

ONTARIO MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ONTARIO PARKS

**PRESQU'ILE PROVINCIAL PARK - MANAGEMENT PLANNING
MANAGEMENT PLAN
ONTARIO PARKS POSITION ON MAJOR ISSUES**

October 2000

INTRODUCTION

In February 1999, Ontario Parks released the Preliminary Management Plan for Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Public interest in the Preliminary Plan was very high, and many individuals and interest groups commented on its proposals. Now that an approved Management Plan for Presqu'ile has been released, it's time for Ontario Parks to explain how it has responded to these comments and concerns.

Section 2.2 of the Management Plan lists the Preliminary Plan proposals that emerged as the most significant issues during public review. *Preliminary Management Plan: Summary of Public Response* (October 2000) provides information on how the public responded to each of these issues. This document, *Management Plan: Ontario Parks Position on Major Issues*, explains the position of Ontario Parks on each of these issues, and indicates the changes made in the approved Management Plan as a result. This document also explains the position of Ontario Parks on other specific changes advocated by five or more individual, interest group, and comment sheet respondents to the Preliminary Plan (see *Preliminary Management Plan: Summary of Public Response*).

This document is divided into two sections, the first for the most significant issues, and the second for the other changes advocated by five or more respondents. Each issue is organized as follows.

- A box includes:
 - a summary of the Preliminary Plan proposal,
 - a brief summary of public response to that proposal; for details, see *Preliminary Management Plan: Summary of Public Response*,
 - a statement of whether and how this proposal has been changed in the approved Management Plan.
- The paragraphs that follow the box explain the position of Ontario Parks. Where Ontario Parks made a change desired by most respondents, in some cases no further explanation is needed and none is provided. Where Ontario Parks didn't fully accommodate what most respondents advocated, in all cases the paragraphs explain why.

1 SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The issues in this section are listed in the order they are mentioned in Section 2.2 of the Management Plan.

1.1 Water Boundary in Presqu'ile Bay

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Expand the park water boundary in Presqu'ile Bay, as shown on Map 2 of the Preliminary Plan. Include 163 ha of park waters off the Fingers in Zone NR1, 3 ha off Calf Pasture Point in Zones NE2, and 5 ha off Calf Pasture Point and 5 ha off Salt Point in Zone NR5.*

Public Response 21% of the 147 individual and interest group respondents commented on this proposal. Of these, 81% opposed the proposal and wanted to keep the current water boundary. 61% of the 234 comment sheets submitted opposed the proposal and wanted to keep the current water boundary. As well, over 2,300 form letters were submitted opposing this proposal.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Expand the park water boundary in Presqu'ile Bay, as shown on Map 2 of the Plan. Include 84 ha of park waters off the Fingers in Zone NR1, 3 ha off Calf Pasture Point in Zones NE2, and 5 ha off Calf Pasture Point in Zone NR5.*

- Ontario Parks continues to believe that the current Presqu'ile Bay water boundary is inadequate because:
 - it does not accommodate recent and anticipated growth of the tombolo; as shown in Map 2 of the Management Plan, it leaves parts of the Fingers outside the park,
 - it is not easy for boaters to identify whether they are inside or outside the boundary,
 - it does not adequately protect vulnerable and endangered bird species in the marsh inlets.
- Some respondents argued that the proposed water boundary changes were beyond the jurisdiction of Ontario Parks and the Province. However, the Ontario Government has clear authority under the *Provincial Parks Act* to include the beds of Great Lakes waters within provincial parks. Presqu'ile's currently regulated boundary, first established in 1957, includes 235 ha of Presqu'ile Bay and Lake Ontario, and many other provincial park boundaries extend into the Great Lakes.
- The approved boundary will halve the area of Presqu'ile Bay that the Preliminary Plan proposed to include in the park. The boundary will exclude from the park almost all waters more than 1 m deep, while ensuring that all of the marsh's land area and a modest water buffer are included in the park.
- Closely related to public concerns about the boundary expansion were concerns about the proposed restrictions on motorboating within the expanded boundary. Motorboating is dealt with in Section 1.2.
- The waters around Salt Point will not be included in the park because Salt Point will not be included; see Section 1.3.

1.2 Motorboating in Park Waters in Presqu'ile Bay

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Prohibit motorboating in park waters in Zones NR1 and NR5, 173 ha in total, as shown on Map 2 of the Preliminary Plan.*

Public Response 35% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this proposal. Of these, 37% supported the proposal, 31% opposed it and wanted no more restrictions on motorboating than at present, and 31% supported some more restrictions on motorboating than at present without prohibiting it in all park waters. 67% of comment sheets opposed the proposal and wanted no more restrictions on motorboating than at present.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Ontario Parks will seek a Boating Restriction Regulation prohibiting motorboating, electric motors excepted, in the marsh inlets of Zone NR1 as shown on Map 2 of the Plan, 36 ha in total (see Section 7.4 of the Plan). (This regulation would also prohibit motorboating in Zone NR2; see Section 2.5 of this document.) Continue to permit motorboating in the rest of Zone NR1 and in Zone NR5.*

- Ontario Parks continues to believe that restrictions on motorboating are needed to protect bird nesting habitat and migration areas in the inlets of Zone NR1, over and above the current standard boat speed limits within 30 m of shore.
- The controls on motorboating proposed in the Preliminary Plan were beyond provincial jurisdiction, because at the time the Preliminary Plan was released, the planning team was not aware of recent legal developments in this field. The approved Management Plan makes clear that the proposed restrictions on motorboating in the inlets of Zone NR1 will require Ontario Parks to seek a specific Boating Restriction Regulation under the *Canada Shipping Act*. The final decision will be taken by the Canadian Coast Guard following a public consultation process. Those concerned about the proposed regulation will have every opportunity to advance their cases in that forum.
- The document *Management Plan Changes - Proposals for Discussion*, released to the public on July 13, 1999, indicated that Ontario Parks was considering a 10 km/h speed limit and no jet ski boats throughout Zones NR1 and NR5. However, on further consideration, Ontario Parks concluded that this approach was not restrictive enough in the 36 ha of inlets in Zone NR1, and unreasonably restrictive in the remaining 53 ha of the two zones.
- The area in which the Preliminary Plan proposed to restrict motorboating has been reduced by four-fifths, and some (electric) motors will be permitted in the remaining fifth. This will reduce most of the impact about which traditional users of these waters were understandably concerned, while still ensuring that the most sensitive areas of the marsh will be reasonably protected.
- The approved Management Plan states that Ontario Parks will carefully monitor boating impacts on the bird nesting habitat and migration areas of concern in Zones NR1 and NR5. If Ontario Parks is successful in obtaining the Boating Restriction Regulation described in the Management Plan, but finds that park values are still not being adequately protected, Ontario Parks may seek to amend the regulation to further restrict boating within one or both zones. This would not require a management plan amendment, but the Canadian Coast Guard public consultation process would still apply.
- Closely related to public concern about motorboating restrictions were concerns about the expansion of the park boundary within which motorboating could potentially be restricted. The Presqu'ile Bay water boundary is dealt with in Section 1.1.
- There may be some cases where natural heritage values outside the new boundary (for example, black terns nesting on floating vegetation) will need to be protected. In such situations, MNR's

Peterborough District could restrict use for periods of time under the *Public Lands Act*.

1.3 Salt Point

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Include Salt Point and surrounding waters in the park, in Zone NR5, as shown on Map 2 of the Preliminary Plan.*

Public Response 16% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this proposal. Of these, 92% opposed the proposal. 74% of comment sheets opposed the proposal. As well, over 2,300 form letters were submitted opposing this proposal.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Salt Point and surrounding waters will not be included in the park.*

- Although Salt Point will not be added to the park, it is and will remain Crown land. MNR's Peterborough District will seek to resolve any valid claims against the Crown's title to Salt Point and surrounding waters.
- MNR's Peterborough District will review current mooring and docking uses in Salt Point cove, and regularize or remove any unauthorized occupations of Crown beds of water. MNR will consider entering into a beach management agreement under the *Public Lands Act* with the Municipality of Brighton (into which the Township of Brighton and Town of Brighton will be amalgamated on January 1, 2001), whereby the Municipality could assume authority over the Crown beds of water in the cove, and issue leases and licences to individuals.
- MNR's Peterborough District will review current uses and occupations of Salt Point and regularize or remove any unauthorized uses or occupations of Crown land. MNR may restrict uses of Salt Point under the *Public Lands Act* to protect natural heritage values.
- MNR will consider entering into:
 - an agreement with the Municipality of Brighton and the Presqu'ile Point Property Owners' Association for the future partnership management of Salt Point for the benefit of the Point's natural heritage values, nearby landowners, and the general public, or
 - a lease of Salt Point to the Municipality or the Property Owners' Association.

1.4 Calf Pasture Point Boat Launch

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Close Calf Pasture Point boat launch.*

Public Response 24% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this proposal. Of these, 63% opposed the proposal. This issue was not listed on the comment sheet; there were write-in comments opposing the proposal on two comment sheets. As well, over 2,300 form letters were submitted opposing this proposal.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Same as in Preliminary Plan.*

- Facilities at the present launch are inadequate, and the launch cannot be used effectively without substantial, costly dredging.
- The document *Management Plan Changes - Proposals for Discussion* indicated that Ontario Parks was considering allowing a replacement launch to be developed on a partnership basis, if the partners could show that development, operation, and maintenance of the launch would be economically viable and not place an undue financial burden on Ontario Parks. However,

on further consideration, Ontario Parks concluded that there was almost no chance that any partner would be able to meet these conditions, and that leaving this possibility open would only create unrealistic expectations. Also, Ontario Parks concluded that Calf Pasture Point is too close to Zones NR1 and NR5 for the present launch to be improved or a new one developed without unacceptable risk to the very highly significant bird migration values protected in those zones.

- Park visitors will continue to be free to carry in and launch cartop boats such as canoes, sailboards, and small outboards anywhere along the shoreline of Zone NE2. Park visitors may also use the Municipality of Brighton's launch about 1 km east of the park entrance.

1.5 Beach Management

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Include the 1.2 km of sand beach currently managed for recreation in Zone NE1, with the beach to the north in Zone NR3 and the beach to the south in Zone NR2. Detailed prescriptions for managing the Zone NE1 beach for both recreation and migrating birds were provided in the Zone NE1 description in Section 5.4 of the Preliminary Plan.*

Public Response 24% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this proposal. Of these, 54% supported managing the beach more for recreation and less for bird migration than the proposal would. 57% of comment sheets supported managing the beach mainly for recreation. As well, over 2,300 form letters were submitted supporting managing the beach more for recreation and less for bird migration.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Include the 1.2 km of sand beach currently managed for recreation in Zone NE1, with the beach to the north in Zone NR3 and the beach to the south in Zone NR2. Detailed prescriptions for managing the Zone NE1 beach for both recreation and migrating birds are provided in Section 5.4.1 of the Plan. The major differences from the Preliminary Plan policies are:*

- *The Plan makes clear that the entire length of the Zone NE1 beach, from the water's edge to about 10 m in front of the dunes, will be managed to maintain optimal recreational conditions during the "management seasons".*
- *The "management seasons" are June 8-August 15 on Beach 4, and June 8-Labour Day on the remaining 1.0 km of beach.*
- *During the management seasons, the beach will be raked daily or as required to maintain optimal conditions, and the raked material removed.*
- *The Preliminary Plan statement, "the width of beach managed primarily for recreational use will be reduced further", was deleted.*
- *The Preliminary Plan reference to "stockpiling raked material and redistributing it on the beach in spring and fall" as an experimental management technique was deleted.*
- *The Plan makes clear that the Zone NE1 beach will be fully open to the public year round, except for:*
 - *emergency closures,*
 - *outside the management seasons only, possible restriction of access to limited areas of the beach for limited times, where and when critical to bird migration.*

- Ontario Parks believes that with these changes, the beach management policies reflect a balance appropriate to the mix of recreational and natural heritage values on the beach.
 - Except for emergency closures, beach recreation and completely open access will take priority on the core beach during the peak use period.
 - On the core beach, public access and use will normally have priority in the rest of the year, but may be limited in special situations to protect natural heritage values.

- On those parts of the beach that are zoned nature reserve because of their natural heritage values, those values will take priority, but as long as those values are not impaired, public access and use will be permitted.
- Some respondents supported rezoning the beach from natural environment and nature reserve to development.
 - Zoning the managed beach - water, sand, foredunes, and recreational access - as natural environment means that it will be managed so that its important values are properly looked after. The single natural environment zone recognizes the beach's recreational importance as well as its natural heritage values, particularly its dune landforms and bird migration areas, and will ensure that the beach is managed in an integrated fashion.
 - The beach areas within Zones NR2 and NR3 have not been managed for several years. These areas were always less used by the public, and the Zone NR2 beach area is as much mud as sand. The significant natural heritage values of these beach areas are described in Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 of the Management Plan.
- Some advocates of rezoning the beach argued that it is Ontario Parks policy that all provincial parks have their recreational beaches in a development zone. This is not so. The descriptions of natural environment and development zones in provincial parks policy certainly point towards recreational beaches being zoned development in most cases, but the wording is open to interpretation and adaptation to specific situations. While most parks' major recreational beaches are zoned development, there are at least three other cases of approved natural environment zoning of recreational beaches: Inverhuron Provincial Park (management plan approved 2000), Long Point Provincial Park (1989), and Pancake Bay Provincial Park (1988). Like at Presqu'île, these parks' swimming beaches are backed by significant coastal dune landforms and vegetation, and in each case their beach, dunes, and offshore waters are in a single natural environment zone.
- Some advocates of rezoning say that natural environment zoning is too restrictive. Natural environment zoning does restrict development, but all types of recreational development currently in Zone NE1 (change houses, comfort stations, temporary picnic shelters, small food concession building, trails) are generally permitted by provincial parks policy and are specifically permitted in the Preliminary Plan. Natural environment zoning does not restrict any beach recreation activity normally permitted on provincial park beaches (swimming, walking, picnicking, motorboating, canoeing, sailboarding, sport fishing, etc.).

1.6 Picnic Shelter North of Park Store

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Include the picnic shelter north of the park store in Zone NR1. Remove the shelter and restore this area to its original condition (see Preliminary Plan, Section 5.2, Zone NR1 description).*

Public Response 10% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this proposal. Of these, 53% opposed the proposal. This issue was not listed on the comment sheet, and there were no write-in comments about the proposal.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Same as in Preliminary Plan; see Section 5.2.1 of the Plan.*

- Ontario Parks continues to believe that protecting the panne, the extremely significant natural environment in which the picnic shelter is located, has to take first priority.
- The nearby park store (in Zone D3) would not be located in the panne if it were being developed today. There was substantial support during the management planning process for

removing the store as well as the picnic shelter. The Management Plan policies on development in this area are a compromise. Confining future development to Zone D3, which includes the store and the smallest possible access and service area around it, will minimize disturbance to the panne, while protecting a hard-to-replace capital investment.

- In the approved Management Plan, the policies for Zone D3 have been changed to indicate that picnic facilities may be developed around the store as required, and the zone itself has been slightly enlarged. If picnic facilities are developed in Zone D3 on the north side of the store, they would be only about 125 m farther from Beach 4 than the current shelter is, and the same distance closer to the store.
- The park currently rents temporary canopy shelters for group picnicking for the same fee as permanent shelters. Temporary shelters are and will continue to be permitted in the beach parking lots or on the managed beach proper. Table 1 of the Management Plan has been changed to recognize and continue to allow this use in Zone NE1.

1.7 Cormorant Management

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Although the general wildlife management policies in Section 6.5 allowed cormorant populations to be managed, there was no specific reference to cormorants in the Preliminary Plan.*

Public Response 19% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this issue. Of these, 93% supported including a specific cormorant control policy in the Management Plan. 87% of comment sheets supported reduction of "problem" wildlife populations such as cormorants, and there were write-in comments on four comment sheets advocating a controlled public hunt for cormorants. As well, over 2,300 form letters were submitted supporting some form of cormorant control.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Develop a cormorant management strategy, dealing with cormorant impacts on specific park values (vegetation, terrestrial habitat, and other bird species). See Section 6.5 of the Plan.*

- Whether there should be any control of cormorants targeted at their impacts on fish will be addressed by MNR on a Lake Ontario-wide basis, independent of the park management planning process.
- It is not legal to hunt cormorants in Ontario.

1.8 Changing Municipal Official Plans

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Recommend to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing that the Township of Brighton and Town of Brighton be asked to amend their official plans to appropriately identify the park's lands and waters, so that the impacts of development near the park are assessed in accordance with provincial policy (see Section 4.1 of Preliminary Plan).*

Public Response 6% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this proposal. Of these, 56% opposed the proposal. This issue was not listed on the comment sheet, and there were no write-in comments about the proposal.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Recommend to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing that the Municipality of Brighton be asked to ensure that its official plans appropriately identify the park's lands and waters, so that the impacts of new development near the park are assessed in*

accordance with provincial policy (see Section 4.1 of Plan). This is the same policy as in the Preliminary Plan, with some clarifications.

- MNR continues to believe that as a provincial resource management agency, it is obliged to seek to implement the Provincial Policy Statement under the *Planning Act* and in accordance with MNR's *Natural Heritage Reference Manual*, June 1999.

1.9 Community Involvement in Plan Implementation

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Pursue a continuing liaison between the park, local municipalities, and community organizations on issues of mutual interest. Establish a Presqu'ile Heritage Forum of individuals knowledgeable about the park's heritage to advise Ontario Parks on and assist with natural and cultural heritage aspects of management plan implementation (see Section 9.2 of Preliminary Plan).*

Public Response Two individual and interest group respondents advocated a permanent citizens' committee with greater scope than the Preliminary Plan proposal. This issue was not listed on the comment sheet, and there were no write-in comments about the proposal. However, concerns about community involvement in management plan implementation lay beneath many of the comments made on other issues.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Establish a Presqu'ile Forum to formalize liaisons among the park, the community, and individuals and groups that value the park's heritage. The Forum will advise Ontario Parks on and assist with issues of mutual interest, and aspects of management plan implementation related to natural and cultural heritage and recreational opportunities. The Municipality of Brighton, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, and various named community organizations will be invited to appoint representatives, while Ontario Parks will appoint individuals knowledgeable about the park's heritage. Ontario Parks may also establish liaison groups independent of the Forum to help with specific issues for a short time (see Section 9.2 of the Plan).*

1.10 Waterfowl Hunting

Preliminary Plan Proposal *None. Section 2.5 of the Preliminary Plan quotes the February 18, 1998 recommendation of the Ontario Parks Board to the Minister, the Hon. John Snobelen, that the Plan should phase out waterfowl hunting over no more than five years, provided MNR develops alternative waterfowl hunting opportunities in partnership with conservation organizations. The Preliminary Plan indicated that a committee would be established to advise the Minister on the implementation of this recommendation.*

Public Response 52% of individual and interest group respondents commented on this issue. Of these, 66% supported ending the waterfowl hunt, 17% with no conditions or fewer conditions than recommended by the Ontario Parks Board. 57% of comment sheets opposed implementing the Ontario Parks Board recommendation to end the hunt.

Approved Management Plan Policy *The committee referred to in the Preliminary Plan was established and provided its advice to the Minister in May 2000. Waterfowl hunting will continue until up to five years after alternative waterfowl hunting opportunities have been established outside the park, at which time hunting in the park will be ended without amending the Plan. Under no circumstances will the duration or the extent of the hunt be increased (see Section 6.5 of the Plan).*

- The Minister accepts in principle and supports the implementation of the Ontario Parks Board recommendation of February 18, 1998. The committee appointed by the Minister in April 1999

to advise him on the feasibility of implementing this recommendation has recommended Sawguin Creek Marsh, in Muscote Bay between Belleville and Picton, as a suitable replacement site. Early in 2001, MNR will consult with the County of Prince Edward, landowners, the hunting community, and current Presqu'ile waterfowl hunters about the acceptability of this alternative site.

2 OTHER PROPOSED CHANGES

The proposed changes in this section are listed in order of the number of individual, interest group, and comment sheet respondents advocating them.

2.1 Park Classification

Preliminary Plan Proposal Continue to classify Presqu'ile as a natural environment park.

Public Response 15 individual and interest group respondents advocated classifying the park as a recreation park, zoning the park mainly for recreation, and/or managing the park mainly for recreation. This issue was not listed on the comment sheet, and there were no write-in comments about the proposal. As well, over 2,300 form letters were submitted that expressed concern about the plan shifting the park's management direction away from recreation.

Approved Management Plan Policy Same as in Preliminary Plan.

- Some who argue for reclassifying Presqu'ile say that it is too small to be a natural environment park. The park is currently 894 ha and, with the boundary changes in the approved Management Plan, will expand to 974 ha. Provincial parks planning and management policies state that natural environment parks that represent their site districts in achieving provincial representation targets should be at least 2,000 ha. The policies clearly exempt from this minimum size parks in southern Ontario where it is not possible to designate enough Crown land or acquire enough private land to meet the standard.
- There are many other long established natural environment parks in southern Ontario that protect important natural heritage and provide outstanding recreational opportunities within areas of less than 2,000 ha: for example, Sandbanks (1,510 ha), Murphys Point (1,239 ha), Silent Lake (1,450 ha), Killbear (1,756 ha).
- Ontario Parks continues to believe that Presqu'ile clearly fits all other provincial parks policy criteria for a natural environment park, and clearly does not meet the criteria for any other class. Though small, Presqu'ile is, as described on the Approval Statement page of the Management Plan, noted for its extreme natural diversity in so small an area.
- Presqu'ile has been classed natural environment since provincial park classification was introduced in 1967. Ontario Parks is not aware of any significant concern or controversy about Presqu'ile's classification before 1999.

2.2 Reducing Deer Population by a Controlled Public Hunt

Preliminary Plan Proposal Reduce the deer population by shooting. All deer population reduction will be undertaken directly by Ontario Parks, or through partnerships under the supervision of Ontario Parks. Section 6.5 of the Preliminary Plan does not provide any further detail on who will undertake reduction and how they will do it.

Public Response 27% of individual and interest group respondents commented on deer population reduction. Of these, 92% supported reduction, 26% specifically by a controlled public hunt. The issue of how population reduction should be undertaken was not listed on the comment sheet; there were write-in comments specifically advocating a controlled public hunt on eight comment sheets.

Approved Management Plan Policy Same as in Preliminary Plan; see Section 6.5 of the Management Plan.

- The eventual decision of Ontario Parks on who will undertake reduction and how they will do it must reflect not only what works best for Presqu'île, but also provincial policy and MNR's experience with deer herd reduction in Pinery and Rondeau Provincial Parks.
- Some reduction methods may be more appropriate for initially reducing the deer population, and others for maintaining it near target levels over the long term.

2.3 Gull Management

Preliminary Plan Proposal Although the general wildlife management policies in Section 6.5 allowed gull populations to be managed, there was no specific reference to gulls in the Preliminary Plan.

Public Response 10 individual and interest group respondents advocated including a specific gull control policy in the Management Plan. 87% of comment sheets supported reduction of "problem" wildlife populations, but gulls were not given as an example, and there were no write-in comments about this issue.

Approved Management Plan Policy Same as in Preliminary Plan.

- There is no evidence at this time that gulls are adversely affecting park values or beach use. If it becomes evident in the future that such impacts are occurring, the wildlife management policies in Section 6.5 of the Management Plan provide the park with considerable authority to control animal populations as needed to protect human health and safety or park values.

2.4 Park Store

Preliminary Plan Proposal Renovate and modestly expand the park store in Zone D3.

Public Response Eight individual and interest group respondents advocated not expanding the park store, relocating it within the park, or removing it from the park. This issue was not listed on the comment sheet; there were write-in comments advocating removing the store on one comment sheet.

Approved Management Plan Policy Same as in Preliminary Plan.

- The reasons for renovating and modestly expanding the store are given in Section 1.6 of this

document, and in greater detail in Section 2.8 of the Preliminary Plan.

2.5 Water Boundary and Motorboating in Lake Ontario

Preliminary Plan Proposal *Expand the Park water boundary in Lake Ontario, as shown on Map 2 of the Preliminary Plan. Include all park waters off the beach in Zone NE1, those off Owen Point and the islands in Zone NR2, and those off the south shore in Zone NE3. The areas of Lake Ontario to be included in the park would be 18 ha in Zone NE1, 143 ha in Zone NR2, and 49 ha in Zone NE3. There would be no motorboating in Zone NR2.*

Public Response Four individual and interest group respondents advocated keeping the current Lake Ontario water boundary, one advocated removing all waters from the park, and one advocated allowing motorboating in Zone NR2. 61% of the 234 comment sheets submitted wanted to keep the current water boundaries of the park; though the comment sheet asked respondents about all water boundaries, the focus of public concern was almost entirely on Presqu'ile Bay, and there were no write-in comments about the Lake Ontario boundary or motorboating in Zone NR2.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Same as in Preliminary Plan, with the clarification that Ontario Parks will seek a Boating Restriction Regulation prohibiting motorboating in Zone NR2.*

- Ontario Parks continues to believe that the current Lake Ontario water boundary is inadequate because:
 - it does not accommodate recent and anticipated growth of the tombolo; as shown in Map 2 of the Management Plan, the boundary comes right up to the beach shoreline at one point,
 - it is not easy for boaters to identify whether they are inside or outside the boundary,
 - it does not adequately protect vulnerable and endangered bird species.
- The Zone NR2 waters around Owen Point and the islands are much less suitable for navigation, sport fishing, and pleasure boating than Presqu'ile Bay is, but these waters and the lands they surround are extremely significant bird habitat. For many years, most of this zone has been designated under the *Wilderness Areas Act* and public access to the islands has been prohibited from March 10 to September 10.
- The Management Plan does not restrict motorboating in Zones NE1 and NE3 in any way.
- General issues about the legality of water boundaries are discussed in Section 1.1.

2.6 Reopening Former Channel East of Owen Point

Preliminary Plan Proposal *The Preliminary Plan did not propose any action to reopen and dredge the channel that used to exist between Owen Point and High Bluff campground.*

Public Response Three individual and interest group respondents advocated reopening and dredging this channel to improve beach water quality. This issue was not listed on the comment sheet; there were write-in comments advocating reopening and dredging the channel on three comment sheets.

Approved Management Plan Policy *Same as in Preliminary Plan; this area will be left in its natural state.*

- This channel separated Owen Point, which was then a shoal or island, from the present High

Bluff campground to the east. The park installed a boat docking facility on the campground side of the channel in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The channel and docking facility silted up by the late 1970s.

- According to the research report on park landforms used in preparing the Management Plan, *The Geomorphology of Presqu'ile Provincial Park*, 1989:
 - The first dependable map of Presqu'ile, an Admiralty chart of 1815, shows the peninsula extending west without interruption to High Bluff Island. This was obviously later breached in several places by erosion, storms, and/or water level changes.
 - Since the first air photographs were taken in 1929, when the former channel was wide, the beach has grown to the west about 200 m in this area, or 3 m per year on average.
 - "In terms of landscape evolution [this] is one of the most dynamic sites in the park Although the changes of, and variability in, shoreline form around Owen Point have been documented, the precise processes that cause these changes are not fully understood. . . . Until the processes operating at this site are better understood it is difficult to accurately address its sensitivity."
- The westward growth and infilling of the beach is a natural process, and may be part of a long term cyclical process of breaching and infilling from the peninsula to High Bluff Island. The whole area is included in Zone NR2 on the basis of its natural heritage values. Interference with poorly understood natural processes that are part of those values would be contrary to the mandate of Ontario Parks and should only be allowed in exceptional situations.
- Dredging has adverse impacts of its own on water quality and aquatic habitat, and would likely have to be repeated regularly. Any new channel would have infilling problems similar to those experienced with the former channel. Channel alteration and dredging are not permitted in nature reserve zones.
- Water quality at the managed beach has been tested regularly for decades, as required at all provincial park recreational beaches. The beach has been posted six times in the last 20 years. There is no evidence that water quality has deteriorated as a result of the infilling of the channel east of Owen Point. Water quality in Popham Bay is also greatly influenced by sources outside the park, over which Ontario Parks has no control.
- The area's bird populations have been mentioned by dredging advocates as affecting water quality. However:
 - Waste from birds nesting on the islands is flushed by the prevailing currents away from the beach, into the deeper waters of the lake.
 - Migrant shorebirds generally use the beach before and after the peak beach use season.
 - Sizeable populations of Canada geese appeared on the beach in 1999 and 2000, and may have affected water quality during the peak use season. An intervention strategy cannot be justified, however, on the basis of what is so far a short term phenomenon. Ontario Parks will continue to monitor the situation. If it becomes evident in the future that adverse effects are persisting, the wildlife management policies in Section 6.5 of the Management Plan provide Ontario Parks with considerable authority to control animal populations as needed to protect human health.