

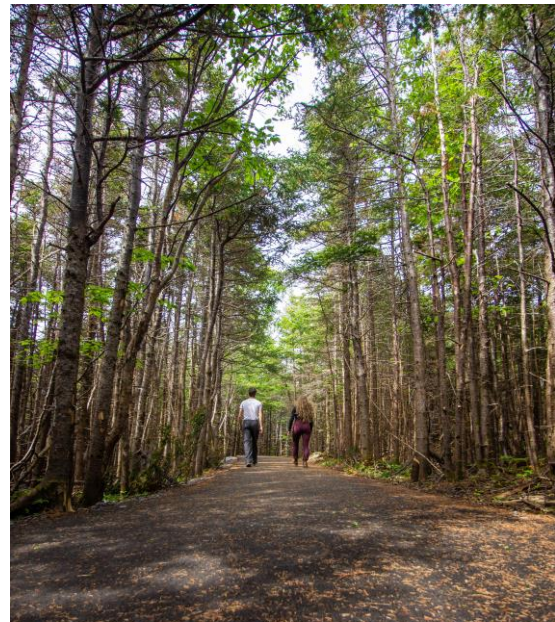
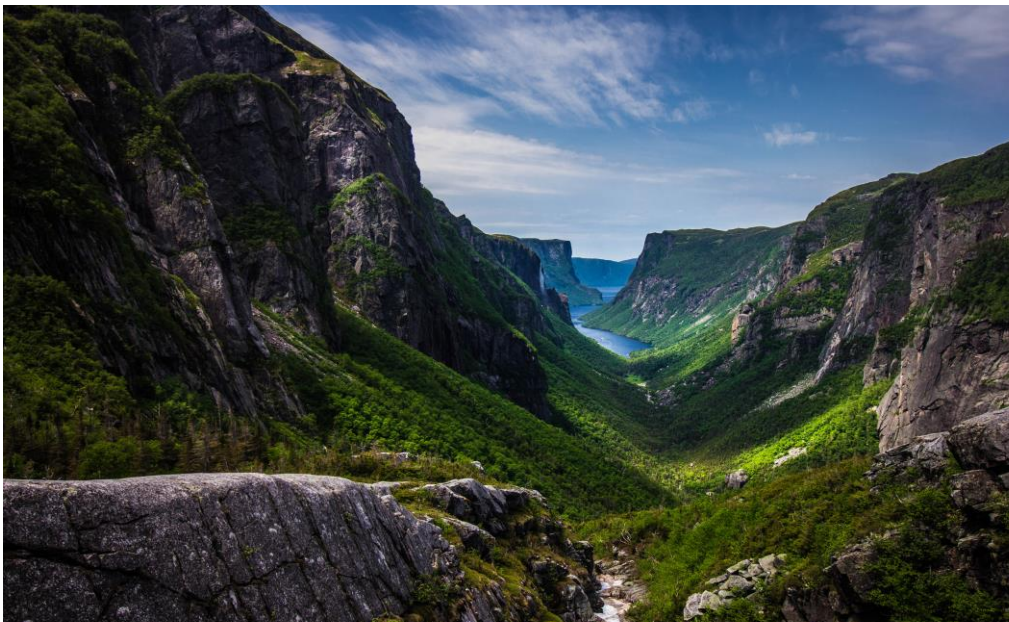


Gros Morne
National Park

What We Heard:

Building a Vision for the Future

**Gros Morne National Park
Management Plan Review
Phase 1 Consultation**



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction.....	3
2.0	Consultation Process	3
3.0	Who We Heard From.....	4
	Table 1. Who We Heard From in Phase I.....	5
4.0	What We Heard.....	5
	Table 2. Responses to Proposed Vision Elements.....	5
	Table 3. Responses to Proposed Opportunities for GMNP.....	6
4.1	Ecological Resilience and Restoration	7
4.2	Growth in Visitation	8
	Figure 1. Proposed visitor management options for GMNP over the next 10 years	9
4.3	Indigenous and Local Community Relations	10
4.4	Sustainable Assets.....	11
4.5	Land Use Management and Resource Extraction Adjacent to the Park.....	12
4.6	Pollution and Waste Management	12
5.0	Next Steps	13
	Figure 2. GMNP Management Planning Process Key Phases.....	13
	Appendix A: Summary of Comments for the Six Key Considerations for Gros Morne National Park Phase I Consultation.	14

1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada Mandate:

To protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.

The *Canada National Parks Act* (2000) requires that Parks Canada prepare and review management plans for each heritage place in its care at least once every 10 years. Management plans are developed through consultation with Indigenous people, partners, stakeholders and the public, and are intended to serve as the key accountability document to Parliament and to Canadians for Parks Canada management decision-making.

Parks Canada began working on a new management plan for Gros Morne National Park (GMNP) in 2017, starting with a State of the Park Assessment (SOPA) which described the current state of ecological integrity, cultural resources, external relations, Indigenous relations, visitor experience and built assets. Based on the results of the SOPA and a review of the 2009 Management Plan for GMNP, five key considerations for the future of GMNP were identified and summarized in a document titled, “*Gros Morne National Park Management Plan Review Discussion Paper: Building a Vision for the Future*”¹. The Discussion Paper included proposed vision elements for the future of GMNP and summarized the opportunities for each of the following key considerations: Ecological Resilience and Restoration, Growth in Visitation, Indigenous Relations, Sustainable Assets, and Land Use Management and Resource Extraction Adjacent to the park. The Discussion Paper was shared with Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public as a starting point for management plan consultations.

2.0 Consultation Process

In order to facilitate meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development of the draft management plan for GMNP, a two-phase engagement plan was developed that utilized in-person and online approaches to solicit input.

Between August 2018 and February 2019, the first phase of consultation was conducted to inform and engage in discussions about the future of GMNP with local, regional and national audiences. During Phase I, the Discussion Paper was posted online along with a comment card to gather feedback on the proposed vision and potential opportunities for

¹ Discussion Paper: Planning for the Future <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nl/grosmorne/info/plan/discussion>

GMNP over the next 5-10 years. Participants were asked to rank each vision element and proposed opportunities on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). They were also given an opportunity to share their own vision for the park, ask questions and make suggestions by responding to open ended questions.

In addition to the online comment card, a series of in-person sessions were held with Qalipu and Miawpukek First Nations, partners, stakeholders, local residents, youth and the general public. These sessions followed a similar format, starting with a presentation on management planning, followed by an opportunity for participants to complete the comment card survey and ending with small facilitated group discussions. A number of pop-up sessions were also held at Memorial University of Newfoundland – St. John’s Campus and the Corner Brook Plaza Mall where Parks Canada staff provided information on the GMNP management plan, responded to questions, gathered input, and made tablets available to access the online comment card.

In December 2018, Parks Canada hosted a 1.5-day Area Management Workshop led by an external facilitator with 25 partners and stakeholders to help define the future management approach for two iconic areas of GMNP, Western Brook Pond watershed and the Tablelands - Trout River Pond area.

Phase II consultations will occur in spring 2019 and will provide an opportunity to review and comment on a draft management plan that has been developed using input gathered during Phase I consultations.

3.0 Who We Heard From

During Phase I consultations, Parks Canada met with Indigenous partners, Gros Morne Cooperative Association, multiple stakeholders, university and high school students, local residents and the general public (see table 1). Parks Canada also received 432 comment cards in addition to a number of written submissions. Results from the comment card questions varied depending on the number of participants that completed individual questions. The total number of responses for each question is represented by the n-value. In addition to comment card responses, over 700 comments were recorded during in-person meetings and events, and from written submissions. All of the input received through this process has been carefully analyzed and will be considered in the development of the draft management plan.

Table 1. Who We Heard From in Phase I	Number of Participants
Meetings with key partners and stakeholders	28
Community meetings in Cow Head, Norris Point and Woody Point	82
Engagement sessions (6) at high schools in the communities surrounding GMNP and Corner Brook	167
Engagement session at the Sir Wilfred Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) in Corner Brook	39
Joint Terra Nova National Park and GMNP engagement sessions with Qalipu and Miawpukek First Nations	17
Pop-up info session at the St. John's Campus of MUN	30
Pop-up booth at the Corner Brook Plaza mall	30
Area Management Workshop with invited partners/stakeholders	25
Total participants engaged	418

4.0 What We Heard

Responses to the online comment card and feedback provided at in-person sessions indicated that participants were receptive to the proposed vision elements and five key considerations identified in the Discussion Paper.

Table 2 outlines responses related to proposed vision elements.

Table 2. Responses to Proposed Vision Elements for GMNP Over the Next 10-20 Years.	Somewhat to Very Important
1. Recognized as a leader in natural resource conservation and ecological restoration, well regarded for maintaining ecological integrity by incorporating ecosystem-based principles into decision making (n=424).	93%
2. A place where sustainable communities support the preservation of natural and cultural heritage (n=429).	91%
3. Well known and celebrated for its UNESCO World Heritage Site status (n=390).	85%
4. A place of inspiration, reflection, connection, renewal and transformation for communities and visitors (n=416).	84%
5. A showcase national park, known across Canada and around the world as a "must see" destination due to its outstanding universal values as well as dynamic and innovative visitor experience opportunities (n=427).	70%
6. A place where Indigenous people share and celebrate their knowledge and perspectives (n=432).	67%

Table 3 outlines the responses related to the importance of the proposed opportunities for GMNP. Overall, the responses to the online comment card reflected broad-based support for conservation of the environment and an emphasis on sustainable tourism.

Table 3. Responses to Proposed Opportunities for GMNP.	Somewhat to Very Important
1. Take a leadership role in preventing the loss of the Atlantic salmon run in Trout River (n=404).	92%
2. Better understand and manage cross-boundary species such as caribou and issues such as climate change through research partnerships (n=402).	89%
3. Take a lead role in sustainable tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador by ensuring visitors have exceptional experiences without impairing ecological integrity or cultural heritage values (n=405).	89%
4. Improve collaboration with enclave communities and adjacent land managers to help identify issues and solutions with regard to land use and development adjacent to the park (n=404).	86%
5. Continue efforts to restore forest health by maintaining a sustainable moose population through an annual moose hunt (n=398).	81%
6. Offer volunteers more opportunities to get involved in Gros Morne National Park's ecological conservation and restoration work (n=386).	72%
7. More maintenance and investment in park infrastructure is required to improve visitor satisfaction (n=403).	69%
8. Offer visitors opportunities to experience Indigenous culture (n=400).	65%
9. New investments in outdoor recreational activities like mountain biking, trail running, backcountry skiing and climbing should be considered (n=409).	54%
10. Consider environmentally friendly ways to enable visitors with mobility challenges to experience the Western Brook Pond fjord boat tour, such as a small scale shuttle service (n=378).	50%
11. Hold more special events and festivals to increase visitation in the park and surrounding communities (n=401).	49%
12. Make more opportunities available for entrepreneurs to operate businesses within Gros Morne National Park (n=430).	37%

Written comments and input gathered during in-person meetings indicated support for two additional considerations: local community relations; and pollution and waste management. As a result, six key considerations will inform the 2019 GMNP Draft Management Plan:

1. Ecological Resilience and Restoration
2. Growth in Visitation
3. Sustainable Assets
4. Indigenous and Local Community Relations
5. Land-Use Management and Resource Extraction Adjacent to the Park
6. Pollution and Waste Management

Analysis of the comments pertaining to the six key considerations identified specific topics of interest that have been summarized below. The breakdown of the topics of interest in each key consideration is provided in Appendix A.

4.1 Ecological Resilience and Restoration

Ecological Integrity

The majority of the comments received under the theme of “Ecological Resilience and Restoration” supported conservation as the top priority for GMNP. Participants indicated that there should be no adverse impacts to the natural environment from infrastructure or visitor experience. Some expressed the view that Parks Canada must continue to lead in nature conservation and establish clear goals and standards to maintain or increase the ecological integrity rating of GMNP from “fair to good” to “good to excellent”.

Research and Partnerships

Participants highlighted the importance of scientific research and/or use of traditional knowledge in decision-making. For example, a shared ecosystem database was suggested as a means to strengthen partnerships, improve and standardize research, better evaluate cumulative environmental impacts and enhance educational opportunities. Programs to encourage public participation in gathering data, monitoring sensitive areas and contributing to GMNP’s research and protection efforts were also recommended.

Domestic Timber Harvest

Comments regarding the domestic timber harvest suggested reducing the pressure on harvesting blocks by utilizing alternative strategies to meet the provisions of the Federal-Provincial Agreement such as allowing those with permits to harvest “blow downs” outside of designated wood blocks. There was some interest in revisiting the sunset clause within the Federal-Provincial Agreement for timber harvesting and rabbit snaring as well as a recommendation for a sustainable wood harvesting strategy for land within the watersheds that drain into GMNP.

Ecological Impacts from Snowmobiles

Some participants expressed concerns related to the potential ecological impacts of over snow vehicles on wildlife within GMNP, the primary species of concern being caribou, ptarmigan and Arctic hare. Issues such as noise pollution and carbon emissions were also noted, along with suggestions for effective monitoring. Opportunities to further mitigate the impacts of snowmobiling were suggested, such as involving the snowmobile community in resource conservation monitoring activities and adding additional restrictions on the number of snowmobilers permitted in the park.

Climate Change

Some participants stressed the urgency of working with climate change experts and coastal communities of western Newfoundland to prepare for the potential impacts of climate change. Suggestions included using sustainable products that can withstand extreme weather events, implementing a shoreline protection zone, increasing monitoring and research, and developing a regional strategy.

4.2 Growth in Visitation

Trails

Trails were the most popular topic in relation to visitor experience, with some suggesting GMNP is seen as a world-class hiking destination. Reinvestment into hiking trails was encouraged, with specific recommendations for repairing existing trails that were poorly designed and/or have been neglected (e.g., Snug Harbour and Gros Morne Mountain) and, if it could be done sustainably, expanding the trail system to include more loop options with overnight backcountry camping opportunities (e.g., Crow Gulch). There were also suggestions for trails to support different types of activities such as mountain biking. Other comments concerning trails were related to overall maintenance and can be found under sub-section 4.4 - Sustainable Assets.

Other Experiences

There were diverse ideas and feedback on other experiences that are, or could be, offered in GMNP. Ideas included Indigenous cultural experiences, more science and outdoor recreation programs for youth, wellness retreats (e.g., yoga, meditation, etc.), events and festivals (e.g., centred on food, music, campfire, art, etc.), Instagram meet-ups, and much more.

Interest was also expressed in making GMNP a four-season destination with suggestions for enhanced self-propelled winter activities (snowshoeing, backcountry snowboarding, backcountry skiing, cross-country skiing, ice climbing) throughout the park. Other ideas for an enhanced winter offer included increasing the number of backcountry huts and creation of a winter festival or a winter race for youth.

Several comments related to various aspects of inclusion and accessibility. For example, there was positive feedback on GMNP's Rustic Cabins and efforts to be more welcoming to visitors with sensory and other needs. Other comments indicated there is interest in inclusive experiences for people who are blind (audio guides connected to interpretive

displays), anything that could be adapted to be more accessible for passengers with mobility issues, or offering service in various languages.

Visitor Management

Concerns related to visitor management (i.e., carrying capacity or the number of visitors that can be accommodated before there is an impact on the environment, the asset or the quality of the experience) were raised by some participants. The comment card offered several options for managing growth over the next 10 years. Priorities expressed by survey participants are indicated in Figure 1.

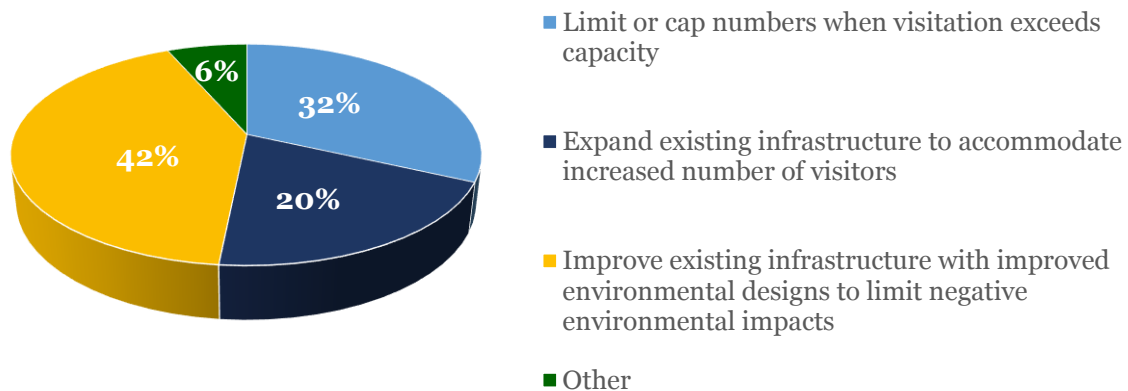


Figure 1. Proposed visitation management options for GMNP over the next 10 years (Survey participants were able to choose more than one option, n = 475).

Overall, participants felt that more research needs to be done to assess visitation to the park as well as the enclave communities. It was suggested that capping snowmobile use and visitation would be appropriate given the ecologically sensitive areas in question, while difficulties in determining carrying capacity were also raised. Several suggestions were offered for limiting visitation in high-use areas, including a permitting or ticketing system, promoting less-used trails, or finding ways to spread out visitation year round rather than its current 6-month concentrated season. Other comments supported better communication with towns on what they need to do to support growth and increased infrastructure within their communities. Some participants also recommended a transportation service throughout the park to reduce carbon emissions, reduce the number of vehicles in the park, and promote green transportation overall.

Economic Benefit and Business Opportunities

Comments submitted under “Growth in Visitation” also highlighted the importance of collaborating with partners and others (including the Gros Morne Co-operating Association, Indigenous partners and local communities) on economic and business opportunities. Interest was expressed in the development of a business strategy that reflects GMNP priorities and values, supports better directional and interpretative signage inside and surrounding the park, works with the province and communities to address labour shortages, and helps communities identify business opportunities related to tourism.

Support was expressed for establishing business licenses during the next management planning cycle to encourage new entrepreneurs to partner with GMNP, and also to ensure quality control, compliance with Parks Canada regulations and policies, and revenue generation as appropriate. A few comments recognized the necessity of revenue for Parks Canada to maintain a world-class national park.

Diverse ideas were shared for marketing and promotion, including: a review of best practices and publications such as the [“Promote Iceland 2013 Strategy”](#) to increase sustainable visitation; marketing incentives for visitors; and the establishment of a “Friends of the Trails” ambassador group. The importance of a user-friendly website and an active social media presence with timely visitor information was also identified.

4.3 Indigenous and Local Community Relations

Consistent and Meaningful Engagement

Comments under this theme were focused on the need for continued collaboration, engagement and increasing the presentation of both Indigenous and traditional Newfoundland culture into GMNP experiences. Partners, stakeholders and the public expressed interest in opportunities to support, protect and present GMNP with Parks Canada. Suggestions included: the need for more opportunities for volunteers to help with ecological monitoring and research; more engagement of user groups in decisions regarding trails, day-use areas and campgrounds; and increased engagement and partnerships with local colleges and universities.

There was interest in the development of a public engagement strategy that would bring together Indigenous peoples, local community residents and youth to be active participants in park operations. Other comments suggested GMNP convene a workshop to facilitate discussion on how communities and Parks Canada could work more collaboratively together.

Indigenous Relations

Many of the comments under “Indigenous and Local Community Relations” related specifically to Indigenous Relations and focused mainly on engagement and collaboration with Qalipu and Miawpukek First Nations.

Indigenous partners demonstrated an interest in continuing to present their history and culture to the public in GMNP and provided recommendations on how to incorporate Indigenous living culture in park programming (e.g., through inclusion of the Mi’kmaq language on signs, in publications, etc.). The idea of a circle of respect as a tool for collaboration was also put forward.

Exchanging knowledge of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and working together to better assess and manage the overall ecological integrity of GMNP was of interest, as was creating an Indigenous Liaison Officer position to ensure that there would be ongoing communication and coordination between Parks Canada and Indigenous

partners. Other potential opportunities were identified, including a GMNP and Mi'kmaq employee exchange program, involving youth in recovery of the Trout River salmon population, continuing to partner on delivery of outdoor education programs at Killdevil Camp and Conference Centre, and involving youth and traditional knowledge holders in GMNP's moose management program.

To support the sharing of Indigenous culture, history and stories, it was suggested that there could be improvements to the Mattie Mitchell trail or creation of a permanent location where traditional Mi'kmaq demonstrations could occur within GMNP, including celebrations with dancers and crafters, and programs such as fire circles. This space could also allow local people and visitors to participate in activities such as canoe, wigwam, and drum building, or to enjoy traditional Indigenous food. Having Indigenous arts and crafts available for sale in Parks Canada facilities was also of interest. These ideas match well with feedback from other participants who expressed interest in learning about Indigenous peoples and their history, stories, relationship with the land, living culture and communities, and understanding how Indigenous culture connects and relates to traditional Newfoundland culture in the region.

4.4 Sustainable Assets

Infrastructure

Most of the comments under “Sustainable Assets” related to overall maintenance of current infrastructure including GMNP's parking lots, roads, bridges, wharves, directional signage, trail washrooms, and campgrounds. Participants expressed positive feedback on the roads and bridges that have been recapitalized in GMNP. There was also support for adopting a high environmental standard for any future development within GMNP, improvement of existing infrastructure with more sustainable or climate-resilient designs, and redevelopment of areas that are already disturbed as long as the footprint does not increase. Others wanted to see the addition of bike lanes and green technology, such as solar/wind power generation and electric charging stations for cars. Accessible, environmentally friendly, and well maintained washrooms at trailheads, campgrounds, in the backcountry, and at scenic lookouts were recommended. Some also advocated for the ongoing maintenance of campgrounds, including reinvestment in cooking areas, playgrounds and washroom facilities.

Trail Maintenance

Feedback indicated that participants would like to see future investments focus more on trails. Comments included concerns about a lack of general maintenance, insufficient numbers of washrooms on trails, and interest in providing feedback on the creation of new trail infrastructure. Participants also highlighted the need for timely trail maintenance to reduce safety concerns, mitigate trail braiding, address flooding and erosion, improve infrastructure, and reduce negative impacts on visitor experience.

4.5 Land Use Management and Resource Extraction Adjacent to the Park

Snowmobiling

Tourism operators in the region identified snowmobiling as a high-interest experience for visitors to western Newfoundland and thought improved snowmobile offers and promotion were vital to increasing winter tourism to the region. Local community residents indicated that they feel snowmobiling is an important part of Newfoundland culture and is the preferred transportation used to hunt moose and harvest wood in the winter. Ideas to better manage this activity included limiting entry and exit points, offering guided trips only, and implementing a sign-in system for those entering the park in order to enforce daily limits. Suggestions were also made to work with communities bordering the park (such as Wiltondale, Bonne Bay Pond, Deer Lake and Cormack) to help with monitoring the activity in the backcountry.

Resource Extraction

Several participants expressed interest in improving the quality of access roads and monitoring fish staging areas to support traditional use. Others indicated that Parks Canada should be actively participating in discussions on issues that extend beyond the boundaries of the park including coastal development, timber and mining proposals, slope remediation, water contamination issues, and oil and gas exploration.

Land Use Management

Within the comments on “Land-Use Management and Resource Extraction Adjacent to the Park”, there was support for the idea of a buffer zone or a “zone of cooperation” around GMNP. It was suggested that the park collaborate with interested local, national and international organisations, all levels of government, Indigenous groups, community stakeholders, and non-government organisations to protect the land, intertidal and marine environments adjacent to the park from commercial and industrial development that could threaten the ecological integrity of the park. Recommendations were made to increase ecosystem monitoring to reflect the entirety of the park landscape, with increased emphasis on marine and coastal systems, wetlands, freshwater oligotrophic water bodies, and barrens.

4.6 Pollution and Waste Management

The theme of “Pollution and Waste Management” was of importance to some youth and a small group of general public participants. Recommendations included offering recycling options at campgrounds and trail heads, and increasing signage to educate visitors about the effects of littering. Further suggestions included working with the enclave communities to develop a waste management strategy to promote sustainable, green communities and tourism operations.

Reduction of carbon emissions and light and noise pollution were also of interest to some participants, particularly when modernizing park experiences and encouraging business operators within the park to do the same.

5.0 Next Steps

Based on the input received during Phase I consultations, a draft management plan will be prepared and made available for public comment during Phase II consultations. A copy of the draft management plan along with instructions on how to provide feedback will be posted online at www.pc.gc.ca/grosmorne in the spring of 2019. Feedback received during Phase II consultations will be reviewed and incorporated before a final management plan is submitted to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. For updates on the management planning process, check back regularly at www.pc.gc.ca/grosmorne, or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GrosMorne, or on twitter @ParksCanadaNL.

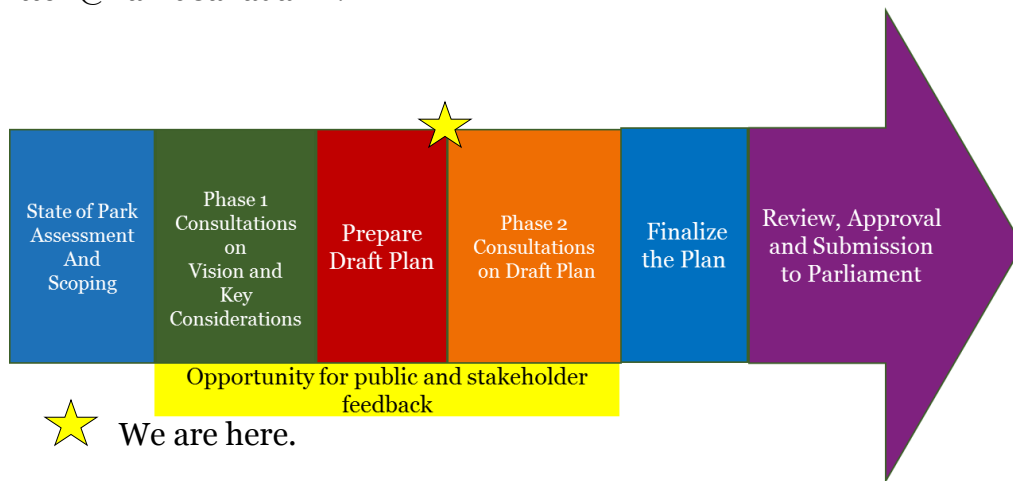
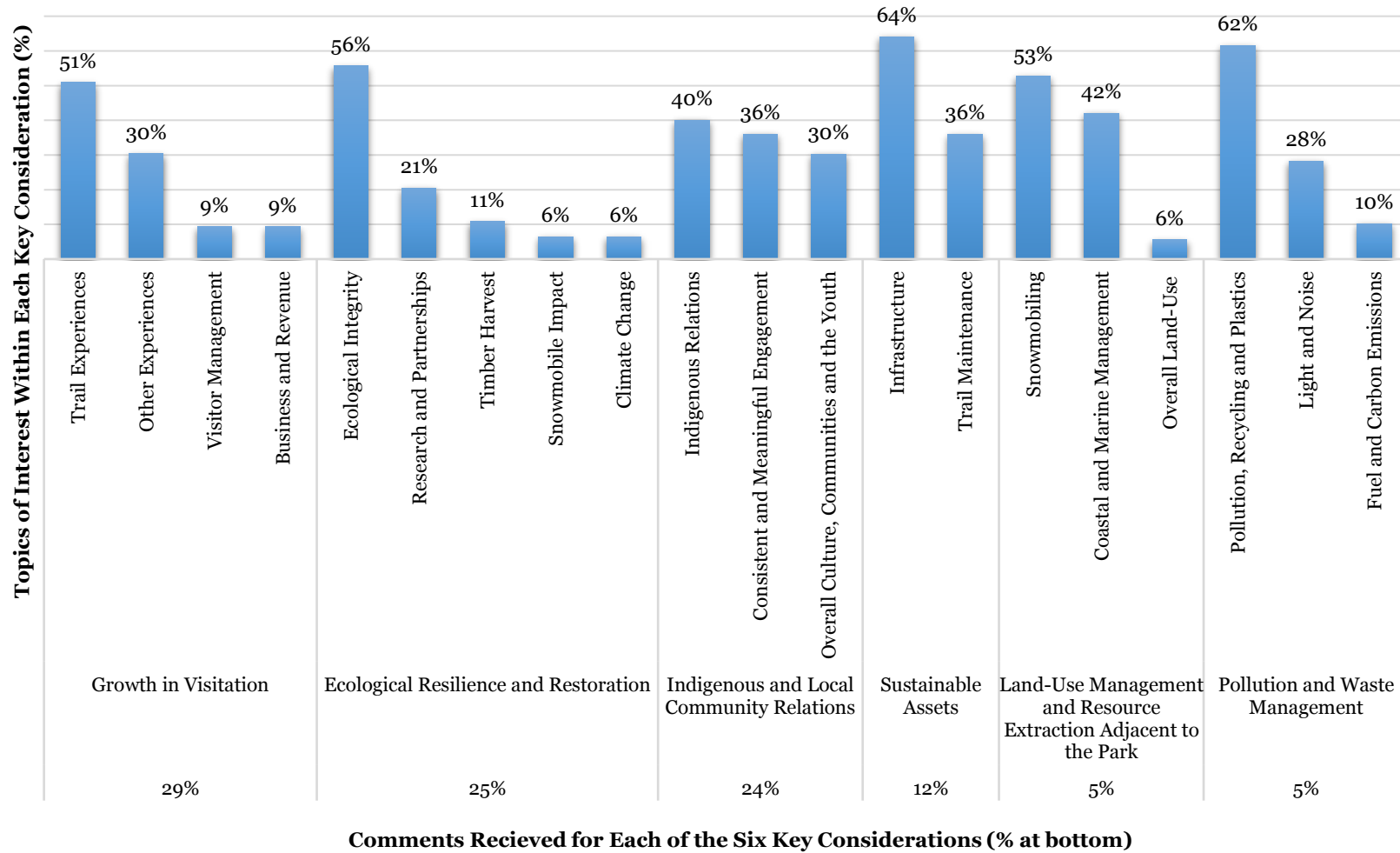


Figure 2. GMNP Management Planning Process Key Phases

Appendix A: Summary of Comments for the Six Key Considerations for Gros Morne National Park Phase I Consultation.²



² n=738 comments received