

McRAE POINT PROVINCIAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN



Ministry of
Natural
Resources

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Resources

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We are pleased to approve the McRae Point Provincial Park Management Plan, as official policy for the management and development of this park. The plan reflects this Ministry's intent to protect natural and cultural features of McRae Point and maintain and develop high quality opportunities for outdoor recreation and heritage appreciation for both residents of Ontario and visitors to the Province.

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1. INTRODUCTION

McRae Point Provincial Park has a land area of 67 hectares and water area of 68 hectares. It is located on Lake Simcoe, 18 km south of Orillia off Highway 12 (Figure 1). The park opened in 1971 providing facilities for swimming, picnicking and camping. The primary attractions of the park are its location on Lake Simcoe with open campsites, a magnificent view of the lake, 400 metres of sand beach and a very interesting nature trail through the wooded portion of the park. The park is also only one and a half hours drive from Toronto.

The park is within the Georgian Lakeland Tourist Region which provides a wide variety of recreation opportunities for both residents and non—residents. The area is well—known for its cottaging, boating, and other water—based recreation activities as it is part of the Canada—Ontario Rideau, Trent-Severn (CORTS) waterway

There are many tourist attractions close to McRae Point such as Ste. Marie Among the Hurons, Wye Marsh Wildlife Interpretation Centre, the Historical Naval and Military Establishment, the home of Stephen Leacock, the Champlain Monument, the Big Chute Marine Railway, and Mara Provincial Park.

The park was once part of glacial Lake Algonquin, which explains the large amount of clay found in the park. The most prominent physical feature of the park is the drumlin spanning the entire south side of the park. The northern one third of the park contains a silver and red maple swamp with upland hardwoods closer to the lake. The biological and geological features of the park are all of local significance. Inventory reports are available at the Huronia District office in Midhurst.

The McRae Point Provincial Park Management plan provides long term policy direction and guidelines to ensure orderly development and-effective management of the park over the next 20 years.

2. PARK POLICIES

2.1. Park Classification

McRae Point is classified as a recreation park because of the excellent recreation opportunities it provides to large numbers of people.

2.2. Goal

The goal for McRae Point Provincial Park is:

TO PROVIDE A WIDE VARIETY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES
FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN ATTRACTIVE SURROUNDINGS.

2.3. Objectives

The following are the objectives for the park.

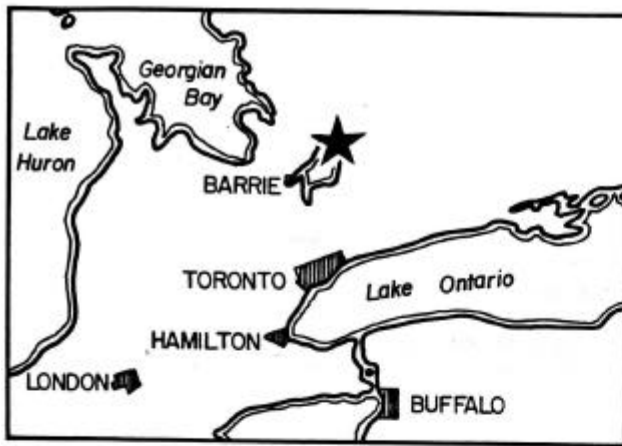
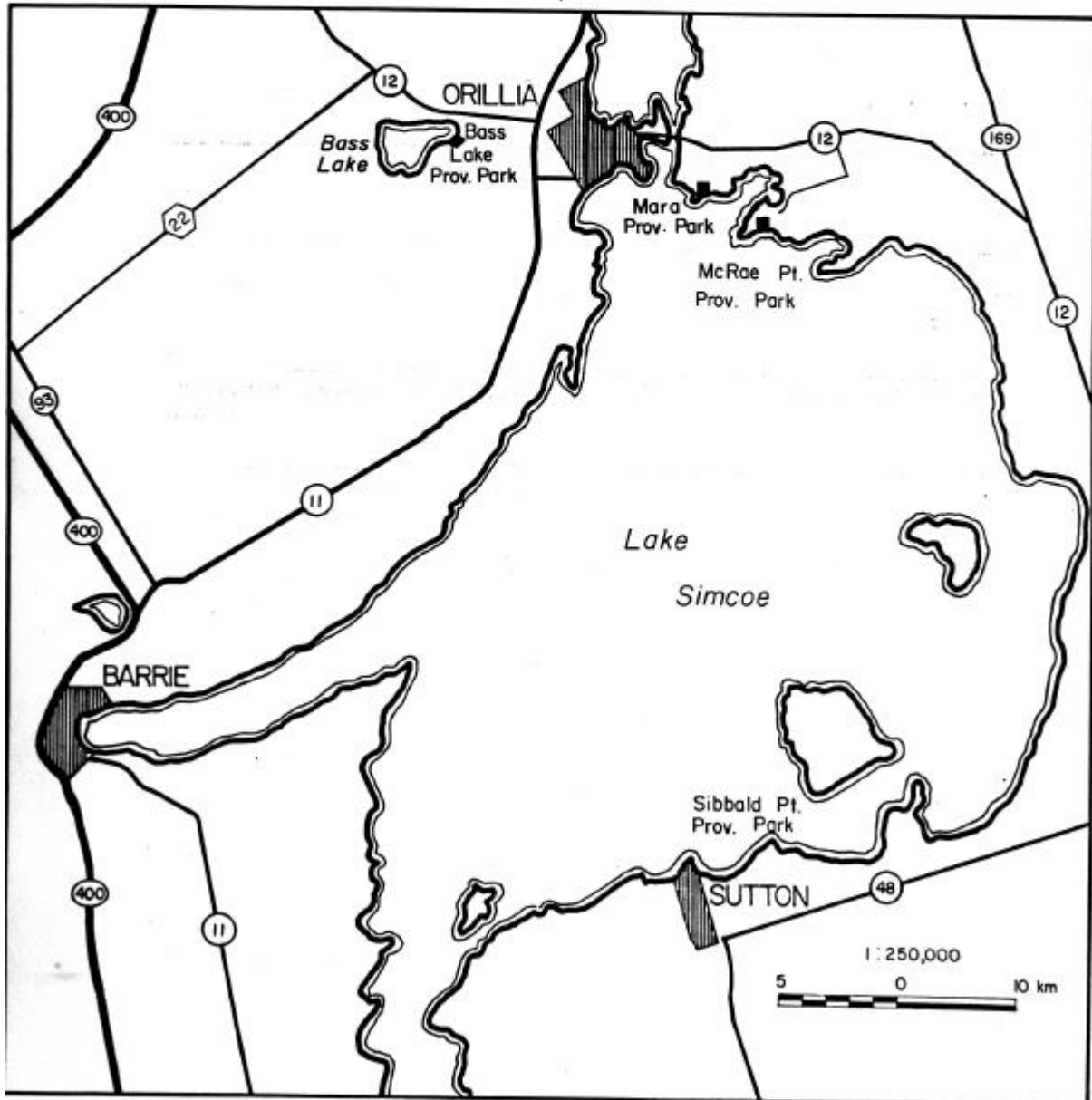


Figure 1

Regional Context

Legend:

- ★ McRae Point Provincial Park



2.3.1. Recreation:

- TO PROVIDE VISITORS WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAND AND WATER BASED DAY USE RECREATION SUCH AS SWIMMING, SUNBATHING, PICNICKING, BOATING, FISHING, HUNTING AND HIKING;
 - TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH SUMMER SEASON CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES;
- AND,
- TO PROMOTE PUBLIC SAFETY FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES.

TABLE 1 RECREATION FACILITIES IN MCRAE POINT PROVINCIAL PARK

Activity	Existing Facilities/ Opportunities	% of District Total	Facilities/ Opportunities After Redevelopment	% (after redevelopment) of District Targets to the year 2000
Swimming	400M/74,800	2.3%	400M/74,800	2.0%
Picnicking	40 tables/9,600	0.8%	120 tables/28,800	1.7%
Camping	203 sites/47,900	14 %	243 sites/57,300	10 %
Waterfowl hunting	2 blinds/240	0.6%	2 blinds/240	0.5%

The capacity of the day use area at any one time is approximately 560 people based on parking for 160 cars and 3.5 people per car. There are 40 picnic tables, which can accommodate 140 people. The number of day—use visitors using the park in 1983 was 6,100 based on 1900 daily vehicle permits and an average party size of 3.2. As the demand for picnicking opportunities increases, additional picnic tables will-be provided.

There are 203 campsites in the park with 125 of these electrical sites. The average number of camper nights annually used in the park from 1974—1983 was 30,600. The July—August occupancy rate ranged from 44% in 1974 to 72% in 1983, with the park full on many weekends. As a result of the increasing demand up to 40 additional campsites will be provided in the future, as required.

2.3.2 Heritage Appreciation:


















TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EXPLORATION AND APPRECIATION OF THE PARKS NATURAL FEATURES.

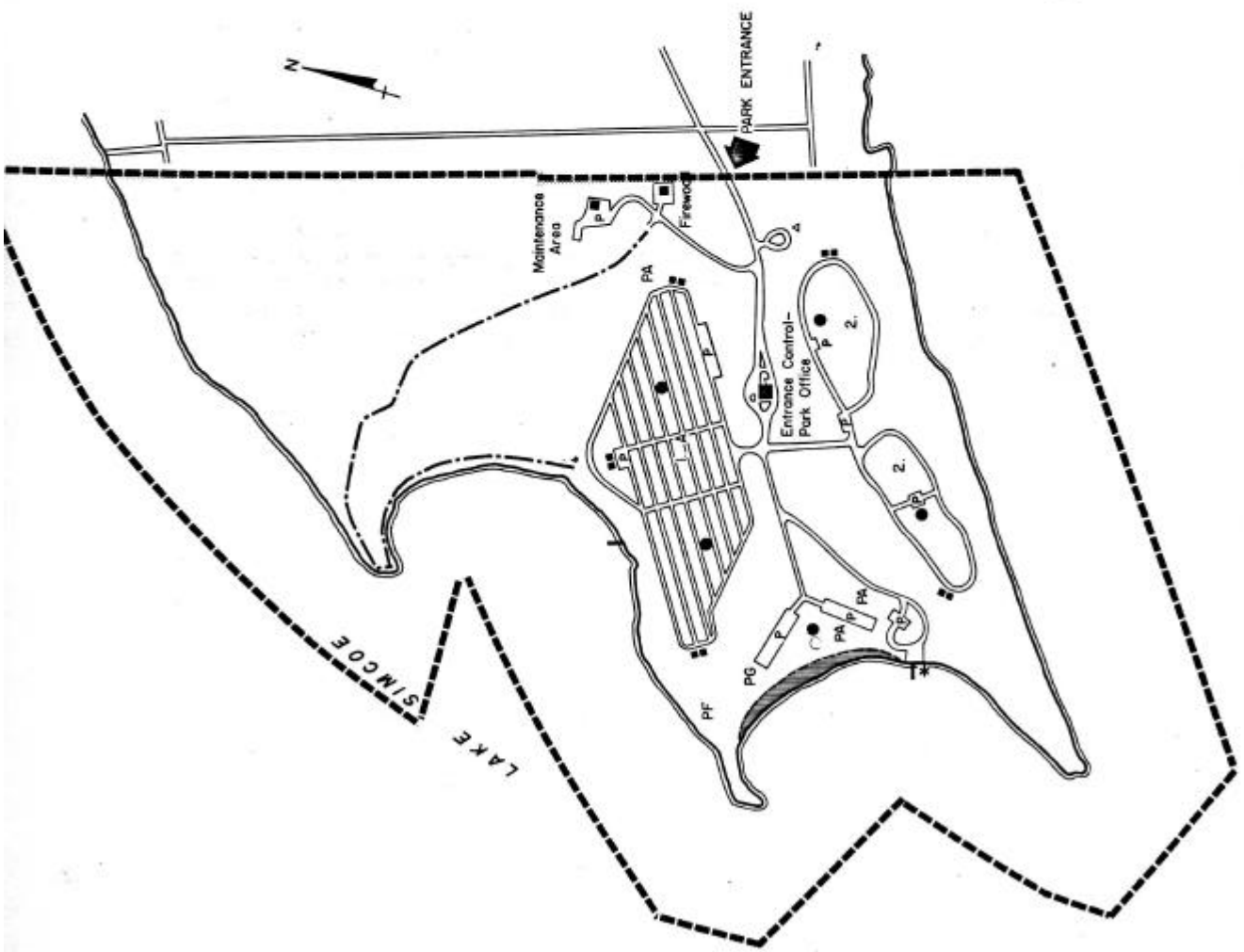
This objective will be accomplished through a self—use information and interpretive program.

* Ontario Recreation Supply Inventory Space Standards

Figure 2

Existing Facilities

-  Beach Area
-  Park Boundary
-  Pathless Woods Trail
-  Dock
-  Vault Privies
-  Comfort Station
-  Changehouse
-  Building
-  Boat Launch
-  Parking Area
-  Picnic Area
-  Playground
-  Playfield
-  Trailer Sanitation Station
-  Electrical Sites
-  North Campground
-  South Campground



2.3.3. Tourism:

- TO CONTRIBUTE TO TOURISM AND THE ECONOMY OF THE GEORGIAN LAKELAND TOURIST REGION, AND THE CORTS POLICIES BY PROVIDING RESIDENTS AND NON—RESIDENTS OF ONTARIO WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE AREA.

The park currently contributes over a million dollars annually to the Provincial economy through tourist and park expenditures.

The Canada — Ontario Rideau, Trent, Severn Corridor policies were adapted by the Federal and Provincial Governments in 1982. These policies encouraged the protection of public open space as well as the development of a coordinated recreation system in the Corridor.

2.3.4. Protection:

- TO PROTECT THE SIGNIFICANT NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE PARK.

This objective will be accomplished through zoning the silver/red maple swamp and upland hardwoods so as to protect these locally significant resources.

2.4. Zones and Zone Policies

McRae Point has two zones (Figure 3) based on the Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies, 1978.

2.4.1. Development Zone: This 38 hectare zone will accommodate facilities and services for a wide range of day use recreation and camping activities. Development will be designed to limit environmental impacts on the land and water. The two points in this zone covered with white cedar and upland hardwoods will be protected to maintain their natural values.

2.4.2. Natural Environment Zone: Zone NE 1 (28 ha) in the north—west corner of the park will provide protection for the silver/red maple swamp complex which are of local significance.

Zone NE 2 (.3 ha) and Zone NE 3 (.7 ha) provide protection for the white cedar points and accommodate the waterfowl hunting in the fall. Development in this zone will be limited to facilities that support low intensity day use recreation such as the nature trail and associated signs.

2.5. Significant Issues and Policy Decisions

Traditionally waterfowl hunting has occurred in the fall on the middle and southern points of the park under regulation 442 of the Game and Fish Act. Due to the timing of the hunting season (mid—October to mid—December) and co—operation from the hunters, there has been no conflict between the hunters and other park users. Hunting will continue to be permitted on these two points. There will be no other hunting allowed in the park.

*Economic Impact of Provincial Parks in Ontario, 1980.

Figure 3

Proposed Development and Zoning

Legend



Natural Environment Zone



Development Zone



Pathless Woods Trail

1. Proposed boat launch and dock facilities

2. Proposed unheated storage barn

3. Proposal to discontinue firewood storage

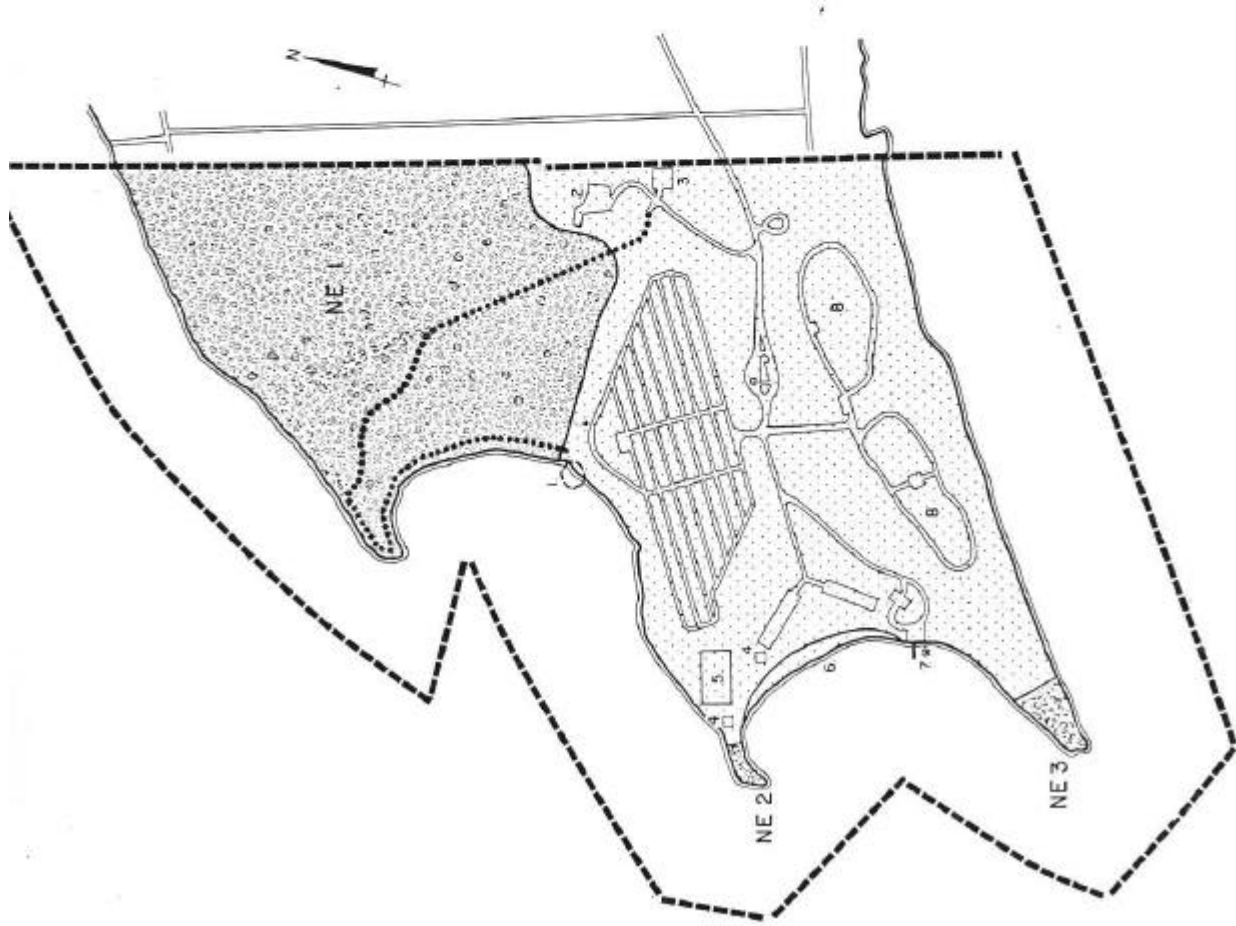
4. Proposed picnic shelter

5. Proposed playfield

6. Proposed beech improvement

7. Proposal to phase out boat launching facility

8. Possible locations for showers (1 site)



3. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The park's natural resources will be managed in accordance with the general planning and management policies for recreation class parks outlined in the Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies. Although the policies in this section are presented in separate categories all subsequent planning and management will recognize the need to integrate these components as they are all inter-related.

3.1. Landform and Water Management

The dry sand beach at McRae Point is very narrow and the wet—beach is filled with numerous cobbles and stones. The sand beach will be widened to accommodate more people. In addition, stones will be removed from the wet—beach to improve the swimming. All works will be done in accordance with an approved site and development plan.

3.2. Vegetation Management

Vegetation management activities in the park will promote forest regeneration, where appropriate, and wildlife habitat and public safety. Commercial forest operations will not be permitted in the park.

To ensure protection of the rare park flora, provide documentation for the planting program, and protect wildlife habitat, a vegetation management plan will be prepared for the park. Forestry and fish and wildlife staff will be consulted and, the prescription will follow vegetation management guidelines for parks.

In the natural environment zone those trees that are hazardous to park visitors will be removed. Wildlife “den” trees will be retained provided they are not a safety hazard. Insects and diseases threatening the forest values of the park will be controlled using biological methods where feasible. Control will be directed as narrowly as possible. Significant vegetation communities identified in the life science inventory will be protected.

In the development zone the vegetation management will involve planting of native species, where possible, in the open areas for aesthetics and as vegetative buffers around buildings and storage area. The regeneration of trees on the drumlin ridge in the south portion of the park has been difficult since much of the topsoil was removed during initial construction of the park. Special planting measures such as the addition of topsoil fertilizers and the use of non—native species on the drumlin may be necessary to establish vegetation.

Within the development zone the grassed areas will be managed to maintain the groomed appearance that is part of the park's character. The tree planting program will eventually reduce the grass area that needs to be mowed.

3.3. Fish and Wildlife Management

Waterfowl hunting will be permitted on the two southern points; no other hunting will be permitted. Sport fishing will be encouraged through the provision of boat launch and docking facilities. Commercial bait fishing and trapping will not be permitted. Control of nuisance animals will be carried out under the supervision of the ministry.

4. CLIENT SERVICES

4.1. Visitor Services

The goal of the visitor services program is to provide visitors with a variety of recreational and interpretive opportunities, and to provide information on the park, the surrounding area and other ministry programs and facilities.

The emphasis will be on self—use facilities. The district office will offer technical advice to the park staff. Guidance and assistance will also be provided by the staff of Bass Lake Provincial Park.

Visitor services consists of the following three components listed in order of importance; information, recreation, interpretation.

4.1.1. Information: Information concerning the park, points of interest in the Orillia area, and the policies and programs of the ministry must be delivered to the park user. This will be achieved through publications, newsletters, bulletin boards, displays and personal contacts. The best location for this information is the park gate.

4.1.2. Recreation: Emphasis will be placed on self use recreation facilities such as the children's creative playgrounds, small play areas in the campgrounds, a playfield for soccer or baseball, etc. and the Pathless Woods Nature trail. Some recreation equipment such as soccer balls, bats or volleyball nets may be made available on loan.

The park will be linked to local recreation events such as the annual Orillia Perch Festival and lake trout fishing. The park will act as a base of operations for many fishermen and boaters, not only for the special events but also throughout the summer.

4.1.3. Interpretation: Interpretive messages will be delivered through publications, the self—guiding trail brochure "The Pathless Woods" and occasional campsite visitation by park staff. This nature trail will be maintained so the park can continue to provide wildlife viewing and nature interpretation opportunities.

There are two interpretive themes of local significance associated with the park. They are the earth science theme (lacustrine spit and beach and drumlin) and the waterway theme because of the park's location on the Trent—Severn Waterway.

Special programs for educational groups will not be provided at McRae Point. However, the park's nature trail may be used for self interpretive outdoor educational field trips. An effort will be made by the district office and parks staff to inform local schools of the facilities at McRae Point Provincial Park.

4.2. Recreation Management

The park operating season is normally from May to October. During the off season the public may use the park for such activities as hiking, and cross—country skiing. Of f season parking is available just outside the park gate.

Existing facilities will be upgraded and additional ones provided, as required to enhance and maximize the recreational opportunities of the park.

4.3. Commercial Services

Firewood is now provided by the private sector just outside the park. As long as the service continues there will be no need to provide firewood in the park.

There is some potential in the park for a boating concession, (sailboats, canoes, fishing boats). This type of concession is compatible with the parks goal and objectives and would be encouraged.

4.4. Marketing

The marketing of McRae Point Provincial Park will focus on the following items listed in order of priority:

increasing tourist awareness of the park by requesting signage for the park on Highway 11; increasing day use throughout the season by raising the parks profile locally including informing schools of outdoor education opportunities; and improving occupancy rate by attempting to hold present customers longer and encouraging shoulder season and week—day camping

5. DEVELOPMENT

En all instances detailed site plans will be completed and approved in advance of any development. The requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act will be followed. In addition a park rede velopment plan will be prepared to guide the changes identified below. A conceptual plan outlining the general location of the changes will be prepared as soon as possible.

5.1. Camping Areas

In view of the demand for campsites on Lake Simcoe there may be pressure in the future to expand the camping facilities in the park. One alternative is to expand the southwest camping loop towards the point. This could add up to 20 additional sites. A second alternative could be to join the two southern campground loops with a road that parallels the lake. As many as 20 campsites could be placed along the road. This would provide some popular lakeshore sites. These and any other alternatives will be examined during the preparation of the redevelopment plan. It should be emphasized that this expansion would only take place if the demand warranted it.

Sandboxes and small swing and slide units will be installed near the campgrounds.

5.2. Day Use Areas

5.2.1. A limiting factor to beach use is the width of the dry sand beach. The sand beach is usually less than 5 m wide, which does not leave much room for sunbathing and other beach activities. To give the area a wider sand beach, some of the grass will be removed and replaced with sand. In addition some of the cobbles will be removed from the wet beach to improve the swimming. The area to be disturbed will be determined during the site planning process.

5.2.2. Picnic Area: The picnic area is adjacent to the sand beach. More tables can be placed in the area according to demand, (maximum limit 120 tables).

Two small picnic shelters (3—4 families each) are proposed for the park to provide shelter during inclement weather (Figure 3).

5.2.3. Playgrounds: A new playfield is proposed for the beach area, just west of the north campgrounds. The playfield will incorporate the type of facility most suited to the park users.

5.3. Boat Launching and Docking

The site of the existing boat launch is subject to wave battering and has suffered some damage. Consideration will be given to moving the existing boat launch ramp to where the docks are now, making it more convenient for boaters. It must be emphasized that this would only be practical if the existing boat launch ramp required major repairs. A few additional parking spaces at the new launch site may have to be developed. One potential problem is that those using the boat launch would have to drive through the camping area. Methods of minimizing the problem will be examined during the preparation of the park redevelopment plan.

5.4. Maintenance Facilities

The maintenance facilities for the park consist of the following:

- one large maintenance building;
- one small storage building; and
- one gas storage building

A small unheated storage barn is proposed to store large equipment and provide a place for outside maintenance such as painting tables, carpentry work, etc.

Since firewood is no longer provided by the park the existing firewood storage area may be used to store equipment and supplies.

5.5. Sanitary Facilities

There are five comfort stations, ten vault privies, and a trailer dumping and filling station in the park. The comfort station at the beach has changehouses, while the two comfort stations in the north campgrounds have showers.

To provide the southern campgrounds with shower facilities it is proposed that showers be added to one of the two comfort stations. The suitability of the soils for tile beds will be a major consideration in the selection of the site.

Garbage will be handled by a private waste management company utilizing a centrally located collection system.

6. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The scheduling of park development is difficult at this time because of unknowns regarding funds, manpower and the demand for park facilities. However, should the demand for facilities increase the following priority list of projects will be used as a guide for park development as funds become available.

1. Two small picnic shelters will be constructed.
2. Showers will be added to one of the comfort stations in the south campgrounds.
3. The beach area will be improved through expansion of the dry sand beach and removal of stones from the water.
4. A vegetation management plan will be prepared for the park.
5. Facilities for the playfield.
6. A small, open sided, unheated storage barn will be constructed.
7. The campground will be expanded.
8. The boat launch area will be relocated to the docking area.

7. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND PLAN REVIEW

Public consultation during the management planning process for McRae Point Provincial Park focused on the local area and included the following:

- Copies of the preliminary plan and a news release were sent to the local municipalities, interest groups and MPP's.
- A news release was sent to the local news media and resulted in several newspaper articles and radio interviews.

A fact sheet was prepared that summarized the proposals in the management plan and included a map. Approximately 200 copies were distributed primarily to park users.

All comments and suggestions received from the public were considered while finalizing the plan.

This management plan will be reviewed when major issues surface or at least once within the next ten years. Plan amendments will be made following the appropriate level of public consultation.

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