

EXPANSION PROJECT OF THE PARC NATIONAL DE PLAISANCE

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Introduction

The Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP) is responsible for planning and developing Quebec's network of national parks, as well as overseeing their operation. Québec's network of national parks includes 28 territories in addition to the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park jointly managed with the Government of Canada.

Created in 2002, the Parc national de Plaisance is a protected area of 28.2 km² located in the Outaouais administrative region, in the Papineau Regional County Municipality. It spans from west to east in the heart of the Rivière des Outaouais, bordering the municipalities of Thurso, Lochaber, Plaisance, and Papineauville. The reasons that led to its creation are to protect:

- a representative sample of the natural region of the St. Lawrence Lowlands;
- a network of biodiverse wetlands located in an important waterfowl migration corridor;
- a precious natural landscape and recognized as one of Quebec's most remarkable archaeological reserves.

The national park's great diversity of habitats is particularly favorable to birdwatching. Each year, nearly 200 bird species can be observed in any of the park's typical ecosystems, making the Parc national de Plaisance one of the best birdwatching areas in Eastern Canada. Rare species such as the least bittern can be seen here, as well as the only colony of black tern in the entire Outaouais region. Mammal species are prominent in the wetland areas, and can be observed in large numbers in the many marshes of the national park. Species include muskrat, beaver and American mink. Three species of turtles can also be observed.

The national park is also the home to nearly 70 species of fish, including several species of game fish such as walleye, largemouth bass, and muskellunge. Its bays and the Rivière de la Petite Nation offer several sites favorable to the reproduction of most of these species.

The swamp forest, which includes silver maple groves, dominates the national park's forest. Over 40 tree species have been identified to date. The national park is also home to an old-growth forest, a red oak and ironwood grove, considered one of the oldest in Quebec. This forest is designated as an exceptional forest ecosystem. In terms of flora, the most recent inventory includes nearly 750 species of plants, including several rare species .

The Parc national de Plaisance aims to preserve all these rich ecosystems, while promoting the development and exploration of the area through educational and recreational activities.

The park offers to visitors 40 kilometres of bike trails and 6-kilometers walking circuit adapted to wetlands via the Zizanie-des-Marais and Marais-aux-Rubaniens trails. These remarkable attractions allow visitors to explore marshes and forest swamps using floating and elevated structures. Water activities include kayaking, canoeing, rabaska and paddleboarding. Finally, to extend the experience, visitors can extend their stay in the national park with a choice of 137 camping sites, three yurts, one cottage, 27 traditional ready-to-camp and 10 Étoile ready-to-camp accommodations.



The project

The purpose of the expansion project of the Parc national de Plaisance is to incorporate 2.03 km² of land located on both sides of the Rivière de la Petite Nation, including the site of the Chutes du Moulin. In 2010, the Municipality of Plaisance adopted a resolution asking the government to include these lots in the national park. They were acquired by the government, by decree, in 2018. The addition of these sites would help protect mixed forests and rugged landscapes, which are distinct from other ecosystems found within the current boundaries of the Parc national de Plaisance. It would also contribute to preserve an important ecological connectivity corridor between the current national park and the natural areas located further north. Botanical inventories recently confirmed the presence of six species at risk, including a large colony of ram's-head lady slipper, a species classified as vulnerable. Faunal inventories and research conducted in the past two years on those lots have confirmed the presence of:

- 34 species of birds;
- 11 species of amphibians;
- 4 species of reptiles;
- 12 species of mammals.

It should be noted that the Northern ring-necked snake would add a new species in the national park and that more extensive inventories will likely confirm the presence of the northern frog and the marsh frog. The new habitats are particularly suitable for river otters and black bears, whose presence has been confirmed. Finally, for fish species, the foot of the Chutes du Moulin is a documented breeding site for many species.

Occupied by the village of North Nation Mills in the mid-19th century, the site is also rich in cultural heritage. A study of the archaeological potential to document the use of the site by First Nations is also underway. These elements could certainly be showcased.

The MELCCFP proposes adding another plot of land to the national park lot 4 653 381 located in Thurso, already owned by the Gouvernement du Québec (see Expansion 1 on the proposed modifications of the boundaries map).

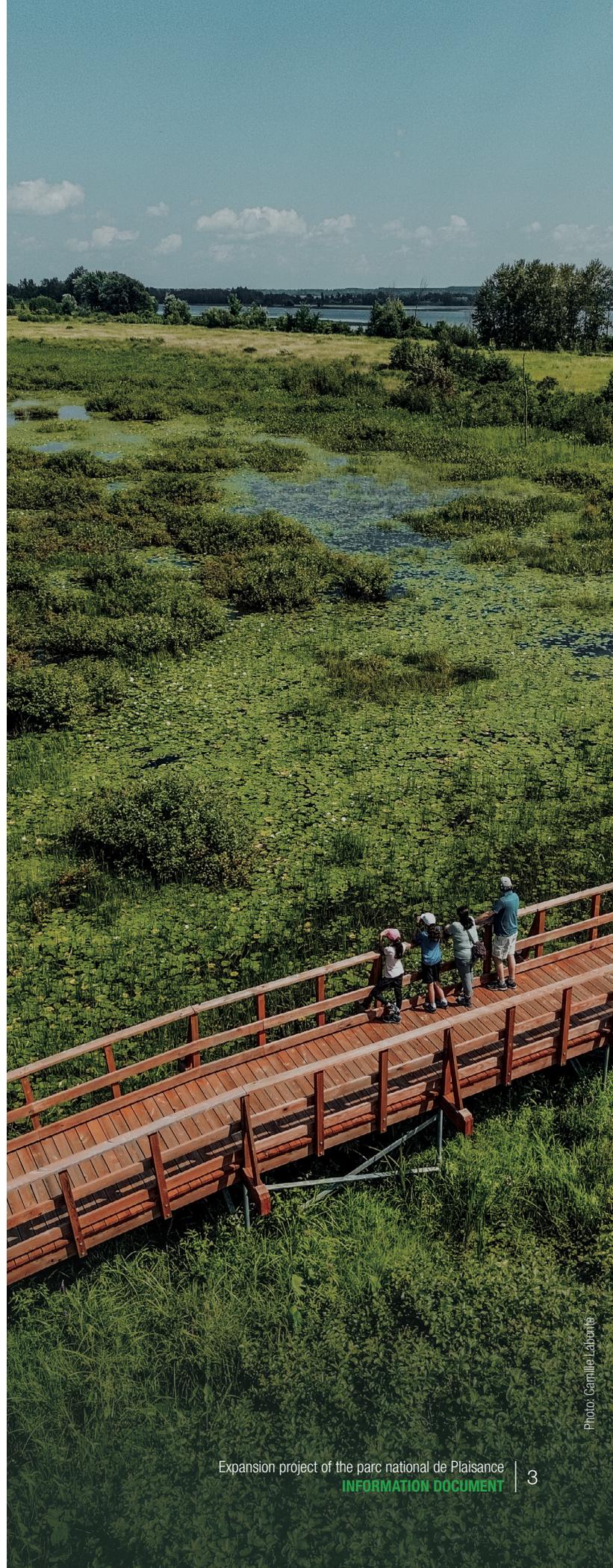


Photo: Carollie Labonté

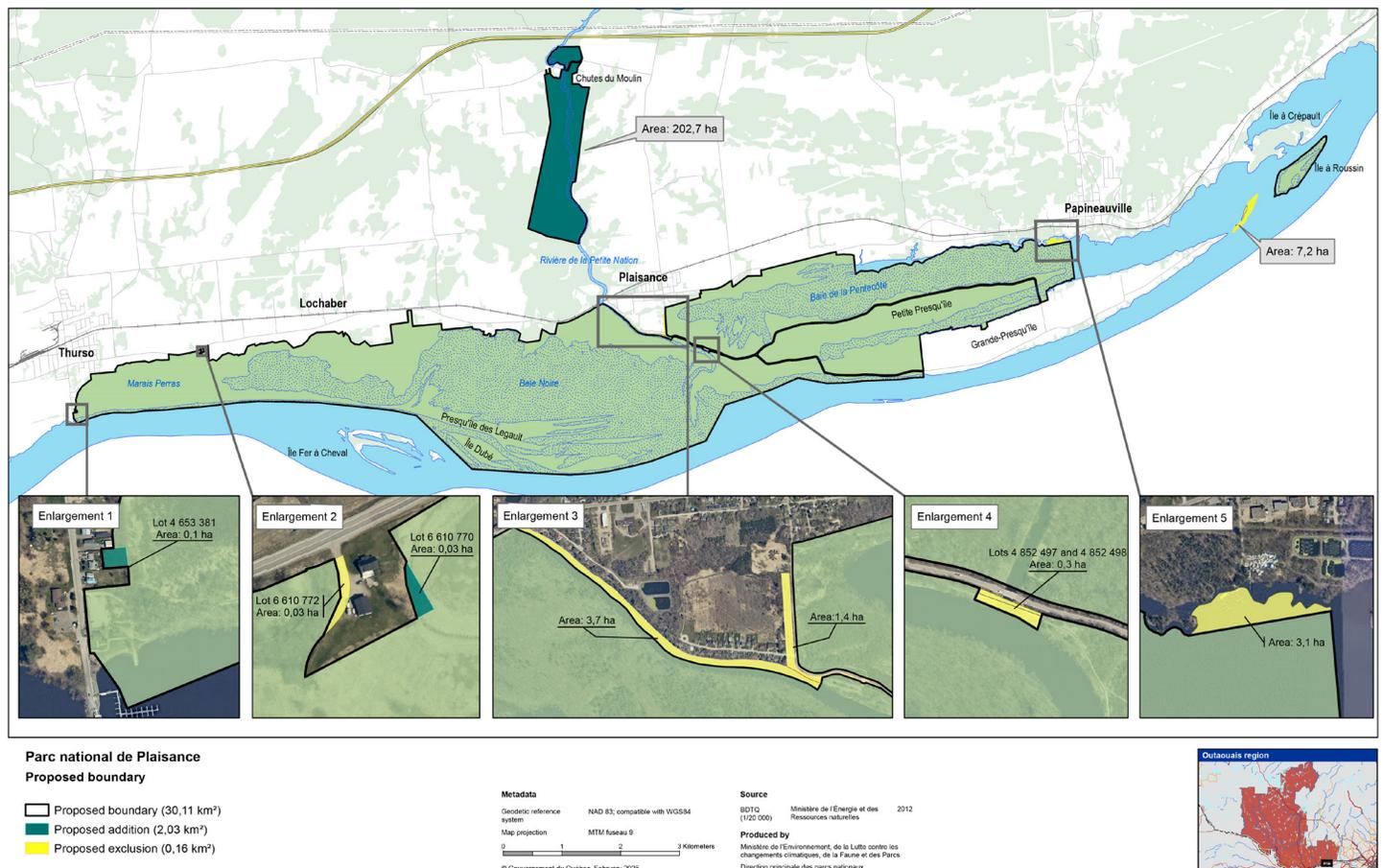
In addition, it is proposed to withdraw some other areas covering a total surface area of 0.16 km² to correct irregularities:

- The withdrawal of a part of the Rivière de la Petite Nation, to be consistent with the practice in the national park's system when the government owns only one bank of a watercourse (see Expansion 3 on the proposed modifications of the boundaries map).
- The withdrawal of a part of lot 4 852 496, as it is the subject of discussions resulting from a memorandum of understanding regarding a land exchange between the Municipality of Plaisance and the government (see Expansion 3 on the proposed modifications of the boundaries map).
- The withdrawal of lot 4 852 497, owned by the Municipality, and lot 4 852 498, owned by the federal government, both of which were mistakenly included in the Parc national de Plaisance when it was created in 2002 (see Expansion 4 on the proposed modifications of the boundaries map).

- The removal of the Papineauville's marina, which was mistakenly included in the Parc national de Plaisance when it was created in 2002 (see Expansion 5 on the proposed modifications of the boundaries map).
- The withdrawal of Petite île Sèche, as it is now submerged.

Finally, the MELCCFP proposes to resolve an encroachment case dating back to before the creation of the national park by proceeding with a land exchange with a neighbour of the national park. Thus, lot 6 610 772 would be removed from the national park and transferred to the neighbouring owner, who in turn would transfer lot 6 610 770, an undeveloped plot of land of equivalent size and land value (see Expansion 2 on the proposed modifications of the boundaries map).

Map 1: Proposed modification of the boundaries of the Parc national de Plaisance



Zoning modification

Zoning is an essential planning and management tool to ensure the fulfillment of the national parks' conservation and accessibility mission. It consists of delimiting areas of a national park to modulate the degree of protection according to the natural, cultural, and landscape heritage. Zoning is one of the means of guiding interventions in an area for long-term preservation.

Type of zone	Definition	Examples of layouts or permitted activities
Extreme preservation	Zone dedicated exclusively to the protection of natural and landscape heritage and which is only exceptionally accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific research
Preservation	Zone primarily dedicated to the protection of natural and landscape heritage and only accessible by means that have little impact on the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking • Canoeing and kayaking • Lookout
Natural environment	Zone dedicated to the enhancement of natural and landscape heritage, characterized by a layout that promotes accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Path for vehicles or bicycles • Secondary parking lot • Picnic area • Fishing and boating
Services	Zone primarily dedicated to reception, accommodation, or administration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service center • Main parking lot • Campground
Intensive recreation	Area occupied by a golf course or a ski centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alpine ski centre • Golf course

This tool is used by the national park's operator, in this case the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq), which implements it in its management and development decisions. All development projects must comply with the established zoning plan.

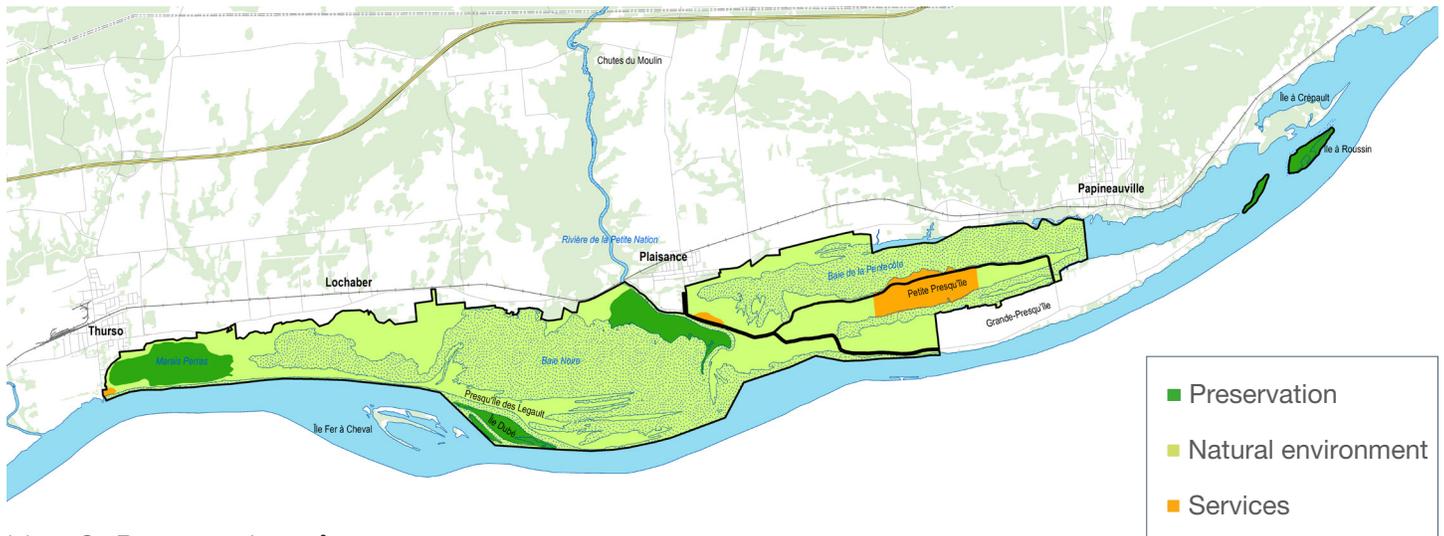
The lands that would be integrated into the Parc national de Plaisance must be assigned a zoning plan. Thus, for these lands, three types of zones are proposed: preservation, natural environment, and service zones. This proposal reflects on one hand, the elements of natural heritage to be protected and, on the other hand, the existing and proposed developments. Specifically, the preservation zone aims to protect forested areas, habitats of species at risk, and wetlands. The natural environment

zone corresponds mainly to the developed area at the Chutes du Moulin site. Finally, the service zone corresponds to the parking and visitors reception area.

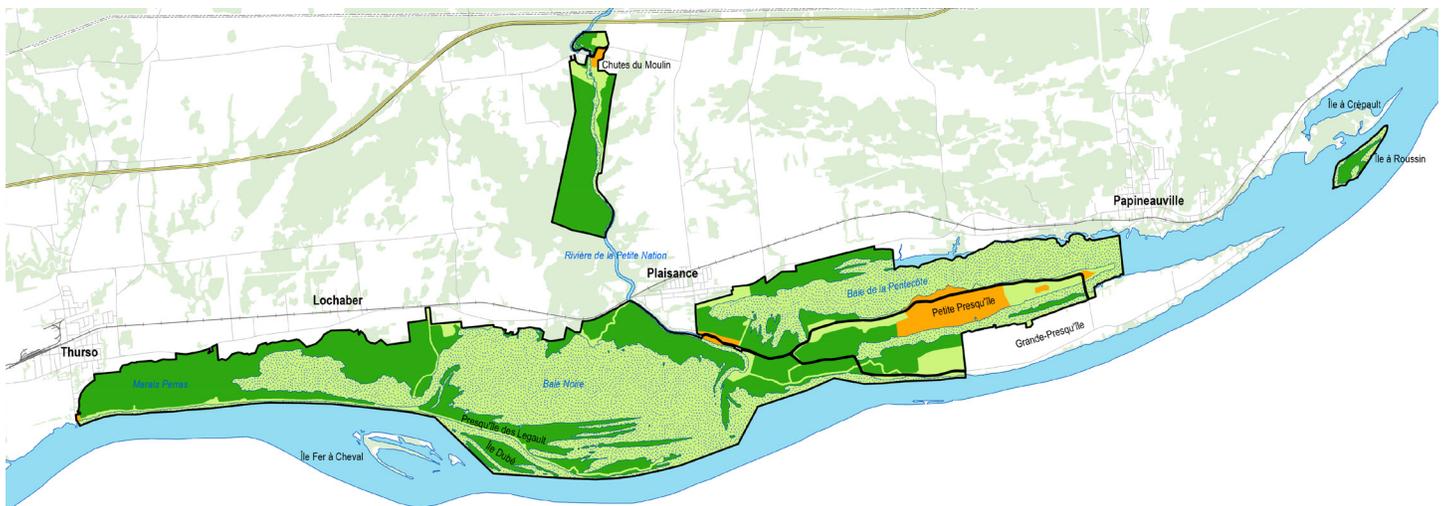
The expansion process also provides an opportunity to update the zoning of the entire national park to better reflect the protection and actual use of the land. These proposed zoning adjustments would significantly increase the preservation surface, from 10% to 39%, while maintaining the range of activities offered to park visitors. These gains in preservation are mainly wetland and wooded areas such as the sectors of Baie Noire Ouest, Presqu'île des Legault, and Marais aux Rubaniers..

Type of zone	Current zoning		Proposed zoning	
	Surface area (km ²)	Proportion (%)	Surface area (km ²)	Proportion (%)
Extreme preservation	-	-	-	-
Preservation	2.75	9.74	11.74	39.
Natural environment	24.37	86.30	17.30	57.4
Services	1.12	3.97	1.08	3.6
Intensive recreation	-	-	-	-
Total	28.24	100.00	30.11	100.00

Map 2: Current zoning

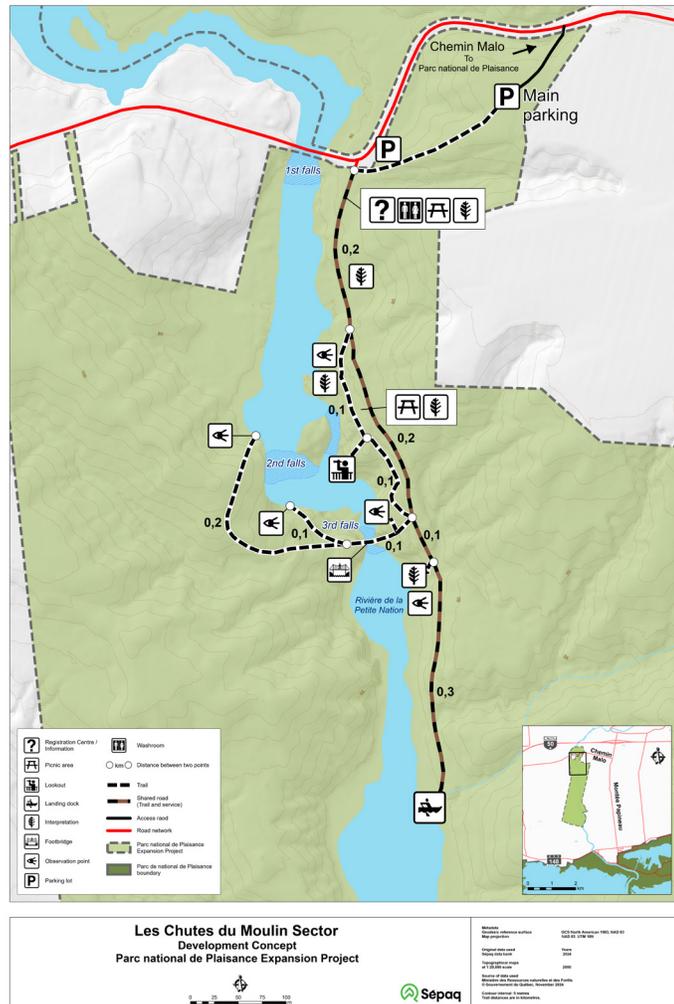


Map 3: Proposed zoning



Proposed development concept

The proposed development for the Chutes du Moulin site aims primarily at improving the site's facilities and at enhancing the visiting experience of the Chutes.



The most imminent change concerns the lookout point of the Chutes du Moulin. It is planned to replace the existing lookout with a platform that would allow a larger number of people to observe the Chutes simultaneously. This new lookout will be accessible to people with reduced mobility.

There are also plans to relocate the parking to the former institutional plateau to the east of the current parking lot, so it can accommodate up to 100 cars. It is also proposed to move on the same plateau, a historical home, likely originating from the former village of North Nation Mills. This home is currently located on Montée Papineau, at about 3 kilometres from its original location.

Feasibility studies are also underway to assess the possibility of building a footbridge crossing the base of the Chutes, providing access to short trails and viewpoints on the west side of the Rivière de la Petite Nation.

Finally, the proposed plans are to maintain and enhance the other existing facilities, including the welcome pavilion, trails, picnic areas, and interpretation boards.





Consultation Process

The consultation process is an integral part of the national park expansion process. It allows stakeholders to comment on proposed changes to the national park's boundaries and zoning at various points during the process, to promote social acceptability. Adjustments to the project may be made throughout the consultation process, to consider suggestions and issues raised.

This process includes:

- targeted consultations with local and regional stakeholders;
- specific consultations with the concerned Indigenous communities to ensure their interests and concerns are considered;
- a 60-day online public consultation following the publication of the notice of intent to expand a national park in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*.

A public hearing by the Bureau d'audience publique sur l'Environnement (BAPE) may be held if written objections are submitted to the MELCCFP during these 60 days.

Finally, a second 45-day online public consultation period is carried out when the proposed amendment to the park's Regulation is published in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*.

Want to learn more?

Visit the Gouvernement du Québec's website for information on the [expansion project of the Parc national de Plaisance](#).

To submit your comments, please write to the following email address: consultation-parcs@environnement.gouv.qc.ca.

**Environnement,
Lutte contre
les changements
climatiques,
Faune et Parcs**

Québec 