



Mikisew Provincial Park Management Plan

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Approval Statement

Mikisew Provincial Park is located in the picturesque region of the province known as the Almaguin Highlands. The park is an attractive natural setting for family camping and it provides many recreational opportunities on Eagle Lake and the surrounding area.

I am pleased to approve the Mikisew **Provincial Park Management Plan** as the official policy for the management and development of this park. The plan reflects this Ministry's intent to protect the natural features of Mikisew Provincial Park and to maintain high quality opportunities for outdoor recreation and heritage appreciation for both residents of Ontario and visitors to the Province.

Norm R. Richards
Managing Director, Ontario Parks
Ministry of Natural Resources

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PREFACE

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is responsible for managing Ontario's natural resources in accordance with the statutes it administers. As the province's lead conservation agency, the Ministry is the steward of provincial parks, natural heritage areas, forests, fisheries, wildlife, aggregates, fuel minerals, and Crown lands and waters that make up 87% of Ontario.

In 1994 the MNR finalized its Statement of Environmental Values (SEV) under the *Environmental Bill of Rights* (EBR). The SEV is a document that describes how the purposes of the EBR are to be considered whenever decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the Ministry. During the development of this Management Plan for Mikisew Provincial Park, the Ministry has considered its Statement of Environmental Values. This plan is intended to reflect the direction set out in the SEV and to further the objectives of managing our resources on a sustainable basis.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mikisew Provincial Park is situated in Machar Township in the Parry Sound District. The Park is located on the west shore of Eagle Lake. Highway 11, located 16 kilometres east of the Park provides exceptional access from the large urban centres of North Bay, Huntsville and Bracebridge. The Park is approximately 260 kilometres north of Toronto and 75 kilometres south of North Bay (Figure 1).

The park, known then as Eagle Lake Provincial Park, was opened for public use in 1957, incorporating 120 campsites on 38 hectares of land. Additions to the park property have increased its size to 131 hectares with 259 campsites. In 1960, the park name was changed from Eagle Lake to Mikisew avoiding confusion with the many other Eagle Lakes in the Province. Mikisew was put in regulation under the *Provincial Parks Act* in 1964 (O. Reg. 161/64) as a Recreation class park.

Mikisew Provincial Park is first and foremost a destination park for campers. The park offers two developed campgrounds, the Pines and Hardwoods, for both tents and trailers (Figure 2). As well, the park offers a 4 hectare day use area located at the south end of the park. For both campers and day users, Mikisew offers four natural sandy beaches on the shores of the lake and excellent sport fishing. In the western portion of the park, three hiking trails offer visitors a chance to experience the natural beauty of the Almaguin Highlands area visiting a complex of beaver ponds, mature deciduous forests and a black ash swamp.

Mikisew Provincial Park is represented by the Middle Precambrian metasediments in the Ontario Gneiss Segment of the Grenville Geological Province. The topographic expression of the park is that of a relatively flat, boulder-free sand plain with three relict shorelines and few outcrops of Precambrian bedrock. These features can be attributed to

the last ice age and the large glacial lake, which superimposed present day Eagle Lake. In fact, geologists believe that the entire park was once a kame moraine. The only present day remnant of this glacial feature is situated in the upland, western portion of the park. Within protected areas in Site District 5E-8 of Ontario, Mikisew protects one of the few areas of ice contact landform.

The Park is located on the eastern edge of the Georgian Bay Forest Section of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest Region. In the western section of the park, early successional upland forest (Trembling Aspen, White Birch, Red Maple, and White Pine) and a smaller area of submature late successional deciduous forest (Sugar Maple, American Beech) is found. Within this area, wetland areas occupy bedrock depressions with aquatic and thicket swamps forming a complex of beaver ponds. The upland forest and wetlands are provincially significant.

Mikisew lies in a moist continental climatic region. Summer temperatures average 1800 with maximum temperatures reaching 2400. The combination of pleasant temperatures and moderate rainfall provide exceptional camping conditions.

2.0 PARK CLASSIFICATION

Mikisew Provincial Park is classified as a Recreation Park in recognition of its ability to support a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities for large numbers of people in an attractive natural environment.

The Mikisew Provincial Park Management Plan has been developed in accordance with the recreation class guidelines as set out in the *Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies* and the District Land Use Guidelines for Bracebridge.

Figure 1

Regional Context

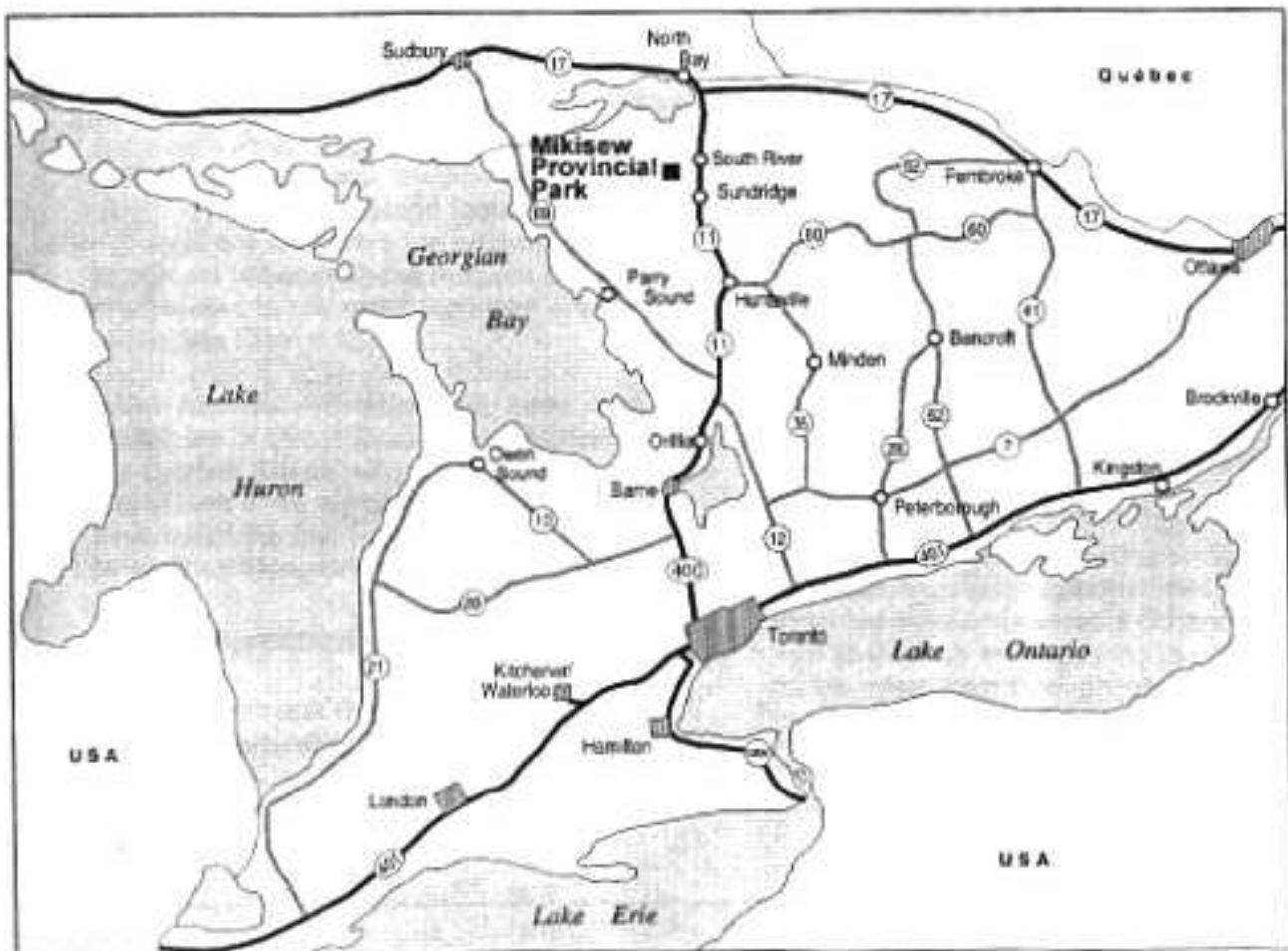
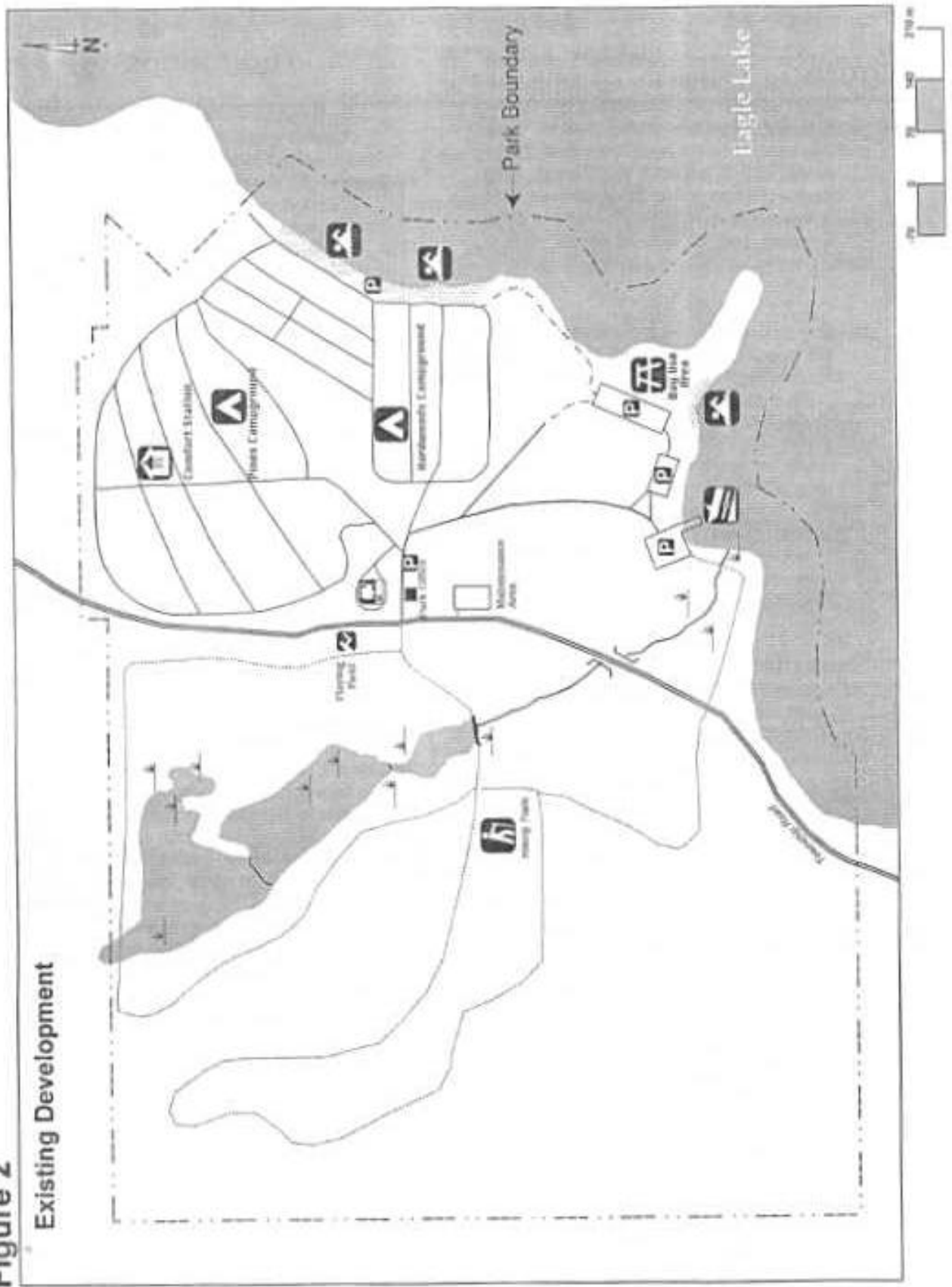


Figure 2

Existing Development



3.0 PARK GOAL

The goal of Mikisew Provincial Park is:

To provide opportunities for campers and day users to enjoy a variety of quality outdoor recreational experiences in an attractive natural setting and to protect significant natural features.

opportunities in a natural environment of outstanding recreational potential.

To provide day use opportunities in areas of outstanding recreational potential associated with the natural environment.

4.0 PARK OBJECTIVES

Mikisew contributes to the achievement of the four objectives of the Ontario Provincial Park system: protection, recreation, heritage appreciation and tourism.

Mikisew Provincial Park serves primarily as a family destination park for vacationers. To a lesser extent, the park is used as a weekend holiday or stopover location and as a swimming and picnicking area for local people. Eagle Lake attracts many people to Mikisew for leisure activities including swimming, fishing and boating. The three hiking trails are well used by visitors. In the non-operating season, the park is popular with local people for walking and cross-country skiing.

4.1 Protection

To maintain the park's representative features and to protect its natural, cultural and recreational values.

4.3 Heritage Appreciation

To provide opportunities for unstructured exploration and appreciation of the natural and cultural environment of the park and the surrounding area.

Mikisew Provincial Park protects representative life science features. These features include: upland early successional deciduous and mixed forest; young to submature upland late successional deciduous forest; beaver pond and thicket swamp wetlands; and, lowland deciduous swamp forest. The upland forest and wetlands are considered to be provincially significant because these features are not represented in any other protected area within Site District 5E-8.

Opportunities to explore and appreciate the natural and cultural history of the park and surrounding area will be provided using self-use facilities and through limited programming.

Within Mikisew Provincial Park, three relict shorelines of Upper Glacial Lake Algonquin are evident. These relict shorelines are considered to be regionally significant because of the few Lake Algonquin strandlines along this part of Georgian Bay.

4.4 Tourism

To provide Ontario residents and out-of-province visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the Province.

4.2 Recreation

To provide facility-based camping

Mikisew Provincial Park will provide destination camping opportunities for those attracted from considerable distances as well as day use and camping opportunities for travelers from throughout Ontario. The tourism emphasis will be to support the

continued viability of the Almaguin Highlands tourist industry.

The management and operation of Mikisew Provincial Park make a sizeable contribution to the local economy. In 1994, direct expenditures related to the park including the operation of the park and visitor expenditures totaled 1.374 million dollars. When this figure is entered into the Ontario Parks Regional Economic Impact Model, the total economic activity associated with the park includes 6.133 million dollars and 83.5 person years of employment.

5.0 PARK BOUNDARY

Mikisew Provincial Park is 130.713 hectares in size. The current boundary includes a 91.44 metre strip of property (16.187 hectares) extending from the water's edge into Eagle Lake. There are no plans to extend the boundary of the park or to acquire adjacent private lands.

Two rights-of-way exist within the boundaries of the park: 1) along the northern boundary in the eastern portion of the park, an Ontario Hydro/Bell Canada line extends from the township road to the subdivision road 2) in the southern section of the park on the west side of the township road, a right-of-way laneway exists that provides access to a private property located adjacent to the park boundary. Routine maintenance will be permitted including brushing operations to remove vegetation that interferes with hydro and phone lines or that prevents access to the private property.

6.0 ZONING

To fulfill the objectives of Mikisew Provincial Park, lands and waters within the park are zoned on the basis of their significance for protection and their

6.2 Nature Reserve Zone

potential for recreation appropriate to a Recreation Park (Figure 3). Three zones have been designated to guide the management of the Park: natural environment, nature reserve and development (Figure 4). Specific policies for each zone are established for resource stewardship, development and management. Further details are provided in Section 7.0.

6.1 Natural Environment Zones

Natural environment zones include attractive landscapes in which minimum development is required to support low intensity recreational activities. Development will be limited to trails, necessary signs, minimal interpretive facilities where appropriate, and temporary facilities for research and management. Mikisew contains the following natural environment zones:

NE1 . This area in the western section of the park surrounds the nature reserve zone. To the west of the nature reserve zone, the zone includes a mixed forest dominated by Hemlock, Beech and maple on a kame moraine. It complements the forest ecology story of the maple forest and the beaver pond system and acts as a buffer for the nature reserve. To the east of the nature reserve zone, the zone includes mixed forests of Balsam Fir, White Birch, White Spruce, Sugar Maple, Yellow Birch and an open field which will buffer the nature reserve zone. Relict shorelines of glacial Lake Algonquin are evident throughout the zone.

NE2 . This area is in the eastern section of the park. The area includes a Black Ash Balsam Fir Eastern White Cedar swamp, a "dead" Black Ash-Sedge meadow and a small area of Balsam Fir/White Birch mixed forest. The area includes a portion of the relict shoreline (364 m) of glacial Lake Algonquin.

Figure 3

Significant Features

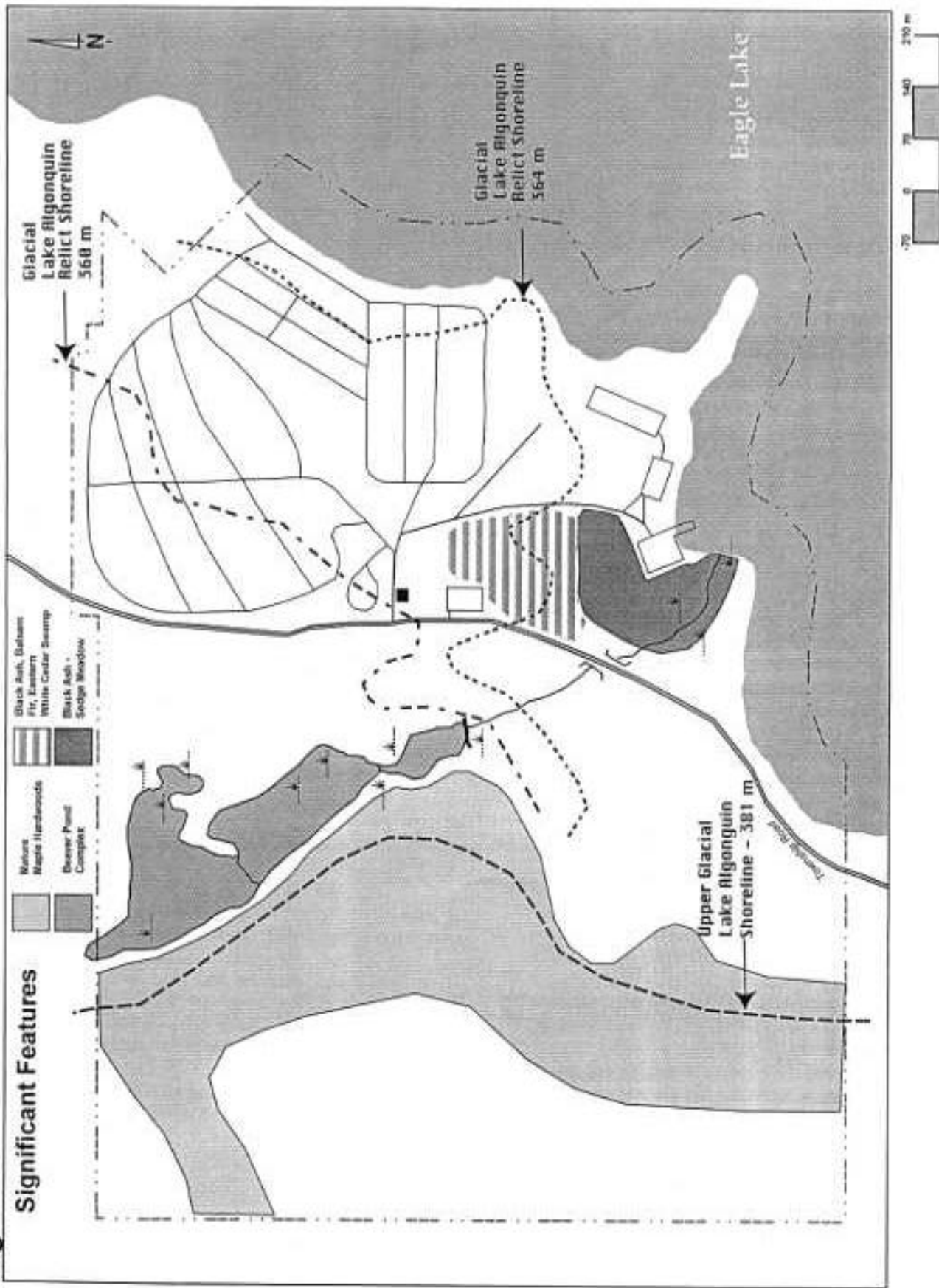
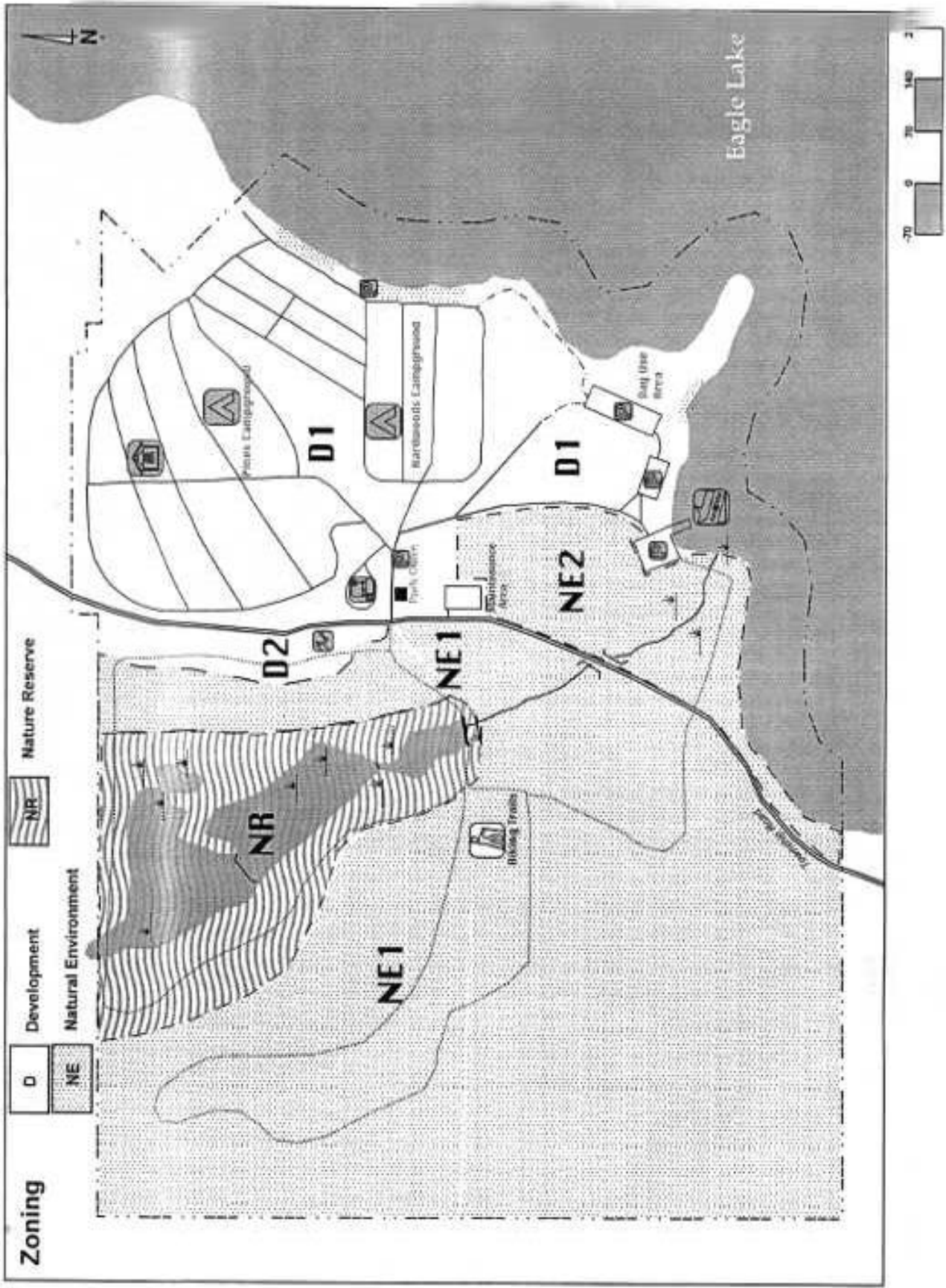


Figure 4



6.2 Nature Reserve Zone

Nature reserve zones include significant earth and life science features, which require special management distinct from lands in adjacent zones in order to protect these features. These zones are selected to represent distinctive natural habitats and landforms. The priority for nature reserve zones will be protection, research and 'heritage appreciation. Development will be limited to trails, necessary signs, minimal interpretive facilities, and temporary facilities for education, research and management.

NRI Beaver Pond Meadow and Upland Forests

This zone is located in the western section of the park and includes two distinct areas. The first occupies bedrock depressions and is a complex of beaver wet meadows containing emergent aquatics and thicket swamps. The second area comprises an area of submature late successional deciduous forest (Sugar Maple, American Beech) and early successional upland deciduous forest (Trembling Aspen, White Birch, Red Maple White Pine) located on a rolling landscape of thin till over granitic bedrock. A study of Site District 5E-8 representation targets classified the upland forest and wetlands in this zone as provincially significant.

6.3 Development Zone

Development zones provide the main facilities and services for car camping and day-use opportunities. Development will be limited to trails, roads, visitor control structures, day use facilities, car campgrounds, basic commercial service facilities for visitors, and interpretive and orientation facilities.

D1. This zone includes all the developed facilities in the eastern portion of the park including the Pines and Hardwoods campgrounds, the day use area, the park office and all support facilities.

D2. This zone includes the cleared lands and playing fields on the western side of the township road.

7.0 RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP POLICIES

The Park's natural, recreational and cultural resources will be managed in accordance with the general planning and management policies for Recreation class parks as described in the *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies*. Specific direction, where needed to meet the special requirements of Mikisew Provincial Park, is presented below under a series of headings, each representing a component of the resource base.

7.1 Vegetation

All vegetation management will be undertaken solely in support of objectives related to visitor safety, aesthetics and perpetuation of the natural, recreational and cultural values of Mikisew. In the event that standing trees are to be cut during development or vegetation management, the Park Superintendent will supervise cutting operations.

A vegetation management plan will be prepared. The plan will meet the diverse needs of the park and provide direction to park staff. The plan will be prepared by the Park Superintendent in conjunction with other Ministry staff and outside experts as required and in consideration of the prescriptions for each zone as outlined below.

In the development zone, vegetation management will be undertaken: 1) to rehabilitate the area of the Pines Campground by thinning the planted red pines and by planting native vegetation to

create privacy buffers between campsites; 2) to selectively remove diseased or dying trees; and, 3) to maintain the existing canopy in the Hardwoods campground and the forested areas in the day use area as identified in the life sciences inventory; and, 4) to perpetuate the values being protected in adjacent zones.

Vegetation management will include measures to protect the shoreline, water quality and the health of Eagle Lake's coldwater aquatic ecosystem. Shoreline vegetation will not be removed except to maintain the quality of the beach areas and to selectively remove trees threatening the safety of visitors. Degraded shorelines areas will be rehabilitated through revegetation whenever possible.

In the natural environment zones, natural succession will progress unimpeded. Where safety hazards exist along trails, potentially dangerous trees will be removed in association with "brushing" operations and routine trail maintenance.

In the nature reserve zone, natural succession will be allowed to progress unimpeded except for those trees, which pose a safety hazard along trails. Potentially dangerous trees will be removed in association with "brushing" operations and routine trail maintenance.

Effort will be made to control and eradicate non-native and/or noxious weeds (e.g., purple loosestrife) when they pose a threat to the values being protected in the Park. Controls will be directed as narrowly as possible to the specific pest, minimizing effects of the surrounding environment. Biological control rather than chemical will be relied on whenever possible.

Given the small size of the park, existing recreational facilities and adjacent private lands, all wildfires will be suppressed.

7.2 Wildlife

Hunting and commercial trapping are prohibited in Mikisew Provincial Park. Control of nuisance animals may be permitted under the authority of the Park Superintendent.

7.3 Fisheries

Sport fishing is encouraged in Recreation Parks.

Mikisew provides boat access to Eagle Lake and trail access to shoreline fishing spots. Eagle Lake is managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources as a coldwater lake supporting fisheries populations of walleye, smallmouth bass, lake whitefish and rainbow trout. Specific management direction will be provided through the Bracebridge District Fisheries Management Plan.

7.4 Lands and Waters

Commercial mineral exploration and development will not be permitted in the park. The extraction of aggregate will not be permitted. When sand or gravel is required for maintenance and capital improvements, it will be brought in from external sources.

The existing picnic table and brush disposal area located in the western portion of the park and adjacent to the beaver pond is in an area designated as natural environment zone. To protect the values being protected in the beaver pond and to provide an aesthetically pleasing location in which to view the pond, this area will be rehabilitated and no further disposal of brush or tables will occur.

8.0 OPERATIONS POLICIES

A Park Operating Plan will be prepared to provide park staff with the necessary information required to operate the park on a day-to-day basis. In addition to addressing

the operations policies, which follow, the plan will include such topics as budget, staffing, maintenance schedules, enforcement and emergency services. The provisions of the plan will be consistent with the approved *Ontario Provincial Parks Operating Standards*, and will be reviewed annually and updated as required.

8.1 Natural Heritage Education

Mikisew Provincial Park will offer a self-use level of programming which will include the three components of natural heritage education: information, interpretation and outdoor recreation. The natural heritage education program will be managed in accordance with the current operating plan.

8.1.1 Information

Information concerning park features, management, facilities, rules and regulations, programs and nearby points of interest will be available at key locations throughout the Park including the park office and bulletin boards at the park gate and comfort station. Information will consist of a park leaflet, information guide, information signs and special publications as required. Park staff will provide information through personal contact with visitors.

8.1.2 Interpretation

Interpretive programs will provide visitors with the opportunity to learn and experience the natural and cultural heritage of Mikisew Provincial Park and surrounding area. This objective will be achieved by providing self-use facilities in the form of maps, trail brochures and displays. Interpretive programs may be organized using qualified guest speakers and volunteers. The following themes should be emphasized: historical (the South Shield Agricultural Historical theme); earth sciences (glacial Lake Algonquin emphasizing the three glacial lake shorelines); and, life sciences (hardwood forest communities, beaver pond

complex).

As stated previously, the Park is located in an area representative of the South Shield Agricultural theme, specifically the Dominion Land Policy and Colonization Roads. A new program called *The Forgotten Trails* has been organized locally to celebrate this history and to foster an appreciation of the cultural and natural heritage within the Almaguin Highlands area. The Forgotten Trails' self-guided hiking and cycling trails and motor tours are located near to the park and park visitors will be encouraged to use this program.

8.1.3 Outdoor Recreation

Programs may be offered by interested groups and agencies to develop the outdoor skills of park visitors. The skills promoted will be limited to those appropriate to the character of the park (e.g., canoeing). Recreation equipment will be made available to the public through an equipment loan program. Throughout the summer, staff will assist visitors to organize and promote recreational events.

8.2 Volunteers

Ontario Parks will be receptive to volunteer services offered by groups or individuals to carry out projects that would not otherwise be undertaken that contribute to the goal of the Park. It is recognized that a variety of interests, skills and knowledge are available which could benefit the park's management and operation. Volunteer projects will be approved and directed by the Park Superintendent.

8.3 Research

Research by qualified individuals, which contributes to the knowledge of natural and cultural history and to environmental and recreational management will be encouraged in Mikisew Provincial Park where appropriate. All research projects will

require the approval of the Park Superintendent and will be consistent with park management policy and applicable legislation.

8.4 Marketing

A marketing plan to attract more visitors to Mikisew Provincial Park throughout its operating season will be prepared with the following objectives: to hold present clientele; to attract campers during low use periods; to augment involvement with the commercial sector by encouraging park clients to use local tourist services and attractions; to stimulate interaction between the park and the private tourist and commercial sectors in the vicinity; and, to encourage day use visitors from local urban centres and private cottages. A special effort will be made to develop partnerships with local businesses to undertake joint marketing efforts by promoting the park as a base from which to use other recreational facilities in the Eagle Lake area.

8.5 Motorized Vehicles

A local snowmobile club will be permitted to use a private right-of-way laneway within the park under a letter of authority issued by the Park Superintendent. Motorized snow vehicles may travel along the laneway only.

Motorized snow vehicles may be permitted for grooming trails along existing park roads for cross-country skiing in the eastern portion of the park if designated by the Park Superintendent.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Facilities and amenities provided in Mikisew Provincial Park are limited to those

needed to support the level of service to park visitors as described in this plan.

New developments or improvements to existing facilities will occur in accordance with the Provincial Parks Development Standards and Development Policies as well as approved site and development plans. As well, all development projects will conform with the *Environmental Protection Act* and be approved under the *Environmental Assessment Act*.

Special effort will be made to ensure that any new recreational facilities, as well as improvements to existing facilities, will provide barrier-free access for the physically challenged.

Development will proceed in accordance with Figure 5 and the following guidelines. Development projects will be phased in according to the Implementation Strategy (Section 10.0) as needed and as funding permits.

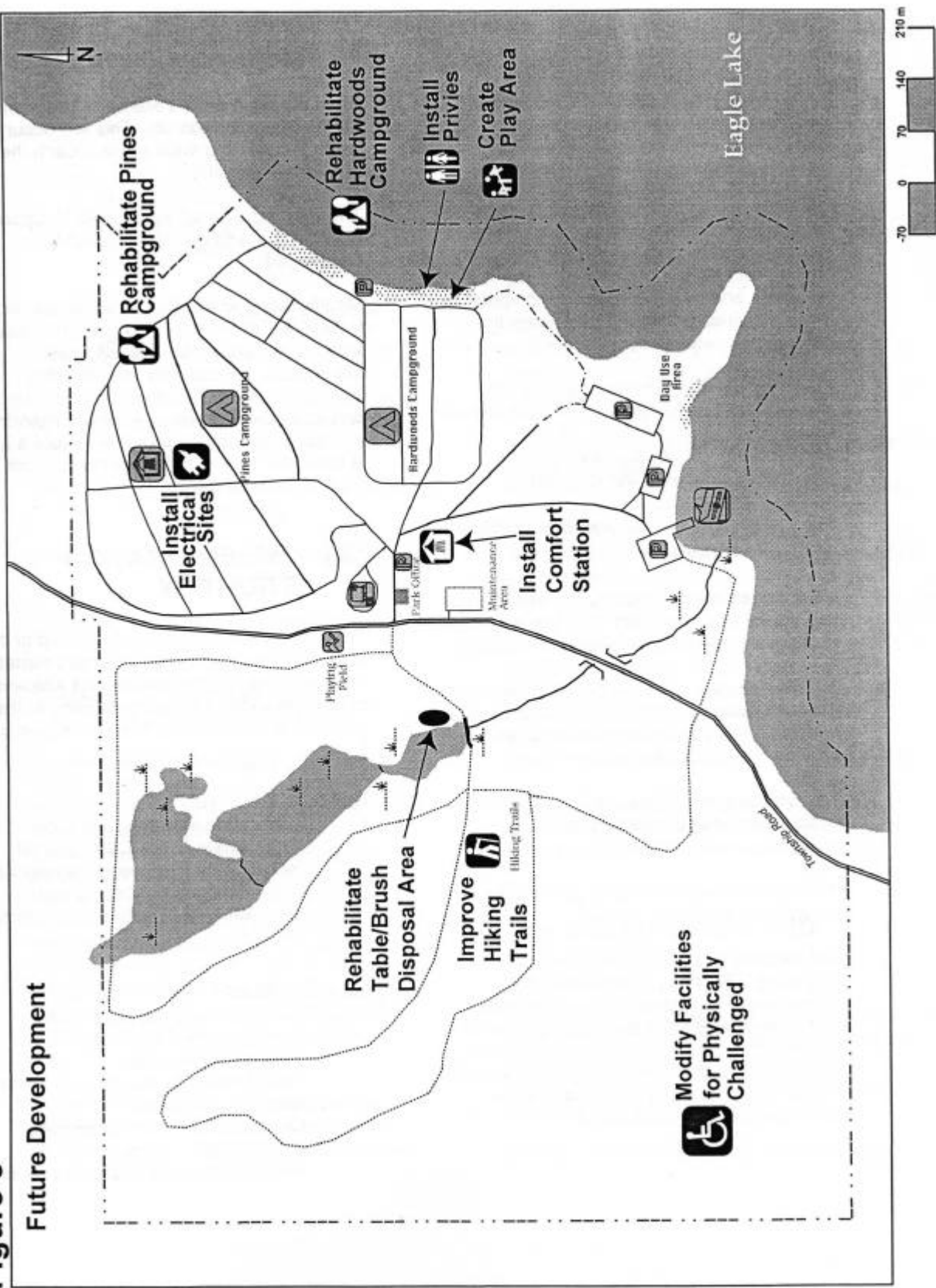
9.1 Campgrounds

The number of campsites in Mikisew Provincial Park has reached full development. In fact, a number of sites have been retired since the park reached its maximum development (270 sites) and currently only 259 are operated.

In order to provide campers with the services they demand in provincial parks, 30 sites in the Pines Campground will be provided with electricity. Factors leading to the decision to locate these sites within the Pines include:

- 1) the ease of installation and nearness to existing hydro lines;
- 2) to provide electrical sites close to the existing comfort station; and,
- 3) the size of sites in the Pines will accommodate larger recreational vehicles.

Figure 5



In the Pines, a rehabilitation program will be initiated to thin the even-aged stand of Red Pine and to under plant with species that provide better shade, are less susceptible to fire and provide more privacy between campsites. Native species will be used and natural regeneration will be promoted. Any timber removed will be used for park purposes or will be sold to recover costs.

Site rehabilitation is also required in the Hardwoods section of the campground. Many of the sites are showing signs of too intensive use with sites becoming larger and vegetation surrounding sites being lost. Rehabilitation efforts will include defining parking and shelter equipment areas (e.g., tent pads and demarcated parking spots) to focus activities on the site and allow the natural regeneration of vegetation.

A second comfort station equipped with showers will be developed in the Hardwood section of the campground. This development will occur in the former woodyard adjacent to the park office.

9.2 Day Use Area and Recreation Facilities

No changes will be made to the existing day use areas on Eagle Lake or to the recreation facilities in the western section of the park.

A children's play area will be constructed in the Hardwoods campground adjacent to the beach. A few campsites may be closed to provide a suitable play area.

The construction of new vault privies in the beach area near the campground is required.

If it is economically feasible, power may be provided to the picnic shelter.

The existing trail system is in need of upgrading. Sections of the trails cross seasonally and permanently wet locations and there is a need to reroute or provide a better surface for these trails so that these conditions are overcome. In all cases, trails will be rehabilitated in such a way as to

minimize annual maintenance.

9.3 System and Tourism Services

All of the vault privies will be upgraded to meet current standards. This will occur when the existing vault privies reach the end of their service life.

The existing comfort station will be upgraded to provide access for the physically challenged.

Modifications to existing facilities may occur to allow for the sale of goods and services that are necessary for a quality park experience. Goods and services may include firewood, ice, pop, park souvenirs and equipment rentals. Additional goods and services may be provided where a need is identified and with the approval of the Park Superintendent.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The projects and activities described in this plan and listed below will be implemented depending on the availability and allocation of funding each year and according to the priorities established by Mikisew Provincial Park.

Resource Stewardship

- Vegetation Management Plan
- Rehabilitate Pines Campground
- Rehabilitate Hardwood Campground
- Rehabilitate picnic table/brush disposal area in natural environment zone NEI

New Facilities

- Develop hydro sites in Pines Campground
- Children's Play area
- Vault Privies for Hardwoods beach area
- Comfort station for Hardwoods Campground
- Provide electricity to picnic shelter

Upgrade Facilities

- Refurbish and upgrade comfort station
- Upgrade vault privies
- Upgrade hiking trails

Other

- Marketing Plan
- Survey and sign park boundary
- Park Operating Plan

11.0 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The four stages in the preparation of the Mikisew Provincial Park Management Plan are:

- Phase 1- Terms of Reference/Invitation to Participate
- Phase 2- Background Information and Issues Report
- Phase 3- Preliminary Management Plan
- Phase 4- Approved Park Management Plan**

Phase I consisted of the preparation of terms of reference in June 1996 and the issuing of an Invitation to Participate. The invitation consisted of: newspaper advertisements, bulletin board notices throughout the park; distribution of a newsletter in the park office and in the community; mailing of a newsletter to interest groups and adjacent landowners. A notice was also posted to the *Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR)* Environmental Registry. Discussion between Ontario Parks and various groups were held in July and August.

Phase 2 included the publication of the *Mikisew Provincial Park: Compilation of Background Information and Issues Report* in August 1996. An Open House was held on August 21 to release the background information. This was promoted through

directed mailings, newspaper advertisements, radio features, bulletin board notices and direct contact with park visitors. Approximately 120 people attended the open house. A second newsletter was released summarizing the background report. As a result of the open house and the directed mailing, 135 submissions were received.

Phase 3, was initiated in December 1996 with the release of the Preliminary Management Plan. The public consultation component included an advertisement in the local newspaper and mailing approximately 175 copies of the preliminary plan to people on the mailing list, local public libraries and local government. A second notice was also placed on the *EBR* Environmental Registry. After the 60 day comment period, 4 responses were received. These comments were used to make minor changes to the preliminary plan.

The final phase in this planning process includes the release of the Approved Park Management Plan. The public will have 60 days to inspect this document. An *EBR* notice will again be posted to the Environmental Registry.

All documentation related to this planning exercise will be available for public review at Arrowhead Provincial Park near Huntsville.

12.0 PLAN REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

The Mikisew Provincial Park Management Plan will be reviewed regularly throughout its 20 year lifespan to address issues or changing conditions. A mandatory review will be held after 10 years.

During the term of this plan, circumstances

may require amendment to the approved Park Management Plan. Amendments permit changes which do not alter the overall intent of the plan and which are consistent with the park's classification, zoning, and goal and objectives. The process for amending the plan will follow the approved Ontario Parks policy.

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