



# Frontenac

## Management Options

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**[http://www.OntarioParks.com/english/fron\\_planning.html](http://www.OntarioParks.com/english/fron_planning.html)**

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## Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve the Frontenac Provincial Park *Management Options* document as part of the third stage of the management planning process for this park. This document identifies management considerations requiring direction through the planning process. Options to resolve these considerations are presented for your review and comment. Your feedback will be used to draft policies for the preliminary management plan that will be prepared as part of the next stage of the planning process for Frontenac Provincial Park.



 Adair Ireland-Smith  
Managing Director  
Ontario Parks

February 2007

## FRONTENAC PARK MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Ontario Parks is seeking comments from stakeholders, Aboriginal community members and the general public to assist in the preparation of a new park management plan for Frontenac Provincial Park. We encourage you to review and provide your comments on this *Management Options* document. Specifically, your preferences and ideas related to the options presented further on in this document would be appreciated and will be carefully considered during the development of the park management plan.

### What is a Park Management Plan?

Formerly called park master plans, the management plan is the document that identifies how individual parks will contribute to achieving the objectives of the provincial parks system – protection, heritage appreciation, recreation and tourism – and sets out policies that will maintain or enhance that contribution over a 20-year period. Park management plans contain policies that reflect specific resource and management needs of the park, such as classification, zoning, resource management or permitted uses. A management plan is reviewed or amended as needed to provide the flexibility to accommodate changes required by new circumstances affecting the park.

### What is the Planning Context Specific to Frontenac?

Frontenac Provincial Park originated as a park reserve in the 1960s. A park planning study was initiated in 1973, and Frontenac entered the provincial parks system as a natural environment class park the following year. Natural environment parks are defined as areas where *the emphasis is on providing high quality recreational and educational experiences in an attractive outdoor setting*<sup>1</sup>.

Over the years, several management planning and supportive documents have been prepared for Frontenac Provincial Park. The *Master Plan of Frontenac Provincial Park – 1969* was the first thorough compilation of the park's history, resources and setting. In 1974, a park management plan<sup>2</sup> was prepared; this report – *A Threshold Wilderness Concept for Frontenac Provincial Park* – developed a central theme for Frontenac, which involved introducing park visitors to outstanding natural environment experiences as an introduction to wilderness travel in other parks and more remote areas of Ontario.

A five-year review<sup>3</sup> of the park's management plan in 1981 concluded that the original plan's philosophy and direction were still appropriate. Park-specific development had not yet occurred – there were no entry fees and, apart from traditional campsites and canoe routes, the trail network was limited – and most park visitors were from the Kingston area. Despite this, annual visitation was estimated by park staff to be 7,300 visitors in

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources. 1992. *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies*. 90 pp. + appendices.

<sup>2</sup> Hough Stansbury and Associates Limited. 1974. *A Threshold Wilderness Concept for Frontenac Provincial Park* (Master Plan Report). Ministry of Natural Resources. 59 pp.

<sup>3</sup> MNR. 1981. *Frontenac Provincial Park Master Plan Review 1980-81*. 13 pp.

1980, a 60% increase over the previous two years. Park visitation continued to increase steadily, such that a 1997 background information and issues review for the park<sup>4</sup> recognized that “*shifts in the recreational market will continue to put user pressures on Frontenac lands and park management planning policies*” in the near future. Park visitation had grown to approximately 30,000 visitors annually by 1997. The park’s threshold wilderness foundation – a unique concept in southern Ontario – remained strong, unaltered and in demand.

### **A Vision for Frontenac Provincial Park**

Frontenac Provincial Park’s goal, developed in 1974, is *to provide for high quality dispersed recreation in an outstanding Natural Environment of regional significance, within the total Provincial System of Parks*. The original management plan’s vision of Frontenac as a “threshold wilderness” embodied many of the goal’s supporting objectives, including the protection and promotion of the park’s natural and cultural resources and environments while providing an alternative to developed, campground-centred and facility-intensive recreation. This park, to be promoted as an extended-use primary destination, would offer opportunities for visitors to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviour necessary for ethical, personally rewarding and environmentally sensitive recreational near-wilderness travel experiences during all four seasons.

Over 30 years later, Frontenac Provincial Park’s goal is still appropriate. The park has maintained its near-wilderness characteristics by remaining seemingly unspoiled – it still imparts wilderness moments such as silence and solitude – in a landscape dotted with evidence of human activity. Following public consultation to park management planning in spring 2005, most respondents expressed satisfaction with the park; one individual summarized this by describing Frontenac as “a very successful Natural Environment Class park; well managed and protected”. The predominant sentiment toward Frontenac Provincial Park’s management was to “keep the park as wild and as natural as possible”, which is consistent with the threshold wilderness concept.

### **A New Management Plan**

The current management plan for Frontenac, although developed over 30 years ago, has guided the park effectively around the threshold wilderness theme. The park now hosts a large network of hiking trails and paddling routes connecting several clusters of backcountry campsites. A Trail Centre off Big Salmon Lake Road serves as a year-round administrative and educational facility, while a small network of cross-country ski trails encourages winter exploration. The park’s popularity increases annually, with visitors coming from as far away as Toronto and northern New York State.

In 2002, Ontario Parks, Southeast Zone initiated the process to update and re-write the management plan for Frontenac Provincial Park. Through policy development regarding the park’s classification, zoning, boundary, access, permitted recreational activities, services, resource management and land additions, the new plan will guide the

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<sup>4</sup> Hough Woodland Naylor Dance in association with Jack B. Ellis and Associates, André Scheinman, and Gartner Lee Limited. 1997. *Frontenac Provincial Park Background and Issues Review*. 1997 Management Plan Review for Ontario Parks. 48 pp. + maps.

sustainable management of the park's resources for a 20-year time period.

Effective management of people within the park will be a crucial element of management planning for Frontenac. The new management plan for the park will need to meet visitors' expectations of Frontenac as a near-wilderness destination and, at the same time, protect the park's ecological integrity from the stress of increased visitation. A 1997 market analysis of park attendance asked whether Frontenac Provincial Park could maintain *the quality of the near-wilderness experience that its patrons expect and deserve*, identifying parking lot overflows and hiking trail and campsite erosion as some examples of the negative effects of recreational use on the park. Despite this concern, a user survey<sup>5</sup> completed three years later found that, overall, visitors were quite satisfied with conditions at Frontenac Provincial Park. For example, 91.4% of visitors were satisfied with parking in the park and 88.2% of campers did not experience crowding during their visit.

### **What are you being asked to provide comments on right now?**

The following are the main topics – not listed in priority order – that will be addressed through the management planning process. For each topic, possible options to address that topic are presented. As a result, some options may contradict other options. The reader is advised to consider all options independently, as well as to consider how a preferred option would affect others. As well, the reader is encouraged to identify other potential options. For further information on each topic, please refer to the *Background Information* document for Frontenac Provincial Park (April 2005) that details up-to-date inventory information and provides analyses of park resource data.

Each management topic will be addressed in one of two ways:

- 1) Options are proposed for topics with two or more distinctly different approaches that are feasible and could be consistent with provincial park policies and the proposed park goal and objectives. For these topics, the first option maintains the status quo.
- 2) For topics where there is only one approach consistent with provincial park policies and the proposed park goal and objectives, a policy direction will be proposed in the next stage of the planning process. These topics are listed briefly at the end of this document, and will be presented in greater detail in the upcoming *Preliminary Park Management Plan*.

The extent and location of all proposed development or site alteration will be subject to the requirements of the *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves*.

Please provide comments on your preferences for the options identified in this document. **To assist you in this process, we have provided a questionnaire at the end of this document that you can complete and send to the park.** If you have suggestions for

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources. 2002. Ontario Parks Park User Survey: Frontenac Interior Statistical Summary – 2000. Planning and Research Section, Ontario Parks. 36 pp. + appendix.

other ways of dealing with a particular topic, please provide those as well. Please note, however, that any new options presented will be screened to ensure that they are consistent with park policy and the Provincial Parks Act prior to being considered as a possible management solution.

This opportunity to provide your comments on the *Management Options* document is being made available to persons and groups on our Frontenac management planning mailing list and to the general public through media advertisements and the Environmental Registry, # PB02E3001 at: <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envregistry>.

Comments and personal information regarding this project are collected under the authority of the Provincial Parks Act to assist in making decisions. Comments and opinions that do not constitute personal information, as defined by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, will be shared among the Ministry of Natural Resources and others, as appropriate, and may be included in study documentation that is made available for public review. Personal information will remain confidential unless prior consent to disclose is obtained.

## **MANAGEMENT TOPICS WITH OPTIONS**

This section contains management options for four topics and is the focus of public review at this stage in the park management planning process. Discussion of these topics includes a brief background of each topic including a summary of related legislation and/or policy direction, a broad assessment of actual and potential impacts to park values and is then followed by the presentation of possible management options to address the topic.

The general consensus by repeat park users<sup>6</sup> is that the threshold wilderness experience of Frontenac should be maintained. As much as possible, this document presents management options that are consistent with the threshold wilderness vision of the park and its visitors, particularly in cases where facility development is proposed.

### **Park Access and Entry**

The Trail Centre is the official registration and entry point to the park and all entering vehicles must have a valid permit. Official parking areas in the park are located adjacent to the Trail Centre and at two parking lots along Salmon Lake Road. The Arab Lake parking lot is two kilometres from the Trail Centre, and is located centrally among three hiking trails. The Big Salmon parking lot is 4.5 km from the Trail Centre, and provides centralized access to the park's interior lakes and trails. A 2001 survey found that 86% of campers who parked within the park left their vehicle at Big Salmon Lake, while much smaller numbers left their vehicles at Arab Lake and the Trail Centre.

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<sup>6</sup> This consensus is based on comments received by Ontario Parks during public consultation on park management planning for Frontenac Provincial Park.

Frontenac Provincial Park experiences heavy visitation during its periods of peak use of June through August, as well as on most long weekends from spring to fall, and at opening season for lake trout and bass. Heavy day use and the trend of overnight visitors bringing additional vehicles to the park have resulted in parking lot crowding and overflow onto the narrow shoulders of Salmon Lake Road. The existing parking lot capacity does not meet current campsite capacity, nor does it meet the projected trends in day use visitation.

It is currently very difficult to monitor and assess vehicle numbers and available parking spaces in the park at a given time. Seasonal pass-holders often bypass the Trail Centre during their visits and, at times of peak use, park staff encourages visitors to park at one of three unofficial access points outside the park: Kingsford Dam, Mitchell Creek, and the Devil Lake boat launch.

Although parking at unofficial access points outside the park helps to alleviate parking lot overcrowding within the park, this also results in a loss of revenue for a park that does not charge a walk-in fee to visitors. In addition, some visitors use other unofficial park entry points that are contentious, and access through these locations is discouraged by park staff.

### **1. Is there sufficient vehicle parking space within the park to accommodate current and future visitation?**

Parking lot overflow, particularly onto the single-lane Salmon Lake Road at Big Salmon Lake, is both an inconvenience and a safety concern to park visitors and staff. The status quo of maintaining the existing parking capacity cannot continue unless overflow parking is diverted off Salmon Lake Road. However, the apparent solution – expanding parking lots or developing a new parking lot – may not be consistent with park visitors' threshold wilderness vision of Frontenac Provincial Park.

The following options seek park visitors' input on how to balance development pressure with their desire for a natural, relatively undeveloped park. The first option minimizes development while spreading parking to other areas outside the park, potentially at an inconvenience to visitors. The second option proposes development within the park for the safety and convenience of park visitors. As stated earlier, any development would be subject to evaluation under the *Class EA for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves*.

#### **Policy Alternatives:**

Option A: The existing parking capacity will be maintained. The park entrance area, where Salmon Lake Road enters the park at its boundary, will be reconfigured and a small gatehouse will be developed. On weekends, summer staff will be transferred from the Trail Centre to the gatehouse to monitor entry into the park (including traffic toward Big Salmon Lake) and issue day use permits.

During peak visitation, park staff will divert vehicles to parking lots outside the park –

such as Kingsford Dam and public boat launches – but strategies to control entry into the park will be investigated, which may include:

- Implementing a walk-in fee for visitors parking outside the park,
- Cooperating with South Frontenac Township to develop and enforce municipal parking restrictions at sites outside the park, and/or
- Partnering with local residents and cottagers' associations to discourage unauthorized park entry at non-designated access points, such as Clear Lake Road.

Option B: Parking capacity will be increased, either by expanding the existing parking lots at Big Salmon Lake or Arab Lake or by developing a new parking lot at Big Salmon Lake.

### **Camping Facilities**

Frontenac has 48 interior campsites, distributed among 13 clusters. All sites are accessible by canoe or via the approximately 160 km of interconnected hiking trails and portages throughout the park. Campsites also support winter camping.

A recent survey found that 50% of campers were out for a weekend trip and 44% were on vacation, suggesting that the park acts not just as a learning centre but as a destination in itself. The average stay at the park was reported to be two nights, and most campers visited the park during the summer months.

## **2. Should Frontenac develop a walk-in campground?**

The 1974 park management plan proposed that an unserviced campground be developed on North Otter Lake (currently Crown land but included in the planning area as a potential park addition) *to attract ... those recreationists not fully committed to interior travel and camping*. This development was identified again as a priority in the 1981 review, albeit with the caveat that the “campground may not be necessary should private accommodation be able to provide the camping experience prescribed by the master plan. With the private sector filling these roles, interior use could be sustained without a park campground”.

A campground was never developed at Frontenac Provincial Park. Currently, four private campgrounds in the vicinity of the park can service this clientele, but these are closed from mid-October to spring.

A campground within short walking distance to the Trail Centre would be useful to the park. A small walk-in campground could accommodate participants of Wilderness Skills Program courses – as well as park and Friends volunteers – who come from afar to participate in park events. Only 7.8% of interior campers had attended any wilderness skills programs at the park, suggesting that it may be difficult for interior campers to travel to the Trail Centre to attend wilderness skills programming. The campground could also serve as a staging area for visitors arriving late in the day, since access to the park by those arriving close to and after sunset has raised visitor safety concerns.

### **Policy Alternatives:**

Option A: Frontenac Park will not develop a campground. Staff will continue to refer car campers to local resorts, bed and breakfasts, and car campgrounds.

Option B: The development of a small walk-in campground (with 10 or fewer non-reservable sites) will be considered in the vicinity of the Trail Centre, as determined by a detailed site assessment and a campground feasibility study. This campground will service the clientele described above. To preserve the threshold wilderness nature of the park, this campground will be hike-in access only and will rely, as much as possible, on existing facilities – potable water, composting toilets, garbage / recycling bins and parking lot – near the Trail Centre.

### **3. Is there demand for a group campsite at Frontenac?**

None of the park's existing campsites is designed to cater to group campers. Currently, groups are required to reserve multiple campsites at a cluster for their purposes, and are required to limit the number of tents and campers on each site as per existing park regulations. These restrictions severely limit the size and cohesiveness of camping groups, and have lead visitors to request that the park provide group campsites. Also, within a cluster, vegetation is trampled and trails are formed as individuals travel between campsites, and groups occasionally disturb other campers within a cluster.

The following options seek park visitors' input on whether the park should establish a separate group camping facility or whether the existing cluster layout adequately accommodates group camping.

### **Policy Alternatives:**

Option A: Groups will continue to reserve campsites within a cluster for their purposes.

Option B: One or two areas within the park will be dedicated specifically for use by large groups. A group campsite may be an existing campsite cluster modified to provide a central gathering and cooking area, or may be created in a new location. The development of a group campsite would not prevent small groups from camping at other campsites in the park.

### **4. Is the proximity of campsites within clusters appropriate?**

Campsite clusters consist of two to four individual campsites separated by up to 50 m from each other. Some campsites within clusters are quite close together, which diminishes the near-wilderness feeling of the backcountry experience. A recent Frontenac Park user survey (2000) found that 88.2% of campers did not experience crowding; of those that did, 6.5% identified sites within a cluster as being a problem. When suggesting improvements for the park, 8.5% of visitors surveyed commented that campsites were too close together.

## Policy Alternatives:

Option A: Campsites will remain at their existing locations within each cluster. This set-up minimizes the number of privy facilities, thereby contributing a lesser environmental impact and providing easier maintenance than would isolated campsites, and maintains a smaller ecological footprint within the surrounding forest. Clustered campsites can accommodate families / couples who want their own campsite (tent pad) but who also wish to camp close to their friends.

Option B: Some campsites will be spread further apart to create a greater amount of privacy between sites within a cluster. Some campsites may remain within clusters, while others will be replaced with individual sites, *without decreasing the total number of campsites in the park*. Decommissioned campsites and access trails will undergo site rehabilitation and restoration.

## TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE PRELIMINARY PLAN

This section identifies some additional topics that will have management policies presented for public review in the next stage of the park management planning process. If there are other topics not presented here but you feel are of concern, we encourage you to identify these in your submission.

- **Boundary delineation:** In many places, the park boundary has not been surveyed. This contributes to illegal entry and other unauthorized uses in some areas.
- **Motorized boating:** Concerns with safety, pollution and aesthetics near campsites on boundary lakes could be alleviated by restricting motorized boating from bays fully enclosed by the park. Federal law does not permit this type of restriction, so the park will need to investigate other means of addressing these concerns.
- **Cultural resource protection and promotion:** Foundations, buildings, mines, fences and gates in the park are being hidden by encroaching vegetation and are rapidly deteriorating. Action could be needed to maintain the visibility of these resources, to highlight the importance of the area's history and early settlement.
- **Wildlife and vegetation management, including invasive species:** Beaver and deer have impacted park vegetation communities in recent years, and beaver activity has flooded some of the park's significant cultural and ecological resources. Invasive aquatic species, including zebra mussels, purple loosestrife and European water-milfoil, have become established in the park and present a risk to aquatic ecosystems.
- **Campsite facilities and design:** Enlarging the tent pads at the park's campsites would better accommodate campers and their tents. Campsites are not provisioned with bear hangs or food lockers, leading to concerns about impacts on adjacent vegetation and attraction of nuisance wildlife. Many campsites are heavily used, but research does not support closing sites for rehabilitation; off-site trampling and trail creation must therefore be minimized.

- **Garbage control:** Increased garbage represents a potential problem for Frontenac, especially with popular use of plastic PET bottles and Tetra Pak containers. To reduce potential hazards from broken glass and metal, some other parks with interior camping have implemented a can and bottle ban. Recently, the use of disposable propane cylinders has been discouraged within Ontario's provincial parks.
- **Recreational opportunities and promotion of winter activities:** Some park visitors have inquired about mountain biking in the park, and some have suggested that a sandy beach with a gradual slope would make day use swimming opportunities available to a wider demographic. Although visitors are generally aware that the park is open in the winter, few people make regular winter visits to the park. However, there is a demand for more cross-country ski trails, including groomed trails that cater to a range of skier ability.

### WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

Copies of management planning documents are available via the Internet at: [http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/fron\\_planning.html](http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/fron_planning.html). Print copies can be obtained from the MNR at the following locations:

Ontario Parks  
Southeast Zone Office  
51 Heakes Lane  
Kingston, Ontario  
K7M 9B1

OR

Park Superintendent  
Frontenac Provincial Park  
P.O. Box 11  
Sydenham, Ontario  
K0H 2T0

For more information about this project, please contact the Park Superintendent, Frontenac Provincial Park at the address above or by phone at 613-376-3489.



# Frontenac

## Management Options Questionnaire

Your responses to this questionnaire and any other comments you have will help us when we prepare the *Preliminary Park Management Plan* for Frontenac Provincial Park.

**Please submit your comments by Thursday, April 5, 2007.**

Comments and personal information regarding the Frontenac Provincial Park management planning process are collected under the authority of the Provincial Parks Act to assist the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) in making decisions and to determine further public consultation needs relating to the park's management plan. Comments not constituting personal information, as defined by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, will be shared among MNR and others, as appropriate, and may be included in documentation available for public review. Personal information will remain confidential unless prior consent to disclose is obtained.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do your comments represent those of an interest group?**

**If yes, please identify your association:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your interest in the park?** \_\_\_\_\_

For each topic, please check your preferred option and provide any additional comments you may have. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

**1. Is there sufficient vehicle parking space within the park?**

- Option A: Maintain the existing parking capacity but reconfigure the park entrance so that traffic flow can be monitored and diverted to areas outside the park. Increase entry control to minimize revenue loss.
- Option B: Increase parking capacity within the park.

**Comments:**

**2. Should Frontenac develop a walk-in campground?**

- Option A: A campground will not be developed.
- Option B: A small walk-in campground will be developed within the vicinity of the Trail Centre.

**Comments:**

**3. Is there demand for a group campsite?**

- Option A: Groups will continue to reserve campsites within a cluster for their purposes.
- Option B: A separate group camping facility will be developed, specifically for use by large groups.

**Comments:**

**4. Is the proximity of campsites within clusters appropriate?**

- Option A: Campsites will remain at their existing locations within clusters.
- Option B: Some campsites will be spread further apart within a cluster, or may be replaced with individual sites. This option will not decrease the total number of campsites within the park.

**Comments:**

Also, do you feel there are a sufficient number of campsites in the park? Do we need more? If so, do we need more canoe-in only sites and/or hike-in only sites? Or, have we attained campsite capacity?

**Comments:**

**Feel free add other ideas and suggestions for our consideration!**

Please return this questionnaire to:

Frontenac Provincial Park  
Box 11  
1090 Salmon Lake Road  
Sydenham, Ontario K0H 2T0

or

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Assistant Park Planner  
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FAX: 613-536-7228

***Thank you for providing your comments!***