



Wood Buffalo
National Park

Protecting Wood Buffalo National Park World Heritage Site

Volume 4, Issue 1, September 2020

What's new in this issue:

The last newsletter for Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) World Heritage Site (WHS) was released in August 2019 and included information on next steps in Action Plan implementation.

The newsletter stated that Canada, in collaboration with partners, will take action to protect WBNP World Heritage Site by:

- Strengthening relationships with Indigenous people
- Protecting ecological integrity of the park and surrounding ecosystems
- Progressing understanding of water management in the PAD (Peace-Athabasca Delta)
- Improving the integration of science and monitoring in the PAD, and
- Supporting the recovery of iconic species, such as Whooping Cranes and Wood Bison.

The Government of Canada has continued to collaborate with provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners to bring the Action Plan to life. This newsletter offers a more detailed look into implementation of the Action Plan and reflects on highlights so far.

Implementation of the Action Plan:

Since 2019, Parks Canada and its federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners have worked together to support the on-going implementation of the Action Plan. Each partner has specific responsibilities for action within their jurisdiction and authority, and with Indigenous governments which have stewardship responsibilities for their traditional territories. Committees, Working Groups, and Task Teams have been established to ensure collaboration in implementing the Indigenous Partnerships, Environmental Flows and Hydrology, and Monitoring and Science themes. Some highlights from these groups are outlined below.

THEME: Strengthening Indigenous Partnerships

In 2014, the Cooperative Management Committee (CMC) was formed to provide a venue for the exchange of information and dialogue between Parks Canada and Indigenous governments and groups. The committee is made up of members from each of the parks 11 Indigenous partners and is working toward actions 1-6 in the Indigenous Partners theme of the Action Plan. CMC provides meaningful, timely and ongoing recommendations regarding the management of the park and is addressing Indigenous employment, staff training and economic opportunities through Indigenous procurement.

THEME: Environmental Flows and Hydrology

In November 2019, federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous representatives met in Edmonton for an Environmental Flows and Hydrology (EFH) Working Group meeting. During this meeting, the participants identified the need for EFH task teams: Terms of Reference Task Team, Indigenous Task Team, Water Control Structures Task Team, Strategic Flow Release Task Team, and Information Sharing Task Team. More details on the purpose and goals of these task teams are highlighted below.

Terms of Reference Task Team (EFH1-3)

The Terms of Reference Task Team was created to establish a cross-jurisdictional and Indigenous governance team to guide implementation for EFH. The task team was re-established in 2019 with members from ECCC, Parks Canada, Government of Alberta, Mikisew Cree First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, Smith's Landing First Nation and Northwest Territory Métis Nation to continue the development of a terms of reference for the EFH Working Group.

Indigenous Task Team (EFH 71 – 72, 10 – 12, 17, 44 & throughout EFH theme)

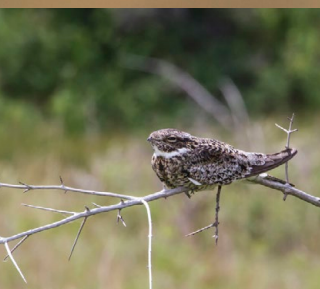
The Indigenous Task Team was established with the goal of informing and guiding the objectives of the Outstanding Universal Values (OUV) and Actions through the ethical use and interpretation of each nation's Indigenous Knowledge (IK). The task team is comprised of the 11 WBNP Indigenous partners.

Water Control Structures Task Team (EFH 8, 9, 31, 32, 56 – 58)

The Water Control Structures Task Team aims to acquire information related to past and current control structures, such as the performance of the existing weirs, and assess the feasibility of installing new water control structures at locations identified by representatives, elders, and land users of Indigenous communities in the PAD. Membership in this task team includes representatives from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, Mikisew Cree First Nation, Alberta, the Government of Canada, and Government of Northwest Territories.

Strategic Flow Release Task Team (EFH 23-26; 29)

The Strategic Flow Release Task Team was developed to advance work related to a strategic release of water from the Williston Reservoir behind the WAC Bennett Dam that could enhance an ice jam flood event within WBNP (EFH23-26, 29). The task team's initial focus has been on the information required to develop a flow release protocol, and monitoring and forecasting activities amongst the jurisdictional authorities during an ice jam event (EFH23 a-g).



About this newsletter —

This newsletter keeps WBNP partners and stakeholders informed as Parks Canada and the Government of Canada collaborate with Indigenous groups, other government partners, and stakeholders, to protect Wood Buffalo National Park World Heritage Site. For additional information, please visit Wood Buffalo National Park's website at this link:

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/nt/woodbuffalo/info/action>

Information Sharing Task Team (EFH 69-70)

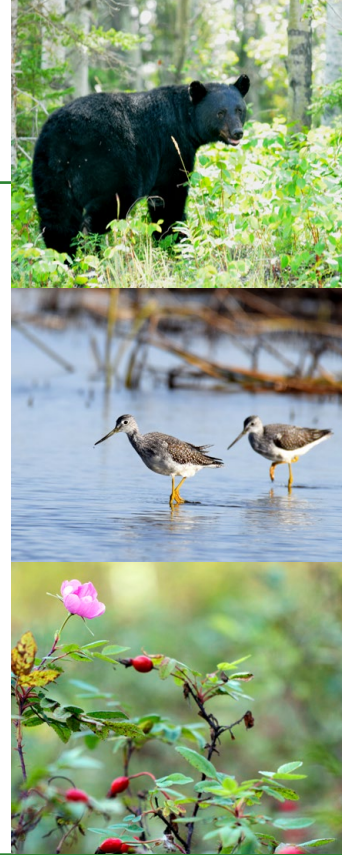
The Information Sharing Task Team's goal is to establish a Knowledge Hub to make PAD information and data more easily accessible through a single-window to access information, as well as to develop and recommend communication strategies for fulfilling Actions. The task team includes representatives from the Government of Canada and the Mikisew Cree First Nation.

THEME: Monitoring and Science

A Peace-Athabasca Delta (PAD) Monitoring, Science and Indigenous Knowledge Task Team (MSIKTT) has also been established to support the Monitoring and Science theme of the Action Plan.

PAD Monitoring, Science and Indigenous Knowledge Task Team (MS1-9)

The PAD Monitoring, Science and Indigenous Knowledge Task Team was created to assess the current state of knowledge and monitoring in the PAD and to assist in the development of an integrated PAD Research and Monitoring program (using both science-based and Indigenous Knowledge) that is supported by a community-based research and monitoring hub, is implemented to detect cumulative effects on the PAD and to generate information that informs land-use management and regulatory decision-making. The task team has representatives from the Government of Canada, Athabasca-Chipewyan First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association and the Mikisew Cree First Nation.



2020 Flood

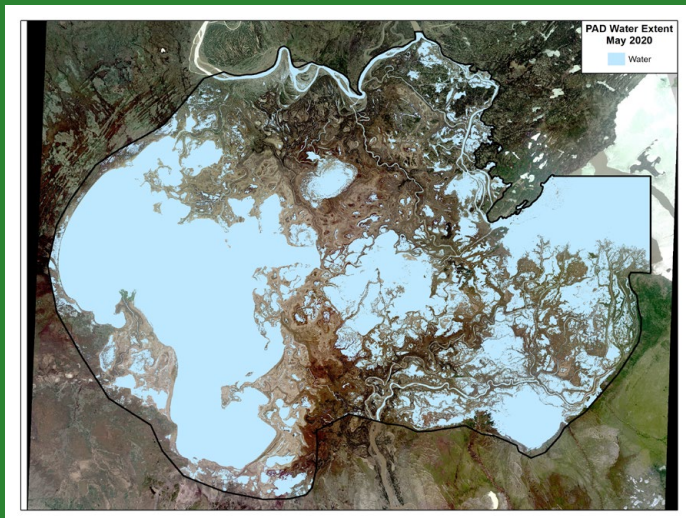


Figure 1. PAD Spring Surface Water Trends.

Since 1996, Parks Canada has been using satellite imagery to measure the amount of spring-time open water in the Peace-Athabasca Delta. For the 2020 flood, for the first time, PlanetScope satellite imagery was used. PlanetScope is comprised of a constellation of 200 micro-satellites that provide high quality, daily images of the PAD and give unprecedented detail in mapping this year's flood. Over 400 satellite images were used between

April 28 to May 30 to map the extent of the 2020 flood (figure X). Results show that the 2020 PAD flood reached 290,260 ha and represents the 2nd highest recorded water extent surpassed only by the 1998 flood (figure X). Further research and monitoring is planned to assess the effects of this year's flood on the ecology of the PAD and the Outstanding Universal Values of the Wood Buffalo National Park World Heritage Site.

Look Ahead

COVID-19

We understand that many of our partners are experiencing challenges due to the evolving situation with COVID-19, and our thoughts are with everyone who has been impacted by this global challenge. The health and safety of Canadians, our partners, and Government of Canada team members is of the utmost importance to us. We are following the advice of public health experts and implementing measures to support Canada's efforts to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). As a result, the Action Plan meetings, including Environment Flows and Hydrology, Monitoring and Science, and Cooperative Management Committee teams, are suspending all face-to-face engagement, events and meetings with partners on the WBNP Action Plan until further notice. In the meantime, we are committed to hosting virtual meetings and will resume all Action Plan in-person events once partner capacity and interest allows and when public health authorities flag it to be safe.



Announcements



Stuart Macmillan is Retiring!!

After 32 years with Parks Canada, Stu has decided to retire! Stu started his career with Parks Canada in 1988. In the mid 1990's Stu lived and worked in Fort Chip as the coordinator of the Peace Athabasca Delta Technical Studies. Although Stu moved away for a number of years, his love of the delta and WBNP brought him back to Fort Smith in 2005. Stu worked in the park as the Resource Conservation Manager for many years and was instrumental in initiating the Peace Athabasca Delta Environmental Monitoring Program (PADEMP). Over the past few years Stu has managed many aspects of the WBNP Action Plan. His knowledge of the area, the issues and the meaningful connections he made with local people, researchers and those with jurisdictional responsibility has been a significant asset to all of us. He will be sorely missed.

We would like to wish Stu a happy retirement and all the best with his future endeavors. Stu, thank you for sharing your dedication, wonderful sense of humor and time with all of us.

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