



## MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND WESTERN BROOK POND

As you may know, Parks Canada is currently working on a new management plan for Gros Morne National Park. Since late summer 2018, stakeholders, partners, local residents and others have attended meetings or completed on-line questionnaires to provide input. We thank all those who have participated.

Over the next few months we will be completing and sharing a summary report of “What We Heard” from phase 1 of Gros Morne’s management plan consultations. We will also meet with partners and stakeholders to gather input on a management approach specifically for Western Brook Pond and the Tablelands-Trout River Pond areas of the park. These areas have been identified as iconic locations that attract many visitors and offer amazing visitor experience opportunities, but which also include important ecological and geological features that must be protected.

We will also be continuing conversations with Indigenous communities to better understand their interests and perspectives on the future of Gros Morne. All of these discussions will inform the draft management plan that will be shared with the public for feedback later this winter.

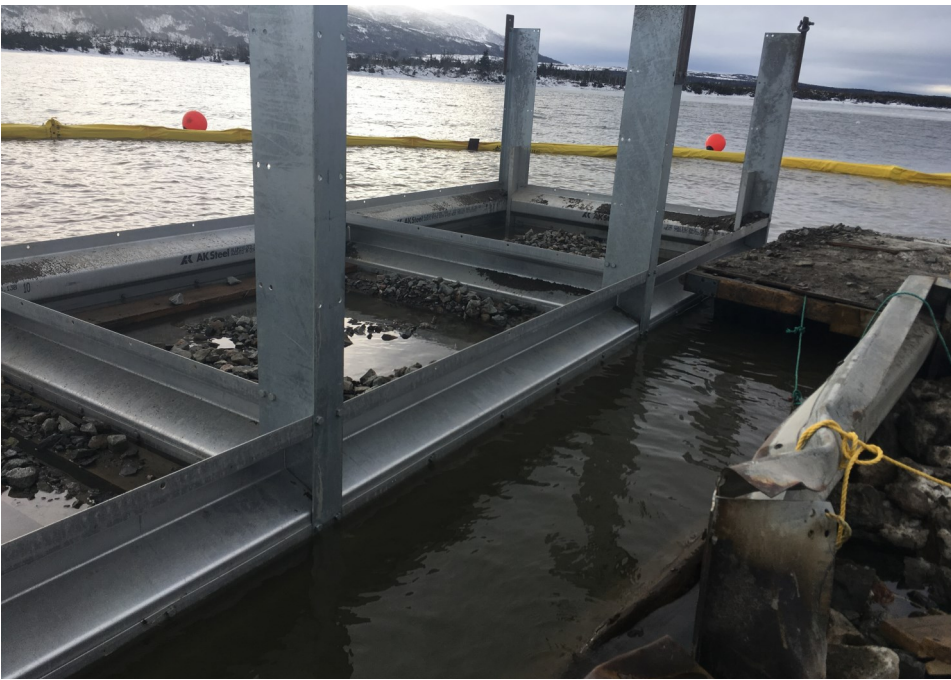


*Management planning open houses were held in Cow Head, Norris Point, and Woody Point in December 2018.*

## CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Despite the winter weather, infrastructure work at Western Brook Pond is continuing. The old wharf, which had an estimated serviceable lifespan of less than five years, has been removed and is being replaced by a new wharf that will have a lifespan of fifty years. Renovations to the boathouse are also underway and, to support the annual wintering of the boats, the removal of a small volume of sediment in the channel leading to the boathouse will soon begin. Finishing the surface of the trail to the pond will be the final step in the construction phase of the project. This will be done prior to the reopening of the trail in May and will result in a smoother, more compact trail tread that will make it safer, sustainable and more accessible for visitors.

Once the construction is complete, Parks Canada will embark on the next phase of work at Western Brook Pond involving vegetation restoration and the addition of rest areas, interpretive elements and viewpoints along the trail. A vegetation plan is being developed with input from internal and external experts, as is a visitor experience plan for the area. Stay tuned for more information on these initiatives in a future update.



*Steel bins like the ones above are being used in the construction of the new wharf at Western Brook Pond.*



# ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

Western Brook Pond has been a major draw since Gros Morne National Park was established in 1973. In the early years of the park, visitors accessed the pond using a route originally used by locals to fish and pick berries. Gradually, this developed into a formal trail providing access to a boat tour. The last time Western Brook Pond saw significant investment was in 1992-3 when the wharf and dockside facility were constructed and the trail was widened to accommodate increased visitation and servicing of the boat tour.

Since then, the efforts of seasonal trail crew have kept up with the increasing trail maintenance to keep it in service. However, a growing number of complaints about its condition and the challenges experienced by those with mobility concerns signalled the need for new investment. When Parks Canada undertook a national review of its assets in 2012, the trail, wharf and boathouse at Western Brook Pond were flagged as high priorities based on their condition and importance to Gros Morne’s visitor offer. In the immediate years following this review, Parks Canada began to consider ways of generating the funds necessary to maintain its assets. One idea was to generate additional revenue that could be reinvested into the agency’s aging infrastructure. Parks Canada ultimately shifted away from aggressive revenue generation, maintaining our primary focus that ecological and cultural integrity of our treasured places must remain the priority.

In 2015, funding to improve the condition of infrastructure at Western Brook Pond was approved and planning for the project commenced in 2016. The first step was to work with a consultant to come up with a plan to address issues related to the condition of the trail, such as persistent flooding, a sinking boardwalk, accessibility, increased visitation and operational requirements for the boat tour.

The next step was to conduct an Environmental Impact Analysis, which was completed in 2017. Three public sessions were held in Woody Point, St. Paul’s and Norris Point in May 2017 to provide information to local residents about upcoming infrastructure work including this particular project. Work commenced on site at Western Brook Pond in November of that year, halted in spring 2018 for the visitor season, resumed in October and is ongoing.

We invite you to visit our website at [www.pc.gc.ca/grosmorne](http://www.pc.gc.ca/grosmorne) for a more detailed look at the origins and evolution of the Western Brook Pond project.



*Above: The original boats used for tours of Western Brook Pond.*

*Below: The original trail to Western Brook Pond was narrow and followed an existing route originally used by locals.*



# ECOLOGICAL MONITORING AT WESTERN BROOK POND

Parks Canada is committed to ensuring that ecological integrity (health of the park) is top of mind in every project that occurs within Gros Morne National Park. This starts with an environmental impact analysis of the proposed project and the identification of specific mitigations required to address potential environmental impacts. Over 40 different mitigations were put in place for the Western Brook Pond project. For example, the work is being conducted in the winter to avoid disturbing nesting songbirds, while also ensuring the ground is frozen and snow-packed to protect the sensitive bog ecosystem.

Once the project begins, the involvement of park resource conservation staff continues throughout the project through ecological monitoring. Environmental Protection Officers regularly visit the site to monitor compliance with required mitigations and evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation measures. Even now, with the project well underway at Western Brook Pond, an Environmental Protection Officer is on site almost daily. Resource Conservation staff are also considering ecological monitoring efforts following the completion of the construction phase of the Western Brook Pond project, including ways that site level monitoring might help inform the overall ecological integrity monitoring program for the park.



*A curtain boom around the wharf construction area contains sediment to the site and prevents it from escaping into the rest of the pond.*

Ecological integrity monitoring doesn’t just happen in response to infrastructure projects. Resource conservation staff have been monitoring the health of ecosystems throughout the park for years. At Western Brook, for example, staff have installed fish fences to count returning Atlantic Salmon, have used temperature loggers to track the suitability of stream temperatures for Brook Trout, and have conducted helicopter surveys to count Harlequin Ducks which need healthy, fast-flowing rivers to raise young. These monitoring efforts have resulted in some real conservation gains. In 1984, only 19 Atlantic Salmon returned to Western Brook leading to a decision to close the river to angling. By 2016, the number of returning salmon had increased to 789!

# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Canada’s national parks belong to all Canadians so we want to hear from you. If you have questions about the work happening at Western Brook Pond or any of the infrastructure projects happening in the park, please contact us by phone at 709-458-2417 or send an email to [grosmorne.info@canada.ca](mailto:grosmorne.info@canada.ca). Parks Canada will continue to provide updates on this project and others as work progresses. So stay tuned for more information on our efforts to protect Gros Morne and share the places and stories that make it special.