1.0 Purpose and Application

Subsection 2(2) of Ontario Regulations 347/07 and 319/07 under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, states that except with written permission of the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager, no person shall conduct research in a provincial park or conservation reserve.

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the review and authorization of appropriate research in provincial parks and conservation reserves, and to ensure that the impacts of proposed research activities on protected area resources, features, staff and visitors are adequately considered. Additional direction can be found in Research Authorizations for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Procedure (Procedure PM 2.45.01).

This policy applies to recommended and regulated provincial parks and conservation reserves, and proposed and recommended additions thereto.

2.0 Scope of Authorization

Letters of authorization issued under this policy represent approval under the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006*. Such letters do not represent authorization under any other legislation (e.g. *Endangered Species Act, 2007*) that may apply.

For example, any proposed research that involves the handling of vertebrate species also requires a Wildlife Scientific Collectors Authorization under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997*. Work with species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List, or their habitat, may require a permit under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007*. Other permits, such as those required for archaeological work, may impose additional requirements and conditions on the research.

3.0 When a Research Authorization Letter Is Required

A research authorization letter is required for any investigation, assessment, inventory, monitoring or studies of natural, cultural, archaeological, social, recreational, economic, management and/or...
other features and characteristics of protected areas that involve fieldwork, specimen collection, and/or have the potential to disturb resources, users, or staff within a protected area.

Research activities that do not physically occur in a protected area, but that require information related to Ontario protected areas that is not publicly available from the Ministry of Natural Resources, require authorization under this policy. For example, surveys of protected area staff require an authorization.

Activities for personal enjoyment or recreation, that do not involve handling, collecting, or otherwise disturbing natural, cultural or social features, do not require authorization.

Researchers conducting research under contract with MNR will receive authorization as part of an endorsed consulting agreement.

The responsible manager (e.g., provincial park superintendent, conservation reserve manager) may provide authorization to his or her staff to carry out scientific activities within the protected areas without requiring a research authorization letter. Staff must comply with the conditions normally associated with research authorizations within the protected area.

3.1 Who is Eligible

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) shall make efforts to accommodate all reasonable requests from eligible applicants. Applications to conduct research will be considered from individuals and their assistants. Applications from individuals affiliated with a school, college, university, museum, provincial park friends group or cooperating association, government agency, consulting firm, non-governmental organization, Aboriginal communities or organizations, or scientific agency, and from individuals not affiliated with an institution, will be considered.

In the case of student researchers, any approval issued will be through the professor or supervisor of the project.

4.0 Class Environmental Assessment

The Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves (Class EA PPCR) identifies conducting authorized research as a Category A project, indicating the low potential for negative effects normally associated with research projects. The option is available to screen a research project if it presents some potential for concern or negative impact.

Any additional projects associated with research activities (e.g., construction of associated facilities) are subject to the Class EA PPCR and the associated requirements.

1 Technically, research, including inventory and monitoring, is exempt from the Environmental Assessment Act. However, the MNR recognizes the importance of considering the potential need for additional evaluation.
5.0 Application to Conduct Research

The researcher shall complete an application to conduct research provided by the MNR to begin the process. This application to conduct research is available online (English and French) at http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/form2.html. The application form may be updated as needed, without an update to this policy.

Should the researcher wish to obtain Ministry of Natural Resources data for use within their research, they must also submit a request for a data sharing agreement. The researcher must submit this request to the appropriate zone ecologist or district biologist.

6.0 Review

This section outlines the responsibilities for reviewing and authorizing applications to conduct research, and the criteria used to evaluate research applications.

6.1 Responsibilities for Review and Authorization of Research Applications

The review coordinator outlined in the table below is responsible for coordinating the review of the application.

Review of the application may involve several individuals depending on the number and location of protected areas where the research is proposed to be conducted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Research Project</th>
<th>Review Coordinator</th>
<th>Review</th>
<th>Responsible Manager for Authorization²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Single Provincial Park   | Zone Staff (as appropriate) | • Zone staff (as appropriate)  
• Park Superintendent and staff (as appropriate)  
• Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate) | Park Superintendent or Zone Manager |

² As specified in Ontario Regulations 347/07 and 319/07, written permission must be provided from the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager. This written permission may take the form of internal document (email) on file with the review coordinator, with a single authorization letter issued to the researcher by the responsible manager outlined in this table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Research Project</th>
<th>Review Coordinator</th>
<th>Review</th>
<th>Responsible Manager for Authorization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Provincial Parks in Single Zone</td>
<td>Zone Staff (as appropriate)</td>
<td>• Zone staff (as appropriate) • Park Superintendents and staff (as appropriate) • Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate)</td>
<td>Zone Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Provincial Parks in Multiple Zones</td>
<td>Protected Areas Research Analyst</td>
<td>• Zone staff (as appropriate) • Park Superintendents and staff (as appropriate) • Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate)</td>
<td>Manager, Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Conservation Reserve</td>
<td>Natural Heritage Specialist</td>
<td>• District Biologist/ Ecologist/ Planner (as appropriate) • Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate)</td>
<td>Conservation Reserve Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Conservation Reserves in Single District</td>
<td>Natural Heritage Specialist</td>
<td>• District Biologist/ Ecologist/ Planner (as appropriate) • Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate)</td>
<td>Conservation Reserve Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Conservation Reserves in Multiple Districts in Single Region</td>
<td>Natural Heritage Specialist</td>
<td>• District Biologist/ Ecologist/ Planner (as appropriate) • Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate)</td>
<td>Regional Planning Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Conservation Reserves in Multiple Regions</td>
<td>Protected Areas Research Analyst</td>
<td>• District Biologist/ Ecologist/ Planner (as appropriate) • Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate)</td>
<td>Manager, Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Size of Research Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province Park(s) and Conservation Reserve(s)</th>
<th>Protected Areas Research Analyst</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Review Coordinator
- Natural Heritage Specialists
- District Biologist/ Ecologist/ Planner (as appropriate)
- Zone staff (as appropriate)
- Park Superintendents and Staff (as appropriate)
- Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section staff (as appropriate)

#### Responsible Manager for Authorization
- Manager, Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section

Other MNR staff may provide additional review to ensure appropriate subject matter expertise. In addition, the MNR may consult with outside academic, government, partners, First Nation communities or other agencies/individuals when necessary to ensure appropriate subject matter expertise (e.g., cultural and archaeological topics).

### 6.2 Review Criteria

As stated in the Ontario Regulations (347/07 Provincial Parks: General Provisions; 319/07 Conservation Reserves: General Provisions), in considering whether or not to grant authorization, the responsible manager shall base his or her decision on the following criteria:

- The potential for the proposed activity to protect or enhance human safety
- The degree that the proposed activity would harm or benefit the natural environment, plants or wildlife or support or impede the maintenance of ecological integrity
- The range and value of scientific benefits that the proposed activity would provide
- The extent that the proposed activity would promote cultural knowledge and understanding

### 6.2.1 Critical Factors

In considering whether to recommend authorization to the responsible manager, reviewers will consider the following factors in addition to the review criteria. If any of these critical factors are not satisfactorily addressed, the reviewers and review coordinator will not recommend that the proposed research be authorized by the responsible manager.

The researcher:
• has submitted all data and reports from previous projects conducted in Ontario’s protected areas

The proposed research project:

• is consistent with MNR legislation and policy
• minimizes disruption to the protected area’s visitors, staff, and operations
• (where applicable), has obtained all necessary collecting permits and has addressed any concerns raised by the review
• provides sufficient lead time to allow for necessary review and consultation
  ▪ a period of at least one to two months should be provided
• will not adversely impact the protected area’s natural, cultural, or amenity resources
• minimizes impacts related to construction and support activities, trash disposal, trail conditions, and mechanized equipment use in sensitive areas
• does not involve extensive collecting of natural or cultural materials or unnecessary replication of existing collections
• when deemed necessary by MNR staff, has contacted and received consent from Aboriginal communities affected by the project. This may be done after the application has been received and with the aid of MNR staff.
• has identified any potential health and safety issues, and proposed measures to mitigate these issues

6.3 Favourable Factors

In recommending authorization to the responsible manager, the reviewers will consider the following favourable factors associated with the research application. While not critical factors to the approval of the proposed research project, the following favourable factors should be addressed, and will be considered.

The proposed research project:

• contributes information useful to an increased understanding of protected area resources, and thereby contributes to effective management and/or interpretation
addresses problems or questions of importance to science or society and shows promise of making an important contribution to humankind's knowledge of the subject matter

- communicates the research findings to the scientific community, preferably through peer reviewed literature

- provides for the investigator(s) to prepare occasional summaries of findings for public use, such as protected area or community seminars and literature

- discusses plans for the cataloguing, conservation and care of collected natural or archaeological objects, and their disposition in a recognized institution

- clearly anticipates logistical needs and provides detail about provisions for meeting those needs

- does not require substantial logistical, administrative, curatorial, or project monitoring support by MNR/Ontario Parks staff

- considers alternative sites (e.g., outside the protected area)

- addresses any other factors not listed here (e.g., site-specific issues)

### 7.0 Authorization

After the review of the project, and any concerns raised during the review have been satisfactorily addressed, written authorization must be provided by the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager to the review coordinator. An e-mail from the park superintendent or conservation reserve manager account to the review coordinator is acceptable. The review coordinator will retain this written permission on file and send a copy to the Protected Area Research Analyst.

A single letter of authorization may be issued by the responsible manager outlined in the Section 6.1 of this policy.

A template authorization letter is available through the Protected Area Research Analyst with the Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section. This template should be customized (adding or removing conditions) as necessary for each project. The authorization letter template may be updated as needed, without requiring an update to this policy.

Conditions and requirements may be included in the research authorization letter as necessary.

If the researcher has been granted a data sharing agreement, an additional bullet should be added to the authorization letter to recognize this agreement. To recognize this data sharing agreement, the following statement should be added to the drafted authorization letter: "For the sole purposes of your research work in the park, you will be granted access to [insert specific data to be used]. These data may be used solely for the purposes of this project and your use of these data will comply with the Electronic Intellectual Property End-User License Agreement (attached)".
Along with this statement, a copy of the Ministry of Natural Resources “Electronic Intellectual Property End-User License Agreement” should be attached in the appendix of the agreement.

Authorization letters will be valid for a period not exceeding two years. The researcher may request a maximum of two extensions, not exceeding a total length of four years. If a researcher wishes to continue beyond four years, the researcher must submit a new application to conduct research, and the MNR must provide a full review and issue a new authorization letter before further work may be conducted.

Researchers are required to submit an annual report following each field season. The annual report will contain a copy of all field data collected, a report on the activities conducted, any methodological changes (if applicable), and the expected field schedule for the coming field season (if applicable). If no major methodological changes are to take place, and all terms and conditions of authorization have been followed, a full review of the project is not necessary. If major methodological changes are to take place, a new application must be submitted and a full review of the project is mandatory.

Researchers are required to submit copies of any reports or publications arising from research occurring in protected areas by the date stated in the approval letter for the project to the research review coordinator.

8.0 Tracking

Copies of all applications to conduct research, authorization letters (including rationale), letters of denial (including rationale), reports and data will be submitted to the Protected Areas Research Analyst, Parks and Protected Areas Policy Section, Natural Heritage, Lands and Protected Spaces Branch, for inclusion in a central tracking system.

9.0 Unauthorized Research

Unauthorized research is subject to possible charges and fines (subject to conviction) for contravening the regulations under the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006. Unauthorized researchers may also be prohibited from receiving authorization to conduct research in provincial parks and/or conservation reserves for a period of up to three years.

Failure to meet the terms of conditions associated with a previously authorized research project will result in the immediate withdrawal of authorization. Continuation of research for which authorization has been withdrawn will be considered as unauthorized activity, subject to the same possible penalties as described above.

10.0 References

10.1 Legal References

- Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006 (S.O. 2006, c. 12)
- Provincial Parks: General Provisions Regulations (O. Reg. 347/07)
- Conservation Reserves: General Provisions Regulations (O. Reg. 319/07)
10.2 Related References
