



State of the Park Report Sirmilik National Park of Canada



August 2012


Recommendations and Approval

Sirmilik National Park of Canada
State of the Park Report

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The preparation of this first State of the Park Report for a national park in Nunavut involved many people. The input of this diverse group of individuals has resulted in a State of the Park Report that will be the foundation for the first management planning process for Sirmilik National Park. The following individuals have made special contributions to the State of the Park Report and deserve mention:

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Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report– August 2012

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Members of the Communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk:

Elders of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk

Hamlets of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk

Hunters' and Trappers' Organizations of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk

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In Memory



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The late Cornelius Nutarak Sr. is remembered as a respected elder whose extensive knowledge was matched only by his passion for sharing it. For many years to come, his knowledge of the past will help us imagine and build a future of which we can be proud. He received the Order of Canada in 2006.

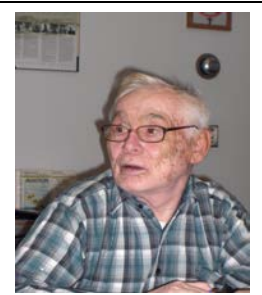


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The late Jayco and Annie "Paingut" Peterloosie were both leaders in transferring knowledge from elders to youth.



Annie Peterloosie received 2011 National Aboriginal Achievement Award in the category of Culture, Heritage and Spirituality.



The late Joseph Koonoo was a respected elder and a leader in encouraging Inuit and "southern Canadian" cultures to learn from each other. He noted that Parks Canada's work was an example of that bridging of the two cultures.



The late Phillip Issigaittuq participated in the contest to name the park. He won the contest and the name he recommended is now the name of the park, "Sirmilik National Park".

Other elders have also had an important role in the history of the park and its surrounding.

Table of Contents

Contents

Recommendations and Approval	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
In Memory	v
Table of Contents	vi
Introduction	1
Co-operative Management.....	1
State of the Park	4
Summary of the park’s performance rating.....	10
Summary of key issues	13
APPENDIX 1	16
Description of Rating Assessments for State of Ecological Integrity.....	16
Description of Rating Assessments for State of Cultural Resources.....	16
Description of Trend Assessment for State Indicators	16

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

Introduction

The purpose of this State of the Park Report (SoPR) for Sirmilik National Park is to:

- Provide a snapshot of the state of the park;
- Report the park's achievement in meeting its performance expectations, as well as its contribution to the Agency's strategic outcome;
- Report the results of the park's efforts to maintain or improve the state of the park;
- Identify key issues facing the park for consideration in management planning.

The SoPR serves as a tool to report to Parks Canada's Chief Executive Officer and to help inform decision makers and to communicate to stakeholders and the general public. It can also provide an opportunity to initiate external discussions at the onset of the development of the park's management plan.

This State of the Park Report for Sirmilik National Park was prepared co-operatively with the Sirmilik Park Planning Team and the Joint Inuit/Government Park Planning and Management Committee (JPMC)¹ based on existing information. It includes information provided by elders of the communities of Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) and Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay), as part of the Inuit Knowledge Project (2005-2010) and as part of other meetings. This State of the Park Report was approved by the Joint Park Management Committee.

Co-operative Management

Sirmilik National Park is located in the North of Baffin Island, near the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk. At 22,200 km², it is among the largest national parks in Canada. It was established in 2001 and is co-operatively managed by Inuit and Parks Canada in accordance with the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, the *Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement of Auyuittuq, Quttinirpaaq and Sirmilik National Parks* and the *Canada National Parks Act*. The park is divided into four separate parcels: Bylot Island, Borden Peninsula, Baillarge Bay, and Oliver Sound.

Inuit of the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk carry the collective experience of the many generations who have been living in and around the area now known as Sirmilik National Park, for the past 4,000 years. The need to know and protect the environment has been essential for the survival of the people of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk. Their food, and therefore their life, have depended on it. The communities' collective knowledge of the regional environment is based on that long history of necessity.

¹ The "Joint Inuit/Government Park Planning and Management Committee" is also known as the "Joint Park Management Committee" and the "JPMC".

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report– August 2012



Figure 1: Location of Sirmilik National Park

Through collaborative projects with the two communities, Parks Canada has begun to learn from that collective knowledge about important cultural and ecological areas, traditional land use patterns and their extensive knowledge of the environment. Some of that knowledge has been captured through oral history projects and place names work. Key findings are presented in this State of the Park Report; they highlight the importance of Inuit knowledge in the implementation of Parks Canada's mandate in the area.

The following map (Figure 2) illustrates an extensive land use pattern and familiarity with the regional environment which is based on the collective knowledge of the Inuit of the communities of Mittimatilik and Ikpiarjuk:

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report– August 2012



Figure 2: Main sea ice travel routes, selected sea ice safety features and Inuktitut Place Names around Mittimatalik and Ikiarjuk. Inuit Knowledge Project, 2010

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

During discussions with community members of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk (as part of the Inuit Knowledge Project, the development of this State of the Park Report, Park Planning Team meetings, JPMC meetings, meetings with the Hunters and Trappers Organizations and community information sessions), several general concerns have been raised:







- Working together: There is a strong desire from the communities to inform research and management activities. Key projects have assisted in building the relationship between Parks Canada and the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk and have increased Parks Canada’s understanding of the park’s ecosystems, cultural resources and cultural context (oral histories, Inuktitut place names and Inuit knowledge projects). However, there is a sense that more can and should be done.
- Perceived interference: Some research, monitoring and management actions in the Park have been viewed as interfering with Inuit use of the park and the park’s health, and more communication is needed with the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk on regulations and policies that apply to the park.
- Building capacity: Parks Canada maintains an office in Mittimatalik but does not have a regular presence in Ikpiarjuk. Maintaining a Parks Canada presence in the associated communities and employing local people in the operation and management of the park is considered a basic requirement for long term success.

These concerns are important to the communities and critical to future collaborative work.

State of the Park

This is the first State of the Park Report for Sirmilik National Park and data was not available to rate a number of indicators. Indicators that were rated showed that the state of the park is overall good but that the state of some ecosystems is in decline due to global stressors.

The State of the Park Report uses the following symbols to communicate the state of ecological integrity, cultural resources, visitor experience, outreach and education in a park and the extent to which the park has achieved its park-level performance expectations:




CONDITION				TREND			
			N/R				N/R
Good	Fair	Poor	Not rated	Improving	Stable	Declining	Not rated

Note: Refer to Appendix 1 for definitions related to condition and trend

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012



Table 1 below summarizes the state of the park’s ecological integrity, cultural resources, visitor experience and the state of public appreciation and understanding of the park based on available information.

Table 1: State of the Park Summary

INDICATOR	STATE	RATIONALE Summary of state and accomplishments over last 5 years to maintain or improve that state
Resource Conservation – Ecological Integrity (<i>Condition and Trend</i>)		
Glaciers and Permanent Ice		Based on the condition assessment of ‘good’ with a declining trend for two of three measures, supported by the long-term observations provided by the Late Cornelius Nutarak Sr., this indicator is assessed as good with a declining trend.
Tundra / Barrens		Presently, measures for this indicator are assessed to be in fair condition because there is cause for concern with all measures declining.
Wetlands		Presently, two of the three measures are assessed to be in good and stable condition and with one measure rated as fair and declining. In view of that, the wetlands indicator is assessed as good and stable.
Coastal / Marine	N/R	This indicator is not rated because only one of three measures can be rated at this point. The third measure is rated based on Inuit knowledge as being in a fair condition with a declining trend and shows that the marine ecosystem is changing in the area.
Freshwater	N/R	Monitoring of the five measures proposed in 2008 to assess water quality in the park has not started yet. Inuit hunters have expressed concern that thawing permafrost is creating mudflows in some locations affecting several square kilometres of land and resulting in huge amounts of sediment being deposited into rivers. ² Members of the Joint Park Management Committee also indicated at their meeting in March 2012 that the water level of a number of lakes in the region has decreased and that the thickness of the ice on lakes has also decreased.

² Arctic Bay 2008. Information cited was drawn from notes recorded during meetings of the Park Planning Team with the elders, HTO and Hamlet Council of Arctic Bay on March 19, and August 05 and 06, 2008.

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

Resource Conservation – Cultural Resources (<i>Condition and Trend</i>)		
Resource Condition*		Many sites and cultural resources have been recorded to date. Of the 66 known sites, 6 are listed as possibly threatened and 4 are listed as disturbed or threatened, 21 are listed as highly stable and 35 are identified as sites whose condition is unknown. Threats to cultural resources in the Park have not been analyzed in detail but generally include unauthorized artifact removal or disturbance to archaeological features, erosion and visitation. Based on this information, this indicator is rated overall as good and stable.
Selected Management Practices		Parks Canada has been conducting inventories of the park’s cultural resources and has started the evaluation and monitoring of known cultural resources. The Nunavut Field Unit has also prepared a five-year plan for its cultural resource management program in 2009. The plan was approved by the Field Unit and the Joint Park Management Committee, and it was updated in 2011. Parks Canada involves elders and youth of the communities of Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) and Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay) and the Joint Park Management Committee in inventory, evaluation, monitoring, planning and other aspects of the cultural resource management program of the park.
Visitor Experience (<i>Trend</i>)		
Visits	N/R	This indicator is not rated because of the annual fluctuation in visitation. Overall the recent trend is a definite decline in attendance with an increase in the number of visitors other than cruise ship passengers. In 2007 there was a large drop in the number of these visitors (other than cruise ship passengers), but since then visitation has increased, doubling between 2007 - 2011. Cruise ship visitation is even more volatile. With a rapid peak in 2007, cruise ship passengers have been on a steady decline since. Changes to Parks Canada regulations on the use of firearms for safety may result in an increase in visitation. Visitors to the park office and exhibits, who experience the park remotely and with one on one contact with staff, have not been counted as visitors to date. Data from 2008 – 2010 on visitor satisfaction with information indicate that visitors are overall satisfied with the level of pre-trip information provided to them.

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report– August 2012

Learning	N/R	Data on visitors’ learning opportunities and satisfaction with learning during their experience in the park are limited. Most of the available information comes from one-on-one interactions between visitors and staff and data on visitors’ motivations to go to the park from pre-registration surveys for 2008-2010. Data on visitors’ satisfaction with their experience is only available for 2010 (for 14 visitors), so this indicator cannot be rated yet.
Enjoyment	N/R	Data on visitors’ enjoyment in the park (including in relation to facilities, services, activities and staff) are limited. All visitors have one-on-one interactions with staff and many provide feedback to staff on their park experience. Interactions between visitors and staff suggest that visitors enjoy their visits to the park. Data on visitors’ satisfaction with their experience is only available for 2010 (for 14 visitors), so this indicator cannot be rated yet.
Satisfaction	N/R	All visitors have one-on-one interactions with staff and many provide feedback to staff on their park experience. A 2007 cruise ship study conducted for Auyuittuq, Quttinirpaaq and Sirmilik national parks provides some data on cruise ship passengers’ satisfaction with their trip, but the data are unclear as to whether the responses on passengers’ satisfaction with their experience reflected their overall experience or their experience in Sirmilik National Park specifically. Data on visitors’ satisfaction with their experience is otherwise only available for 2010 (for 14 visitors), so this indicator cannot be rated yet.
Meaning	N/R	All visitors have one-on-one interactions with staff and many provide feedback to staff on their park experience. Information on visitors’ reasons for deciding to visit the park is available for 2008-2010 (see Learning Indicator above). Data on visitors’ satisfaction with their experience is only available for 2010 (for 14 visitors), so this indicator cannot be rated yet.

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

Public Appreciation and Understanding		
Appreciation and Understanding	N/R	<p>Until 2007, the Field Unit focused its efforts on developing products that were required by the <i>Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement for Auyuittuq, Quttinirpaaq and Sirmilik National Parks</i>, in particular exhibits about the park in the two adjacent communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk. Outreach and education programs for Sirmilik National Park are starting to be developed in a more proactive manner. Key initiatives have included the development of a curriculum element for Nunavut schools (grade 7-9) called “The Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program”, as well as filming in Sirmilik National Park for the <i>The National Parks Project: Reconnecting Urban Youth to Wilderness</i>, supporting a student as Canada’s Greatest Summer Job program and developing the relationship with the Vancouver Aquarium.</p>
Support	N/R	<p>The Field Unit and the Park have been engaging a variety of stakeholder groups to assist Parks Canada in implementing its mandate within the Park. They have included stakeholders involved in tourism, education, public safety and research, including building relationships with the Inuit communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk in these areas. Recently, the Nunavut Field Unit has increased its outreach with the teaching community in Nunavut and elsewhere, the Park and the Nunavut Field Unit have developed and delivered programs to enhance Parks Canada’s relationship with the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk, and the Field Unit is planning to develop outreach and education products based on the 2005-2010 Inuit Knowledge Project. Research taking place in the park has been featured in documentaries such as the BBC’s Planet Earth series and David Suzuki’s <i>Nature of Things</i> series, several Radio-Canada programs on Bylot Island and a documentary on snow geese (“Lumière des oiseaux”) featuring Bylot Island and famous Québec poet Pierre Morency.</p>

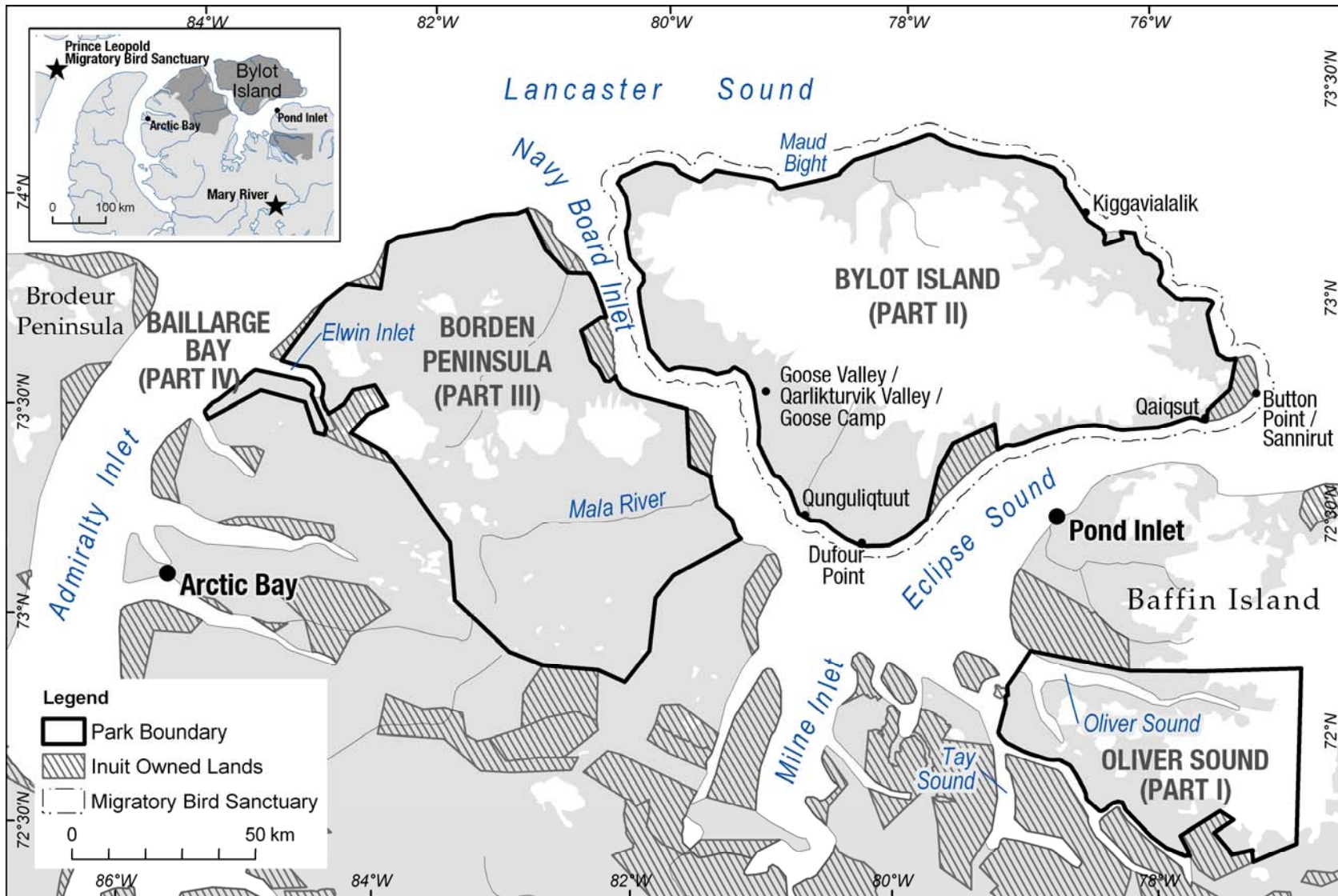


Figure 3: Overview of Sirmilik National Park

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012


Summary of the park’s performance rating

Sirmilik National Park does not have a management plan yet. This State of the Park Report is being completed as part of Sirmilik National Park’s first management planning cycle. Performance ratings relating to Sirmilik National Park’s contribution to achieving recent Parks Canada Corporate Plans commitments are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Performance Ratings relating to recent Parks Canada Corporate Plans

Performance Expectation	Rating	Results/ Rationale
Results relating Field Unit Commitments in its 2010/11 Business Plans		
Heritage Resource Conservation		
Improve the Ecological Integrity indicators.	N/R	The 2009 Parks Canada Agency Performance Management Framework exempted northern parks from this performance expectation. See “Summary of Issues” for more details on this matter.
80% of active management targets to improve ecological integrity are met by March 2014.	N/R	Active management targets have not been identified yet for Sirmilik National Park.

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

<p>Increase the % of Canadians that consider that they learned about the heritage of Parks Canada's administered places by March 2014.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The following initiatives have been implemented by the Field Unit, including in relation to Sirmilik National Park:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach educative initiatives: The Environmental Stewardship Certificate Program was implemented by March 31, 2011 (launched in February 2010) • Contribution to reaching urban audience: The Field Unit attended national and international trade shows focussing on arctic tourism and education in Montreal and Vancouver by February 2011. <p>External communication products on sea ice monitoring were to be developed by March 31, 2011, but have not yet been developed due to staff capacity.</p>
<p>Maintain the condition of cultural resources.</p>		<p>See Table 1: State of the Park Summary, Resource Conservation – Cultural Resources, Resource Condition</p>
<p>Public Appreciation and Understanding</p>		
<p>Increase the % of Canadians who understand that nationally significant places that are administered by Parks Canada are protected and presented on their behalf by March 2014.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Web content relating to Sirmilik National Park was updated by March 2011.</p>
<p>Increase the % of stakeholders and partners that support the protection and presentation of Parks Canada's administered places by March 2014.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Partner and Stakeholder content related to the Nunavut Field Unit was updated on Stakeholder/Partner Registry by March 2011.</p>

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

<p>Increase the % of stakeholders and partners that feel that they have opportunities to influence and contribute to Parks Canada's activities by March 2014.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The recent consultations on the proposed Wild Animal Regulations is a key example of a process that was influenced by stakeholders. The key networking and relationship building opportunity that the Field Unit intended to achieve for its 4 national parks was the “Extend Your Stay” program with Nunavut Tourism. After identifying this project as a key Field Unit project, it was determined that it could only be implemented at one park in the short term, Auyuittuq National Park because flight schedules and other logistical issues make it difficult to facilitate an extended weekend visit in the other national parks.</p>
Visitor Experience		
<p>On average, 85% of visitors at surveyed locations consider the place is meaningful to them.</p>	<p>N/R</p>	<p>National Parks in the Nunavut Field Unit, including Sirmilik National Park, are not required to report or to take part in the Visitor Information Program because these national parks have been receiving less than 1,000 visitors per year and data from such a small number of visitors can not be analyzed in a sound statistical manner. The Field Unit is, however, collecting this data as part of the visitor de-registration process and should be able to use this data in the future to some extent to guide visitor experience and management planning priorities.</p>
<p>On average, 90% of visitors at surveyed locations are satisfied with their visit and on average 50% of visitors at surveyed locations are very satisfied with their visit.</p>	<p>N/R</p>	
<p>Maintained number of visits at the National Park</p>	<p>N/R</p>	
<p>On average, 60% of visitors at surveyed locations consider that they learned about the natural heritage of the place.</p>	<p>N/R</p>	
<p>On average, 90% of visitors at surveyed locations enjoyed their visit.</p>	<p>N/R</p>	

The first evaluation of the *Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement for Auyuittuq, Quttinirpaaq and Sirmilik National Parks* is being completed in 2011. The results of that evaluation, however, were not yet available at the time of writing this State of the Park Report.

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

Summary of key issues

The preparation of this State of the Park Report has identified the following key issues:

Community relations

The cooperative management of Sirmilik National Park by Inuit and Parks Canada relies on the knowledge and engagement of the communities of Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) and Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay).

- The establishment of the park has resulted in the operation of the park's Joint Inuit/Government Park Planning and Management Committee, a new office in Mittimatalik, employment of Inuit from Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk, as well as exhibits in both communities.
- Further relationship building is needed on various components of park management.
- Parks Canada maintains an office in Mittimatalik but does not have a regular presence in Ikpiarjuk.
- Building the capacity of community members, including employees, has been identified as a need to better support visitor experience, public and education and ecological integrity and cultural resources programs.
- Inuit need to go to the land and sea ice – especially the floe edge³ and glacier areas – to share their knowledge and culture, and they wish to involve youth in the process.
- Oral histories relating to the park have been collected in Mittimatalik but not in Ikpiarjuk.
- The communities adjacent to the park are interested in educating the public about Inuit culture and traditional way of life but are also concerned about filming and photographing of Inuit hunting activities in and out of the park.

Protection of the park's ecosystems and cultural resources

The protection of the park's ecological integrity and cultural resources is an integral part of the relationship between Parks Canada and Inuit. It relies on conducting inventories, obtaining information from the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk and on that knowledge being shared through outreach and education programs and products.

³ The floe edge is the boundary where the floating sea ice meets the stationary land-fast ice along the shoreline. (Environment Canada, 2010. Environment Canada's International Polar Year Achievements. <http://www.ec.gc.ca/Publications/E5881C40-0D99-4339-9C07-D218094798E2/ECInternationalPolarYearAchievements.pdf>, accessed on March 5, 2012.)

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report – August 2012

- Parks Canada's ability to effect improvements to entire ecosystems within Sirmilik National Park is limited because of the size of ecosystems and because most stressors are global or regional.
- Active management targets have not been identified yet to improve ecological integrity in Sirmilik National Park.
- Local and regional stressors have been identified by members of the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk.
- Many areas of the Park remain unexplored for cultural resources by Parks Canada and implementation of the cultural resource management program has been spread over time.
- A Cultural Resource Value Statement is needed for the Park.
- Outreach and education programs and products on the park's ecosystems and cultural resources are currently limited.

Opportunities for visitor experience

Sirmilik National Park provides a high arctic/arctic visitor experience, with a breathtaking and diverse landscape, a relatively high density of wildlife and a rich Inuit culture and history. Travel costs to reach Sirmilik National Park are higher than for Auyuittuq National Park to the south, but much lower than what it costs visitors to explore Quttinirpaaq National Park to the north – both parks that have higher visitation and are within the Nunavut Field Unit.

- A Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Natinnak Visitors Centre in Mittimatalik is being updated.
- Cruise ship tourism has the potential to increase visitation to the park but has raised community relationship concerns.
- Outfitters are interested in being able to carry firearms to protect themselves and their clients in the park.
- There are no specific hiking or skiing or other routes currently advertized for visitors to the park.
- Visitor experience programs and products relating to Inuit culture and the park need development.
- Visitor safety is of great importance to the communities of Mittimatalik and Ikpiarjuk.
- A need was identified for more visitor information and more promotional materials on the park.

Sirmilik National Park State of the Park Report– August 2012




Monitoring programs

Monitoring programs on the state of the park's ecological integrity, cultural resources, visitor experience and public outreach and education have been initiated but there are gaps for some indicators.




- Reliable information is available from Inuit knowledge and research for some ecological integrity indicators, but there are gaps for other indicators.
- Most of the ecological research and monitoring conducted in Sirmilik National Park since the 1980s has been done by universities and other organizations. Their work has contributed significantly to the assessment of the state of the park.
- There are 66 recorded archaeological sites in Sirmilik National Park and the cultural resource evaluations and monitoring program for the park is in its early stages of development and implementation.
- Many of the measures for Visitor Experience indicators could not be rated because the data was not available.
- Monitoring of outreach and education programs and products is in early stages of development.

APPENDIX 1




Description of Rating Assessments for State of Ecological Integrity

Good		The ecosystem is presently secure, and contains a healthy composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes. No major active management actions are required.
Fair		The ecosystem is presently vulnerable and does not contain a completely healthy composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes. Active management actions may be required.
Poor		The ecosystem is impaired and does not contain a healthy composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes. Significant and ongoing management actions are required.
Not Rated	N/R	There is presently not enough information available to provide a condition for the indicator.

Description of Rating Assessments for State of Cultural Resources

Good		Good, effective, or not currently impaired
Fair		Fair, or minor to moderate impairment. Requires improvement.
Poor		Poor, ineffective, seriously impaired or a significant attribute missing (whether related to condition or selected management practices).
Not Rated	N/R	Not rated or not reported on because the information is not available.
Not Applicable	N/A	Not applicable; the question does not apply.

Description of Trend Assessment for State Indicators

Improving		The state of the indicator/measure has improved since the last assessment.
Stable		The state of the indicator/measure has not changed since the last assessment.
Declining		The state of the indicator/measure has declined since the last assessment.