Parks Canada Parcs Canada

Canada

La Mauricie

National Park of Canada

Management Plan

2021

2021

La Mauricie
National Park of Canada

Management Plan

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented
by the President & Chief Executive Officer of Parks Canada, 2021.

LA MAURICIE NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2021.

Paper: R64-105/90-2021E
978-0-660-40335-9

PDF: R64-105/90-2021E-PDF
978-0-660-40334-2

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

Note to readers

The health and safety of visitors, employees and all Canadians are of the utmost importance. Parks Canada is following the advice and guidance of public health experts to limit the spread of COVID-19 while allowing Canadians to experience Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Parks Canada acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic may have unforeseeable impacts on the *La Mauricie National Park of Canada Management Plan*. Parks Canada will inform Indigenous peoples, partners, stakeholders and the public of any such impacts through its annual implementation update on the implementation of this plan.

For more information about the management plan or about
LA MAURICIE NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA:

La Mauricie National Park of Canada
702 5e Rue
P.O. Box 160, Station Bureau-chef
Shawinigan QC G9N 6T9

Tel.: 1-888-773-8888
Fax: 1 866 787-6221
Email: pc.information.pc@canada.ca
www.parkscanada.gc.ca/en/pn-np/qc/mauricie

Front cover image credits
top from left to right: Parks Canada
bottom: Parks Canada

Foreword

From coast to coast to coast, national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas are a source of shared pride for Canadians. They reflect Canada's natural and cultural heritage and tell stories of who we are, including the historic and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples.

These cherished places are a priority for the Government of Canada. We are committed to protecting natural and cultural heritage, expanding the system of protected places, and contributing to the recovery of species at risk.

At the same time, we continue to offer new and innovative visitor and outreach programs and activities to ensure that more Canadians can experience these iconic destinations and learn about history, culture and the environment.

In collaboration with Indigenous communities and key partners, Parks Canada conserves and protects national historic sites and national parks; enables people to discover and connect with history and nature; and helps sustain the economic value of these places for local and regional communities.

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

Management plans are developed by a dedicated team at Parks Canada through extensive consultation and input from Indigenous partners, other partners and stakeholders, local communities, as well as visitors past and present. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this plan for their commitment and spirit of cooperation.

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

Steven Guilbeault
Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada

Recommendations

Recommended by:

_____

Ron Hallman
President & Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada

_____

Andrew Campbell
Senior Vice-President
Operations Directorate

_____

Geneviève Caron
Superintendent
La Mauricie and Western Quebec Field Unit

Executive Summary

La Mauricie National Park is located 15 km northwest of Shawinigan, 45 km north of Trois-Rivières and halfway (180 km) between Québec City and Montréal. It contributes to the preservation of a natural area representative of the Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. The landscape of the national park is characterized by rolling hills covered by a mosaic of coniferous and deciduous forests, as well as a multitude of lakes, streams and rivers.

The park's territory has been a preferred location for First Nations for thousands of years. Several archaeological sites bear witness to their use of lakes Wapizagonke and Anticagamac and their shores for not only for travelling, but also for hunting, fishing and gathering. When, at the end of the 19th century, hunting and fishing clubs were established in the region, they turned to Indigenous people because of their skills and their knowledge of the land.

This period also saw an intensive development of commercial logging. About half of the forest area was logged before the park was established in 1970. Logging has significantly altered the regional landscape, and the impact on the park's forest, wetland and aquatic ecosystems is still felt today.

This national park was established in 1970 to protect the 536 km² area, to initiate a long-term ecosystem restoration process, and to protect and document its cultural heritage. Construction of reception infrastructure has allowed the general public to discover this exceptional environment and to engage in outdoor activities.

Four key strategies are presented in this management plan to guide national park management over the next ten years.

Key Strategy 1: Protecting natural heritage and acting to restore its integrity

This strategy focuses on the protection and integrity of the national park's natural heritage through conservation programs and activities to raise awareness incorporated into the visitor experience. Parks Canada will work closely with managers of the surrounding lands, local partners and organizations, First Nations and the general public.

The strategy aims to

- continue ecosystem restoration programs (forests, lakes, wetlands);
- continue to implement recovery plans for species at risk in consultation with the community;
- develop tools to measure the impact of climate change and, where possible, adapt management actions to limit the effects;
- implement sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in terms of operations and visitor experience;
- continue, in collaboration with managers of the surrounding lands and First Nations, to implement landscape level conservation initiatives; and
- continue to educate and engage the public about protecting nature and strengthen this approach by integrating it fully into the visitor experience.

Key Strategy 2: Protecting the traces of the past and sharing its stories

This strategy emphasizes Parks Canada's commitment to continue its efforts to document the rich history of the park and to share its stories with the general public. This approach will be done in collaboration with First Nations, partners, community organizations and the public. The strategy also consists of continued efforts to protect the most significant elements of cultural heritage.

The strategy aims to

- work with First Nations to better showcase their cultures and knowledge;
- continue to collaborate and acquire historical, archaeological and ethnological knowledge to document the past of the national park territory and to inventory the cultural resources;
- continue to protect the most representative elements of the park's cultural heritage; and
- offer the public more opportunities to discover and to better understand the past of the national park territory.

Key Strategy 3: A diversity of experiences in all seasons, in a unique natural and cultural setting

This strategy consists of improving and diversifying the national park experience according to the needs and expectations of target audiences. Parks Canada will also ensure that it provides inclusive experiences, regardless of ability, culture, social status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation and age. The strategy will be applied in a manner consistent with the conservation and environmental protection objectives of the national park and with visitor safety, and will make the park a model for sustainable tourism.

The strategy aims to

- improve and diversify visitor experiences in an innovative way in collaboration with partners, local organizations, and First Nations;
- structure and promote the visitor experience according to the level of practice and type of experience sought by target audiences to attract a greater diversity of visitors and respond more adequately to their needs;
- increase opportunities for accessible and inclusive experiences for all;
- better position the winter and fall seasons to attract more visitors during these periods;
- review the spatial distribution of visitors during the summer to enhance the quality of the nature experience;
- increase the possibilities for active transportation and experiences without a personal vehicle; and
- promote the use and sharing of the Parkway in a way that is safe, pleasant and respectful of the natural environment.

Key Strategy 4: A national park that is accessible and well integrated into the regional community

This strategy demonstrates the importance of continuing to work closely with the community and to take part in a concerted regional development approach that generates positive benefits for all parties.

The strategy aims to:

- continue and strengthen cooperation with stakeholders, partners, community organizations, and First Nations;
- collaborate with regional actors to diversify activities, promotions, and the conservation of cultural and natural resources;
- strengthen relationships with the public, encourage visitors to act as ambassadors for the national park and foster their attachment to it; and
- strengthen relationships with nearby schools to attract more local young people.

Table of Contents

Foreword iii
Recommendations v
Executive Summary vii
1.0 Introduction 1
2.0 Significance of La Mauricie National Park 4
3.0 Planning Context 5
4.0 Development of the Management Plan 7
5.0 Vision 8
6.0 Key Strategies 9
7.0 Zoning 16
8.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment 19

Maps

Map 1: Regional Setting 2
Map 2: La Mauricie National Park 3
Map 3: La Mauricie National Park Zoning 18

1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada administers 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 historic site, national park, national marine conservation area and heritage canal 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.

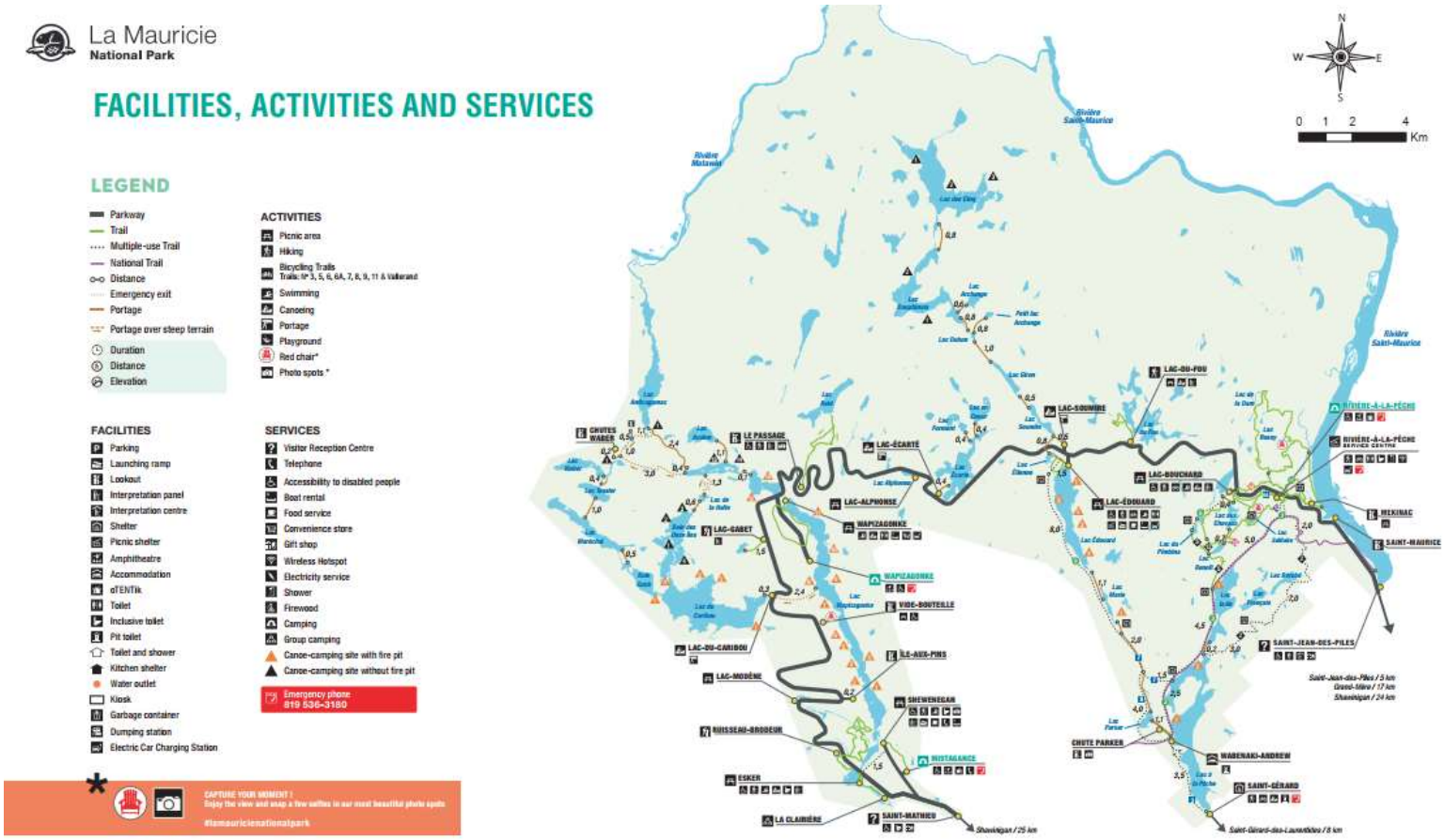
The *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act* require Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for each national park. The *La Mauricie National Park of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's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

First Nations, stakeholders, partners and the Canadian public were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of La Mauricie 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.

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 and, where appropriate, consultation, on the management of La Mauricie National Park in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting

Map 2: La Mauricie National Park



2.0 Significance of La Mauricie National Park

La Mauricie National Park is located 15 km northwest of Shawinigan, 45 km north of Trois-Rivières and halfway (180 km) between Québec City and Montréal. Created in 1970 and covering 536 km², the park helps preserve a natural area representative of the Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. This area bears the traces of the last ice age. It features rolling hills covered by a mosaic of coniferous and deciduous forests as well as many lakes, streams and rivers.

The park's territory has been a preferred location for First Nations for thousands of years. Since 1971, 43 Indigenous archaeological sites have been recorded. They are a testament to the use by First Nations of the long watercourse formed by lakes Wapizagonke and Anticagamac not only to travel, but also to hunt, fish and gather. Current knowledge of the territory's occupation has made it possible to establish that, at the beginning of the 17th century, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw and the Algonquins occupied the upstream and downstream parts of the Saint-Maurice watershed, respectively. In the 19th century, several private hunting and fishing clubs were established on the current territory of the park. These clubs called upon Indigenous people, particularly the W8banakiak, as guides because of their skills and their knowledge of the land.

The middle of the 19th century saw intensive development of commercial logging. The territory was divided into forest concessions for the collection of trees for sawing. The lakes and rivers were then developed (through dredging, construction of dams and slides, etc.) to transport the wood. At the end of the 19th century, the era of logging for pulp and paper production began. In total, about half of the park's forest area was logged from the 19th century to the 1970s. Logging has significantly altered the regional landscape, and its impact on the park's forest, wetland and aquatic ecosystems is still felt today.

The creation of the national park in 1970 allowed for the territory to be protected and initiated a long-term ecosystem restoration process. Parks Canada has also undertaken efforts to conserve and document the park's cultural heritage. A number of archaeological sites have been identified and documented and several heritage buildings related to hunting and fishing clubs have been preserved. Construction of visitor facilities has allowed the general public to discover this exceptional environment and to engage in recreational and educational activities while respecting the park's natural and cultural heritage. Also, under the terms of an agreement with the City of Shawinigan, Parks Canada ensures the protection of the city's drinking water supply, which consists of Lac à la Pêche and its watershed, located within the boundaries of the national park.

Today, the 63-km-long Parkway runs through the park from east to west, providing access to lookouts featuring stunning landscape views. Visitors can stay at one of three equipped campgrounds or enjoy more rustic backcountry facilities accessible by foot or canoe. They can also stay at the Wabenaki and Andrew heritage lodges. The national park has an extensive network of hiking and biking trails, roads, cross-country ski and snowshoe trails, and canoe routes. It offers visitors a variety of ways to discover this magnificent territory throughout the seasons and regardless of the means of transportation. The quality of the services offered, the beauty of the landscape and the variety of activities that visitors can engage in have made the national park the main regional tourist attraction.

Finally, the presence of the national park generates direct and indirect spin-offs that benefit the region's economic, social and environmental vitality, whether in terms of visitor spending in businesses and on accommodations, job creation, or conservation initiatives undertaken in cooperation with the community.

3.0 Planning Context

Current state and achievements

In 2019, La Mauricie National Park welcomed nearly 200,000 visitors. Over the past ten years, there has been a steady increase in visits, approaching a 40% increase compared to 2009 (142,000 visitors). This growth can be attributed to better promotion, new experiences being offered (such as camping sites equipped with electricity, oTENTik ready-to-camp tents, etc.) and the current public enthusiasm for nature and outdoor activities. La Mauricie National Park is mainly visited by adults without children (73%). The majority of the park's visitors come from Canada, particularly Quebec, but the park also welcomes more and more international tourists, most of whom come from Europe. It is open all year round; however, not all areas are accessible at all times. During the summer, visitors can enjoy a multitude of activities: swimming, cycling, canoeing and kayaking, camping, hiking, interpretive experiences, fishing, etc. In the fall, which is increasingly popular for its splendid colours, visitors mainly take advantage of the hiking trails and the parkway. It's also a great time for canoeing, biking on forest trails and observing wildlife. In winter, the park is known for its quality cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and Nordic walking trails. Depending on the season, there are a variety of accommodation options: rustic canoe camping in the backcountry, four season oTENTik ready-to-camp tents, heritage lodges on the Wabenaki-Andrew estate, and serviced or unserviced campsites.

Since 2006, the park has hosted two major events each year: "Défi du parc" (cycling race at the end of the summer), and "Défis du parc – Nordique" (sports events in the middle of winter). Parks Canada works with regional stakeholders such as the surrounding municipalities and tourism, cultural and environmental organizations. Currently, eight partners are involved in organizing activities or events, maintenance of leisure facilities and visitor safety. The park has also initiated an important connection with the surrounding First Nations, notably the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw and the W8banakiak. Management plan review represents a unique opportunity to strengthen ties with partners, community organizations, First Nations, and stakeholders. This will allow for more active collaboration, whether to better reach out to visitors, enhance and diversify the visitor experience, or carry out collaborative conservation initiatives.

In terms of natural heritage conservation, three indicators of ecological integrity are measured at La Mauricie National Park: the forest ecosystem, the aquatic ecosystem and the wetlands. Since the creation of the park, substantial efforts have been made to contribute to long-term stabilization, and even the improvement, of the integrity of the natural environment. For example, as part of ecosystem conservation and restoration programs, Parks Canada has implemented major projects in aquatic, wetland and forest environments. Infrastructure upgrades have also reduced the impact on the natural environment.

In recent years, the park has benefited from significant investments ($75 million). In addition to the conservation and restoration programs, these investments have allowed Parks Canada to undertake major infrastructure upgrades to visitor facilities, including trails, picnic areas, campgrounds and the parkway. They allowed for the addition of new oTENTik ready-to-camp accommodations as well as repairs of service buildings. These investments have also had a positive impact on cultural heritage. In fact, archaeological explorations have made it possible to broaden knowledge on the First Nation inhabitation of the area as well as the logging period. Work was done on the Wabenaki Lodge, a recognized heritage building, to better protect it. Several projects are still underway and will eventually ensure the quality and sustainability of activities and services offered to visitors as well as the protection of natural and cultural heritage. This will provide Canadians with unique opportunities to enjoy La Mauricie National Park.

Challenges

Several challenges have affected the development of this management plan, including the following:

Natural Heritage Conservation: Logging, which occurred between the 1800s and 1970, had a negative impact—that is still felt today—on the ecological integrity of the national park, particularly on forest ecosystems (tree cutting, fire suppression) and aquatic ecosystems (spring log drives, dams).

The national park is also home to dozens of species at risk, including the eastern wolf, the wood turtle and several species of bats. These species are also influenced by activities outside the park's borders. Ad hoc protection measures and plans for protecting species at risk are being implemented. The latter was the subject of consultations with community partners, managers of surrounding lands, and First Nations.

The effects of climate change are expected to impact the ecological integrity of the park through increased recurrence of climatic events, ecosystem changes and the arrival of invasive species.

Finally, because of the size and location of the park, the ecosystems it harbours are closely linked to what happens outside its borders. Consultation and collaboration with the managers of adjacent lands are therefore essential to conserving the park's natural heritage.

Renewal and enhancement of visitor experience offer to meet client needs and expectations and to better stand out: In recent years, visitor experience has been greatly enhanced. Leisure facilities and accommodation infrastructure have been renewed and new activities have been offered to visitors. Nevertheless, recreation and tourism trends are evolving and visitors are always looking for unique experiences. In addition, the national park has the potential to better position itself to stand out from other similar offerings. It is essential to anticipate the needs and expectations of current and future clients and to develop innovative approaches to meet them. It will be necessary to continue updating and improving visitor experience to allow the national park to better distinguish itself and to reinforce its ability to attract visitors.

Improved communication of park history and Indigenous perspectives: The park's territory has been a preferred location for First Nations for thousands of years. It was also marked by the establishment of hunting and fishing clubs and by logging. Historical and archaeological studies have been conducted, resulting in the collection of a large number of artifacts and the identification of several areas of archaeological significance. Some buildings, used during the hunting and fishing club period, are recognized for their heritage and historical value. However, the available information needs to be analysed and shared better with the public. This information will also allow for the effective management of cultural resources according to their heritage value. Furthermore, little is known about how Indigenous people lived and used the land. There is not yet a structured visitor experience, implemented in collaboration with First Nations, to honour their traditions, knowledge and perspectives, and to share them with the public.

Integrating the national park into the regional economic, environmental and recreational tourism dynamic: La Mauricie National Park is a key player and a pivotal component of regional development. The park and its adjacent lands are interdependent and influence one another, particularly at the environmental, recreational tourism, and economic levels. Although La Mauricie National Park regularly works together with regional stakeholders, there has been an interest in improving the approach to harmonizing the park's vision with regional dynamics.

4.0 Development of the Management Plan

In order to generate new and bold ideas to guide the future management of La Mauricie National Park, Parks Canada has done extensive engagement and consultation work with a wide range of participants, including partners, First Nations, managers of surrounding lands, visitors, youth and the general public. This approach was carried out in two phases:

Phase 1: Conceptualization (January to March 2019 – February to March 2020)
Three conceptualization workshops were conducted in the winter of 2019 with partners and with managers of the lands surrounding the national park. More than 45 people representing various organizations and entities related to the park, adjacent lands, natural resource conservation, the recreational tourism sector, and the regional cultural sector participated. The ideas and discussions that came out of these workshops fuelled thought on the future management plan and had a major influence on the directions proposed in it.

In February and March 2020, Parks Canada implemented an engagement activity with elementary school children that asked them to write on a ribbon a few words that describe their dream park. The ribbon was then hung on a "wish tree." A total of 88 children responded, and among the main ideas submitted was to improve the range of activities related to the interpretation and observation of wildlife and the natural environment.

Phase 2: Consultations on the draft management plan (May to August 2021)
More than 450 members of the public and some 30 representatives of partners and organizations related to the park took part in consultations on the draft management plan. A web page was developed to enable members of the public to view the draft management plan, complete a survey, or offer their ideas and comments. Meetings with partners and stakeholders were held by videoconference. Overall, the draft management plan was very well received by the public and the partners. The results of the survey and the feedback received demonstrated the importance to Canadians of prioritizing the preservation of the natural environment and the "nature" experience. The implementation of inclusive and universally accessible experiences was also discussed. Finally, the importance of making the public more aware of the First Nations' cultures related to the national park territory was emphasized by the public and the partners.

First Nations' engagement and consultation
At the same time, Parks Canada worked closely with First Nations, particularly Atikamekw Nehirowisiw Nation and W8banaki Nation, both of which are located near the park and to which the park is of great importance. Parks Canada has also submitted the draft management plan to other Nations with potential ties to the national park. Representatives from the Mohawk, Huron-Wendat, and Algonquin Anishinabeg nations submitted comments. The direction of this new management plan, whose implementation is linked to collaboration with First Nations, reflects their concerns and the importance Parks Canada places on cooperative relationships with First Nations.

5.0 Vision

The vision represents the aspirations for La Mauricie National Park over the next 10 to 15 years. It expresses the desired future and will inspire national park managers as well as its partners and collaborators in their management decisions and management direction. The vision presented below, therefore, reflects the expected outcomes resulting from implementation of the management guidelines proposed in this plan:

La Mauricie National Park is the guardian of splendid, authentic and wild nature. It offers a seemingly endless panorama of hills covered with forests whose colours change with the seasons. A constellation of majestic lakes, streams, waterfalls and rivers completes this landscape and makes it very attractive.

Representative of the Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, the national park's forest, lake and wetland ecosystems have been preserved and are recovering with human support. Biodiversity is protected. Species at risk find, in the park as well as in the surrounding areas, an environment conducive to their recovery and free movement. Environmental protection efforts are reinforced by the adoption of clean technologies and sustainable practices, both in operations and in visitor experience.

The national park is a place to recharge and connect with nature. Aware of the value of the exceptional natural spaces that surround them, visitors engage in activities in a manner that is consciously respectful of the environment. Parks Canada and community initiatives to restore and preserve ecosystems are an integral part of the visitor experience and are understood and supported by the public. The park is recognized as a model of sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism.

Easily accessible and inclusive, the national park welcomes visitors in all seasons. The quality and diversity of the experiences reach a varied audience, regardless of each person's level of practice and their interests. In addition, each area offers different possibilities that satisfy even the most varied tastes, making the park an idyllic place where every visitor can live unique moments in a protected and safe natural environment.

The park is the scene of several thousand years of human occupation and bears witness to a past that is filled with stories. Each period has left its mark, from use of the land by First Nations, through logging and hunting and fishing clubs, to the more recent period before the creation of the national park. The traces of these adventures can be found at the bend of a path, deep in the forest, or on the banks of a lake or a river. The greatest of these are accessible to visitors, showcased and protected. The diversity of perspectives and stories that are presented reinforces the uniqueness of this territory.

As a place of exchange, the national park maintains close ties with First Nations and works with them to preserve and promote their cultures, knowledge and values.

As a place of dissemination and expression for La Mauricie's cultural and tourism community, the park raises the regional profile and allows visitors to discover its rich, living heritage.

A recognized player and partner in La Mauricie in terms of tourism, conservation efforts, the economy and culture, the national park works with communities, First Nations, partners, community organizations and the public. Concerted action generates positive benefits for all and strengthens the region's influence and allure as well as the integrity of the natural environment.

6.0 Key Strategies

La Mauricie National Park of Canada Management Plan includes four key strategies. These describe the major approaches that will guide park management over the next ten years in order to achieve the desired vision in the longer term. Each of these key strategies has more specific objectives and associated targets to measure progress in future years. The approaches set out in this section take into account La Mauricie National Park's capacity and resources. Certain undertakings may, however, require additional funding in the future or may rely on partnership agreements with external collaborators.

Key Strategy 1: Protecting natural heritage and acting to restore its integrity

Although renowned for the beauty of its landscapes and its biodiversity, La Mauricie National Park still bears the effects of intensive land use in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is therefore necessary to continue the efforts already undertaken and to equip ourselves to meet future challenges where possible.

As part of this strategy, Parks Canada wishes to continue to implement ecosystem conservation and restoration programs in order to support nature's long-term recovery process. Parks Canada also intends to work with conservation stakeholders to implement a recovery plan for species at risk so they can find a special space where they can live and circulate freely either within the park territory or on certain adjacent protected lands.

In the coming years, environmental pressures related to climate change will increase. Parks Canada will monitor and evaluate the impact of these changes in order to make informed management decisions. This approach will aim, where possible, to implement adaptive measures to sustainably protect the ecosystems of the national park.

Since nature knows no borders, the ecological balance of the national park is closely linked to the management of adjacent lands. Hence, Parks Canada is committed to working with territorial managers, local stakeholders, First Nations and the public to better address ecological connectivity and to coordinate landscape-level activities.

Finally, the public and visitors must understand the value of La Mauricie National Park's natural heritage and support the efforts made to maintain a balance between natural resource conservation, visitor numbers, and the development of the visitor experience. It is crucial that visitors behave in an environmentally responsible manner, whether on the Parkway, in the more developed areas of the park or in the natural environment. As such, the proposed activities must always take into account the value of ecosystems and must promote protecting them in a sustainable manner. Parks Canada intends to continue its efforts to engage and educate visitors and the general public about conservation through participatory and self-guided interpretive experiences as well as communication approaches. To be effective, these will be based on the needs and preferences of target audiences and will form an integral part of the visitor experience and external communications.

Objective 1.1: Forests continue to regenerate, lakes and wetlands are healthy.

Targets:

- Forest, freshwater and wetland ecosystem indicators remain stable or improve from one park assessment to the next through the implementation of conservation and restoration projects as well as suitable management practices.
- By 2025, a fire risk management strategy has been developed and implemented.
- By 2030, the process of forest regeneration has advanced, in particular through the pursuit of prescribed fire programs.
- By 2030, the water regime of seven lakes is restored through the removal of log driving structures on the shoreline.

- By 2030, the brook trout populations are re-established in three lakes, and they will be free to pass between them.
- Parks Canada continues to implement actions to protect and maintain water quality of Lac-à-la-Pêche, the city of Shawinigan's drinking water supply.

Objective 1.2: Species at risk recover.

Targets:
- By 2023, an action plan for species at risk is implemented in collaboration with the community, First Nations and the public.
- By 2026, more than 50% of the recovery measures in the action plan for species at risk are complete.

Objective 1.3: Parks Canada's management practices aim to limit the effects of climate change on the natural environment and the park's infrastructure.

Targets:
- By 2025, an assessment of the park's vulnerability to climate change has been conducted and adaptive measures are implemented where possible.
- By 2025, a program to prevent, monitor and control invasive species has been implemented.
- By 2030, Parks Canada continues to take steps towards greening and optimizing operations and assets.
- On an ongoing basis, Parks Canada ensures that facilities and visitor experiences are sustainable and consistent with the park's conservation objectives.

Objective 1.4: Protection of the natural environment at the landscape level is maintained or enhanced through collaborative approaches beyond national park boundaries.

Target:
- Starting in 2024, landscape-level conservation initiatives that promote ecological connectivity are implemented in collaboration with the community, First Nations and the public.

Objective 1.5: The public is aware of and supports Parks Canada's conservation efforts.

Targets:
- As of 2024, visitor experience and communication approaches educate and engage the public and visitors regarding the preservation or restoration of ecological integrity.
- As of 2025, visitors are engaged in conservation initiatives through participatory experiences delivered by Parks Canada or in collaboration with partners, First Nations or community organizations.
- On an ongoing basis, Parks Canada integrates awareness-raising initiatives into its visitor experience program on the importance of adopting ethical and responsible behaviour in the wilderness.
- The number of visitors who feel they have gained knowledge about natural heritage shows an upward trend in future visitor surveys.

Key Strategy 2: Protecting the traces of the past and sharing its stories

Land use in La Mauricie National Park has spanned several millennia. Its past is rich and marked by the great diversity of populations that have lived there.

This strategy aims to better tell the public about the park's past and to present the diverse perspectives of those who have shaped it. To this end, Parks Canada will continue to acquire knowledge of the park's past,

whether archaeological, historical or ethnological, in collaboration with First Nations and the academic community.

This strategy also aims to clarify which cultural resources (whether landscape, archaeological, constructed, tangible or intangible) best represent the importance of the territory to the peoples who inhabited it, and to share their value and protect them. Consequently, Parks Canada will update the cultural resource inventories. The Agency will also implement, in collaboration with First Nations and community partners and depending on the resources available, actions to showcase and protect the most significant cultural resources.

Finally, the forests, hills, lakes and rivers, in addition to the flora and fauna of the national park, have helped shape the cultures and traditions of the various communities that have been here. The fact that the park attracts a large number of visitors makes it a good place for outreach. As such, Parks Canada will work closely with First Nations to honour and share their stories, cultures, knowledge and values with visitors. In addition, in the course of managing La Mauricie National Park, the Agency will take into account how important the territory is for First Nations. Parks Canada will also work with partners in the regional cultural and tourism community to promote and showcase the cultures and traditions of the Mauricie region to the public.

Objective 2.1: The park's past and its stories are shared with the public, who discover and understand their significance.

Targets:

- By 2026, the public has access to a wider variety of visitor experiences to explore and discover the park's past as well as the different perspectives related to it.
- Every year, activities showcasing regional culture and traditions are offered in collaboration with the regional cultural and tourism community.

Objective 2.2: Indigenous cultures and perspectives are honoured, communicated and integrated into the visitor experience in collaboration with First Nations.

Targets:

- By 2023, the national park is a place where the knowledge, skills and traditions of the First Nations associated with the park are shared.
- Starting in 2023, initiatives to honour and showcase Indigenous cultures, knowledge and values are featured in collaboration with First Nations.
- Parks Canada works with First Nations to generate economic, social and cultural benefits for them, such as those related to Indigenous tourism.

Objective 2.3: The cultural resources that best convey the historical significance of the territory, whether landscape, archaeological, constructed, tangible or intangible, are known, evaluated and protected.

Targets:

- By 2026, the inventory and evaluation of the park's cultural resources has been updated based on new information.
- The cultural resources that best convey the territory's historical significance are protected on an ongoing basis as resources permit, and their value is shared with the public and visitors.

Key Strategy 3: A diversity of experiences in all seasons, in a unique natural and cultural setting

Due to its geographical location, La Mauricie National Park represents an ideal and quick access point to nature with breathtaking landscapes. It offers the public a multitude of opportunities for discovery. The infrastructure currently in place can accommodate visitors regardless of their abilities and the activity

they wish to practise. Whatever the length of stay in the wilderness, it will enhance people's physical and mental, even spiritual, well-being.

The proposed approach is intended to better meet visitors' varied needs. It will help retain traditional national park clientele and reach new target audiences such as families, youth, and cultural communities.

The implementation of this strategy will be based on existing infrastructure. Parks Canada will ensure that facilities required for the operation of the national park are maintained in good condition and, where necessary, are upgraded if they do not adequately meet operational requirements, visitor needs, or park greening and sustainability objectives. Should new visitor needs emerge or future operational issues arise, new infrastructure could be added, within Parks Canada's budgetary capacity. Any addition would also be done while respecting the need to conserve the park's environment and "nature experience." Choices will have to be made to promote energy efficiency, greening and sustainability.

In terms of experience, this strategy aims to improve the visitor offer and the opportunities to enjoy the protected natural environment in terms of outdoor activities, whether interpretation, accommodation or cultural activities. The offer will be structured and promoted not only according to experience type and level, but also according to the types of experiences that can be found in the park. Adding extra activities besides what is already offered at the park, and enticing young people in particular, will help attract and retain families. Parks Canada will also continue its efforts to make the park more inclusive to allow a greater diversity of visitors to explore and enjoy the park, regardless of their ability, culture, social status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation or age. This approach will be based on sustainable tourism that is environmentally friendly, safe, and adapted to the needs of the public.

The national park should be positioned to enable it to stand out. This positioning will capitalize on the territory's natural assets, conservation and restoration efforts, and a renewed and enhanced visitor experience. Parks Canada will need the cooperation and involvement of partners, community organizations and First Nations to supplement and expand the range of visitor opportunities. This collaborative approach will be consistent with the capacity and mandate of Parks Canada.

This strategy also aims to promote a better geographical and seasonal distribution of the activities being offered. Its implementation will make it possible to better manage visits during the summer period by proposing and promoting activities that encourage visits to areas that were previously less showcased, but are just as interesting. This will relieve pressure on the most visited areas and will enhance the quality of the customer experience, the sense of connection to nature and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. In the fall and winter, the park's attendance is below its potential; the activities will be improved and optimized and promotion will be targeted to attract new visitors.

Through this strategy, Parks Canada intends to develop and promote opportunities for visiting the park and getting around it without a personal vehicle, and to strengthen opportunities for discovery using active modes of transportation (on foot, by bicycle, on skis, even by canoe). Indeed, the park is already considered to attract this type of activity. Its location near several tourist routes (Route Verte, Sentier National, Saint-Maurice River canoe corridor) will facilitate its integration into existing networks. In addition, it will not be necessary to undertake any major developments given the recently completed work on the Parkway and the trail network. Parks Canada will therefore work to structure the activities being offered to better accommodate visitors who use active modes of transportation. Partner collaboration will be necessary to develop public transportation options not only from the surrounding urban centres, but also within the park.

Finally, because it meanders through such beautiful landscapes, has a high-quality surface and a winding route, the Parkway is an attraction for visitors travelling in motor vehicles. This can sometimes cause road safety issues and noise pollution. Parks Canada will therefore work to raise awareness among the various route users and will put in place measures to promote the safe use and sharing of this infrastructure, in keeping with the Agency's vision and mandate and with the park's nature experience.

Objective 3.1: Visitor experience is improved and diversified in collaboration with partners, community organizations and First Nations. It better corresponds to the expectations of visitors and target groups.

Targets:

- By 2025, the presentation program has been updated to better meet the needs of contemporary target audiences.
- Beginning in 2025, visitor experiences are enhanced to provide more opportunities for visitors to enjoy the national park.
- By 2025, the possibilities offered through the use of new technologies are an integral part of the visitor experience.

Objective 3.2: The national park develops and communicates its strategic approach related to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Targets:

- By 2025, visitor experience will be structured according to experience and age levels and according to the types of interests of various clienteles.
- By 2025, Parks Canada develops and implements an approach to promote a stronger positioning of La Mauricie National Park.

Objective 3.3: Priority infrastructure is of good quality, is adapted to visitor needs, and is maintained in good condition.

Targets:

- By 2024, Parks Canada develops a strategic asset management plan that includes an assessment and prioritization of services and related infrastructure based on visitor needs and operational and safety requirements.
- By 2030, the condition of priority infrastructure related to service offer is maintained or improved.

Objective 3.4: Opportunities for discovery that are car-free and that use active transportation are enhanced and promoted.

Targets:

- By 2023, Parks Canada works with stakeholders, community organizations and partners to explore the possibility of developing public transportation options to allow visitors to access and move around the park.
- By 2023, a program for safe and respectful use of the Parkway has been developed and implemented and leads to a downward trend in the number of incidents.
- By 2025, opportunities to discover the park using active modes of transportation are enhanced, better structured and promoted.
- The needs and expectations of non-motorized visitors are taken into account in the planning and implementation of services.

Objective 3.5: Visitor numbers continue to increase without having an impact on nature conservation, the quality of the visitor experience, or public safety.

Targets:

- By 2022, tools for measuring attendance are implemented at various locations in the park, allowing for better evaluation and adaptation of services required in each sector.
- By 2023, attendance increases by 10% in the fall and winter compared to the 2018–2019 base year (28,800 visitors from October to March).
- By 2026, summer visits to the park are more suitably distributed in terms of geography through the implementation of visitor experiences and the promotion of attractions located in lesser-known and lower-traffic areas of the national park.

Objective 3.6: The national park becomes more accessible and inclusive to allow a greater diversity of visitors to experience and enjoy it.

Targets:

- Beginning in 2022, introductory outdoor activities are offered to help novices discover and appreciate the nature experience.
- Beginning in 2023, in consultation with specialized agencies, a number of visitor experiences and facilities are made inclusive and accessible.
- By 2025, new activities complementary to traditional park activities are developed to increase the park's appeal to families.
- By 2025, the range of fees for activities offered in the park allows all visitors to have access to experiences in line with their financial situation.

Key Strategy 4: A national park that is accessible and well integrated into the regional community

The national park is a protected area, but also a major tourist attraction in the heart of the Mauricie region. The territory managed by Parks Canada and the adjacent lands are interdependent and influence each other in terms of economy, ecology and recreation. The park contributes to regional prosperity and sustainability, but it also needs community support and commitment to carry out its mission and remain relevant to Canadians.

This strategy aims to strengthen the integration of the park with regional development, regional tourism, conservation and land use planning. Parks Canada wishes to continue its efforts to work with regional actors, the tourism community and First Nations to create more opportunities for collaboration and to generate mutual benefits in terms of conservation, activities, outreach and promotion.

The strategy also aims to strengthen the sense of attachment to the park and its mandate on the part of visitors, local organizations, and the community. In this way, Parks Canada will facilitate and encourage the participation of the public and community organizations by strengthening the volunteer base. This is essential to operations and visitor experience, and allows for close ties with the local and regional community. As well, the national park will strengthen its presence in a variety of traditional and digital media, thereby increasing its outreach, including to members of the public who cannot visit in person.

Objective 4.1: Parks Canada works in synergy with the community.

Targets:

- By 2025, the national park works with local and regional tourism partners to implement packages beneficial for all parties.
- Parks Canada is continuing its collaborative approach by holding regular meetings with community and First Nations representatives.
- On an ongoing basis, Parks Canada and tourism organizations work together to promote the destination and La Mauricie National Park.

Objective 4.2: Connections with the public are strengthened to foster a sense of attachment and to expand the network of community ambassadors for La Mauricie National Park.

Targets:

- By 2024, volunteer opportunities are consolidated to better meet the park's management needs while providing a positive and rewarding experience for volunteers.
- The national park works with regional educational institutions every year to create initiatives that foster the local youth's sense of attachment.
- The park makes full use of digital and traditional platforms on an ongoing basis to enhance its outreach and strengthen the public's sense of attachment.

Objective 4.3: Parks Canada works with businesses and organizations to expand and diversify the visitor experience and the services offered to visitors in and around the park.

Target:

- By 2024, a business licensing program that creates a fair and equitable business environment, sets standards for visitor experience and public safety, and promotes sustainable practices, is implemented.

7.0 Zoning

Parks Canada's national park zoning system is an integrated method of classifying land and water within a national park and designates where particular activities can occur on land and 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; and
- Zone V – Park Services.

All of these categories apply to La Mauricie National Park. These are described below:

Zone I: Special Preservation (6.7%)
This zone corresponds to ecological areas or exceptional elements that deserve to be preserved because they contain unique, threatened or endangered species or components, or represent the best examples of a natural or cultural element. Studies and efforts to restore and manage wildlife are taking place. Use or access are strictly controlled, if not prohibited. No motorized vehicles or facilities are allowed. Management arrangements are in place for sites located near existing day-use and developed areas.

In La Mauricie National Park, 15 areas have been identified as special preservation zones:

- Areas comprised of species or plant communities that are rare or unique in the park and in Quebec, such as the Saint-Maurice River valley, the area around Anticagamac Lake, and areas comprised of limestone soils that are rare in the park.
- The wall featuring rock paintings south of Wapizagonke Lake, rare remnants of Quebec Indigenous material culture.
- Critical habitats of species at risk, particularly in the Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc sector, Lac-à-la-Pêche, Dauphinais and Des Cinq lakes and other watercourses and wetlands.
- Fragile and important island ecosystems that contribute to the protection of rare plants or archaeological sites, as well as known waterfowl nesting sites where human disturbance affects the health of the populations (for example, the common loon).
- The watersheds of Français and Bérubé lakes, which include the only Arctic char population.
- The Baie Verte sector, a territory rich in rare fauna and flora and representative of the territory.

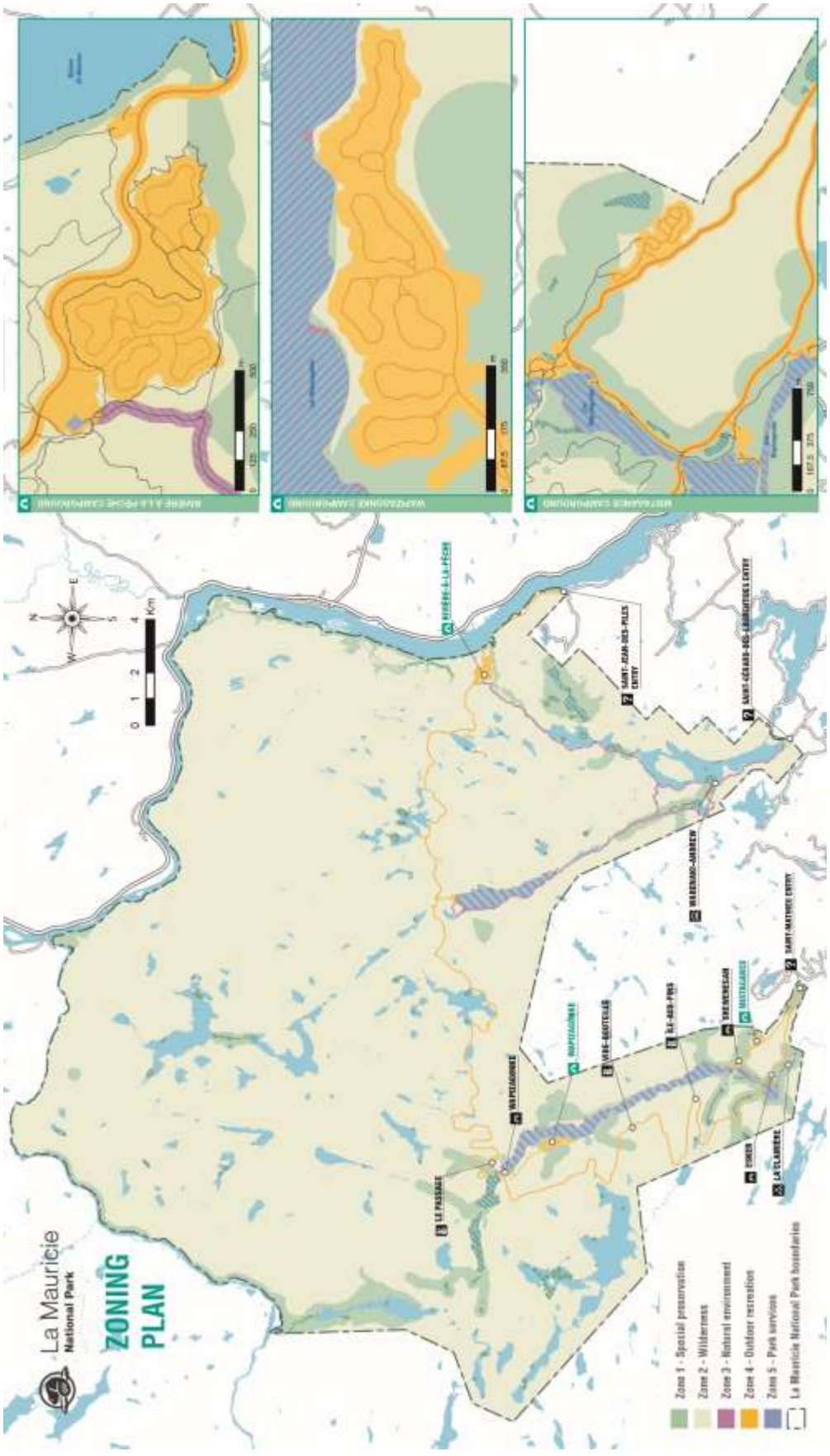
Zone II: Wilderness (90.8%)
This zone is a large area that represents the natural components and the park's focal species, and is maintained in a wilderness state to provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy quiet and isolation. Only a few activities requiring the most rudimentary facilities are allowed. Access to these areas by motorized vehicles is prohibited. In La Mauricie Park, this zone covers the largest area. Zone II is made up of sectors that exemplify the natural Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes and that feature opportunities for outdoor activities compatible with the preservation objectives set out for this zone.

Zone III: Natural Environment (1.5%)
While maintaining a natural atmosphere, this area supports, with minimal changes, the organization of certain outdoor activities and the construction of related facilities. In the context of park management, only non-motorized means of transportation are allowed. Zone III consists primarily of Wapizagonke (south of the Parkway) and Édouard lakes, due to their accessibility, high level of use and the nature of the activities permitted there. Zone III also covers the multi-use trail network that connects Édouard Lake, the Wabenaki Lodge and the southern part of Lac-à-la-Pêche to the Rivière-à-la-Pêche campground. This area has been designated Zone III because of a higher number of facilities required for such a network. Finally, the right-of-way for power transmission lines and other infrastructure related to existing public services in La Mauricie National Park are also designated as Zone III.

Zone IV: Outdoor Recreation (1%)
Zone IV is a limited area where a wide range of educational and outdoor activities are concentrated and where the related necessary facilities are located. There are a number of activities and facilities within this zone, but they remain compatible with the natural environment. Motorized vehicles are allowed. In La Mauricie National Park, the outdoor recreation zones coincide with the parkway and its right-of-way (20 m on either side of the route) and the main centres of intensive development, which are the two visitor centres at Saint-Jean-des-Piles and Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc, the picnic areas at Bouchard, Édouard, Wapizagonke, Shewenegan and Esker lakes, and the campgrounds at Rivière-à-la-Pêche, Wapizagonke and Mistagance. Finally, the parking lot and garage located at the Saint-Gérard entrance are also part of Zone IV.

Zone V: Park Services (<0.01%)
Zone V is a limited area that allows for the park's administrative and technical services to be carried out. The design and operation of facilities and buildings within this zone is respectful of the natural environment. Motorized vehicles are allowed. At La Mauricie National Park, the service zone is comprised of a garage at Rivière-à-la-Pêche, and a machinery storage and fuel supply area used by operations in this sector.

Map 3: La Mauricie National Park Zoning



8.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

All national park management plans are assessed through a strategic environmental assessment to understand the potential for cumulative effects. This understanding contributes to evidence-based decision-making that supports ecological integrity being maintained or restored over the life of the plan. The strategic environmental assessment for the for *La Mauricie National Park of Canada Management Plan* considered the potential impacts of climate change, local and regional activities around the park, expected increase in visitation and proposals within the management plan. The strategic environmental assessment assessed the potential impacts on different aspects of the ecosystem, including forest landscapes, the status of salmonid populations, the hydrological regime, and species at risk.

The disturbed state of the ecosystems is largely attributable to logging between 1830 and 1970, before the park's creation. Therefore, forestry activities (cutting, fire suppression) have profoundly marked the entire territory by altering the composition, structure and natural processes of the forest ecosystem. The forest landscape could be impacted by additional long-term effects caused by climate change and its secondary consequences such as colonization by invasive species and intensification of uncontrolled forest fires and epidemics. However, ongoing restoration efforts were undertaken, including a prescribed fire program that began in 1990 to help certain species. This program, in addition to some of the objectives of the management plan, is still ongoing and will continue in the coming years to reverse the current trend and improve certain aspects of ecological integrity.

The situation regarding salmonid populations, historically disturbed by the introduction of many exotic fish species by hunting and fishing clubs (between 1883 and 1970), could be further affected, mostly because of activities and developments outside the park. Since the watershed extends beyond the park's boundaries, the introduction of invasive alien species or non-native brook trout species remains possible. Ecological connectivity must be taken into account and joint landscape-level actions must be carried out to prevent non-native salmonid species stocked in numerous watershed lakes from interacting with genetically unique populations living in allopatry in certain park lakes.

The aquatic ecosystems and wetlands have also been greatly affected by logging and log driving beginning in the mid-19th century. Work was performed on lakes and streams to facilitate log floating. Numerous dams built at lake outlets altered their water flow patterns, resulting in changes to wetland and riparian habitats. To reverse the current trend and improve certain aspects of ecological integrity, an aquatic ecosystem restoration program was developed. Since 2004, it has enabled intensive restoration efforts and these efforts continue through the current Restoring Memory and Ecosystems project. Under this project, several actions were carried out: the demolition of old dams, the removal of thousands of logs accumulated on lake beds and along the littoral zone, and the recovery of genetically unique allopatric populations of brook trout. This project is still ongoing and is expected to continue in the coming years.

The implementation of a multi-species action plan for the recovery of species at risk in the Mauricie and Western Quebec Field Unit will define the direction of the actions taken to recover species at risk in the park. The strategic environmental assessment also provides recommendations to mitigate effects arising from increased attendance, park activities, and developments outside the park. A new land management tool or the introduction of additional protective measures that meet current species requirements would circumvent contributing to cumulative unwanted impacts.

Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the public were provided with opportunities to provide comments on the draft plan, and a draft summary of the draft strategic environmental assessment. Comments from the public, Indigenous groups, and stakeholders were incorporated into the strategic environmental assessment and management plan as appropriate.

The SEA was conducted in accordance with *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals* (2010) and facilitated an evaluation of how the management plan contributed to the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Individual projects undertaken to implement management plan objectives at the site will be evaluated to determine if an impact assessment

is required under the *Impact Assessment Act*, or successor legislation. The Management Plan supports the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals of “Connecting Canadians with Nature,” “Healthy Wildlife Populations” and “Sustainably Managed Lands and Forests.”

Many positive environmental effects are expected and there are no significant negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of the *La Mauricie National Park of Canada Management Plan*.