



# Hardy Lake

Management Statement

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## Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve the Hardy Lake Provincial Park Management Statement as the official policy for the management and development of this park. The management statement reflects the intent of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks to protect the natural and cultural features of Hardy Lake Provincial Park, and to maintain and develop opportunities for high quality ecologically sustainable outdoor recreation experiences and heritage appreciation for the residents of Ontario and visitors to the province.

This document outlines policies and implementation priorities for the park and summarizes the Aboriginal community, stakeholder and public involvement that occurred as part of the planning process. In accordance with the provisions of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, one opportunity for involvement was provided during the development of the management statement. This involvement included an invitation to participate and an open house, and provided an opportunity to review background information and the preliminary management statement. Information about this involvement opportunity was conveyed through direct mailings to stakeholders, Aboriginal communities, local landowners, and through notices posted on the Ontario Parks website, Environmental Registry, at the park, and on local public notice boards.

The management statement for Hardy Lake Provincial Park will be used to guide the management of the park over the next 20 years. During that time, the management statement may be reviewed to address changing issues or conditions, and may be amended as the need arises. This management statement will be examined in accordance with the provisions of the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all those who participated in the planning process.

Yours truly,

Approved

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Bradley Fauteux  
Managing Director  
Ontario Parks

May 6, 2014

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Date

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# **1 CONTEXT**

## **1.1 Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act**

Ontario's *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006* (PPCRA) is the legislation that guides the planning and management of Ontario's protected areas system. The PPCRA has two specific principles that guide all aspects of planning and management of Ontario's system of provincial parks and conservation reserves:

- Maintenance of ecological integrity shall be the first priority and the restoration of ecological integrity shall be considered.
- Opportunities for consultation shall be provided.

## **1.2 Statement of Environmental Values**

Under the *Environmental Bill of Rights* (EBR), the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR or Ministry) must develop a Statement of Environmental Values (SEV) that describes how the purposes of the EBR are to be considered whenever decisions are made in the Ministry that might significantly affect the environment. This includes decisions made as a result of preparing management direction for a protected area.

The Ministry's SEV has been considered throughout the planning process. The management direction for Hardy Lake Provincial Park will further the objectives of managing Ontario's resources on an environmentally sustainable basis.

## **1.3 Ecological Integrity**

Ontario's PPCRA states that ecological integrity will be the first priority of planning and management activities in Ontario's provincial parks system.

In this context, ecological integrity includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) healthy and viable populations of native species, including species at risk, and maintenance of the habitat on which the species depend; and
- (b) levels of air and water quality consistent with protection of biodiversity and recreational enjoyment.

All planning and management activities for Hardy Lake Provincial Park will consider ecological integrity first and foremost.

## **1.4 Aboriginal Communities**

Aboriginal communities in the vicinity of Hardy Lake Provincial Park include Wahta First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Wasauksing First Nation, and Chippewas of Rama First Nation.

## **1.5 Planning Context**

This management statement has been prepared consistent with direction contained in Ontario's *Protected Areas Planning Manual* (2009), in *Our Sustainable Future: A Renewed Call to Action, Ministry of Natural Resources Strategic Directions, 2011*, in *Biodiversity, It's In Our Nature: Ontario Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity 2012-2020*; and in *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies (1992 update)*. The park is managed according to the purpose, principles and objectives of the PPCRA and provincial park policies. Additionally, Hardy Lake Provincial Park will be managed to protect any species at risk and their habitats in a manner consistent with the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA). All activities (undertakings) carried out in Hardy Lake Provincial Park must comply with *A Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves* (Class EA-PPCR), where applicable.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

Hardy Lake Provincial Park is located on Muskoka Road 169, 19 kilometres (km) west of Gravenhurst and 170 km north of Toronto within Wood Ward of the Township of Muskoka Lakes, District Municipality of Muskoka (Figure 1). This non-operating, natural environment class park protects natural and cultural features, and provides day-use recreation.

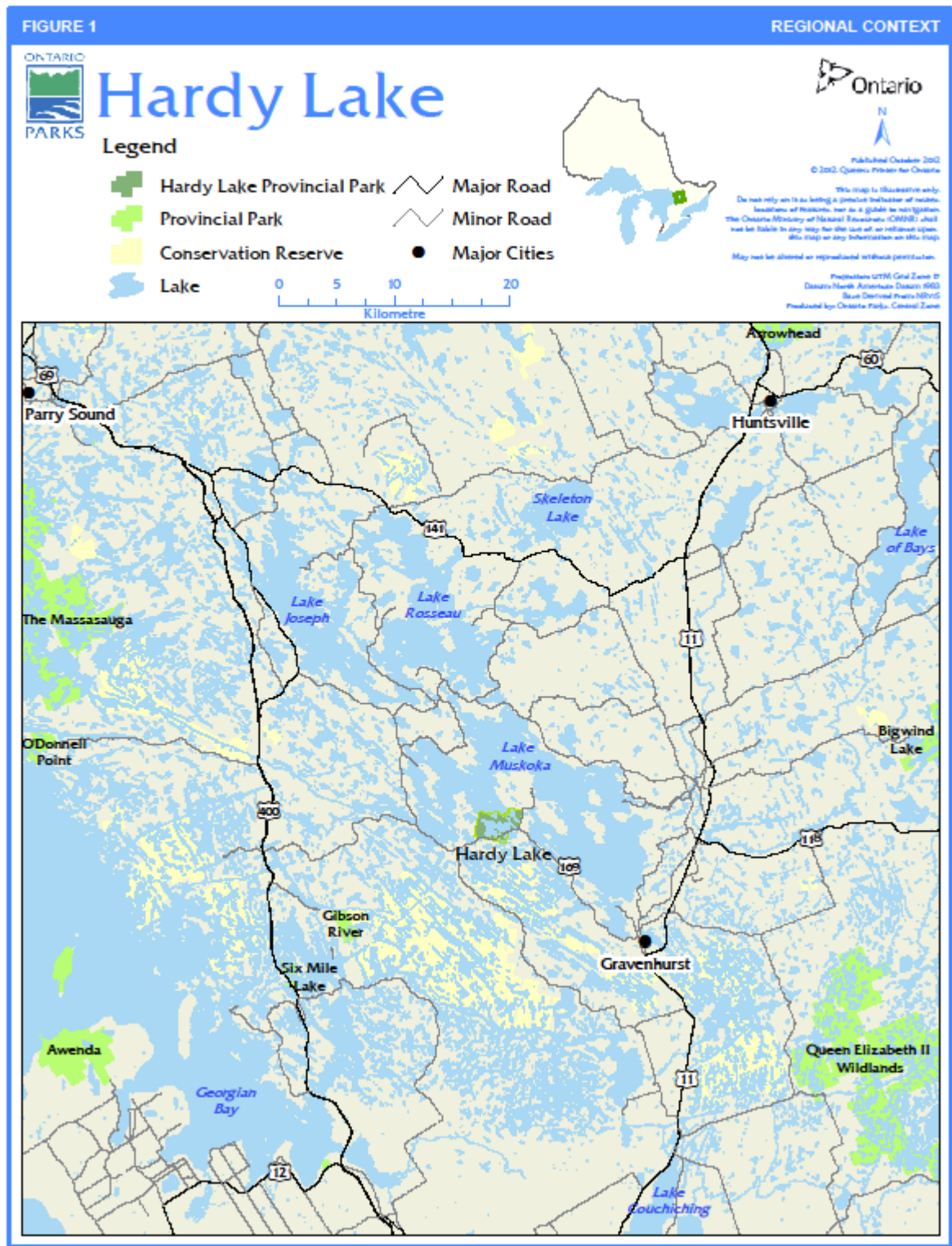
Located within the Georgian Bay Section of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Forest Region, in Ecodistricts 5E-7 and 5E-8, Hardy Lake Provincial Park includes approximately 808 hectares (ha) of land surrounding Hardy Lake and 6480 metres (m) of shoreline on East Bay of Lake Muskoka. The flora is characteristic of much of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Forest Region with a biogeographically significant complex of Atlantic Coastal Plain species, as well as other provincially and locally significant species.

This document provides the long term direction for managing Hardy Lake Provincial Park, including the purpose, permitted uses, zoning, and implementation priorities. This management statement is written with a 20 year perspective.

## **3 PARK CLASSIFICATION**

Through park classification, Ontario's provincial parks are organized into broad categories, each of which has particular purposes and characteristics. Hardy Lake Provincial Park is a natural environment class park. Natural environment class parks protect outstanding recreational landscapes, representative ecosystems and provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural features and cultural resources and provide high quality recreational and educational experiences. This classification has been assigned in recognition of the natural and cultural heritage values within the park as well as the variety and quality of the recreational opportunities offered.

Figure 1: Regional Context





## **4 PURPOSE**

The purpose of Hardy Lake Provincial Park is to protect the park's geological, biological, and cultural features while providing ecologically sustainable opportunities for low intensity day use recreation.

## **5 OBJECTIVES**

Management of Hardy Lake Provincial Park will be consistent with the four objectives for provincial parks as described in Ontario's PPCRA:

1. To permanently protect representative ecosystems, biodiversity and provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage and to manage these areas to ensure that ecological integrity is maintained.

The park's protection objective is to protect representative and significant ecosystems, as well as natural and cultural heritage values. Emphasis will be placed on protecting important habitat for species, including species at risk.

2. To provide opportunities for ecologically sustainable outdoor recreation and encourage associated economic benefits.

A number of low intensity day use activities occur within the park including hiking, canoeing, kayaking and picnicking. All authorized activities occurring within Hardy Lake Provincial Park will be managed in a way to ensure ecological integrity is maintained. Partnerships with local municipalities to promote tourism opportunities may be explored.

3. To provide opportunities for residents and visitors of Ontario to increase their knowledge and appreciation of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage.

Hardy Lake provides visitors with the opportunity to experience the unique ecological and recreational characteristics of this region through self-directed exploration and appreciation of its natural and cultural resources. Healthy vegetation and wildlife communities, the remains of a 19th century homestead, and access to undeveloped shoreline on Hardy Lake and Lake Muskoka contribute to a better appreciation of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage.

4. To facilitate scientific research and to provide points of reference to support monitoring of ecological change on the broader landscape.

The park's scientific research objective is to provide a benchmark to support monitoring of ecological change on the broader landscape, and to collect timely and relevant information for integration into the park decision making process. This information will help to achieve the Ontario Parks goal and objectives, strengthen stewardship capabilities and ensure that sound environmental and business decisions are made.

## 6 PARK VALUES

### 6.1 Life Sciences

Hardy Lake Provincial Park is located within the Georgian Bay Section of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Forest Region on the boundaries of Ecodistricts 5E-7 and 5E-8. It is an area of high life science value with a variety of forest and wetland vegetation types. Hardy Lake Provincial Park protects land that is within an ecologically important transition zone between the St. Lawrence Lowlands to the south and the Canadian Shield to the north. This transition zone, known as an ecotone, is comprised of landscapes which vary in physical structure and formation resulting in high ecological diversity.

The upland's deeper soils to the west of Hardy Lake are forested with hardwoods such as sugar maple (*Acer saccharinum* ssp. *saccharinum*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*) and white ash (*Fraxinus americana*). Bedrock ridges with sugar maple and eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), as well as an extensive swamp dominated by red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and eastern hemlock occur in the south west corner of the park. Swamps such as these are more typical of the shores of eastern Georgian Bay, are rare this far inland, and are probably not found in stands larger than those at Hardy Lake. Red oak (*Quercus rubra*), eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) and trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) cover the bedrock ridges to the east of the lake. To the north of the lake, ridges with eastern hemlock rise above the hardwood forests. The troughs between the ridges support a variety of wetlands including beaver ponds, poor fens and shrubby thicket swamps.

Nearly 400 taxa (i.e., species, subspecies, varieties and hybrids) of vascular plants have been identified in the park. None of the plants are classified as species at risk; however, one is provincially rare and 37 are rare in Ecodistrict 5E-7 or 5E-8. Hardy Lake Provincial Park has seven species which belong to the Atlantic Coastal Plain flora. Atlantic Coastal Plain flora is a small group of plant species that once grew on the shoreline of postglacial Lake Algonquin (Keddy, 1989). They occur in wet areas, mostly lakeshores, in the Georgian Bay area of Ontario. Among those with disjunct population distributions found in Hardy Lake are: small waterwort (*Elatine minima*), two species of water milfoil (*Myriophyllum farwellii* and *M. tenellum*) and Carolina yellow-eyed-grass (*Xyris difformis*).

The local climate is moderated by Georgian Bay. As a result, a number of species near the northern limit of their range can be found within the park. The most notable example is white oak (*Quercus alba*), which is common. Squaw-root (*Conopholis americana*) is found in the dry oak-maple forest surrounding the uncommon eastern white pine peatlands in the north-eastern section of the park.

A number of biogeographically important plant species are supported by the poor fens, and the black spruce (*Picea mariana*) and tamarack (*Larix laricina*) stands south of

Muskoka Road 169. These include regionally rare species like dragon's mouth orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*) and several species of sedge (*Carex* spp.).

Among the 11 species of amphibians and five species of reptiles found in the park, three are species at risk. At least 17 species of mammals are present. White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) wintering yards are located in the northern section and beaver ponds are scattered throughout. None of the mammals known from the area are provincially rare or at risk. With 94 species, the park supports a rich bird community. Several species of neotropical migrants and area sensitive species are present. Five species of bird found in the park are currently listed as Endangered or Threatened on the Species at Risk in Ontario (SARO) list.

## **6.2 Earth Sciences**

Hardy Lake Provincial Park is located within the Moon River Domain, Parry Sound Terrane of the Grenville Geological Province, Canadian Precambrian Shield. The Grenville Province is subdivided into domains and terranes which are based on distinctive age, lithologies (rock types) and degree and style of metamorphism (modification by pressure and temperature). The exposed bedrock shows the impact of two continental land masses, which created a range of mountains approximately one billion years ago. Grenville rocks exposed in the park consist mainly of granitic gneisses (Spek, 1981). A billion years of erosion has subsequently planed the land surface here into a peneplain of relatively gently rolling topography.

The landforms of the area have been affected greatly by the Quaternary glaciations of approximately the last two million years. During the last glaciation (Wisconsinan Period), the area was probably covered in an extensive, but thin blanket of till (ground moraine), which helped to level the irregular, gentle topography (Bennett, 1976). During the late deglaciation, glacial Lake Algonquin overflowed the Great Lakes basins. A legacy of this process is a set of raised (abandoned) beaches found just east of the park (Chapman and Putnam, 1964). The lake over the park area would have been shallow. The eastern section of the park was probably exposed through wave action along the shorelines of glacial Lake Algonquin (Bennett, 1976). Recent deposits of organic material have built up in the wet depressions between these ridges. It has been suggested that the park area may have been a small island in the archipelago that formed the Algonquin shoreline (Spek, 1981). The surficial deposits are considered to be locally significant due to similar shoreline features in the Parry Sound region.

Some glacial deposits occur west of Hardy Lake in the form of remnant, scoured wave-washed till that was not removed by glacial action from the park area. These form a discontinuous, patchy blanket of sediment (Kor and Miller, 1987). Bennett (1976) noted low, parallel ridges of till along the western shore of Hardy Lake, which may be ice push ridges, created during periods of higher water levels in the lake. Whatever their origin, they form drainage barriers along this shoreline and the subsequent water impoundments support an uncommon wetland vegetation community. The long, narrow, low ridges of beach sand and cobbles, which mark the extent of high ice levels in Hardy Lake, are locally significant.

### **6.3 Cultural Resources**

Wood Ward, formerly Wood Township, was first surveyed in 1870, and subsequently two homesteads were patented within the present day park boundary. William Freeman received a patent in 1878 for Lots 19 and 20, Concession V. Joseph Braeze obtained a patent for Lot 19, Concession VI in 1873 and Lot 18, Concession VI in 1878.

More recently, most of the Hardy Lake property was in ownership of one individual and was used as a recreational retreat. The owner used the Freeman homestead site as a cottage until it was destroyed by fire in 1975. Only a small wooden building and the rock foundation of the homestead remains. A boat house, which is no longer present, was constructed in the north-west bay at the south end of the portage to Lake Muskoka. Vegetative cultivars can be found in the vicinity of the old homestead and may be of historical botanical interest.

Boulders topped with rock piles are located in various areas near the homestead. These consist of numbers of small rocks 15-30 cm in diameter set on top of larger boulders. These were likely stockpiled when the land was originally cleared for the homestead.

A formal study of cultural resources has not been undertaken for the park. Activities involving significant ground disturbance will require the prior completion of a site-specific archaeological study.

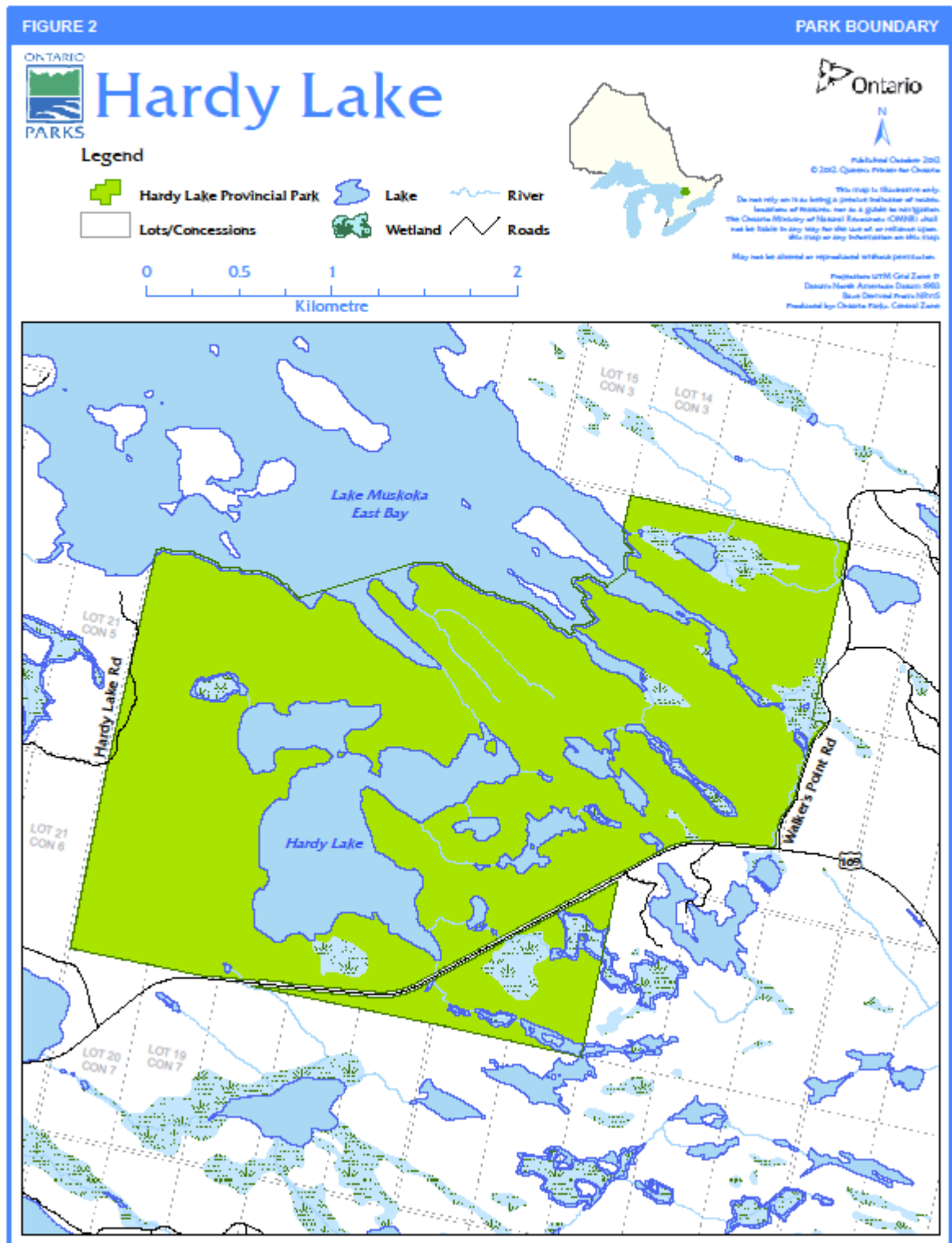
### **6.4 Recreation Resources**

Hardy Lake provides opportunities for high quality day use recreation for visitors. Hiking, picnicking, canoeing, kayaking, sport fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing and nature appreciation are all popular activities in the park. Hiking trails traverse the park providing access to the shores of both Hardy Lake and Lake Muskoka. The trails are currently maintained by the Township of Muskoka Lakes in partnership with Ontario Parks. A trail guide developed by The Recreational Trails Committee of the Township of Muskoka Lakes is available at the trail head, which is accessible from Muskoka Road 169.

## **7 BOUNDARY**

The boundary of Hardy Lake Provincial Park is shown in Figure 2. The 808 hectare park is divided by Muskoka Road 169 into two parts. Part 1, north of Muskoka Road 169 consists of 751 hectares; Part 2, south of Muskoka Road 169 is 57 hectares. The park boundary extends along the lakebed 15 metres in perpendicular distance from the water's edge of Lake Muskoka, except for some portions of the shoreline (i.e., inlets) where the boundary extends further.

Figure 2: Park Boundary



Most of the land that is now Hardy Lake Provincial Park was acquired in 1980 by the MNR in partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The park was regulated under the *Provincial Parks Act* (PPA) in 1985 (Ontario Regulation 493/85).

As recommended during the 1986 management planning process, two separate parcels of private land have been acquired for addition to the park.

1. Lots 12 and 13, Concession IV (81 ha) were purchased by a private individual for the purpose of donating the land to the province for addition to the park. These lots were regulated as part of Hardy Lake Provincial Park under the PPA in 1997 when Ontario Regulation 951, R.R.O. 1990 was amended by Ontario Regulation 257/97. This addition increased the size of the park from 684 ha to approximately 765 ha.
2. Lot 20, Concession VI (40.5 ha) was purchased by the MNR in March, 1986; however, the regulated park boundary was not changed until 2012 when Ontario Regulation 316/07 under the PPCRA was amended by Ontario Regulation 95/12. This addition increased the size of the park to approximately 808 ha.

Legislation, regulations and park management statement policies apply only to the area within the regulated boundary of the park. Within the park boundary, the protection of park values and features will be achieved through appropriate zoning, the control of land use and activities, education, and monitoring of ecological impacts.

Ontario Parks will support, in principle, the acquisition of property for addition to the park, where the property will enhance park values. Potential acquisitions will be evaluated as to their contribution to park objectives, and will be considered on a willing buyer, willing seller basis, subject to available resources.

## **8 ADJACENT LAND USES**

The park is adjacent to private land to the east and west, and Lake Muskoka to the north. The southern portion of the park abuts Crown land which is identified as a General Use Area (Multiple Resource Management Area G362). A full range of resource and recreational uses can occur in General Use Areas.

Torrance Barrens, a 1906 ha conservation reserve (CR) regulated under the PPCRA, is located south of the park (Figure 1). Conservation reserves protect representative natural areas and special landscapes. In addition to its CR status, Torrance Barrens was recognized by the Ontario Government as a Dark Sky Reserve in 1999.

## **9 PARK POLICIES**

The following policies apply to the whole park.

### **9.1 Industrial Uses**

Industrial activities are prohibited.

### **9.2 Commercial Uses**

The PPCRA allows for the MNR to enter into commercial agreements with respect to the use and occupation of land in provincial parks. There are a number of provincial policies governing what type of commercial activities may occur in certain classes of parks and zones within the park.

Commercial harvesting, including trapping, fishing, and bait harvesting are not permitted in the park. There are no existing licences, and new operations will not be considered.

There are no bear management area (BMA) licences in the park; new BMA licences will not be issued.

### **9.3 Resource Management Policies**

Hardy Lake Provincial Park will be managed in accordance with the policies set out in Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies (1992 update) for natural environment class parks. The following policies will guide the management of park resources consistent with the ESA, the PPCRA and with the requirements of the *Environmental Assessment Act*. All resource management projects (undertakings) will be carried out consistent with A Class EA-PPCR. The Ministry of Natural Resources will consider adaptive management approaches when managing park resources.

Resource management initiatives may be undertaken through partnerships.

#### **9.3.1 Land**

Aggregate needed for in-park consumption (e.g., parking lot improvement) will be acquired from an external source. Areas where aggregate is brought in will be monitored for alien and invasive species (see Section 9.3.5).

There are currently no private or commercial leases, land use permits, or licences of occupation in the park. New land dispositions are prohibited.

### **9.3.2 Private Recreation Camps and Boat Caches**

There are currently no private recreation camps; no new private recreation camps will be considered.

Boat caches are not permitted<sup>1</sup> unless authorized in writing by the park superintendent.

### **9.3.3 Access and Crossings**

Hardy Lake Provincial Park can be reached by road from Muskoka Road 169 and by water from Lake Muskoka. The nearby main transportation corridors are Highways 400, 11, and 69.

A parking lot accommodating approximately 12 vehicles is accessible from Muskoka Road 169, one kilometre west of Walker's Point Road. Formal access to the park will only be maintained at this access point.

With the exception of the parking lot and a portion of Hardy Lake Road which provides access to private property outside the park, all other vehicular entry to the park will be closed.

Portions of Hardy Lake Road and a small turnaround are located within the regulated boundary on the west side of the park (Figure 2). This road provides access to private property outside the park and will remain open; however, Ontario Parks will not maintain or permit any expansion of the turnaround or road within the park. A dock located beside the turnaround is not within the regulated park boundary.

Ontario Parks will not maintain any roads within the park.

### **9.3.4 Water**

Sustaining high quality water resources is fundamental to the protection of park and adjacent land features and values. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment enforces applicable legislation and regulations pertaining to water quality.

A former water control structure at the outlet of Hardy Lake has deteriorated and no longer controls the water level of the lake. The structure will not be reconstructed, repaired or replaced for the purpose of controlling water levels.

### **9.3.5 Alien and Invasive Species**

Alien species are plants, animals and micro-organisms that have been unintentionally or deliberately introduced by human activity into areas beyond their normal range. Alien species will not be deliberately introduced into the park.

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<sup>1</sup> *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, 2006. Ont. Regulation 347/07, s. 27.



Invasive species are alien species whose introduction or spread threatens the environment, the economy and/or society, including human health. Where invasive species threaten natural or cultural values or human health, a control program may be undertaken if feasible and practical.

#### **9.3.6 *Extirpated Native Species***

Extirpated native species may be reintroduced, and existing populations replenished, if biologically feasible, acceptable, and desirable for perpetuating park values.

#### **9.3.7 *Insects and Diseases***

Infestations of insects and diseases that are native to the region will normally be allowed to progress naturally. Insect and disease control measures for native and alien species may be implemented if the features and/or values of the park are threatened. Infestations by insects and diseases may be monitored and assessed.

Emergency measures may be implemented to protect the park's features and values and would be subject to the appropriate MNR approval.

#### **9.3.8 *Forest Fires***

The Forest Fire Management Strategy for Ontario (OMNR, 2004) provides strategic direction for the management of forest fires in Ontario. Hardy Lake Provincial Park is located in the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Fire Management Zone, according to this provincial strategy.

Hardy Lake Provincial Park is located within the Township of Muskoka Lakes, where municipalities have the lead in fire protection and management activities under the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* and through municipal by-laws. Response for structural fires and forest fires is guided by a municipal forest fire management agreement between the MNR and the Township of Muskoka Lakes. The park is located entirely within the municipal protection area, where the Township responds to forest and structural fires, with MNR support as required.

Fire management within Hardy Lake Provincial Park will help to restore and maintain ecological integrity while preventing personal injury, loss of values and social disruption. Fires that pose a threat to public health and safety, property and infrastructure, or other values, are a priority for suppression.

Prescribed burning, to achieve ecological or hazard reduction objectives, may be implemented within Hardy Lake Provincial Park. Operational plans for any prescribed burning will be developed in accordance with the MNR policy in cooperation with the MNR fire management staff and/or the municipal fire department.

Fuel caches are not permitted in the park.

### **9.3.9 Species at Risk**

Species at risk will be protected in a manner consistent with the ESA and associated regulations.

Hardy Lake Provincial Park provides habitat for species listed as Endangered or Threatened on the Species at Risk in Ontario (SARO) list. Recommendations from recovery strategies, government response statements and recovery teams relating to species at risk management will be considered and may be implemented as appropriate.

### **9.3.10 Pesticide Use**

Pesticides may be used to protect or enhance park values in accordance with Ministry of the Environment regulations and MNR policy.

### **9.3.11 Vegetation**

Vegetation management will promote the natural succession of native plant communities within the park, with minimal intervention. Restoration of natural environments may be considered. Where planting or seeding is necessary, use will be made of species native to the park with seed sources originating in or near the park.

Standing dead trees in close proximity to trails or the parking area will be removed if they pose a risk to public safety or park operations, but otherwise left in place to provide wildlife habitat.

Broken or rotted limbs or crowns may be removed in areas where there are park facilities if they pose a risk to public safety or park operations, with tree trunks left in place for wildlife habitat wherever possible.

Wind thrown trees and live branches may be removed where they impede park operations or pose a risk to public health and safety. Fallen trees and limbs will be left in place, as long as they do not pose a risk to public safety or park operations.

Standing, fallen or sunken trees which are removed for resource management or public safety purposes may be marketed or used by the park.

### **9.3.12 Wildlife**

Animal populations or individual problem animals may be controlled when essential to human health and safety, the health of the species, or the values for which the park has been established.

Where control is necessary, techniques which have minimal effects on other components of the park's environment will be used. Appropriate methods of population

control, including lethal control, may be undertaken directly by Ontario Parks or through partnerships under the strict supervision of Ontario Parks.

### **9.3.13 Fisheries**

Fisheries management is not undertaken by Ontario Parks.

Smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) inhabit Hardy Lake. This shallow, warm water lake is the only lake wholly enclosed by the park. Hardy Lake is not stocked and future stocking is prohibited.

Lake Muskoka is a cold water lake. Sport fish found there include, brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*), rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), smallmouth bass, walleye (*Sander vitreus vitreus*) and northern pike (*Esox lucius*).

### **9.3.14 Cultural Heritage**

Examples of pioneer farming, including foundations and remaining vegetative cultivars, are confirmed in one area and may exist in a second area of the park. No studies have been done to determine their historic significance.

An assessment of the cultural resources specific to Hardy Lake Provincial Park may be conducted. The management of cultural heritage resources within the park will be directed towards protection, and providing heritage appreciation and research opportunities. Cultural heritage resources that may be affected by any park projects and activities will be identified and managed (i.e., protected, maintained, used and/or disposed of) in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties (*Ontario Heritage Act*, Part III.1). Staff will consult MNR's Technical Guideline for Cultural Heritage Resources.

All areas of archaeological potential that may be affected by any activities associated with park design investigations, construction, operation or maintenance shall undergo archaeological assessment. Archaeological resources shall be identified and evaluated in accordance with the processes documented in the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists (MTC, 2011). Impacts may include any form of soil disturbance or alteration including testing, excavating, grading, capping and filling.

### **9.3.15 Research**

The Ministry of Natural Resources encourages scientific research by qualified individuals contributing to the knowledge of natural and cultural history and to environmental management. Ontario Parks will review proposed research to ensure adequate consideration of potential impacts on protected area resources, features, staff and visitors.

Research and monitoring activities require authorization issued under the Research Authorization Policy for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves and must be consistent with Ontario Parks' research and information strategies. Research will be subject to development and management policies associated with the park's classification, unless special permission is given. Research must meet all requirements under applicable provincial and federal legislation, and may require additional permits or approval (e.g., MNR Wildlife Scientific Collector authorization or ESA permits).

Ontario Parks may allow temporary facilities in support of approved research and monitoring activities. Sites altered by research activities must be rehabilitated as closely to their previous condition as possible, except where the specific intent of the research activities is disturbance for the purpose of ecological enhancement or restoration.

#### 9.3.15.1 Inventory and Monitoring

Planning and management decisions are intended to ensure the ecological integrity of protected areas. Considerations will be given to social and economic components. Ontario Parks will ensure that these decisions are made with the best available information. Ontario Parks may conduct inventories and monitoring to provide this information. Such efforts will be undertaken based on established methodologies and best practices. Inventory and monitoring will foster an adaptive management approach to protected areas management.

Inventory and monitoring priorities include, but are not limited to:

- species at risk inventory and monitoring
- life science inventory for the entire park
- monitoring of the trail system for erosion and degradation
- cultural heritage evaluation and archaeological assessment

### 9.4 Recreation Management Policies

Where compatible with park values and the maintenance of ecological integrity, high quality day-use activities that promote public awareness and enhance appreciation of the park's natural and cultural heritage will be permitted.

#### 9.4.1 Fees

Fees are not currently collected but may be collected in the future.

#### 9.4.2 Hunting

Recreational hunting is not permitted.

### **9.4.3 Recreational Fishing**

Recreational fishing is permitted in Hardy Lake Provincial Park. Recreational fishing is subject to provincial and federal fisheries regulations (e.g., the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* and the *Fisheries Act* (Canada)) as set out in the Ontario Recreational Fishing Regulations Summary.

### **9.4.4 Camping and Open Campfires**

Camping and open campfires are not permitted.

### **9.4.5 Day-Use Recreation**

A network of trails and a parking area are provided for day-use visitors. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing may occur along the trails. Any future trail expansion or development must be approved by the park superintendent (see Section 9.7.4).

Horseback riding is not permitted.

Existing canoe/kayak uses may continue unless park values become threatened. Canoeists/kayakers may portage along the trails to access both Hardy Lake and Lake Muskoka.

### **9.4.6 Mechanized Recreation**

Motorized and non-motorized vehicles are not permitted in most of the park; these vehicles are only permitted in Access Zone 1 (A-1) and on Hardy Lake Road. Motorized and non-motorized vehicles include, but are not limited to: bicycles, vehicles, trailers, motorized snow vehicles<sup>2</sup>, all-terrain vehicles (ATV)<sup>3</sup> and other off-road vehicles.

The park superintendent may authorize the use of ATV, motorized snow vehicles and/or other vehicles within the park for management, monitoring or emergency purposes.

No person shall operate a power boat in Hardy Lake Provincial Park except for the purpose of park management.<sup>4</sup>

Aircraft landings are not permitted.

### **9.4.7 Other Recreation Uses**

There are emerging or other recreation uses for which there is either limited or no current provincial policy to direct their management. The park superintendent will use legislation, park policy and interim guidelines to manage other or emerging recreational uses.

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<sup>2</sup> Defined in the *Motorized Snow Vehicles Act*, R.S.O.1990. c.M. 44, s.1.

<sup>3</sup> Defined in the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, 2006. Ont. Reg. 347/07.

<sup>4</sup> *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*, 2006. Ont. Reg. 347/07, s. 31 (1)

## **9.5 Operations Policies**

Hardy Lake Provincial Park is currently non-operating<sup>5</sup>; a park operations plan will not be prepared.

The operating status of provincial parks is determined by Ontario Parks based on visitation and use, analysis of revenue and expenditures, and infrastructure needs. Changes to a park's operating status may be made by the MNR without the provision of external involvement.

### **9.5.1 *Natural Heritage Education***

The goal of the Natural Heritage Education (NHE) program is to develop visitor awareness and appreciation of Ontario Parks' natural and cultural heritage, and foster a commitment to its protection for future generations. Programming will include the three components of NHE: information, interpretation and outdoor recreation.

#### **9.5.1.1 Information**

Basic literature and supporting information may be developed to describe Hardy Lake Provincial Park in the context of Ontario's provincial parks and protected areas. Boundary limits, significant natural and cultural heritage features and permitted uses of the park may be included in park literature.

A trail guide has been developed for the trails in Hardy Lake and is available at the trail head. Interpretive plaques and maps have been posted along the trails. Both trail guide and plaques are currently provided and maintained by the Township of Muskoka Lakes; they may be updated, as required.

#### **9.5.1.2 Park Interpretation**

Visitors to Hardy Lake may be informed about the natural and cultural values of the park through the Ontario Parks website and other publications, or by contacting Six Mile Lake Provincial Park.

#### **9.5.1.3 Outdoor Recreation**

There are no recreational programs offered at Hardy Lake Provincial Park. Canoeing, kayaking and self-directed use of the trail system for hiking, picnicking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are encouraged.

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<sup>5</sup> Non-operating provincial park: a provincial park designated by the Minister where facilities and services are minimal or not provided, and for the use of which fees are not normally charged.

## **9.6 Partnerships**

In the implementation of the management statement, Ontario Parks may pursue opportunities for partnerships involving other agencies and groups through formal partnership agreements. Partners may represent the local community, and local and provincial interests. Partners will work with Ontario Parks to assist in the implementation of the park management statement and will follow provincial park policies and regulations.

The parking lot, interpretive material and all trails are currently maintained by the Township of Muskoka Lakes under a partnership agreement. A partnership of this nature may continue to be fostered.

## **9.7 Development Policies**

All development undertaken by Ontario Parks, or by partners on its behalf, will comply with A Class EA-PPCR, and will be carried out in accordance with approved site and development plans that meet standards for provincial parks.

Areas proposed for development will require prior assessment for significant cultural heritage features and natural values, such as species at risk, to ensure these values are identified and protected at the site.

In accordance with conditions associated with the donation of Lots 12 and 13, Concession IV, no trail or other development will be permitted within the Grand Nature Reserve Zone (NR-2) (see Section 10.1.2).

### ***9.7.1 Parking Areas and Internal Roads***

The parking area accessed from Muskoka Road 169 may be upgraded or expanded should demand warrant.

There are sections of Hardy Lake Road and a small turnaround within the regulated park boundary on the west side of the park (Figure 2). Ontario Parks will not maintain or permit any expansion of the turnaround or road within the park (see Section 9.3.3).

Barriers may be placed at the former entrance to the hiking trail from Hardy Lake Road to stop mechanized vehicle use and horseback riding within the park.

The development of new roads is prohibited.

### ***9.7.2 Campsites***

The development of campsites is prohibited.

### **9.7.3 Signs**

As need arises, new signs will be installed and existing signs replaced. All signs, including maps and/or text, must be approved by the park superintendent.

### **9.7.4 Trails**

Existing trails may be expanded and new trails developed in most zones, provided they do not degrade park values; however, no trail development is permitted within the Grand Nature Reserve Zone (NR-2).

Trail conditions will be monitored and sections may be temporarily or permanently closed to prevent erosion, trampling, rutting or widening. All trails will be designed and managed with ecological integrity as the first priority.

Water crossings and foot bridges will be maintained, repaired or upgraded as required.

The trail within the Grand Nature Reserve Zone (NE-2) has been permanently closed and the associated water crossing removed. Support cribs for this water crossing have been left in place below the water level so as to minimize disturbance to the stream bed.

## **10 ZONING**

Lands within Hardy Lake Provincial Park are zoned in accordance with their environmental and cultural values, and their need for protection. Zones differentiate the sensitivity of the natural and cultural values, and the permissible degree of development, recreational uses and management practices within the park.

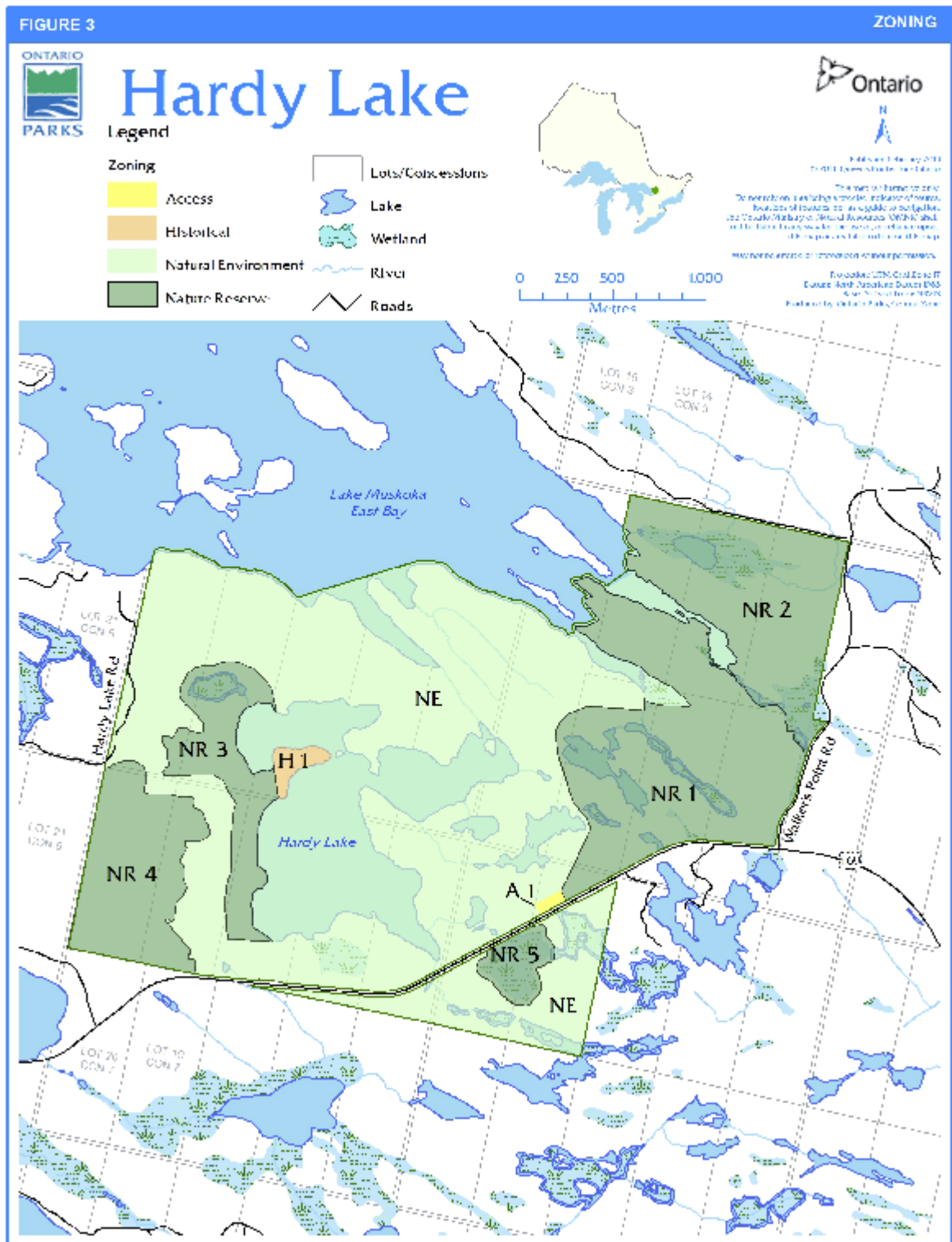
The four zoning categories for Hardy Lake Provincial Park are nature reserve, historical, access, and natural environment (Figure 3). Direction for the zone policies are derived from the Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies (1992 Update).

### **10.1 Nature Reserve Zones**

Nature reserve (NR) zones protect the provincially significant earth and/or life science features within a park, and may include a protective area in which a minimum of development is permitted. Development is generally restricted to trails, necessary signs, interpretive facilities (where warranted) and temporary facilities for research and management. No special management is required in these zones.



Figure 3: Zoning



#### **10.1.1 NR-1: Barren Ridges Nature Reserve Zone (124 ha)**

This zone contains an extensive area of the dry, red oak and pine forested granite ridges which typify the eastern side of Hardy Lake. Associated with this habitat are beaver ponds, chainfern peatlands and meadows. Species at risk and a large population of white oak are also found here.

This zone also protects a portion of a landform-vegetation unit that is considered critical for protection in ecodistricts 5E-7 and 5E-8, a White Elm Association on Precambrian Intermediate to Acidic Bedrock. Hardy Lake Provincial Park currently contains the only representation of this landform-vegetation unit within any protected area in Ecodistrict 5E-7.

#### **10.1.2 NR-2: Grand Nature Reserve Zone (83 ha)**

The primary feature of this zone is the unusual peatland dominated by eastern white pine in the north-eastern section of the park. The pines are growing abundantly on logs and old stumps on a saturated organic mat complete with typical bog species including virginia chainfern (*Woodwardia virginica*). The occurrence of white pine in such a wet site is unique in the region. These eastern peatlands are heavily utilized for winter shelter by white-tailed deer. Squawroot, a rare plant in Canada, is found in the dry oak-maple forest surrounding the bogs. This zone also protects a portion of the White Elm Association on Precambrian Intermediate to Acidic Bedrock (see Section 10.1.1).

This zone contains land purchased by a private individual for the purpose of donating the land to the province for addition to the park. In accordance with conditions of this donation, no trail or other development is permitted in this zone.

#### **10.1.3 NR-3: West Shore Nature Reserve Zone (39 ha)**

Part of this zone is dominated by a rich association of aquatic plants normally found along the Atlantic Coastal Plain of Eastern North America. Few other sites in this region are known to exceed the populations of Atlantic Coastal Plain flora species found within this park. In addition, this zone protects a portion of the White Elm Association on Precambrian Intermediate to Acidic Bedrock (see Section 10.1.1).

#### **10.1.4 NR-4: Hemlock and Hardwoods Nature Reserve Zone (54 ha)**

Red maple and eastern hemlock dominate this extensive swamp zone situated amongst drier bedrock ridges of sugar maple. Maple swamps such as these are rarely found this far inland and are more typical of the Georgian Bay shore. Furthermore, the maple swamps are not usually found in stands as large as those in Hardy Lake Provincial Park. Virginia chainfern is abundant in this zone. This zone is also heavily utilized by white-tailed deer for feeding and shelter.

This zone protects portions of two landform-vegetation units that are considered critical for protection in Ecodistrict 5E-8. The landform for both landform-vegetation units is Glaciofluvial Esker-Kettle Terrain, the vegetation types are Tolerant Hardwood-Hemlock Forest and Mixed Tolerant Hardwood Forest. Hardy Lake Provincial Park currently contains 100 per cent of the representation of the Tolerant Hardwood-Hemlock vegetation type, and 10 per cent of the Mixed Tolerant Hardwood vegetation type on this landform within all protected areas in Ecodistrict 5E-8.

#### ***10.1.5 NR-5: Sphagnum Bog Nature Reserve Zone (11 ha)***

The extensive, open, poor fens, and tamarack and black spruce stands in this zone support a number of biogeographically important plant species.

### **10.2 Historical Zone**

Historical (H) zones encompass the significant cultural resources of a park. They generally focus on a specific site (e.g., area of human occupation), building(s) and the relationship to the surrounding landscape, so as to include a protective buffer around the main cultural resource. Development is limited to trails, necessary signs, interpretive, educational, research and management facilities, and historical restorations or reconstruction, where appropriate.

There is unsubstantiated evidence indicating that a second homestead site is located in the south-eastern section of the park in lots 12, 13 or 14, Concession V. Should an archaeological or cultural assessment identify any significant areas or artefacts, this management statement may be amended to include the area as a second historical zone.

#### ***10.2.1 H-1: Freeman Homestead Historical Zone (4 ha)***

The remains of the Freeman homestead are located in this zone. William Freeman received a patent on November 28, 1878 for Lots 19 and 20, Concession V. A series of structures, including an ice house and homestead, were built along the shoreline of the point located in the southern portion of Lot 18, Concession V. More recently, the Hardy Lake property was in ownership of one individual who used the Freeman homestead as a cottage until it was destroyed by fire in 1975. Only the rock foundation of the homestead and one small wood building (ice house) remain. Vegetative cultivars can be found in the vicinity of the stone foundation.

Boulders and smaller rock piles are located near the homestead. They were likely piled here when the land was originally cleared for the homestead.

### **10.3 Access Zone**

Access (A) zones serve as staging areas where minimum facilities support the use of other less developed zones. Generally development is limited to roads, small parking lots, and visitor control structures. Provisions may be made for limited orientation,

interpretive or educational facilities, though generally more for self-use rather than through structured personal service. Limited facilities for research and park management may also be present.

#### ***10.3.1 A-1: Access and Parking Zone (1 ha)***

The access zone in Hardy Lake Provincial Park contains a parking area providing approximately 12 parking spaces for park visitors, and is accessible from Muskoka Road 169.

### **10.4 Natural Environment Zone**

Natural environment (NE) zones include natural landscapes which permit the minimum level of development required to support low-intensity recreational activities. Development is generally limited to trails, portages, necessary signs and minimal interpretive facilities.

#### ***10.4.1 NE: Natural Environment Zone (492 ha)***

Development in this zone is limited to the trail system, associated foot bridges, and the remains of a section of the original Highway 169 in the park.

## **11 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES**

Park development, operations and resource management will be contingent upon the availability of funding and unforeseeable changes in priorities or policy. Park management, development and operations proposals will be phased in as follows:

- Maintain, repair, or replace water crossing structures as required
- Replace or install signage as required
- Maintain and monitor trails and parking area
- Evaluate feasibility and demand to expand the trail system or parking area
- Conduct a stage one archaeological assessment

## **12 MANAGEMENT STATEMENT EXAMINATION AND ADJUSTMENT**

The management statement will be examined after it has been in place for 20 years to determine whether the management direction is still relevant, effective and current or if adjustments are needed to enable the document to guide the management of the park. An amendment can be considered at any time to address specific issues or needs. In circumstances where the statement as a whole is not providing sufficient direction to protect the values or address existing or emerging pressures, it can be examined prior to the next scheduled examination.

External requests for amendments to address specific requests or needs may be considered. The park superintendent can provide further guidance on the process for

requesting an amendment for this statement and whether specific requests can/will be considered.

## **13 INVOLVEMENT**

Aboriginal and public involvement was integral to the development of the Hardy Lake Provincial Park management statement.

### **13.1 Summary of Aboriginal Involvement**

In addition to the stages of involvement listed in Section 13.2, a letter announcing the start of the planning process, including an invitation to participate, was sent to Wahta Mohawks, Chippewas of Rama, Beausoleil, Moose Deer Point and Wasauksing First Nations on May 20, 2010. Chief Sharon Stinson Henry of Chippewas of Rama First Nation acknowledged receipt of this letter; no further comments have been received to date.

A letter, dated May 31, 2011, was sent to the above noted Aboriginal communities at the release of the background information and preliminary management statement advising them of their opportunity to comment. Chief Sharon Stinson Henry of Chippewas of Rama First Nation acknowledged receipt of this letter; no other comments were received.

On November 20, 2012, a letter was sent to the Aboriginal communities listed above and to the Moon River Métis Council (with a copy to the Métis Nation of Ontario). This letter outlined changes made to the preliminary management statement that resulted from the analysis of new information and input received during Stage 1 (see changes outlined below). This letter provided an additional 30 days to submit comments on these changes. No comments were received.

A letter has been sent to these communities announcing the release of the approved management statement.

Meetings will be held with any Aboriginal community upon request.

### **13.2 Summary of Public Involvement**

Stage 1 – Invitation to participate; review of the background information and preliminary management statement

- The background information file and preliminary management statement were made available for review and comment for a period of 45 days from June 3 to July 18, 2011. This comment period gave interested parties the opportunity to review and comment on management policies being proposed for Hardy Lake Provincial Park, as well as the background information used to inform the planning process.

- This stage of consultation was announced through a direct mail out to local land owners, stakeholders, agencies and interest groups, and through postings on the Ontario Parks website and the Environmental Registry. An article also appeared in The Weekender newspaper on June 17, 2011.
- Paper copies of the preliminary management statement along with the background information file were made available during the 45 day comment period at Six Mile Lake Provincial Park's office, Ontario Parks' Central Zone office in Huntsville, and the Gravenhurst Public Library in Gravenhurst.
- An open house was held on June 18, 2011 at Hardy Lake Provincial Park; eight people attended.
- Five comments were submitted during this stage of consultation. Those who submitted comments highlighted the importance of preserving the natural character of the park, and were pleased to see that development would be limited and only low-impact uses permitted.
- Comments have been addressed in this final management statement as follows:
  - Focused consultation has been held with the Recreational Trails Coordinator from the Township of Muskoka Lakes and a local landowner regarding land use and development within the park.
  - A new Memorandum of Understanding has been developed regarding the partnership between Ontario Parks and the Township of Muskoka Lakes with respect to trail and parking area maintenance, development and use.
  - Information regarding the purchase and subsequent addition of Lots 12 and 13, Concession IV has been added. In accordance with conditions associated with the donation of this land, policies prohibiting development in NR-2 have been added, and a trail in the north-east corner of the park has been closed and the associated footbridge removed.
  - Information and direction has been added regarding the use and maintenance of those portions of Hardy Lake Road that are within the park boundary (including the associated turnaround area).
- New information has been analyzed by Ontario Parks staff resulting in the following changes:
  - Nature reserve zones have been refined and expanded using new air photo and gap analysis in an effort to ensure that all critical landform-vegetation units are appropriately protected, and to make the zone boundaries more recognizable on the ground.
  - New references have been added.
- Administrative regulation and Crown Land Use Policy Atlas (CLUPA) amendments have been pursued to reflect the addition of Lot 20, Concession 6 (40.5 ha) to the park. This parcel was purchased from a private owner in 1986; however, the regulated park boundary was not changed until 2012.

On November 20, 2012, a letter was sent to those who provided comments or contact information during the Stage 1 involvement opportunity. This letter outlined changes made to the preliminary management statement that resulted from the analysis of new information and input received during Stage 1 (see changes outlined above). This letter provided an additional 30 days to submit comments on these changes. No comments or responses were received.

Stage 2 – Release of the approved management statement:

- The Managing Director of Ontario Parks has approved the Hardy Lake Provincial Park Management Statement. The management statement is now formally adopted as the management direction for Hardy Lake Provincial Park.
- The release of the approved management statement has been announced through a direct mail out to those who have requested to be on the mailing list, local land owners, stakeholders, agencies and interest groups, and through postings on the Ontario Parks website and the Environmental Registry.

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