

2019

Thousand Islands

National Park of Canada

Draft Management Plan

DRAFT

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Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse) Foreword

Greetings to the Natural World

The People

Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People.

Now our minds are one.

The Mother Earth

We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our Mother, we send greetings and thanks.

And now our minds are one.

Ohên:ton Karihwatêhkwen

Onkwehshôn:?a

[Text to be translated](#)

Êhtho niohtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.

Iethi?nistênha Ohôn:tsia

[Text to be translated](#)

Êhtho niohtônha?k ne onkwa?nikôn:ra.

This is an excerpt from the “Thanksgiving Address” that has ancient roots, dating back over 1,000 years to the formation of the Great Law of Peace by a man called the Peacemaker, and perhaps before that. Today these words are still spoken at the opening and closing of all ceremonial and governmental gatherings held by the Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse). The Mohawks of Akwesasne, part of the Haudenosaunee, include Thousand Islands National Park as part of their traditional territory.

Foreword

(Minister's forward to follow)

Recommendations

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Executive Summary

In the heart of the Thousand Islands, on traditional Haudenosaunee and Algonquin lands, Thousand Islands National Park consists of several mainland properties, 26 islands, and 89 islets and shoals. The properties extend across a 120 kilometre stretch along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario from Brockville to Prince Edward County. The park was initially established in 1904 as St. Lawrence Islands National Park, and officially renamed in 2013.

Thousand Islands National Park is a core protected area of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. The park is located at the crossroads of the St. Lawrence River and the Frontenac Arch, and is in the transition zone between eastern deciduous and boreal forests. Because of this, the region is one of the most biodiverse in Canada. The park has more native reptile and amphibian species than any other Canadian National Park. The park also represents a rich cultural landscape of human activity. Many generations have connected to this place including pre-contact and contemporary Indigenous groups, military and trade route travellers, early islands settlers and farmers.

The park has visitor offers at three of its mainland properties: Landon Bay, Mallorytown Landing and Jones Creek. These hubs, featuring a variety of trails, a former church campground and recreation facility, oTENTiks, a visitor centre and an administration office, are situated on the Thousand Islands Parkway between Brockville and Gananoque. The vehicular and cycling parkway runs along the river, parallel to the nearby Highway 401, approximately halfway between Toronto and Montreal. Visitors - with either their own or third party boat and kayak access - can enjoy docks, trails and diverse camping and accommodation offers at 20 island locations.

This management plan replaces the 2010 management plan for Thousand Islands National Park. Since 2010, the park has improved overall ecological integrity by engaging with partners, stakeholders, local landowners, volunteers and Indigenous partners; developed a multi-species action plan; improved marine structures; established strong foundational relationships with several partners; and undertaken initiatives to increase access to islands for paddlers and campers.

Engagement and consultation with partners and stakeholders as well as the general public in the preparation of this management plan yielded key thematic areas for guiding management activities at Thousand Islands National Park for the next ten years.

The four key strategies for the ten year management plan are:

- **Working together to achieve conservation goals in a fragmented and developed landscape:** This strategy focuses on positive conservation outcomes for the park and for the region through collaborative relationships with a range of partners.
- **Re-imagining the Thousand Islands National Park Experience:** This strategy aims to develop new experiences that immerse both island and mainland visitors in the unique ecology of the area and the rich cultures of Indigenous peoples.
- **Building resilience and sustainability of assets:** This strategy focusses on modernizing the asset base from its eclectic mix of antiquated facilities towards unified design aesthetics and elements that support the park's conservation and visitor experience objectives.
- **Recognising the value of Thousand Islands National Park:** This strategy aims to improve Parks Canada's regional brand awareness and highlight its role in managing Thousand Islands National Park.

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1.0 Introduction

Parks Canada manages one of the finest and most extensive systems of protected natural and historic places in the world. The Agency's mandate is to protect and present these places for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Future-oriented, strategic management of each national park, national marine conservation area, heritage canal and those national historic sites administered by Parks Canada supports the Agency's vision:

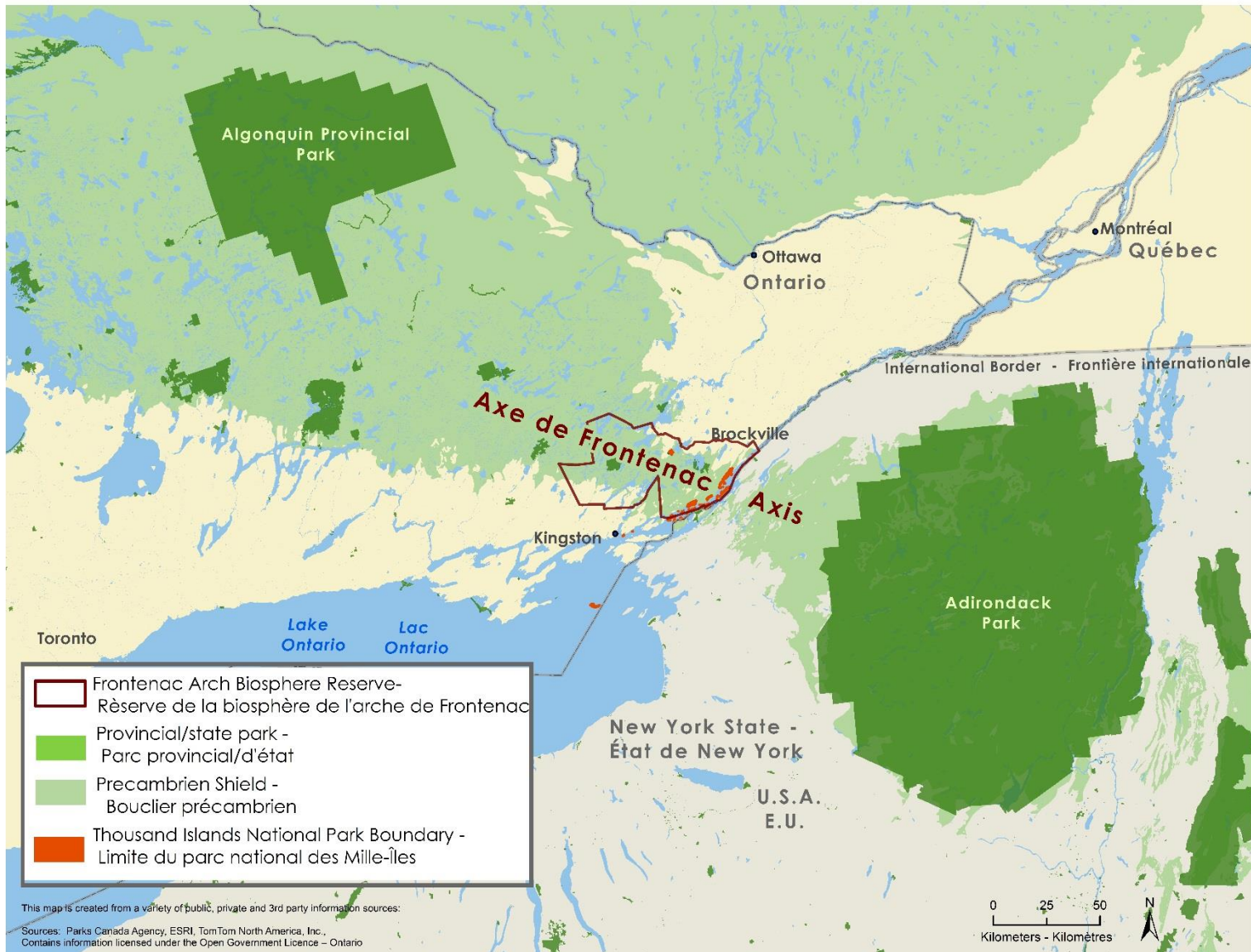
Canada's treasured natural and historic places will be a living legacy, connecting hearts and minds to a stronger, deeper understanding of the very essence of Canada.

The *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Parks Canada Agency Act* require Parks Canada to prepare a management plan for each national park. The *Thousand Islands National Park of Canada Management Plan*, once approved by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada and tabled in Parliament, ensures Parks Canada's accountability to Canadians, outlining how park management will achieve measurable results in support of the Agency's mandate.

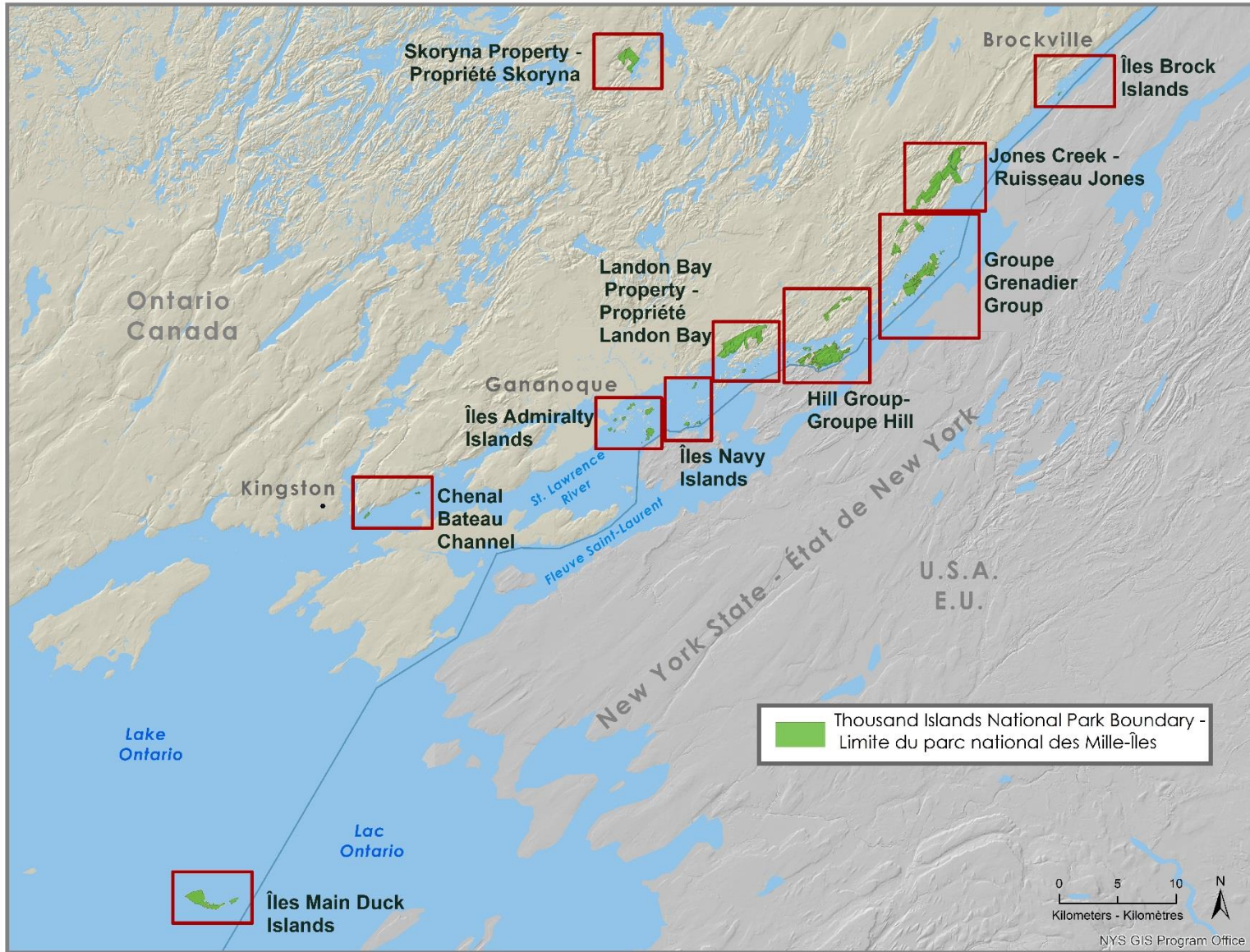
Canadians, including Indigenous peoples were involved in the preparation of the management plan, helping to shape the future direction of the national park. The plan sets clear, strategic direction for the management and operation of Thousand Islands National Park by articulating a vision, key strategies and objectives. Parks Canada will report annually on progress toward achieving the plan objectives and will review the plan every ten years or sooner if required.

This plan is not an end in and of itself. Parks Canada will maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of the management plan, to ensure that it remains relevant and meaningful. The plan will serve as the focus for ongoing engagement on the management of Thousand Islands National Park in years to come.

Map 1: Regional Setting



Map 2: Thousand Islands National Park



2.0 Significance of Thousand Islands National Park

Initially established in 1904 as St. Lawrence Islands National Park, and officially renamed in 2013, Thousand Islands National Park was the first Canadian National Park east of the Rocky Mountains.

Thousand Islands National Park is a core protected area of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve and representative of the St. Lawrence Lowlands and the Canadian Shield (see map 1). The park is located at the crossroads of the St. Lawrence River and the Frontenac Arch, and is in the transition zone between eastern deciduous and boreal forests. Because of this, the region is one of the most bio-diverse in Canada. The park has more native reptile and amphibian species than any other Canadian National Park and has one of the top concentrations in the country for a number of species-at-risk including the Gray Ratsnake, Blanding's turtle and Least Bittern. For some species, such as Deerberry, the park is the only national park where they can be found.

The characteristics of Thousand Islands National Park's intersectional location makes it an exceptionally important north-south corridor for wildlife movement and gene flow. The park is the only ecologically intact connection between the Canadian Shield and the Adirondack Mountains, making it a key artery through the continentally significant Algonquin-to-Adirondack corridor.

Connected by the water, the Thousand Islands region has long been important to many Indigenous groups. As European exploration, trade and settlement expanded into the area, from the 1600's onwards, it became known for its natural beauty and tourism potential. The park also represents a rich cultural landscape of human activity. Many generations have connected to this place including pre-contact and contemporary Indigenous groups, military and trade route travellers, early islands settlers and farmers.

3.0 Planning Context

In the heart of the Thousand Islands, on traditional Haudenosaunee and Algonquin lands, Thousand Islands National Park consists of several mainland properties, 26 islands, and 89 islets and shoals. The properties extend across a 120 kilometre stretch along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario from Brockville to Prince Edward County. The park has visitor offers at three of its mainland properties: Landon Bay, Mallorytown Landing and Jones Creek. These hubs, featuring a variety of trails, a former church campground and recreation facility, oTENTiks, a visitor centre and an administration office, are situated on the Thousand Islands Parkway between Brockville and Gananoque. The vehicular and cycling parkway runs along the waterfront, parallel to the nearby Highway 401 and railway, approximately halfway between Toronto and Montreal. Visitors - with either their own or third party boat and kayak access - can enjoy docks, trails and diverse camping and accommodation offers at 20 island locations.

This management plan replaces the 2010 management plan for Thousand Islands National Park which provided direction for regional connection, working with Indigenous communities, and exploring new landscapes, markets and opportunities. Since 2010, Thousand Islands National Park has:

- improved the overall ecological integrity by engaging with partners, stakeholders, local landowners, volunteers and Indigenous partners. Outcomes include deer management, joint programming and youth programming, invasive species removal, prescribed fires, citizen science initiatives (bioblitzes, turtle boxes), a key Learn-to-Camp site, and native tree plantings.
- developed an ongoing relationship with the Mohawks of Akwesasne.

- taken steps to think more broadly and act on landscape level planning, to ensure that the artery of wildlife movement running north to south, does not get furthered pinched or severed.
- developed a Multi-species Action Plan, a commitment under the *Species At Risk Act* (SARA).
- improved the park's understanding of target markets and gathered more refined data for new island and mainland offers.
- established strong foundations to evolve from a state of being inward focussed to building relationships with various partners (e.g. environmental groups, steering committee, etc.).
- improved marine structures through the replacement of end-of-life-cycle crib docks with engineered floating docks.
- improved the mainland offers to reach new markets.
- undertaken new initiatives to increase access to islands for paddlers and campers.

A 2018 State of the Park assessment identified four themes that need to be addressed during the implementation of the next management plan: conservation management in a fragmented and highly-developed region; re-imagining the visitor experience; long-term asset sustainability; and regional brand awareness, support and partnering.

Ecological Integrity

Thousand Islands National Park is one of Canada's smallest and most bio-diverse national parks. It is surrounded by major east-west transportation corridors, urban development, intensive agriculture, and regulated water flows. While the predominant ecosystem of the park is forest, the freshwater shorelines and wetlands of the park are its defining ecological features and one of its most important conservation priorities. Of the nine species for which critical habitat is identified in the park, five occur in wetlands or along shorelines. Due to the park's size, many of these species at risk move outside of the park to complete portions of their life cycle. Therefore, engagement with Indigenous partners, regional conservation groups, local landowners, and volunteers is crucial to success in protecting the ecological integrity of the park and the broader corridor. Many of these partners and stakeholders work with Parks Canada on ecological restoration projects in the park such as hyper-abundant species management, invasive species removal, prescribed fires and native tree plantings. As challenges such as urbanization, ever increasing nearby transportation congestion, climate change, and ubiquitous invasive species grow, the park will need to continue to work closely with the network beyond its boundaries, to secure ecosystem resilience and protect critical natural corridors.

Cultural Resources

Within Thousand Islands National Park there are a number of cultural resources that warrant protection. Nineteen buildings are recognized by the Federal Heritage Building Review Office (FHBRO) and 109 archaeological sites have been identified to date. Some of these cultural resources (mainly archaeological sites) are at risk of damage or destruction, most notably by erosion and flooding at shoreline locations. These threats are expected to be exacerbated by the effects of climate change in coming years.

Visitor Experience

Almost 15 million Canadians and over 3.5 million Americans, live within a 3-hour drive of Thousand Islands National Park. The park is also located in the Great Waterway tourism region, which encompasses the entire Ontario portion of the St. Lawrence River, the city of Kingston and Prince Edward County. It is a popular destination that sees close to 8 million visitors each year. Further, over 35,000 vehicles pass by the park each day on Highway 401. The park's current annual visitation of 80,000 has the potential for considerable growth. It will be important to proactively plan for the capacity of infrastructure, and consider the sensitivity of ecosystem features to cumulative effects, as

new visitor experiences are developed at the park. Already, mainland visitation has doubled since 2013, while visitation to the islands has remained constant over the past decade. Many natural destinations across Ontario, representing escapes from the growing cities, are struggling to appropriately manage excess demand and all that entails.

The island geography of the park presents inherent difficulties for connecting visitors to the park. Historically, the park has been a boater's park, and, largely inaccessible for visitors who do not own boats. Most island visitors access the park with private vessels, although a small but growing number of visitors are paddling. However, an iconic immersive island experience is difficult for most. The park has undertaken the development of a visitor experience strategy that will result in a range of opportunities that appeal to market demand. Expanding experiences on the islands themselves, and finding ways to connect mainland visitors to the actual islands within this island park, will be a focus for this plan.

Asset Sustainability

In addition to the typical array of land-based assets such as administration buildings and visitor shelters, campgrounds, and trails, Thousand Islands National Park maintains over 60 docks and marine facilities that are critical to the visitor experience and park operations. These assets are vulnerable to the effects of climate change including extreme high and low water levels and significant weather events. Recent high water levels on Lake Ontario damaged most of these resources in one season. Marine facilities are also spread throughout the park along its 120km water route, at a high number of disjointed nodes, presenting challenges for operational efficiency.

Regional Brand Awareness, Support and Partnering

As a small part of a much larger regional tourism industry, Thousand Islands National Park lacks brand awareness, or has brand confusion with other organizations such as the St Lawrence Parks Commission. Increased awareness and distinct branding will ensure that visitors, potential partners and stakeholders are aware of the national significance of the park, Parks Canada's role in managing it and of new developments and experiences as they come into play.

The park has a well-established relationship with the Mohawk community of Akwesasne, located approximately 100km to the east and regular quarterly meetings are held with representatives of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. Areas of collaboration include species-at-risk inventory, medicinal plant collection, hyper-abundant deer management and National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations. The park is working on deepening this relationship into employment and other opportunities and strengthening relationships with other Indigenous communities.

The park also maintains strong working relationships with several regional conservation organizations including the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network, the Algonquin to Adirondack Collaborative, and the Thousands Islands Watershed Land Trust.

4.0 Vision

Thousand Islands National Park is a natural oasis on the shores of a busy world. It is a living model of collaboration, respect for partners, and honour for the land and water that sustain all life. A place of connection for thousands of years, and for thousands of years to come.

In 10-15 years, Thousand Islands National Park will:

- Continue to protect a treasured area right next to three of Canada's largest urban centres.
- Improve ecological connectivity in the continentally-significant Algonquin-to-Adirondack corridor through strong partnerships, land stewardship and a regional conservation strategy.
- Offer an exceptional day use program that is accessible to all visitors, including those who do not own boats.
- Promote and provide immersive and experiential programs that connect visitors with the unique ecology of the area and rich cultures of Indigenous peoples.
- Collaborate respectfully with Indigenous partners to provide visitor experience and conservation initiatives throughout the park.
- Reconfigure docks and other assets with designs that respond to changing trends, improve efficiency and are resilient to climate change.
- Be recognised as a national park in the region through strong engagement with regional partners and more strategic promotional and outreach activities.
- Build strong relationships with partners in the region, working together to reverse harm and adapt to ecosystem change.

Long regarded as a sacred area by local Indigenous groups, Thousand Islands National Park is a place where all Canadians can connect with rich Indigenous history and experience living and vibrant Indigenous cultures. Just as the Great Peacemaker brought the Haudenosaunee peoples together centuries ago, Thousand Islands National Park continues to forge diverse connections among landscapes, wildlife, and people.

Where the waters of the St. Lawrence River cross the ancient granite ridges of the Frontenac Arch, Thousand Islands National Park provides a critical artery in a continentally significant ecological corridor and a refuge for one of the most diverse arrays of species anywhere in Canada. Here, partners come together to join in conservation efforts that build connectivity across the broader landscape and ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The park is an accessible and inviting place where youth, families, new and urban Canadians share in the experience and enjoyment of the park's picturesque islands and secluded bays, and find their own personal connections to the natural world.

5.0 Key Strategies

Four strategies frame the management direction for Thousand Islands National Park for the next ten years. The strategies and corresponding objectives and targets lay out a roadmap for achieving the vision for the park through an integrated approach to park management.

Key Strategy 1: Working together to achieve conservation goals in a fragmented and developed landscape.

Given the fragmented nature of the park, positive conservation outcomes for the park and for the region will not be possible without collaborative relationships with a range of partners. Rethinking a focus on Parks Canada Agency lands versus a collective landscape will shape many future approaches. Partners will appreciate the leadership shown by Parks Canada in conservation efforts in and beyond the boundaries of the park. Parks Canada will find near-term, encouraging wins and reasons to celebrate while forming actions and strategies for the long haul. The park and Indigenous partners will continue to work together to maintain an active connection to lands, and to encourage involvement in the ecological management of the park.

Objective 1.1: Ecological connectivity between the park and the broader landscape is maintained and improved through strong partnerships.

Targets:

- By 2025, a landscape connectivity and stewardship strategy is implemented to increase protection of natural areas in the region.
- With the best available science and traditional knowledge, Parks Canada and partners are actively identifying, prioritizing and protecting ecologically important lands.
- By 2025, Parks Canada has begun working with partners and levels of government towards a plan to mitigate the impact on connectivity created by Highway 401.
- The park is contributing to Regional Conservation Action Plans developed by partner organizations.

Objective 1.2: Ecological integrity of Thousand Islands National Park is maintained and improved.

Targets:

- By 2030, key ecosystems of the park maintain their fair/good condition ratings:
 - Forest and Wetland indicators maintain their good condition.
 - Freshwater indicators maintain their fair condition rating.
- Indigenous partners are actively involved in the ecological management in the park.
- By 2030, ecological integrity is improved through active management projects such as prescribed fire, invasive species management, hyper-abundant species management, and road mortality mitigation.
- By 2030, levels of riparian disturbance are equal to or less than 2016 baseline levels.

Objective 1.3: Species-at-risk and their habitat are protected through the Multi-Species at risk Action Plan for Thousand Islands National Park.

Targets:

- Recovery actions identified in the Multi-species at risk Action Plan are completed.
- Population and distribution monitoring objectives identified in the Multi-species at risk Action Plan are met.
- Monitoring and protection measures are in place for new species-at-risk identified during the life of this management plan.

- Before 2030, new outreach and interpretive experiences are integrated into appropriate park nodes, focusing on species-at-risk, road mortality, park ecology and biodiversity. This will result in visitors having a greater understanding of species-at-risk and their changing habitats, instilling wonder and a stewardship ethic.

Objective 1.4: Boundary encroachment impacts are reduced.

Targets:

- By 2025, the amount of boundary encroachment is reduced in comparison to the 2020 baseline.
- By 2030, park boundaries are clearly defined using various tools (e.g. communications, signs, fences, etc.) to limit impacts of encroachment.

Key strategy 2: Re-imagining the Thousand Islands National Park experience.

While achieving conservation goals, the park will continue to offer diversified and interpretive experiences that encourage exploration and learning opportunities to help protect the park. The park will develop new experiences that immerse both island and mainland visitors in the unique ecology of the area and the rich cultures of Indigenous peoples. In so doing, Parks Canada will take advantage of its proximity to Highway 401, to the railway and to the major urban centres of Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa to connect target markets (e.g. youth, new Canadians, and urban-dwellers) to this special place. Visitor Use Management Frameworks (VUMF) will continue to ensure safe and unforgettable experiences in ways that leave Thousand Islands National Park unimpaired for future generations. The visitor experience strategy being undertaken will refine target markets for the park and result in a range of offers appealing to them.

Objective 2.1: Accessibility is improved to all visitors and strong personal connections to the raison d'être of Thousand Islands National Park are forged.

Targets:

- By 2025, new and diversified accommodation offers are available on mainland properties.
- By 2025, new 'gateway experiences' to attract short-stop visits are developed in the park.
- By 2030, a high quality island day-use experience is offered to visitors who do not own boats, connecting them to the unique attributes of the park.
- By 2025, administrative aspects of the visitor experience such as reservations and fee collection are modernized and improved.
- By 2030, a representative portion of island and mainland experiences are available to visitors with mobility challenges.

Objective 2.2: Unique and immersive 'only at Parks Canada' experiences are facilitated. Deeply enjoyable experiences are created and strong personal connections to the conservation aspirations of Thousand Islands National Park are forged.

Targets:

- By 2030, immersive and experiential programs are in place that engage visitors to discover the park's important ecological features such as the St. Lawrence River, Frontenac Arch, boreal forest, eastern deciduous forest and wetlands.
- Welcome nodes and messages are designed for a sense of arrival and passage into important ecological areas.
- The 2028 Visitor Information Program shows that:
 - At least 90% of visitors enjoy their visit.
 - At least 85% of visitors consider the park meaningful to them.
 - Participation of island visitors in interpretive programs has increased by 10%.

- Sixty percent of boaters, and overall visitors, entering through controlled park hubs, report that they have learned something about the natural and cultural heritage of the park.
- Connection to the park is maintained through the active use of social media (web and followers) and visits on the Thousand Islands National Park webpage increases by 10% per year.
- Programs, infrastructure and special events are developed that showcase the confluence of important ecological features such as the St. Lawrence River, Frontenac Arch, boreal forest, eastern deciduous forest, and wetlands.

Objective 2.3: Visitor experiences are enhanced as visitors discover Thousand Islands National Park as a place of Indigenous cultures and histories.

Targets:

- By 2025, new programs and products highlighting Indigenous cultures and the essence of place are developed in collaboration with Indigenous partners.
- By 2030, Indigenous language is prominent on park signage through a graduated signage replacement plan.
- By 2030, all visitors have a minimum awareness of regional Indigenous and treaty history. For others, deeper learning experiences and programming is available.

Objective 2.4: Visitor Use Management planning is employed to provide safe and quality visitor experience while maintaining resource protection and optimal use of assets.

Targets:

- By 2025, a Visitor Use Management Framework is in place that ensures future growth in visitation is sustainable.
- By 2030, a Cultural Resource Values Statement is completed.

Key strategy 3: Building resilience and sustainability of assets

Thousand Islands National Park will modernize its asset base, from its eclectic mix of antiquated facilities towards unified design aesthetics and elements that support the park's conservation and visitor experience objectives. As assets are replaced and repaired, they will: be adaptable and purpose-built to fulfil changing visitor needs; be resilient to the effects of climate change; and maximize operational efficiency. Principles of green design will be considered for all infrastructure development to ensure the protection of this small and highly-valued park.

Objective 3.1: Assets are built and repaired to support outstanding visitor experiences and operational efficiency.

Targets:

- By 2025, new visitor facilities and experiences which appeal to target markets are developed at Landon Bay and Mallorytown Landing.
- By 2030, mainland trail networks are improved to support a premiere hiking experience for target markets.
- Marine infrastructure is resilient to climate change, addresses changing trends in boating, and promotes ecosystem protection and operational efficiency.
- By 2030, modernize and improve the office and administration complexes.

Objective 3.2: Assets are planned, designed and maintained for resilience and long-term sustainability.

Targets:

- By 2025, preventative maintenance plans are in place for all assets.
- By 2030, built assets indicators (buildings, roads, marine structures and visitor facilities) maintain a minimum of fair condition.

- All new and replacement assets are located, planned, and designed to be resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Principles of green design are used for all new and replacement assets (e.g. minimizing footprint, using lower impact technologies and materials).
- By 2030, excess infrastructure, such as rundown buildings, is eliminated and those sites are restored or repurposed.

Key strategy 4: Recognising the value of Thousand Islands National Park

This strategy aims to improve Parks Canada's regional brand awareness and highlight its role in managing Thousand Islands National Park. Stronger engagement with regional partners, and more strategic promotional and outreach activities will result in better differentiation between the park and other regional tourism offers. Greater involvement of Indigenous partners in the park will help to highlight its cultural significance, and build awareness of the Indigenous and treaty history of the area. All of this work will help to solidify Parks Canada's reputation as a leader in conservation, visitor experience, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Objective 4.1: Indigenous involvement in Thousand Islands National Park is increased.

Targets:

- By 2025, existing relationships with Indigenous groups are formalised and deepened through more meaningful and valued outcomes.
- Relationship-building efforts are increased with other local Indigenous groups.
- Parks Canada continues to meet regularly with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and their employees to discuss various aspects of park management.
- Parks Canada continues to collaborate with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the Mohawk Nation of Chiefs on conservation initiatives such as species-at-risk inventories, wetland conservation, and deer herd reduction.
- By 2025, joint employment and tourism opportunities are explored and implemented with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne.

Objective 4.2: Parks Canada's regional brand awareness is improved through strategic outreach, promotional activities and strengthened partnerships.

Targets:

- By 2022, the informal steering committee is guided into a formal advisory committee with documented aims and terms of reference.
- By 2025, opportunities are explored for a Co-operating Association, alongside the expanded visitor offerings.
- By 2030, the number of volunteer opportunities and/or volunteer numbers per program show increasing trends. Volunteers having great experiences transform into park ambassadors.
- Participation in outreach events increases, targeting youth and urban dwellers. Parks Canada stays in touch with participants and they become visitors with calls to action.
- Parks Canada finds partners for mutually beneficial cross-promotion and packaged experiences.

Objective 4.3: Proximity to the 401 corridor and the Nation's Capital is leveraged to continue to offer a high quality experiences that showcase the special characteristics of Thousand Islands National Park.

Targets:

- By 2030, all travellers on Highway 401 know when they are in the biosphere, a critical corridor, and that they are passing next to Thousand Islands National Park (e.g. Signage and features).
- By 2030, the park becomes a learning hub for Federal employees to experience the programs Parks Canada has to offer.
- By 2028, there is an increase in visitation from the National Capital Region.

6.0 Management Areas

In support of the four key strategies, this section presents detailed objectives for specific locations within Thousand Islands National Park. The four strategies mentioned previously (e.g. achieving conservation goals) applies to the heritage place as a whole including these distinct geographic areas mentioned below.

Mainland Properties:

The mainland properties of Thousand Islands National Park contain three distinct visitor nodes: Landon Bay, Mallorytown Landing and Jones Creek. Gananoque, while not having any park owned properties, could be a future launching pad for park visitors to get access to the islands. A welcoming storefront or mobile, pop-up unit may form part of that offer. These properties and the town of Gananoque are linked by the 1000 Islands Parkway that follows the river's edge and is connected at both ends to Highway 401, making these locations easily accessible to visitors travelling by car. These nodes will be a main focus in the next ten years for improving the mainland visitor experience. New facilities, products and programs will be developed that meet the park's objectives to connect to target markets (e.g. youth, new Canadians, and urban dwellers).

Landon Bay:

- Located north and adjacent to the parkway, Landon Bay is in a strategic location. It has the best high altitude natural lookout in the region and accessible vistas of the islands scattered in the St. Lawrence River. For decades this site had been used as a church camp, commercial family campground and still has a swimming pool and community programs. Planning is underway to incorporate these holdings into Parks Canada and finalize visitor offer developments and ecosystem management and protection.

Mallorytown Landing:

- Located south and immediately adjacent to the parkway and river, Mallorytown Landing provides for a more intimate river experience. It will continue to be the primary point where park visitors can access the St. Lawrence River, with its waterfront picnic areas, boat launch and oTENTiks.

Objectives:

- A holistic and integrated visitor experience offer is developed that ties Landon Bay together with Mallorytown Landing and respects the following guiding principles:
 - Immersive experiences are provided that connect Canadians to nature.
 - The rich cultures and histories of Indigenous peoples are integrated.
 - Ecological integrity improvements are incorporated into plans and impacts on the ecological integrity of ecosystems is limited.
 - Species-at-risk are protected and habitat connectivity is promoted.
 - Partnerships and learning opportunities are favoured.
 - Sustainable, innovative and “green” design is incorporated.
 - Accessibility and inclusivity is promoted.
 - Awareness of Thousand Islands National Park as a Parks Canada place is improved.
- The Landon Bay features, including the best cliff-edged viewpoint in Thousand Islands, is leveraged and made available to visitors.

- New built assets will have a multi-purpose use (e.g. as a shelter, a gathering place, an interpretive space) to support new target markets.
- The 40km adjacent parkway is leveraged with partners for a suite of mainland experiences such as bike rentals, day long itineraries, fitness events.

Jones Creek:

The Jones Creek trails provide a hiking experience through a small slice of accessible wilderness with a wetland complex and rocky terrain typical of the Frontenac Arch. Trail upgrades will be made that improve the visitor experience and maintain ecological integrity.

Objective:

The Jones Creek trail system is improved to provide one of the best hiking experiences in Eastern Ontario.

Island Properties in the St. Lawrence River

While the park's 20 island-based visitor nodes can be accessed by boaters from anywhere on the river, Mallorytown Landing will continue to be a key port of entry with its boat launch and trailer parking. It is anticipated that the large tourism hub of Gananoque will also become a gateway to the islands, via future third party offers that bring visitors to the Admiralty group of islands. Islands will be managed according to their features and benefits for visitors, ecosystem health, vulnerabilities and cultural and spiritual considerations. They will support the following offers:

Full-service offer: This offer accommodates high visitation and provides high level of service that includes garbage collection, boat generator use, dock space and some wheelchair accessibility. It currently applies to areas such as Grenadier Central and other key boater hubs. This offer typically attracts private boaters who tie up at park docks.

Basic offer: This offer provides a peaceful experience in a more natural setting and significantly lower noise levels. Services include composting toilets, a pack-in and pack-out policy for garbage, primitive camping sites, no generator use, smaller docks, and mooring buoys where appropriate. It currently applies to islands distributed across a number of areas such as Gordon Island. This offer typically attracts private boat-owners seeking a more natural experience, and campers arriving by private boat, kayak/canoe, or water taxi.

Paddle-only offer: This offer provides the same peaceful, natural setting and basic facilities included in the Basic offer, but for paddling and beaching access only. This offer does not currently exist in the suite of island offers at Thousand Islands National Park, but future sites may include parts of Mulcaster or Aubrey islands.

Day-use offer: This offer provides a day-use boat transit, swimming, picnicking experience to visitors who do not own boats. Transportation to and from the island(s) must therefore be facilitated by Parks Canada or a third party operator. A node within the Admiralty Islands group will be the likely landing spot for the island day-use experience, with the best available swimming, most suitable features and the iconic cloistered viewscapes of the incomparable 1000 islands. Through previous planning work, Thwartway Island has been identified as an optimal location. In recent years, the 'Island Explorer', a day-use program for school groups has been run at Georgina island. The Island Explorer program will continue into the future.

Objectives:

- By 2025, a system is in place that facilitates better management and access to docks and islands (e.g. reserveable dock spaces, updated length of stay policies, updated seasons pass policies, etc.).
- By 2025, an exceptional island day-use experience is available to visitors who do not own boats as result of the implementation of the new visitor experience strategy.

Stovin, Cedar, and Milton Islands

These islands exist outside of the main groupings of islands within the park. Stovin Island is in Brockville while Cedar and Milton Islands are within a stone's throw of Fort Henry National Historic Site in Kingston. Because of their distance from other park operations, they present unique operational challenges. Cedar Island hosts the Cathcart Martello Tower, part of the UNESCO world heritage site/Kingston Fortifications National Historic Site. The offer at these islands will therefore continue to follow the basic model. Further, opportunities will be explored to work with partners and/or volunteers to operate these islands more efficiently, or under license.

Yorkshire and Main Duck Islands

These two islands are links in a chain of islands in eastern Lake Ontario that stretches from Prince Edward Point near Picton, Ontario, to Stony Point, New York. They are the most distant islands from Thousand Islands National Park's base of operations. Given their remoteness, they attract far fewer visitors than other areas of the park, although they are a destination for some boaters. Operations on these islands focus on resource management, with some basic visitor facilities that include a dock and single composting toilet at School House Bay, and a primitive hiking trail between the dock area and the Canadian Coast Guard lighthouse at Southwest end of the island. There are a number of unused buildings on Main Duck Island that will be removed during this planning cycle.

Objectives:

- Partners and/or volunteers are involved in the operation and maintenance of Yorkshire and Main Duck islands.
- Main Duck Island is managed to protect critical habitat for species-at-risk, and the impact of invasive and hyperabundant species is minimized.
- By 2030, excess infrastructure is eliminated from Main Duck Island.
- Ecological integrity is monitored and species-at-risk recovery activities are implemented.

Skoryna Nature Reserve

The Skoryna Nature Reserve is located approximately 50 km to the north of the main body of the park. Part of the property is within a regionally significant "Area of Natural and Scientific Interest" (ANSI) and the south-east portion borders on an important wetland. The ecological significance of this site is its combination of habitats, including forest cover and wetlands. There are no visitor facilities on this property and public access is difficult.

Objectives:

- Partners and/or volunteers are involved in the operation and maintenance of Skoryna Nature Reserve.

7.0 Zoning

Parks Canada's national park zoning system is an integrated approach to the classification of land and water areas in a national park and designates where particular activities can occur on land or water based on the ability to support those uses. The zoning system has five categories:

- Zone I - Special Preservation;
- Zone II - Wilderness;
- Zone III - Natural Environment;
- Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation; and
- Zone V - Park Services.

The zoning plan for the park is illustrated on Maps 3 to 12. The park zones apply to all areas of the park.

Zoning will help support the park vision by directing visitor use to appropriate areas of the park, and ensuring that rare, sensitive ecological or cultural areas are protected.

Changes have been made to zoning to contribute to improving ecological connectivity, to reflect contemporary use and to enhance visitor experiences. These amendments from the 2010 management plan include:

- Increase in zone I areas to improve ecological connectivity, preserve interior forests, and protect species at risk critical habitat areas.
- The addition of new zone I areas as a result of new knowledge on species-at-risk and recent discoveries of significant areas (e.g. wetland complex at Lees Pond), forest habitat (notably Jones Creek, Landon Bay).
- Zone IV and V areas at Landon Bay, Jones Creek, Mallorytown Landing, Hill Island, were adjusted to reflect existing use of the areas, infrastructure in place and planned visitor opportunities.
- Zone III areas were adjusted and added in areas such as Thwartway Island, Gordon Island and Lindsay Island to reflect current and future visitor use.
- Several new properties and islets were acquired since 2010 and minor adjustments as a result of surveyed boundary connections were required.

Zone I – Special Preservation Area

Zone I is applied to areas of the park that are among the best examples of the features that represent the natural region, or that support outstanding or rare natural or cultural features. This zone offers the highest level of protection. This zone may also be used to protect areas that are too sensitive to accommodate facility development or large numbers of visitors. Within Zone I areas, preservation is the primary management consideration. Motorized access and circulation is not permitted. Natural features may be interpreted off-site.

There are 18 Zone I areas encompassing a total area of 7.1 km² representing 28.1% of park lands. These areas provide a high level of protection for sensitive and representative features such as multiple species at risk habitats, rock barrens, provincially significant wetlands, archeological sites, mature old growth forests and rare floral communities.

Zone II – Wilderness Area

Zone II wilderness areas are meant to protect representative natural landscapes where visitors can experience nature with minimal human intrusion or facilities. The visitor experience in these areas is focused on self-propelled activities. No motorized access or circulation is permitted.

There are 154 Zone II wilderness areas totalling 16.5 km² representing 65.4% of all park lands. These Zone II areas encompass islands and undeveloped mainland properties that may have significant ecological and species at risk habitats but which can support rudimentary visitor facilities that include docks, trails, primitive campsites and composting toilets.

Zone III – Natural Environment Area

Zone III areas are managed as natural environments that are capable of supporting a range of visitor experiences. These areas enable visitors to enjoy and learn about the park's natural and cultural features through outdoor recreational and educational activities requiring minimal facilities and services.

There are 14 Zone III areas that encompass a total area of 1.8 km² or 7.0% of the park. Most of the park hiking trails, many of the interpretive signs, oTENTIKs on islands and many of the facilities such as composting toilets and shelters are located within Zone III areas.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

The Zone IV designation is applied to limited areas that are capable of supporting more intensive visitor use and major facilities. These zones provide direct access by motorized vehicles.

The Zone IV areas include: all paved roads, parking lots, campgrounds, etc. These areas encompass 0.4 km² or 1.7% of all park lands.

Zone V – Park Services

This zone applies to operation, maintenance and administrative facilities. There are three of these zones in the park and they encompass 0.06 km² or 0.2% of all park lands.

Environmentally and Culturally Sensitive Sites

Thousand Islands National Park has a number of natural and cultural resources that warrant protection but may be small in extent, are located within visitor use areas or are of somewhat lesser significance than the valued resources in Zone 1. Designation of an environmentally (ESS) and culturally (CSS) sensitive site provides a means by which these resources can be protected without completely restricting other park uses in the area. The protection required for each designation is determined through an assessment of the sensitivity of the resource. Several sensitivities considered in these areas include a number of species at risk or provincially rare flora populations, species at risk fauna habitat (including nesting and hibernating areas), rare geological areas, numerous culturally significant and archaeological sites and FHBRO classified or recognised heritage structures. These sensitive sites are found on 18 islands and 3 mainland properties throughout Thousand Islands National Park. As new information on park resources is obtained, it may be necessary to refine the boundaries of sensitive sites or to identify new ones. If necessary, this designation may be removed from some sites. Changes to sites under this designation will not require a revision to the management plan.

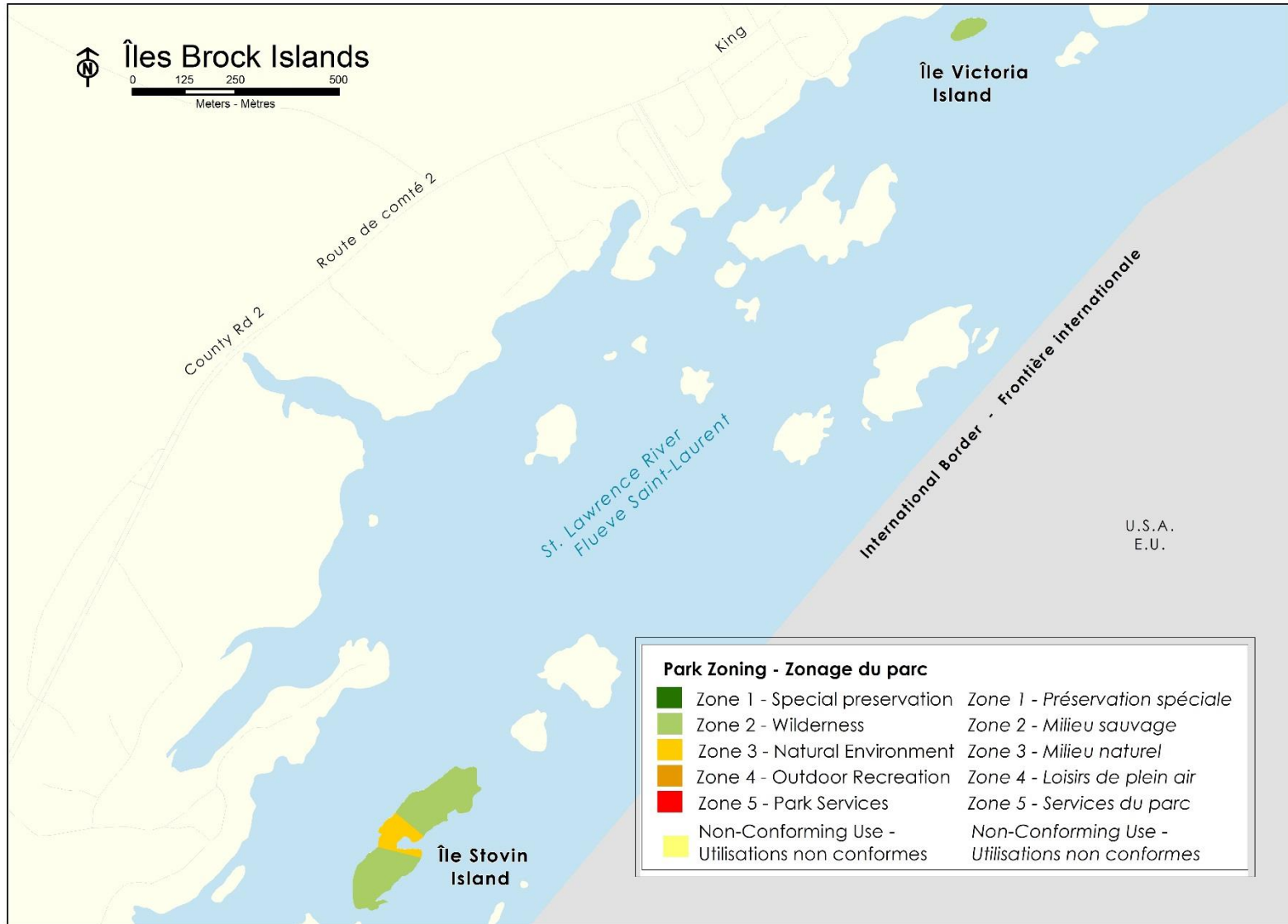
A Special Note on Landscape Planning

Land management within the park and priority areas outside the park will be based on the best available science and collaborative efforts with partners. Land use decisions will be adaptive as new information or conditions emerge. As a result of adaptive decision-making, certain areas may need stronger protections in the future and a reduced footprint. Other areas may need temporary restrictions for restoration activities or for climate change mitigations to take place. Parks Canada will manage these changes, and be transparent and proactive in its communications and engagement on these types of changes.

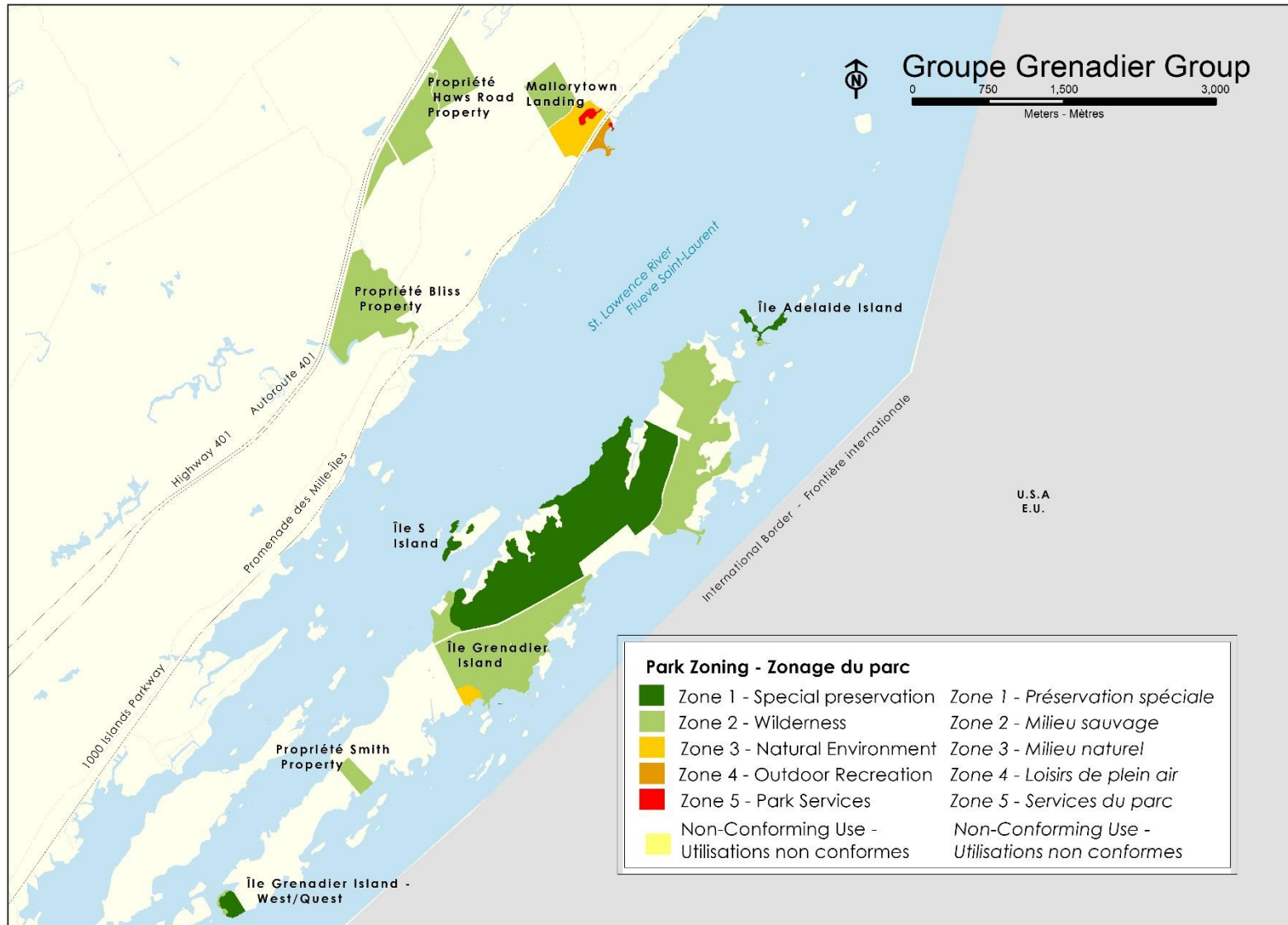
Non-Conforming Uses

An inappropriate use within a Zone is termed a non-conforming use. There are three types of non-conforming use at Thousand Islands National Park: bridge easements; road right-of-ways; and utility lines. The Thousand Islands International Bridge spans Constance and Georgina islands. The Thousand Islands Bridge Authority, by agreement with Parks Canada, maintains a cleared right-of-way under the bridge. This right-of-way is at variance with the Zone II designation of both Constance and Georgina islands. In order to minimize future impacts, consultations will be held with the bridge authority to establish guidelines for managing the natural resources along the right-of-way. There are three roads on Hill Island that are owned by the park but have access easements by private property owners. These are Skydeck, Blacksnake, and Park Hill Lane. They do not conform to the adjacent Zone I and II designations. There are also about 15 km of utility lines forming a total of 12.1 ha across the park. The lines service both park and adjacent facilities and are long-standing utilities, or were included in previous land transfers. Where possible, the park supports decommissioning these lines when they are no longer needed.

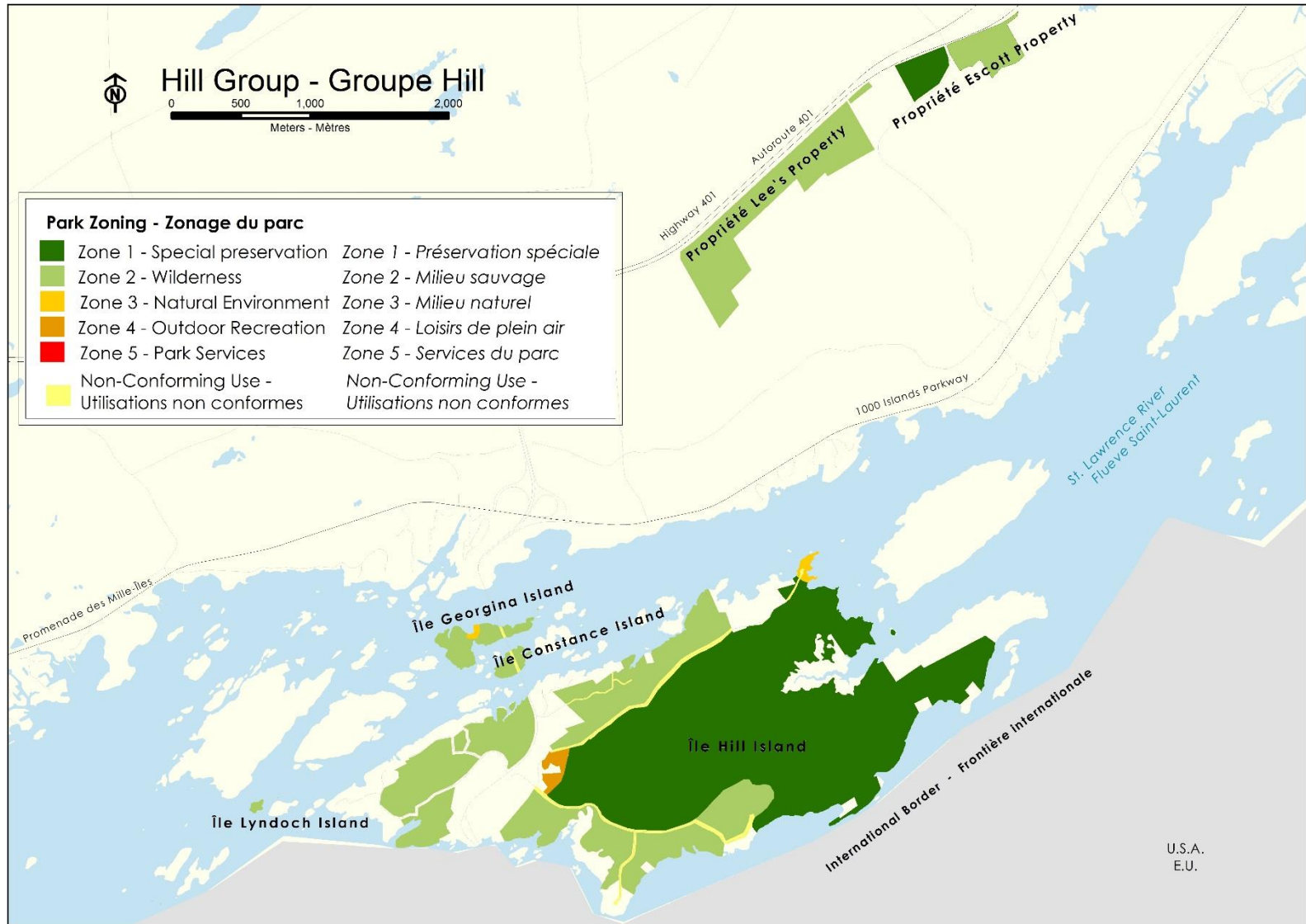
Map 3: Brock Islands



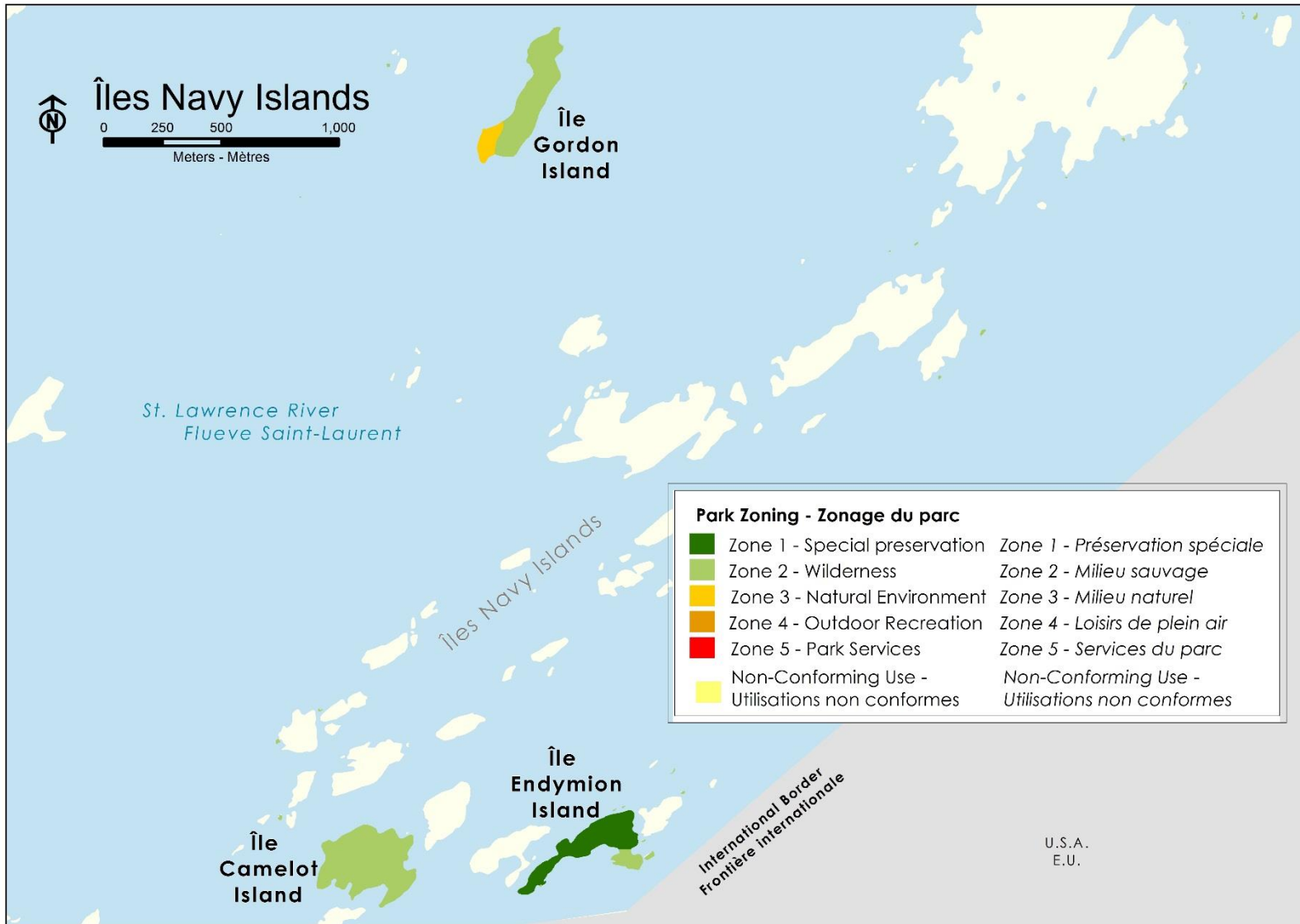
Map 4: Grenadier Group



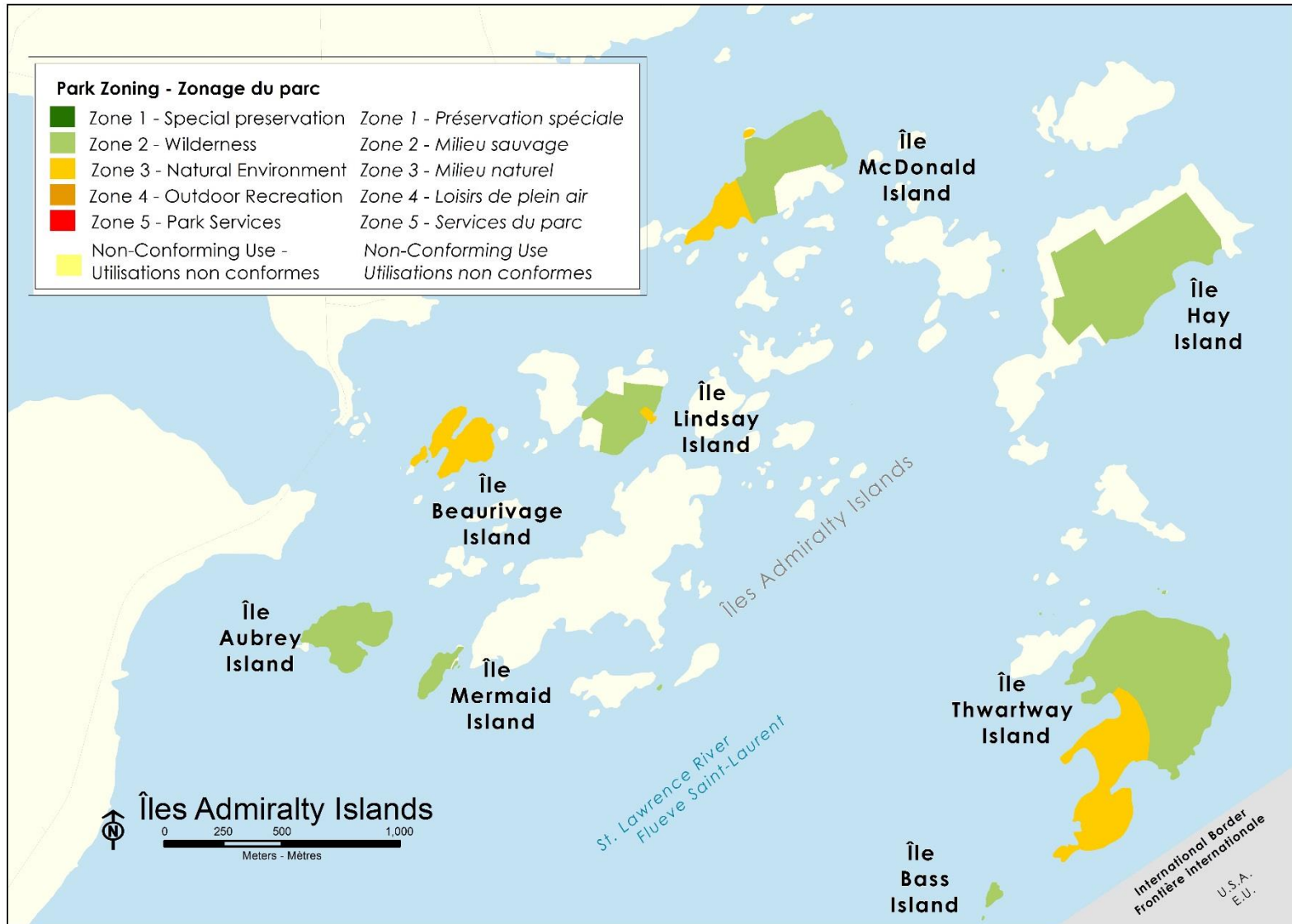
Map 5: Hill Group



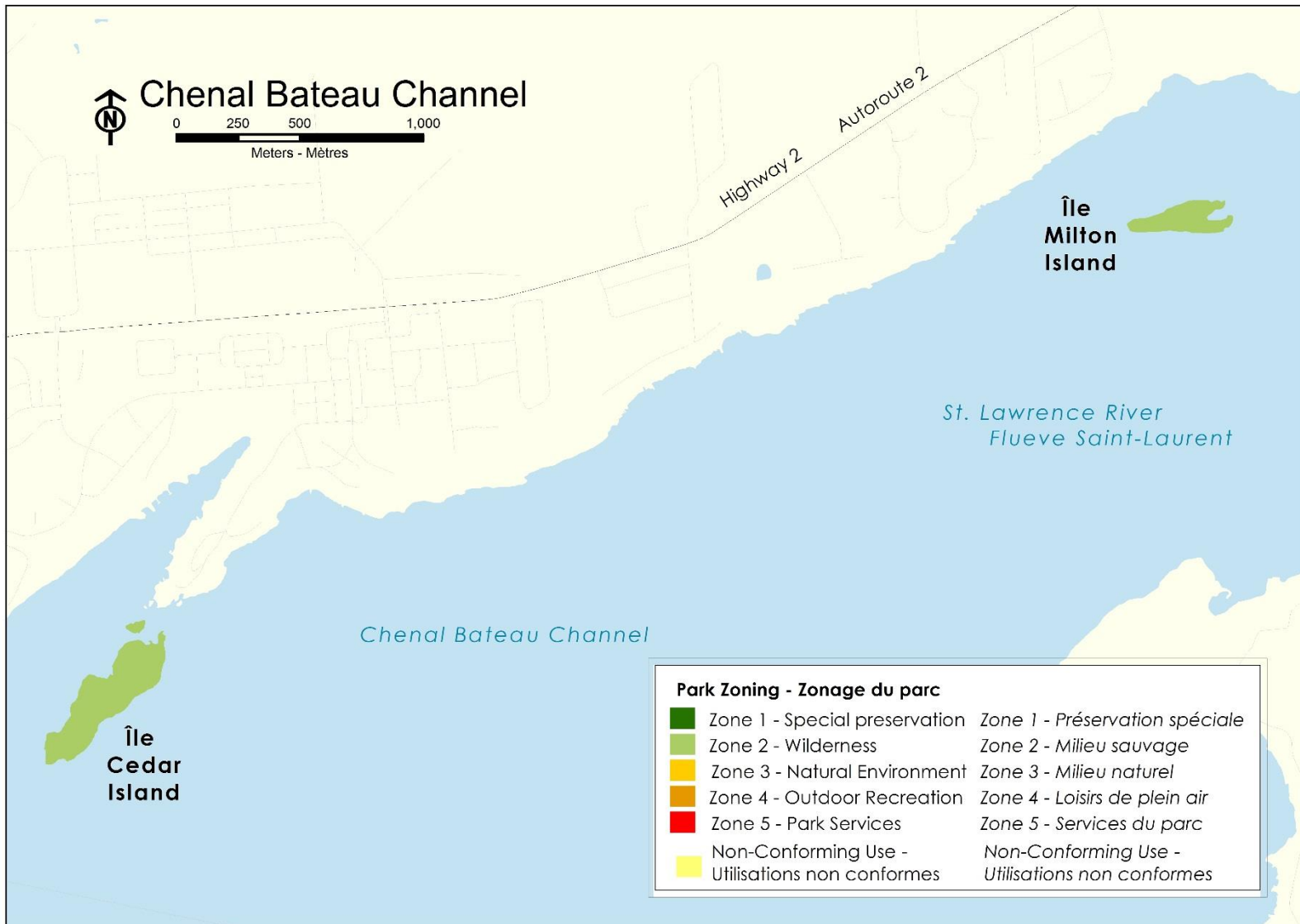
Map 6: Navy Islands



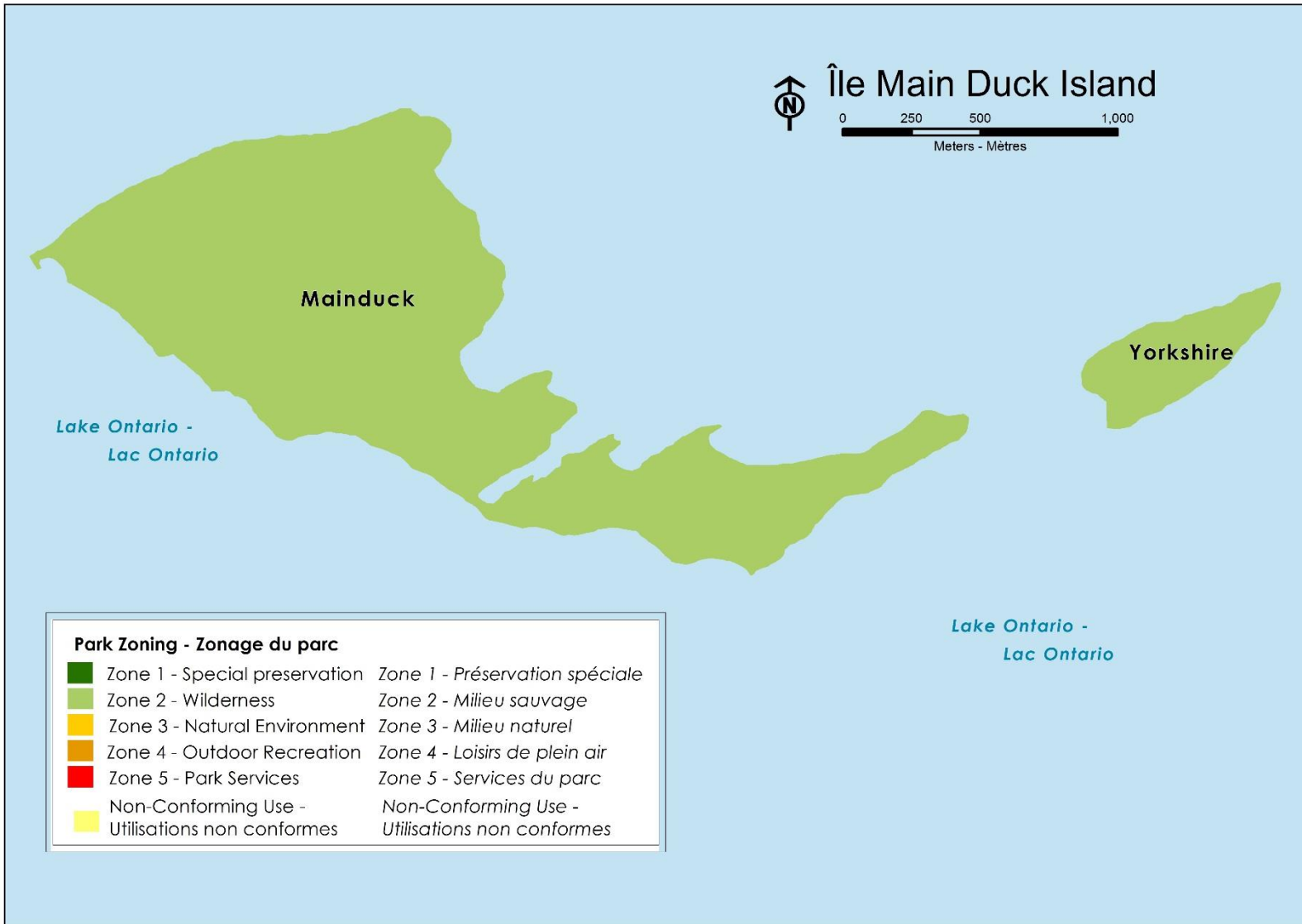
Map 7: Admiralty Islands



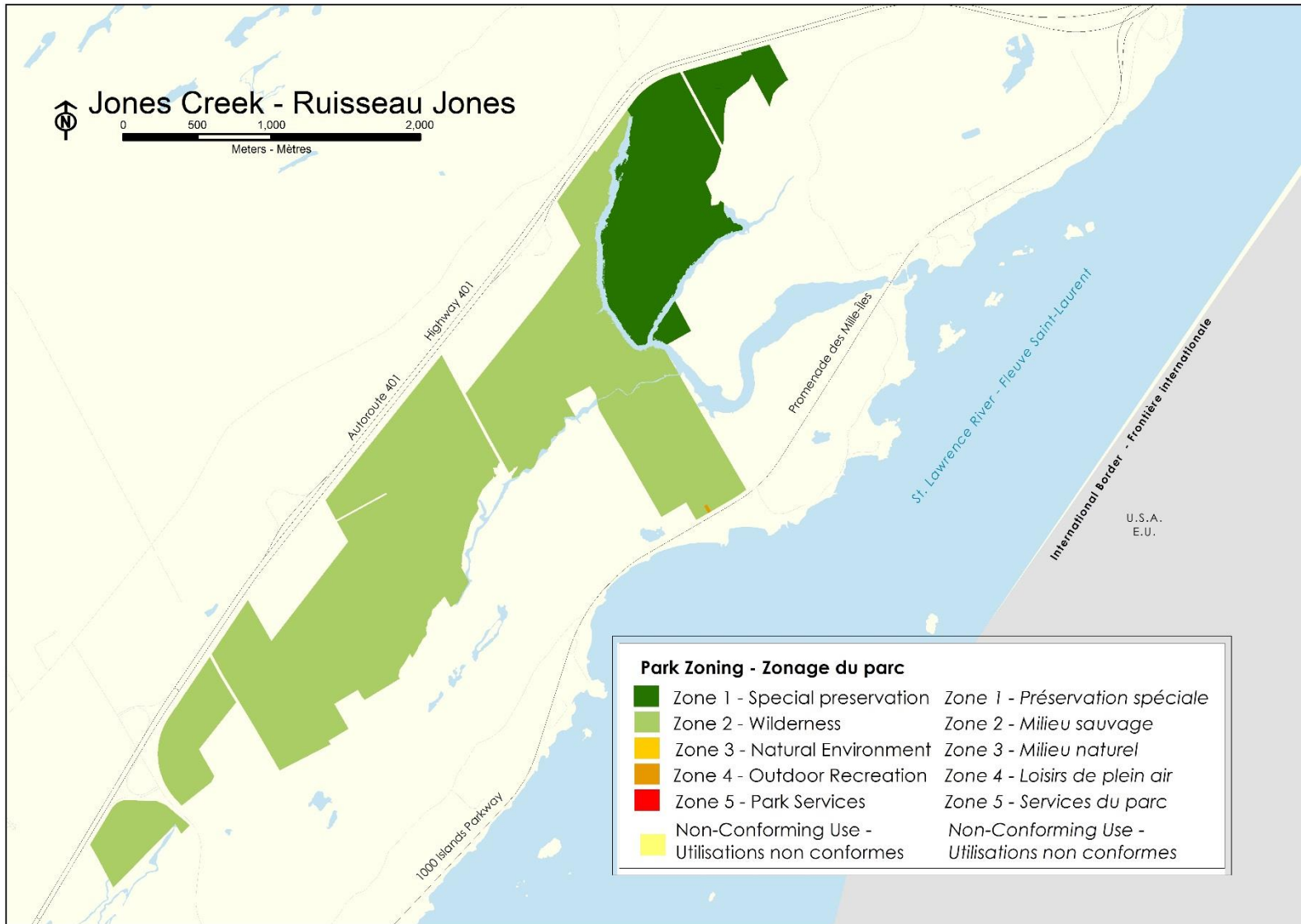
Map 8: Bateau Channel



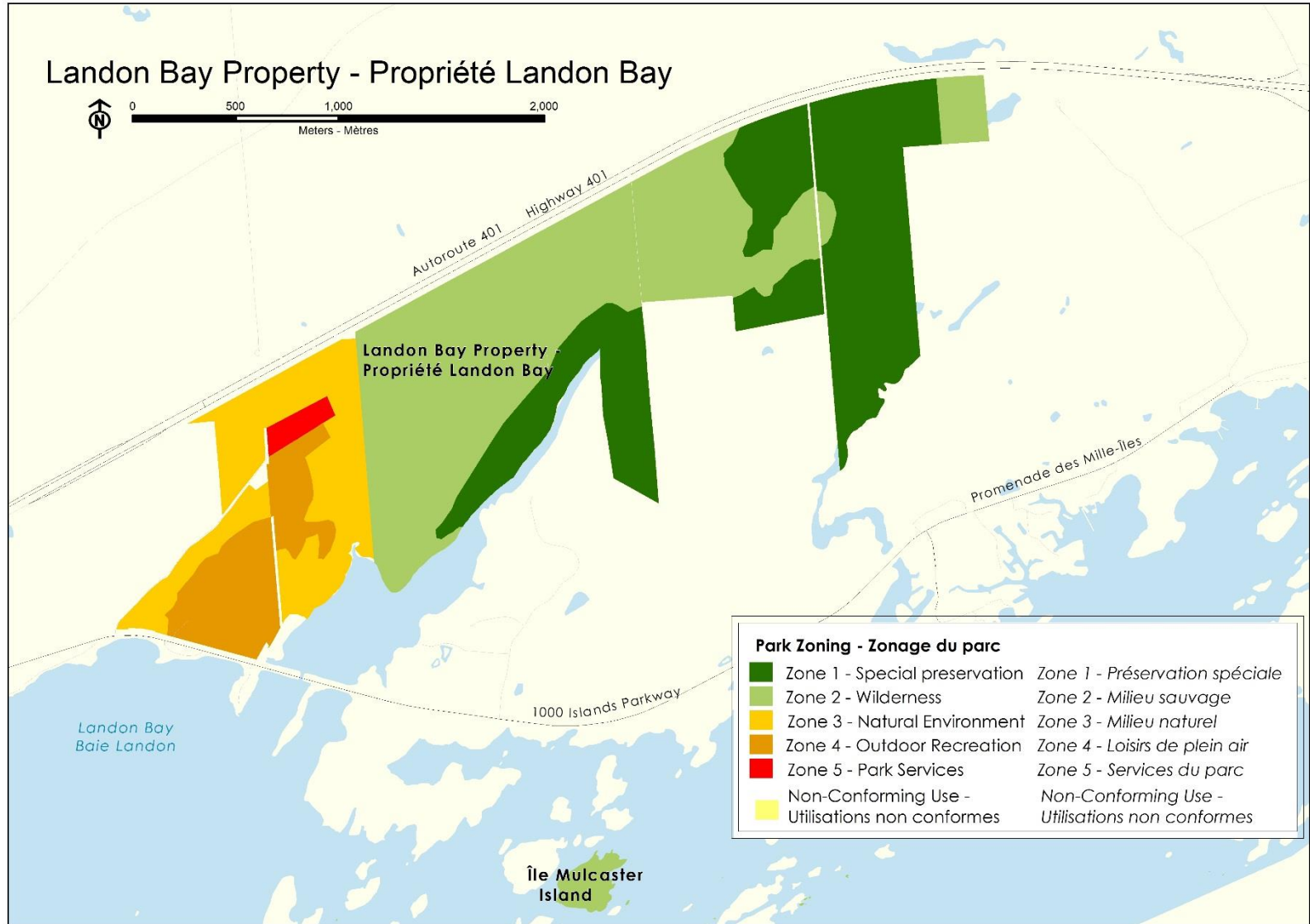
Map 9: Main Duck Islands



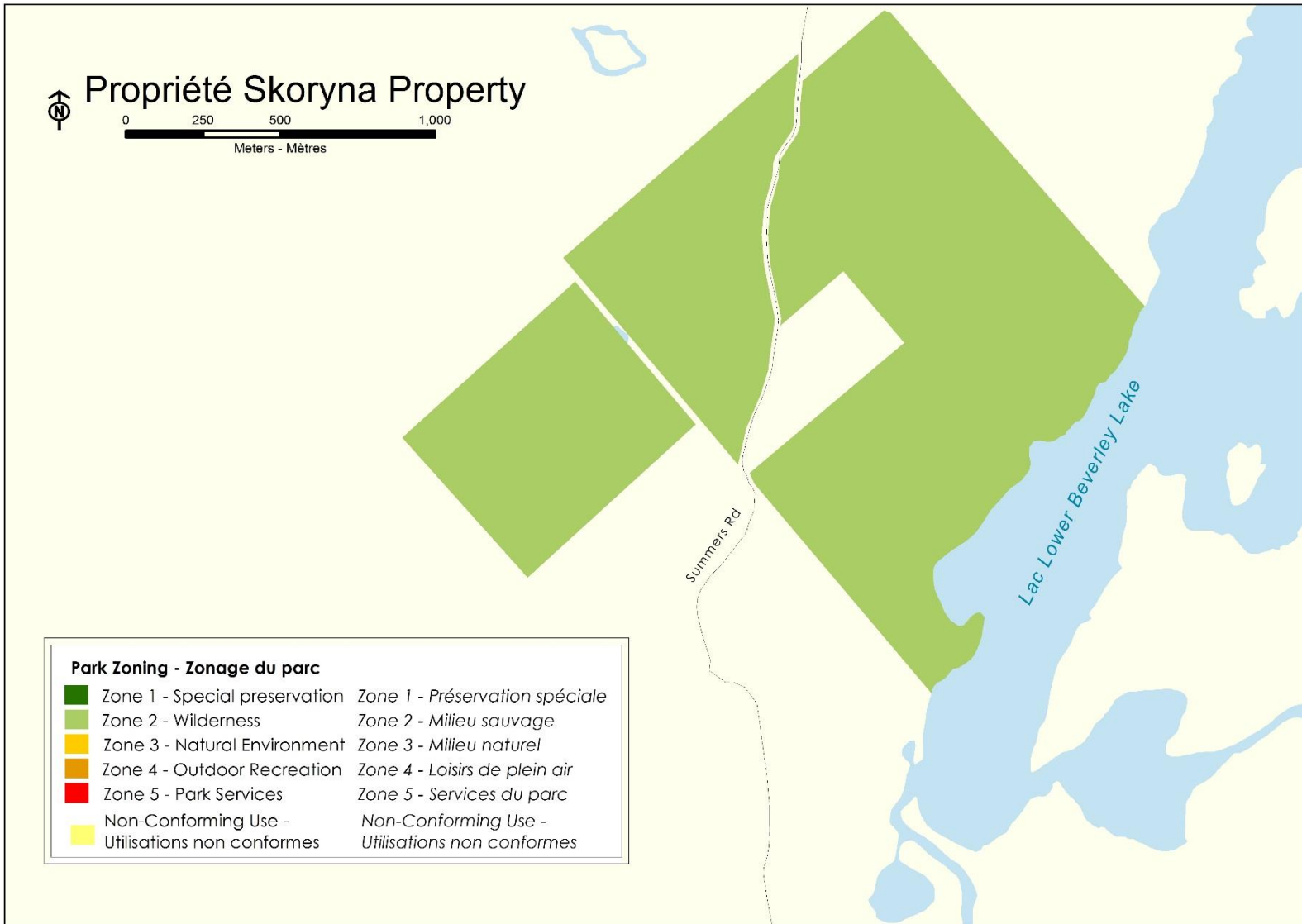
Map 10: Jones Creek



Map 11: Landon Bay Property



Map 12: Skoryna Property



8.0 Summary of Strategic Environmental Assessment

In accordance with The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2010), a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was conducted on the Thousand Islands National Park of Canada Management Plan. The purpose of SEA is to incorporate environmental considerations into the development of public policies, plans, and program proposals to support environmentally-sound decision making. The focus of this SEA was on the assessment of cumulative effects. Individual projects undertaken to implement management plan objectives at the site will be evaluated to determine if an impact assessment is required under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act 2012, or successor legislation.

The SEA was focused on the areas within the boundary of Thousand Islands National Park and considered influences from potential local and regional activities outside of the park, climate change, changes in visitation, and proposals in the management plan. The time frame considered in the assessment was ten years from the date of the management plan approval, at which time the management plan will be reviewed. The SEA assessed the potential impacts on different aspects of the ecosystem, including: forest, freshwater and coastal ecosystems, wetlands, Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Musk Turtle, Northern Map Turtle, Snapping Turtle, Gray Ratsnake, Milksnake, Deerberry, Least Bittern, and Five-lined Skink.

Thousand Islands National Park is comprised of a mosaic of small landholdings within the greater surrounding landscape. As a result of this geography, many of the valued components within the park are vulnerable to cumulative effects from actions occurring both inside and outside the park. The management plan identifies several objectives and targets that are intended to help address cumulative effects to species-at-risk vulnerable to road mortality and habitat fragmentation, to forest seedling regeneration, and to freshwater and wetland ecosystems. These include plans to develop and implement a landscape connectivity and stewardship strategy to improve ecological connectivity (Objective 1.1); commitments to continue the ongoing work on active management projects such as prescribed fire, invasive species management, hyper-abundant species management, and road mortality mitigation (Objective 1.2); and employment of visitor use management tools to optimize visitor experience while maintaining a high standard of environmental protection (Objective 2.4). Further mitigation strategies are identified in the SEA.

None of the ecological integrity indicators for Thousand Islands National Park were ranked as poor in the 2018 State of the Park assessment. The seedling regeneration measure of Forest ecosystems is ranked as fair but stable in the State of Park assessment as a result of excess browsing by white-tailed deer and a lack of fire. Since the previous management plan, positive effects on forest regeneration have been demonstrated following several prescribed fires over the past nine years. This management plan aims to build on these starting steps to improve this measure with continued use of prescribed fire and hyper-abundant species management as outlined in Objective 1.2.

The public, stakeholders and Indigenous partners will be consulted on the draft management plan and the draft summary of the SEA. Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the SEA and management plan.

The Plan supports the Federal Sustainable Development Strategies of themes III Protecting Nature and Canadians and theme IV Shrinking the Environmental Footprint. There are no important negative environmental effects anticipated from implementation of the Thousand Islands National Park Management Plan.