



PARC DE LA  
**Gatineau**  
PARK



Recreational Services Plan  
*Gatineau Park*

Phase I: Planning Framework



# Plan

Planning in Gatineau Park  
Gatineau Park : an overview  
Trends  
Preliminary assessment  
Strategic framework

*“Unique natural and cultural heritage attractions and the variety of recreational activities and opportunities available make the park one of the most heavily used natural parks in Canada.”*

Heintzman, 2006



# Planning in Gatineau Park



# Gatineau Park Master Plan

- The mission of Gatineau Park:
  - Preserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Park
  - **Offer quality outdoor recreation experiences that are respectful of the natural environment**
  - Inspire all Canadians, visitors to the National Capital Region and residents to respect conservation values so as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Park

# Master Plan Priorities

- Environment
  - Conservation of significant ecosystems and natural environments
- **Recreation**
  - **A respectful recreational experience within a preserved natural environment.**
- Regional Integration
  - The Capital's conservation park.
- Heritage
  - Enhancement of heritage resources relating to the Capital
- National Symbol and Communications
  - A Canadian commitment to conservation, interpretation and communication of the Environment
- Management – a strategic tool
  - Conservation-oriented management of all activities

# Vision 2035: Ecosystem Conservation Plan

- 4.2.4 : LEISURE, APPRECIATION AND EDUCATION
- In 2035, Gatineau Park has earned an excellent reputation for its conservation values, and it is this reputation that attracts visitors. Efforts focus on creating awareness and educating visitors about conservation practices, and usage is based principally on the precautionary principle. **The Park is a favourite destination for members of the general public seeking experiences in natural environments.**

# Recreation Services Plan

## Gatineau Park

- Plan Objectives

*Develop a **planning framework** that includes a set of **clear actions**, based on the **recreation activities**, the **infrastructure and services** that should be **developed, enhanced, modified, or abandoned** in order to **optimize the visitor experience** while **maximizing the values and priorities detailed in the Ecosystems Conservation Plan for Gatineau Park.***

# Gatineau Park : an overview

The Park

The activities

Visitation over time

# Gatineau Park...

- 36,131 hectares of green space, lakes and forests (361 square km)
- 7.7% of the total surface area of the National Capital Region (NCR)
- 1.7 million visits annually with over 85% coming from the NCR

# Recreation Resources

## Spring, Summer, and Fall

- 165 km of pedestrian trails
  - 90 km of shared trails (walking/cycling)
  - 20 km of paved trails
- Three (3) scenic parkways (33.2 Kilometres)
- 14 picnic areas
- Six (6) public beaches
- More than 300 camping sites and one (1) overnight cabin
- Dedicated mountain bike trails (Camp Fortune)
- A cave

# Recreation Resources

## Winter

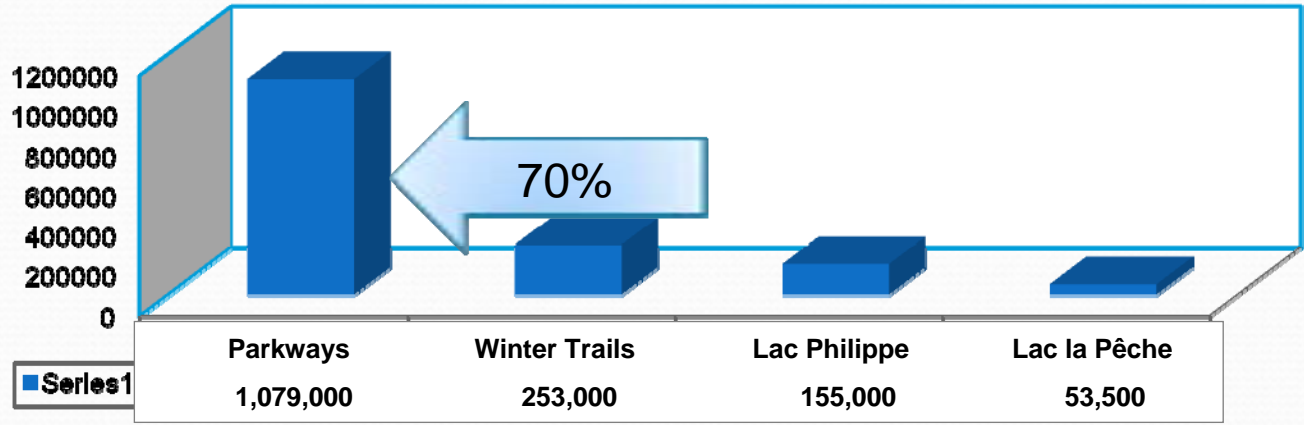
- 200 km cross-country ski trails
- 10 shelters (day use)
- 35 km of snowshoe trails
- 10 km winter hiking trails
- 1 campground
- 6 cabins (overnight use)
- Alpine ski facilities – biathlon (Camp Fortune)

# Visitation Over Time

ESTIMATED VISITATION IN GATINEAU PARK				
1978	1982-1983	1991	1999-2000	2015
600,000	1,000,000	1,243,000	1,500,000	2 200,000
Management estimates	Three-season data synthesis	Est. by number of vehicles entering Park	SODEM survey	Projection (not including Camp Fortune)

## VISITOR DISTRIBUTION

SODEM, 2000



# Trends

Demographics

Technology and infrastructures

Socio-cultural

Environment

Forces of Change:

# Regional Demographics

- Growing population
- Aging population
- Increasing:
  - Cultural Diversity
  - Educated population
  - Urban population

## Forces of Change:

# Technology and Infrastructure

- Innovation and development of outdoor recreation gear
  - E.g. High-performance mountain bikes
  - E.g. Next generation showshoes
  - E.g. Snow grooming machines
- Use of the Internet for tourism and recreation planning
  - E.g. Online transactions
- Use of the Internet for social networking and communications
  - E.g. User blogs
- Use of GPS: opens of new opportunities and land areas for discovery
- Improvement of transportation corridors towards natural areas
  - E.g. Extension of Highway 5, Des Allumettières blvd

Forces of Change:

# Socio-cultural

- Greater emphasis on Quality of Life
  - Better understanding of the connection between outdoor activities and health and wellbeing
- Greater economic accessibility
  - Increase in the number of individuals able to participate in outdoor recreation activities
- Diversification of cultural values
  - New enthusiasts, different expectations
- Expectations of some local residents and Park users
  - A backyard playground ?
  - Park expected to satisfy all needs

## Forces of Change:

# Environment

- Climate Change
  - E.g. Increased precipitation in the Winter season
  - E.g. Increased need for shelter from rain and UV during the Summer season
- Increased pressure on natural areas from urban development
  - Insufficient protected areas close to urban centres
  - Absence of a regional park that could meet the local population's recreation needs
- Green Transportation Plan in development
  - Maintain or improve accessibility while diminishing environmental impacts

# Outdoor Recreation Trends in Canada

- Outdoor recreation is a significant free time pursuit
- Outdoor recreation participation has been consistent over the last few decades
- Decreased visitation in some national parks in Canada and USA. Increase in others.
- Some users are recognizing environmental values and need for recreation landscape preservation
- Participation remains consistent over time. Key activities remain constant

*“Massive change is unlikely ... Gradual change is most likely.”*

# Assessment:

## Opportunities and Challenges

# Opportunities and Challenges

- Management
- Programming
- Infrastructure
- User Culture
- Regional Integration

# Management

- Increased visitation
- Complex management with increasingly tight budgets
- Permeability of Park boundaries, particularly in the area close to residential zones (south)

# Management

- Individualism: some people bend rules to use park as seen fit by them
- Difficulties in responding to demands in peak periods
- Complex and contradictory demands
- Activities requiring official management e.g. climbing and geocaching

# Programming

- Depreciation of the Park experience during peak periods
- Increased promotion of the Park's conservation mission as part of the Recreation Services Plan (education, interpretation)
- Recent developments of new products and services
  - E.g. snowshoe trails, all-inclusive camping
- Existing activities will likely remain popular as visitation will remain proportionate to local population

# Infrastructures and Resources

- Aging of some infrastructures and increasing pressure on existing resources
  - E.g. Line-ups at ski shelters on weekday nights
- Increased maintenance costs, particularly related to trails
- Increasing number of non-official trails
- Adaptation of infrastructures in the context of climate change
- Increasingly sophisticated development demands

# User Culture

- Diverse interests
  - E.g. Park as a training centre or sports facility
- Increasing conflicts between users
- Not much willingness to compromise the quality of the experience for the benefit of conservation
- Growing number of users with less experience in outdoor recreation

# User Culture

- False sense of security – amplified by reliance on technology (GPS, cellular telephones)
- Regional recreation (85% of visitors come from NCR)
- Park boundaries not always clear so visitors do not know that they are entering a Conservation Park
- Limited resources for education and interpretation programs

# Regional Integration

- Peripheral opportunity
  - Gatineau Park remains one of the only nature-based parks in the National Capital Region
  - Gatineau Park can not support alone such a major role in the regional outdoor recreation opportunity spectrum
- Important regional tourism attraction (economic impact = \$24 million, 420 employed (1998))

# Planning framework

# Vision

- In 2035, Gatineau Park will be considered a public place where sustainable relationships between people and nature are forged through responsible outdoor recreation activities that:
  - Contribute to the **conservation** objectives of the park; and
  - Encourage visitors to **discover, access, and appreciate** the natural and cultural heritage of the Park, which is of regional, national, and international significance.
- To realize this vision, a Recreation Management Plan is guiding Gatineau Park towards 2035. The Plan is based on four strategic principles:
  - **Conservation**
  - **Discovery**
  - **Appreciation**
  - **Accessibility**

# Mission

- To promote and support the discovery of Gatineau Park's natural and cultural heritage through responsible outdoor recreation activities that contribute to the Park's conservation objectives and the wellbeing of park visitors and surrounding communities.
- Gatineau Park will continue to work with visitors, communities, partners, and friends to build a strong network of local, regional, and national support

# Responsible Recreation: a definition

- Responsible recreation is an approach meant to foster the discovery of Gatineau Park through outdoor recreation activities that contribute to the Park's conservation objectives and the wellbeing of park visitors and surrounding communities.



Slogan

***Naturellement responsable***

***Responsible by nature***

# Four guiding principles

- Conservation
  - Activities and services must have minimal impacts on the natural environment
- Discovery
  - Activities and services must foster the discovery of the natural environment, our history and culture.
- Appreciation
  - Activities and services must permit users to enjoy and experience the diversity of benefits associated with outdoor recreation.
- Accessibility
  - Recreation programs and services must be developed in such a way as to facilitate the participation of all Canadians.

# Conservation:

## possible orientations

- Infrastructure and equipment should be managed to reduce their impact on the natural environment
- Visitation should be managed to reflect the carrying capacity of the Park
- Mitigation measures should be put in place to better control the movement of motorized vehicles
- Intensive sport activities or those requiring advanced techniques or equipment should be controlled.
- Recreation activities with major impacts on the natural environment should be moved to the periphery of the Park.

# Discovery: possible orientations

- Infrastructure and equipment should emphasize the beauty of the landscape and the cultural heritage
- Infrastructure and equipment should facilitate the development of an intimate relationship between users and the natural environment
- The recreation potential of less sensitive ecological areas should be developed and select activities should be relocated to these areas
- Activities that foster discovery can serve to extend the length of the visit

# Appreciation: possible orientations

- The development of responsible recreation ethics and behaviours should be reinforced
- Interpretive and educative opportunities should be fostered through recreation programming and services

# Accessibility:

## possible orientations

- The majority of activities should be accessible to those without advanced technical skills or equipment
- The NCC website should provide complete information on the recreation activities, programs, and services available in the Park
- A sustainable transportation plan should be established and it should provide for enhanced access to recreation opportunities within the Park
- A regional perspective should be assumed when planning the Park and it should contribute to the development of recreation in the periphery
- Visitors centres and information services should be improved (location for services and training of personnel)