

2021

# La Mauricie

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

Draft

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented  
by the President & Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada, 2021.

LA MAURICIE NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2021.

*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 La Mauricie National Park of Canada Management Plan. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous 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  
**LA MAURICIE NATIONAL PARK**

702, 5e Rue  
C.P. 160, Succ. Bureau-chef  
Shawinigan (Québec) G9N 6T9

Tel.: 819-538-3232, Fax: 1 866 787-6221  
Email: [pc.information.pc@canada.ca](mailto:pc.information.pc@canada.ca)  
<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/qc/mauricie>

## Executive Summary

La Mauricie National Park is located 15 km northwest of Shawinigan, 45 km north of Trois-Rivières and halfway (180 km) between Quebec City and Montreal. It contributes to the preservation of a natural area representative of the Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. The landscape of the national park is characterized by rolling hills covered by a mosaic of coniferous and deciduous forests, as well as a multitude of lakes, streams and rivers.

The park's territory has been used by First Nations for several thousand years. At the end of the 19th century, several private hunting and fishing clubs were established in the region. Intensive development of commercial logging also took place during this period. About half of the forest area was logged before the park was established in 1970. Logging has significantly altered the regional landscape and the impact on the park's forest, wetland and aquatic ecosystems is still felt today.

The national park was established in 1970 to protect the 536 km<sup>2</sup> area, to initiate a long-term ecosystem restoration process, and to protect and document cultural heritage. Construction of leisure facilities has allowed the general public to discover this exceptional environment and to engage in outdoor activities.

Four key strategies are presented in this management plan to guide national park management over the next ten years.

### **STRATEGY 1: PROTECTING NATURAL HERITAGE AND ACTING TO RESTORE ITS INTEGRITY**

This strategy focuses on protecting the integrity of the park's natural heritage through conservation programs, participatory activities, and initiatives to raise awareness integrated with visitor experience. Parks Canada will work closely with managers of the surrounding lands, local partners and organizations, stakeholders, First Nations and the general public.

The strategy aims to:

- continue ecosystem restoration programs (forests, lakes, wetlands);
- develop and implement a recovery plan for species at risk in consultation with the local community;
- develop tools to measure the impact of climate change and, where possible, adapt management actions to limit the effects;
- implement sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in terms of both operations and visitor experience;
- continue to work with managers of the surrounding lands to collaboratively implement landscape conservation initiatives; and
- continue to educate and engage the public about protecting nature in the national park and strengthen this approach by integrating it fully into the visitor experience program.

### **STRATEGY 2: PROTECTING THE TRACES OF THE PAST THROUGH STORYTELLING**

This strategy emphasizes Parks Canada's commitment to continue its efforts to document the rich history of the park and to share its stories with visitors and the general public. This approach will include collaboration and participation of First Nations, partners, community organizations and the public. The strategy also consists of continued efforts to protect the most significant elements of cultural heritage.

The strategy aims to:

- allow the public to discover and better understand the past of the national park territory;

- work with First Nations to showcase their cultures and traditions;
- in collaboration, pursue historical, archaeological and ethnological research efforts to document the past of the national park territory;
- create an inventory of cultural resources based on current data; and
- continue to protect the most representative elements of the park's cultural heritage.

**STRATEGY 3: A DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCES IN ALL SEASONS, IN A UNIQUE NATURAL AND CULTURAL SETTING**

This strategy consists of improving and diversifying the national park experience according to the needs and expectations of traditional and new national park target audiences such as families, youth, cultural communities and newcomers. This approach will be applied in a manner that is sustainable and consistent with the conservation and environmental protection objectives of the national park.

The strategy aims to:

- improve and diversify visitor experiences in an innovative way in collaboration with partners, local organizations and First Nations;
- structure and promote visitor experience according to level and type of experience to attract a greater diversity of visitors and respond more adequately to their needs;
- better position the winter and fall seasons to attract more visitors during these periods;
- review the spatial distribution of visitors during the summer to enhance the quality of the nature experience;
- increase opportunities and experiences of “active” travel without a car; and
- promote the use and sharing of the parkway in a way that is safe, pleasant and respectful of the natural environment.

**STRATEGY 4: A NATIONAL PARK THAT IS ACCESSIBLE AND WELL INTEGRATED INTO THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY**

This strategy demonstrates the importance of continuing to work closely with the community and continuing to take part in a concerted regional development approach. All parties benefit from the positive outcomes and improved positioning. In order to be regionally and even nationally relevant, the park will also seek to provide experiences to a greater diversity of visitors, regardless of their ability, culture, social status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation or age.

The strategy aims to:

- continue and strengthen cooperation with stakeholders, partners, community organizations and First Nations;
- work with regional actors to diversify activities, events, promotions and conservation efforts;
- strengthen relationships with the public, encourage visitors to act as ambassadors for the national park and foster their attachment to it;
- strengthen relationships with nearby schools to attract more local young people; and
- increase opportunities for accessible and inclusive experiences for all.

Draft

## 1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada administers one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency's 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 park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's 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 *La Mauricie National Park 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 the Agency's mandate.

Indigenous peoples are important partners in the stewardship of heritage places, with connections to the lands and waters since time immemorial. Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of La Mauricie National Park 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 La Mauricie National Park in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting





## 2.0 Significance of La Mauricie National Park

La Mauricie National Park is located 15 km northwest of Shawinigan, 45 km north of Trois-Rivières and halfway (180 km) between Quebec City and Montreal. Created in 1970 and covering 536 km<sup>2</sup>, the park helps preserve a natural area representative of the Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. This area bears the traces of the last ice age. It features rolling hills covered by a mosaic of coniferous and deciduous forests as well as many lakes, streams and rivers.

First Nations have used the park's territory for several millennia. When the Europeans began the fur trade in the region in the mid-1700s, the Atikamekw occupied the entire Saint-Maurice River basin. At the end of the 19th century, several private hunting and fishing clubs were established. These clubs used Indigenous people, particularly the Wabanakiak, as guides because of their skills and knowledge of the land. This period also saw an intensive development of commercial logging. The territory was divided into forest tracts and the lakes and rivers were altered (through dredging, construction of dams and slides, etc.) to transport the wood to the pulp and paper mills. About half of the forest area was logged before the park was established in 1970. Logging has significantly altered the regional landscape and its impact on the park's forest, wetland and aquatic ecosystems is still felt today.

The creation of the national park in 1970 has allowed for the territory to be protected and has initiated a long-term ecosystem restoration process. Parks Canada has also undertaken efforts to conserve and document the park's cultural heritage. A large number of archaeological sites have been discovered and documented and several heritage buildings related to hunting and fishing clubs have been preserved. Construction of leisure facilities has allowed the general public to discover this exceptional environment and to engage in recreational and educational activities while respecting the park's natural and cultural heritage. Also, under the terms of an agreement with the city of Shawinigan, the national park's territory protects the city's drinking water reserve which consists of Lac-à-la-Pêche and its watershed area.

Today, a 63 km long parkway runs through the park from east to west, providing access to lookouts featuring stunning landscape views. Visitors can stay at one of three equipped campgrounds or enjoy more rustic backcountry facilities accessible by foot or canoe. They can also book a stay at the Wabenaki and Andrew heritage lodges. The national park has an extensive network of hiking and biking trails, roads, cross-country ski and snowshoe trails, and canoe routes. It offers a variety of ways to discover this magnificent territory and its lakes, hills and forests throughout the seasons and regardless of the means of transport. The quality of the services offered, the beauty of the landscape and the variety of activities that visitors can engage in, have made the national park the main regional tourist attraction.

Finally, the national park generates direct and indirect spin-offs that benefit the region's economy, whether in terms of visitor spending in local businesses, overnight stays within or outside the bounds of the national park, or job creation.

## 3.0 Planning Context

### Current state and achievements

In 2019, La Mauricie National Park welcomed nearly 200,000 visitors.

Over the past ten years, there has been a steady increase in visits, approaching a 40% increase compared to 2009 (142,000 visitors). This growth can be attributed to better promotion, new experiences being offered (such as camping sites equipped with electricity, oTENTik ready-to-camp tents, etc.) and the current public enthusiasm for nature and outdoor activities. La Mauricie National Park is mainly visited

by adults without children (73%). The majority of the park's visitors come from Canada, particularly Quebec, but the park also welcomes more and more international tourists, most of whom come from Europe. It is open all year round; however, not all areas are accessible at all times. During the summer, visitors can enjoy a multitude of activities: swimming, cycling, canoeing and kayaking, camping, hiking, self-guided interpretive experiences, fishing, etc. In the fall, which is increasingly popular for its splendid colours, visitors mainly take advantage of the hiking trails and the parkway. It's also a great time for canoeing, biking on forest trails and observing wildlife. In winter, the park is known for its quality cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and Nordic walking trails. Depending on the season, there are a variety of accommodation options: rustic canoe camping in the backcountry, four season oTENTik ready-to-camp tents, heritage lodges on the Wabenaki-Andrew estate and serviced or unserviced campsites.

Since 2006, the park has hosted two major events each year: "Défi du parc" (cycling race) at the end of each summer and "Défis nordiques" (winter sports events) in the middle of winter. La Mauricie National Park works with regional stakeholders such as the surrounding municipalities and recreational or environmental organizations. Currently, eight partners are involved in organizing activities or events, maintenance of leisure facilities and visitor safety. The park has also initiated an important rapprochement with the surrounding First Nations, notably the Atikamekw of northern Mauricie and the W8banakiak of central Quebec. Management plan review represents a unique opportunity to strengthen ties with partners, community organizations, Indigenous Nations and stakeholders. This will allow for more active collaboration with them, whether it is to attract more visitors, enhance and diversify visitor experience, or carry out collaborative conservation initiatives. In this context, Parks Canada has held several meetings to reflect on the future of the national park with employees, partners, stakeholders, conservation specialists and the Atikamekw and W8banaki First Nations.

In terms of natural heritage conservation, three indicators of ecological integrity are measured at La Mauricie National Park: the forest ecosystem, the aquatic ecosystem and the wetlands. Since the park has been created, substantial efforts have been made to contribute to long-term stabilization, and even the improvement, of the integrity of the natural environment. For example, as part of ecosystem "conservation and restoration" programs, Parks Canada has implemented major projects in aquatic, wetland and forest environments. Infrastructure upgrades have also reduced the impact on the natural environment.

In recent years, the park has benefited from significant investments (\$75 million). In addition to the conservation and restoration programs, these investments have allowed Parks Canada to undertake major infrastructure upgrades to visitor facilities, including trails, picnic areas, campgrounds and the parkway. They allowed for the addition of new oTENTik ready-to-camp accommodations as well as repairs of service buildings. These investments have also had a positive impact on cultural heritage. In fact, archaeological explorations have made it possible to broaden our knowledge on the First Nation inhabitation of the area as well as the logging period. Work was done on the Wabenaki Lodge, a recognized heritage building, to better protect it. Several projects are still underway and will eventually ensure the quality and sustainability of activities and services offered to visitors as well as the protection of natural and cultural heritage in order for Canadians to enjoy unique experiences at La Mauricie National Park.

### Challenges

Several challenges have affected the development of this management plan, including the following:

- **Natural Heritage Conservation:** Between the 1800s to the 1970s logging had a negative impact—which is still felt today—on the ecological integrity of the national park, particularly on forest ecosystems (tree cutting, fire suppression) and aquatic ecosystems (spring log drives, dams).

The national park is also home to dozens of species at risk, including the eastern wolf, the wood turtle and several species of bats. These species are also influenced by activities outside the park borders. Temporary protection measures have been implemented and a plan for protecting

species at risk is being developed. The latter is the subject of consultations with community partners, First Nations and managers of surrounding lands.

The effects of climate change are expected to impact the ecological integrity of the park through increased recurrence of climatic events, ecosystem changes and the arrival of invasive species.

Finally, because of the size and location of the park, the ecosystems it harbours are closely linked to what happens outside its borders. Consultation and collaboration with the managers of adjacent lands are therefore essential to conserving the park's natural heritage.

- **Renewal and enhancement of visitor experience to meet client needs and expectations and to stand out from similar offerings:** In recent years, visitor experience has been greatly enhanced. Leisure facilities and accommodation infrastructures have been remodelled and new activities have been offered to visitors. Nevertheless, recreation and tourism trends are evolving and visitors are always looking for unique experiences. In addition, the national park has the potential to better position itself to stand out from other similar offerings. It is essential to anticipate the needs and expectations of current and future clients and to develop innovative approaches to meet them. It will be necessary to continue updating and improving visitor experience to allow the national park to better distinguish itself by its positioning and to reinforce its ability to attract visitors.
- **Better communication of park history and Indigenous perspectives:** The national park area has been used by First Nations for many thousands of years. It was also marked by the establishment of hunting and fishing clubs and by logging. Historical and archaeological studies have been conducted, resulting in the collection of a large number of artifacts and the identification of several areas of archaeological significance. Some buildings, used during the hunting and fishing club period, are recognized for their heritage and historical value. However, the available information remains to be articulated and shared with the public. This information will also allow for the effective management of cultural resources according to their heritage value and level of significance. Furthermore, little is known about how Indigenous people lived and used the land, and there is not yet a structured visitor experience, implemented in collaboration with First Nations, to honour their traditions, knowledge and perspectives, and to share them with the public.
- **Integrating the national park into the regional economy, ecology and tourism:** La Mauricie National Park is a key player and a pivotal component of regional development. The park territory and adjacent lands are interdependent and influence one another, particularly at the ecological, recreational and economic levels. Although La Mauricie National Park regularly works together with regional stakeholders, there has been no integrated approach to date focused on harmonizing the park's vision with regional dynamics.

## 4.0 Vision

The vision represents the aspirations for La Mauricie National Park over the next 10 to 15 years. It expresses the desired future and will inspire national park managers as well as its partners and collaborators in their management decisions and management direction. The vision presented below

therefore reflects the expected outcomes resulting from implementation of the management guidelines proposed in this plan:

La Mauricie National Park is the guardian of a splendid, authentic and wild nature. It offers a seemingly endless panorama of hills covered with forests whose colours change with the seasons. A constellation of majestic lakes, streams, waterfalls and rivers completes this landscape and makes it very attractive.

Representative of the Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, the national park's forest, lake and wetland ecosystems have been preserved and are recovering with human support. Biodiversity is vibrant, species at risk are protected and the park as well as the surrounding areas offer them an environment conducive to their recovery and free movement. Environmental protection efforts are reinforced by the adoption of clean technologies and sustainable practices, both in operations and in visitor experience programs.

The national park is a place to recharge and connect with nature. Aware of the value of the exceptional natural spaces that surround them, visitors engage in activities in a manner that is consciously respectful of the environment. Parks Canada and community initiatives to restore and preserve ecosystems are an integral part of the visitor experience and are understood and supported by the public. The park is recognized as a model of sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism.

Easily accessible, the national park welcomes visitors in all seasons. The quality and diversity of visitor experience attract a varied audience, regardless of their familiarity or interest in outdoor activities. In addition, each area of the park offers a different vibe that satisfies even the most varied tastes and interests, making the park an idyllic place where every visitor can have a unique experience.

The park is the scene of several thousand years of human occupation and bears witness to a past that is filled with history. Each period has left its mark, from use of the land by First Nations, through logging and hunting and fishing clubs, to the more recent period before the creation of the national park. The traces of these adventures can be found at the bend of a path, deep in the forest or on the banks of lakes and rivers. The most important ones are accessible to visitors, showcased and protected. The diversity of perspectives and stories reinforces the uniqueness of this territory. As a place of dissemination and collaboration, the national park allows First Nations to perpetuate their cultures, their knowledge and their values as they relate to the territory, and to share them with visitors. It is also a place where the Mauricie cultural community can express itself and where local traditions, past and present, can be showcased. In this way, the park raises the regional profile and allows visitors to discover its rich living heritage.

A recognized regional player and partner in terms of tourism, conservation, economy and culture, La Mauricie National Park works with communities, First Nations, partners, local organizations and the general public. Concerted actions generate positive spin-offs for all and strengthen the region's reputation and allure.

La Mauricie National Park charms with its authenticity and beauty of its wilderness, its history and its traditions. Inspirational experiences and memories that can be created here lead to a strong sense of attachment and enthusiasm among visitors, partners, community organizations, First Nations, employees, the general public and local residents.

## 5.0 Key Strategies

La Mauricie National Park management plan includes four key strategies. These describe the major approaches that will guide park management over the next ten years in order to achieve the desired

vision in the longer term. Each of these key strategies has more specific objectives and associated targets to measure progress in future years. The approaches set out in this section take into account La Mauricie National Park's capacity and resources. Certain undertakings may, however, require additional funding in the future or may rely on partnership agreements with external associates.

### **KEY STRATEGY 1: PROTECTING NATURAL HERITAGE AND ACTING TO RESTORE ITS INTEGRITY**

Although renowned for the beauty of its landscapes and its biodiversity, La Mauricie National Park still endures the effects of intensive land use in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is therefore necessary to continue the efforts already undertaken and to equip ourselves to meet future challenges where possible.

As part of this strategy, Parks Canada wishes to continue to implement ecosystem conservation and restoration programs in order to support nature's long-term recovery process. Parks Canada also intends to work collaboratively to implement a recovery plan for species at risk that find a privileged space where they can live and circulate freely either within the park territory or on certain adjacent protected lands.

In the coming years, environmental pressures related to climate change will increase. Parks Canada will monitor and evaluate the impact of these changes in order to make informed management decisions. This approach will aim, where possible, to implement adaptive measures in order to protect the national park territory in a sustainable manner.

Moreover, since nature knows no borders, the ecological balance of the national park is intimately linked to the management of adjacent lands. As such, Parks Canada is committed to working with territorial managers, local stakeholders, First Nations and the public to better address ecological connectivity and to coordinate landscape activities.

Finally, it is important to Parks Canada that the public and visitors understand the value of La Mauricie National Park's natural heritage and that they support efforts to maintain a balance between natural resource conservation and visitor experience. It is crucial that visitors behave in an environmentally responsible manner, whether on the parkway, in the more developed areas of the park or in the natural environment. As such, the proposed activities must always take into account the value of ecosystems and must promote protecting them in a sustainable manner. Parks Canada intends to continue its efforts to engage and educate visitors and the general public about conservation through participatory and self-guided interpretive experiences as well as communication approaches. To be effective, these will be based on the needs and preferences of target audiences and will form an integral part of the visitor experience and external communications.

**Objective 1.1:** Forests continue to regenerate, lakes and wetlands are healthy.

Targets:

- Forest, freshwater and wetland ecosystem indicators remain stable or improve from one park assessment to the next through the implementation of conservation and restoration projects as well as suitable management practices.
- By 2024, a fire risk management strategy has been developed and implemented.
- By 2030, the process of forest regeneration will advance, in particular through the pursuit of prescribed fire programs.
- By 2030, the water regime of seven lakes is restored through the removal of dredge structures on the shoreline.

- By 2030, the brook trout population is re-established in three lakes and they will be free to pass between them.
- Parks Canada continues to implement actions to protect and maintain water quality of Lac-à-la-Pêche, which represents the city of Shawinigan's drinking water supply.

**Objective 1.2:** Species at risk recover.

Targets:

- By 2023, an action plan for species at risk is implemented in collaboration with the community, First Nations and the public.
- By 2025, more than 50% of the recovery measures in the action plan for species at risk are complete.

**Objective 1.3:** Parks Canada's management practices aim to limit the effects of climate change on the natural environment and the park's infrastructure.

Targets:

- By 2025, an assessment of the park's vulnerability to climate change is conducted and adaptive measures will be implemented where possible.
- By 2025, a program to prevent, monitor and control invasive species is implemented.
- By 2030, Parks Canada continues to take steps towards greening and optimizing operations and assets.
- On an ongoing basis, Parks Canada ensures that facilities and visitor experiences are sustainable and consistent with the park's conservation objectives.

**Objective 1.4:** Protection of the natural environment at the landscape level is maintained or enhanced through collaborative approaches beyond national park boundaries.

Target:

- Starting in 2023, landscape-level conservation initiatives that promote ecological connectivity are implemented in collaboration with the community, First Nations and the public.

**Objective 1.5:** The public is aware of and supports Parks Canada's conservation efforts.

Targets:

- Beginning in 2022, visitor experience and communication approaches educate and engage the public and visitors regarding the preservation or restoration of ecological integrity.
- Beginning in 2022, visitors are engaged in conservation initiatives through participatory experiences delivered by Parks Canada or in collaboration with partners, First Nations or community organizations.
- On an ongoing basis, Parks Canada integrates initiatives to raise awareness into its visitor experience program to encourage ethical and responsible behaviour in the wilderness.
- The number of visitors who feel they have gained knowledge about natural heritage shows an upward trend in future visitor surveys.

**KEY STRATEGY 2: PROTECTING THE TRACES OF THE PAST AND SHARING STORIES**

Land use in La Mauricie National Park has spanned several millennia. Its past is rich and marked by the great diversity of populations that have evolved there.

This strategy aims to better tell the public about the park's past and to present the diverse perspectives of those who have shaped it. To this end, Parks Canada will continue its collaborative efforts to research the park's archaeological, historical or even ethnological past.

This strategy also aims to clarify which cultural resources (whether landscape, archaeological, constructed, tangible or intangible) best represent the importance of the territory to the people who have inhabited it, and to share their value and protect them. Consequently, Parks Canada will update the cultural resource inventories and will also implement, in accordance with its budgetary capacity, actions meant to showcase and protect the cultural resources that best represent the heritage significance of these sites.

Finally, the forests, hills, lakes, rivers as well as the flora and fauna of the national park, have influenced the cultures and traditions of the people who have inhabited it. Some are still thriving today. The fact that the park attracts a large number of visitors makes it a potential outreach platform. As part of this strategy, Parks Canada will work with First Nations to enable them to honour and share their past and present cultural traditions as well as their knowledge and values with visitors. In addition, in the course of managing La Mauricie National Park, the Agency will take into account how important the territory is for First Nations. Parks Canada will also work with partners in the regional cultural and tourism community to promote and showcase the cultures and traditions of the Mauricie region to the public.

**Objective 2.1:** The park's past and its stories are shared with the public, who discover and understand their significance.

Targets:

- By 2024, the public has access to a wide variety of visitor experiences to explore and discover the park's past as well as the different perspectives related to it.
- Every year visitor experiences or events highlighting regional culture and traditions are offered in collaboration with the regional cultural and tourism community.

**Objective 2.2:** Indigenous cultures and perspectives are honoured, communicated and integrated into the visitor experience in collaboration with First Nations.

Targets:

- By 2022, the national park is a place where the knowledge, skills and traditions of the First Nations associated with the park are shared.
- Starting in 2023, initiatives to honour and showcase Indigenous cultures, knowledge and values are featured in collaboration with First Nations.
- Parks Canada facilitates economic opportunities for First Nations, such as those related to Indigenous tourism.

**Objective 2.3:** The cultural resources that best convey the heritage significance of the territory, whether landscape, archaeological, constructed, tangible or intangible, are known, evaluated and protected.

Targets:

- By 2023, the inventory and evaluation of the park's cultural resources is updated based on new information.
- The cultural resources that best convey the territory's heritage significance are protected on an ongoing basis as resources permit, and their value is shared with the public and visitors.

### **KEY STRATEGY 3: A DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCES IN ALL SEASONS, IN A UNIQUE NATURAL AND CULTURAL SETTING**

Due to its geographical location, La Mauricie National Park represents an ideal and quick access point to deep-rooted nature with breathtaking landscapes. It offers the public a multitude of opportunities for discovery. The wide range of leisure facilities can accommodate a variety of visitors, regardless of their abilities and activities they wish to engage in. Whatever the length of your stay in the wilderness, it will enhance your physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

The approach proposed below is intended to better meet the varied needs of national park visitors, whether by retaining traditional park clientele or attracting new target audiences such as families, youth and cultural communities. Its implementation will be based on the park's existing infrastructure. Parks Canada will ensure that facilities required for the operation of the national park are maintained in good condition and, where necessary, are upgraded if they do not adequately meet operational requirements, visitor needs, or park greening and sustainability objectives. New infrastructure could be added should new visitor needs emerge or future operational issues arise. This will be done within Parks Canada's budgetary capacity, with due regard for environmental preservation and with a preference for choices that promote energy efficiency, greening and sustainability.

This strategy aims first and foremost to enhance and diversify the visitor experience in an innovative manner. The proposed approach will be based on the needs of current and future target audiences and may involve interpretation, outdoor activities and accommodation, as well as cultural activities. Adding extra activities besides what is already offered at the park, and enticing young people in particular, will help attract and retain families. Visitor experiences will be structured and better promoted according to experience type and level, but also according to the different vibes found in the park.

The national park should be positioned to enable it to stand out from similar offers. This positioning will capitalize on the territory's natural assets and on the renewed and enhanced visitor experience. Parks Canada will need the collaboration and involvement of partners, community organizations and First Nations to supplement and expand the range of visitor opportunities. This collaborative approach will be consistent with the capacity and mandate of Parks Canada.

In addition, this strategy aims to promote a better geographical and seasonal distribution of the activities being offered. Its implementation will make it possible to better manage visits during the summer period by proposing and promoting activities that encourage visits to areas that were previously less frequented but are just as interesting. This will relieve pressure on the most frequented areas and will enhance the quality of the customer experience, the sense of connection to nature and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. In the fall and winter, the park's attendance is below its potential. The range of activities will be improved, optimized and better promoted in order to attract more visitors during these seasons.

This strategy will also aim to develop and better promote opportunities for visiting the park and getting around it without a car, as well as to strengthen opportunities for discovery using active transportation (on foot, by bicycle, on skis, even by canoe). Indeed, the park is already considered to attract this type of activity. Its location near several tourist routes (Route Verte, Sentier National, Saint-Maurice River canoe corridor) would facilitate its integration into existing networks. In addition, it would not be necessary to undertake any major development given the recently completed work on the parkway and the trail network, which was done in response to user needs. Parks Canada would therefore work to structure the activities being offered to better accommodate visitors using active transportation. It will be necessary to

work together with potential partners to develop public transport options from the surrounding urban centres, but also within the park.

Finally, because it meanders through such beautiful landscapes, it has quality surface and a winding outline, the parkway is, in itself, an attraction for visitors travelling in motor vehicles. This can sometimes cause problems for wildlife, such as collisions with animals, noise pollution and even accidents due to excessive speed. Parks Canada will therefore work to raise awareness among the various road users and will put in place measures to promote the safe use and sharing of this infrastructure, in keeping with Parks Canada's vision and mandate.

**Objective 3.1:** Visitor experience is improved and diversified in collaboration with partners, community organizations and First Nations. It better corresponds to the expectations of visitors and target groups.

Targets:

- By 2022, the presentation program is updated to better meet the needs of contemporary target audiences.
- Beginning in 2023, visitor experiences are enhanced to provide more opportunities for visitors to enjoy the national park.
- By 2024, the possibilities offered through the use of new technologies are an integral part of the visitor experience.

**Objective 3.2:** The national park develops and communicates a positioning related to nature, culture and outdoor activities.

Targets:

- By 2022, visitor experience is structured according to age and level of experience as well as the variety of interests exhibited by the park's traditional and target audiences.
- By 2023, areas and activities representative of the park's atmosphere and experiences are identified and communicated by Parks Canada.
- By 2024, Parks Canada develops and implements an approach to promote a stronger positioning of La Mauricie National Park.

**Objective 3.3:** Priority infrastructure is of good quality, adapted to visitor needs and is maintained in good condition.

Targets:

- By 2022, Parks Canada develops a strategic asset management plan that includes an assessment and prioritization of services and related infrastructure based on visitor needs and operational and safety requirements.
- By 2023, the condition of priority infrastructure related to service provision is maintained or improved.

**Objective 3.4:** Car-free opportunities for discovery using active transportation are enhanced and better promoted.

Targets :

- By 2021, Parks Canada works with stakeholders, community organizations and partners to explore the possibility of developing public transport options to allow visitors to access and move around the park.
- By 2023, opportunities to discover the park using active transportation are enhanced, better structured and promoted.
- By 2023, an awareness program for safe and respectful use of the parkway is implemented and leads to a downward trend in the number of incidents.

- The needs and expectations of non-motorized visitors are taken into account in the planning and implementation of services.

**Objective 3.5:** Visits continue to increase while a balance is maintained between nature preservation and quality of the visitor experience.

Targets:

- By 2022, tools for measuring attendance are implemented at various locations in the park, allowing for better evaluation and adaptation of services required in each sector.
- By 2023, attendance increases by 10% in the fall and winter compared 2018-2019 base year (28,800 visitors from October to March).
- By 2024, summer visits to the park are more suitably distributed in terms of geography through the implementation of visitor experiences and the promotion of attractions located in lesser-known and less-trafficked areas of the national park.

#### **KEY STRATEGY 4: A NATIONAL PARK THAT IS ACCESSIBLE AND WELL INTEGRATED INTO THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY**

The national park is a protected area, but also a major tourist attraction in the heart of the Mauricie region. The territory managed by Parks Canada and the adjacent lands are interdependent and influence each other in terms of economy, ecology and recreation. The park contributes to regional prosperity and sustainability, but it also needs community support and commitment to carry out its mission and remain relevant to Canadians.

This strategy aims to strengthen the integration of the park with regional development, regional tourism, conservation and land use planning. Parks Canada wishes to continue its efforts to work with regional actors, the tourism community and First Nations to create more opportunities for collaboration and to generate mutual benefits in terms of conservation, activities, outreach and promotion.

The strategy also aims to strengthen the sense of attachment to the park and its mandate on the part of visitors, local organizations, and the community. In this way, Parks Canada will facilitate and encourage the participation of the public and community organizations by strengthening the volunteer base. This is essential to the operation and visitor experience, and allows for close ties with the local and regional community. As well, the national park will strengthen its presence in a variety of traditional and digital media, thereby increasing its outreach, including to members of the public who cannot visit in person.

Finally, Parks Canada will continue its efforts to make the park more accessible and inclusive to allow a greater diversity of visitors to experience and enjoy the park, regardless of their ability, culture, social status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation or age.

**Objective 4.1:** Parks Canada works together in synergy with the community.

Targets:

- By 2022, the national park works together with local and regional tourism partners to implement options beneficial for all parties.
- Parks Canada is continuing its collaborative approach by holding regular meetings with community representatives.
- On an ongoing basis, Parks Canada and tourism organizations work together to promote the destination and La Mauricie National Park.

**Objective 4.2:** Connections with the public are strengthened to foster a sense of attachment and to expand the network of community ambassadors for La Mauricie National Park.

Targets:

- By 2024, volunteer opportunities are consolidated to better meet the park's management needs while providing a positive and rewarding experience for volunteers.
- The national park works with regional educational institutions every year to create initiatives that foster the attachment of local youth.
- The park makes full use of digital and traditional platforms on an ongoing basis to enhance its outreach and strengthen public attachment.

**Objective 4.3:** Parks Canada works with local businesses to expand and diversify visitor experience and services offered within and outside the park.

Target:

- By 2022, a business licensing program that creates a fair and equitable business environment, sets standards for visitor experience and public safety, and promotes sustainable practices, is implemented.

**Objective 4.4:** The national park becomes more accessible and inclusive to allow a greater diversity of visitors to experience and enjoy it.

Targets:

- Beginning in 2022, introductory outdoor activities are offered to help the novice public discover and appreciate the nature experience.
- By 2023, where possible, facilities are upgraded to make them more welcoming to all.
- By 2023, new activities complementary to traditional park activities are developed to increase the park's appeal to families.
- From 2023 onwards, in consultation with specialized agencies, a number of visitor experiences and facilities are made accessible and promoted among people living with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities.
- By 2024, the fee range system for activities offered in the park allows everyone to have access to experiences in line with their financial situation.

## 6.0 Zoning

The Parks Canada Agency national park zoning system is an integrated method of classifying land and water within a national park. It identifies locations where specific activities can be carried out on land and water, based on the ability to support them. The zoning system is divided into five categories:

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

All of these categories apply to La Mauricie National Park.

As part of this draft management plan, changes are proposed to existing zoning to reflect the strategic management directions planned for La Mauricie National Park. These are described in a box in each of the corresponding fields described below:

- Zone I: Special Preservation (6.7%)

This zone corresponds to ecological areas or exceptional elements that deserve to be preserved because they contain unique, threatened or endangered species or components, or represent the best examples of a natural or cultural element. Use or access are strictly controlled, if not prohibited. No motorized vehicles or facilities are allowed. Management arrangements are in place for sites located near existing day-use and developed areas.

In La Mauricie National Park, fifteen areas have been identified as special preservation zones:

- Eight of these areas, spread throughout the park, are home to species or plants that are rare or unique in the park and in Quebec, and are of scientific interest.
- The perimeter around Lake Anticagamac, an area representative of the lake and land environment, was selected for its great wealth of fauna and flora. This area is a rich and complex transition zone, threatened by human intervention in the Matawin River system.
- The wall featuring rock paintings south of Lake Wapizagonke, a rare remnant of Quebec Indigenous material culture, has been designated Zone I.

### **Proposed changes**

The purpose of these changes is to increase the protection level of the areas described below that demonstrate a high level of ecological significance:

- Several critical habitats of species at risk discovered as a result of numerous observations in recent years. Two main sectors will be designated: the Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc sector bordering Lake Wapizagonke and the waterways adjacent to this lake; and the sector located on the periphery of the multi-use trail no.3 near Lac-à-la-Pêche. Other smaller sectors are also included, such as the sector linking Dauphinais and Lac des Cinq lakes, as well as the boundary of La Mauricie National Park located to the northwest along the Mattawin River.
- More than 51 islands harbouring fragile ecosystems important for the preservation of waterfowl populations, including the common loon, and rare plant species. Several of these islands also contain archaeological sites or potential archaeological sites associated with Indigenous communities. The islands will be surrounded by 50-metre buffer zones as recommended by the Canadian Wildlife Service and in accordance with good management practices with regards to the presence of migratory birds (Environment Canada, 2014; Parks Canada, 2018).

- All common loon nesting sites. These will also be surrounded by a 50-metre buffer zone as recommended by the Canadian Wildlife Service and in accordance with good management practices with regards to the presence of migratory birds (Environment Canada, 2014; Parks Canada, 2018).
- The watersheds of Français and Bérubé lakes. The goal is to protect the only Arctic char population in La Mauricie National Park. Protecting this Arctic char population is highly dependent on the preservation of water quality and, consequently, the preservation of the waterways throughout the watershed. The designation of this portion of the territory as a special preservation zone will also make it possible to protect certain populations of plants considered rare in the park or in the province of Quebec.
- The Baie Verte sector, a territory rich in rare fauna and flora, but also representative of the territory. This area already has special protection status under section 7 of the *Parks Act* and boat traffic is prohibited there. A 10-metre buffer zone along the perimeter of the bay will also be preserved to ensure the protection of the bay's riparian strip and wetlands, as recommended by the Quebec Ministry of the Environment and Fight against Climate Change.
- All the locations of plant species considered threatened or vulnerable in the park, as designated by the Quebec Ministry of the Environment and Fight against Climate Change, as well as those listed in Schedule 1 of Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. A 30-metre buffer zone around each location will be applied to ensure that the habitat is preserved as recommended by the Department of the Environment and Climate Change.

- Zone II: Wilderness (90.8%)

This zone is a large area that represents the natural components and the park's focal species, and is maintained in a wilderness state to provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy quiet and isolation. Only a few activities requiring the most rudimentary facilities are allowed. Access to these areas by motorized vehicles is prohibited. In La Mauricie Park, this zone covers the largest area. Zone II is made up of sectors that exemplify the natural Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes and that feature opportunities for outdoor activities compatible with the preservation objectives set out for this zone.

- Zone III: Natural Environment (1.5%)

While maintaining a natural atmosphere, this area supports, with minimal changes, the organization of certain outdoor activities and the construction of related facilities. In the context of park management, only non-motorized means of transportation are allowed. Zone III consists primarily of Lake Wapizagonke (south of the parkway) and Lake Édouard, due to their accessibility, high level of use and the nature of the activities permitted there. Zone III also covers the multi-use trail network that connects Lake Édouard, the Wabenaki Lodge and the southern part of Lac-à-la-Pêche to the Rivière-à-la-Pêche campground. This area has been designated Zone III because of a higher number of facilities required for such a network.

**Proposed changes**

The purpose of this change is to make some minor adjustments to reflect how certain areas are used: The areas described below will be added to Zone 3:

- The right-of-way for power transmission lines and other infrastructure related to public services crossing the territory of La Mauricie National Park. A three-metre strip on either side of high-voltage lines and around service infrastructure is affected by this change.

- Zone IV: Outdoor Recreation (1%)

Zone IV is a limited area where a wide range of educational and outdoor activities are concentrated and where the related necessary facilities are located. There are a number of activities and facilities within this zone, but they remain compatible with the natural environment. Motorized vehicles are allowed. In La Mauricie Park, the outdoor recreation zones coincide with the parkway corridor and the main centres of intensive development, which are the two visitor centres at Saint-Jean-des-Piles and Saint-Mathieu, the picnic areas at Bouchard, Édouard, Wapizagonke, Shewenegan and Esker lakes, and the campgrounds at Rivière-à-la-Pêche, Wapizagonke and Mistaganche.

**Proposed changes**

The purpose of this change is to make some minor adjustments to reflect how certain areas are used: The areas described below will be included in Zone 4:

- The parkway right-of-way. A 20-metre strip on either side of the road is affected by this change.
- The day-use and camping areas in the Shewenegan and Rivière-à-la-Pêche picnic area that were omitted from the previous management plan zoning.
- The parking lot and garage located at the Saint-Gérard entrance that were omitted from the previous management plan zoning.

- Zone V: Park Services (<0.01%)

Zone V is a restricted area that allows for the park's administrative and technical services to be carried out. The design and operation of facilities and buildings within this zone is respectful of the natural environment. Motorized vehicles are allowed. At La Mauricie Park, the service zone is comprised of a garage at Rivière-à-la-Pêche, and a machinery storage and fuel supply area used by operations in this sector.

**Proposed changes**

The purpose of this change is to make some minor adjustments to reflect how certain areas are used: The following service infrastructure is added to zone 5:

- Garage at Rivière-à-la-Pêche



## 9.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impact of its management measures on ecosystems and cultural resources. The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plans and Programs Proposals, prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, requires that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) be submitted to the Cabinet or a minister for approval for all policies and plans considered to have a positive or negative environmental impact.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment was conducted for this management plan and the management direction contained therein was adjusted for findings. The following section is a summary of the environmental assessment.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment contained in La Mauricie National Park's management plan considers potential impacts from climate change, local and regional activities surrounding the park, the expected increase in attendance and proposals contained in the management plan. The Strategic Environmental Assessment evaluated the potential impacts on various ecosystem components, in particular forest landscapes, salmonid populations, the hydrological regime and species at risk. The fair state of the ecosystem is largely attributable to logging between 1830 and 1970 before the park's creation. Therefore, forestry activities (cutting, fire suppression) have profoundly marked the entire area by altering the composition, structure and natural processes of the forest ecosystem. The forest landscape could be impacted by additional long-term effects caused by climate change and its secondary consequences such as colonization by invasive species and intensification of uncontrolled forest fires and epidemics. However, to reverse the current trend and improve certain aspects of ecological integrity, ongoing restoration efforts were undertaken, including a prescribed fire program that began in 1990 to help certain species. This program is still ongoing and will continue in the coming years.

The situation regarding salmonid populations historically disturbed by the introduction of many exotic fish species by fish and game clubs (between 1883 and 1970) could be further affected mostly by activities and developments outside the park. Since the watershed extends beyond the park's boundaries, the introduction of invasive species or non-native brook trout species remains possible. Ecological connectivity must be taken into account, and joint landscape-level actions must be carried out to prevent non-native salmonid species stocked in numerous watershed lakes from interacting with genetically unique populations living in allopatry in certain park lakes.

The aquatic ecosystems and wetlands have been greatly affected by logging and log driving beginning in the mid-19th century. Work was performed on lakes, rivers and streams to facilitate log floating. Numerous dams built at lake outlets altered their water flow patterns, resulting in changes to wetland and riparian habitats. To reverse the current trend and improve certain aspects of ecological integrity, ongoing restoration efforts were undertaken, including in 2004, via the "From Log to Canoe" project, an ambitious project to restore dozen of lakes. Under this project, several actions were carried out: the demolition of old dams, the removal of thousands of logs accumulated on lake beds and along the littoral zone and the recovery of genetically unique allopatric populations of brook trout. The rest of this project is still ongoing and expected to continue in the coming years.

La Mauricie National Park's future multi-species action plan will outline the strategic direction for park actions to restore species at risk in the park. The Strategic Environmental Assessment also provides recommendations to mitigate effects arising from increased attendance, park activities and developments outside the park. A new land management tool or the introduction of additional protections that meet current species requirements would circumvent contributing to cumulative unwanted impacts. Furthermore, activities and managerial decisions in adjacent territories around the park have the greatest impact on species with habitats extending beyond the park since hunting, trapping, poaching and alterations to the ecosystem outside the park's boundaries affect these species.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public will be consulted on the draft management plan, which includes a summary of the draft Strategic Environmental Assessment. Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the Strategic Environmental Assessment and management plan, where applicable.

The SEA was conducted in accordance with the Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plans and Programs Proposals (2010) and facilitated the assessment of the management plan's contribution to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Individual projects undertaken to implement the management plan's objectives on the site will be assessed to determine whether an impact assessment is required under the Impact Assessment Act or successor legislation. The management plan supports the goals of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy, i.e., "Connecting Canadians with nature," "Healthy wildlife populations" and "Sustainably managed lands and forests."

Many positive environmental effects are anticipated, and no significant negative environmental effect is expected as a result of the implementation of the La Mauricie National Park management plan.