

# **Ottawa River Provincial Park**

## **Interim Management Statement**

**Ontario Parks  
Central Zone, Huntsville  
February, 1998**

## **Approval Statement**

I am pleased to approve this Interim Management Statement for the Ottawa River Provincial Park. This Waterway Provincial Park protects significant biological features including one nationally significant species and provides representation of regionally significant rock types of the Bancroft Terrain of the Central Metasedimentary Belt. The Ottawa River Provincial Park is one of the last natural sections of the river which has not been altered by flooding for hydro-electric power. The white-water which acted as a barrier to early explorers and settlers offers high quality recreational experiences to large numbers of commercial rafters, training for kayakers and scenic vistas to all park users.

This Interim Management Statement will provide direction for the custodial management of the Park until a comprehensive Management Plan is prepared. The Park is operated under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Bonnechere Provincial Park.

**Brian Pfrimmer**  
Central Zone Manager  
Ontario Parks

## Management Guidelines

Interim management statements identify: park values; guidelines to protect those values; and restrictions on use.

The policies in this interim management statement are consistent with provincial policies for park planning and management, and reaffirms these policies to place a priority on the protection objective of Ottawa River Provincial Park while having regard for the other three park objectives: heritage appreciation, recreation and tourism.

## Land Uses

The park boundary is delineated by the following plan: Ontario Regulation No. 290/89, Schedule 257. Figure 2 illustrates the approximate boundary of this 125 hectare Provincial Park.

## Adjoining Land Uses

The land adjacent to the Park is patented. The closest access is via a private road to the River Run Whitewater Rafting Company.

Ontario Hydro owns all shoreline from below the park land parcel, downstream to Byces Point (up to an elevation of 90 metres). Below Byces Point, Ontario Hydro's ownership resumes at Lot 22, Concession A. All of this shoreline was originally acquired by Ontario Hydro to accommodate flooding for the Cheneaux Dam head pond.

Over 200 landowners occupy private lands within and adjacent to the Park (OMNR, 1990). A detailed account of land tenure is available in the Ottawa River Waterway Study (1990).

Land use along the waterway is primarily farming (72%) and vacant lands (18%). Commercial use is the smallest component on the land base (10%) but has the greatest influence on the river. Commercial rafting companies have purchased numbers of access points as their "put-in and take-out sites." Private land purchases have overly limited public access to the river (Brunton, 1982).

A hunt camp, a non-compatible use by policy, is located on the park land parcel in Lot 8, Concession XIII of Ross Township. The building belongs to the adjacent landowner. This hunt camp will be addressed during the management planning period.

There are no existing Ontario Parks facilities in the Park. Commercial white-water rafting companies utilize some of the park islands. Soil erosion and compaction, loss of shoreline vegetation, and exposure of tree roots are all evident.

Use of these park islands will be assessed for natural habitat loss and degradation. Remediation will be considered during management planning, and may limit future public use.

## Recreation Activities

### **Hunting is permitted in Ottawa River Provincial Park.**

**Recreation uses (e.g. rafting, kayaking, white-water canoeing, etc.) are not managed** While the actual shoreline of the waterway is relatively undeveloped, use of the river appears to be at or near capacity (OMNR, 1990). Management planning will examine rafting, kayaking and canoeing experiences to determine if user conflicts can be minimized.

Site constraints and adjacent development appear to limit the camping potential for the Park. This portion of the Ottawa River offers some exceptional natural vistas. The linear nature of the Park may offer a potential hiking trail along the rapids. Management planning will determine if such a shore trail is feasible or desirable.

Although this is one of the last stretches of the Ottawa River to remain in a natural state, most recreational users will be confronted with large numbers of commercial rafters.

Informal trails exist on some park islands used by rafters. The condition of these trails will be evaluated. Management planning will determine if formal trails should be established, if the existing trails should be rehabilitated possibly even closed.

### **Commercial Activities**

Commercial white-water rafting companies account for most of the present use of the waterways.

Use of the islands for commercial purposes may be regulated to protect the Park for all users.

### **Aboriginal Interests**

The Park is subject to the Golden Lake land claim.

### **Geological and Biological Features**

Initial work for the natural heritage features of the Park was completed in the 1980's. This work is of a reconnaissance nature only. The life science study by Brunton

(1982) appears to be the first botanical study for this portion of the Ottawa River. The corridor marks the eastern-most exposure of the Bancroft Terrain of the Central Metasedimentary Belt within Ontario (Easton, 1992). Lower water levels in summer expose extensive marble outcroppings from pure white calcitic marble to bands of marble marked by abundant layers of biotite and clear green apatite crystals. The islands within the Park range from marble bedrock to low-lying alluvial sands and silts. The flora reflects this diversity and the fact that the Ottawa Valley served as a post-glacial drainage route from Glacial Lake Algonquin. The valley also served as an important plant migration corridor from about 10,000 to 5,000 years ago (Brunton, 1982). Western flora, including tall-grass prairie species such as little bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*), cord-grass (*Spartina pectinata*) and Indian-grass (*Sorghastrum natans*) are found here and are regionally significant. A total of sixteen regionally significant plant species have been identified to date. The nationally significant lake cress (*Armorica aquatic*), a tiny amphibious mustard, is found in one locality. It may be considered rare in Canada (Brunton, 1982). The marble substrate is host to a number of calcicoles or calcium-loving plants. These include elliptic spikewort, a boreal-subarctic relict and the uncommon closed gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*).

Management in the area would ideally allow natural processes to continue to shape the ecology of the islands and the shoreline where possible. Remediation of vegetation cover to minimize erosion will be considered during management planning. Heavy use of the corridor during the spring through summer period, particularly on weekends, indicates that this area needs management. Further inventory, especially of the life science resources, is needed to support management.

**All fires will be suppressed due to the adjacent private land holdings. Fire management through prescribed burning will not be conducted.**

## **Cultural Resources**

There has been no assessment of cultural resources; archaeological sites, historic use, artifacts, or historical landscapes.

This section of the Ottawa River was once part of the major interior waterway route of the Samuel de Champlain era circa 1600's. Full archaeological and historical surveys should be conducted on the islands and main land base to assess the rich trade, travel and logging history of the river.

## **Visitor Services**

Visitor services in this location deal with information and self use interpretation. The challenge will be to present information on this high quality environment to large numbers of commercial white-water rafting clients. Information on the area should identify: park boundary, natural heritage and recreation target achievement, viewing opportunities and research objectives.

## **Research**

Research will deal with all aspects of scientific study, inventory or surveys of vegetation and ecological processes, cultural resource inventories or special studies, and user surveys. It will be consistent with Ontario Parks Research and Information Strategy. An approved research application is required in order to conduct research in Provincial Parks.

As in the past biological and geological research will be encouraged. Research will develop a data base on the biological and geological features within the Park and adjacent properties. Comparative studies will be encouraged to understand how the features and processes of the Park relate to better-known stretches of the Ottawa River. The role of the waterway as a corridor for flora is of particular interest.

Completion of an updated Earth Science Systems Plan for Central Region and a theme study on the Central Metasedimentary Belt would provide a more complete context in which to assess the significance of the Park's geological features.

## **References**

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