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Fathom Five National Marine Park Business Stakeholder Meeting

Parks Canada Agency
Fathom Five National Marine Park
Tobermory, Ontario, Canada
Facilitator: John Miller, ICA Associates Inc.



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Business Planning Information and Discussion Session: Fathom Five National Marine Park**Introduction and Context:**

Fathom Five National Marine Park protects a remarkable freshwater ecosystem and islands in the heart of the Great Lakes, while offering world class experiences to connect with nature. Parks Canada recognizes the important economic opportunities that visitation to Fathom Five brings to residents and economy of the Tobermory community. Parks Canada must balance environmental protection with economic interests and is committed to managing Fathom Five on behalf of all Canadians, First Nations, residents, businesses, and the community for a sustainable future.

Parks Canada is currently updating the management plan for Fathom Five National Marine Park which will establish a vision and guide park management for the next 10 years. Throughout the management planning process, Parks Canada is consulting with partners, stakeholders, and visitors to gather valuable input from Canadians on the future of this special place. A vibrant future for Fathom Five includes strategic business partnerships to deliver world class, innovative experiences that enable visitors to connect with this unique freshwater ecosystem in the heart of the Great Lakes. These experiences and the partnerships we count on to deliver them, will be carefully designed and managed using evidence-based tools to ensure the protection and sustainability of the park.

In the summer of 2020 Parks Canada is opening numerous competitive solicitations through Requests for Proposal to award business opportunities for delivering meaningful and innovative visitor experience offers in Fathom Five. Parks Canada wants to ensure the Canadian public has a fair and equitable opportunity to compete for business opportunities, in line with Federal Treasury Board policy.

Parks Canada organized a 3 ½ hour meeting on Friday December 13th 2019 at the Parks Canada Visitor Centre in Tobermory, Ontario, to engage and inform business operators about the upcoming solicitation process and to gain input from the business community to ensure its smooth implementation.

Parks Canada invited all business operators that currently conduct business in Fathom Five, or who had expressed interest in conducting business in Fathom Five (see Appendix A for the invitation list)

The meeting commenced with opening remarks by John Haselmayer, Park Superintendent. John Miller from ICA Associates was introduced as the meeting facilitator, who subsequently explained the meeting ground-rules and code-of-conduct for participants; conducted a round table of introductions; explained the 'Question and Comments' wall where participants could place a sticky note containing any questions at any time during the meeting; and, provided an overview of the purpose for the breakout table discussions.

Participation Guidelines:

- Everyone has wisdom
- We need everyone's wisdom to produce the wisest results
- There are no "wrong" answers (or "right", so avoid judging before listening)
- Everyone will hear and be heard (hence the small group discussions are really important)
- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

"Chatham House" rules apply:

- non-attribution of comments, and
- Sharing your best thinking does not automatically imply official organizational endorsement

John Haselmayer proceeded to deliver a presentation describing the direction of business partnerships in Fathom Five, after which John Miller began facilitating the breakout table discussions.

Breakout Table Discussions

The breakout table discussions concentrated on a series of four categories with questions posed to the broader group of participants during the presentation.

The four categories discussed were:

- 1: Anticipating Trends
- 2: Discovering Commonalities
- 3: Addressing our Differences
- 4: Advice - Implementing the RFP Process

Participants were divided into four groups, each group sitting at one of four tables. Tables were covered with a paper tablecloth that had quadrants representing the four categories for discussion. Groups were allocated approximately 15-20mins for each category to discuss them in sequence, beginning with category 1. Participants wrote down thoughts, considerations, and answers directly in the quadrants on the tablecloth during their discussions.

The following are notes that were written onto the paper tablecloths by the participants during their discussions, and, comments that were shared with the whole group during wrap-up conversations following each category.

1. Anticipating Trends:

What are trends in our industry and/or economy that we need to anticipate?

- Visitor numbers may be reaching a peak
- Declining number of available Dive sites (moorings not available)
- Because of unpredictable winds, increased need for diverse offerings / locations within the geographical area
- Changing length of season due to climate change?
- Shorter operating seasons
- Decreasing water temperature
- Spring air temperature cooler
- Cooler springs and falls
- Increasing intro to diving
- Decrease in visits from technical divers and increase in intro divers
- Group travel day trips
- Increasing snorkelers
- Increasing “experience travel”
- Reducing our carbon footprint
- Visitor footprint coming here
- Operational footprint as local businesses
- Encourage emission free offers
- Day trippers
- Visitation has already peaked
- Off-season travel (hopefully)
- Increased (need to) Planning ahead
- Green travel increase
- Day trippers here for recreation and pictures
- Water levels increase
- Water temperature increasing
- Cooler spring and fall / shorter season
- Increasing numbers of day trippers
- Reduce carbon footprint
- Emission free offers
- Book online / plan ahead

2. Discovering Commonalities:

What are some of our common values now and in the future?

- Access to remote areas
- Provide employment
- Positive experience – “blow minds”
- Exploring different areas and in different ways: large groups, small groups, different vessels, education...
- Parks commitment to historical elements (presentation centre, Cove Island, Lighthouse)

- Offerings for both high volume attractions as well as more isolated, quiet spaces preserved
- Teaching stewardship ethic
- Status quo for development
- First class vessels
- Clean waters and environment
- Our values for intimate experiences are different from visitors
- Love of the beauty here
- Relaying historic significance and value of area and dive sites
- Our value of cleanness and waste management needs to be relayed to visitors
- Seasonal staff challenges
- Being able to present the area in a quality way
- Contributing to the economy
- Visitor education – e.g. littering etc.
- Affordability of offers
- Don't fix what ain't broken
- Helping people feel like it's their place too
- We keep it affordable
- We wake people up: "I never knew that!"
- Beautiful icons like lighthouse need protections so it does not crumble

3a. Addressing Our Differences

What are some examples of potential differences now and in the future?

- Access to Flowerpot Island
- Potential conflicts between operators at Beachy Cove Dock / Big Tub Harbour
- Cove Island development
- Access to Flowerpot Island and (ship) wrecks
- Number of people on Flowerpot Island; bus – park levels
- Total number of activities on water
- Types of activities
- Operators with no local history and experience
- Additional operators added after RFPs?
- Business versus environmental issues
- Regulation versus operation of business
- No sudden change to status quo
- Small versus big business
- Parks doesn't understand how fragile we are
- Access times
- Who is awarded what
- Scope too large for small operators
- Vague versus specific RFPs

- Facilitating both large and small opportunities for operators
- Visitorship and Competition
- Pick-up/Drop-off points
- Regulation vs Spontaneity
- Business vs climate (Windy conditions, very cool weather, storms, etc)
- Prebooking vs day-of/spur of the moment
- Over-regulation by PCA could limit business opportunities
- Reduce sudden/dramatic changes
- Small businesses vs larger, more established businesses and the opportunities that may or may not go strictly to the larger businesses

3b. Addressing Our Differences:

How might we prevent and resolve any of our potential difference in the future?

- Communication
- Possible new offerings to accommodate
- Multiple RFPs
- Increase Flowerpot Island capacity
- Discussion and consultation
- Timely notice
- No pre-conceived notions
- Acting on what is said / suggested / recommended by businesses
- Strong recognition of existing operators
- Local operators already operate with professionalism
- Recognition for track record
- Collaboration of businesses
- Complementary business models
- Clarity of communications
- Collaborating with PC
- More flexibility from PC
- Open lines of communication between potential conflicting parties
- Safety becomes a priority
- Regulations → discourages tour operators
- Make framework around existing strengths of operators
- Collaboration between businesses and between businesses and PCA
- Flexibility by PCA to recognize economic realities of operating a business in the Tourism Sector
- Communication amongst the business owners
- Make framework around existing business offers
- PCA should/needs to look at what businesses are currently offering, and servicing, and what businesses see as the “Next Big Thing”

- How does/will PCA plan on dealing with businesses that come from outside the local community?
- Will PCA give licenced operators access to site?
- Will current quota be honoured
- Businesses would like at least 6 months lead time on the RFP's // to respond to RFP's
- Build flexibility into the process
- Ensure good communication between PCA and local businesses and community
- Businesses require time to plan, so please respect how our businesses have to operate around the busy season
- Businesses require reasonable terms on the license (many indicating at least 5 years, but prefer 10-15 years)
- Businesses require contract security in order to invest in their business.
- Applicants should show they have a track record of success in the chosen business
- Applicants must have a proven safety record in the business operation
- PCA should allow for some growth of existing businesses
- Is there going to be an opportunity for non-motorized traffic on the water and land?
- Very important for there to be Transparency and open communication throughout the RFP process

4a. Advice - Implementing the RFP Process

What are your needs as small business owners operating within this context?

- Certainty:
 - Time to plan
 - Reasonable requirements
 - Flexibility to adapt and change
 - Reasonable term lengths, 5 – 10 years.
 - Contract security
- Fathom Five on the water. “Eyes” on the water of operators in the absence of Parks people.
- Easy contact number to report anyone that doesn't belong
- Existing operators / employers need insurance (assurance) that their investments aren't left high and dry
- Longevity. 5-10 years is better
- Growth sustainability
- Non-motorized facilities, ie: kayak launches similar to the diving dock
- Driftwood cove
- Multiple moorings and well maintained
- Access points for operations and flexibility
- Early season / timelines
- Options for sites due to changing winds

4b. Advice - Implementing the RFP Process

How can we all ensure the fair smooth implementation of a competitive RFP process for Fathom Five National Marine Park?

- Applicants must provide proof of successful history in the industry.
- Provide a track record of safety.
- A reasonable timeline depends on level of requirements for infrastructure, schedule, offerings.
- Reasonable timeline to respond to an RFP
 - May 2020 announcement
 - March 2021 deadline for submission
 - January 2022 set
 - May 2022 start business
- Timely notice and transparency of communication
 - End of season debrief in the last two weeks of October
- Decisions made early for implementation – December for following season
- Flexibility
- Don't close the RFP process in peak season, wait until fall
- 1 year to submit
- 1 year after award to implement
- Recognition of historic and current investments
- Meetings with individual businesses – private setting
- Mutual agreed time
- Transparency of who is bidding
- Rated criteria depends on company. Ie: kayaks aren't "accessible"
- Safety record in these types of conditions
- Parking, washrooms
- Investing in employees' future
- Accessibility
- Give licensed local operators guaranteed access to sites (ie: mobile operators)
- Will current quota be honoured?
- Release the results of RFP 6 months or more before implementation
- Give adequate timeline for operators to write and submit RFP ie: 6 months or a season for operators to make money and submit proposal. Submit December – January
- Continued consultations
- Build flexibility into the outcome
- Review on an annual basis
- Submit a template to operators on what an RFP looks like

Question and Comment Wall:

A portion of wall space in the meeting room was dedicated to collecting any questions from participants. Questions were written on sticky notes and placed on the wall by participants over the course of the afternoon. The following is a list of the questions that were placed on the wall and answers that were addressed by Parks Canada during the course of the afternoon, or directly during the Summary discussion period. John Haselmayer ensured that each question identified on a sticky was discussed.

- **Q. Who owns and manages the other lighthouse (Cove Island)?**
 - A. Fisheries and Oceans Canada owns and manages the land and structures associated with the Cove Island Lightstation and the Big Tub Harbour Lightstation.
- **Q. How is new and existing PCA infrastructure addressed via the RFP process?**
 - A. If third party access to existing Parks Canada infrastructure is required to deliver a service solicited through an RFP, that access will be defined using the most suitable regulatory tool available for the situation (e.g. a License of Occupation). If a third party response to an RFP suggests the development of new infrastructure to deliver a service, Parks Canada is moving forward with a cost-neutral approach, meaning all costs associated with the new infrastructure would be the responsibility of the service provider (e.g. a new dock on Cove Island Lightstation).
- **Q. Is infrastructure and parking part of the RFP requirements?**
 - A. The RFPs will be awarded to successful applicants using a 'Merit Based' approach. RFP submissions will be evaluated using a range of Mandatory and Additional criteria that will score each application relative to the requirements for delivering a service, for example safety, track record. If parking or infrastructure are required in order to deliver a service, it's reasonable to think these may be part of the RFP requirements.
- **Q. What is an RFP process? Can you provide a broad outline of it? What do you want out of it?**
 - A. An RFP is a form of bid solicitation that is used when the bidder selection is based on best value rather than on price alone. In broad strokes, Parks Canada will issue an RFP describing a service that it requires, such as providing a new visitor experience in Fathom Five. Bidders prepare a proposal in response to the criteria listed in the RFP package. A timeframe for bids will be specified. Responses to the RFPs will be evaluated by a panel of professionals and stakeholders, against a set of predefined criteria and are based on relative merit.
- **Q. What are the different offers? (E.g.: shipwrecks, Flowerpot Island? Anything else?)**
 - A. The different offers that will be solicited through the RFP processes are currently under development and will be presented at a follow up meeting. Parks Canada has been cooperatively developing Area Plans and a Visitor Experience Strategy for

Fathom Five that are informing the different kinds of visitor experiences that Parks Canada would like to support. Since Flowerpot Island and the Big Tub Harbour shipwrecks are the most popular destinations, it's reasonable to assume that the current experiences at these locations will continue in some form.

- **Q. What will be Parks Canada's responsibility for divers and snorkelers?**
 - A. Parks Canada expects that any business operating within Fathom Five National Marine Park will enter into a business arrangement with Parks Canada, depending on the relevant authorities that Canada maintains within the area where the business operates.
- **Q. How rigid are the parameters (of the RFPs)? By type?**
 - A. Parks Canada follows the established Federal Government process (Treasury Board Policy) for soliciting business opportunities. The RFPs will be issued in line with policy to ensure all Canadians have a fair and equitable opportunity to transact with Canada. Parks Canada is meeting with the business community in advance of the RFP launch to ensure that the RFPs are respectful of operational realities.
- **Q. How will the RFP process accommodate guided excursions greater than one day?**
 - A. The different offers that will be solicited through the RFP processes are currently under development and will be presented at a follow up meeting. Parks Canada has been cooperatively developing a Visitor Experience Strategy and Visitor Use Management Frameworks for Fathom Five that are informing the different kinds of visitor experiences that Parks Canada would like to support.
- **Q. What is the timeline for the RFPs?**
 - A. The timeline for the RFPs will be a maximum of two years, from May 2020 to May 2022. The end date, May 2022 is a set date for the implementation of the new and revised visitor experience offers awarded through the solicitation process. The 'opening' date for the RFPs, could be as early as May 2020, however, we want to be mindful of the operational realities of existing operators and when it would make the most sense to issue the RFPs.
- **Q. What does "RFP" mean?**
 - A. RFP means 'Request for Proposal'. A Request for Proposal is a form of bid solicitation that is used when the bidder selection is based on best value rather than on price alone. An RFP should be used when, owing to the nature of the requirement, suppliers are invited to propose a solution to a problem, requirement or objective, and the selection of the supplier is based on the effectiveness of the proposed solution.
- **Q. How will you make sure the process is fair, fairly share opportunities?**
 - A. Parks Canada follows the established Federal Government process (Treasury Board Policy) for soliciting business opportunities. The RFPs will be issued in line with policy

to ensure all Canadians have a fair and equitable opportunity to transact with Canada.

▪ **Q. Who will evaluate the RFP submissions?**

A. The RFPs will be evaluated by a neutral panel represented by Government Realty and Business specialists; Indigenous and other partners; and industry professionals, selected by Parks Canada.

▪ **Q. Will Parks Canada share what is important to Parks Canada in Fathom Five?**

A. In addition to the information that has been shared today, Parks Canada will host a second meeting in February of 2020 and will discuss the outcomes of the Visitor Use Management Framework and Visitor Experience Strategy planning documents. Both planning documents will be used to inform the specific solicitations in the RFPs.

▪ **Q. Can other organizations be engaged in educating visitors on the beauty of the area, and how to treat this area with the same respect permanent residents do?**

A. The short answer is, yes. Parks Canada believes working with partners is the best way to promote and exercise the shared values that we all have in this place. There are many different groups working to keep this place beautiful, and Parks Canada is very interested in ensuring that the business opportunities available providing visitor experiences are sustainable and support a thriving local economy and community.

▪ **Q. The Uniqueness of the area needs to be recognized and respected.**

A. Agreed.

▪ **Q. Is it feasible/possible to circulate visitors to other islands/attractions in the park?**

A. It is possible that new visitor experiences may be available at other locations within the park (e.g. Cove Island). While Parks Canada wants to encourage sustainable business opportunities and a vibrant local economy and community, we are mindful of our first priority, which is the protection of the ecological integrity of these places.

▪ **Q. How do you fit non-local operators into the RFP process? E.g. the fly-by-night companies that don't comply with existing regulations?**

A. Parks Canada expects that any business operating within Fathom Five National Marine Park will enter into a business arrangement with Parks Canada, depending on the relevant authorities that Canada maintains within the area where the business operates. Parks Canada may promote a 'preferred partner' model that encourages visitors to use the services provided by businesses that have business agreements in place with Parks Canada.

Next Steps:

At the end of the meeting Parks Canada confirmed the 'Next Steps' that would follow, including:

- Parks Canada will produce a 'What we Heard' report detailing the information provided by the meeting attendees
- Parks Canada will compile and publish the materials provided and collected at the meeting (e.g. post on a public website for others to access)
- Parks Canada extended offers for bilateral meetings between Parks Canada and interested business operators
- Parks Canada indicated a second, follow-up meeting would take place in February of 2020. This meeting has since been confirmed for Friday, February 14, 2020.

Appendix A - List of Invitees and Parks Canada Representatives

The following tables list the different businesses that were invited to participate at the meeting, as well as the Parks Canada representatives. Some businesses were unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts, however Parks Canada committed to provide these businesses with copies of all materials shared at the meetings, and a copy of the 'As Was Heard' report.

Invitee Business Name	Attendance at Meeting
Blue Heron Company	Yes
Blue World Marine Adventures Ltd.	No
Bruce Anchor Cruises / Big Tub Harbour Resort	Yes
C-View Charters	No
Dawn Light	Yes
Divers Den	Yes
Explorer's Tread	Yes
Fathom Five Paddling	Yes
Thorncrest Outfitters	No
Tobermory Cruise Lines	Yes
Tobermory Wave	Yes

Parks Canada Employee Name	Organizational Role
Katherine Patterson	Field Unit Superintendent
John Haselmayer	Park Superintendent
Annique Maheu	Field Unit External Relations Manager
Pamela Hayhurst	Senior Realty Advisor
Jennifer Duquette	Field Unit Strategic Advisor
Lance Sherk	Senior Realty Advisor
Jeff Truscott	Strategic Advisor
Sean Liipere	Prevention Coordinator
Ethan Meleg	Visitor Services Manager
Sheila Peacock	Administrative Assistant

Appendix B – Letter of Invitation



**Bruce Peninsula National Park/
Fathom Five National Marine Park**
P.O. Box 189
Tobermory, Ontario
N0H 2R0
John.Haselmayer@canada.ca
Tel: (519) 596-2233 x234
Fax: (519) 596-2298

**Parc national de la Péninsule-Bruce/
Parc marin Fathom Five**
C. P. 189
Tobermory (Ontario)
N0H 2R0
John.Haselmayer@canada.ca
Tél: (519) 596-2233 x234
Fax : (519) 596-2298

*Recipient
Contact
Info Here*

Re: Invitation to Business Planning Information and Discussion Session: Fathom Five National Marine Park

Dear *Enter Name Here*,

You are receiving this meeting invitation because you are either already a member of the Fathom Five business community, or you have expressed interest in developing a business in the national marine park. At this meeting Parks Canada will be providing information on business opportunities and upcoming processes for issuing business agreements in Fathom Five. We will also be seeking to learn from the industry to ensure that, in designing these processes, we understand the realities of your operations.

Each year, Parks Canada welcomes over 400,000 visitors to Fathom Five National Marine Park, the majority of whom access the park via a third-party business. Parks Canada values its relationship with commercial operators who provide these services to visitors of Fathom Five. In recent years we have worked closely with the business community to modernize the business environment through formalized business arrangements and we would like to continue this collaboration. We look forward to a future together where we continue to offer an array of vibrant visitor experiences and collectively protect this jewel of the Great Lakes.

We are pleased to invite you to a **Business Planning Information and Discussion Session at the Parks Canada Visitor Center in Tobermory, Ontario, on Friday December 13th from 1pm – 4:30pm.**

If you plan to attend this meeting, please RSVP to Sheila.peacock@canada.ca by **Friday December 6th**. Remote attendance will be made available via telecom and WebEx.

If you have questions about this meeting, please feel free to reach out to me directly at 519-596-2444x234 or john.haselmayer@canada.ca.

Sincerely,

John Haselmayer
Superintendent
Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park

cc

Katherine Patterson, Field Unit Superintendent, Georgian Bay and Ontario East Field Unit, Parks Canada