One third of respondents (31%) underline the lack of access to places where they can enjoy outdoor activities or have wilderness experiences (Pronovost *et al.*, 2010).

A DESIRE FOR *RAPPROCHEMENT* WITH THE FIRST NATIONS AND THE INUIT

Québec society is increasingly aware of the realities of Aboriginal communities and the need to reinforce our mutual relationships. In addition, Aboriginal communities are initiating projects to make their history and culture better known. The public dissemination of arts, both traditional and contemporary, is an example of this. This is all part of the improved understanding of the First Nations and the Inuit and reconciliation with them.

A photograph showing a person's hand in a red jacket holding a long, light-colored wooden stick. The background is a blurred forest with trees having yellow and orange autumn leaves, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

The **nature deficit** is a term used to describe the negative impacts on a personal, family, community and societal level resulting from a lack of contact with nature. Outdoor activities, in contact with nature, improve cognitive, emotional and social health, while promoting the development of motor skills and the reduction of a great many negative effects of modern life such as stress and anxiety (Demers, 2012; Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, 2017).



Isabelle Tessier, Parc national de la Jacques-Cartier, MFFP

The Gouvernement du Québec would like to participate actively in the social and cultural development of Aboriginal nations and establish conditions favourable to the development of individuals and communities.

THE LOSS AND ALTERATION OF NATURAL AREAS

The loss and alteration of natural areas are a major concern, at a planetary scale. This observation justifies the need to continue land protection efforts, including through the establishment of protected areas.

During the last few decades, natural areas have suffered a net loss in all administrative regions of southern Québec. Artificial surfaces increased by approximately 8% (528 sq. km., which is equivalent to the area of the island of Montréal) between the 1990s and the 2000s, principally because of suburban sprawl peripheral to major centres. This increase has been primarily due to the loss of forested areas and wetlands (Uhde and Keith, 2017).

The alteration of natural areas can result in the fragmentation of territory, loss of connectivity between habitats, modifications to the components of a habitat, changes in the composition of species as well as modification in numbers and distribution of animal and plant species, etc. New pressures are already being felt, such as the arrival of exotic invasive species and the overabundance of certain animal populations. These transformations are likely to continue.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a reality which society must face. At the planetary scale, it is estimated that average temperatures increased by 0.7 °C during the 20th century (Gouvernement du Québec, 2012). In southern Québec average annual temperatures increased by 0.3 to 1.5 °C during the 1960–2008 period. A similar statement applies to Northern Québec, where general heating of the climate has been observed since the 1990s, primarily during the winter (Gouvernement du Québec, 2012).

Climate models developed in 2015 by the Ouranos consortium predict a continuation of temperature increases throughout Québec (Ouranos, 2015). In southern Québec and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, annual temperatures are forecasted to increase by approximately 2 to 4 degrees in the 2041–2070 period. For central and northern Québec, forecasts are of even greater concern, with increases of 3 to 6 degrees for the same period. The impacts of these changes will be perceptible in such ways as in the water balance, extreme weather events, the distribution of plant and animal species, and the composition of habitats (Berteaux *et al.*, 2014). The cumulative effects of all these changes will have significant consequences for biodiversity and the ecological services⁵ provided to society.

5 Ecological services result from ecological processes produced in ecosystems which have direct or indirect benefits for human beings (Limoges, 2009). Purification of air by trees is an example.

ORIENTATIONS

Based on the national parks' mission of conservation and accessibility, and taking into account factors influencing the context in which they evolve, three orientations will guide actions regarding national parks.





1. CONTINUE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK OF QUÉBEC NATIONAL PARKS

In 2018, the network of Québec national parks included 27 national parks and 1 marine park. The majority of them were created on public land, most of which was already used for outdoor activities, in the 10 years following adoption of the Parks Act, in 1977. Since then, development of the Québec national parks network has continued with the addition of new national parks and the expansion of existing national parks. This development complements other protective status for land in Québec and helps meet governmental targets for protected areas.

1.1 REVISE PLANNING FOR THE NATIONAL PARKS NETWORK

Historically, planning for the Québec national parks network was designed principally to protect representative areas in each of the 43 natural regions in Québec, and preserve exceptional natural sites. The result was a range of areas from which the network we know today developed.

Since adoption of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act in 2002, other kinds of statuses for protected

areas have been created, thereby enlarging the range of conservation tools and transforming the portrait of protected areas in Québec. Consequently, planning for the national parks network will be revised to take into consideration the other available protective mechanisms and currently protected areas. The pertinence of creating new national parks will be based on several criteria, including representativeness of natural regions, biodiversity, landscape beauty, recreational tourism potential, accessibility and the support of local and Aboriginal communities.

National park projects may be prioritized for reasons such as their potential to stimulate and diversify the economy of a region as well as commitments made by the Gouvernement du Québec.

Prior to proposing creation of a national park, the proposal is submitted for consultation with local and Aboriginal communities in order to evaluate societal acceptance of the project and to make improvements in light of comments expressed. The creation of national parks will continue to be made

with collaboration at the very start of projects with local and regional stakeholders, including Aboriginal communities, as well as with operators and other governmental departments involved.

1.2 IMPROVE THE CONFIGURATION OF NATIONAL PARKS

Expanding a national park improves the scope of the conservation and accessibility mission of these lands. Expansion projects generally arise from opportunities to acquire land, requests made locally or regionally or from a governmental obligation,⁶ and are motivated by one or more of the following objectives:

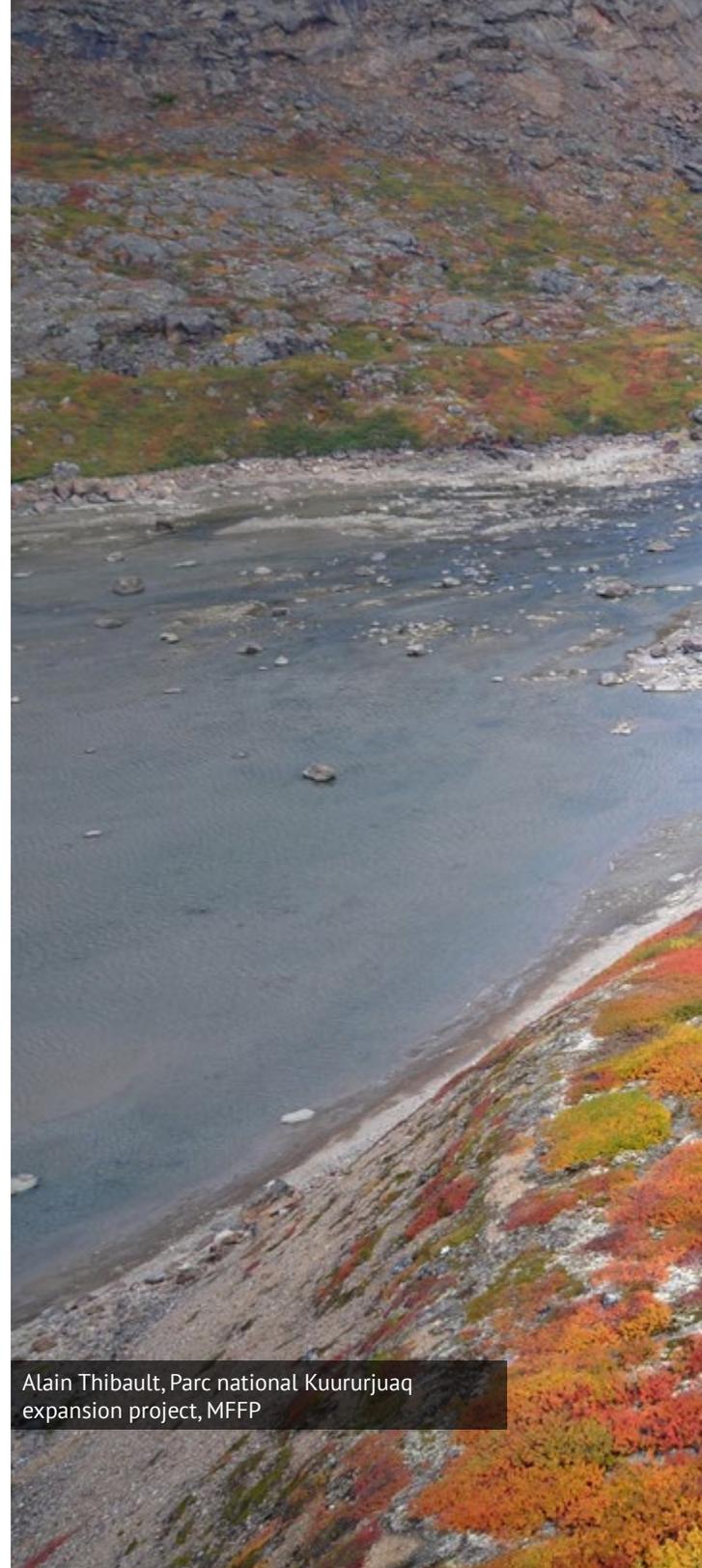
- › Protect exceptional ecosystems, species at risk, and other rare or fragile elements;
- › Improve connectivity with other natural areas;
- › Consolidate the protection of watersheds and landscape;
- › Improve the representation of a natural region;
- › Protect important cultural sites;
- › Improve access to a national park;
- › Diversify the range of activities in a national park.

6 Chapter II of the Environment Quality Act (CQLR, chapter Q-2) includes specific provisions for environmental assessment applicable to James Bay region and northern Québec, in conformance with the provisions included in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and the Northeastern Quebec Agreement, signed with the Aboriginal nations of the northern regions. The environmental assessment procedure for these regions includes, in particular, active participation by Native communities (Cree, Inuit and Naskapi) living there. Creation of a national park in the areas under the jurisdiction of these agreements must be previously authorized by the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and the Fight against Climate Change, as the provincial administrator for the evaluation and examination of development projects. The resulting certificates of authorization contain conditions that may include obligations to expand a national park once the area targeted is no longer subject to rights (e.g. free of mining claims).

Analysis of the relevance of expansion projects will be based on the following criteria:

- › Localization and ecological value of land targeted;
- › Support of local and Aboriginal communities;
- › Compatibility of existing and planned uses;
- › Land acquisition cost;
- › Value-added in comparison to another protective status.

Expansion projects will continue to be submitted to consultation with local and Aboriginal communities. Once the expansion process is completed, as with creation of a national park, the new land is added to the register of protected areas in Québec.



Alain Thibault, Parc national Kuururjuaq expansion project, MFFP







2. ENSURE THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL, CULTURAL AND LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

Conservation is the priority objective of Québec national parks. This important dimension of the mission is the responsibility of national park managers as well as of visitors, decision-makers and other local and regional stakeholders.

More specifically, the conservation objectives are:

- › Maintain biodiversity;
- › Protect flora, fauna and habitats;
- › Prevent the alteration of biophysical conditions (water, soil, air);
- › Minimize the human footprint related to use of the area;
- › Encourage the maintenance of ecological processes and services;
- › Ensure that viable populations of plant and animal species are maintained, in particular rare species and species at risk;
- › Ensure harmonious cohabitation with animals;
- › Ensure sustainable management of fisheries;
- › Restore disturbed sites;

- › Protect and enhance the cultural heritage of sites.

2.1 ADOPT AN ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Each national park in Québec was created to protect a representative area of a natural region or an exceptional element of our natural, cultural and landscape heritage. In order to ensure the permanence of these components, it is important to have a good understanding of their functions and processes. This knowledge will allow the recognition of changes which occur in an ecosystem and for responses with human intervention, if appropriate.

While management of the land is usually done so as to allow natural processes to occur freely, certain situations may require human action. Adopting an adaptive management approach introduces flexible management, which allows for reactions: observe changes, evaluate actions taken and acquire new knowledge so as to continually improve management measures (Groom *et al.*, 2006; Grumbine, 1997). Some

of these interventions could be proposed in direct response to a problem or as a restorative measure for degraded areas.

This approach will be necessary when the free evolution of an ecosystem is not a solution. For example, an intervention might be required to:

- › Ensure protection of species at risk;
- › Control harmful or problematic species, including invasive or overabundant exotic species;
- › Ensure the maintenance of plant and animal populations whose natural regeneration has been compromised by human intervention;
- › Reintroduce a species that has disappeared from a park;
- › Ensure the permanence of a cultural heritage element;
- › Maintain access to a remarkable cultural landscape.

Depending on the problem, the expertise of the Ministry, the operator and other collaborators, including Aboriginal communities, will be deployed to recommend implementation measures. Analysis will be necessary in order to measure, beforehand, the effects of a potential action. As needed, reference framework will be developed to describe the recommended measures, guide decisions and consultations, if any.

Interventions will also allow for the restoration of degraded sites and rehabilitation of contaminated areas.

2.2 PLAN NATIONAL PARKS IN LIGHT OF BEST PRACTICES

The protection of natural, cultural and landscape heritage continues to be at the forefront of the development of national parks. This premise is reflected in the various planning tools, including zoning and the master plan for each national park, which will guide actions in the field.

Creation of infrastructure in a national park requires prior analysis of different implementation scenarios and a characterization of potential sites. Information to be obtained will include the presence and distribution of sensitive and at-risk species, animal habitats and wetlands. The goal of this analysis is to evaluate potential sites in order to make a measured choice to avoid or minimize the impact of new facilities.

Cultural heritage of interest will be another aspect to take into account, and elements of cultural heritage protected under the Cultural Heritage Act will have to be preserved. This could involve archaeological intervention prior to excavation work; regular maintenance of buildings, infrastructure and equipment in order to prevent or delay their deterioration; conservation of objects; and evaluation of the significance of a cultural heritage element. Input from Aboriginal communities as well as from competent ministries and organizations will be deployed.

Zoning divides up a national park into different zones in order to adjust the degree of protection provided to a sector. Zoning will be guided by the principle that the highest degree of protection possible must be assigned to the natural, cultural and landscape heritage of a national park, as a function of the components to be protected, while considering the current use of the area and the future development of the national park. Zoning maps are appended to the Parks Regulation (Direction des parcs nationaux, 2016).

Cultural heritage encompasses all elements that testify to the history and evolution of the human presence. This includes landscapes, buildings, immaterial heritage, archaeological sites, historic persons and events, and collections in museums and archives (Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, 2017).



Station Mont-Tremblant, Parc national du Mont-Tremblant

2.3 SUPPORT LEASEHOLDERS TO IMPROVE THEIR PRACTICES

In some national parks, some of the land is rented for the operation of major facilities, such as a ski hill, golf course, art centre or a resort. Given their special location within the boundaries of national parks, leaseholders are required to adopt practices that are environmentally respectful and comply with the orientations of the National Parks Policy. The Ministry will support leaseholders in their efforts to improve their practices in order to maintain the quality of the lands on which they operate.

The extent of the rented land may be adjusted as needed, within national park boundaries. However, the total area rented will not be increased. As well, no new space will be added to the current list of space rented in national parks:

Centre de villégiature Jouvence, Golf des Îles de Boucherville, Club de golf du Mont Orford, Station de ski Mont Orford, Ski Saint-Bruno, Orford Musique, Observatoire du Mont-Mégantic, Station Mont Tremblant.

2.4 FOCUS KNOWLEDGE- GATHERING ON CONSERVATION ISSUES

The national parks offer important opportunities for research and knowledge acquisition in a variety of fields. However, efforts devoted to the acquisition of knowledge must be primarily directed to projects that will have direct impacts on the conservation of land and the harmonization of different uses. For example, fishing in national parks is carefully managed, based on the most up-to-date information in order to ensure the sustainability of the resources.

It is important to publicize what information is needed by operators. Dissemination of these needs may elicit the interest of the scientific community and local and Indigenous communities, and the emergence of research projects in the development of tools to help decision-making in response to priority issues for each national park.

Governmental organizations and ministries will also be involved in the acquisition of knowledge within national parks. The Québec national parks network is a prime location for knowledge acquisition initiatives related to matters such as animal inventories, monitoring of water quality and climate, and other monitoring programs. In addition, the planning of knowledge acquisition activities will take into account Aboriginal knowledge.

Moreover, particular attention must be made to disseminating of the information acquired in Québec national parks.



Mathieu Dupuis, Parc national de Miguasha, Sépaq

2.5 ENSURE MONITORING OF CONDITIONS IN NATIONAL PARKS

It is essential to monitor the status of natural heritage in order to ensure that the national parks will be preserved for current and future generations. Monitoring will measure the evolution of the health status of the park and detect the development of changes in order to adapt management measures accordingly.

Existing monitoring programs will be maintained and will evolve over time. The choice of the most relevant environmental indicators⁷ and the development of protocols to collect appropriate data will be supported by experts and scientists, as necessary.

Climate change raises several issues, since it is affecting and will continue to affect the components of national parks, changes to the distribution of plant and animal species, arrival of new invasive exotic species, modifications to natural disturbance regimes, impact on species at risk, etc. As protected areas, national parks constitute prime location sites for use by ministries and scientists to study the evolution of biodiversity and phenomena associated with climate change. Data collected by them, as well as by operators, can help better understand these phenomena in order to adapt decision-making both for the parks themselves and for all of Québec.



National parks can help attenuate the negative effects of climate change. They play an important role as core conservation areas within ecological corridors. They are also the setting for the understanding of how ecosystems respond to climate change (Berteaux *et al.*, 2014).

⁷ In areas subject to the Northern Agreements, some indicators will be mandatory for the Ministry and operators, as required by the authorization certificates issued by the ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques.

2.6 INCLUDE NATIONAL PARKS IN REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Actions taken outside the limits of national parks can have effects on ecological processes occurring within them (Deshaies et Charest, 2018). Consequently, collaboration on decision-making with stakeholders outside of park boundaries will be necessary to ensure the sustainability of Québec national parks. It is essential to recognize the importance of involving regional stakeholders, including municipalities, regional county municipalities, ministries, conservation associations and groups, as well as Aboriginal communities, communities and industry, to support the viability of ecosystems at the regional level.

In order to reduce the impacts of national parks being ecological “islands”, which can lead to the isolation of animal populations, special attention must be paid to maintaining and restoring the ecological connectivity of national parks with the surrounding natural environments.

During consultations on various proposed laws, regulations, strategic orientations and other projects related to land use, issues related to national park conservation and access will be presented so that they can be taken into consideration by the ministries and organizations involved. For the sake of consistency, a synergy between governmental organizations and ministries managing the land and resources that are in the domain of the State will reinforce governmental action.





Mathieu Dupuis, Parc national d'Aigüebelle, Sépaq

2.7 RAISE AWARENESS OF THE BENEFITS OF NATIONAL PARKS AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS WITH REGARD TO CONSERVATION

For the sake of transparency in the management of these public lands, it is essential to regularly report on what they have produced with regard to conservation. As well, the distribution of information about positive economic impacts, ecological services and other benefits to communities provided by national parks can improve the perception of citizens regarding national parks.

Production of annual reports, distribution of communiqués, publication of bulletins and notes, and social media will be used to inform citizens. In addition, certain tools and guides could be made public. This would allow the public to recognize the efforts made, understand the work that remains to be done and appreciate the benefits that national parks provide communities.





Mathieu Dupuis, Parc national d'Oka, Sépaq

3. CONTRIBUTE TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES

Québec's national parks help protect biodiversity and deliver many ecological services to Quebecers. The parks also are part of the tourist brand image for several regions. By offering the most beautiful landscapes in Québec, national parks attract visitors from here and elsewhere. They are veritable levers of community development, in particular through job creation.

Through the Policy for Québec National Parks, the government seeks to raise awareness about the contribution of parks to regional development. It invites municipal administrations, and local and Aboriginal communities to develop ties and collaborate with national park operators in order to multiply the advantages they can obtain from national parks, including health benefits for their citizens.

3.1 IMPROVE ACCESS TO NATIONAL PARKS

The possibility of exploring nature and developing an appreciation for the natural environment, culture and landscapes should be available to everyone, no

matter their age or origins. Measures to promote access to national parks and bring citizens closer to nature are already bearing fruit. This must continue, as must the following practices:

- › Maintain affordable pricing;
- › Maintain free access for children 17 and younger, as well as for school groups;
- › Develop partnerships and strategies in order to facilitate access, in particular with regard to transportation, different clientele and communities.

The establishment of partnerships for health, recreation, education, and social and cultural integration, as well as the involvement of municipalities and regional county municipalities will be encouraged in order to increase attendance in national parks and citizens' sense of attachment.

3.2 RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT NATIONAL PARKS AS ESSENTIAL PLACES FOR EDUCATION, CONNECTING WITH NATURE, AND PROMOTING A PHYSICALLY ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Physical activities, especially outdoors, promote socialization, reduce feelings of isolation and lead to the acquisition of interpersonal skills (Du Mays and Bordeleau, 2015). In aging adults, physical activities improve muscle endurance, balance and agility, which extend active-life expectancy. Québec national parks are some of the best places to promote a healthy and active lifestyle. They encourage a connection with nature and, in this way, help maintain public health.

Education in the broadest sense, i.e. to acquire knowledge and awaken scientific and cultural curiosity, at all stages of life, is an important facet of the national park mission. By promoting the establishment of contact between humans and nature, national parks lead visitors to discover the diversity of the components of protected heritage, as well as the role and value of this diversity. In particular, national parks are an exceptional outdoor place for learning for the student population. The participation of schools and educators will allow national parks to develop their full educational

potential. Through education and frequent contacts with nature and culture, a feeling of connection and a greater respect for the environment are created. In addition, knowing that in Aboriginal communities, natural and cultural heritage are closely linked to numerous threatened traditions, the discovery experiences available in a park can contribute to promoting and maintaining vitality of certain traditions specific to the Aboriginal culture.

Initiatives designed to get citizens of all ages moving and to sensitize them to the benefits of frequent outdoor activities will be encouraged in national parks.





Mathieu Dupuis, Parc national de l'Île-Bonaventure-et-du-Rocher-Percé, Sépaq

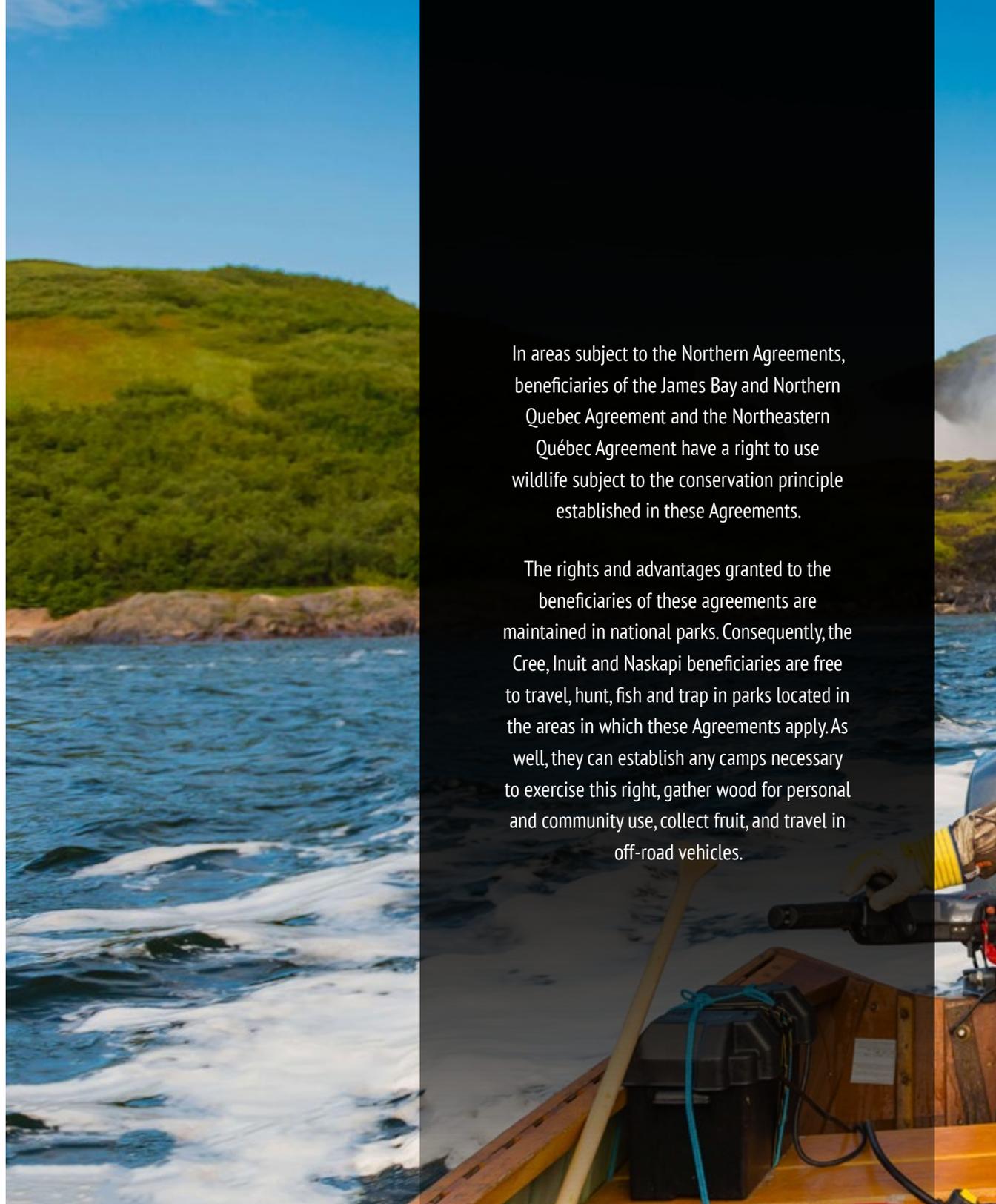
3.3 STRENGTHEN TIES WITH THE FIRST NATIONS AND THE INUIT

National parks provide unique opportunities for the creation of stronger collaborative connections with the First Nations and the Inuit, and to bring together non-natives and Aboriginal peoples so as to encourage mutual comprehension of our respective cultures. With a view to establishing and maintaining relations based on trust, partnership and mutual respect, the Gouvernement du Québec will continue to closely associate Aboriginal communities with national park projects. Consequently, collaborative mechanisms to recognize Aboriginal knowledge may be defined with Aboriginal communities prior to and during project development, in particular during the creation or expansion of a national park.

In order to increase participation of Aboriginal communities, national parks can also become places to support and expand the possibilities of economic diversification and professional training for Aboriginal communities.

In areas subject to the Northern Agreements, beneficiaries of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement and the Northeastern Québec Agreement have a right to use wildlife subject to the conservation principle established in these Agreements.

The rights and advantages granted to the beneficiaries of these agreements are maintained in national parks. Consequently, the Cree, Inuit and Naskapi beneficiaries are free to travel, hunt, fish and trap in parks located in the areas in which these Agreements apply. As well, they can establish any camps necessary to exercise this right, gather wood for personal and community use, collect fruit, and travel in off-road vehicles.





Steve Deschênes, Parc national Tursujuq, KRG

3.4 INCREASE BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITIES

The culture of partnership is already well integrated into the national parks network. It has led to the creation of business opportunities and offers complementarity in products and services at the regional level.

In order to increase benefits for communities, partnerships that promote people, regional products, innovations and culture continue. Québec national parks can contribute even more to the development of municipalities, local and Aboriginal communities as well as companies, in particular in the tourism sector. This alignment of regional attractions and strengths represents one of the key elements to reinforce the feeling of attachment to national parks.





IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Policy for Québec National Parks will be implemented through various guidance documents, management tools, and communication and collaboration mechanisms. The Policy will guide actions and encourage collaboration in the management and operation of national parks.

GOVERNANCE

The governance of Québec national parks is based to a great extent on collaboration of several stakeholders, both on the operational level and the strategic level. Through its National Parks Policy, the Government promotes sustainable, collaborative and transparent governance:

- › SUSTAINABLE, since clear governmental orientations guide environmental, social and economic decisions;
- › COLLABORATIVE, because the responsibilities of each stakeholder and communication mechanisms are defined. The Policy emphasizes their complementarities, the obligation to share information and the empowerment of all stakeholders involved in national parks governance;
- › TRANSPARENT, since local and Aboriginal communities are involved in the development of the network, and citizens are informed of the evolution of national parks and the status of the natural heritage they protect.

RESPONSIBILITIES

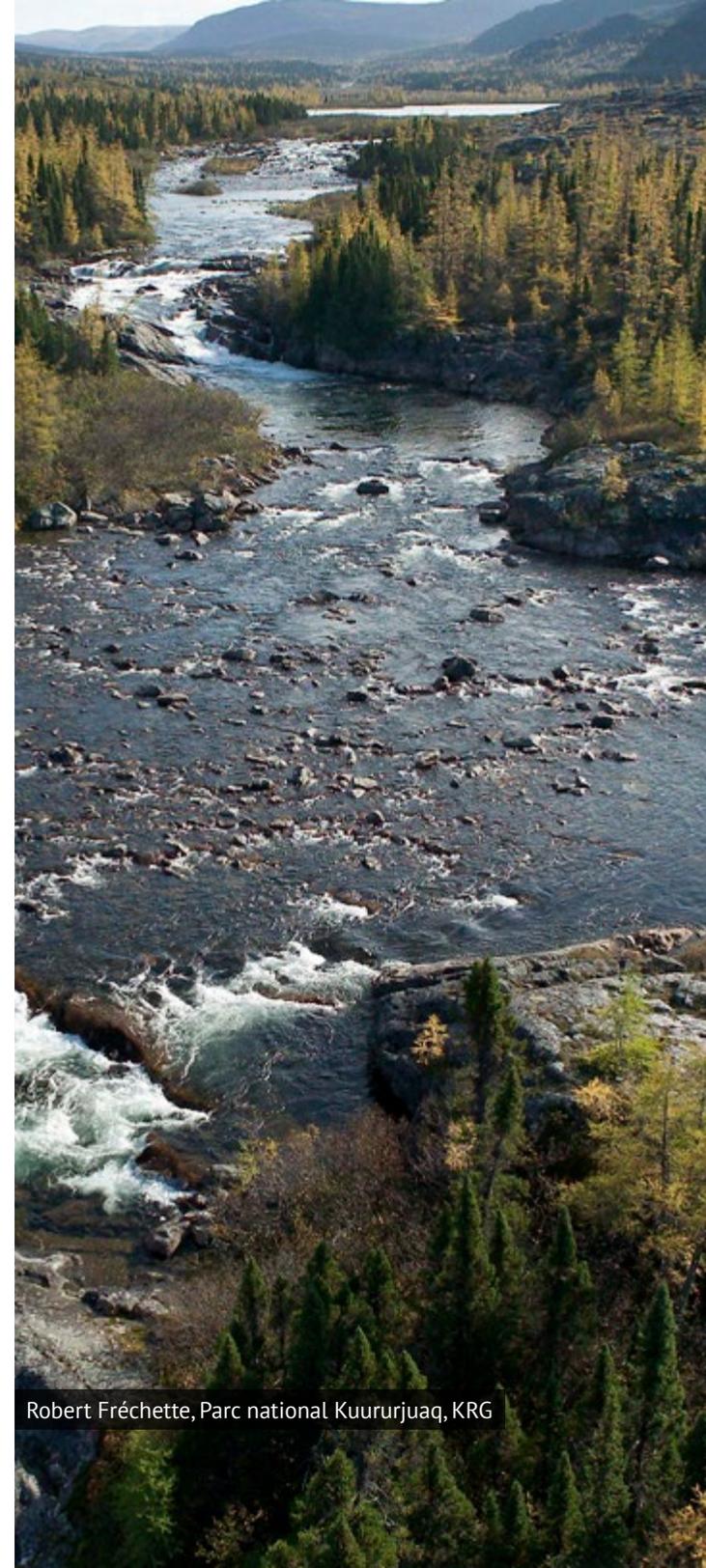
Given the multiple facets of national park management, it is important to clarify the responsibilities of each stakeholder. The fields of action for which the Ministry for Québec national parks and the operators, including Sépaq and the Kativik Regional Government, are responsible include, but are not limited.

Ministry

Field of action	Responsibilities
Planning and development of the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Legislative and regulatory amendments.› Planning and analysis of project proposals.
Establishment of national parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Creation and expansion of national parks.› Modification of boundaries of a national park.› Definition of zoning in a national park.› Consultation of local and Aboriginal communities.› Management of real estate activities (acquisition, transfer, etc.).
Operations framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Definition of network management orientations.› Monitoring of existing leases within national park boundaries.› Monitoring of agreements related to national parks located in the areas of application of northern agreements.
Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Authorization of work and activities requiring approval by the Minister.› Monitoring of agreements related to projects for the decontamination and restoration of natural areas.› Monitoring and management of liabilities related to contaminated site.
Surveillance and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Maintenance of territorial integrity of national parks (boundaries, boundary disputes, surveying, etc.).› Territorial surveillance and regulatory conformance.› Supervision of park guards who have the status of wildlife protection assistants.
Communications and external relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Collaboration with Aboriginal communities.› Public distribution of information about the Ministry's conservation accomplishments in national parks.› Opinions and representations to ministries and organizations during interministerial and intergovernmental consultations.

Operators, including Sépaq and the Kativik Regional Government

Field of action	Responsibilities
Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sustainable enhancement and development. › Adaptive management of ecosystems. › Coordination of knowledge acquisition. › Authorization of scientific research. › Implementation of rehabilitation and decontamination projects in natural areas. › Monitoring of environmental indicators.
Management and development of products and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Creation of development, operation and marketing strategies. › Development of the visitor experience. › Client management. › Management of educational and outdoor activities. › Marketing. › Management of access fees and setting prices for activities and services.
Asset maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Maintenance and protection of heritage buildings, sites and landscapes. › Management of infrastructure and assets.
Surveillance and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Supervision within the parks by park guards designated as wildlife protection assistants. › Establishment of security measures.
Communications and external relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Connections to the region. › Collaboration with Aboriginal communities. › Partnership agreements. › Distribution of information on the health status of national parks.



Robert Fréchette, Parc national Kuururjuaq, KRG

EXCHANGE MECHANISMS

Committees comprised of the main stakeholders have already been established; they ensure better coordination and implementation of collaborative actions. It is important to maintain these exchange mechanisms.



Field of action	Exchange mechanism
Development of the network	Park consultative committee: The Ministry responsible for national parks has established a consultative committee in which members are invited to give their opinions and make recommendations on policies and strategic orientations regarding national parks. The committee is comprised of representatives of environmental organizations, researchers, and tourism or user groups. Park operators also sit on this committee.
Establishment of national parks	Working groups: Groups established at the very beginning of a national park creation process to encourage discussions with stakeholders in the region. This allows the Ministry to collect and share relevant information, distribute it to the various groups involved and take into account their expectations. Through this process, the social, environmental and economic acceptability of the national park project is encouraged. The working group is generally composed of representatives of the municipal and tourism sectors, Aboriginal communities, environmental groups as well as organizations responsible for regional development.

Field of action	Exchange mechanism
Operating activities	<p>Liaison committees: These committees provide contacts between the Ministry responsible for national parks and operators, and allow for the regular sharing of information. They are designed to promote complementarity of actions responding to the mission of national parks. The committees are also forums for discussion to find solutions to problematic situations. One particular liaison committee ensures monitoring of protective efforts and the standardization of management of park guards who have the status of wildlife protection assistants.</p> <p>Harmonization roundtables and committees: Established by operators for each national park, these committees provide advice with regard to conservation, enhancement, management and development of national parks, for harmonizing with the region's development priorities. The Ministry responsible for national parks can also use these venues to consult local communities on ministerial orientations.</p> <p>In southern Québec, the composition of roundtables can vary from one national park to another. Generally, they include representatives of the municipal and tourism sectors; Aboriginal communities; environmental, educational, and recreational groups; the scientific community; as well as organizations responsible for regional development. The Ministry responsible for national parks also sits on these roundtables and committees.</p> <p>In Nunavik, the committees are composed of representatives of the Inuit (and, depending on the committee, Cree and Naskapi), Landholding Corporations and the Makivik Corporation. Harmonization committees give their opinion on the compatibility of national park operations with traditional activities; they also participate in approval of scientific research projects conducted in national parks.</p> <p>External scientific committee: Established by Sépaq and comprised of university and governmental experts as well as experts from conservation organizations, this committee provides an external view of conservation issues in national parks. It proposes ways to improve conservation tools and encourages collaboration among its members to develop projects.</p>



Steve Deschênes, Parc national des Monts-Valin, Sépaq

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING TOOLS

The following documents are the prime means to implement and monitor the Policy for Québec National Parks. The Ministry and operators collaborate in the preparation of these documents. The park consultative committee, the scientific committees and expert committees, as well as the harmonization roundtables can also be called upon to orient the contents of these documents. Alignment of all these documents will ensure the consistency of actions and the appropriate functioning of the network of Québec national parks.

Field of action	Tools
Organizational planning	<p>Strategic plan: Document developed pursuant to the Public Administration Act in which a ministry or organization subject to this law presents its strategic orientations. It covers more than a year and must indicate the mission of the organization, its issues, strategic orientations, avenues of intervention and objectives. It also includes the target outcomes and the performance indicators that will allow it to measure the attainment of targets.</p>
Management of operations	<p>Master plan: Document created as an initiative of the Ministry; it presents a portrait of the land and details specific orientations for management of a national park. The zoning map constitutes its central element. All development projects must conform to the master plan. Every ten years, the Ministry evaluates the relevance of revising the master plan.</p> <p>Operating plan or business plan: Document developed by the operator which establishes the development and management objectives for a national park for the purpose of ensuring the protection, respectful development, accessibility and evolution of products and services available.</p> <p>Conservation plan: Planning tool to determine priority conservation issues as well as all actions to be completed by a national park with regard to conservation. Developed by the park operator, the conservation plan is indissociable from the operating plan or the business plan.</p> <p>Education plan: This document is a planning tool for educational activities that is designed particularly for the manager of educational services in the national park and employees responsible for presenting educational messages to the public. It is developed by the operator.</p> <p>Lease: This document, signed by the Minister responsible for national parks and a leaseholder, sets the conditions for the creation of facilities and activities for recreational tourism or other uses.</p>

Field of action	Tools
Surveillance and protection	<p>Environmental indicators monitoring program: Brings together different indicators focusing on the same goal, i.e. to determine changes that occur in natural areas. Implemented by the operator, it permits monitoring of the health status of every national park, based on standardized protocols. If necessary, depending on the results of measurements, park management will be adapted. The assessment is made public every five years.</p> <p>Protection plan: Prepared jointly by the operator and the Direction de la protection de la faune, this annual plan establishes the delegated protection mandate which must be prioritized in a national park by its operator. It structures the actions specifically connected to application of regulations, determines priority problems and actions, defines all roles, and sets guidelines for collaboration with the Direction de la protection de la faune.</p>
Communications and external relations	<p>Annual management report: The annual management report is an accountability tool whose principal objective is to communicate with provincial elected officials and citizens, in comprehensible language and in a timely fashion so as to provide significant, complete, comparable and reliable information on results relative to commitments made by the organization in the previous year. The annual management report is used by the Ministry responsible for national parks and Sépaq to present conservation results.</p> <p>Conservation bulletin: This bulletin is designed to be a tool to present accomplishments in conservation and to raise awareness about the importance of conserving the natural areas of national parks.</p> <p>Communication plan for Nunavik residents: The goal of this document, for national parks located in Nunavik and under the responsibility of the Kativik Regional Government, is to inform residents of this region and help them develop and benefit from the economic possibilities connected to the park.</p>



Alain Thibault, Parc national du Fjord-du-Saguenay et Saguenay–St. Lawrence Marine Park, MFFP





CONCLUSION

This governmental Policy on Québec national parks is a testimony to the great value of these natural spaces for society. These protected lands deliver many ecological services to us, provide outdoor destinations for families, and opportunities for non-natives and Aboriginal peoples to come together. They are also development levers for the regions. All these benefits are facets of a network constructed for citizens.

The Policy for Québec National Parks defines the orientations that guide and will continue to guide actions in national parks, emphasizing the essential collaborative links between stakeholders to fulfil the mission of the Québec national parks network.

PROTECTED AND ACCESSIBLE LANDS

The sustainable management of national parks is an ever-present challenge. It is within the jurisdiction of the Minister responsible for Québec national parks through the monitoring of the legislation and the management orientations. Maintaining the health of Québec national parks is a daily responsibility of all operators when choosing best practices for managing and developing natural spaces. The challenges of conservation and access to our collective heritage are also the concern of regional and local development agents for the areas surrounding national parks. Their acceptance of national park objectives is crucial for ensuring that public investments are sustainable.

A COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT WHICH MAKES US PROUD

The Gouvernement du Québec intends to contain the development of the national parks network for the benefit of all citizens and communities, as well as for current and future generations. The contributions of national parks to the development of communities and improvement of quality of life of citizens have already been recognized, demonstrating the pertinence of maintaining this commitment.

Thanks to the alignment of forces of all stakeholders, the maintenance of quality of these lands and educational and outdoor experiences, Quebecers' feelings of connection and pride in their national park network will continue to grow.



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