



Protecting Wood Buffalo National Park World Heritage Site

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Group photo with Mikisew Cree First Nation following workshop on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

WBNP'S WORLD HERITAGE VALUES

Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) has special features that are important to the international community. Here are the key things that led to the park being listed as a World Heritage Site in 1983:

- great concentrations of wildlife of global importance, and rare and superlative natural phenomena, including a large inland delta, salt plains and gypsum karst;
- WBNP contains the only breeding habitat in the world for the whooping crane. The park's size, complete ecosystems and protection are essential for the conservation of the cranes; and,
- WBNP is the most ecologically complete example of the entire Great Plains-Boreal grassland ecosystem of North America.

Indigenous Peoples' Input in the Strategic Environmental Assessment

In May 2018, Parks Canada finished the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that had been requested by the World Heritage Committee. The SEA looked at the potential cumulative impacts of all developments on the world heritage values of WBNP. The SEA presents the best available information (Indigenous traditional knowledge and science) on activities and trends that may be having negative impacts on the world heritage values of the site.

Working with the SEA contractor (a company called "Independent Environmental Consultants" or IEC), Parks Canada managed the engagement process to ensure the SEA reflected a broad and balanced range of perspectives and information. The SEA reflects input from all 11 Indigenous communities that partner with WBNP.

Parks Canada and IEC are grateful for the generous sharing of information by the Elders, land-users, leadership and advisors who represented these communities.

The SEA report includes the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. That input is now being used by decision-makers to develop the Action Plan and to influence the long-term management of WBNP and the surrounding area.

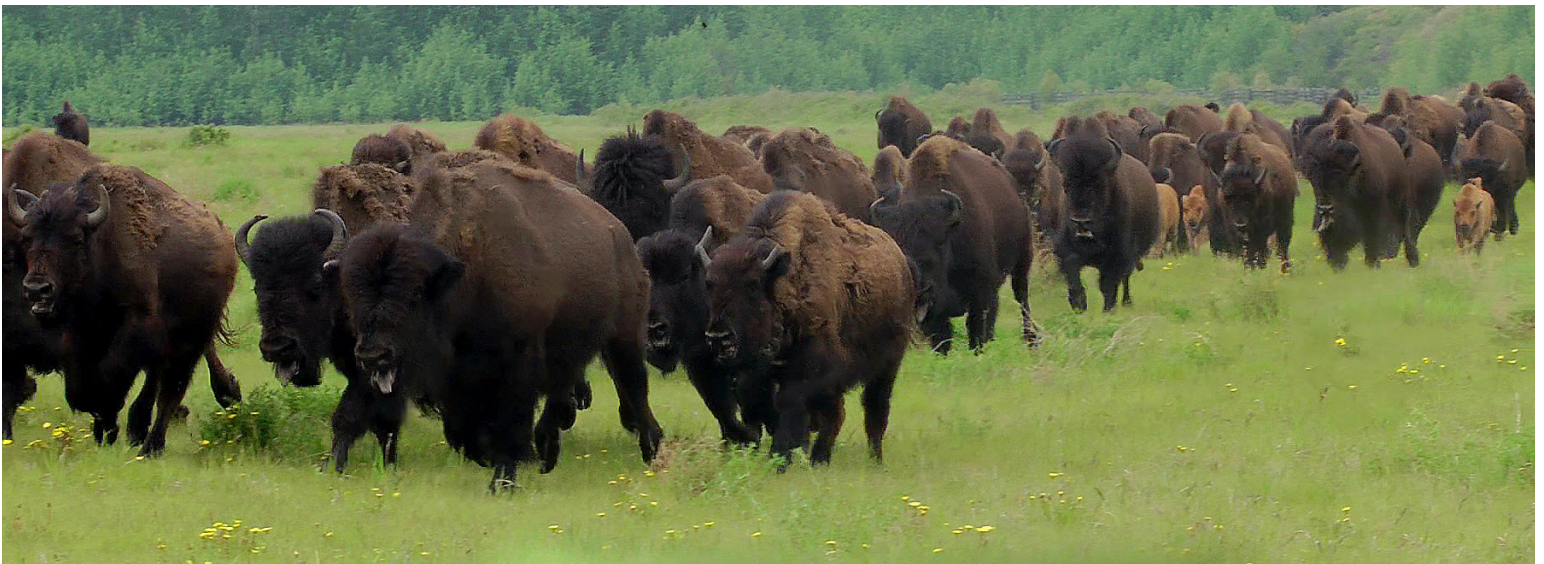
"Ultimately, the aim of Environmental Assessment is to equip decision-makers with the information necessary to preserve these exceptional [World Heritage] sites for future generations."

IUCN World Heritage Advice Note
on Environmental Assessment

About this newsletter—

This newsletter is to keep WBNP partners and stakeholders informed as Parks Canada and the Government of Canada, in consultation with Indigenous groups, other government partners, and stakeholders, respond to the World Heritage Committee. For additional detail on the world heritage values of WBNP and the Reactive Monitoring Mission, please visit the WBNP website at this link: http://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nt/woodbuffalo/info/SEA_EES





Bison herd in Wood Buffalo National Park.

ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

Indigenous groups and stakeholders can be engaged in development of the Action Plan in two ways:

- by commenting to Parks Canada on the draft Action Plan (to be shared for review later this summer and again in the fall), and;
- by working directly with the different jurisdictions (for example, the Government of Alberta) on the initiatives they lead that will contribute to the Action Plan.

Working Together on an Action Plan

Now that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is finished, Parks Canada, in collaboration with federal, provincial and territorial governments and with Indigenous partners, is coordinating the development of an Action Plan for the park. The Action Plan is expected to be finished by December 1, 2018. The action plan aims to ensure that the world heritage values of the park are protected for generations to come.

Indigenous groups played an important role in contributing to the content of the SEA (see above). Parks Canada and other federal, provincial and territorial partners continue to work closely with Indigenous groups to develop the Action Plan, including through the park's cooperative management committee and through working groups, as well as through engagement in relevant processes led by other jurisdictions.

Since the spring of 2017, Parks Canada has chaired a Federal-Provincial-Territorial Coordinating Committee on the Action Plan. This committee is working to ensure that existing initiatives led by various jurisdictions, and new processes relevant to the action plan, are coordinated and inform the development of the action plan. The multi-jurisdictional action plan will be guided by the 17 recommendations of the RMM report, and will be organized into seven thematic areas:

- Indigenous Partnerships in Park Management
- Environmental Flows and Hydrology
- Monitoring and Science
- Environmental Assessment
- Conservation Area Connectivity
- Tailings Pond Risk Assessment
- Wildlife (Bison and Whooping Crane)

Parks Canada is working with other federal, provincial and territorial government partners to develop the Action Plan, and each government also its own area of jurisdictional authority. Details on each of the thematic areas and the roles of different governments are on the WBNP web site:

https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nt/woodbuffalo/info/SEA_EES/action



Paddling on the Peace-Athabasca Delta.

Parks Canada and Indigenous partners are exploring ways to strengthen relationships for the management of the park.

Update on Shared Management of WBNP

The Reactive Monitoring Mission (RMM) made four recommendations that ask Parks Canada to improve its partnerships with Indigenous communities for managing WBNP. These recommendations are consistent with Parks Canada's goals that are listed in the management plan for WBNP, and with the Parks Canada Agency's national guidelines for working with Indigenous partners (called "Promising Pathways"). Parks Canada has met frequently with many of the 11 Indigenous communities to identify opportunities for strengthened relationships. In addition, Parks Canada continues to engage with Indigenous groups in bilateral forums, where this is desired by Indigenous groups.

WBNP has a Co-operative Management Committee (CMC) to strengthen Indigenous involvement in management of the park. The committee has representation from the 11 First Nations and Métis

communities with an interest in the park as well as from Parks Canada. Participation in the CMC is voluntary and does not in any way impact on Indigenous rights. More information about the existing CMC partnerships can be found on the park's web page under "Cultural History" (<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nt/woodbuffalo/decouvrir-discover/natcul2>).

Since May, Parks Canada and the Indigenous groups have been reviewing and redesigning the terms of reference for the CMC. All parties participating in the committee believe the CMC is a very valuable process for engagement between the park and the Indigenous groups who call this area home, and between the Indigenous groups themselves. We all believe it can be made even better and are working hard to build on our recent efforts.

The CMC met on May 2-3, June 4-5, and July 19-20, with the next meeting planned for mid-September. The in-person meetings have included time for the representatives of the Indigenous communities to meet together without Parks Canada representatives

present, including some follow-up conferences by phone. As a result of these caucuses and discussions, the CMC has decided to set aside redesigning the CMC terms of reference for the time being and continue to use the existing 2014 terms of reference. The CMC will focus on developing policies on human resources and procurement for WBNP that will contribute to expanding opportunities in these areas for the Indigenous groups. Individual member groups of the CMC will also explore the development of bilateral agreements with WBNP relating to their specific interests.

Progress made this summer and fall will be reflected in the Action Plan and will be implemented at the park as soon as possible. For more information about the CMC please contact Acting Park Superintendent Cam Zimmer at cam.zimmer@pc.gc.ca or 867-872-7923.

Working Group on Environmental Flows and Hydrology Theme

Throughout the process - the petition from Mikisew Cree First Nation, the RMM, the requests from the World Heritage Committee, and the Strategic Environmental Assessment - the health of the Peace-Athabasca Delta (PAD) has been a key issue, and management of the PAD continues to be a strong focus in the Action Plan. The PAD has world heritage value that is recognized in

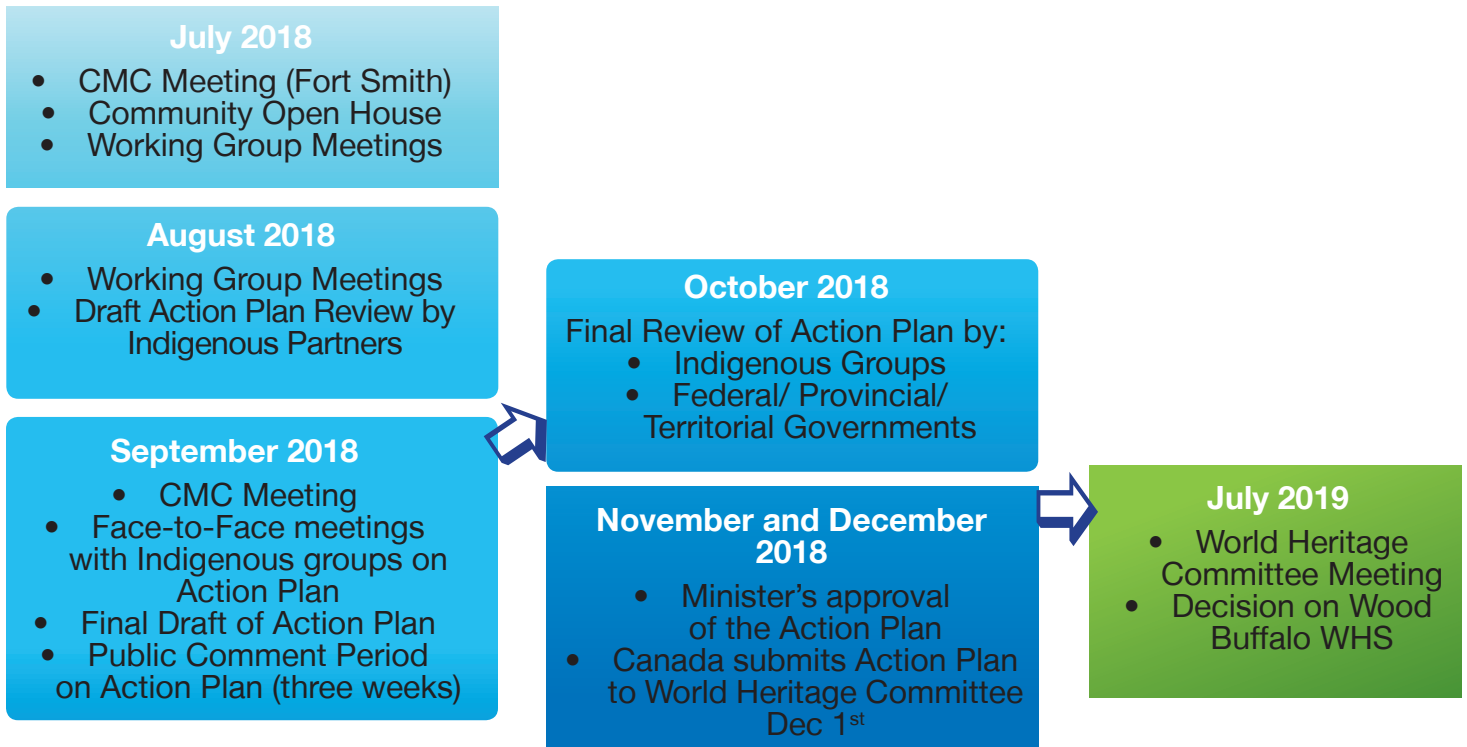
the criteria for listing WBNP as a World Heritage Site. The RMM recommendations related to the PAD call for assessing the flows that are required to sustain the ecological functioning of the PAD (Recommendation 3) and establishing better information for monitoring hydrological conditions (Recommendation 7). Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC),

with the support of Parks Canada, is bringing people together to advance work on these recommendations. A working group on the Environmental Flows and Hydrology theme has met several times, working to identify key early and long-term actions. Representatives on this working group include ECCC, Parks Canada, the 11 Indigenous partners

of WBNP, the Province of Alberta, the Province of BC and BC Hydro, and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

ACTION PLAN TIMELINE

Action Plan for the Protection of the World Heritage Values of Wood Buffalo National Park World Heritage Site



Purpose of the Action Plan

Parks Canada is committed to protecting the park's world heritage values for generations to come. A goal of developing and implementing the Action Plan is to increase the level of cooperation between different government bodies, Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders to make sure the right information is being collected, shared, reported and used in managing the park and its surrounding area.

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