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# Kouchibouguac

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

2021



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KOUCHIBOUGUAC NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2021.

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#### 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 Kouchibouguac National Park of Canada Management Plan. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders and the public of any such impacts through its annual implementation update on the implementation of this plan.

For more information about the management plan or about  
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## Foreword



From coast to coast to coast, national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas are a source of shared pride for Canadians. They reflect Canada's natural and cultural heritage and tell stories of who we are, including the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples.

These cherished places are a priority for the Government of Canada. We are committed to protecting natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places, and contributing to the recovery of species at risk.

At the same time, we continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities to ensure that more Canadians can experience these iconic destinations and learn about history, culture and the environment.

In collaboration with Indigenous communities and key partners, Parks Canada conserves and protects national historic sites and national parks; enables people to discover and connect with history and nature; and helps sustain the economic value of these places for local and regional communities.

This new management plan for Kouchibouguac National Park of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed by a dedicated team at Parks Canada through extensive consultation and input from Indigenous partners, other partners and stakeholders, local communities, as well as visitors past and present. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of cooperation.

As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the Kouchibouguac National Park of Canada Management Plan.

**Steven Guilbeault**

*Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada*



## Recommendations

*Recommended by:*

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## Executive Summary

Kouchibouguac National Park is located approximately 100 kilometres north of the city of Moncton in New Brunswick. It was officially established in 1979 as part of Parks Canada's extensive national protected area network because of its coastal landscape, its barrier islands, lagoons, rivers, marshes and Acadian forest, all representing the Maritime Plain natural region. The park sits on unceded Mi'gmaq territory where hunting, fishing, plant harvesting (including trees), habitation and trading were traditionally practiced and continue to be practiced. The park also recognizes the *Peace and Friendship Treaties* that were signed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This covenant chain of treaties were intended to establish amicable relations between Indigenous Nations, including the Mi'gmaq, and the British.

Kouchibouguac National Park is known for its long sandy beaches and campgrounds. It is also accessible year-round for a variety of activities, including the discovery of Indigenous culture practiced on the territory, and other cultures that once occupied the protected area.

This management plan builds on the key achievements since the 2010 management plan, but it also addresses the challenges facing the park today, such as the need to maintain and upgrade some of its facilities, the lack of knowledge about cultural resources in the park, and the need to maintain and strengthen relationships with local partners and communities, including the Mi'gmaq and former residents. It also addresses the impacts of climate change, including marine and coastal environments; and other environmental and external pressures that impact park management and operations.

This management plan proposes a long-term vision describing the aspirations for Kouchibouguac National Park for the next 15 to 20 years. It also presents four key strategies for achieving this vision, which include more specific and measurable objectives and targets.

**Key Strategy 1** is entitled "*A healthy and resilient park*" and aims to improve the overall ecological integrity of the park, by further documenting its environmental processes while mitigating the impacts of recreational activities and climate change.

**Key Strategy 2**, "*Kouchibouguac: a park at the forefront*," focuses on innovation in all components of the park's management and operation. Its goal is to meet the evolving expectations of Canadians and visitors toward protected natural spaces and ways to enjoy them. It also seeks to respond to recent trends in recreation, outdoor activities and tourism.

**Key Strategy 3** is entitled "*Reflection of engaged communities*." It relies on encouraging various partners such as the Mi'gmaq in New Brunswick, the Acadian community and local communities to play a larger role in the greater joint management of the park. A common understanding of the park's issues and cultural features, knowledge sharing and mutual respect will enable Kouchibouguac National Park to optimize its operations, expand its service offer and pursue its role as a major tourism partner in the region.

**Key Strategy 4**, "*Highly satisfied visitors throughout the year*," focuses on visitor satisfaction by providing a broader and enhanced range of experiences and services, available year-round, while ensuring the ecological integrity of the park. Among other things, the park wishes to position itself as a leading winter destination for outdoor enthusiasts from both near and far.



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## 1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada administers one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national historic site, national park, national marine conservation area and heritage canal 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 *Kouchibouguac National Park of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how park management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

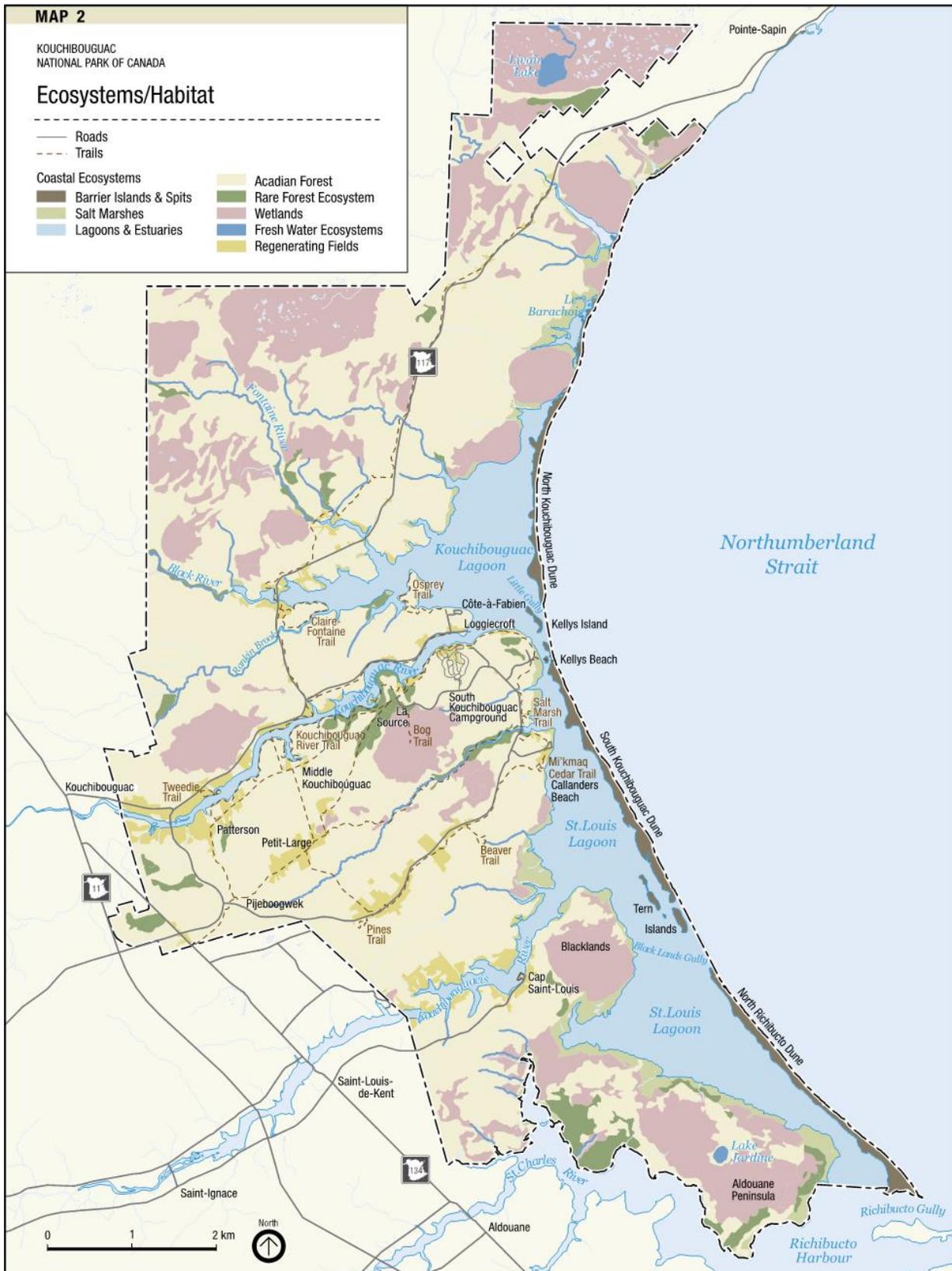
Indigenous peoples, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Kouchibouguac National Park by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement and, where appropriate, consultation, on the management of Kouchibouguac National Park in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Kouchibouguac National Park



## 2.0 Significance of Kouchibouguac National Park

Kouchibouguac National Park Reserve was created in 1969 to protect and present an area of national importance representative of the Maritime Plain natural region, one of Canada's 39 natural regions. The park was officially established in 1979. It is located in the Northumberland Strait, along the eastern coast of New Brunswick. Spanning an area of 238 square kilometres, the park protects and presents a spectacular and dynamic coastline comprised of sandy barrier islands, estuarine lagoons, tidal rivers, salt marshes, forests and bogs, as well as freshwater lakes, streams and rivers. More than 15 species protected under the *Species at Risk Act* live in the park, several of which are the focus of conservation and recovery measures, such as the piping plover, the Gulf of St. Lawrence aster, the wood turtle and certain species of bats. Designated in 2009 as a dark sky preserve, Kouchibouguac National Park also promotes the protection of nocturnal habitats for present and future generations and encourages public enjoyment and awareness of the cultural heritage of the night sky.

The park is located approximately 100 kilometres north of the city of Moncton, on unceded Mi'gmaq territory, and recognizes the *Peace and Friendship Treaties* that were signed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This covenant chain of treaties was intended to establish amicable relations between Wabanaki Nations, including the Mi'gmaq, and the British. In fact, the park's name is rooted in the Mi'gmaq word *Pijeboogwek*, or *Pigipogoek*, which means "river that flows and grows into the forest". Other interpretations of the word Kouchibouguac include "river of long tides". Since time immemorial, the Mi'gmaq have been living, hunting, fishing, harvesting plants (including trees), and trading in what is now the park. The park also presents traces of a rich human and cultural history, with more than 30 known Indigenous and four known non-Indigenous archaeological sites. A series of cultural landscapes – marked by the presence of former villages – are also found in the park, mostly linked to industrial, agricultural, forestry and fishing activities. The communities surrounding the park, namely Saint-Louis-de-Kent, Pointe-Sapin, Kouchibouguac, Richibucto, Rexton, Elsipogtog, Lno Minigog, Rogersville, Bouctouche and Tjipōgtōjg, are home to approximately 25,000 French-speaking Acadians, English-speaking people, and Mi'gmaq, most of whom are engaged in activities related to fishing, hunting, harvesting, agriculture, forestry and tourism.

Kouchibouguac National Park is operated year-round and employs some 90 people, complemented by an additional 35 students during the summer season. It is undeniably an important economic driver for Kent County, New Brunswick. In 2017, operations, visitors and infrastructure projects generated direct and indirect sales (expenditures) of more than \$26.3 million for the Kent County region and \$44.4 million for the province as a whole. These sales also had an impact on the annual gross domestic product, adding up to \$12.2 million for Kent County and \$19.2 million for the province. The park has some 350 campsites and offers 60 kilometres of cycling trails, 35 kilometres of walking trails and 45 kilometres of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails in winter. The sandy beaches also make it a popular destination. A total of 226,400 visitors came to the park during the 2019–2020 season, representing an increase of 33% since 2016.

## 3.0 Planning Context

Immediately before its creation, the territory which now forms Kouchibouguac National Park was home to 1,200 people in 228 households and seven villages. The establishment of the park and the subsequent expropriations had a significant social and economic impact on the region. Today, Parks Canada continues to recognize the history of previous Acadian and European settlers by incorporating this story in the park's interpretation products, including in an exhibit dedicated to the families of former residents in the Visitor Centre. The park also offers free entrance to its former residents and their descendants for six generations. As the only national park outside the province of Quebec being managed and operated primarily in French, expectations are that the Acadian history of the region is recognized and presented in the park.

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the Mi'gmaq had a longstanding history of occupying, utilizing and managing the land that we now know as Kouchibouguac National Park. The strong connection of the Mi'gmaq to this land remains today, as their culture continues to thrive, grow and evolve despite the hardships endured since the establishment of European colonies. Over the years, Kouchibouguac National Park and Mi'gmaq partners have developed strong working relationships, which are based upon shared values regarding conservation and stewardship of the lands and waters, ensuring their resilience and their availability for future generations.

The Memorandum of Understanding between both Parks Canada field units in New Brunswick and Mi'gmawé'l Tplu'taqnn Inc. (MTI), a group representing eight Mi'gmaq communities in New Brunswick, was renewed in 2016, whereas the one between Kouchibouguac National Park and Elsipogtog and Lno Minigog was renewed in 2015. Under these agreements, entry fees that give access to all Parks Canada protected areas in New Brunswick are waived for the Mi'gmaq in New Brunswick. In addition, these agreements facilitate collaboration with Indigenous partners for the advancement of common projects, especially in regard to (i) education and promotion, (ii) opportunities for economic development, and (iii) cultural and natural resource conservation. Several regular Mi'gmaq interpretation programs (storytelling, singing, dancing, and celebrations), special ceremonies (sweat lodges, purifications, prayers) and other major events (e.g. Mawiomi) are held in the park each year to the delight of visitors and Indigenous communities.

This document replaces the management plan published in 2010, which contained four key strategies focusing on the park's vitality, its history, its discovery by visitors using various tools, and lastly the relationships and collaborations needed to help the park carry out its mandate. A review of Appendix 1 in the 2010 plan reveals that 73% of the actions proposed have been completed and more than 90% of the remaining actions are in the process of being completed. The main achievements associated with the objectives in the 2010 plan include: the voluntary buy-back of commercial fishing licences to stabilize the populations of certain aquatic species (2006), the park's designation as a dark sky preserve (2009), the development and installation of an exhibit on former residents in the Visitor Centre (2012), the development of new interpretation programs on Indigenous culture with Mi'gmaq partners (2010–2018) and the complete reconstruction of Highway 117 and its bridges (2015–2018). A review of the 2010 management plan's implementation as well as a *State of the park assessment* (2017) revealed that Kouchibouguac has been performing well in terms of maintaining the forest's ecological integrity, external relations and visitor appreciation of its programs and services.

The park must now contend with a number of issues associated with deteriorating park infrastructure and facilities, including some secondary access roads and service buildings for visitors. The fact that the inventory of cultural resources present in the park is still incomplete also poses a challenge in the development of plans to conserve and present them. Lastly, although relations with Indigenous partners continue to improve and become better defined, maintaining and improving this special relationship involves continued, active engagement to seek mutually beneficial opportunities, especially economic opportunities, as well as increase park employees' awareness of Indigenous culture and values.

The ecological integrity of marine and coastal areas of the park are considered particularly vulnerable and will likely be under significant pressure in the decades to come. Contributing factors include: the presence and threat of new marine and terrestrial alien invasive species, the growing popularity of softshell clam and brook trout recreational fishing, the environmental pressures affecting species at risk in the park and the monitoring required to better understand and document the state of the park's ecological integrity. The fact that it is possible to access the park in multiple ways – both by land and water – is also an issue for park management in terms of responding to illegal activities (e.g. poaching), forest fires, access to protected dunes, and increased boat traffic. Peripheral development around the park must also be considered. Lastly, the park continues to be a site that is sensitive to climate change, particularly gradual sea level rise. For example, erosion rates are at an average of 1.8 metres on the shoreline of the barrier islands every year mainly due to storm surges. This new reality requires a thorough monitoring of natural processes and of park infrastructure at risk and must be considered in the park's future management direction.

## 4.0 Development of the Management Plan

A broad range of Canadians participated in the development of the Kouchibouguac National Park management plan, including Mi'gmaq partners, as well as stakeholders and partners from surrounding communities. Parks Canada engaged and consulted in various ways with Canadians at the local, regional and national levels, so they could share their interests or concerns regarding the park and express their views on its future management. Indigenous partners made significant contributions to the development of the management plan. As the draft management plan presented objectives for bringing together various partners and working with local communities, getting feedback on the proposals contained in the draft plan was of paramount importance to the Parks Canada team.

### **Engagement and consultation with the Mi'gmaq (2018–2021)**

The Mi'gmawel Tplu'taqnn Inc. (MTI) group, representing eight Mi'gmaq communities in New Brunswick, and the community of Elsipogtog, represented by the Kopit Lodge organization, were invited to participate in the co-development of new management guidelines for the park from the outset. Indeed, the first exchanges between MTI, Kopit Lodge and park staff took place in the spring of 2018, prior to the development of the draft management plan. These meetings were to identify the priorities and concerns of these groups in regard to the future management of the park.

These same organizations were also involved in drafting the management plan in 2019 to ensure that the concerns and interests of Indigenous partners in the region had been well understood and were properly reflected in the plan. The draft management plan was thus co-developed in the spirit of Indigenous rights recognition, and close attention was paid to the key principles and values that are important to Mi'gmaq peoples.

### **Stakeholders consultations (spring 2021)**

Seven consultation sessions were held on the draft management plan, via an online platform, to gather feedback from partners and organizations with an interest in the park. Nearly 50 participants representing 31 groups and organizations from the tourism, academic, scientific, economic and community sectors, including Indigenous groups, were invited to speak during these sessions, or to provide their comments and ideas in writing, on the strategies presented in the draft plan that resonated the most with them. Several underlined their interest in an increased collaboration with Kouchibouguac National Park, particularly in its visitor services offer and in scientific programs and research. Ecological integrity, showcasing the Acadian history of the park, and winter operations, were recurring themes of discussion.

### **Public consultation (March 10 to May 2, 2021)**

Due to health restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, public consultations on the draft management plan initially scheduled for spring 2020 were delayed so that alternate means of consulting with Canadians and the general public in a safe and efficient manner could be found. A summary of the draft management plan was first printed and distributed to households in the Kent and Northumberland counties for a total of 21,000 mailings. The draft management plan, as well as a survey created to measure Canadians' appreciation of the plan's proposals, were also available on the park's website between March 10 and May 2, 2021. Parks Canada staff in Kouchibouguac promoted these opportunities to provide feedback through social media, traditional media and also during virtual discussions with stakeholders. These consultations, as well as the analysis of the survey results, demonstrated strong support from partners and the public for the vision, strategies and objectives put forward for the future management of Kouchibouguac National Park. These consultations further informed the final development of the 2021 management plan for Kouchibouguac National Park.

## 5.0 Vision

The vision below represents the aspirations for Kouchibouguac National Park over the next 15 to 20 years. Development of this vision was guided by the values and perspectives of Indigenous partners, former park residents, local communities and Canadians, recognizing that Parks Canada's first priority is to protect the natural and cultural heritage of Kouchibouguac National Park. The vision outlines the desired future state of the park and will be a source of inspiration for park employees, supervisors and managers, as well as for park collaborators and partners:

*Kouchibouguac National Park has become a reference point for the advancement of scientific and Mi'gmaq Indigenous knowledge, species at risk recovery and climate change adaptation in Atlantic Canada. Because of its sustainable resource management approaches to effectively manage ecological integrity, its various ecosystems are in good health, functional and resilient. More specifically, its Acadian forest and its estuaries are protected and managed so that species and ecological processes therein can be restored and preserved.*

*Kouchibouguac National Park is also known as a vibrant place that Canadians, both locals and tourists, can enjoy throughout the four seasons. Its winter trails and paths have become as highly prized as its sandy beaches and dunes in summer.*

*The park's leadership in innovation is reflected in the services it offers to visitors, in its activities and experiences, and in the sustainable management of its assets and infrastructure. The park is a trailblazer in these areas and is often cited as an example nationally.*

*The park is also at the forefront in terms of inclusion and diversity: Integrated into a Mi'kmaq and Acadian cultural landscape, it represents a gateway to the different cultures of the region and, with its openness, fosters a true climate of reconciliation with both Indigenous and local communities.*

*Mi'gmaq and local communities are committed to working closely together to protect, promote, and present Kouchibouguac National Park and raise cultural awareness amongst Canadians.*

*By fostering participation in recreational activities in a healthy environment offering a range of outdoor opportunities and discoveries, Kouchibouguac National Park contributes to the well-being of its visitors, as well as to the environmental, economic and social vitality of the entire region.*

## 6.0 Key Strategies

The four strategies below describe the major approaches needed to guide the park's management over the next ten years in order to ultimately achieve the vision stated above. Each strategy encourages Kouchibouguac National Park to aim for high standards of excellence, while dealing with the main issues facing the park as well as new and emerging trends, and takes advantage of local opportunities for greater collaboration.

Each of the key strategies includes specific objectives as well as targets for measuring progress toward achieving those objectives in the coming years. Unless otherwise specified, all targets are intended to be achieved within the 10-year period set out in the management plan.

An annual review of the plan's implementation will be carried out in order to report on the results achieved and to engage Indigenous communities and groups, partners, stakeholders and the general public.

## Key Strategy 1: A healthy and resilient park

Parks Canada's mission in Kouchibouguac National Park is to maintain the park's various ecosystems, both aquatic and terrestrial, in good health, as well as to protect the plant and animal species that live there. This strategy will document the park's environmental processes using scientific data and Mi'gmaq Indigenous knowledge, while mitigating the impacts of recreational activities on the environment and the effects of climate change. This key strategy will support the improvement of the park's overall ecological integrity so that all can continue to enjoy and appreciate this exceptional natural environment.

**Objective 1.1:** The aquatic species that are commercially harvested or caught for recreational purposes are managed effectively and responsibly using recent scientific data and Mi'gmaq Indigenous knowledge.

### Targets

- Starting in 2022, a review of fishing quotas is conducted annually for softshell clams and every two years for brook trout.
- The softshell clam population density has reached 12 clams (minimum size of 55 millimetres) per square metre by 2030.

**Objective 1.2:** Invasive alien species are effectively monitored and controlled, in collaboration with Indigenous partners, and the introduction of new species posing a risk to the ecological integrity is limited.

### Targets

- The green crab population is monitored and managed to limit its expansion compared to numbers observed between 2017 and 2018.
- The invasion index for alien plants in the park, as reported in the Information Centre for Ecosystems (ICE) in 2017, is improved by 2023.
- The quantity of wood imported and intercepted at the entrances of campgrounds drops by 50% by 2030, using 2019 as the reference year.

**Objective 1.3:** The degree of knowledge about the representativeness and health of the Acadian forest in the park increases using Mi'gmaq Indigenous knowledge and scientific data.

### Targets

- A map presenting the park's current forest stands and their historical evolution is completed by 2023.
- At least two information sessions on the national program for the use of fire as a technique for restoring the Acadian forest are given in local communities for education and information-sharing purposes by 2030.
- The targets for the restoration of a representative Acadian forest are developed by 2028.

**Objective 1.4:** The impacts of climate change continue to be documented and is an integral part of park planning and management decision-making.

### Targets

- Sea level rise projections for the next 100 years are updated by 2022.
- A climate change adaptation plan, compiling the new important ecological integrity measures to be monitored and addressed in relation to climate change, is completed by 2023.

**Objective 1.5:** Activities related to the monitoring and the recovery of species at risk in Kouchibouguac National Park continue in accordance with the multi-species action plan.

### Targets

- By 2030, the productivity measure of the piping plover population has returned to "good" in the Information Centre for Ecosystems.

- The Atlantic salmon population in the park is maintained or increases using 2017 as the reference year.
- The status of recovered populations of the Gulf of St. Lawrence aster is assessed and monitored annually and, if necessary, their habitats are restored at the beginning of each summer.

## **Key Strategy 2: Kouchibouguac: a park at the forefront**

This strategy focuses on innovation in all aspects of the national park's management and operations. Its goal is to meet the evolving expectations of Canadians and visitors in terms of protected natural spaces and how they are enjoyed, and to address recent trends in recreation, outdoor activities and tourism. This approach is reflected in the park's current operations where priority is given to new green and energy-efficient technologies.

**Objective 2.1:** Kouchibouguac National Park is recognized for its eco-friendly operational protocols, appealing visitor experiences and sustainable management practices all taking into account ecological integrity.

### Targets

- A new backcountry campground with a small ecological footprint is available by 2030.
- More than 80% of waste containers are converted to allow for waste sorting and recycling by 2022.
- The quantity of single-use plastics used by visitors and park employees drops by 50% by 2030 using 2018 as the reference year.
- All of the park's outdoor lighting is converted to low energy-consumption bulbs and is compatible with the park's dark sky preserve status by 2025.
- Initiatives to increase public awareness on how to properly visit a national park and safely enjoy the outdoors (e.g. Leave No Trace Principles, proper trail etiquette) are better promoted.

**Objective 2.2:** Kouchibouguac National Park focuses on the health, wellness, inclusion and diversity of its visitors, stakeholders, Indigenous partners and local communities.

### Targets

- An advisory committee, comprised of health professionals, partners and other concerned community members, is set up by 2023 to promote an inclusive approach in its programs and infrastructure, and thus allow all categories of visitors to have an optimal experience.
- Three trails are accessible to people with reduced mobility by 2025.
- A four-season campground accessible to persons with reduced mobility is planned and designed by 2025.
- An annual event is held in conjunction with local multicultural groups to bring new Canadians and recently arrived immigrants to the park.

**Objective 2.3:** Kouchibouguac National Park is promoted and increasingly recognized as a place of research that contributes to conservation and scientific advances.

### Targets

- Three lectures on scientific projects conducted by collaborating academic partners and students are offered every year to visitors starting in 2022.
- The scientific projects being conducted in Kouchibouguac National Park are reported in the media at least once every year.
- A scientific and Mi'gmaq Indigenous knowledge study of buffer zones surrounding commercially operated bogs and their effectiveness in protecting the ecological integrity of a protected area is initiated by 2030.

### Key Strategy 3: A reflection of engaged communities

This strategy focuses on collaboration and commitment by all the various partners surrounding the park. A common understanding of the park's issues, knowledge-sharing and mutual respect will enable Kouchibouguac National Park to optimize its operations, expand its service offer, and continue exercising its role as a major tourism partner in the region. Over time, this strategy will enable park management and residents of the entire surrounding region to look optimistically toward the future.

**Objective 3.1:** Kouchibouguac National Park has pursued and improved its relationships with Mi'gmaq partners in a spirit of respect, collaboration and reconciliation.

#### Targets

- Current or future agreements concluded with the Mi'gmaq in New Brunswick, or other Wabanaki nations in New Brunswick, are implemented in a timely manner, and encourage a transition toward a greater role in decision-making.
- The Mi'gmaq word *Pigipogoek*, which better represents the Mi'gmaq pronunciation and meaning of the word Kouchibouguac, is incorporated into the park's operations and maps by 2030.
- A Mi'gmaq Indigenous Knowledge Study (IKS) of the park's territory is conducted in collaboration with Mi'gmaq partners by 2025.
- On site educational resources regarding the *Peace and Friendship Treaties* are developed in collaboration with Mi'gmaq partners.
- A Mi'gmaq economic development strategy is elaborated with Mi'gmaq partners in order to encourage Mi'gmaq employment and business opportunities.

**Objective 3.2:** Former residents of Kouchibouguac National Park and their descendants help commemorate the history of the park and former villages.

#### Targets

- An advisory committee made up of former residents of the park is set up by 2023 to advise the park management on how to promote the history of former villages.
- Prior to the setup of the advisory committee, terms of reference defining the relationship between the park and the committee are developed.

**Objective 3.3:** Support for the park by local communities and partners improves and new strategic partnership opportunities are pursued.

#### Targets

- The feelings of belonging and pride of Kent County residents toward the park have improved and are reflected through an increased number of visitors coming from those communities (see section 2.0).
- A strategic vision and plan are developed in collaboration with the park's adjacent communities by 2024.

**Objective 3.4:** Kouchibouguac National Park has a strategy for managing its cultural resources developed in collaboration with the Mi'gmaq, former residents and their descendants, and other partners.

#### Targets

- All known archaeological sites are characterized and evaluated by 2024.
- The preliminary inventory of cultural resources is completed by 2025 in order to better identify the park's cultural resources and their potential historical value.

**Objective 3.5:** Kouchibouguac National Park continues to support and maintain the Loggicroft and Cap Saint-Louis wharves as community bases for designated commercial fishing activities.

#### Targets

- At least one meeting with port authorities and Fisheries and Oceans Canada is held every year to discuss wharf management.
- Discussions are initiated by 2025 with port authorities and park enforcement officers to develop a compliance plan to enforce water safety regulations applicable to motorized pleasure craft and gradually reduce the number of boat launches.

### **Key Strategy 4: Highly satisfied visitors throughout the year**

Visitor satisfaction is at the core of this last strategy. The objective is to offer visitors of Kouchibouguac National Park a broader and enhanced range of year-round experiences and services grounded in the best available practices for maintaining the ecological integrity of the park. Through this strategy, and because of the region's untapped potential, the park wishes to position itself as a leading winter destination for outdoor enthusiasts, from both near and far.

**Objective 4.1:** The level of visitor satisfaction and the range of activities and accommodations are enhanced and increased.

#### Targets

- Number of visitor complaints regarding the conditions and quality of the cross-country ski trails decreases, using 2019 as the reference year.
- Visitor satisfaction with regard to the services offered is on an upward trend in the next State of the Park Assessment.
- Twenty-five existing oTENTik campsites are converted for year-round use by 2025.

**Objective 4.2:** More visitors enjoy Kouchibouguac National Park every year.

#### Targets

- Visitation numbers reach 250,000 yearly by 2030.
- The number of visitors participating in activities and events during the winter season continues to increase every year, using 2019 as a reference year.

**Objective 4.3:** Park assets and infrastructure are safe, functional and their condition is improved and maintained to support enjoyable visitor experiences.

#### Targets

- Visitor satisfaction with the condition of park facilities increases by 2030, using 2017 as the reference year.
- The Tweedie Trail located along Highway 117 is restored and reopened to the public by 2027.

**Objective 4.4:** Kouchibouguac National Park takes advantage of the Loggicroft and Cap Saint-Louis wharves to establish safe, ecological, enjoyable and educational activities open to all visitors.

#### Targets

- The possibility of offering boat tours to park visitors from the Loggicroft wharf is reassessed by 2025.
- Improvements such as parking lots, picnic areas and access to interpretation products for local residents and park visitors are completed at the Cap Saint-Louis wharf by 2030.

## 7.0 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.

Zoning is an important management tool that helps to achieve the park vision. Visitors are directed to appropriate areas of the park, while rare and sensitive ecological or cultural areas are protected. Management decisions are based on this zoning, depending on the degree of protection required for the various park ecosystems.

The zoning plan for Kouchibouguac National Park is shown on Map 3. This zoning has remained unchanged since the 2010 management plan was published because so far, it has properly preserved the specific characteristics of each sector, and has protected each sector's natural and cultural resources.

Three small areas, representing 3% of the park's territory, are designated Zone I – Special Preservation Area due to their exceptional, threatened or endangered natural or cultural characteristics that deserve the highest level of protection. The Barachois sector, the Black River valley and an Indigenous burial ground in the southern part of the park have been given this designation. Temporal Zoning I is also in effect during a certain period of the year, i.e. the piping plover breeding season on Tern Islands, Kellys Island and the southern and northern capes of the South Kouchibouguac Dune.

Zone II – Wilderness Area encompasses more than half of the park's territory (59%) with the intention of keeping it in a wild state. The Zone II designation provides a high degree of protection for the areas that are most representative of the Maritime Plain natural region. It includes most of the park's north sector, the North Richibucto and North Kouchibouguac dunes as well as the area south of the boardwalk. Motor vehicle access and traffic are not permitted in this zone.

The central part of the park is designated as Zone III – Natural Environment Area. This zoning covers 29% of the park's territory. In these natural areas, visitors can experience the park and engage in recreational outdoor activities that require few or no services and facilities. While motor vehicle access is sometimes allowed in this zone, it is controlled.

Lastly, Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation Area encompasses the areas that include the main facilities and infrastructure required to provide visitors with a wide range of activities and services, such as the administrative centre, the campgrounds, the Cap Saint-Louis and Loggicroft wharves, the day use areas, Highway 117 as well as the access roads, trails and dredged navigation channels. These areas represent 9% of the park's total area.

No part of the park has been designated Zone V – Park Services or declared wilderness area.



## 8.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

In accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* (2010), a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is performed for all management plans. The purpose of a SEA is to integrate environmental considerations into the development of policies, plans and program proposals to support environmentally responsible decision-making. This understanding contributes to evidence-based decision-making that supports ecological integrity being maintained or restored over the life of the plan. The specific projects carried out to implement the objectives of the Kouchibouguac National Park management plan will be the subject of a separate assessment to establish whether an impact assessment is necessary under the *Impact Assessment Act* (2019), or any successor law.

The SEA focuses on cumulative effects. The strategic environmental assessment for the management plan for Kouchibouguac National Park considered the potential impacts of climate change, local and regional activities around the park, expected increase in visitation and proposals within the management plan. The SEA assessed the potential impacts on different aspects of the ecosystem, including the coastal zones, the Acadian forest biome, the peatland ecosystem, species at risk or of interest using coastal zones, aquatic species at risk, and fishery resources that are, or have been, the subject of commercial, traditional or recreational fisheries.

Cumulative impacts on valued components can be mitigated through the use of strategic level mechanisms such as management objectives, land use and conservation planning, research, restoration, impact assessments at the project level, engagement and education, monitoring, regulation, and law enforcement. The current use as well as the possible needs of each mechanism were assessed for each valued ecological component identified and the results of this assessment were used to develop recommendations.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public were provided with opportunities to provide comments on the draft plan and a summary of the draft strategic environmental assessment. Comments from the public, Indigenous groups, and stakeholders were incorporated into the strategic environmental assessment and management plan as appropriate.

Many of the goals of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy align with the Agency's mandate and vision. Even though the management plan already mentions the goals of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy "Greening of Government, Healthy Coasts and Oceans, Sustainably Managed Lands and Forests, Healthy Wildlife Populations, Connecting Canadians to Nature", it is possible that other objectives will be considered when developing projects or during day-to-day operations.

The SEA revealed that the implementation of the management plan will have positive impacts, especially for fishery resources. The negative effects will be mitigated through existing mechanisms such as project-level impact assessments, research, and working in collaboration with regional partners. Although some ecological components may experience decreasing trends, the implementation of the management plan should contribute to the long-term maintenance or improvement of ecological integrity of Kouchibouguac National Park.