

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES within Ontario's Protected Areas

In 2007, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act (PPCRA) came into effect. One of its objectives for both provincial parks and conservation reserves is to "facilitate scientific research and provide points of reference to support monitoring of ecological change on the broader landscape".

With this emphasis on scientific research as a key part of the protected areas mandate, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) conducted a Protected Areas Research Needs Survey of its protected area management and staff in 2010 to identify the types of scientific research necessary to fulfill this PPCRA objective.

The survey sought the opinions of a broad spectrum of MNR employees associated with Ontario's provincial protected area system. These included park superintendents, planners, marketing and natural heritage education specialists, information experts, and both natural and social scientists.

Top 10 Research Needs

As Identified in the Protected Area Research Needs Survey

Protected Areas Values Monitoring

Long-term, standardized, multi-disciplinary, multi-species monitoring to serve as a benchmark for the landscape.

Human Use Impacts

Research regarding the potential impacts of recreational uses within protected areas. Examining how the permissible/non-permissible uses within protected areas may be adversely impacting ecological integrity.

Invasive Species

Research which would improve the ability to manage the impacts of invasive species, including: improved understanding of their autecology; their method of spread; methods of control; their complex interactions within ecosystems.

Protected Area Selection: Representative Ecosystems

Research on ecosystem representation including alternative approaches in light of new knowledge, new data, and climate change.

Fish Populations

Research on the population dynamics of the fish populations found within protected areas, their vulnerabilities, and their contribution to fish populations within the landscape as a whole.

Ecological Integrity

Research on how to determine whether ecosystems within protected areas are being managed such that their ecological integrity is being maintained.

Public Understanding of Protected Areas

Research on effective communication of Ontario's protected area protection mandate to the public, as well as research on the public's understanding of Ontario protected areas.

Understanding Protected Areas in Landscape Context and the Impact of Adjacent Uses

Research on the need to understand the unique roles that protected areas play within landscapes, as well as research on the impact of adjacent land uses on protected areas.

Ecosystem Restoration

Research on effective restoration of degraded ecosystems to a healthy condition, with specific focus on techniques to restore impacts associated with park-related activities.

Deer Management

Research on the effective management of white-tailed deer populations in protected areas to mitigate their impacts on tree recruitment and native plant species.

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Conducting Research Within Ontario's Protected Areas

The Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section is responsible for administering protected area research relating to the geological, biological, cultural and social sciences.

All proposed research activities within provincial parks and conservation reserves must be authorized by MNR. The Research Authorization Policy for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves sets out the guidelines for the review and authorization of research in provincial parks and conservation reserves.

The impacts of proposed research activities on protected areas resources, features, staff and visitors are considered as part of this review.

Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserve Objectives

Provincial Parks

Ecological Integrity

Ecologically Sustainable Recreation

Natural and Cultural Heritage Education

Research and Monitoring Opportunities



Conservation Reserves

Ecological Integrity

Ecologically Sustainable Land Uses

Research and Monitoring Opportunities

Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006

Research Partnerships

MNR program areas including Ontario Parks, Science and Research Branch, Regional Operations Division, Aviation and Forest Fire and Protected Areas Policy work together to help identify and fulfill protected area research needs.

MNR is a contributing partner of the Centre for Applied Science in Ontario Protected Areas (CASIOPA) and a member of the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas (CCEA). Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section leads the MNR presence in these partnerships.

MNR works in partnership with researchers from several Ontario universities and welcomes additional collaborative research partnerships with academic groups and other interested Organizations

Visit the CASIOPA website
www.casiopa.mediamouse.ca

Visit the CCEA website
www.ccea.org

For questions about research in Ontario's protected areas, email
pa.science@ontario.ca



To download a copy of the full Research Needs Survey Report, visit:

www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Parks/2ColumnSubPage/RESEARCH_NEEDS_REPORT_SUMMARY.html

Apply to do research online: www.ontarioparks.com/email/research