

Approval of Changes to Ontario Parks “Phase Out” Policy

Executive Summary

Provincial park policy established in 1989 set a deadline to eliminate certain activities in some parks by December 31, 2009. This is known as the “phase out” policy. The activities are private tenure (e.g. recreation camps and agriculture), and commercial harvesting (e.g. trapping, bait harvesting, commercial fishing and wild rice harvesting). Application of the policy depends on park location, date of establishment, class and zoning. The policy does not affect Aboriginal people exercising Aboriginal or treaty rights.

In December 2009 the Ministry concluded consultation on a proposal to grant a lifetime extension for those activities due to expire on December 31, 2009. The proposal also identified exceptions where the lifetime extension would not be granted.

Changes to the phase out policy have been approved, including minor edits as a result of input received and additional clarifications made by the Ministry. A summary¹ of the approved policy is as follows:

- A lifetime extension for commercial trapping licences and private recreation camp land use permits.
- Annual extensions for bait harvesting licences, conditional on the outcome of a policy review of bait use and bait harvesting in protected areas.
- Limited exceptions where the lifetime extension will not be granted:
 - Traps where there are other commitments or a confirmed Aboriginal interest (Quetico and Woodland Caribou Provincial Parks)
 - Agricultural tenure in southern Ontario, where an extension for up to five years may be granted (i.e. until December 31, 2015), with term and conditions negotiated locally.
- Flexibility to mitigate potential impacts where there is concern for park values or ecological integrity.
- Extensions are for the current permit holder (on October 30, 2009) for as long as that person is alive.
- Transfers are not permitted except that the transfer of harvesting licences to or between Aboriginal people continues to be permitted.
- The lifetime extension is not applicable to commercial fishing or wild rice harvesting as there are no licences affected by the policy.

¹ The final policy is available on the Ontario Parks website (English only): http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/phase_out_policy.html. A decision notice is posted on the Environmental Registry, registry number 010-8203.