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Point Pelee

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

2020

DRAFT



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 Point Pelee 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.

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Executive Summary

Point Pelee National Park was established in 1918 to protect nationally and internationally significant natural resources and processes representative of the Carolinian ecozone of the St. Lawrence Lowlands natural region. Though the park was the very first national park established for conservation purposes, it also has a rich cultural history dating back at least 6,000 years and is within the traditional territory of Caldwell First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation.

Point Pelee is the southernmost tip of mainland Canada, in the Municipality of Leamington, Essex County, with Middle Island marking the southernmost point of the country. Point Pelee National Park supports incredible natural diversity, including over 60 species at risk and critical habitat for many of them. The national park attracts tens of thousands of birding enthusiasts each year and is a popular day-use area for visitors to enjoy the sandy beaches of Lake Erie. The park has seen an increasing trend in visitation over the past decade; 390,000 visitors were welcomed in 2019, with the majority coming from Ontario, within 80 kilometres of the national park. Visitation is expected to increase annually over the next 10 years with significant demand during the May to August period. Managing visitor use to ensure that natural and cultural resources are protected and that visitors enjoy a quality experience is a key component of this plan.

A 2018 State of the Park Assessment reconfirms the challenges associated with Point Pelee National Park's small size and isolation from other natural habitats in the region. Of these challenges, the most concerning is that of the effects of erosion along both shorelines of the park. Neighbouring municipalities, stakeholders and partners on the Lake Erie shoreline are also increasingly impacted by the effects of climate change, with more frequent, intense storms, and changing water levels causing significant damage to both land and infrastructure.

This management plan replaces the 2010 management plan, outlining the future vision for Point Pelee National Park within the regional landscape, and highlighting the opportunities and issues that need to be addressed within national park boundaries. Key issues to be addressed in the next ten years include regional collaboration to address landscape scale challenges, further collaboration with Indigenous partners, continued investments in sustainable assets, improving the understanding of cultural resources, improvements in the health of the marsh ecosystem, and addressing specific aspects of visitor experience, like better information prior to arrival. The management priorities for the next ten years are ambitious, focussing on work inside the national park and in the Pelee region, with our partners and stakeholders.

This draft management plan builds on the successful initiatives from 2010 and has been developed through engagement with Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the general public. Feedback is reflected in the proposed vision, key strategies, objectives and targets.

The four key strategies for the 10 year management plan period focus on the following:

Key Strategy 1: Resilience Through Regional Collaboration

Point Pelee National Park is an important refuge for local and migratory species, providing habitat and biodiversity in a landscape that is experiencing significant stress from erosional forces, invasive and hyperabundant species, and limited natural habitat coverage and connectivity. With an accelerated rate of shoreline erosion and the uncertainty associated with climate change, ecosystems, species at risk, cultural resources and park infrastructure are all vulnerable. This strategy responds to the urgency for long term solutions requiring collaborative efforts aimed at landscape connectivity including maintaining existing habitat, restoring biodiversity and working towards a regional network of natural areas.

Key Strategy 2: Adapt, Protect and Promote

The intent of this strategy is to continue to improve the condition of the habitats and species at risk in Point Pelee National Park. Point Pelee National Park will lead by example to identify and implement solutions to reduce, mitigate and adapt to landscape stressors within the mainland park and also on Middle Island. Maintaining a focus on the Lake Erie Sand Spit Savannah and new efforts on improving

marsh habitat will be a priority over the next ten years with sustained efforts on reducing invasive and hyperabundant species and improving ecological diversity through active management in collaboration with partners.

Key Strategy 3: Working with Indigenous Partners

Strengthening the relationship between Point Pelee National Park and Indigenous communities through increased collaboration in all aspects of park management is the focus of this strategy. The extent of engagement in park management will be guided by conversations with Caldwell and Walpole Island First Nations, including collaboration with the First Nations Advisory Circle.

Key Strategy 4: Enhancing Visitor Experience

The intent of this strategy is to maintain the high levels of visitor enjoyment and learning and to enable visitors to connect with the unique natural and cultural heritage of Point Pelee National Park. Overall visitor satisfaction will be maintained with an overnight experience; emphasis on broadening interpretation themes to include Indigenous histories and cultures, arts, science, and climate change; promotion of shoulder and winter season offers; and increased activities and opportunities for visitors.

Point Pelee National Park is within the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, composed of the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. We acknowledge the caregivers of this land and all the moccasins that have travelled it over time.

1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada manages 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 *Point Pelee 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.

Many partners, inclusive of Caldwell First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation, and stakeholders were engaged in the preparation of the draft management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The draft plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Point Pelee 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 on the management of Point Pelee National Park in years to come.

2.0 Significance of Point Pelee National Park

Point Pelee National Park was established in 1918 to protect nationally and internationally significant natural resources and processes representative of the Carolinian ecozone of the St. Lawrence Lowlands natural region. Though the park was the very first national park established for conservation purposes, it also has a rich cultural history dating back at least 6,000 years and is within the traditional territory of Caldwell First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation.

Point Pelee National Park consists of approximately 420 hectares of dry land and 1,070 hectares of freshwater marsh that sits within a ten kilometre long sandspit and marsh complex extending into Lake Erie. Currently Canada's second smallest national park, Point Pelee has been constantly adapting and evolving to protect its rich natural and cultural heritage. Point Pelee continues to be a leader in adaptive management within the national parks system with significant achievements. For example, in 1971, it became the first national park to integrate needs for resource protection and visitor experience by reducing private vehicle access to the fragile Tip area and providing an innovative shuttle service for visitors. A year later, in 1972, Point Pelee became the first national park in Canada to have a park management plan, which placed a renewed focus on conservation. Point Pelee also became the first national park to be designated as a Dark Sky Preserve in 2006.

The national park supports a high diversity of flora and fauna including many species at risk, which is why it is recognized as an important ecological site at the regional, national, and international level. Point Pelee is located at the crossroads of two major North American migratory flyways, providing habitat for more than 390 species of migrating birds. This has led to its international designation as an Important Bird Area, which attracts tens of thousands of birding enthusiasts to the national park every year. In addition, the southern Great Lakes freshwater marsh is recognized as a Wetland of International Significance by the Ramsar¹ Convention of UNESCO². In 1984, Middle Island in Lake Erie was identified as a critical unprotected natural area and designated as a Carolinian Canada Signature Site. In 2000, in partnership with government and non-government groups, this 18.5 hectare island became part of Point Pelee National Park. The island is the southernmost point of Canada and provincially designated as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest due to its unique and rare assemblage of plants and animals.

3.0 Planning Context

Point Pelee National Park is located near the densely populated Greater Toronto Area and the Detroit-Toledo metropolitan area in the United States with over 46 million people living within a 450 kilometre radius of the park (Map 1). More than 4.5 million people live within a one-hour drive of Point Pelee National Park, where people can enjoy the sites and sounds of the Carolinian ecosystem and be introduced to Canada's national park system. The park has seen an increasing trend in visitation over the past decade; 390,000 visitors were welcomed in 2019, with the majority coming from Ontario and within 80 kilometres of the national park. Visitation is expected to increase annually over the next 10 years with significant demand during the May to August period. Managing visitor use to ensure that natural and cultural resources are protected and that visitors enjoy a quality experience is a key component of this plan.

Point Pelee is the southernmost tip of mainland Canada, in the Municipality of Leamington, Essex County (Map 2), with Middle Island marking the southernmost point of the country. The national park is one of the only remaining natural areas in the region and is isolated from other natural areas within Essex County, which contains less than 5% native forest cover and less than 2% wetland cover³. Agriculture, industry and urban development account for a high proportion of the land use in the county. Point Pelee's location on the north shore of Lake Erie, in the western basin, provides an ecologically significant area within the watershed. The western basin of Lake Erie is subject to nutrient loading and there are opportunities to increase wetlands and protected areas within the region to help address sediment, water quality, and contaminant issues.

The national park supports incredible natural diversity, including over 60 species at risk and critical habitat for many of them. Ecosystem-based solutions continue to be key to conserving this diversity through sustained active management, while additional species-specific recovery efforts are undertaken where warranted. Restoration gains made over the last decade of effort, such as the success in the Lake Erie Sand Spit Savannah ecosystem, require ongoing maintenance, while other areas such as the marsh are in poor condition and will require significant attention during the implementation of this management plan. The control of hyperabundant (e.g., deer) and invasive species (e.g., phragmites) is resource intensive, yet is key to restoring and maintaining park ecosystem health and species at risk.

The Point Pelee area is part of the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation and the Walpole Island First Nation. The park and the First Nations work in collaboration on a range of initiatives, including marsh restoration, hyperabundant species management, traditional ceremonies in the park, employment for First Nations youth, and sharing knowledge for cultural conservation. A First Nations Advisory Circle is in place to help support communication and respectfully weave Indigenous perspectives into park management and operations.

¹ The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

² UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

³ County of Essex Official Plan Review: Policy Background Report. November 2012.

A strong network of stakeholders and partners is essential to the ongoing success of Point Pelee National Park. Building on the successful relationships that exist with the Friends of Point Pelee, Advisory Committee of Local Citizens, and First Nations Advisory Circle, staff continue to develop meaningful connections with other government departments at municipal, provincial and federal levels, the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario, tourism industry partners, conservation organisations, academia, and other stakeholders. A volunteer program provides ongoing engagement opportunities both for specific restoration and conservation programs and regular events, such as beach clean ups.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Local Setting



The previous 2010 management plan provided management direction for ecological integrity, Indigenous relations, cultural resource management, visitor experience, outreach and education, and stakeholder and partner relations. Since 2010, Point Pelee National Park has focussed on improving habitat in the park to reflect the natural biodiversity of the Carolinian ecosystems. Populations of species at risk, such as Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus and Five-lined Skink, have increased in areas of active management and habitat restoration, whereas hyper-abundant species have been managed in collaboration with partners to reduce stress on park ecosystems.

Major infrastructure investments have focussed on improved visitor experiences like the renewal and expansion of Camp Henry, which provides year round public overnight accommodations, and enhanced group facilities for outdoor education experiences. The Camp Henry oTENTik village, consisting of 24 sites, is very popular, with high occupancy rates in the summer and shoulder season and increasing use through the winter. Additional park investments included eight kilometres of bike trails; the redevelopment of the Northwest Beach day-use area; upgrades to the visitor centre theatre; replacement of the marsh boardwalk; and several road and parking lot improvements. Collaboration with Indigenous partners has improved through the establishment of a First Nations Advisory Circle and relations with other partners and stakeholders remains a priority.

The Time to Act is Now

A 2018 State of the Park Assessment reconfirms the challenges associated with Point Pelee National Park's small size and isolation from other natural habitats in the region. Of these challenges, the most concerning is that of the effects of erosion along both shorelines of the park.

Erosion is a natural process along the Lake Erie shoreline; however, the rate of shoreline erosion in the Point Pelee region has accelerated in recent decades due to human-made changes in the lake-wide ecosystem, including shoreline hardening, sand depletion, and interference with natural sand movement. Effects of climate change, including recent years of record-breaking high water levels in Lake Erie, have further intensified this erosional force. Climate change induced variations in future lake levels may increase the loss of land at Point Pelee National Park. Studies of aerial photographs have shown that between 1931 and 2017, the area of the park's beaches has decreased by 79% (from 82 to 17 hectares). With a loss of more than 12 hectares of park shoreline in the past decade alone, park ecosystems, species at risk, cultural resources, visitor experience and infrastructure are all at risk. Current projections would see such significant losses that the Tip Exhibit Area could be at risk within the next 50-100 years⁴ (Figure 1).

⁴ A 2018 projection of extent of erosion (Zuzek Inc. 2018) determined the Tip Exhibit Area at risk of erosion within the next 100 years. However, based on the results of a recently completed climate change investigation for Lake Erie, winter ice cover may disappear from the lake by late century. Without the protective ice cover, erosion rates could double at Point Pelee National Park in the future, making the 100-year projection in Figure 1 (marked as 2117) closer to a 50-year estimate of the extent of erosion.



Figure 1 Past, present and estimated future location of the eastern shoreline adjacent to the Tip Exhibit Area (assumes continuous maintenance of west shore armour stone revetment)
Source: Zuzek Inc., 2018

Neighbouring municipalities, stakeholders and partners on the Lake Erie shoreline are also increasingly impacted by the effects of climate change, with more frequent, intense storms, and changing water levels causing significant damage to both land and infrastructure. The northeastern shoreline of the entire Point Pelee landform, including Point Pelee National Park and lands north, is a hotspot of erosion. Lands immediately to the north of the national park are below the elevation of Lake Erie and are protected from flooding by an aging dike system. The threat of a breach in these deteriorating dikes is increasing with higher lake levels, causing potential for serious economic, social and environmental consequences.⁵ It is clear that without concerted, collaborative efforts to develop and implement scale-appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies, key coastal areas along Lake Erie – including Point Pelee National Park itself – will be at significant risk.

This management plan outlines the future vision for Point Pelee National Park within the regional landscape and highlights the opportunities and issues that need to be addressed within national park boundaries. The State of Park Assessment points to key issues to be addressed in the next ten years including further collaboration with Indigenous partners, continued investments in sustainable assets, improving the understanding of cultural resources, improvements in the health of the marsh ecosystem, and addressing specific aspects of visitor experience, like better information prior to arrival. The management priorities for the next ten years are ambitious, focussing on work inside the national park and in the Pelee region, with our partners and stakeholders.

⁵ Synopsis of Point Pelee National Park Erosion and Mitigation Options, Zuzek Inc. (2018)

4.0 Vision

Celebrating over 100 years as a national park, Point Pelee protects and presents the rich diversity of Carolinian plants and animals at the southernmost point of Canada. The next century of park management rests heavily on the ability of Point Pelee to adapt and respond to the significant impacts of climate change, erosion and invasive species. This management plan builds on decades of successful ecosystem management in the park and sets an immediate focus on the urgency of long term landscape-scale collaboration to address issues affecting local communities, residents, land managers and Point Pelee National Park.

The desired future of the park is a resilient, healthy mosaic of habitats that supports sustainable levels of visitation, where Point Pelee National Park:

- supports a shared regional approach to the stewardship and conservation of natural and cultural resources;
- develops and implements projects to understand, mitigate, and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- sustains meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities in park management;
- protects a restored marsh with a resilient and heterogeneous ecosystem that supports a diversity of species at risk and remains a highlight of visitor experience;
- offers diverse, accessible, inclusive outdoor recreation experiences in all seasons; and
- functions as a key element in an ecologically connected landscape.

5.0 Key Strategies

Four key strategies frame the management direction for Point Pelee National Park for the next 10 years. The strategies and corresponding objectives and targets focus on achieving the vision for the park through an integrated approach to park management. Targets have been prioritized with specific dates where feasible. Where no dates have been referenced, the target will be achieved within the period of the plan based on opportunities, annual priorities and financial capacity of the national park. Annual implementation updates will be communicated to partners from Indigenous communities, local communities, stakeholders and the general public.

Key Strategy 1: Resilience Through Regional Collaboration

Point Pelee National Park is an important refuge for local and migratory species, providing habitat and biodiversity in a landscape that is experiencing significant stress from erosional forces, invasive and hyperabundant species, and limited natural habitat coverage and connectivity. With an accelerated rate of shoreline erosion and the uncertainty associated with climate change, ecosystems, species at risk, cultural resources and park infrastructure are all vulnerable. This strategy responds to the urgency for long term solutions requiring collaborative efforts aimed at landscape connectivity including maintaining existing habitat, restoring biodiversity and working towards a regional network of natural areas.

Sharing expertise with Indigenous partners and regional land managers, Point Pelee National Park will work collaboratively to identify solutions to reduce, mitigate and adapt to landscape stressors beyond its boundaries. Point Pelee National Park is a committed partner and supports conservation efforts in the region. The national park can serve as a catalyst and a venue for research on regional land use planning initiatives, increasing knowledge development, data sharing and integration with Caldwell and Walpole Island First Nations, academic institutions and regional partners.

Objective 1.1

Point Pelee National Park contributes expertise and support as an active participant in regional land use planning initiatives, to address priorities like shoreline erosion, impacts of climate change, and a lack of natural area cover.

Targets:

- Sustainable and innovative solutions are developed to address climate change and the regional shoreline erosion issue by 2025.
- Point Pelee National Park contributes to the development of a regional phragmites control strategy, by 2025.
- The Middle Island Conservation Plan is updated by 2026 to focus on the resiliency of unique habitats and species at risk of the Lake Erie Islands to climate change, invasive species and other stressors and also potential opportunities for collaboration with regional partners.
- Point Pelee National Park contributes to the development of nutrient loading and flooding reduction targets in regional ‘watershed health’ collaborations, by 2030.
- The 12% natural cover target⁶ and habitat connectivity initiatives, led by the Essex Region Conservation Authority, are supported by Point Pelee National Park with expertise in species at risk management, ecological restoration, invasive and hyperabundant species management, and monitoring throughout the planning period.

Objective 1.2

A shared approach to the stewardship of natural and cultural resources provides partners and stakeholders with meaningful opportunities to contribute to and influence park management priorities.

Targets:

- Collaborative initiatives with stakeholders and community organizations increase from 2020 levels.
- A formal relationship is established with a stakeholder group composed of young adults and youth by 2025.

Objective 1.3

Point Pelee National Park inspires local citizens in the region to implement stewardship initiatives related to landscape issues such as climate change, erosion and invasive species.

Targets:

- To increase public awareness, a program focused on a landscape related issues is included in the Parks’ rotational feature series schedule, including temporary exhibits, events and interpretive programming.
- At least one interpretive or educational program on stewardship best practices is offered by park staff by 2025.

⁶ “Sustaining the Place for Life, Strategic Plan for 2016-2025.” Essex Region Conservation Authority.

Key Strategy 2: Adapt, Protect and Promote

The intent of this strategy is to continue to improve the condition of the habitats and species at risk in Point Pelee National Park. Point Pelee National Park will lead by example to identify and implement solutions to reduce, mitigate and adapt to landscape stressors within the mainland park and also on Middle Island. Maintaining a focus on the Lake Erie Sand Spit Savannah and new efforts on improving marsh habitat will be a priority over the next ten years with sustained efforts on reducing invasive and hyperabundant species and improving ecological diversity through active management in collaboration with partners. Knowledge from research and monitoring programs, species at risk recovery strategies, and active collaboration with partners will contribute to an adaptive approach to maintain and improve the ecological integrity of the park and promote the protection and recovery of species at risk.

Incorporating green technology into park operations is one way the park can mitigate the impact of climate change and thereby contribute to reducing the climate change footprint at the local and regional level. Promoting the success of conservation initiatives with positive resource conservation stories will increase the awareness and understanding of the unique values and management challenges facing Point Pelee National Park.

Objective 2.1

Forest and coastal ecosystem health are maintained as part of the national park's diverse, resilient habitat mosaic.

Targets:

- An assessment of options for increasing and retaining the volume of sand on the park's shoreline will be completed by 2023, and a pilot project to test one option will be implemented by 2030.
- The coastal indicator is in 'fair' condition with a stable trend in the next State of the Park Assessment, through the continued maintenance of savannah habitats including the use of prescribed fire.
- The forest indicator is maintained in 'good' condition in the next State of the Park Assessment through continued management of the hyperabundant white-tailed deer population.
- Invasive species management strategies are developed by 2021 and implemented to maintain or improve invasive species control measures for coastal and forest ecosystems in the park by 2030.
- The ecological integrity of Middle Island continues to show an improving trend from the 2018 condition in the State of the Park Assessment, as a result of conservation actions including active management of double-crested cormorant nests.

Objective 2.2

Point Pelee's marsh shows an improving trend as a result of collaborative active management.

Targets:

- Sport fishing in the marsh is phased out as a non-conforming use by 2022 and alternative marsh activities and conservation-based volunteer opportunities are offered.
- Wetland interspersion measure improves from 'poor' to 'fair' with 8 hectares of invasive cattails and phragmites removed from the marsh by 2025.

Objective 2.3

Species at risk protection, population and distribution objectives and recovery measures are achieved through the implementation of a Multi Species Action Plan for the national park, and research and monitoring contribute to the management of species of conservation concern.

Targets

- A new Multi-Species Action Plan is developed by 2022 considering interconnectivity, regional stressors and climate change, and including priority recovery actions beyond national park boundaries.
- Population monitoring programs are implemented to help prioritize and inform species at risk recovery efforts, as resources permit.

- The status of the re-introduced Southern Flying Squirrel is assessed bi-annually and research collaborations established to investigate the stressors of population isolation and habitat fragmentation.

Objective 2.4

Climate change mitigation, improved waste management, and increased energy efficiency are addressed through the incorporation of green technologies in national park operations.

Targets:

- Fleet and other motorized vehicle use is reviewed annually, and a replacement strategy includes lower emission alternatives wherever feasible.
- A formal strategy is in place and being implemented by 2024 to reduce the use of single use plastics in the park.
- Visitor use patterns are analysed by 2025 to determine the need for expansion of visitor transportation throughout the park, including, but not limited to, replacing the existing shuttle with a more extensive and energy efficient system.
- Solar energy is used to offset energy use at park administration and maintenance facilities by 2030.
- Net zero emission targets are incorporated into approved day use area and marsh infrastructure renewal projects by 2030.

Objective 2.5

Diverse methods of outreach and promotion extend the reach of Point Pelee National Park, sharing conservation success stories with a broad audience.

Targets:

- Point Pelee’s refreshed website results in longer user stays and multiple page views when compared with 2020 data. .
- Targeted resource conservation messaging is integrated within a full suite of communication initiatives (e.g., web content, media relations, outreach, social media, and feature programs).

Key Strategy 3: Working with Indigenous Partners

Strengthening the relationship between Point Pelee National Park and Indigenous communities through increased collaboration in all aspects of park management is the focus of this strategy. Collaboration in park management will be guided by conversations with Caldwell and Walpole Island First Nations, including ongoing engagement with the First Nations Advisory Circle. Building on successful initiatives like hyperabundant deer management and marsh health, conservation goals will be achieved through knowledge sharing, and Indigenous participation in natural and cultural resource management. Incorporating Indigenous languages and perspectives into visitor experience programming will strengthen the cultural connection to Point Pelee National Park and improve visitors’ learning and understanding of the cultural histories and traditions of Caldwell and Walpole Island First Nations.

Objective 3.1

Indigenous partners and Point Pelee National Park achieve mutual benefits through increased collaboration.

Targets:

- The First Nations Advisory Circle contributes to Point Pelee National Park annual work planning priorities.
- Economic and employment opportunities for Indigenous partners are advanced in collaboration with the First Nations Advisory Circle.
- Relationships with Indigenous partners continue to strengthen over the planning period with increased opportunities for collaboration.

Objective 3.2

Indigenous partners maintain connections to traditionally used lands and waters through park management initiatives.

Targets:

- Collaborative initiatives are developed with Indigenous partners that support traditional connections and/or activities within the park.
- Indigenous partners are engaged in natural and cultural heritage conservation initiatives that are priorities for their communities.
- Indigenous partners continue to participate in deer herd reduction.
- Indigenous partners are engaged with Point Pelee staff in prescribed fire management initiatives, participating in at least one event focused on traditional knowledge and the use of fire.

Objective 3.3

Visitors experience Indigenous cultural history, language and traditions at Point Pelee National Park.

Targets:

- The Anishinaabe language (Anishinaabemowin) is further honoured and integrated into park interpretation with guidance from Caldwell and Walpole Island First Nations.
- Indigenous partners guide the development and integration of Indigenous histories and stories in park programming by 2025.
- The number of visitors who engage in Indigenous related learning experiences increases by 2028, from a baseline established in 2019.

Key Strategy 4: Enhancing Visitor Experience

The intent of this strategy is to maintain the high levels of visitor enjoyment and learning and to enable visitors to connect with the unique natural and cultural heritage of Point Pelee National Park. Overall visitor satisfaction will be maintained with an overnight experience; emphasis on broadening interpretation themes to include Indigenous histories and cultures, arts, science, and climate change; promotion of shoulder and winter season offers; and increased activities and opportunities for visitors. Anticipated visitation increases during the spring and summer months will be examined through a visitor use management approach that considers impacts on natural and cultural resources, quality visitor experience, infrastructure requirements, and costs. Visitor accessibility and inclusivity will be a focus of asset sustainability over the next ten years.

Objective 4.1

A sustainable overall increase in visitation is achieved through targeted shoulder and winter season offers.

Targets:

- The proportion of off-season (November to April) visitation rates are maintained or increase from the 26% baseline in 2019.
- The occupancy rate for Camp Henry increases from 40% to 50% occupancy between September and June by 2029.
- Visitor use management strategies are identified by 2025 to prepare for long term visitation peaks.

Objective 4.2

New and repeat visitors to Point Pelee National Park experience renewed, expanded and evolving visitor offers.

Targets:

- A Visitor Experience Strategy is developed in collaboration with key partners by 2022 to guide experiences until 2030.
- The learning indicator shows an increasing trend in the next State of the Park Assessment.
- The satisfaction indicator improves from 'fair' to 'good' in the next State of the Park Assessment.
- The number of services and activities offered by third party providers increases by 2025.

- The number of youth participating in organized programming in Point Pelee National Park, both day programming and overnight experiences, is maintained at high levels with a minimum of 2000 annually, represented by all school boards in the region.

Objective 4.3

Point Pelee National Park is a venue for regional events, supporting stronger relationships with regional partners.

Targets:

- Park facilities show an increasing trend in demand and use from partners and community groups on an annual basis, from 2020 levels.
- Support and expertise are provided by Point Pelee National Park for at least one regional tourism conference by 2025.

Objective 4.4

Cultural resources are better understood and integrated with visitor experience opportunities.

Targets:

- The inventory of landscape features, archaeological sites, buildings and structures has progressed throughout the planning period, improving the condition of cultural resource indicators in the next State of the Park Assessment.
- The future visitor offer at the DeLaurier Homestead and other cultural resource conservation priorities are identified in the development of a Cultural Resource Values Statement by 2025.

Objective 4.5

Strategic asset management protects natural and cultural heritage and enables visitors to discover and connect with Point Pelee National Park.

Targets:

- A strategic asset management plan is established by 2023.
- New or improved infrastructure, services and programs incorporate accessibility and inclusivity into the design and delivery.
- Visitors report being ‘very satisfied’ with ‘value for entry fee’ in the next State of the Park Assessment.
- Connectivity in the national park (i.e., wifi, phone lines) is improved by 2025.
- Roads and buildings improve to ‘good’ condition in the next State of the Park Assessment.

6.0 Park Zoning

Parks Canada’s national park zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in a national park and designates where particular activities can occur on land or water, based on the ability to support those uses. The zoning system has five categories:

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

Point Pelee National Park contains Zones I, III and IV (Map 3: Zoning Plan).

The zoning plan has been amended from the 2010 management plan to reflect new knowledge and understanding of the capacity of national park ecosystems to sustain use, or reflect the current understanding of the visitor use areas. The percentage area of each zone in the national park is noted below.

Proposed Zoning Amendments:

- Proposed amendments to the 2010 management plan include rezoning of Camp Henry, DeLaurier Homestead and White Pine from Zone III to Zone IV to accommodate increased visitation and supporting infrastructure.
- Theissen's Channel was rezoned from Zone IV to Zone III to reflect the controlled access to this area which supports canoe rentals and provides access for national park safety and maintenance activities.

Zone I: Special Preservation (78% of the park)

Zone I lands require special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened or endangered natural or cultural features, or are among the best examples of the features that represent the natural region the national park represents. Preservation is paramount. Motorized access is not permitted.

Zone I areas include:

Marsh and East Beach Ridge - The marsh at Point Pelee National Park is one of the best and largest remaining examples of Southern Great Lakes marsh. It is included in the zone I designation in its entirety because the whole marsh functions as a single biological unit with interacting elements of hydrology, soil structure, the vegetation community and fauna. The east barrier ridge also interacts with the marsh, defining and maintaining it. The marsh is home to numerous species at risk, including fish (Spotted Gar and Warmouth), reptiles (Blanding's Turtle and Eastern Foxsnake), birds (Least Bittern), molluscs (Eastern Pondmussel) and plants (American Water-willow and Swamp Rose-mallow). In 1987, the entire marsh was recognized as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

Ridge and Trough Swamp Forest - This habitat is representative of shoreline swamp forest of the western basin of Lake Erie, most of which has now been lost. It contains many plant species representative of southern forest elements such as Spicebush, Sycamore and Hackberry. The trees of the Point Pelee's swamp forest are nesting sites for Tree Swallows, wrens, Wood Ducks, woodpeckers, Great Horned Howls and even the endangered Prothonotary Warbler.

Sections along Western Shoreline - These areas contain the best example of the most threatened and rare habitat in the park, the Lake Erie Sand Spit Savannah, found along the back beaches of the shorelines and the higher dry central ridge of the park. Lake Erie Sand Spit Savannah is extremely rare in Canada; there are only a few other places outside of Point Pelee National Park in which they are found. Within these open, sunny areas are excellent examples of sand barrens, meadows, thickets and woodland which support endangered Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus and provide habitat for 25% of Point Pelee's federally-listed species at risk such as the Five-lined Skink, Yellow-breasted Chat and Common Hoptree.

Middle Island - Middle Island was added to Point Pelee National Park in 2000 to protect the island's rare Carolinian ecosystem and the nine species at risk that depend on it (e.g., Red Mulberry and Lake Erie Watersnake). Middle Island is home to nesting colonies of five species of colonial waterbirds and for this reason, it is closed to public access between April 1 and September 30. There are no facilities on the island (e.g., dock or marine, shelter, washrooms, etc).

Zone III: Natural Environment (19% of the park)

Zone III areas are managed as natural environments, and provide opportunities for visitors to experience the national park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities requiring minimal services and facilities of a rustic nature. Any motorized access will be controlled. Zone III areas are focussed mainly adjacent to visitor use facilities along the western shoreline including much of the park trail system.

Proposed Amendment:

Theissen's Channel is included in Zone III to reflect the controlled access to this area which supports canoe rentals and provides access for national park safety and maintenance activities.

Zone IV: Outdoor Recreation (3% of the park)

Zone IV areas are those areas capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the national park's heritage values and related services and facilities in ways that impact the ecological integrity of the national park to the smallest extent possible and whose defining feature is the permitting of motorized vehicles on existing roadways. Zone IV includes Camp Henry, DeLaurier Homestead, White Pine, Blue Heron, Northwest Beach, Marsh Boardwalk, Dunes, Sleepy Hollow, Pioneer, Black Willow Beach, West Beach and Visitor Centre Area and the Tip Shuttle Loop Area. The road from the Visitor Centre area to the Tip will have controlled access at certain times of the day.

Proposed Amendment:

Camp Henry, DeLaurier Homestead and White Pine are included in Zone IV to accommodate increased visitation and supporting infrastructure.

Environmentally and Culturally Sensitive Sites

Ecologically and culturally sensitive sites are designated on the zoning maps where an area is either too small to be designated as a discrete Zone I or because a site may be variable from one year to the next, such as with bird nesting locations. Recognition as an ecologically or culturally sensitive site ensures that the values for which a site has been designated are protected and respected in any park management decisions or actions. The Park Superintendent may direct the special protection of these sites.

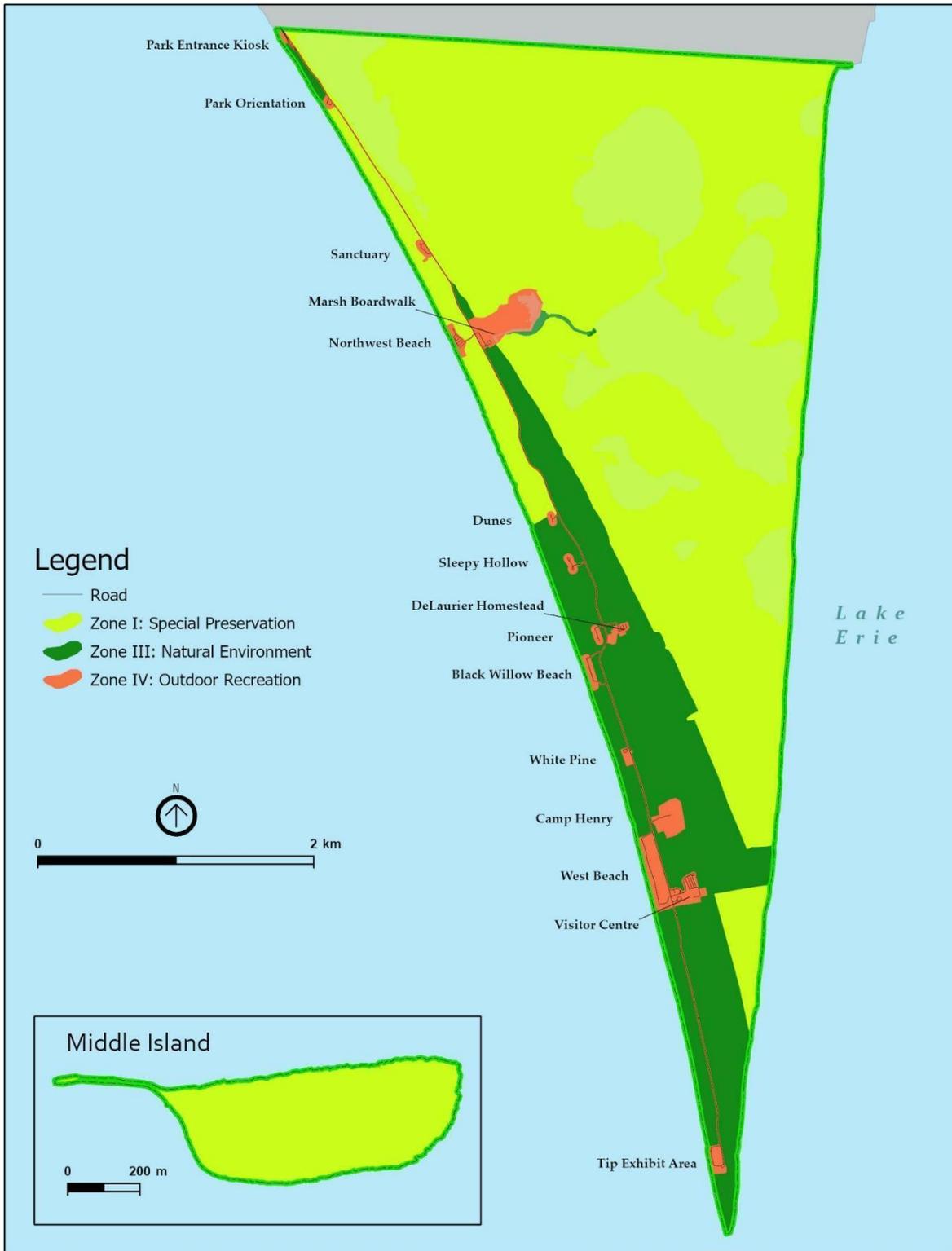
Sites that are ecologically sensitive or of cultural heritage significance have been identified and updated based on studies undertaken since the last management plan. Within Point Pelee National Park, these areas include natural resources and archaeological sites, including First Nations burial sites. The locations of these sites are not shown on the zoning map, in order to ensure the protection of these sensitive areas.

Non-conforming Uses

Some zones support uses or activities that do not conform to the spirit and intentions of the zone type. Non-conforming uses include the utility corridor for electricity that is within Zone I areas of the national park. This non-conforming use will not be expanded.

Sport fishing has been a non-conforming use in the marsh and will be phased out by 2022.

The Park Superintendent may authorize motorized access in any zone for administrative and operational purposes.



7.0 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 of the management plan for Point Pelee National Park considered influences from external (local and regional) stressors outside of the park, climate change, changes in visitation, and proposals in the management plan. The strategic environmental assessment assessed the potential impacts on forest health, wetland habitat, coastal and marine processes, birds, invasive species, marsh water quality, Lake Erie sand spit savannah, herptiles, and species at risk.

Forest ecosystems at the park are in good condition, but the cumulative effects of climate change, hyperabundant species, competition from non-native species, and erosion are threats that need attention over the next ten years in order to maintain the good condition rating. Strategies to address these cumulative effects are identified in the management plan, including continued management of hyperabundant White-tailed Deer and Double-crested Cormorant populations, efforts to manage invasive species, and working regionally to improve and maintain resiliency.

Over two thirds of the park is comprised of freshwater marsh and the condition of wetlands at the park is poor and declining. Climate change, erosion, and the advance of invasive plants from outside the park are sources of cumulative effects that can combine to further degrade wetland ecosystems at the park. Furthermore, several species at risk that are found in the park are dependent on this habitat. The management plan includes several objectives and targets that are geared at managing these cumulative effects and contributing to improvements of the ecological integrity measures. The objectives include a focus on increasing interspersed within the marsh and working regionally on strategic plans for the management of wetland invasive species such as Phragmites. Implementation of the management plan is anticipated to achieve positive environmental effects on wetlands.

The coastal ecosystems of the park have continued to experience the cumulative effects of climate change, shoreline development outside the park boundaries, and historical development activities that have contributed to a major sand deficit and erosion issues at the park. Taking initial steps to manage these cumulative effects is given prominence in the management plan. Addressing this issue will necessitate a long term sustained effort, and continued monitoring and research throughout the management plan period can set the stage for minimizing potential negative effects and potentially achieving positive effects over the ten-year period.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public will be consulted on the draft management plan and the summary of the draft strategic environmental assessment. Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the strategic environmental assessment and management plan as appropriate.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment was conducted in accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* (2010) 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: Healthy Coasts and Oceans, Sustainably Managed Lands and Forests, Healthy Wildlife Populations, and Connecting Canadians with nature.

Overall, the management plan is anticipated to have positive environmental effects. Some of the objectives and targets have the potential to cause negative environmental effects, however, these are all considered to be manageable through the implementation of mitigation measures and monitoring that has been identified in the plan, and supplement with recommendations in the Strategic Environmental Assessment. There are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of the Point Pelee National Park management plan.