



Wapusk
National Park

Management Plan

2017



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Wapusk

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

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Above (left to right): Lesser Snow Geese, Leadership Camp hikers see foxes, Caribou herd in Wapusk NP

Below: Polar bear in Wapusk NP

Foreword



Canada's national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas belong to all Canadians and offer truly Canadian experiences.

These special places make up one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and cultural heritage areas in the world.

The Government is committed to preserving our natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places and contributing to the recovery of species-at-risk. At the same time, we must continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities so that more Canadians can experience Parks Canada places and learn about our environment, history and culture.

This new management plan for Wapusk National Park of Canada supports this vision.

Management plans are developed through extensive consultation and input from various people and organizations, including Indigenous Peoples, local and regional residents, visitors and the dedicated team at Parks Canada.

National parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas are a priority for the Government of Canada.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of co-operation.

As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, I applaud this collaborative effort and I am pleased to approve the Wapusk National Park of Canada Management Plan.

Catherine McKenna

*Minister of Environment and Climate Change and
Minister responsible for Parks Canada*

Recommendations

Recommended by:

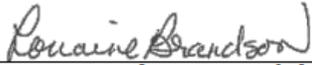
Daniel Watson
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada



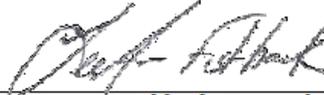
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Wapusk Management Board Recommendation Sheet

Recommended by:



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LeeAnn Fishback, Town of Churchill



Darcy Wastesicoot, York Factory First Nation



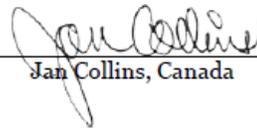
Darryl Hedman, Province of Manitoba



Pierce Roberts, Province of Manitoba



Karen Blackbourn, Canada



Jan Collins, Canada

Note: Official board memberships are pending for two seats for Fox Lake Cree Nation and one seat for York Factory First Nation.

Executive Summary

Established in 1996, Wapusk National Park (NP) represents the Hudson-James Bay Lowlands region within the National Parks System. The park captures the transition zone between boreal forest and arctic tundra, and protects one of the largest concentrations of polar bear maternity dens in the world.

Management of the park is aided by a ten-member Wapusk National Park Management Board. The Board advises the Minister on the planning, management and operation of the park.

The 2016 State of the Park Assessment identified three main issues: low levels of Indigenous Peoples' participation in park management; the need to develop the basic Parks Canada visitor service offer; and the need to better understand the state of the park's ecological integrity. Scoping analyses further identified the issue of cultural resource management as requiring consideration during management planning.

This management plan replaces the 2007 Management Plan for Wapusk NP and builds on previous commitments and management plan objectives, furthering the achievements over the past 10 years. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years, or sooner if required.

The three key strategies for the ten-year management plan period focuses on the following:

Key Strategy 1: Working Toward Greater Participation of Regional Indigenous Peoples and Expanded Presentation of Indigenous Culture

The participation of Indigenous peoples in park management is critical to developing and achieving the park vision. In the spirit of reconciliation, Parks Canada will collaborate with Indigenous peoples to ensure that their advice and perspectives are part of decision making, and their past and living cultures are accurately presented in park information.

Key Strategy 2: Creating Connections and Inspiring Canadians.

Parks Canada aims to connect the public to the unique and awe-inspiring natural and cultural environment of Wapusk NP. Improving the understanding and appreciation for the park and its human history will allow in-person and at-a-distance visitors to connect to the park and make them ambassadors for park stewardship.

Key Strategy 3: A Healthy Park for All.

Canadians can take pride in the integrity of Wapusk NP's unique ecosystems and cultural history that Parks Canada, its Indigenous and other partners, stakeholders, and researchers, strive to protect.

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1.0 Introduction

Wapusk NP is located on the western shores of Hudson Bay in northeast Manitoba. The park is surrounded by Hudson Bay on the north and east and by the Churchill Wildlife Management Area (WMA) on the west and south. The 11,475 km² area selected for Wapusk NP was originally part of the larger Churchill WMA, established by the Province of Manitoba in 1978 to manage and protect wildlife and its habitat. The park, which lies in the transitional zone between boreal forest and arctic tundra, was determined to be the best overall representation of the Hudson-James Bay Lowlands, one of the 39 terrestrial national park natural regions of Canada. Wapusk NP was created with the signing of *The Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park* (Park Establishment Agreement) on April 24, 1996.

Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

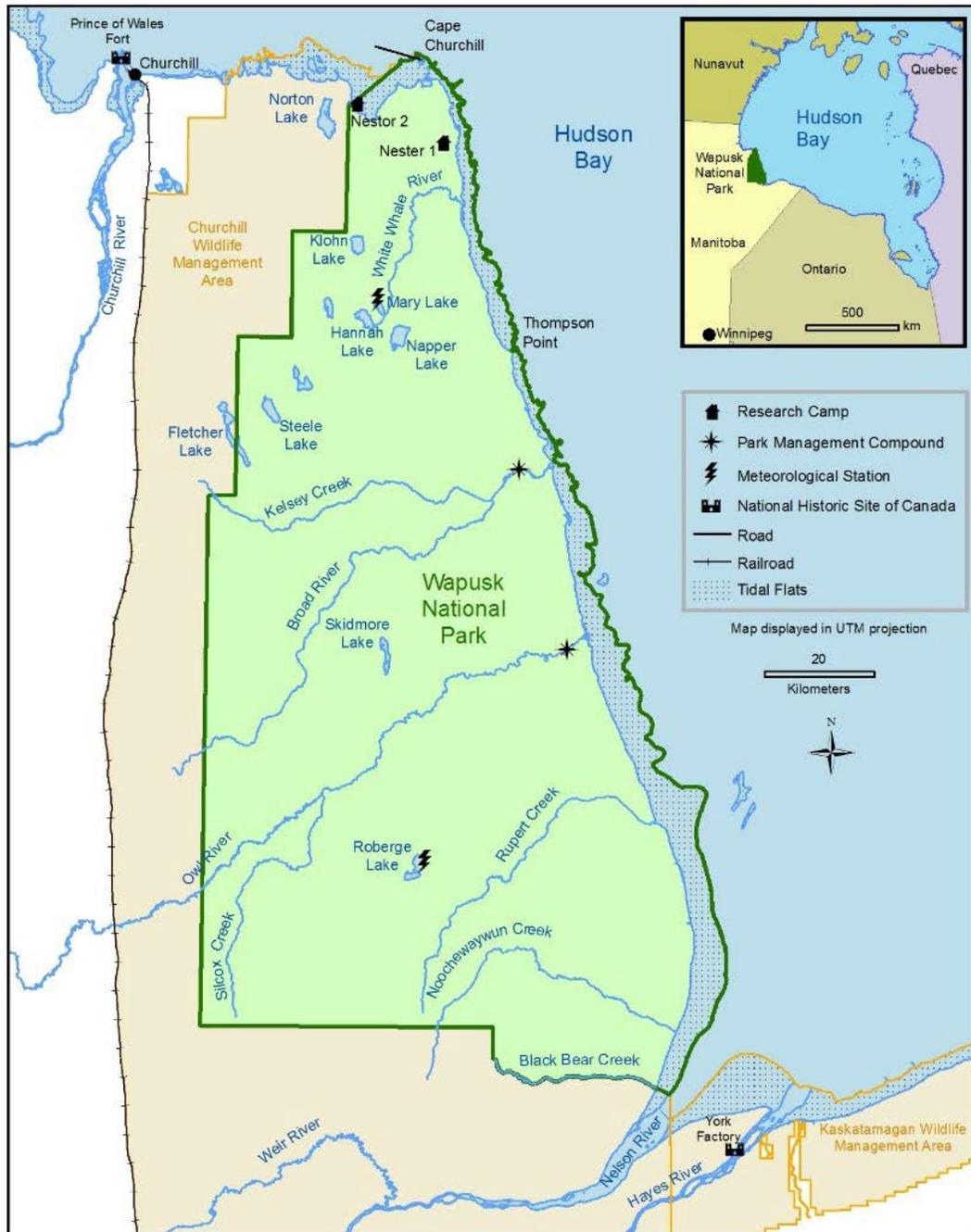
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act* require Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for each national park. The *Wapusk National Park Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how park management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Wapusk National Park by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

The Wapusk Management Board was involved in the preparation of this and the prior management plan. The board includes representatives from the nearby communities of Churchill, Fox Lake Cree Nation, and York Factory First Nation. The board's consultation with Indigenous partners, key stakeholders, and the public is also an important part of shaping the future of the national park.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of Wapusk National Park in years to come.



Map 1: Wapusk National Park

2.0 Significance of Wapusk National Park

The greater Wapusk NP ecosystem is recognized nationally and internationally for its significant biological diversity. Representing the Hudson-James Bay Lowlands in the *National Parks System Plan*, this coastal region is located in the transition zone between boreal forest and arctic tundra. It offers habitat for a great variety of plants and animal species. Wapusk is Cree for 'white bear'. The name holds special significance as it represents the close connection of one of the cultures associated with the park and the polar bear, a listed species of special concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (2011), and whose maternity dens the park protects.

The area has a long history of use by Indigenous peoples who have lived and travelled in the region for thousands of years. The area remains important to several Indigenous groups, including two Treaty No. 5 signatory groups; the Cree communities of York Factory First Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation; and the Sayisi-Dene and Inuit also consider the northern coastal areas of the park as a southern extension of their traditional lands. These groups have expressed ongoing interest in maintaining a connection with or re-connecting with park lands.

Wapusk NP encompasses a portion of the land between York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Sites (NHSs), two historic centres of trade. During the fur trade era, the land served as a source of furs and provisions for the two trading centres and as a travel corridor between them. All three of these heritage places – Wapusk NP, York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort NHSs – are administered by Parks Canada and make up a component of the unique tourism offer in northern Manitoba.

Between the 1940s and 1980s the lands in and around the park were used by the military and to support mineral exploration. The military used the park for manoeuvres and as an impact and recovery area for rockets launched from the Churchill Research (rocket) Range. The park was used as a base for nearby offshore mineral exploration in the 1960's.

The 20th anniversary of park establishment was marked in 2016; however, research in the greater Wapusk area began long before the park was created. The tradition of national and international research on a wide range of study topics continues to this day.

3.0 Planning Context

The planning and management of Wapusk NP is influenced by these contextual factors:

Creation and purpose of the park: Wapusk NP was created with the signing of *The Federal- Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park* (Park Establishment Agreement) on April 24, 1996. Parks Canada's Manitoba Field Unit administers Wapusk NP out of its offices in Churchill, Manitoba.

The Park Establishment Agreement has several distinct purposes:

1. To provide for the establishment of Wapusk NP, pursuant to the *National Parks Act*;
2. To recognize the natural significance of an adjacent Crown Land Area, managed under *The Wildlife Act* or appropriate other legislation of Manitoba;
3. To provide for the complementary planning, management and operation of the Park Land and the Crown Land Area;
4. To respect existing Aboriginal rights and Treaty rights and to provide for the continuation of the traditional use of the Park Land and its renewable resources by Indigenous people, as outlined further in sections 5 and 13 of the agreement; and
5. To provide for certain traditional privileges of local, non-Indigenous users (Local Traditional Users) of the Park Land.

Wapusk Management Board: Management of the park is aided by the ten-member Wapusk Management Board. There are two members from each of the following governments or communities: Government of Canada, Province of Manitoba, Town of Churchill, York Factory First Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation. Board members are nominated by their respective governments or communities and appointed by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada. The board advises the Minister on the planning, management and operation of the park. It may also take into consideration land use planning and resource management in the adjacent Churchill (WMA), which is administered by the Province of Manitoba.

Large scale stressors: Two external stressors, climate change and hyper-abundant lesser snow geese, are having an impact on the integrity of Wapusk NP ecosystems. Global climate change is thought to have its greatest impact in Arctic regions. Over the past four decades, weather patterns and climate in the Arctic have changed significantly. Ice break-up on Hudson Bay has advanced by three weeks in the last half-century, possibly affecting the health and viability of polar bears as just one example of an impact.

Snow geese are at record high population levels and are over-grazing their nesting and staging areas throughout the Arctic, including Wapusk NP. Over-grazing, and the subsequent shifting of habitat inland in search of new food sources, profoundly affects plant communities, other species and habitats. Wapusk NP can play a conservation role in addressing these large scale stressors mainly by supporting research and monitoring that contributes to understanding impacts and communicating findings to the research community and the public.

The role of Parks Canada to date has been to support research and monitoring related to these external stressors and to communicate and educate visitors, managers and policy makers towards a better understanding of the factors.

Tourism and Visitation: Wapusk NP is one of three Parks Canada places that contribute to the local Churchill tourism offer. On average, Wapusk NP receives approximately 150 visitors a year. Access to the park is currently limited to travel by boat, helicopter, chartered aircraft, over-snow vehicle or all-terrain vehicle. Parks Canada staff are present in the park intermittently throughout the year to perform inspections and

undertake maintenance; conduct and support research, monitoring, and visitor activities; and to lead youth engagement initiatives.

The majority of visitors to the region stay in the Churchill area and do not go to the park. The few tourists who visit Wapusk NP use the services of private tour operators who provide access via over-snow and tundra vehicles or aircraft. The main points of direct public contact for Wapusk NP are the Parks Canada Visitor Centre in Churchill and the “Journey to Churchill” exhibit at the Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg. Visitors also virtually connect to Wapusk NP via the Parks Canada website, social media, and partnerships with groups like *explore.org* who have a Polar Bear Cam stationed at Cape Churchill.

Local and traditional use: The level of Park use by Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons from the area is low. The Park Establishment Agreement provides access to the park land and renewable resources and the continuation of certain traditional privileges, such as caribou hunting and trapping on registered trap lines within the park, for specified Indigenous and non-Indigenous beneficiaries. Indigenous and Treaty rights will continue to be respected in the park.

Park research: A variety of research occurs in the park and although park staff do undertake some research and monitoring activities, the majority is conducted by outside organizations. These organizations include universities, non-profit groups and other government departments. Through these institutions, the park has had several successful long-running fieldwork programs engaging youth from high schools and universities. Overall, the history of research is quite rich, some pre-dating park establishment, with a focus on natural science – wildlife, such as polar bears, fox, and geese; botany; ecology; climate change; snowpack; permafrost and other topics.

Inuit Land Claim: Negotiations related to Article 42 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* related to Inuit rights in Wapusk NP are currently underway by the Governments of Canada, Manitoba and Nunavut. It is foreseeable that a resolution will be reached which will clarify Inuit rights and interests in Wapusk NP.

Changes since the 2007 plan: Approximately 78% of the actions recommended in the previous plan have been implemented, or have been initiated and remain ongoing. Parks Canada has maintained its commitment to increase communication about the park and the importance of maintaining park ecological integrity and cultural heritage. Four Wapusk NP research and monitoring symposia, three research and monitoring reports, and a number of presentations and outreach programs have been delivered in Winnipeg and Churchill.

Relationships with tourism partners continue to be nurtured and developed. Parks Canada has actively supported and provided staff expertise to unique, authentic initiatives such as the Frontiers North Adventures Tundra Buggy Lodge.

In addition, Parks Canada’s visitor safety objective has been met in a variety of ways. A notable example is the updated polar bear safety messaging for visitors and the Churchill community which was produced in collaboration between Parks Canada, Manitoba Sustainable Development and the Town of Churchill.

Since the last management plan, the services and facilities in the park have expanded to include two fenced compounds at Broad and Owl River. These provide Parks Canada with additional capacity for research, park management activities and tourism potential.

4.0 Vision

The vision presented below expresses the desired state of Wapusk NP in 15-20 years.

Wapusk NP's unique and awe-inspiring landscape continues to be nationally and internationally significant for its biologically diverse ecosystem and as a habitat for denning polar bears, other mammals, and breeding birds. The cultural history of the park and the traditions of the people who use the park are shared with visitors, and passed on to future generations.

The local First Nations of York Factory and Fox Lake, the Town of Churchill, and Inuit for whom this area holds special meaning are fully engaged and participating in the management of Wapusk NP. Indigenous voices are reflected in the management and interpretation of the park and there is greater use of traditional and local knowledge.

Cultures with connections to the park are highlighted through communication, outreach, and youth engagement. Indigenous peoples are economically benefiting from the park through employment and tourism.

Research and Indigenous and local knowledge has led to a better understanding of ecological integrity and cultural heritage in the park and beyond. Wapusk NP is playing a role in addressing large scale stressors such as climate change by supporting research that contributes to understanding the effects of these stressors.

Visitors immerse themselves in the spirit and tranquility of Wapusk NP, and develop a personal connection to the significant cultural and natural heritage the park embodies. The park enhances northern Manitoba's ecotourism offerings, attracting people with diverse interests, allowing socially and environmentally sustainable tourism to flourish, and contributes to the economies of the surrounding communities. Parks Canada and its partners offer once-in-a-lifetime experiences with multi-day and multi-seasonal opportunities. Access and activities are encouraged and managed without compromising the ecological integrity of the park or leaving a lasting impact on the land.

Beyond the visit, the significance and wonder of the park can be experienced through technology and outreach learning opportunities. The public access park information via the web and social media. Exhibits and programming at the Parks Canada Visitor Centre in Churchill are supported by outreach and education activities in local northern communities and in Winnipeg.

5.0 Key Strategies

Three key strategies frame the management direction for Wapusk NP over the next 10 years. The strategies and corresponding objectives and targets focus on achieving the vision for the park through an integrated approach to park management. Unless otherwise specified, all targets are meant to be achieved within the period of the plan. Annual implementation updates will be provided to engage regional Indigenous communities, partners, stakeholders and the general public.

Key Strategy 1: Working Toward Greater Participation of Regional Indigenous Peoples and Expanded Presentation of Indigenous Culture

The participation of Indigenous peoples in park management is critical to developing and achieving the park vision. In the spirit of reconciliation, Parks Canada will collaborate with Indigenous peoples to ensure that their advice and perspectives are part of decision making, and their past and living cultures are accurately presented in park information.

Objective 1: Indigenous perspectives, including Traditional Knowledge, are honoured and incorporated into decisions related to park management.

Targets:

- Working in collaboration with Indigenous communities and knowledge holders, Indigenous and local knowledge is incorporated into park management, including the Ecological Integrity Monitoring Plan, and Cultural Resource Value Statement and monitoring plan.
- Indigenous persons actively share their stories and traditions of Wapusk NP and the greater Wapusk area.
- Parks Canada works with Indigenous communities to bring youth and Elders into the park with a focus on sharing knowledge about park ecosystems, traditional culture and land survival skills.
- Parks Canada shares information related to the park's ecosystems, cultural resources and history with local Indigenous communities, including youth and schools.
- Researchers are encouraged to engage Indigenous community members in the design and conduct of research.

Objective 2: Regional Indigenous peoples are aware of, and benefit from, economic opportunities.

Targets:

- Frequent and effective communication takes place between Parks Canada staff and Indigenous communities with ties to Wapusk NP, and the Town of Churchill.
- Programs aimed at facilitating entry into park careers are in place and Parks Canada is successfully recruiting Indigenous persons into the park workforce.
- Hiring strategies for the park are expanded to include more active recruitment activities, increased training and the exploration of additional Parks Canada support for northern residents.
- Indigenous persons and northern residents are well-represented in the Wapusk NP workforce, as outlined in the Park Establishment Agreement.
- Indigenous products, when requested by regional Indigenous people, are featured for sale in the Parks Canada Visitor Centre in Churchill.

Objective 3: Wapusk NP is a leader in Churchill in celebrating past and living cultures, and sharing information among Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons, enabling visitors to connect with the local history and culture.

Targets:

- Hands-on, authentic Indigenous experiences are accessible to the public in the visitor centre.

- Parks Canada along with Indigenous and community partners are engaged in the creation of new visitor products focused on Indigenous culture.
- All Wapusk NP staff receive cultural training, in keeping with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action # 57, which identifies the need for federal employees to receive education on the history of Indigenous peoples, the history and legacy of residential schools, treaties, Aboriginal rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Key Strategy 2: Creating Connections and Inspiring Canadians.

Parks Canada aims to connect the public to the unique and awe-inspiring natural and cultural environment of Wapusk NP. Improving the understanding and appreciation for the park and its human history will allow in-person and at-a-distance visitors to connect to the park and make them ambassadors for park stewardship.

Objective 1: In-park visitation increases as people are drawn to Wapusk NP by new and innovative opportunities for once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

Targets:

- A basic service offer is developed by working with local, regional, national and Indigenous partners to align with the interests of visitors, trends for tourism, and support Indigenous tourism organizations. Park tourism assessments and opportunities presented in the past are reviewed and compiled to identify best practices and focus future efforts.
- Tourism options are explored, including third party partnerships, which may involve new infrastructure (such as overnight accommodation). Tourism initiatives with regional Indigenous partners are supported as a priority.
- New programming and infrastructure needs are balanced with the park's natural and cultural conservation goals, as well as the interests of our Indigenous partners.
- The capacity to support additional operators and activities in currently used areas of the park is reviewed.
- Parks Canada, Indigenous groups and organizations, the Town of Churchill, the Province of Manitoba, and third party operators collaborate on sustainable tourism development initiatives.

Objective 2: Targeted outreach and promotions initiatives continue and are expanded to provide opportunities for the public to appreciate this remote wilderness park with its natural and cultural heritage, and be inspired to visit.

Targets:

- The number of visitors participating in learning activities generated through off-site interpretation and outreach methods continues to increase.
- Programs highlighting the park's natural and cultural heritage are developed. Messages about climate change, the impacts of hyper-abundant species, and the continuing human use of the park are included in these programs.
- Technology is embraced, as it evolves, for audiences to virtually access the park.
- Outreach and education related to the park's ecosystems, cultural resources and history includes Indigenous perspectives and is shared with local Indigenous communities and the public.
- Destination marketing organizations and partners, including Indigenous partners, help promote the park and are engaged in the creation of new products.
- Wapusk NP participates in national programs targeting youth and other priority audiences.
- Indigenous partners are actively involved in offering Indigenous-led interpretation and visitor experience opportunities.
- Park interpretation includes connecting York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Sites, and the greater Wapusk area with Wapusk NP.

Key Strategy 3: A Healthy Park for All.

Canadians can take pride in the integrity of Wapusk NP's unique ecosystems and cultural history that Parks Canada, its Indigenous and other partners, stakeholders, and researchers strive to protect.

Objective 1: The ecological integrity of Wapusk NP is evaluated and communicated.

Targets:

- The Wapusk NP Ecological Integrity Monitoring Program (2015) is implemented.
- Reporting on the measures in the monitoring plan is well-defined and consistent.
- Research partnerships are established to address reporting data needs.
- Measures to monitor ecological integrity are established within five years.

Objective 2: Wapusk NP nurtures research partnerships to provide meaningful data that feeds into the park's research priorities, ecological monitoring requirements, and knowledge base.

Targets:

- Research and monitoring methodologies are commonly used by internal and external researchers to maintain sustainable continuity of data.
- Research priorities for the park are established and communicated to researchers and Indigenous communities through the Wapusk Management Board.
- The number and effectiveness of research partnerships is increased. The unique opportunity to use the park as a living laboratory for research, monitoring and learning is promoted and successes are replicated.
- The use of traditional and scientific knowledge create a comprehensive knowledge base to support park management and decisions.

Objective 3: Activities in Wapusk NP are managed without compromising the ecological and cultural integrity of the park or leaving a lasting impact on the land.

Targets:

- Parks Canada communicates with researchers, Indigenous and local communities and visitors about permissible activities, park zoning and culturally/naturally sensitive areas.
- Public and tour operator awareness about park stewardship is developed and its implementation monitored.
- Parks Canada, with the support of the Wapusk Management Board, continues to evaluate, monitor and approve permit applications and park use requests with a view towards minimizing and mitigating potential impacts.

Objective 4: The cultural resources of Wapusk NP are identified and monitored.

Targets:

- The historic value and cultural affiliation of all known cultural resources in the park is investigated and a Cultural Resource Value Statement for the park is produced.
- A long-term cultural and resource management strategy for evaluating and monitoring cultural resources is developed.
- Collaboration takes place with Indigenous knowledge holders and youth to continue to research place names and stories about the land and resources within the park, and to solicit input for appropriate management practices for culturally sensitive locations or resources.

6.0 Zoning and Declared Wilderness Area

Zoning is an important management tool that helps to support the park vision by directing visitor use to appropriate areas of the park, and ensuring that rare, sensitive ecological or cultural areas are protected.

Parks Canada's national park zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in a national park and designates where particular activities can occur on land or water based on the ability to support those uses. The zoning system has five categories:

- Zone I - Special Preservation;
- Zone II - Wilderness;
- Zone III - Natural Environment;
- Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation;
- Zone V - Park Services.

Three of the five zones are applicable in Wapusk NP: Zones I, II and III.

The park was zoned broadly in the previous management plan. Data has not been collected to support amendments to the current zones and therefore the zones remain valid and will remain unchanged in the current plan.

The remote nature of the park, the challenges of physical access to the park, and the limited facilities within the park limit the type and frequency of activities that can currently occur within the park. Access is controlled through the research permitting system and a small number of business licenses with privately owned tour businesses, both of which are reviewed and approved by Parks Canada staff and the Wapusk Management Board. Proponents proposing future opportunities and development will be subject to the same review and approval process. They will be directed to Zone III areas, offered the opportunity to make their own assessment of park lands, and submit proposals.

Zone I – Special Preservation Area

Zone I is the most protective category in the Parks Canada zoning system. This zone is applied to areas of the park that are among the best examples of the features that represent the natural region, or that support outstanding or rare natural or cultural features. This zone may also be used to protect areas that are too sensitive to accommodate facility development or large numbers of visitors. Within Zone I areas, preservation is the primary management concern. Motorized access and circulation is not permitted. Natural features may be interpreted off-site.

There is one Zone I area in the park at the tip of Cape Churchill (Map 2). It was designated as Zone I to protect a small sensitive wildlife area and ensures that the wildlife will not be disturbed by tour operators (including tundra vehicles and flight-seeing tours).

Zone II – Wilderness Area

Zone II wilderness areas are meant to protect representative natural landscapes where visitors can experience nature with minimal human intrusion or facilities. The visitor experience in these areas is focused on self-propelled activities. No motorized access or circulation is permitted.

There is one large area of Zone II, intended to ensure that the majority of the known polar bear maternity denning area in the park is conserved in a wilderness state.

Zone III – Natural Environment Area

Zone III areas are managed as natural environments that are capable of supporting a range of visitor experiences. These areas enable visitors to enjoy and learn about the park's natural and cultural features through outdoor recreational and educational activities requiring minimal facilities and services.

Zone III makes up the largest portion of the park and was intended to balance the need to conserve the park as a natural environment while also providing visitors with the opportunity to experience the park through outdoor recreation activities. Zone III currently contains several rustic research and park operational compounds (fenced grounds, cabins, water/wastewater units, sheds): Nester 1, Nestor 2, and Parks Canada's Broad River and Owl River compounds. This zone permits seasonal over-snow vehicle tours to the park area east of Wat'chee Lodge as well as the Cape Churchill polar bear viewing camp.

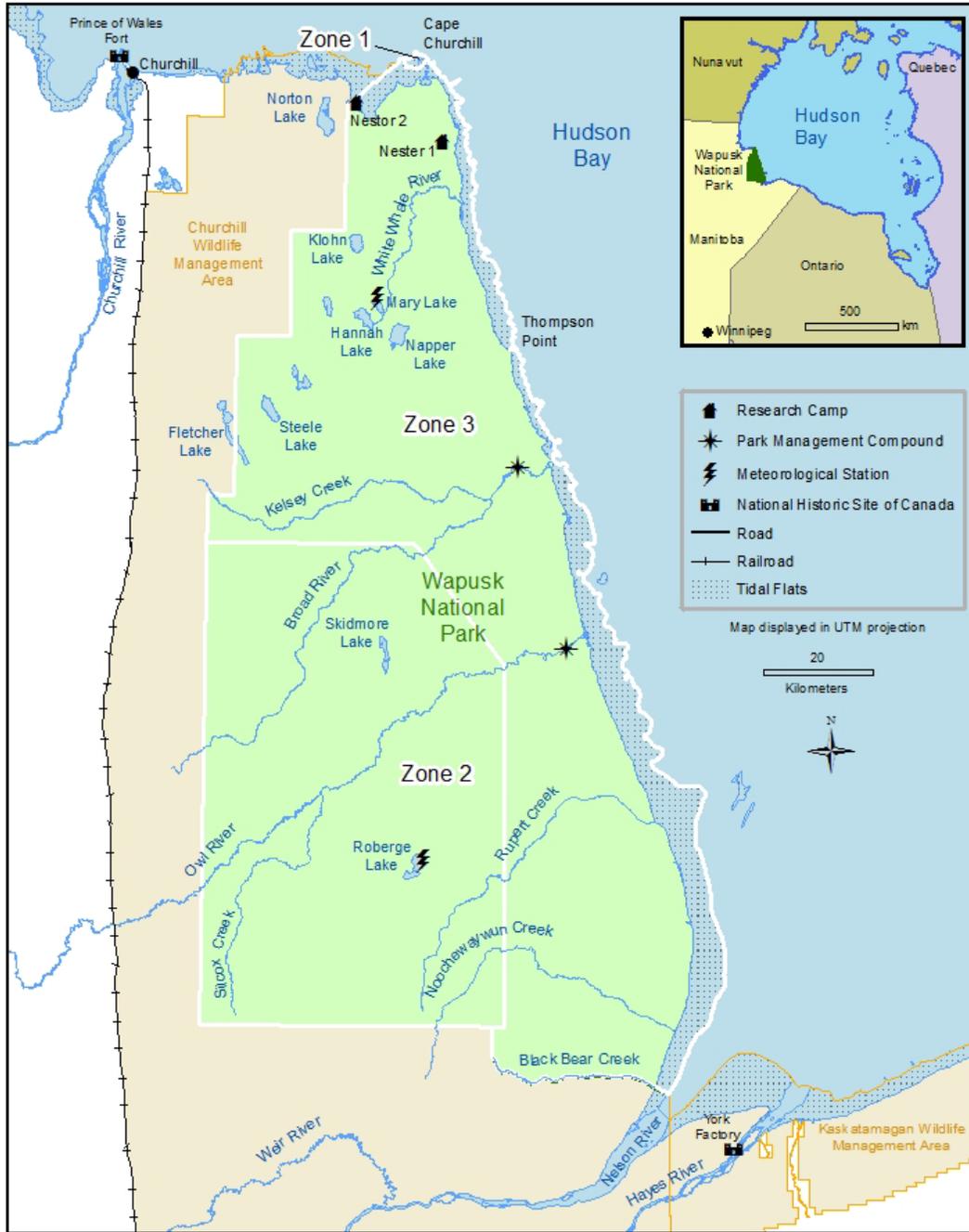
Flightseeing tours are conducted mainly in the northern part of the park and aircraft landings permitted by the Park Superintendent take place in the Cape Churchill area and research camps.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

The Zone IV designation is applied to limited areas that are capable of supporting more intensive visitor use and major facilities. These zones provide direct access by motorized vehicles. There are no Zone IV areas in Wapusk NP.

Zone V – Park Services

Zone V is applied to major park operation and administrative functions and in instances where there are communities located in existing national parks. There are no Zone V areas in Wapusk NP.



Map 2: Wapusk National Park Zoning

7.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

In accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010)*, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is conducted on all management statements. The purpose of SEA is to incorporate environmental considerations into the development of public policies, plans, and program proposals to support environmentally sound decision making.

Individual projects undertaken to implement management statement objectives at the site will be evaluated to determine if an impact assessment is required under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act 2012*, or successor legislation.

The scope of the assessment included the area within the boundary of Wapusk NP and considered influences from potential external local and regional stressors outside of the park. The time frame considered in the assessment was ten years from the date of the plan, at which time the plan will be reviewed. Environmental components of note at this site include marine environments including polar bear denning habitat, coastal environments, vegetation, wildlife, freshwater, soils and permafrost, forest, Species at Risk, cultural resources, and components of the environment important to visitor experience.

Implementation of the plan, in conjunction with the recommendations from the SEA, are anticipated to result in various positive effects. Understanding and management of natural and cultural resources will benefit from research and monitoring that is increasingly collaborative with local and regional partners and integrated with traditional knowledge. Elements of the environment important to visitor experience will benefit from Indigenous voices and traditional knowledge being increasingly reflected in the management. Cultures with connections to the park will benefit from increased access, outreach, and youth engagement.

Several objectives identified in the management plan could potentially result in negative environmental effects. Objectives that will promote new and additional infrastructure, operators, and research and visitor activities have the potential to negatively affect cultural and ecological resources and have the potential to contribute cumulatively to effects on ecological resources. The anticipated effects from these objectives are anticipated to be largely mitigated by the strategies and objectives proposed in this plan. In particular, various strategic-level plans and reviews are proposed that will evaluate potential effects and consider cumulative impacts from proposals. Habitat degradation for Yellow Rail, a Species at Risk from indigenous snow goose population overabundance is anticipated to continue. Potential cumulative effects associated with the objectives in the plan in combination with other internal and external stressors on the park are anticipated to be managed through sustainable planning and visitor engagement and education. Existing policies such as park zoning, research and commercial permits, and project-level impact assessment will provide additional mitigation where required. Public and Indigenous engagement was conducted on the plan and comments were incorporated into the SEA as appropriate.

The Plan supports the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategies* of theme III Protecting Nature and Canadians and theme IV Shrinking the Environmental Footprint. There are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of this Wapusk NP Management Plan.