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Georgian Bay Islands

National Park of Canada and

Beausoleil Island

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

2022



2022

Georgian Bay Islands

National Park of Canada

Beausoleil Island

National Historic Site of Canada

Management Plan

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GEORGIAN BAY ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA AND BEAUSOLEIL ISLAND NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA
MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2022.

Paper: R64-105/91-2022E
978-0-660-44447-5

PDF: R64-105/91-2022E-PDF
978-0-660-44446-8

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

Note to readers

The health and safety of visitors, employees and all Canadians are of the utmost importance. Parks Canada is following the advice and guidance of public health experts to limit the spread of COVID-19 while allowing Canadians to experience Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Parks Canada acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have unforeseeable impacts on the *Georgian Bay Islands National Park of Canada and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders and the public of any such impacts through its annual implementation update on the implementation of this plan.

For more information about the management plan or about
GEORGIAN BAY ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA and BEAUSOLEIL ISLAND NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA:

Georgian Bay Islands National Park of Canada and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site of Canada
901 Wye Valley Rd., Box 9
Midland, Ontario, L4R 4K6

Tel: 705-527-7200
Email: info.gbi-ibg@pc.gc.ca
www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/on/georg

Front cover image credits
top from left to right: Maya March, Ethan Meleg, Hunter Corbiere
bottom: Ethan Meleg

Foreword



From coast to coast to coast, national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas are a source of shared pride for Canadians. They reflect Canada's natural and cultural heritage and tell stories of who we are, including the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples.

These cherished places are a priority for the Government of Canada. We are committed to protecting natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places, and contributing to the recovery of species at risk.

At the same time, we continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities to ensure that more Canadians can experience these iconic destinations and learn about history, culture and the environment.

In collaboration with Indigenous communities and key partners, Parks Canada conserves and protects national historic sites and national parks; enables people to discover and connect with history and nature; and helps sustain the economic value of these places for local and regional communities.

This new management plan for Georgian Bay Islands National Park of Canada and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed by a dedicated team at Parks Canada through extensive consultation and input from Indigenous partners, other partners and stakeholders, local communities, as well as visitors past and present. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of cooperation.

As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the *Georgian Bay Islands National Park of Canada and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*.

Steven Guilbeault

*Minister of Environment and Climate Change and
Minister responsible for Parks Canada*

Land Acknowledgement¹

Parks Canada recognizes that Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site are located on traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and later Métis peoples. This territory is now known as the area of the Chippewa Tri-Council, comprised of Beausoleil First Nation, Rama First Nation, and Georgina Island First Nation.

First Nations' relationships to the lands and waters around Georgian Bay are recognized in the Robertson-Huron Treaty of 1850, Treaty 16 of 1815, Penetanguishene Treaty 5 of 1798 and Williams Treaty 20 of 1923.

Parks Canada acknowledges these traditional lands were used and continue to be used for ceremony and traditional teachings.

A special meeting place for thousands of years. With its landscape as its teacher and water for its life.
A place of refuge.
A place of peace.

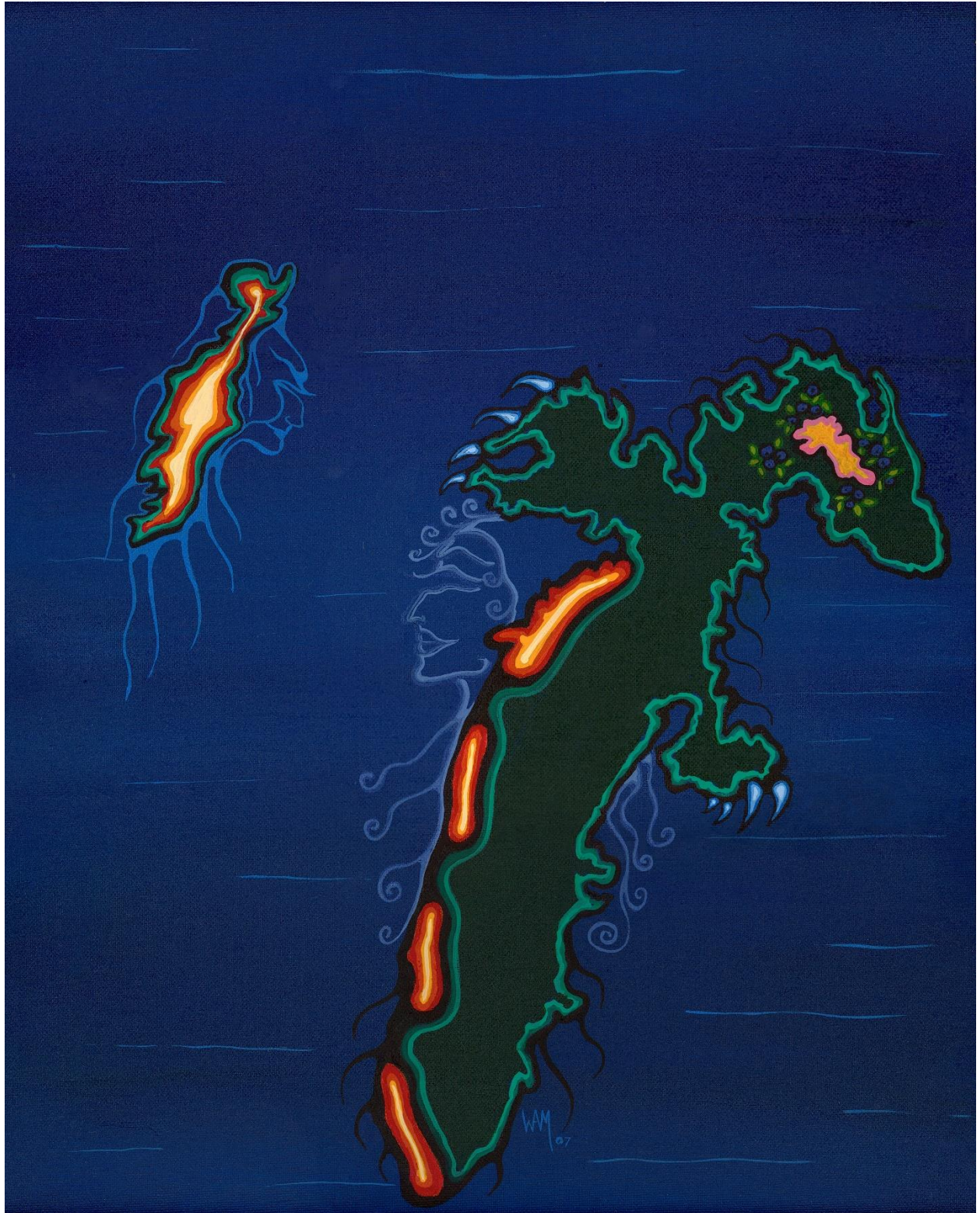
The Story of Fairy Lake

On the following page Parks Canada is pleased to share the commissioned artwork of the late Mr. William Monague of Beausoleil First Nation.

Inspired by the teachings of Mother Earth, the Spirit World, and the natural beauty of Georgian Bay, the painting is connected to a traditional Anishinaabe story shared through the park's Cultural Advisory Circle. The painting speaks to the spiritual and ceremonial significance of Fairy Lake in Anishinaabe culture. Fairy Lake is represented as the eye of the beast (*Migcheshibzhi*) in the painting, it is located on the north end of Beausoleil Island. *The Story of Fairy Lake* is shared with people who visit Fairy Lake by hiking the Fairy Lake trail.

Parks Canada wishes to acknowledge the Monague family for agreeing to share this work of art in the management plan for Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site.

¹ Land acknowledgements may vary according to organizational and even personal preferences, and depending on context. The acknowledgement offered in this management plan is representative of acknowledgements used by the Parks Canada team at Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil National Historic Site, intended to convey respect and understanding about the significance of these lands and waters beyond their designations as protected heritage places.



Recommendations

Recommended by:

Ron Hallman
President & Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada

Andrew Campbell
Senior Vice-President
Operations Directorate

Katherine Patterson
Superintendent
Eastern and Central Ontario Field Unit

Executive Summary

What is now known as Georgian Bay Islands National Park lies within homelands that are significant to Indigenous peoples of the Great Lakes region, including Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Métis peoples. The park protects an iconic landscape appreciated by all Canadians and a cultural landscape that reflects the connections that Anishinaabeg peoples of the southern Georgian Bay region have to these lands and waters. For millennia, Beausoleil Island has been at an intersection for people travelling along the sheltered islands of Georgian Bay, and those travelling from central Ontario on what is now the Trent-Severn Waterway. Beausoleil Island, recognized as a national historic site in 2011, is the largest and most culturally significant island within the park, and the location of the park's visitor facilities, such as docks, camping accommodations and trails. Management of the national park and national historic site benefits from the advice of a Cultural Advisory Circle and other partnerships that support conservation, education and tourism.

Established in 1929, Georgian Bay Islands National Park is Canada's smallest national park, consisting of 50 islands and properties covering a total area of 14 square kilometres. The park is located approximately 160 kilometres north of Toronto, Ontario and is within a half-day's drive for millions of Canadians. Park lands can only be accessed by boat. Visitors arrive by private watercraft, commercial operators, or the park-operated *DayTripper* shuttle boat.

The island-based park is part of the world's largest freshwater archipelago. This area is known as the 30,000 Islands and is a core protected area of the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve. The national park protects important habitat in Georgian Bay, providing a refuge for turtles, snakes, skinks and other plants and animals. The park is much loved for providing visitors with opportunities to enjoy nature.

Visitors connect with the rich natural and cultural heritage of Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site through a wide range of activities, including hiking, swimming, picnicking, canoeing, kayaking, docking opportunities, and overnight accommodation, as well as engaging interpretive presentations and special events. Parks Canada enjoys a strong partnership with two YMCA camps that operate on Beausoleil Island.

The management plan presents a 15-year vision for the park and national historic site and outlines strategies and objectives that will guide Parks Canada's decisions. The plan focuses on the following four key strategies:

Key Strategy 1: Managing conservation and climate change adaptation within a broader fragmented ecosystem

This key strategy focuses on positive conservation outcomes for the park and for the region through ecosystem management, managing impacts of climate change, and collaborative relationships with a range of partners.

Key Strategy 2: Enabling access and enhancing a diverse and enjoyable visitor experience

This key strategy aims to improve visitor experience from beginning to end, balanced with ecosystem conservation and supported by visitor experience strategies and tools for visitor use management.

Key strategy 3: Strengthening formal Indigenous relations – Sharing heritage and culture

This key strategy emphasizes the foundation of respect, mutual trust, tradition and communications to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities.

Key Strategy 4: Building awareness and community support – The invaluable treasures of the park are known

This key strategy aims to increase awareness about the national park and national historic site, highlighting Parks Canada's role in the conservation of natural and cultural resources in the region.

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1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada administers one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. Its mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national historic site, national park, national marine conservation area and heritage canal administered by Parks Canada supports its vision:

Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act* require Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for each national park. The *Georgian Bay Islands National Park of Canada and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how park management will achieve measurable results in support of Parks Canada's mandate.

Indigenous peoples are important partners in the stewardship of heritage places, with connections to the lands and waters since time immemorial. Indigenous partners, including Anishinaabeg (Chippewa/Ojibway, Pottawatomi, and Odowa), Haudenosaunee (Iroquois/Mohawk), Huron-Wendat, and Métis communities, other collaborating organizations, stakeholders and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park and national historic site. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement and, where appropriate, consultation, on the management of Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site in years to come.

2.0 Significance of Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site

Established in 1929, Georgian Bay Islands National Park is Canada's smallest national park. Although small, the ecological and cultural significance of these islands cannot be overstated.

Ecologically, the island-based park is part of the world's largest freshwater archipelago. This area is known as the 30,000 Islands and is a core protected area of the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) designation.

Interestingly, this national park straddles two natural bioregions: Great Lakes Precambrian Shield and St. Lawrence Lowlands. A host to this transition zone, Beausoleil Island is a unique example of southern forests of sugar maple and smooth-barked beech, shifting to northern windswept pines and red oak found emerging from hard granite of the Canadian Shield. As these landscapes merge, it produces a fascinating array of habitat, which hosts a great diversity of species. The park's iconic landscapes, which inspired the Group of Seven to create distinctly Canadian works of art, continue to be a source of inspiration today. Though small in land area, Georgian Bay Islands National Park is widely recognized for its ecological significance. In a combined area of only 14 square kilometres, spread out over dozens of islands, there are known to be at least 25 plants and animals that are listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. Most

notably, the park provides habitat for over 30 species of amphibians and reptiles, more than any national park in Canada, of which 13 are listed as species at risk. For these reasons, the park is recognized as an Important Amphibian and Reptile Area by the Canadian Herpetological Society.

For generations, Georgian Bay has been the land of the haunting call of the loon and the bittersweet splendour of autumn hills aflame with scarlet maples. More recently, it has become well known as an area for recreational boating and iconic cottages. As it has since its establishment in 1929, the national park will continue to protect the ecological integrity of the lands within the park, balanced with opportunities for all people to peacefully enjoy the special natural and cultural features that exist in Georgian Bay.

Beausoleil Island National Historic Site

The islands of Georgian Bay are witness to a long history of human settlement and are long known as a place of refuge, serving as a stopping place and seasonal campsites. Archaeological findings demonstrate human activity and settlement on the islands dating back over 5,500 years.

Following contact with European settlers, Indigenous peoples struggled to maintain their cultural practices while Euro-Canadians rapidly began to settle the area. Beausoleil Island is named after Louis Beausoleil, a Métis settler whose 1819 homestead stood at the island's southern tip. As relationships and settlement patterns evolved over time, different Indigenous groups made use of the Georgian Bay area. Several movements, traditions and relationships of First Nations in the area are commemorated by related designations of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, including the displacement of the Anishinaabeg of southern Georgian Bay from their reserve lands in Coldwater-Narrows in the 1830s, which is recognized as a national historic event.

Beausoleil Island, with its sandy beaches and ample fishing, created an ideal destination for the Anishinaabeg to trade goods and forge relationships. For periods of time, settlement of Beausoleil Island included two reserve villages (1838-1856) and then post-reserve homesteads. From Beausoleil Island, members of Beausoleil First Nation moved to their present-day reserve lands on Christian Island. Beausoleil Island remains a cultural landscape and a place of memory that reflects on the Anishinaabeg people's presence, relationship with the land and displacement. Beausoleil Island is the setting of many Anishinaabe oral traditions and serves as a link to the resources, routines and ceremonies that reflect the traditional way of life of Anishinaabeg peoples. This long and significant heritage of generational ties to these lands and waters, which anchors the collective memory and culture of Anishinaabeg peoples of southern Georgian Bay, led to the recognition of Beausoleil Island as a national historic site in 2011. The nomination of Beausoleil Island as a national historic site was initiated by the park's Cultural Advisory Circle.

3.0 Planning Context

Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site are located approximately 160 kilometres north of Toronto, Ontario and are within a half-day's drive for millions of Canadians (Map 1). Consisting of 50 islands² and properties covering a total area of 14 square kilometres, the park can only be accessed by boat. Visitors arrive by private watercraft, commercial services, or the park-operated *DayTripper* shuttle boat to Beausoleil Island. Beausoleil is the largest and most culturally significant island within the park, making up over 78 percent of the park's land base. As a small island-based park within a fragmented landscape and being located near the most highly populated part of Canada, Georgian Bay Islands National Park provides important opportunities to promote regional connectivity and to make Canadians aware of Parks Canada's role in conserving natural and cultural resources.

² Georgian Bay Islands National Park, under the *Canada National Parks Act*, protects 63 islands. Operationally, Georgian Bay Islands National Park actively manages 50 of the islands; the remaining islands are managed through Fathom Five National Marine Park.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil National Historic Site are located close to several First Nation and Métis communities, and are within the homelands of others. The Indigenous partners of Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil National Historic Site include: Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, the Georgian Bay Métis Council, Potawatomie of Moose Deer Point First Nation, Shawanaga First Nation, Wasauksing First Nation, Wahta Mohawks, and the Huron-Wendat Nation. Many of these communities are represented on the park's Cultural Advisory Circle which has provided guidance and brought an Indigenous perspective to park management, cultural resources, languages, and programming for the past 20 years.

Visitors connect with the rich natural and cultural heritage of the national park and national historic site through a wide range of activities including hiking, swimming, picnicking, canoeing, kayaking and docking opportunities, as well as overnight accommodation options including waterfront cabins, oTENTik and traditional tent camping. The park also offers engaging programs such as interpretive presentations, Indigenous workshops, cultural activities and special events. Two YMCA camps have been operating in the park since 1919, integrating learning opportunities about the national park and national historic site, and providing exceptional opportunities to reach Canada's youth. Located outside the boundary of the national park, the community of Honey Harbour has long served as the gateway to the park, and a key launch point for many visitors to Beausoleil Island.

The administration office for the national park and national historic site is located in Midland, approximately 35 kilometres away from Honey Harbour, on the edge of the Wye River. This location also houses the headquarters for Parks Canada's Eastern and Central Ontario Field Unit, serving other national heritage places in the region.

This management plan replaces the 2010 management plan for Georgian Bay Islands National Park which provided direction for improving visitor facilities and services, protecting the iconic landscape, managing cultural resources and building partner support. Since 2010, Parks Canada has:

- Improved overall ecological integrity through restoration programs that target habitat improvements, including the restoration of the operational compound to a mixed wood forest.
- Initiated further improvements to ecological integrity by targeting the reduction of invasive species found in the park, such as the ongoing "Impede the Reed" project to map and remove the European shoreline reed called Phragmites.
- Made significant improvements to the visitor experience on Beausoleil Island by constructing a new visitor centre, adding comfortable overnight accommodations, and enhancing interpretation.
- Improved capacity for day visitors through expanded services of the *DayTripper* boat shuttle.
- Made investments of over 3.5 million dollars, through Federal Infrastructure Investment funds and other capital funding sources, to improve park infrastructure such as docks (major project at Tobey Dock), picnic shelters, toilets, trails, and water treatment systems, as well as improvements to operations buildings.
- Worked with Indigenous partners through the Cultural Advisory Circle to protect significant cultural resources and help visitors understand the significance of this cultural landscape.

The 2018 *State of the Park Assessment* identified four themes that need to be addressed during the implementation of the next management plan: conserving the natural environment within a broader fragmented ecosystem and adaptation to climate change; enabling access and sustainable visitor growth while enhancing a diverse and enjoyable visitor experience; strengthening formal relationships with Indigenous partners; and, building brand awareness and community support.

Ecological Integrity

Conservation measures at this small, island-based park have been beneficial to the park's current state of ecological integrity. A significant challenge for this park relates to factors external to the park boundary: increased population growth, development, and road networks across southern and central Ontario have reduced or greatly fragmented habitats, and development has impacted the broader ecosystem. The islands within the national park have increasingly become a refuge for a variety of species at risk (25),

including several amphibians and reptiles like turtles, snakes and skinks. These pressures are not only impacting species at risk, they are also introducing and accelerating the pathways for non-native species with unknown long-term impacts to park biodiversity. Phragmites (an invasive reed) is an ongoing concern since it has rapidly invaded the south end of Beausoleil Island and displaced native species, creating areas of dense monoculture and impacting the integrity of the important shoreline environment.

Extreme high water, rapid fluctuations in lake levels, along with ice, wind and seiche events (“seiche” is an oscillating or standing wave) have eroded the island’s shoreline, causing significant damage to habitat and facilities. As a result, understanding both adaptation and resilience of ecosystems and infrastructure to climate change has become a top priority and will be integrated into conservation, visitor experience, and built asset objectives. This range of factors and impacts are particularly important for an island-based park that is shaped by water.

Visitor Experience and Access

All visitor services within the national park are located on Beausoleil Island. Facilities and services for visitors are available from late May until early October. The majority of visitors to the national park and national historic site are from Ontario, and although annual visitation is stable, in the range of 41,000 to 44,000 visitors, the patterns of visitation have evolved over time. More visitors, especially those coming from the Greater Toronto Area, are accessing Beausoleil Island through Honey Harbour and using Parks Canada’s shuttle service, the *DayTripper*. Roofed accommodation in the form of rustic cabins and oTENTik are very popular with first-time visitors, while traditional tent camping has declined. Given the national park’s historic emphasis as a destination for boaters and the constraints of operating an island-based park, adapting the visitor experience offer to meet the needs and expectations of current visitors is challenging. The operations base in Honey Harbour has become the launch point to facilitate more access to the national park and national historic site for those visiting for the day and those arriving to stay in roofed accommodations. Parks Canada’s ability to transport visitors to and from Beausoleil Island cannot keep up with increasing demand. In addition to those who are arriving with reservations, Honey Harbour can become congested with day-trippers, visitors launching their own canoe or kayak, or those stopping in for information. The increased number of people coming to the operations base in Honey Harbour has put pressure on the existing infrastructure, which can cause negative experiences and safety concerns with respect to traffic congestion. Visitors without reservations are turned away each day in peak season, and new options are required to reduce congestion at Honey Harbour and provide visitors with more opportunities to experience the park and national historic site.

Visitors arriving to Beausoleil Island’s docks by private boat remain an important group. The demand for docking space on most summer weekends is greater than what is available. Unlike those accessing Beausoleil Island on the *DayTripper* shuttle service, boaters do not access the park through a common entrance; for these visitors, challenges include a lack of connection with Parks Canada team members and outdated methods for fee collection. Most dock areas require self-registration, and park staff attend the docks periodically for compliance and visitor services. As most docks have no time limit on the length of stay (with the exception of Tobey Dock at Cedar Spring as of 2022), visitors enjoying long stays limit dock access for others.

There are also boaters who enjoy the national park and national historic site from the water offshore and anchor in various bays around Beausoleil Island. These boaters who are not coming onto docks or lands that are administered by Parks Canada are technically not visitors to Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site. Although, some of these boaters use tender vessels (small boats or dinghies) to bring their dogs to shore to exercise them, deposit garbage or otherwise use island facilities. As of 2022, activities on the waters surrounding the islands in the national park are generally not within the control of Parks Canada. Outreach efforts to better connect more of these boaters with messaging about the national park and national historic site are needed, and options to expand Parks Canada authorities may be explored.

Indigenous Relations

There have been several successful collaborations over recent years with Indigenous partners, in particular with the guidance and participation of the Cultural Advisory Circle. The Cultural Advisory Circle is made up of members of First Nations and Métis communities with interests in the park and national historic site, as well as representatives of other partners, such as the YMCA camps and the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve. Contributions from the Cultural Advisory Circle continue to be an integral component for park management, and strengthening these partnerships will be critical as the park moves forward to further incorporate the management of Beausoleil Island as a national historic site.

While many relationships between Parks Canada team members and community members are well established, stronger ongoing dialogue and effective ways of working together directly with leadership of Indigenous communities is desired. Parks Canada will continue to pursue and support a deeper collaboration and integration of Indigenous perspectives into park programming, resource management and decision-making, ensuring that the park and national historic site are welcoming for Indigenous people, and that visitors have opportunities to appreciate Georgian Bay as a special area for Indigenous peoples.

Regional Brand Awareness and Partnering

The park and national historic site have long-standing relationships with members of regional Indigenous groups and the YMCA camps, and works with numerous regional and local partners. As a core protected area within the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve, the national park is part of a network that shares common goals and interests for conservation, education and sustainable use. Increased participation with and support from partners and stakeholders will be imperative in achieving the vision for the park and national historic site.

Many regional residents, partners and stakeholders are familiar with Beausoleil Island, but may not be aware that it is part of Georgian Bay Islands National Park or that it is also a national historic site, and may not understand its significance as part of Parks Canada's system of protected heritage places. The park has several successful partnerships for tourism, marketing and conservation, yet there remains a lack of recognition and awareness about the park and national historic site. A shift is needed to nurture a sense of pride in, and support for the park and national historic site, and to create opportunities for meaningful engagement.

4.0 Development of the Management Plan

Parks Canada consulted with a broad range of interested parties during the preparation of this management plan. The input of partners, stakeholders and the public has helped to shape direction for the future of the national park and national historic site.

During 2018 and 2019, the initial stages of the planning process were completed. This included internal completion of the state of assessment and scoping document, as well as preparation of a discussion paper on management planning. During this time, letters and the discussion paper were sent to Indigenous partners that have interests in Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site. The letters introduced the planning program and inquired how the communities would like to be involved with development of the draft management plan. As a result of these early communications, in 2019 Parks Canada met with four First Nations to gather input on key issues and potential vision elements. Feedback was also received through regular meetings of the park's Cultural Advisory Circle.

In March of 2020, in consideration of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Parks Canada temporarily suspended consultations related to management planning. In the winter of 2022 consultation resumed

and the draft management plan was shared with Indigenous partners and other external parties that work with the national park and national historic site.

Consultation on the draft management plan was conducted with local, regional and national audiences between February and April 2022. Invitations to comment on the draft plan were sent directly to Indigenous leaders and advisors, known partners and stakeholders, advertised in local newspapers, and promoted through relevant community pages on Facebook. The consultation process included a public comment period held between March 8 and April 19, 2022. During this period, the draft plan was posted online along with a comment card to gather feedback on the direction proposed in the draft plan.

Parks Canada team members offered to meet with partners, stakeholders and the public, and virtual meetings were held in March 2022. A meeting was held with the Cultural Advisory Circle, and a public meeting with partners and stakeholders was also held. These sessions included many long-time visitors to the national park and generated valuable discussions and comments that have been taken into account in the final plan. The highlights of feedback from this final phase of consultation are contained in the “What We Heard” report, available on the park’s website.

5.0 Vision

Shaped by wind and water, Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site is a peaceful gathering place, deeply rooted in memory and connection to nature and history.

Parks Canada and its trusted partners are proud ambassadors of the world’s largest freshwater archipelago along southeastern Georgian Bay. Together, they lead the way in conservation and experiential learning, leaving visitors transformed and inspired. The islands are a refuge for biological diversity and a catalyst for regional conservation.

In 15 years, the national park and national historic site will be renowned:

- For representing exceptional ecosystems with incredible biodiversity;
- For leading edge, forward-thinking conservation management that includes scientific research, Indigenous knowledge, and collaboration with partners, and that addresses the effects of climate change and landscape fragmentation;
- As a place where Indigenous heritage and knowledge are respectfully woven throughout visitor programs and conservation management, and Indigenous partners contribute to decision-making;
- As a welcoming place for all people to gather for spiritual and physical connection with the natural world;
- For being a place of memory—historically, and as a place where new memories are created;
- As a place where Indigenous people recognize themselves, their stories and their heritage;
- For building and maintaining strong relationships, and being an important regional leader for conservation and tourism partnerships; and,
- For offering invigorating experiences, starting from the moment visitors arrive and travel over the sparkling waters of Georgian Bay, where people are inspired by the inseparable link between nature and culture.

6.0 Key Strategies

As a long-term strategic plan, in line with the Government of Canada’s approach for results-based planning, the management plan focuses on the results that Parks Canada plans to achieve. The purpose of the management plan is not to identify a decade worth of specific projects, but instead to provide decision makers, partners, stakeholders and the public with the priorities that will guide actions. Where no specific timelines are given, all targets are meant to be achieved within the ten-year life of this plan. Where targets refer to conditions that will be rated as part of the next state of the park assessment, that assessment is typically completed after about eight years of implementation.

The directions identified in this section take into account available resources and existing capacity for Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site. Nevertheless, some undertakings are scalable as additional funding can be sourced, or may require additional support and rely on opportunities to partner with external collaborators. For example, where this management plan includes objectives related to improving visitor experience, the final scale of enhancements at Cedar Spring and Honey Harbour can be adjusted based on capital planning during the life of this plan.

The components of results-based planning work together as follows:

- Vision—describes the desired future and sets the management direction;
- Key Strategies—present major themes, and introduce management approaches;
- Objectives—present management priorities and identify desired results;
- Targets—measure success by defining timing and the amount of change; and,
- Reporting—communicates ongoing implementation and connects actions to direction.

Actions and Reporting

Decisions on how to reach the targets identified in this plan will be made by Parks Canada, in consultation with partners, stakeholders, and the public as appropriate, including the Cultural Advisory Circle, Indigenous partners, local community organizations, academic institutions, and other collaborators in conservation, education and tourism. Over the plan’s 10-year timeframe, this approach allows for flexibility to account for available resources, evolving priorities and emerging opportunities. Informing partners, stakeholders and Canadians about how ongoing decisions, actions or projects fit with the strategies and objectives in this management plan is done through business planning, annual implementation updates and other communications.

High-level Policies

In addition to the strategies, objectives and targets identified in this management plan, decision-making is guided by federal and departmental policies that provide direction on overarching issues. For example, across its network of heritage places, Parks Canada is committed to sustainable development (for example, Greening Government, related to the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*) and equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (for example, Accessibility Plan, related to the *Accessible Canada Act*). Within the area of sustainable development, adaptation to climate change is expected to be a growing influence on the management of heritage places, including Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site. Ensuring that sites are well operated, and are welcoming places for all, are ongoing considerations for the implementation of this management plan.

For the duration of this management plan, four key strategies have been developed to guide management direction for the national park and national historic site.

Key Strategy 1: Managing conservation and climate change adaptation within a broader fragmented ecosystem

Understanding the ecology of Georgian Bay Islands National Park is challenging because the lands surrounding the park have been developed and the park is isolated from the broader landscape. In that context, ecological resiliency and adaptation will be incorporated into the future of conservation management. This will become more urgent as impacts from climate change will have greater influence on the very shape and shoreline of Beausoleil Island, its biodiversity, visitor services and the cultural landscape. The park cannot achieve success in isolation. The ecological aspirations for the region are inextricably linked to integration and collaboration across multiple jurisdictions and with various partners, including the biosphere reserve, Indigenous partners, academic institutions, and numerous regional, municipal and community organizations (for example, the Ontario Invasive Plant Council, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Georgian Bay Land Trust, cottage associations, Boating Ontario, etc.). Given the high degree of influence of external factors on the park ecosystems, there will be a need to consider the future condition of the park in order to prevent ecological decline, manage toward its optimal viability, and maximize its contributions to regional collaboration. Effective demonstration of stewardship techniques that engage visitors and area residents will be a key to success. Habitat protection, resilience and enhancement, particularly for species at risk, will be paramount in management decisions.

The objectives in this strategy are also supported by the implementation of recovery strategies and action plans under the *Species at Risk Act*, including the consideration of habitat changes based on climate scenarios. In cooperation with partners, an updated multi-species action plan for Georgian Bay Islands National Park was underway at the time this management plan was completed, and ongoing work related to the action plan will guide the implementation of this management plan.

Objective 1.1: The ecosystem conditions within the national park are maintained or improved.

Targets

- In the next state of the park assessment, the indicator for the ecological integrity of the forest ecosystem continues to show a condition rating of “good.”
- In the next state of the park assessment, the indicator for the ecological integrity of the coastal/marine ecosystem continues to show a condition rating of “good.”
- In the next state of the park assessment, the indicator for the ecological integrity of the wetlands ecosystem shows a stable or improving trend.
- Ecological stressors continue to be managed and, through working with partners on prevention, monitoring and active management, the impacts of invasive species are contained.

Objective 1.2: Species at risk are protected.

Targets

- Guided by the implementation of recovery strategies and action plans, the awareness of visitors and team members about threats to species at risk is increased.
- Through direct contact with landowners and participation in processes led by community partners, Parks Canada’s leadership role in sharing species at risk knowledge throughout the broader region is continued.
- Parks Canada’s involvement with partners in the development of a land protection strategy to support species at risk across the broader ecosystem is continued.

Objective 1.3: The impacts of climate change are better understood and managed.

Targets

- By 2024, maintenance and capital strategies and plans targeted at increasing the climate resiliency of shoreline infrastructure have been developed to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Within five years, ecological restoration considers optimum viability for future ecosystem stability and transition during times of instability.

Objective 1.4: Cultural resources are protected.

Targets

- Within five years, the availability of information that supports public understanding of the cultural significance of Beausoleil Island, such as interpretive signs, has increased.
- Within five years, coordination between Parks Canada and the YMCA camps is improved, resulting in the establishment of procedures for communication and resource protection.
- Through improved formal relationships with Indigenous partners, opportunities to support the preservation of cultural resources are identified, supporting Park Canada's role as a steward of culturally significant artifacts.
- Through improved formal relationships with Indigenous partners, opportunities to support the preservation of cultural practices and resources, such as culturally significant plants, are identified.

Key Strategy 2: Enabling access and enhancing a diverse and enjoyable visitor experience

Given the impact of fluctuating water levels in the arrival and departure areas on Beausoleil Island, a holistic plan for the approximately one kilometre stretch of shoreline will be key for this strategy. Rehabilitating, repairing or designing new shoreline infrastructure that is resilient and adaptable to the impacts of climate change will facilitate access to the island and instill a sense of wonder from the moment of arrival. Collaboration with Indigenous partners, the private sector, and others, will improve and enrich access to Beausoleil Island, helping a diversity of visitors connect with the amazing natural and cultural heritage of the national park and national historic site. Creating and fostering new partnerships will help develop innovative experiential programming. Parks Canada will expand family-friendly experiences and ensure visitors are charmed and enlightened when exploring opportunities for outdoor recreation and innovative learning experiences. Designing for the needs of different user groups will help ensure better experiences and deeper connections to Beausoleil Island. The park will use visitor management and green strategies to ensure protection of natural and cultural resources while providing exceptional visitor experiences. Improved management and processes around water lots, dock use and mooring policies will also help improve access and visitor experiences throughout the park. Sacred and traditional use, day use, camping, boating and use associated with accessibility considerations will be key elements for design considerations.

The objectives in this strategy will optimize the right mix of visitor experiences and access with intelligent design that takes into account ecosystem conservation and the quiet enjoyment of nature. Achievement of these results are supported by Parks Canada's capacity in visitor use management and the development of visitor experience strategies. Challenges related to access and congestion, including the duration of stays at various docks, and facilities in Honey Harbour, will be addressed through the completion of a visitor use management framework, ongoing strategic planning related to capital investments, and partnerships. The 2016 introduction of stay limits at the main Cedar Spring dock (Tobey Dock), where boats can dock for five days on with three days off, has been a success and provides an example of approaches that can be explored through visitor use management. At the time of completing this management plan, a visitor use management framework for the national park and national historic site was underway through a Parks Canada working group; related follow-up work will be an ongoing influence on the implementation of this management plan.

In addition to a visitor use management framework that assesses dock and mooring capacity for different types of visitors and considers capacity for compliance promotion and enforcement, ongoing work to update payment and reservations options for passes and permits will support a stronger connection between Parks Canada and a range of boaters and visitors.

Objective 2.1: A new sense of welcome to Beausoleil Island is conveyed, meeting the needs of different user groups.

Targets

- By 2027, a vision for the shoreline will be developed, in consultation with Indigenous and other strategic partners, that will address climate-resilient design and a range of requirements for third-party operators, special events, and mobility access.
- By 2029, through improvements to the arrival area at Cedar Spring, visitor flow and the sense of arrival will be enhanced.

Objective 2.2: Access to the park and its experiences is improved, facilitating new offers and meaningful experiences for an increasingly diverse range of visitors.

Targets

- By 2025, a review of park infrastructure and programming is completed to identify potential opportunities for creating barrier-free and inclusive facilities and experiences.
- By 2029, new partnerships (for example, with third-party operators for shuttle services) are in place to expand the arrival and transportation options available to a diversity of visitors.
- Through collaboration and outreach, efforts to connect the boating and cottage communities with messaging about the national park and national historic site are increased.

Objective 2.3: Working with partners, meaningful experiences are offered and visitors forge strong connections to the natural and cultural features that the park protects and presents.

Targets

- In the next state of the park assessment, visitor satisfaction continues to exceed 90 percent.
- In the next state of the park assessment, at least 85 percent of visitors respond that the park is important to them.
- In the next state of the park assessment, the number of visitors stating that they learned something about the park's natural heritage shows an increasing trend, exceeding 66 percent.

Key strategy 3: Strengthening formal Indigenous relations – Sharing heritage and culture

Sharing the stories, experiences and cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples in this pristine archipelago setting is essential to Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site. Experiences offered on Beausoleil Island will be transformative for visitors, who will leave with a greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures and heritage. To that end, Parks Canada will continue to rely on collaborative work with Indigenous partners, including work through the Cultural Advisory Circle, and creating new relationships with Indigenous communities and elected officials. Building on the foundation of respect, mutual trust, traditions and communication while identifying common goals, Parks Canada will foster ongoing connections between Indigenous partners and the lands and waters that make up the national park.

The objectives in this strategy are supported by the direct involvement of Indigenous partners and the advice and guidance provided by the Cultural Advisory Circle through the continuation of its regular meetings. Objectives in this strategy relate closely to the direction for specific management areas, such as the objectives specific to the Cedar Spring campground and day use area and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site.

Objective 3.1: Indigenous knowledge is woven into park management and operations, including decision-making about natural and cultural resource management.

Targets

- Understanding of cultural heritage among Parks Canada team members is increased.
- Through improved formal relationships with Indigenous partners, Indigenous stories and perspectives, including increased use of Indigenous languages, will be more evident to visitors.

Objective 3.2: Indigenous peoples' connection to traditionally used lands within the national park is strengthened.

Target

- Within five years, the frequency of Indigenous people coming to Beausoleil Island to practice cultural activities and participate in cultural events or gatherings has increased.
- In the next state of the park assessment, the indicator for Indigenous access to traditional lands and activities has improved to a rating of "good."

Objective 3.3: Parks Canada works with Indigenous partners on increasing economic benefits for community members.

Targets

- By 2026, at least one Indigenous tourism program is co-developed and offered on-site by Indigenous partners and Parks Canada.
- Within five years, through improved formal relationships with Indigenous partners, economic and employment opportunities are expanding.

Key Strategy 4: Building awareness and community support – The invaluable treasures of the park are known

Stronger partnerships and increased community involvement will help the park enrich its programming and become better known. Regional messaging will showcase the role of the national park in influencing stewardship within the greater ecosystem. Increased awareness will inspire many to visit this unique archipelago and create their own meaningful connections by enjoying the views, the water, family moments, by exploring the invaluable natural and cultural treasures, and by volunteering through a range of stewardship endeavours.

As with the strategic direction related to access and visitor experiences, the objectives in this strategy for promoting the park and national historic site will be supported by tools for visitor use management and infrastructure designed to consider ecosystem conservation and the quiet enjoyment of nature. During the implementation of this plan, Parks Canada will monitor opportunities for engaging and supporting specific target audiences, including new Canadians and potential visitors from urban areas who may not own boats.

Objective 4.1: Canadians are aware of Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site and associated experiences.

Targets

- The park's social media followers increase by ten percent annually.
- By 2024, local and national media outlets begin to cover the park as a source of regular stories and feature angles (conservation, history, Indigenous connections, recreation).
- By 2026, through social media and other online connections, Parks Canada's opportunities to curate online communities of residents and visitors with shared interests in the national park and national historic site have increased.
- By 2026, mutually beneficial cross promotion and packaged experiences are in place with partners.

Objective 4.2: Community support and engagement increase as a result of stewardship projects with partners, stakeholders and visitors.

Targets

- By 2024, a plan adapted to annual priorities and engagement targets outlines local outreach and regional events, including participation in Indigenous ceremony, conservation conferences, parades and festivals.

- By 2026, the number of volunteers and volunteer numbers per program is increasing.
- By 2027, strategic partnerships are expanded to support regional conservation efforts and visitor experience programs.

7.0 Management Areas

In support of the management plan's four key strategies, this section presents detailed objectives for specific locations within Georgian Bay Islands National Park, including Beausoleil Island National Historic Site, Cedar Spring campground and day-use area, YMCA camps, and the outer and northern islands.

7.1 Beausoleil Island National Historic Site of Canada

Known to the Anishinaabeg as *Baamidoonegog*, “rocky place floating about the mouth of a river,” Beausoleil Island is the largest island in Georgian Bay Islands National Park and was officially recognized as a national historic site in 2011.

Beausoleil Island was designated as a national historic site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada for the following reasons:

- It is representative of the cultural landscape of the Anishinaabeg of the southern Georgian Bay region, demonstrating the land's role as a place of memory, illustrating their people's relationship with the land, and recalling the Anishinaabe presence in Southern Ontario and their subsequent displacement;
- It is the setting for traditional narratives that record the island's creation and meaning—many of the traditions associated with the island relate to women, including their use of Beausoleil Island for gathering berries and other plants, and for traditional ceremonies such as girlhood to womanhood transformation rituals; and,
- It has been witness to a long history of settlement—the evolving landscape of the island includes evidence of ancient camps and of its brief period as a reserve in the mid-19th century when the Anishinaabeg struggled to find a new way to live that was compatible with their traditions and with the rapidly growing Euro-Canadian settlement surrounding them.

This designation is an opportunity to protect and highlight the island's cultural significance and character-defining elements. Strengthening Indigenous relationships will be critical as the park moves forward to incorporate the management of Beausoleil Island as a national historic site. In presenting the cultural significance of Beausoleil Island, Parks Canada is guided by the agency's system plan for national historic sites, a *Framework for History and Commemoration*.

Objective: Beausoleil Island National Historic Site and its significance are well known, becoming synonymous with Georgian Bay Islands National Park.

Targets

- The awareness that area residents and visitors to the park have about the national historic site and its cultural significance is increased.
- By 2029, in conjunction with shoreline rehabilitation, a cultural and historical narrative is developed with language, imagery and design treatment that resonates deeply with Indigenous partners and highlights the significance of Beausoleil Island National Historic Site.

Objective: Management of cultural resources is well informed by Indigenous knowledge and guidance provided by the active involvement of Indigenous partners.

Targets

- Parks Canada collaborates with Indigenous partners with respect to cultural resource areas, archaeological work, interpretation and direction setting.
- Mapping of cultural resources areas is updated regularly and considered in decision-making.

Area Considerations for Cultural Values

Beausoleil Island has been designated as a national historic site not only for its tangible points of human history, but also in recognition as a cultural landscape. A cultural landscape is an area that reflects on the intangible qualities that characterize a “sense of place” and integrates both the natural values and human values.

The intent of defining areas related to cultural values is to identify a spectrum of areas that spatially characterize the cultural landscape, from the tangible to the intangible. This will assist managers in ensuring spatially explicit cultural values are considered in the decision-making process, similar to ecological values within the national park.

The implementation of area considerations for cultural values is not intended to restrict activities from certain areas (as done with the park’s zoning), but to provide prescriptive on how the activity can proceed with the heritage values of the national historic site maintained. In this approach, there are three cultural resource areas that should be considered:

Area A: Culturally significant areas where historic use existed. These areas are more sensitive to development and disturbance that require mitigation. These are point locations, or well-defined areas, much of which has been surveyed for cultural resources.

Area B: A buffer of the known culturally significant areas where people are known to have exercised their influence on the landscape. These areas may have less tangible indicators of human use, including signs of cultivated or managed landscapes such as disturbance to support livelihoods (fire, agriculture, berries).

Area C: The cultural landscape that reflects the national historic site’s “sense of place.” This area reflects the environment that people defined as “home,” a connection to the land that possesses intangible heritage value.

Map 2: Cultural Area Plan³



³ Mapping may be updated as cultural knowledge is increased.

7.2 Cedar Spring Campground and Day Use Area

The Cedar Spring area is the main visitor hub and access point on Beausoleil Island, however rapid water level fluctuations and high lake levels have severely impacted shoreline infrastructure in recent years. As such, future visitor offers will be affected by the scale and timing of funding available to rehabilitate, repair and make climate resilient adaptations. The integration of plans, designs and strategic environmental assessments will be incorporated over the next five years to outline the needs and potential of this approximately one kilometre of shoreline and surrounding visitor nodes. Access by third party operators to provide visitor services will also be focused here. Currently, island camping is offered in an area surrounded by lush hardwood forest along the Georgian Bay shoreline. The visitor information centre is located at Cedar Spring, along with roofed accommodation options, and a 45-site campground that offers the highest level of facilities at the park including showers, washrooms, and potable water. Day use facilities, interpretive media and programming, and access to hiking trails are all available in the Cedar Spring area. Services include bike rentals and sales of convenience items such as souvenirs, insect repellent, firewood and ice. The Cedar Spring area also includes sites that focus on ecological initiatives such as pollinator gardens and species at risk habitat.

Management priorities for the Cedar Spring campground and day-use area are closely linked with objectives and targets for improving visitor access and increasing awareness about Beausoleil Island National Historic Site, among others.

Objective: The Cedar Spring area serves as an efficient hub for visitor orientation, facilitating opportunities for growth in visitation and experience.

Targets

- By 2027, the integration of plans that include visitor experience, accessibility, user group management, infrastructure and adaptation to climate change is improved.
- By 2029, a sense of welcome and arrival is created for visitors at Cedar Spring, focusing on the role and history of Indigenous peoples on the island, and the importance of respecting sensitive habitat.

7.3 YMCA Camps

Camp Kitchikewana and Camp Queen Elizabeth introduces over 4,500 young campers per year to Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil Island National Historic Site. The two YMCA Camps (managed through the Simcoe-Muskoka and Western Ontario chapters of the YMCA, respectively) are critical long-term partners at the park, with Camp Kitchikewana predating the establishment of the national park and held its 100th anniversary in 2019. The close working relationship between Parks Canada and the camps provide unparalleled opportunities to deliver key messages about Canada's protected heritage places to receptive target youth audiences. The YMCA camps provide key opportunities to reach important multiplier audiences such as camp staff and educators. Opportunities also exist to leverage the use of YMCA facilities by park teams and Indigenous partners. Both camps are located within species at risk habitat and areas containing significant Indigenous cultural resources, providing excellent linkages to reach campers and instill a strong connection to place and sense of relevance and reverence. The YMCA camps will continue to be managed to respect the cultural and natural setting of the park.

Objective: Youth are provided opportunities to form lifelong memories while learning to appreciate the natural and cultural significance of the national park and national historic site while attending Camp Kitchikewana and Camp Queen Elizabeth on Beausoleil Island.

Target

- Within five years, awareness of the national park and national historic site are increased through learning and training programs such as training for camp staff, professional development for educators, volunteer opportunities for YMCA Leaders-in-Training, and interpretive programs for campers.

7.4 Outer and Northern Islands

Beausoleil Island, which is over 78 percent of the park's total area, serves as the location for visitor services and facilities in the park. However, it is the balance of the park area that forms the most iconic images of Georgian Bay. Tightly woven fabrics of juniper covering the crevices of ancient granite outcroppings and gnarled pine trees bending to the direction of the west wind have inspired those who have come this way before and continue to this very day. This is a place of refuge, a place of solitude. This is where colonies of nesting gulls and herons try to escape the predators of the mainland, only to be met by the Eastern foxsnake. These islands are vital to the ecological integrity of this archipelago and contribute to understanding change across the broader landscape. They will continue to be managed with minimal human interference.

Objective: While visitor services continue to be supported on Beausoleil Island, the remaining islands are an important part of the inspirational fabric of the 30,000 islands and contribute to the conservation.

Target

- By 2030, where appropriate, visitor experiences are supported by indirect opportunities such as virtual reality and effective outreach initiatives.
- The outer and northern islands continue to be a source of inspiration for all Canadians, including those who visit the islands for low-impact activities.

8.0 Zoning

Parks Canada's zoning framework for national parks is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water. Zoning designations identify where particular activities can occur on land or water based on the ecosystem's ability to support those uses. The zoning framework has five categories:

- Zone I – Special Preservation;
- Zone II – Wilderness;
- Zone III – Natural Environment;
- Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation; and
- Zone V – Park Services.

The updated zoning for Georgian Bay Islands National Park includes three categories: Wilderness (Zone II), Natural Environment (Zone III), and Outdoor Recreation (Zone IV). Park services for Georgian Bay Islands National Park are located in Honey Harbour on the mainland, outside of the park boundary. It is important to note that the park zoning applies to Parks Canada lands, but not the surrounding waters of Georgian Bay, over which Parks Canada does not have jurisdiction, therefore, motorized access by water is allowed in all zones. Over the duration of this management plan, Parks Canada will explore the potential of acquiring water lots. Water lots may be considered in areas where there is sensitive habitat or where there are trends in user conflict. Specifically, water lots could be related to swimming areas for visitors or areas of wetlands or shoreline habitat that are not compatible with the use of motor boats.

There are no changes to the management direction for land use within the national park; however, some zoning designations have been adjusted. These changes reflect a more consistent and appropriate application of the zoning framework, considering that Georgian Bay Islands National Park is a small area within a developed landscape. From the previous management plan, zoning of much of Beausoleil Island has changed from Wilderness to Natural Environment, recognizing the level of human use and influence on the island (compared to larger national parks with vast areas of remote wilderness); and, zoning of the outer islands has changed from Special Preservation to Wilderness, recognizing that visitors are invited to use the islands for low-impact activities. There is no change in the zoning of the YMCA camps and Cedar Spring area as Outdoor Recreation. There has been no increase to the area zoned as Outdoor Recreation, which allows for more substantial visitor infrastructure. There has been no reduction in the tools available to protect sensitive natural or cultural resources.

Zone II – Wilderness

The Wilderness designation is meant to protect representative natural landscapes where visitors can experience nature with minimal human interference. The visitor experience in these areas is focused on self-propelled activities. No motorized activities are permitted. Though rudimentary facilities can be supported where the area is large enough, the priority is to maintain the condition of the land in a wilderness state. Zone II areas are sometimes referred to as “backcountry.”

Zone II represents 17 percent of the lands in Georgian Bay Islands National Park. These Zone II areas encompass all outer lands and islands, not including Beausoleil Island. These outer islands have significant species at risk habitats and other ecological values and cannot support visitor infrastructure.

Zone III – Natural Environment

The Natural Environment designation is meant to protect natural environments that are capable of supporting a range of low-impact visitor experiences. These areas enable visitors to enjoy and learn about the natural and cultural features found in the national park. Zone III supports outdoor recreational and educational activities requiring minimal or rustic facilities and services. Public use, such as trail improvements and signage, may be evident, and these areas are sometimes referred to as frontcountry.

Zone III includes the majority of Beausoleil Island, accounting for 77 percent of park lands.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

The Outdoor Recreation designation is applied to limited areas of a national park that are capable of supporting more intensive visitor use and major facilities.

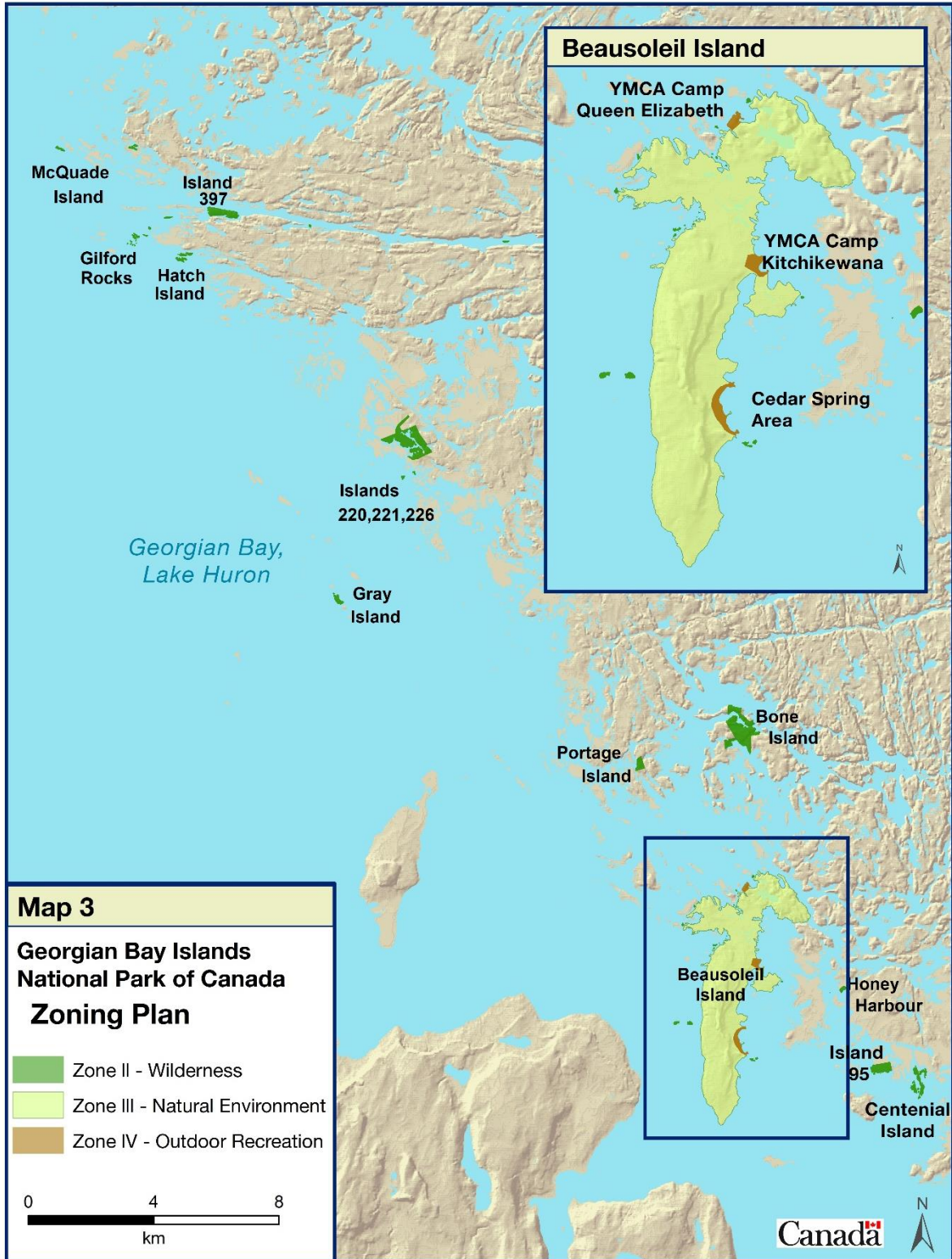
The zone IV areas of Georgian Bay Islands National Park include: the two YMCA camps and the Cedar Spring campground and day use area. These areas make up one percent of park lands.

Nonconforming Use

Use of over-snow vehicles is a popular winter pastime throughout the region. Within the national park, however, the management of snowmobiles continues to be necessary to limit environmental disturbance, and is not supported as a visitor experience.

The vast majority of the snowmobile use occurs on the frozen surface of Georgian Bay; however, people are also known to use trails on Beausoleil Island. As the majority of Beausoleil Island is designated as Natural Environment (Zone III), snowmobile use is not consistent with management objectives for the island. However, in order to prevent the impacts of random access, the park directs use of snowmobiles to one route (along Portage, Rockview and Huron Trails).

Map 3: Georgian Bay Islands National Park Zoning



9.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

All national park management plans are assessed through a strategic environmental assessment to understand the potential for cumulative effects. This understanding contributes to evidence-based decision-making that supports ecological integrity being maintained or restored over the life of the plan. The strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for the management plan for Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Beausoleil National Historic Site considered the potential impacts of climate change, local and regional activities around the park, expected changes to the volume and character of visitation and proposals within the management plan. The SEA assessed the potential impacts on different aspects of the ecosystem, including forest habitat, coastal habitat, herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles), species at risk, colonial water birds and cultural resources.

Georgian Bay Islands National Park is part of the world's largest freshwater archipelago, and at 14 square kilometres, is Canada's smallest national park. The park is a renowned refuge for amphibians and reptiles in the region, and is a core protected area within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve. As an island-based park, Georgian Bay Islands National Park remains sensitive to external factors, such as climate change and water-level fluctuations, and regional habitat changes. The ecological monitoring program has been designed to focus on these sensitivities. The management plan focuses on the park's contribution to maintaining the high biodiversity of the region and the importance of working with local partners in the region and deepening relationships with Indigenous partners, in order to manage cumulative environmental effects. The management plan identifies objectives to understand environmental change in the park and adapt management practices to the evolving environment. Adaptation and resilience to climate change will drive the future design of infrastructure within the park, as well as conservation activities. Beausoleil Island National Historic Site was established since the previous management plan. Its designation as a national historic site and identification of cultural areas that guide management activities will help to mitigate the potential cumulative impacts of park management activities on cultural resources. No further mitigation measures were identified through the SEA in addition to the management plan, existing management action and legislative requirements.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public were provided with opportunities to provide comments on the draft management plan and summary of the draft SEA. Comments were incorporated into the management plan and SEA as appropriate.

The SEA was conducted in accordance with the *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* and facilitated an evaluation of how the management plan contributed to the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*. Individual projects undertaken to implement management plan objectives at the site will be evaluated to determine if an impact assessment is required under the *Impact Assessment Act*, or successor legislation. The management plan supports the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy* goals of Greening Government, Healthy Coasts and Oceans, Sustainably Managed Lands and Forests, Healthy Wildlife Populations, and Connecting Canadians with Nature.