



## STATE OF ONTARIO'S PROTECTED AREAS

Research Conducted by Third Parties

2021

# State of Ontario's Protected Areas Indicator Report

## Research Conducted by Third Parties

This indicator provides an overview of authorized research conducted by third parties in provincial parks and conservation reserves.

### Status of the indicator



**Status:** Good



**Trend (Long-range):** Mixed

### Why it's important

One of the objectives of the PPCRA is to facilitate research in provincial parks and conservation reserves. Supporting research in these protected areas is important to scientific research in Ontario for several reasons. For example, protected areas incorporate many of Ontario's most intact natural areas, provide a wide range of research opportunities in natural settings, and offer security for long-term studies of species and ecosystem trends. Protected areas also offer a forum to communicate scientific information and to educate through structured and unstructured interpretive programs.

### How we monitor

Third-party research activities are reviewed and authorized under the PPCRA to ensure impacts from proposed research activities are adequately considered. Research activities in these protected areas are guided by zone strategies and can be authorized on an annual or multi-year basis to accommodate short- and long-term research needs.

Projects often include complex analysis of environmental, social and economic issues to assess human activity impacts and monitor ecological integrity. Many research projects involve multiple provincial parks and/or conservation reserves. Protected areas researchers consist of a broad-range of individuals, organizations and agencies from federal and provincial governments, academic institutions, consulting firms and environmental non-government organizations.

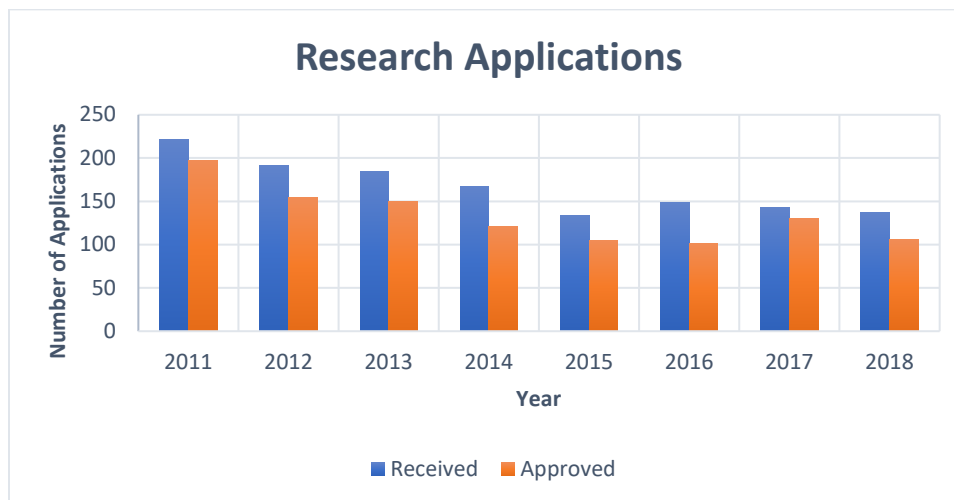
All proposed research activities within provincial parks and conservation reserves must be authorized by MECP. Applications to conduct research are available at [www.ontarioparks.com/science-research](http://www.ontarioparks.com/science-research).

Because research authorizations have been streamlined (e.g., multi-year authorizations were enabled beginning in 2014), trends in authorizations through time do not provide a full picture of actual research underway. In the future we plan to report more fully on research activities.



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## Data



## What's happening

A historical analysis of research authorizations in provincial parks showed that over 1,700 research projects were approved between 1930 and 2011. Since 2011, the trend of total number of applications received and approved has been on a decline from 222 (received) and 197 (approved) in 2011, to 137 (received) and 106 (approved) in 2018. This trend is somewhat misleading as there are currently more active research projects being conducted in provincial parks and conservation reserves than there are annually approved projects. The reason for this is that a new Research Authorization Policy approved in 2014 enabled the issuance of multi-year authorizations. In addition, the number of authorizations that apply to multiple provincial parks and conservation reserves has been increasing. As a result, each year Ontario Parks issues fewer total authorizations but hosts more ongoing research activities. For example, in 2018, 106 authorizations were approved but approximately 231 active research projects were being conducted.

Over the years, projects have included natural resource inventories, geologic mapping, evaluations of invasive species and research into species and ecosystems at risk. Of the 231 research projects active during 2018, 89% were life science studies, 10% were earth science studies and 1% were social science projects. The life science projects cover a wide range of topics, from broad-scale monitoring for the ecological framework for fisheries management and provincial-scale forest resource inventories, to site-specific investigations of wolf populations or lichen recovery. Additional examples include radio-telemetry surveillance of species at risk such as turtles and snakes, monitoring of disease-bearing vectors (i.e. ticks, mosquitoes, etc.), and earth science studies of fluvial geomorphology and stream stability.

The portion of research applications that is not approved ranges from approximately 10% to 30% in a given year. Proposed research projects may not receive authorization for reasons such as:

- applications submitted with insufficient notice for the review process to be completed;
- excessive lethal sampling or collecting;
- duplicate research being conducted;
- proposed harvesting activities for commercial reasons;
- research which conflicts with interests or rights of Indigenous communities; or
- insufficient information

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**Indicator last updated:**

August 2019

**Data source:**

Protected Areas Section, Ontario Parks

**Related links**

<http://www.ontarioparks.com/email/research>