

Planning for the Future

Consultation on the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site



An invitation to take part!

The Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site is planning its operations for upcoming years. To this end, we will be holding public consultations from May 17th to July 30th, 2019. I encourage you to take part in this process by sharing your thoughts and suggestions.

The purpose of this consultation is to give the partners, community stakeholders and general public an opportunity to get involved in the decision-making process related to managing this national historic site. The management plan is the official document that will guide management of the historic site for the next ten years (2019–2029). It provides orientation for protecting cultural and natural resources, visitor experiences and public education.

This national historic site belongs to you! Join the Parks Canada team in developing a common vision and in protecting this national historic site, while encouraging visitors to discover this unique place.

Nadine Blackburn
Superintendent
La Mauricie and Western Quebec Field Unit

Parks Canada's Mandate

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.

Importance of the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site

The Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site is located in Quebec's Mauricie region, halfway between Montréal and Québec. The site is within Trois-Rivières city limits, about 15 km north of the downtown core.

The Forges are bordered by the impressive Saint-Maurice River, and several streams cut through the site. This area was chosen for the Forges due to the main stream's unique hydrographic features. The Forges were built in 1730 by François Poulin de Francheville and remained in operation until 1883.

Known as the birthplace of the Canadian iron and steel industry, the Forges du Saint-Maurice was recognized as a national historic site in 1920.

The site was commemorated for the following reasons:

The Forges du Saint-Maurice, established in 1730, were the main industry under the French regime.

The founding of the Forges du Saint-Maurice marked the beginning of the Canadian iron and steel industry and the origin of the first industrial community in Canada.

The Forges du Saint-Maurice closed in 1883 after more than 150 years of operation.

The site underwent several archaeological excavations in the 1970s and 1980s. The vestiges revealed industrial and domestic elements of a typical old ironworks of European origin dating back to the late 15th century.

Parks Canada took over the site in 1973 and has taken the first steps to develop and preserve it. In 1985, the massive metallic structure modelling the volumetry of the blast furnace and functioning as one of the exhibits was inaugurated. In 1990, the main administrative centre for visitors was created in the Grande Maison (a reproduction of the ironmaster's house, rebuilt in 1990).

Today, Parks Canada's administered territory covers nearly 60 hectares. It consists of a large grassy terrace (called the high plateau), full of archaeological vestiges and trails. The site includes reproductions of the Grande Maison, as well as the metallic structure that models the volumetry of the blast furnace and its storage sheds. The terrace is bordered to the east by a ravine that runs down to the shores of the Saint-Maurice River. Visitors can discover the vestiges of the lower forge and an area where we find water seepage with methane emissions. This place is known locally as the Devil's Fountain. This area is considered a sacred fire by some Indigenous communities, including the Atikamekw Nation.

The tour begins in the Grande Maison, followed by a short walk along a path that allows visitors to view archaeological remains. The tour continues to the blast furnace exhibits. From there, visitors can follow a trail that winds down the ravine to the banks of the Saint-Maurice River, and see the vestiges of the lower forge and the Devil's Fountain.

As they walk the trails along the Saint-Maurice River or on the grassy high plateau, visitors can enjoy the site's natural beauty, which also plays an important role in regional biodiversity.

Planning context

The national historic site is open to the general public from late June to early September. During this time, 70% of individual visitors are adults. The site hosts school groups in the spring and fall, and cruise passengers from September to October.

Several investments have been made in the national historic site in recent years, including the installation of interactive panels and outdoor interpretive panels, the replacement of outdoor furniture, and the restoration of the Grande Maison and other vestiges, including the lower forge chimney.

The site's team maintains close ties to the community and works with multiple partners. For example, the interpretive panels were installed as part of a project with Collège Laflèche in Trois-Rivières. The national historic site works with several regional organizations, including Culture Mauricie, Tourisme Trois-Rivières, and Médiat-Muse. The site also hosts annual events with its partners. Lastly, the national historic site team maintains a relationship and open dialogue with the Atikamekw community in northern Mauricie.

Many issues were raised during the management plan's development, such as:

- **Visitor numbers below the site's potential:** Prior to 2012, the site averaged 15,000 visitors each year. Between 2012 and 2014, a shorter season and fewer events at the site resulted in a 50% drop in traffic (14,350 visitors in 2012; 7,054 visitors in 2014). This number has since increased slightly to 8,147 visitors in 2016. In 2017, interest sparked by the 150th anniversary of Canadian confederation and free entry led 20,900 visitors to discover the site. This exceptional year demonstrates that traffic can be increased to maximize the site's reception potential.
- **Degradation of cultural resources and visitor reception facilities (parking lots, access roads, trails, etc.):** The national historic site is home to numerous cultural resources, many of which are degrading despite Parks Canada's efforts. This is the case for archaeological vestiges and metal objects. In recent years, Parks Canada has restored about 35% of the vestiges, but the vast majority of them continue to degrade and require conservation efforts and management of invasive vegetation. Visitor reception facilities (access roads, trails, parking lots) that have not been maintained as part of the Federal Infrastructure Investment Program (FIIP) are safe and functional but in poor condition.
- **The need to recognize, honour, and present Indigenous cultures with connections to the site:** Although there are no archaeological traces of occupation by Indigenous peoples, the Forges du Saint-Maurice site has cultural significance to many communities, especially the Atikamekw people. To date, no interpretative or commemorative activities have been implemented to recognize, honour, and present the Indigenous cultures with connections to the national historic site.



Vision

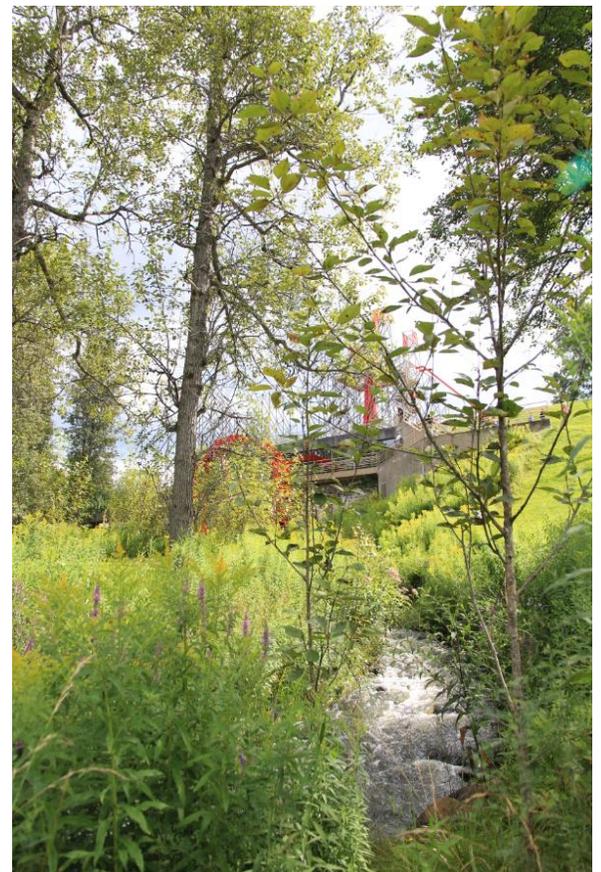
The Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site is a heritage site that shares and celebrates its rich and diverse history.

Visitors discover different historical, cultural, and natural perspectives, including those of Indigenous communities, which give the site its distinctiveness.

Friendly and welcoming, the site is suitable for gatherings and is used by the community.

Heritage resources, including cultural landscapes, archaeological vestiges, and the natural environment are protected and showcased for the benefit of current and future generations.

Conveniently located near Trois-Rivières and at equal distance from Québec and Montréal, the site is ideally located for the Mauricie region's tourism industry. The site works with regional partners and is part of the region's tourism offering.



Key strategies

KEY STRATEGY NO. 1: AN IMPORTANT ATTRACTION FOR THE COMMUNITY AND MAURICIE'S TOURISM OFFERING

The strategy will focus on the site's uniqueness by diversifying opportunities for use of the space and activity offerings. This approach will aim to attract new clients, including families and regional groups, as well as develop a sense of belonging and ownership among the general public and local community. Located at the heart of the community, the site will be recognized as a space for learning and discovery, as well as a gathering place. Working together with partners, Indigenous communities, and stakeholders to diversify activity offerings and organize a recurring, high-visibility event will strengthen the site's role in local and regional tourism offerings.

Objective 1.1: The national historic site will stand out with an evocative, original, and diverse offering.

- ✓ Goal: By 2028, three new or renewed activities that focus on the site's distinctiveness will be offered, designed for the target clientele.
- ✓ Goal: A recurring event or activity that promotes the site's visibility will be established.

Objective 1.2: The site will be recognized as a gathering place within the community, conferring a sense of ownership.

- ✓ Goal: By 2025, the site's reception infrastructure will be improved and adapted to facilitate community gatherings and use.
- ✓ Goal: By 2028, the number of people returning to the site will have increased by 10% over the 2018 reference year.

Objective 1.3: The national historic site will be integrated into the local and regional tourism development.

- ✓ Goal: Every year, Parks Canada will contribute to a regional promotion strategy, along with its tourism industry partners.
- ✓ Goal: An activity that is compatible with the site's character and purpose will be held annually in collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

Objective 1.4: Parks Canada will work with Indigenous communities that have connections to the site to honour and present their culture and history to the public.

- ✓ Goal: Every year, a meeting will be held with the Indigenous communities that have a connection to the national historic site.
- ✓ Goal: By 2025, activities or events will be established in collaboration with Indigenous communities that have a connection to the national historic site.



KEY STRATEGY NO. 2: A PROTECTED PLACE THAT DEMONSTRATES PARKS CANADA'S LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVING AND SHOWCASING CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

This strategy involves continuing efforts to conserve and showcase the cultural landscape, archaeological remains, and objects of national historic significance. Natural environment will also receive special attention. Alternative approaches to landscape management could be developed to improve regional biodiversity while highlighting the site's cultural resources. Finally, activities will be developed to raise public awareness of the national historic site's various cultural and natural attractions. These activities will also demonstrate Parks Canada's leadership in conserving cultural and natural resources.

Objective 2.1: Continue to protect cultural resources.

- ✓ Goal: By 2028, the general state of archaeological vestiges and items of national historic significance will have been stabilized or improved.

Objective 2.2: New activities will raise public awareness about the value of the national historic site's cultural and natural attractions and demonstrate Parks Canada's conservation leadership.

- ✓ Goal: By 2025, three activities will have been implemented to raise public awareness about the value of these attractions and Parks Canada's conservation leadership.

Objective 2.3: The cultural landscape will be protected and developed to support the promotion of heritage resources.

- ✓ Goal: By 2022, a cultural landscape management plan will have been developed and implemented.

Objective 2.4: The natural environment will be recognized, protected, and showcased and will contribute to the site's importance.

- ✓ Goal: By 2028, a management approach for the natural environment will have been implemented.
- ✓ Goal: By 2028, the Species at Risk Action Plan will have been implemented to help at-risk species recover.



Strategic environmental assessment

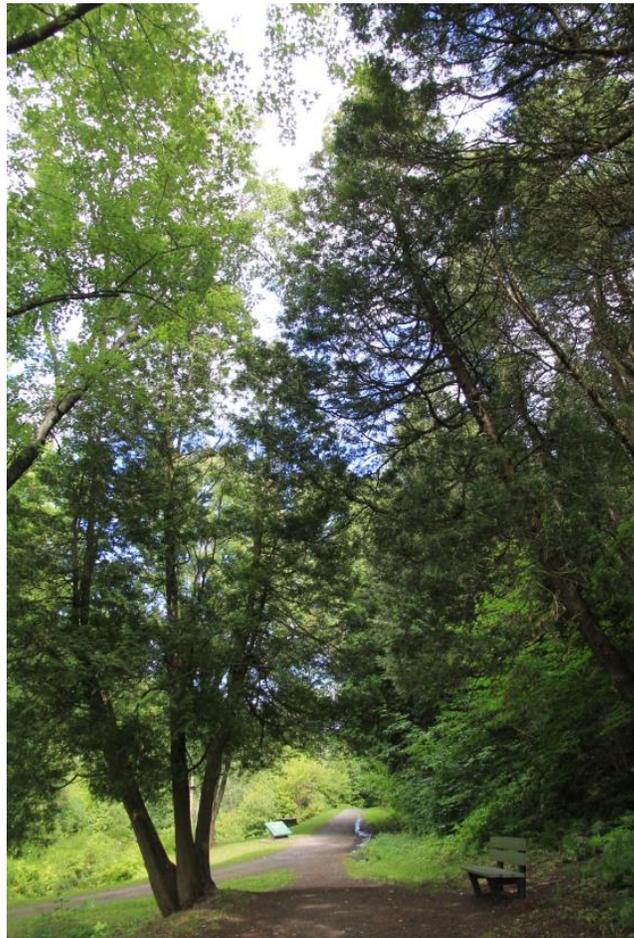
Parks Canada is responsible for assessing and mitigating the impact of its management measures on ecosystems and cultural resources. The *Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plans and Programs Proposals*, prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, requires that a strategic environmental assessment 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 carried out for this management plan. It will be submitted to the consultation participants who are developing this management plan. Any concerns that are raised will be taken into account. The following paragraphs outline this assessment.

The management plan strategies for the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site will increase the site's visibility among Canadians, help them recognize the site's value, strengthen relationships with the community, and maintain heritage resources in good condition. Implementing these measures to achieve the objectives set out in the management plan should help protect the cultural resources and commemorative integrity of the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site.

Certain strategies, objectives, and targets identified in the management plan may have negative environmental effects. These include increased visitation to and use of the site. The strategic environmental assessment also identifies potential environmental impacts on the site's vegetation. These effects can be mitigated by following existing guidelines and by conducting impact assessments for projects, including new facilities, activities, and events, as well as infrastructure maintenance and cultural resource conservation projects. These assessments will determine the effects on the site's valuable features and help minimize potential negative effects on cultural and natural resources, the visitor experience, and relationships with different partners.

It is impossible to determine whether the management plan will significantly contribute to the objectives of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. However, given Parks Canada's mandate, the plan is unlikely to contradict these objectives. No significant adverse environmental effects are expected as a result of implementing the management plan.



What do you think?

This document summarizes and presents the site, its issues, a management approach, key strategies, objectives and measurable targets. Now, it's your turn to take part in the discussion. Here is your chance to add to the conversation and help us develop the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site's management plan. Your knowledge of the area, combined with your experience of the historic site and the future you envision for it are important to us.

How to participate?

There are two ways to share your opinion:

- Send your comments by email to: pc.pcconsult.ouestquebec.pc@canada.ca

Or

- By mail to:

Public Consultation on the Forges du Saint-Maurice National Historic Site
Parks Canada Agency at Fort Chambly
2 De Richelieu Street, Chambly, Quebec, Canada J3L 2B9

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or would like further information on the public consultation.

Visit the Parks Canada website:

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/qc/saintmaurice/index>

You have until July 30th 2019 to share your opinions, comments or ideas with us, or to submit a memory.

Thank you for your participation!