



WAPUSK

National Park of Canada

Management Plan



Parks Canada Parcs Canada

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WAPUSK

NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

Management Plan

October 2007

Foreword



Canada's national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas offer Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast unique opportunities to experience and understand our wonderful country. They are places of learning, recreation and fun where Canadians can connect with our past and appreciate the natural, cultural and social forces that shaped Canada.

From our smallest national park to our most visited national historic site to our largest national marine conservation area, each of these places offers Canadians and visitors unique opportunities to experience Canada. These places of beauty, wonder and learning are valued by Canadians - they are part of our past, our present and our future.

Our Government's goal is to ensure that each of these special places is conserved.

We see a future in which these special places will further Canadians' appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of Canada, the economic well-being of communities, and the vitality of our society.

Our Government's vision is to build a culture of heritage conservation in Canada by offering Canadians exceptional opportunities to experience our natural and cultural heritage.

These values form the foundation of the new management plan for Wapusk National Park of Canada. I offer my appreciation to the many thoughtful Canadians who helped to develop this plan, particularly to our dedicated team from Parks Canada, and to all those local organizations and individuals who have demonstrated their good will, hard work, spirit of co-operation and extraordinary sense of stewardship.

In this same spirit of partnership and responsibility, I am pleased to approve the Wapusk National Park of Canada Management Plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Baird". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Baird
Minister of the Environment

Message from the Wapusk Management Board

Our Management Board is comprised of northern and non-northern residents who care deeply for the continued wellness of the Hudson Bay Lowland region.

Our first goal in writing this management plan for Wapusk was to outline what constitutes the natural magnificence of the Park through the preparation of an Ecological Integrity Statement. Our group strongly recognizes the holistic aspect of an ever-changing parkland where there are many processes and interactions amongst the earth, air, fire, water, ice, plants, animals, and people living in the region. Our Park is the home of Wapusk (Cree for the polar bear), but its richness is infinitely greater.

Our next goal was not only to examine existing Park programs and activities on the land but to envision a new set of future activities. We want to maintain the strengths of existing activities and at the same time facilitate new opportunities to share the riches of Wapusk more closely with our local residents, the Canadian public, and people around the world. We want to ensure that all activities contribute to and nurture a human-environmental relationship that helps each of us to be good keepers of the land and guardians of its cultural resources. We want our local communities and residents to build capacity to increasingly participate in all aspects of Park activities and management.

This plan generally represents the consensus of the Management Board members. However, certain outstanding issues relative to commercial visitor opportunities and interpretations of the park establishment agreement will require special attention from future Board members and Parks Canada during the implementation of this plan.

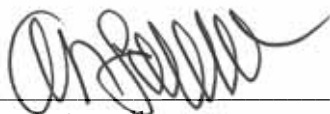
This management plan represents the aspirations of not only this Management Board, but the communities and governments which are represented on the Board. We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to the original park establishment agreement and this management plan. Êkosi. Thank you. Be assured your voices were heard and all issues were thoroughly debated.

As the Management Board for Wapusk, we have a direct and continuing commitment to guide the implementation of the Vision outlined in this management plan. We are pleased to present this plan to all Canadians.

Wapusk National Park of Canada Management Plan

Recommend for approval by:

Recommended by:



Alan Latourelle
Chief Executive Officer
Parks Canada

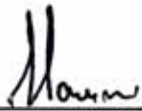


Dawn Bronson
Superintendent
Manitoba Field Unit

Wapusk Management Board Recommendation Statement

Wapusk National Park of Canada Management Plan

Recommended for approval by:



Gavin Lawrie, Town of Churchill



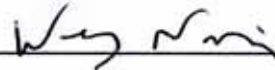
Lorraine Brandson, Town of Churchill



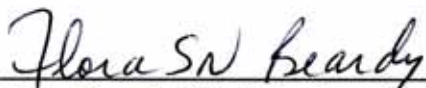
Larris Spence, Fox Lake Cree Nation



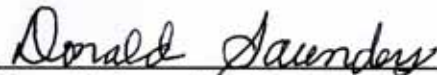
Franklin Arthurson, Fox Lake Cree Nation



Wesley Neepin, Fox Lake Cree Nation



Flora Beardy, York Factory First Nation



Donald Saunders, York Factory First Nation



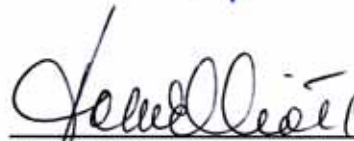
John Garson, Province of Manitoba



Steve Kearney, Province of Manitoba



Terry Duguid, Canada



Cam Elliott, Parks Canada Agency

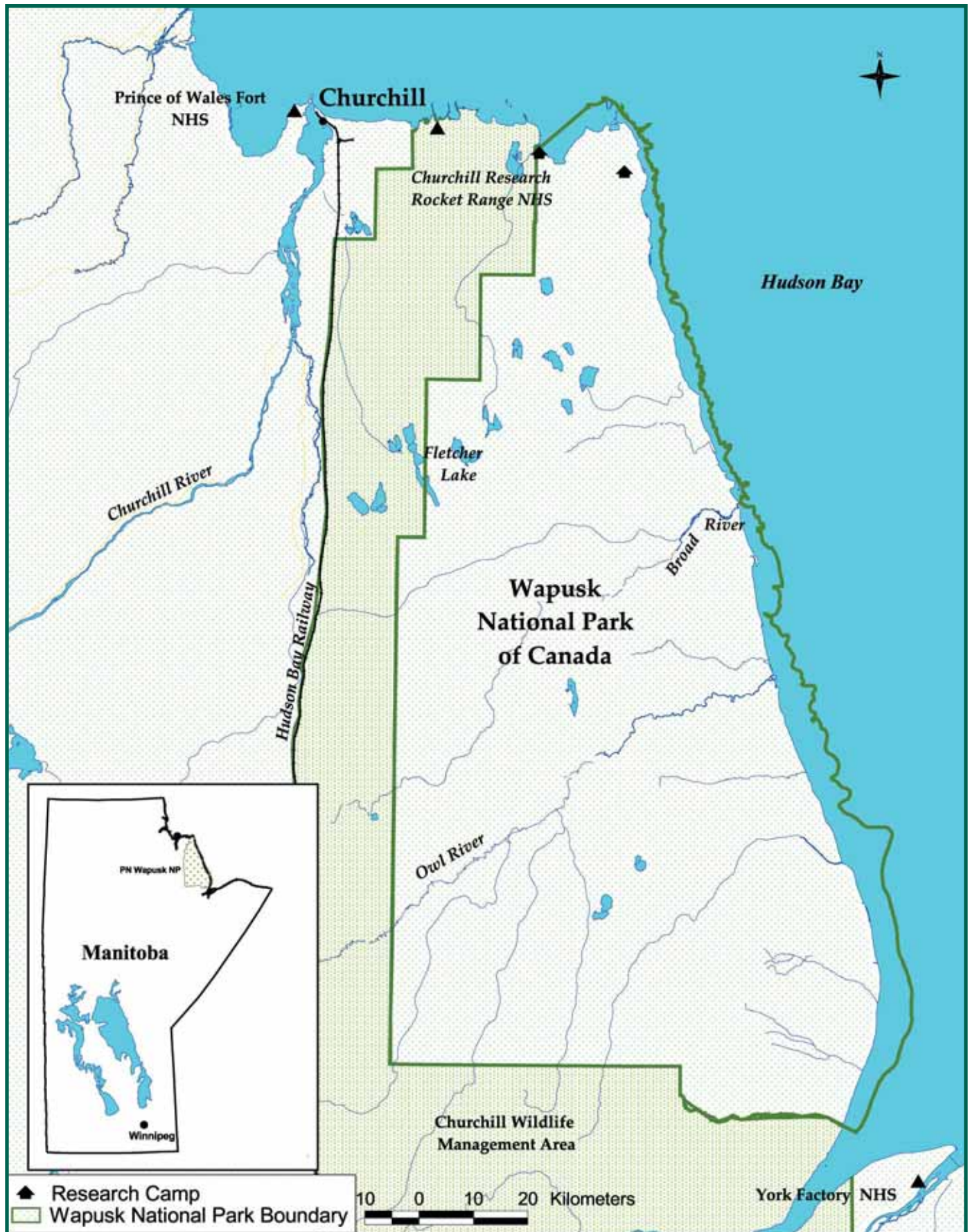


Figure 1.1. Wapusk National Park of Canada.

Summary

This document presents the management plan for Wapusk National Park of Canada. Its purpose is to provide a framework for the management of the park lands and resources to maintain ecological integrity and ensure the protection and presentation of cultural resources. This plan will guide the provision of appropriate visitor activities and lay the foundation for the development of future opportunities for visitors.

The management plan was developed through the management board of Wapusk National Park of Canada. The plan is founded on science and traditional knowledge. It has as its basis the experience, knowledge, and aspirations of the region's land managers, researchers, hunters, trappers, and Aboriginal people, thereby representing the voices of the keepers of the land. The plan was strengthened through a public review, with public presentations made in Churchill, York Factory First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, Thompson, Gillam, and Winnipeg.

Wapusk represents and protects for all time a part of the Hudson-James Lowlands natural region of Canada. The park and adjacent lands are nationally and internationally recognized for their biological diversity. Wapusk is Cree for "white bear" – the park's most sought-after species. The park protects one of the largest concentrations of polar bear maternity dens in the world and is home to the longest-running research program on polar bears. Wapusk will continue to play a valuable role in polar bear conservation, as a setting for continuing research and for monitoring of the effects of climate change.

Wapusk's remoteness will limit the number of its visitors. However, the park will be presented at the Visitor Reception Centre and through the efforts of Churchill's commercial tour operators. Partnerships

and co-operative programs will be a key part of the presentation of Wapusk. Visitors will be challenged by the environment and experience the rigours faced by the First Nations people and Hudson Bay Company employees of the past. They will receive a warm welcome and will come to share in the pride that the local residents and the First Nations have for the park.

This management plan directs key activities, including visitor opportunities, partnerships, and heritage presentations. Without compromising ecological integrity, opportunities will be developed for visitors to experience the park in safety. Parks Canada will meet its commitment to a greater inclusion of Aboriginal people in economic tourism opportunities in the park. This management plan highlights the need to build strong partnerships with the scientific community, the Province of Manitoba, the Town of Churchill, First Nations, commercial tour operators, and local residents. The park exists, not as an island, but as part of a regional network of lands and people dedicated to the conservation of Canada's heritage. Heritage presentation is a cornerstone of park management. Resource conservation will be achieved through communications with park visitors and local residents. Programs will be developed to tell the stories of the land and its people.

New visitors will be attracted to Wapusk with the development of visitor opportunities; park presentations; and strong partnerships with other agencies, tour operators, and First Nations. An increased level of services and implementation of Parks Canada's fee structure will increase revenues.

The management plan will be reviewed every five years.

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...to protect for all time representative natural areas of Canadian significance in a system of national parks, and to encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of this natural heritage so as to leave it unimpaired for future generations

- National Parks System Plan



INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1.0



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Canada

1.0 Introduction

Located on the western shores of Hudson Bay in northeast Manitoba, Wapusk National Park of Canada lies in the transition zone between taiga and tundra. Created with the signing of the Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park on 24 April 1996, Wapusk is one of Canada's newest national parks.

This is the first management plan for Wapusk National Park of Canada. Its purpose is to chart the course for protecting the park while providing for visitor use, appreciation, and understanding. The plan will set out appropriate park activities and lays the foundation for the provision of future visitor opportunities. Underlying this theme of park development is the requirement to maintain ecological integrity and the cultural resources within the park. The management plan also recognizes the reality that activities within the park must be integrated and managed with activities on the lands adjacent to the park and within the Town of Churchill.

There is a legislative requirement that management plans be developed for national parks. For Wapusk, the requirement flows from a number of documents related to the establishment and management of the park, Canada's obligations to Aboriginal people, and its responsibilities to resource conservation. These documents include, but are not limited to:

- *Canada National Parks Act,*
- *Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park, 1996*

- *Biodiversity Convention, 1992*
- *Constitution Act, 1982*
- *International Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears and their Habitat, 1973*
- *Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement, 1998*
- *Treaty 5, 1875*
- *Ecological Integrity Statement for Wapusk National Park, 2003*
- *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operating Policies, 1994*

Public consultation has been an integral part of the management of Wapusk, beginning with discussions to establish the park. Public involvement continues through the Wapusk Management Board. The board has advised Parks Canada on the management of several activities within the park. Workshops were held in Fox Lake Cree Nation and York Factory First Nation in order to solicit their direct input on management issues. The management plan was developed by the board. The draft management plan was tabled with the Town Council of Churchill, Chiefs and Councils of York Factory First Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation, and with Manitoba Conservation. As well, it was available to the public through the Parks Canada website, at the Churchill Visitor Reception Centre and at public open houses held in Churchill, York Factory First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, Gillam, Thompson and Winnipeg.

1.1 The Role of Wapusk National Park of Canada in the National Parks System

Wapusk National Park of Canada is located in the Hudson-James Lowlands natural region. In the preliminary assessment of the region, several sites were evaluated for their potential as a national park. The area selected for Wapusk National Park of Canada was determined to provide the best overall representation of the Hudson-James Lowlands.

The Wapusk area is recognized nationally and internationally for its significant biological diversity. It has important habitats and populations of polar bears, birds and plants. The area has a long and rich history of contact between European and Aboriginal people. It contains some of the youngest land in Canada, as the result of the retreating Hudson Bay waters in response to isostatic rebound – the rising of the land following the last glacial period.

1.2 Planning Context

Located at the northern limit of the Hudson Plain ecozone, Wapusk is situated a few kilometres from the Southern Arctic ecozone. Churchill is known as the accessible arctic. With its rail, sea and air transportation facilities, it is relatively easy and inexpensive to access. The town provides a full range of services and facilities.

The Town of Churchill has long been a destination for people with an interest in the north. Its significance as a birding locale dates back to the early 1930s. Today tourism in Churchill is a well established, diverse and self-sustaining industry that provides the town with a significant economic growth engine.

In spite of tourism potential, there has been little development of lands and resources in the immediate Wapusk area. This is mainly due to geography. Trapping and resource harvesting associated with the Hudson's Bay Company has characterized the economy of the region since European presence in the late 17th century. Apart from the gravel required in the

construction of the railway, there has been no industrial resource extraction in the area. Aboriginal people have used the land and resources of the area for thousands of years.

Local people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, continue to use the lands and resources today. The low level of resource use and the management of the area by successive governments have left the ecosystem relatively unimpaired.

The 11,475 km² Wapusk National Park of Canada was created from lands within the Churchill Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which had been established by the Province of Manitoba in 1978 to manage and protect wildlife and its habitat. As shown in Figure 1.1, Wapusk is surrounded by Hudson Bay on the north and east and by Churchill WMA on the west and south. The establishment of the park fills a niche within the suite of initiatives taken to protect and restore lands in the region. It complements the provincially designated WMA, and the co-management agreements with First Nations in the area.

1.2 Planning Context (*continued*)

Management of the park is through a ten member board. There are two members from each of the following governments or communities: Canada, Province of Manitoba, Town of Churchill, York Factory First Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation. Board members are nominated by their respective governments or communities and appointed by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada. The board advises the Minister on the planning, management and operation of the park. It may also consider land-use planning and resource management in the adjacent WMA.

The *Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement* that initiated Wapusk also states that traditional knowledge shall be considered in the preparation of the park management plan, a goal that is facilitated through the appointment of Aboriginal board membership and by the research and documentation of traditional knowledge.

This management plan recognizes that there are many stresses affecting Wapusk lands and ecosystems, ranging from global climate change and long-range transport of contaminants to local resource use. The managers of Wapusk are unable to control or manage the effects that global climate change may have on the park, however there is an ability to monitor this impact and adapt park management in response to these changes. Local and regional stresses can be managed, but only with the co-operation of other agencies, First Nations, and resource users. The intent of this management plan is to ensure that the stresses resulting from park use are kept within reasonable limits, to maintain the ecological integrity and protect the cultural resources of Wapusk.

1.2.1 The Park Establishment Agreement

The overriding document behind the management plan is the *Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park* (Park Establishment Agreement). The management plan is consistent with the Park Establishment Agreement. The Park Establishment Agreement will not be affected by the management plan.

The *Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park* articulated two major intents for Wapusk that are fundamental to the management of the park: 1) the park is to be managed in the context of its adjoining lands and 2) the residents of the area are to continue

to have access to the park lands. The agreement specifies access to land and resources within the park for Aboriginal people and specified non-Aboriginal beneficiaries. The First Nations of the area maintain the right to select lands within the park to fulfill treaty land entitlements. Aboriginal and Treaty rights will be respected in the park. Specified residents of Churchill will continue to exercise caribou hunting privileges for 35 years from the signing of the Park Establishment Agreement. Trapping on registered traplines within the park will continue but may be phased out at the discretion of the Wapusk National Park Management Board and Parks Canada.

1.2.1 The Park Establishment Agreement (*continued*)

It is the purpose of this Agreement:

- (1) To provide for the establishment of Wapusk National Park, pursuant to the National Parks Act;
 - (2) To recognize the natural significance of an adjacent crown Land Area, managed under The Wildlife Act or appropriate other legislation of Manitoba;
 - (3) To provide for the complementary planning, management and operation of the Park Land and the Crown Land Area;
 - (4) To respect existing aboriginal and treaty rights and to provide for the continuation of the traditional use of the Park Land and its renewable resources by Indian people, as outlined further in sections 5 and 13 of the Agreement; and
 - (5) To provide for certain traditional privileges of local, non-aboriginal users of the Park Land
- Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park



*When we speak of the land
we mean all parts of the land:
the rocks, the water, the fish,
the birds, the wildlife, the forest.*

*People are keepers of the land.
The land is there for the use
of the people but the land must
be kept in balance.*

- Donald Saunders, York Factory



A VISION FOR WAPUSK NATIONAL PARK OF CANADA

SECTION 2.0



2.0 Vision for Wapusk National Park of Canada

The Wapusk Management Board has established the following vision for the park.

Fifteen years after the signing of the agreement to establish Wapusk National Park of Canada, the dreams and ideas that were a product of the negotiation process are being realized.

The unique natural systems, plants, wildlife and cultural resources of the park are protected and preserved in as natural a state as possible. Wapusk is home to one of the largest known polar bear maternity denning areas in the world and the region protects an unparalleled number of plant and animal species co-existing at the transition zone between subarctic taiga and arctic tundra.

Parks Canada recognizes the international role of research, and the park is used as a living laboratory for gaining insights into the biological processes affecting protected areas from local, regional, and global influences. Local and regional activities take place without compromising the ecological integrity of the park or leaving a lasting impact on the land.

Wapusk is a place where the culture, traditions, and traditional knowledge of the Cree, Métis, Dene, Inuit, and other local people are shared with visitors, and passed on to future generations. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people take pride in sharing their stories with visitors. Local users continue to use the land for traditional activities and the existing treaty and Aboriginal rights to hunt, trap, and fish in the park are respected. Visitors of all ages immerse themselves in the cultural and natural heritage of Wapusk, sensing the spiritual and peaceful aspect of their visit and a personal connection to the natural world.

The establishment of Wapusk has enhanced northern Manitoba's ecotourism offerings, attracting people with diverse interests and allowing socially and environmentally sustainable tourism to flourish. Access is managed in a way that minimizes disturbance to culturally and environmentally sensitive areas. Educational and recreational activities are available year round for visitors and local people to enjoy subarctic wilderness and cultural experiences. Visitors are treated with respect and are allowed the freedom to enjoy a quality experience. Through Parks Canada programs and services, park staff, researchers, elders, business operators, and others share knowledge that allows visitors to gain the most from their visit. Visitors leave with an understanding of the unique landforms and spectacular plants and wildlife, and an appreciation for the people and their cultures.

The management model for Wapusk features cooperation with communities and encourages management and staff to work in a professional, open, trusting, and respectful manner. The Wapusk Management Board influences the strategic direction of the park and guides the process of implementing and honouring the Park Establishment Agreement. There are successful training programs in place for local and Aboriginal people to develop as park staff members and to meet the challenge of managing the park. Traditional knowledge and academic research provide a better understanding of the natural systems and cultural resources in the park, and are integrated into management decisions. Sustainable tourism operates within natural processes, while contributing to the economies of the surrounding communities. These communities are proud and supportive of the park.



MANAGING FOR ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

SECTION 3.0



3.1 Overview

The term ecological integrity, as applied to a park, refers to a condition characteristic of the park's natural region that is likely to persist over time. It includes the park's abiotic components, the composition and abundance of its native species, and its rates of change, and processes supporting its biological communities.

The ecological integrity statement for Wapusk National Park of Canada sets out four main tenets of ecological vision:

- the place remains healthy
- people are stewards of the land
- the park is a place to learn
- traditional knowledge and academic research contribute to decision making

Planning for the maintenance of ecological integrity in Wapusk is based on the rationale for establishing the national park. The reasons for establishing Wapusk are clearly stated in the Park Establishment Agreement:

Whereas the lands between the lower reaches of the Churchill and Nelson Rivers, ... are significant nationally and internationally for their biological diversity, their importance as a habitat for seasonal concentrations of migrating and breeding birds and polar bears, and their interrelated aboriginal and European cultural themes ...

Maintaining ecological integrity in Wapusk must focus on the maintenance of biological diversity, protection of wildlife habitats, and the integration of human use of the lands. People residing in the area and using the lands and resources are part of the ecological systems of the region.

The ecological integrity of the park and its regional ecosystem is under assault from a number of global, regional, and local stresses. Global stresses cannot be managed at the local level, but their impact on the system can be observed and monitored. Management of lands and resources will be adapted in response to these impacts.

Global climate change and warming temperatures may directly create changes in the abundance, distribution, and variety of species. Species distribution may shift. Some species may become rare, while others proliferate. Changes to sea ice, ocean currents, and permafrost have an impact on landforms, on plant and animal communities, and on wildlife species within the park. For example, the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population is already impacted by climate changes to sea ice.

The long-range transport of contaminants does not leave Wapusk unaffected. Many industrial and agricultural chemicals are found in seals and polar bears in the Wapusk area. The body burden of toxins in polar bears from western Hudson Bay is one of the highest among global polar bear populations.

Favourable habitat change on the wintering range for lesser snow geese is reducing winter mortality rates for this species. As a result, Wapusk has an exploding goose population that is now destroying salt marsh habitat in the La Pérouse Bay region of Wapusk.

Regional and local stresses are manageable, as they tend to be supply and demand issues. The demands are for access to lands and to the resources. Regional lifestyle preferences place high value on land-based activities such as hunting, trapping, and recreational excursions. The number of hunters and trappers in the park is limited by the Park Establishment Agreement and by Manitoba Conservation's restrictions on licenced hunting and trapping. The tourism industry benefits from and is restricted by controls on the number of tour businesses permitted into the park and on the limits that have been placed on areas open to tours. Both the Province of Manitoba and Parks Canada involve local residents, tour operators, and researchers in developing and improving strategies for minimizing

human impact on the ecosystem of the park and for maintaining a high level of visitor safety. In relative terms, these stresses are much less intense than for parks in the more populated southern regions of Manitoba and Canada. For example, Wapusk and the adjacent Churchill Wildlife Management Area encompass nearly 20,000 km² and throughout this vast area there are fewer than 100 people at any given moment. This situation is unlikely to change significantly in the foreseeable future. Regional and local systems are at risk from invasive and alien species. Through grain shipments by rail to the port of Churchill non-native wildlife are transported to the area. House sparrows and several plant species have become established in Churchill from this source.

3.2 Regional Setting

The Hudson-James Lowlands are a vast, wet plain gently sloping to the sea. More than 80% of the region is muskeg or wet peatlands. Water lies everywhere: on the surface in shallow lakes and ponds, in meandering streams, in bogs and fens, and under the surface locked in permafrost. The Wapusk region is made up of four major landscape units: coastal fens, spruce forest, interior peatlands and salt marsh and tidal flat complexes.

The coastal fens make up 13% of Wapusk's ecological context area. This unit is characterized by beach ridges and surrounding lands lifted from seabed by isostatic rebound and provides an important seasonal habitat for wildlife.

The spruce forest covers 52% of the park's ecological context area. Forest overlying discontinuous permafrost interspersed

with lakes, ponds and wetlands describes the unit. It provides an important winter habitat for caribou and an attractive summer habitat for birds.

The barrens or interior peatlands, which comprise 31% of the park's ecological context area, are characterized by raised bogs, fens, and thermokarst depressions. Peat has accumulated to depths of 2 to 4 metres. Underlying the area is continuous permafrost. The unit offers important habitat for polar bear maternity dens.

The salt marsh and tidal flats landscape unit comprises 4.4% of park's ecological context area. Large tides and shallow land relief produce intertidal areas that are up to 10 km in width. Salt marshes are extremely productive ecosystems and provide important habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds.

3.3 Keepers of the Land

The Aboriginal people of the area recognize that they are part of the ecosystem and that their actions affect it. They believe that each person is responsible for observing and being sensitive to the consequences of their actions on the ecosystem and to take steps, collectively and individually, to ensure that the balance of the system is not disrupted. Aboriginal people refer to this responsibility as being keepers of the land, a philosophy that forms the foundation for the management of Wapusk.

Every park manager, hunter, trapper, researcher, commercial operator, and visitor must assume stewardship of the land. Everyone must acknowledge that human activities are part of the ecosystem processes and that each person must be observant of the land and the changes occurring on the land. In short, it is our collective and individual responsibility to ensure that the ecological integrity of the

park is not disrupted. We are all keepers of the land.

The operation of Wapusk will benefit as much from the accumulated knowledge and experience of the people associated with it as from knowledge generated through the scientific method. The combined knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal people, staff, researchers, hunters, trappers, tour operators, guides, and park visitors will be incorporated into the management of Wapusk, providing the key elements for maintaining the ecological integrity of the park lands. Achieving this goal will require strong communication networks. The ever-growing body of information and knowledge must be passed through time and amongst the people in the park – from users and visitors to the park managers, and from park managers to users and visitors.

Strategic Goal

Ecological Integrity is maintained by keepers of the land.

Objectives

1. to engage all people in the park as keepers of the land
2. to establish and maintain the flow of information between park managers and the people in the park

Key Actions

1. Promote the concept of keepers of the land with staff, researchers, tour operators, local users, local residents, and First Nations.
2. Develop and implement keepers of the land programs pertinent to the various park visitor groups.
3. Develop a repository for observations and notes by the keepers of the land and make them available in a form that is open to the public.
4. Employ observational data in adaptive management of park lands and resources, in review of management plans, in state of the park reports, and in preparation of indices of ecological baseline data and ecological change data.

3.4 Communicating the Need for Ecological Integrity

In order to maintain ecological integrity, it is necessary that the people in the region become knowledgeable and supportive of this management plan.

Strategic Goal:

Local residents, visitors and Canadians understand the need for and challenges of maintaining ecological integrity.

Objectives

1. to communicate the need for ecological integrity of the park and its associated ecosystem
2. to adopt the multiplier principle of communication by working with businesses for primary delivery of messages
3. to encourage support for, and participation in, park management programs
4. to ensure that local residents and First Nations become aware of the research done in the park and are able to access the findings of the studies

Key Actions

1. Develop and co-ordinate a communication program about ecological integrity
2. Target key audiences
3. Involve staff, researchers, businesses, and local residents in the communication program
4. Communicate shared responsibility by Parks Canada, other agencies, and the public in maintaining ecological integrity
5. Promote and engage businesses, local residents, and visitors as keepers of the land
6. Promote the park, Visitor Reception Centre, and the Churchill WMA as opportunities to observe and study significant components of the park's ecosystem
7. Through the Parks Canada web site, deliver key messages about ecological integrity

Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks.

- Canada National Parks Act, 2000

3.5 Shared Regional Ecosystems

The park must be managed within its ecological context. Land use and resource management actions in the park must complement those on adjacent lands.

Strategic Goal

Planning and management of the park and adjacent Crown lands are integrated

Objective

- to ensure complementary planning, management and operation of the park lands and adjacent Crown lands

Key Actions

1. Work with the Province of Manitoba and the York Factory First Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation to set complementary tourism development objectives for Churchill WMA and Wapusk National Park
2. Participate, as appropriate, in current and future regional multi-agency planning and management initiatives
3. Consult with provincial agencies, and regional resource management boards on planning and management initiatives related to lands, waters, and wildlife
4. Participate in the Polar Bear Technical Committee and co-operate with provincial agencies to conserve polar bears and their habitat
5. Participate with other agencies and individuals to enhance and maintain geographic information systems to support informed decision making
6. Support research and management activities in the adjacent Crown lands that contribute to the park's overall goals



3.6 Biological Diversity

Management of the park cannot be restricted to the monitoring and management of single species or to the high profile species such as polar bear. Rather, the focus must include the rich diversity of plant and animal life in the region. Wapusk is in a transition area where taiga gives way to tundra and the subarctic meets the arctic. This

transitional zone supports a diversity of plant and animal species. A review of the literature conducted in 1988 for the Cape Churchill WMA management plan documented over 400 vascular plant species, 226 bird species, and 44 mammal species. Approximately half the land area of the Cape Churchill WMA was incorporated into Wapusk.

Strategic Goal

The lands between the Churchill and Nelson Rivers are significant nationally and internationally for their biological diversity

Objectives

1. to protect park lands from the impact of development and use
2. to maintain healthy aquatic ecosystems
3. to maintain naturally functioning terrestrial ecosystems
4. to maintain viable wildlife populations
5. to maintain human use as a component of the ecosystem

Key Actions

1. Establish baseline data on the state of the park's ecosystem using past and ongoing research
2. Monitor and evaluate the effects of developments and activities in the park lands on the park's ecosystem
3. Assist other agencies and local residents in preventing damage to aquatic ecosystems
4. Engage park users to prevent damage to vegetation communities
5. Prevent the introduction of non-native species
6. Set hunting and trapping limits within the park to prevent depletion of wildlife populations
7. Co-operate with other agencies in efforts to minimize the impact of humans on the regional ecosystem
8. Monitor specific changes within the regional ecosystem (e.g. condition of polar bears, effects of forest fires, impact of snow geese)
9. Develop a monitoring program that engages all park managers, researchers, users, tour operators, and visitors
10. Communicate the extent and the causes of changes within the park's ecosystem.

Table 3.1 Indicators And Targets For Maintaining Ecological Integrity
In Wapusk National Park Of Canada

OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR	TARGET
To maintain biodiversity	Species richness	No species loss
To understand effects of climate change on ecological integrity	Understanding of species adation to changing condtions	Keystone species and habitat management adapted
To maintain natural physical processes	Wildfire cycle	No human caused wildfires in the park
	State of park lands	- Retire and restore unnecessary trails - Human activities cause no erosion or new trails
To maintain naturally functioning terrestrial ecosystems	Health of western Hudson Bay polar bear population	- Human activities do not impair denning success - Maintain mean annual polar bear deaths by any human intervention at less than one - Long-term conservation of polar bears and their habitat
	Health of Cape Churchill caribou herd	- Human activities do not impair critical life functions - Maintain the Cape Churchill caribou herd above 2 000 caribou
	Health of plant communities	- No alien species - Succession trends within normal range
	Foraging of Lesser Snow Geese	- Monitor range of lesser snow goose foraging
To maintain naturally functioning aquatic ecosystems	Water quality & flow	- Water quality meets Manitoba surface water quality standards - No dams or diversions of streams flowing into or through the park
To maintain naturally functioning marine ecosystems	Integrity of intertidal zone	- No trails or human caused erosion in intertidal zone - Understanding of ecological processes in intertidal zone
To maintain humans as part of the park ecosystem	Commercial tourism activities present healthy park ecosystems	- Commercial tourism activities do not impair ecological processes - Complementary tourism activity management in Churchill WMA and park
	Keepers of the land engaged in park management	- >95% compliance with park regulations and permit conditions, visitors self-regulate - >95% voluntary reporting of harvest and observations - Harvest within sustainable limit



A PLACE OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

SECTION 4.0



Parks Canada
Parcs Canada

Canada

4.0 A Place of Historical and Cultural Significance

The cultural resources of Wapusk are inextricably linked to Prince of Wales Fort and York Factory National Historic Sites of Canada (NHSC). More recent historic designations linked with Wapusk are the Churchill Rocket Research Range NHSC (rocket launch facilities) and the Construction of Hudson Bay Railroad. Pre-contact archaeological artefacts and sites are found throughout the region. These are the physical cultural resources of Wapusk that span the history of human presence in the region. The history of people in the region is thousands of years old compared to the few hundred years since the first Europeans set foot on the shores of Hudson Bay. The place names of the Aboriginal people (see Figure 4.1) give value to the land and their history just as the Hudson Bay Company's stone and timber buildings are reminders of the historic resources of a bygone era. Fortunately, the place names live on in the language and traditional knowledge of the Cree.

The earliest evidence of human occupation of the Wapusk area dates to about 3000 years before present when Arctic based cultures made incursions into the area for critical resources. Archaeological finds indicate the earliest cultures were Pre-Dorset which have been found at several locations along the Churchill River and are recognized at the Seahorse Gully NHSC. This group was followed by the Dorset cultural group, which made infrequent visits to the Churchill River area, and by some Woodland cultures that frequented the Nelson River. At the time of contact, the land was used seasonally by the Inuit, Dene, and Cree. Preliminary archaeological work in the park suggests

that the majority of pre-contact sites are found in the north end of the park and are associated with beach ridge complexes. The sites indicate that occupation was likely sporadic and seasonal. Recent research has identified more than 80 archaeological sites in the Park.

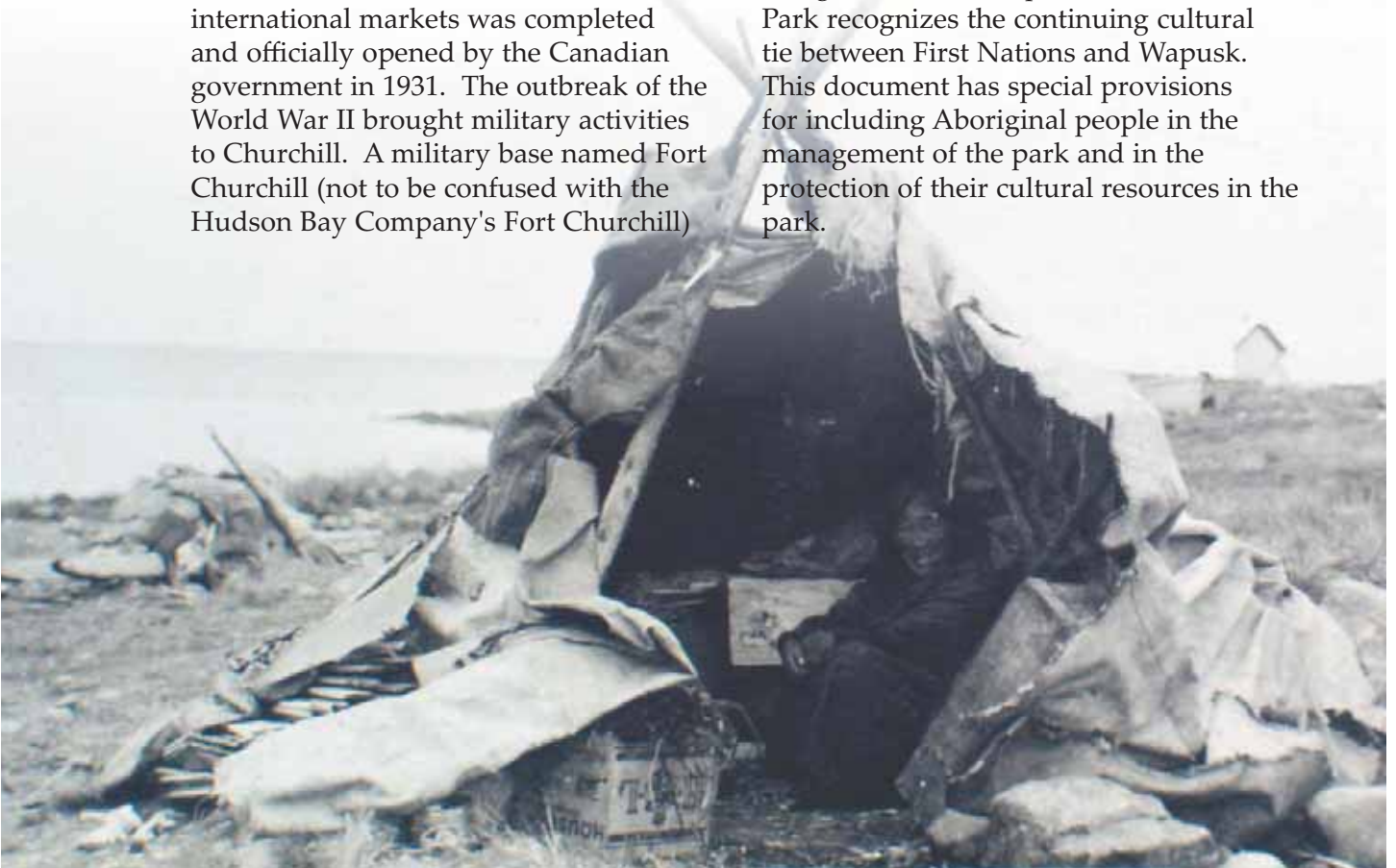
The historic importance of the Wapusk region in the post-contact period is associated with the fur trade and its Aboriginal and European participants. Although initial contacts occurred in the region in the early 17th century, the early fur trade period spanned the century or more that followed the establishment of York Fort in 1684 near the mouth of the Hayes River, just south of the park. North and west of the park, near the mouth of the Churchill River, the Hudson's Bay Company built its Churchill River post in 1717 and later the stone Prince of Wales Fort on the Churchill River's west peninsula. York Fort (later named York Factory) is considered to have been the most important post in western Canada throughout the late 18th century and for much of the 19th century. It served as the Hudson Bay Company's main depot and was in continuous operation from 1684 to 1957. York Factory was also a point of entry to the west via the Hayes River route. Prince of Wales Fort was destroyed by the French in 1782 while its successor, Fort Churchill, remained in existence until 1930 when it was abandoned as port facilities and a town site developed on the east side of the river. In addition to serving as a reminder of the fur trade, York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Sites also commemorate the 17th and 18th century French-English rivalry for control of the lands and resources around Hudson Bay.

Wapusk encompasses the land between these two great centres of trade; land that historically served as a source of furs and provisions for the two trading centres and as a travel corridor between them. The area was and remains an important place for the Cree who once lived and worked at York Factory. Their stories are the stories of Wapusk.

Trapping by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trappers continues to this day on the Wapusk lands. These trappers are the descendants of those who lived and worked under the shadows of York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort. With the settlement and agricultural development of the prairie provinces came new developments to the Wapusk area. Construction of a port facility in Churchill and a railway linking grain-producing areas of Manitoba and Saskatchewan to international markets was completed and officially opened by the Canadian government in 1931. The outbreak of the World War II brought military activities to Churchill. A military base named Fort Churchill (not to be confused with the Hudson Bay Company's Fort Churchill)

was established in 1943. Between 1946 and 1957 Fort Churchill was used by the Canadian and American military as part of the Defence Research Northern Laboratory. The Canadian Army abandoned the base in 1964. In 1957, in support of the International Geophysical Year Rocket Project, the Churchill Research (Rocket) Range was constructed. The park lands were used as an impact and recovery area for rockets launched from the range. The rocket range was taken over by the National Research Council in 1966 and it operated until its closure in 1986.

The Parks Canada office in Churchill manages York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Sites of Canada, as well as Wapusk National Park of Canada. The Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park recognizes the continuing cultural tie between First Nations and Wapusk. This document has special provisions for including Aboriginal people in the management of the park and in the protection of their cultural resources in the park.



4.0 A Place of Historical and Cultural Significance (*continued*)

16 (2): The significance of aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultural resources shall be fully taken into account in developing the management plan for the Park Land and in considering management actions therein.

16 (6): In the case of any proposed archaeological investigation involving aboriginal heritage sites within the Park Land, the superintendent shall consult with the relevant First Nation(s) prior to the issuance of a permit.

16 (8): Access by visitors to the Park Land to any First Nations burial sites discovered thereon shall require the express written consent of the First Nations.

- Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park

Strategic Goal

The historical and cultural resources of the park are protected

Objective

- to develop a cultural resource protection program

Key Actions

1. Monitor known archaeological sites
2. Evaluate known archaeological sites
3. Research recent and contemporary structures in the park
4. Develop reporting system for previously unknown sites discovered by staff
5. Document oral history and traditional knowledge of cultural resources
6. Augment archaeological and historical records for the park and surrounding area

"This place is called Asiniy Sipi (Stony River, named Rupert Creek on NTS maps).

This is where we always went. This is where I grew up and became a man.

That's where we fished and trapped."

John Neepin
Voices from Hudson Bay

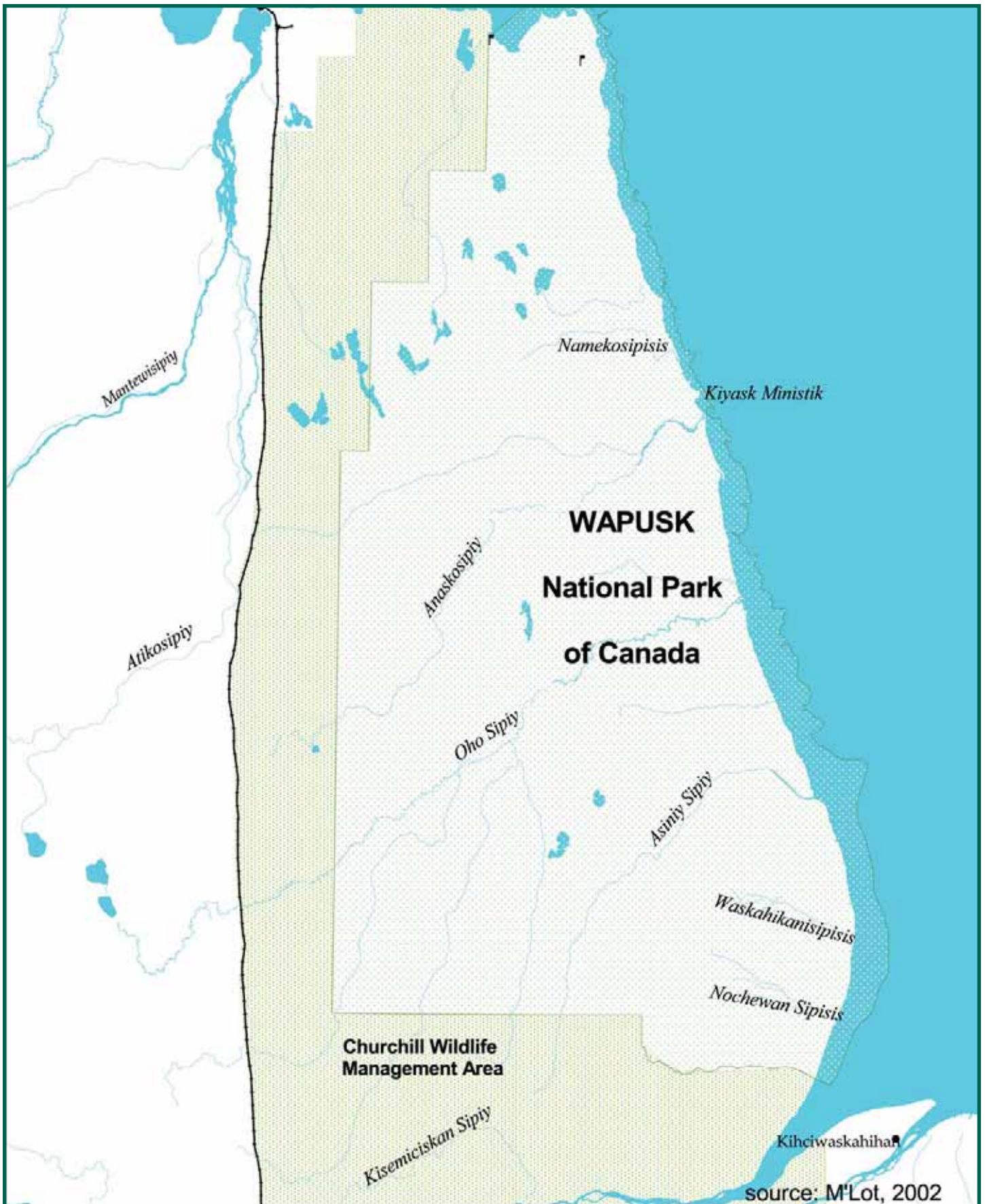


Figure 4.1 Cree Place Names in the Wapusk National Park of Canada Region.

4.0 A Place of Historical and Cultural Significance (*continued*)

Strategic Goal

The interpretation of the cultural resources links past and present occupation of the land by First Nations and non-aboriginal people

Objective

- to present the cultural and historic importance of the region

Key Actions

1. Present cultural and historic resource programs at the Visitor Reception Centre (VRC) emphasizing the role of the fur trade, Prince of Wales Fort, and York Factory National Historic Sites of Canada
2. Regularly update staff knowledge of cultural resources and history as more information is documented
3. Integrate traditional knowledge and cultural values into the VRC presentations
4. Encourage Aboriginal businesses to present Aboriginal history and culture.

The Park Establishment Agreement has specific provisions relating to Aboriginal heritage sites within the park lands. These require that consultation with relevant First Nations occur prior to undertaking archaeological investigation of an Aboriginal heritage site.

Strategic Goal

First Nations cultural resources are respected

Objective

- to ensure that investigations of Aboriginal heritage sites are carried out in co-operation with First Nations
- to ensure that Aboriginal heritage is recognized and used in co-operation with First Nations

Key Actions

1. Develop a checklist of Aboriginal cultural resources in the park and a listing of the terms of the Park Establishment Agreement for the use of researchers wanting to work or currently working in the park
2. Require researchers to involve local Aboriginal people in research projects
3. Require researchers to communicate findings to First Nations
4. Develop projects to document traditional knowledge related to cultural resource management.



MANAGING FOR VISITORS

SECTION 5.0



5.1 Background

Wapusk National Park is remote and northern, a wilderness park within a region that has often been described as the accessible north. The Town of Churchill, 1000 km north of Winnipeg, with access by air, rail, and cruise ship, has an international reputation as a destination to view polar bears in the fall. It has also been a popular spring birding destination since the 1930s. People come during the summer months to view the landscape, historic sites, and whales. Winter tourism is starting to grow as a result of increasing interest in northern lights, snowmobile touring, and dog sledding. The local and regional transportation sector is vital to maintaining the operation of the park and to bringing visitors to the area.

The Wapusk-Churchill region has a strong and vibrant tourism industry. Manitoba is the 5th most popular destination for tourists in Canada. Churchill accounts for about 2% of the \$1.1 billion annual provincial tourism economy, which is a remarkable share considering fewer than 1000 people live in the community.

Although the eastern boundary of Wapusk National Park is only 40 km from the town of Churchill, Wapusk is remote from Churchill. There are no roads to the park and the Churchill area road network ends 20 km from the park. Surrounding Wapusk is the provincial Churchill Wildlife Management Area managed by the Manitoba Department of Conservation.

5.1.1 Current Situation: Wapusk within A Spectrum of Visitor Opportunities

Wapusk National Park lies within a larger region that also includes the town of Churchill and the Churchill Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Within this region there is a spectrum of visitor opportunities, along with associated infrastructure and services. Wildlife viewing is the primary experience sought but there is also considerable interest in culture, history, the wilderness, and the north. As visitors move from the town of Churchill through the Churchill WMA and into Wapusk National Park, the degree of infrastructure and the level of tourism activities diminish. In Wapusk, visitors experience a vast, open, and unspoiled land unlike any place they have ever visited. At times, they experience a



land teeming with life and are struck by its beauty and fragility. At other times, they come face to face with a cold, hard, unforgiving land; a land seemingly devoid of life.

When Wapusk National Park was established in 1996, previously existing commercial tourism operations were permitted to continue their activities until such time a management plan was approved. These operations included:

- helicopter tours for wildlife viewing, sightseeing, and access to lands for natural history interpretation (two helicopter charter companies; a total of six light helicopters permitted to be used for tours)
- helicopter tours for visitors to explore an inactive polar bear maternity den (up to two inactive maternity dens designated; two helicopter charter companies; a total of six light helicopters permitted to be used in tours)
- fall polar bear viewing, via tundra vehicles from a camp based at Cape Churchill, after the land, lakes, and streams have frozen (one camp consisting of trailer units and four tundra vehicles)
- viewing and photographing of polar bear family groups emerging from maternity dens in late winter (based from a lodge located in Churchill WMA with up to four multi-passenger, over-snow vehicles, and additional snowmobiles for guides and clients)

Currently there are no facilities to support visitor opportunities in Wapusk National Park.

In the surrounding Churchill Wildlife Management Area, a more expansive list of visitor opportunities exists. These include:

- tundra and polar bear viewing tours by tundra vehicle (two tour companies operating a total of 18 tundra vehicles)
- polar bear viewing and photography from camps near the Hudson Bay coast (two tour companies operating a total of two camps accommodating 32 guests in each camp)
- helicopter tours for wildlife viewing, sightseeing, and access to lands for natural history interpretation (two

helicopter charter companies; a total of six light helicopters permitted to be used in tours)

- helicopter tours for visitors to explore an inactive polar bear maternity den (up to two inactive maternity dens designated; two helicopter charter companies; a total of six light helicopters permitted to be used in tours)
- viewing and photographing of polar bear family groups emerging from maternity dens in late winter (based from a lodge located in Churchill WMA with up to four multi-passenger, over-snow vehicles, and additional snowmobiles for guides and clients)
- guided walking tours with interpretation of flora, landforms, wildlife, natural history, and cultural history
- guided birding tours
- guided photography tours
- fixed wing aerial tours

In and around Churchill, a much broader range of visitor experiences exists, supported by a network of roads and facilities. Again, the operations are commercial ones. These include:

- bus tours featuring natural and cultural history
- guided walking tours with interpretation of flora, landforms, wildlife, natural history, and cultural history
- whale watching on Churchill River and Hudson Bay by commercial vessel and kayak
- northern lights viewing
- theatre presentations on natural and cultural history, and polar bears presented by tour companies and private individuals
- the Eskimo Museum
- Churchill Northern Studies Centre learning vacations
- Parks Canada presentations on natural and cultural history in the Visitors Centre, at Prince of Wales Fort NHSC, and at Cape Merry
- fixed wing aerial tours
- dog sledding

5.1.2 Current Situation: Visitors to the Churchill Region

In 1995, prior to the establishment of the park, a Churchill visitor study by the University of Manitoba and Parks Canada indicated that about 20,000 people visited Churchill annually. The typical visitor was older and well educated. Almost 40% had an annual income greater than \$80,000. Visitors came to Churchill to view wildlife, to learn the local history, and to experience the area and culture. Two thirds of the visitors took a polar bear viewing tour and almost half came specifically to see a polar bear. In short, nature is the prime motivator for visiting Churchill. In choosing their destination, 72% stated it was very important to have a safe environment for visitors.

Regardless of season, visitors to Churchill tend to be well educated, married and of both sexes. Fall and Spring visitors as a group have higher household incomes. Summer and Fall visitors are more likely to be retired.



Among the visitors to Churchill is a cadre of professional photographers and filmmakers who routinely visit the region to practice their profession. Their visits are primarily associated with capturing polar bears on film. These images are shared with the world, often in high profile publications and productions. Increasingly, these films and photographs are combined with important messages relating to the environment and environmental stresses such as global warming.

Scenery tends to be more important for those who travelled in the Spring and Fall. Fall visitors were more likely to select a destination based on opportunities for viewing wildlife and wilderness/nature. As a group, spring visitors were more interested in viewing birds, and Summer visitors showed the strongest interest in historic sites.

In Summer and Fall, the majority of visitors came to Churchill for a vacation. In Fall, Americans are the most likely to visit and Canadians the least likely. Visitors from overseas are equally likely to visit Churchill in all three seasons.

Regardless of the season of the visit, the opportunity to speak with staff was ranked as the most important service. In Summer, guided walks were more important than were video presentations.

- Churchill Visitor Study, 1996

5.2 A Vision for Visitor Opportunities in Wapusk National Park

In this, the first park management plan for Wapusk National Park, it is critical to describe a vision for visitor opportunities that will direct decision making for the foreseeable future. The directions outlined in the following section will permit visitor use at Wapusk National Park to evolve over time and meet the intention of the dedication clause contained in the National Parks Act:

The national parks of Canada are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, subject to this Act and the regulations, and the parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Wapusk National Park offers high quality opportunities for visitors to experience wilderness and wildlife at the edge of the tundra. These experiences are part of a regional service offer, with the park's opportunities positioned at the wilderness end of the spectrum. In Wapusk, visitors experience pristine natural environment, extraordinary wildlife viewing opportunities, and a strong sense of remoteness. Such opportunities within Wapusk are differentiated from yet complementary to those provided within the Churchill WMA and adjacent Crown lands.

From beginning to end of their stay, the overall experience for visitors to Wapusk consists of a complete package of elements that tell the stories of the land and its people. Visitors gain an appreciation and an understanding of the natural and cultural resources that are found within the region, and are inspired by this special place. Members of the community and local First Nations share with visitors their knowledge of

the land and their relationship with the land, creating enriched and inspired experiences.

Sustainable tourism is the basis for decision making at Wapusk. The natural and cultural resources from which the tourism industry gains its livelihood are protected for future generations. Conflicts among various visitor activities are minimized through careful site planning. Visitor opportunities and commercial ventures, facilities, and services are all subject to environmental assessment. Ongoing monitoring provides feedback to support adaptive management.

The planning of visitor opportunities incorporates a healthy respect for the risks found in the natural environment, and measures are taken to mitigate these risks. Visitors are always encouraged to use a licenced commercial operator when visiting the park. When licencing commercial operators, an emphasis is placed on management of risk and, in particular, avoidance of high-risk situations. Modest visitor facilities are developed within Wapusk to mitigate risks associated with travel in the remote northern wilderness setting and in polar bear country.

Wapusk National Park and the Churchill region continue to be internationally recognized for their rich resources, including the maternal denning locations for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population. Parks Canada collaborates with professional photographers, photojournalists, filmmakers, and other partners in the region to ensure that accurate and appropriate messages are presented to readers and viewers around the world.

5.3 An Integrated Service Offer: Churchill, Churchill Wildlife Management Area, And Wapusk National Park

Most of the visitors to Wapusk National Park of Canada will also be visitors to the town of Churchill and the Churchill WMA. Because there are no boundary markers to indicate which land areas are managed municipally, provincially, or federally and there are no entry gates to the park, few visitors will be aware of the beginning and the end of their Wapusk National Park experience.

Those commercial operators who deliver services in the Wapusk National Park normally require permits to operate in the adjacent Churchill WMA because overland access to the park is through the

WMA. Most visitors will begin and end their visit in Churchill, using the range of services and facilities available in the town.

The concept of a "spectrum" or "continuum" of visitor opportunities across three jurisdictions requires mutual understanding, respect, and strong cooperation. In this context, Wapusk National Park must be clearly integrated into the region and there must be complementary planning, coordinated management practices, and collaborative approaches for dealing with stakeholders.

Strategic Goal

Parks Canada, Province of Manitoba, Town of Churchill and First Nations co-operate to ensure all visitors to Churchill receive an educational, safe, authentic cultural experience and leave with a greater appreciation and respect for the region.

Objective

- for Parks Canada, the Province of Manitoba, the Town of Churchill and First Nations to cooperate on an ongoing basis in order to provide a range of visitor opportunities in a complementary fashion

Key Actions

1. Ongoing planning and management activities in Wapusk National Park through the Wapusk Management Board
2. Promote, with Province of Manitoba, the vision for visitor use in Wapusk National Park and encourage complementary management for adjacent Crown lands
3. Coordinate with Province of Manitoba on complementary licencing of commercial operations
4. Lead the development of a heritage presentation program that presents the natural and cultural history of the region, working in co-operation with Province of Manitoba, the Town of Churchill, First Nations, tour operators and other service providers

5.4 Visitor Opportunities

The vision for visitor opportunities in Wapusk sets the stage for describing the types of experiences and activities that will occur on the landscape of the park. In turn, the experiences and activities of visitors helps to define the facility and service requirements needed in the park, including opportunities for licencing commercial operations.

The Wapusk Management Board has worked with Parks Canada in a series of

workshops to examine the potential of a range of activities to meet the vision for Wapusk National Park. While, in principle, the activities listed in Figure 5.1 have a place in Wapusk National Park, it will be necessary to manage the impact on the resources of the park while ensuring that sustainable, high-quality experiences are offered. An environmental assessment will be completed for all proposed visitor activities.

5.5 Infrastructure Development in Wapusk National Park in Support of Visitor Opportunities

In order to support provision of the tourism opportunities outlined in Section 5.4, modest infrastructure development is planned within Wapusk National Park.

At suitable locations, Parks Canada will develop modest fenced enclosures that can be used by park staff, researchers and commercial operators to support hiking, camping, and other appropriate activities. The exact locations for these developments will be dependent upon reconnaissance and environmental assessment, but the greatest potential exists on inland beach ridges in the vicinity of White Whale River, Salmon Creek, Broad River and Owl River.

Models for the development and operation of a backcountry lodge will be researched by the Wapusk Management

Board. A backcountry lodge is defined as a rustic, small scale permanent fixed roof accommodation for visitor use. The areas to be investigated for this development will require an inland beach ridge large enough to support a range of activities. The exact location will depend upon reconnaissance, environmental assessment and opportunities for presenting the park.

These proposed developments shall not be developed in the following areas of the park:

- polar bear maternity denning areas
- polar bear coastal summer congregation areas
- caribou calving areas
- other areas of cultural or ecological significance

Figure 5.1. Visitor Opportunities in Wapusk National Park

Polar Bear viewing at Cape Churchill from tundra vehicle and camp

Prior to and since the establishment of Wapusk National Park, there has been tundra vehicle touring at Cape Churchill supported by a seasonal camp. The camp is established annually at the Cape for approximately 3 weeks, after the ground freezes. Visitors access the camp via tundra vehicle and experience a multi-day visit to the park. With appropriate controls, this activity is deemed an appropriate continuing activity in Wapusk National Park. This management plan limits this activity to the period from mid-November to mid-December annually. Access to Cape Churchill during this period shall not occur prior to freeze up.

Spring polar bear viewing from Wat'Chee Lodge by over-snow vehicle

Since the establishment of Wapusk National Park, tours have operated to the Fletcher Lake portion of the polar bear maternity denning area when the female bears and cubs emerge from their dens. As professional photographers are a key visitor group, this event reaches a world-wide audience. Understandably, there are strict limits on this tourist activity because of the sensitivity of polar bears to disturbance and the bears' minimal energy reserves when they emerge from the den.

Guided over-snow vehicle tours

Travel to and through Wapusk National Park in the winter and early spring offers visitors the opportunity to experience a dramatic landscape and to view wildlife, including herds of caribou. The First Nations and local residents envision guided over-snow vehicle trips within the park. Visitors' experiences would be enriched by exposure to the traditions and knowledge of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal local people who have an intimate familiarity with and historical attachment to the park lands. Tours through the park could link National Historic Sites, First Nation communities, lodges, outcamps, and the town of Churchill. Parks Canada will work with First Nations, local residents, and commercial tour operators to explore potential opportunities for this type of commercial operation.

Guided dog sledding tours by day and overnight

Travel by dog sled is a means of accessing the park and circulating within it without the use of a motorized vehicle. Dog sledding is an activity that links cultural traditions with exploration of park resources. Currently, there is some dog sledding activity near the town of Churchill and within the Churchill WMA. The extension of this activity into the park creates the opportunity for visitors to experience the eastern and northern areas of Wapusk National Park, particularly during late winter and early spring.

Guided hiking

Guided hiking tours could be organized, based upon the experiences of researchers walking from a camp to various study areas, and upon guided walks in the Churchill vicinity provided that the routes and numbers of participants are controlled. Hiking is an ideal way for visitors to experience the Park's heritage resources, including viewing the landforms that have resulted from isostatic rebound, the taiga - tundra transition, and the Hudson Bay coastal environment. Organized hiking tours provide an ideal venue for visitors to receive heritage messages from either Parks Canada staff or private tour operators. Hikers must be prepared for polar bear encounters, unexpected fog, sudden changes in weather, and unplanned overnight stays in the Park. Guided walks should, therefore, originate from and return to fenced compounds located within the park. Access to and from the park for guided hikes would be by aircraft. Hikers in the Park should be supervised to provide for their safety.

Guided overnight stays

Opportunities for visitors to stay in the park overnight require a sleeping area that is safe from polar bears. An enclosed sleeping area combined with day hikes to and from cultural, landscape, and wildlife viewing areas could enhance the variety of opportunities for experiencing Wapusk National Park. The construction of research camps has demonstrated that erecting and maintaining a bear proof site can facilitate safe overnight stays. Camping must be authorized by permit.

Aircraft access and tours

There has been considerable experience with the use of aircraft in support of visitor experiences. The management plan for Wapusk incorporates three specific visitor opportunities that utilize aircraft:

- overflights of Wapusk National Park and surrounding areas
- overflights of Wapusk National Park with opportunity to land and tour a designated inactive polar bear den
- aircraft transport in support of other in park experiences such as hiking, camping, and other appropriate visitor activities.

Limits to aircraft use are essential to protect the resources and the sense of wilderness in the park.

June canoe and kayak trips on Owl River

The Owl River is the only river in the park suitable for travel by canoe or kayak. Because of the natural hazards restrictions on travel must be imposed. Because there is a large concentration of polar bear maternity dens along this river and because of the fact that in July the bears leave the ice of Hudson Bay and travel inland for the summer, river travel after the first of July should not be permitted. Furthermore, camp fires should not be permitted at any time because of the risks posed to the peat lands that host the polar bear dens.

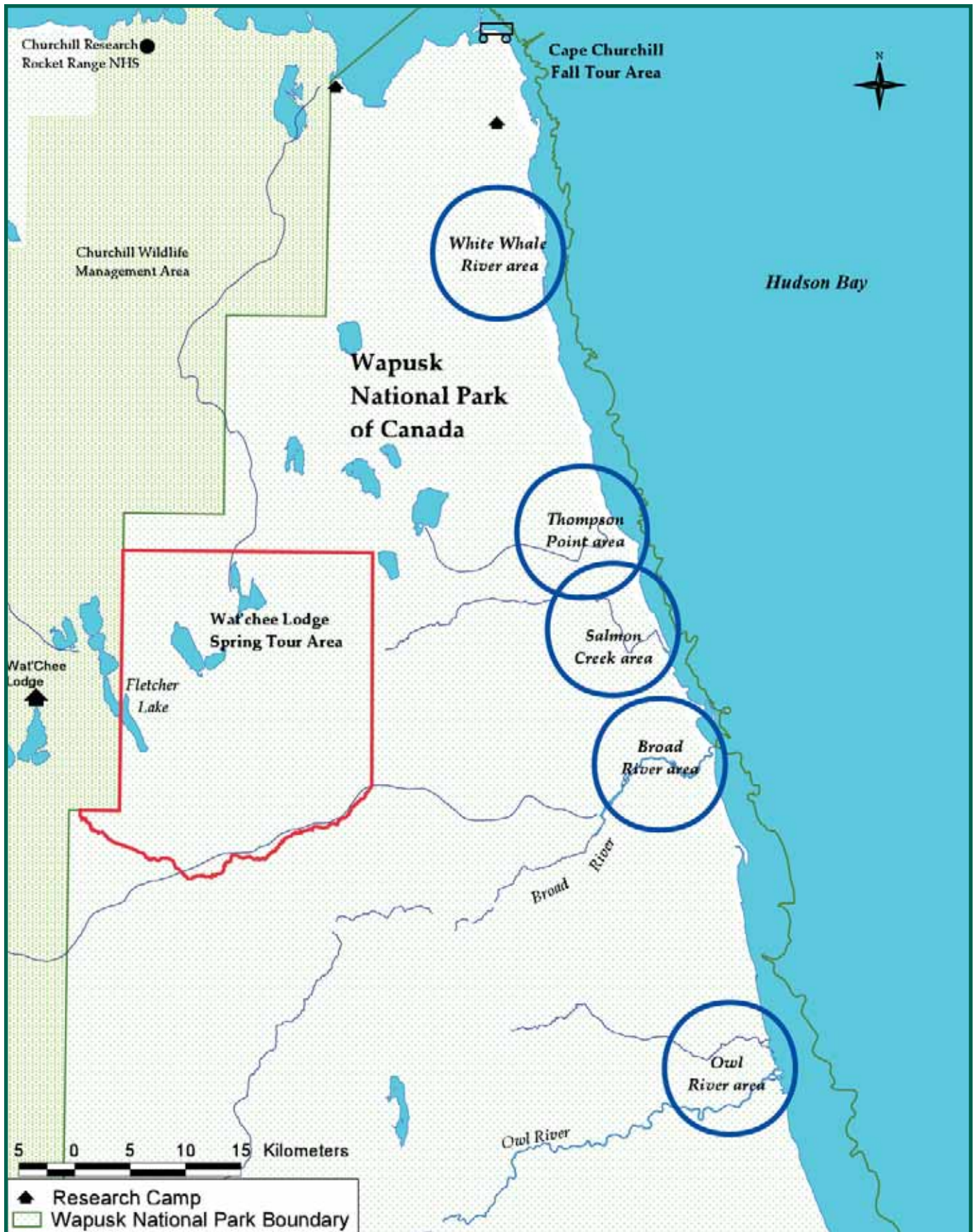


Figure 5.2. Potential Tourism Development Areas in Wapusk National Park of Canada.

5.5.1 Air Access and Overflights

Since the creation of Wapusk National Park, two helicopter companies and at least two fixed wing companies have operated with landing privileges by permit in Wapusk National Park; they support visitor access and touring, research, and park management requirements. The current situation results in a significant level of aircraft use, including overflights and landings within the park. For the life of this management plan, or until there is a better understanding of the impact of aircraft on the natural resources and the experiences of visitors, aircraft use will be capped at existing levels. Parks Canada will licence a maximum of 6 aircraft to operate tours with landings in Wapusk National Park.

Parks Canada does not have the ability to regulate flight operations in the airspace above a national park. However, it is within Parks Canada's authority to ensure flight operations do not impair ecological

integrity, do not disturb wildlife, and do not depreciate the experience of visitors.

Parks Canada will endeavour to work cooperatively with licenced air charter companies to set flight paths to protect and avoid sensitive areas, to set minimum altitudes for flight-seeing and wildlife viewing events, to establish limits for wildlife viewing, and to institute other limits as required. This approach to the management of flight operations over park lands continues the cooperative orientation that extends back to the decade prior to park's establishment.

Designated landing sites will not be set out by regulation. Landings and flight operations supporting tourism activities in the park will be authorized by permit issued by the Park Superintendent, as set out in the National Parks Air Access Regulations.

Strategic Goal

Parks Canada and aircraft operators cooperate to manage flight operations over Wapusk National Park to maintain ecological integrity and high quality visitor experiences

Objective

- to establish and implement standards for aircraft flights over Wapusk to maintain ecological integrity and high quality visitor experiences

Key Actions

Parks Canada will work with commercial air charter companies engaged in nature and wildlife viewing to set standards for flight operations that specify

- designated flight paths near sensitive areas
- minimum altitude over designated areas
- minimum altitude on flight-seeing tours
- minimum altitude for wildlife viewing events
- minimum approach distances to wildlife
- conditions requiring pilot to cease a wildlife viewing
- other conditions as may be required to prevent unnecessary disturbances to wildlife

5.6 Commercial Operations in Wapusk National Park

This management plan marks a turning point in the organization of the park's visitor activities that are supplied by private businesses. Throughout the period covered by the Interim Management Guidelines, restrictions and conditions on the letter of authority to operate in Wapusk have been referenced from the Province of Manitoba's Wildlife Management Area Use Permit. With the adoption of this management plan, Parks Canada will assume sole responsibility for licencing, for setting operating conditions, and for auditing businesses supplying visitor activity opportunities in Wapusk National Park of Canada.

Over the life of this management plan, Parks Canada will, with the advice and direction of the Wapusk Management Board, seek partner interest in establishing new visitor opportunities. The specific considerations that will guide the implementation of new visitor opportunities are:

- environmental and archaeological impact assessment for the development
- ability to mitigate anticipated impact
- public safety
- impact on other park users
- commitment to Aboriginal economic development
- quality of the development with respect to the value and standards of the park
- scale of the development and its ecological footprint
- educational, cultural, and aesthetic values
- consistency with Parks Canada's

mandate, principles and messaging.

Commercial licences to operate in Wapusk National Park fall into three categories. A Business Licence may be issued annually to commercial tour operators and guides who provide activities requiring no infrastructure on the land. A Licence of Occupation may be issued to commercial tour operators authorizing access to a specified location. The term of this licence may not exceed ten years, a time frame that will be applied only when there is substantial private sector investment justifying an amortization period of that length. A Lease for buildings or other infrastructure on the park lands, not to exceed 42 years, may be issued for a commercial operation. Licences of occupation and leases are awarded to qualified operators through a competitive bid process.

Business Licences may be issued to qualified applicants consistent with the *National Parks Business Regulations*. The visitor activity opportunities which fall under this category of licencing include all spring polar bear viewing from Wat'Chee Lodge, guided tours, hikes, and overnight stays, and aircraft assisted tours. Business licence applications will be managed through an initial call for proposals followed by consideration of applications on a first-come, first-served basis. The issuance of business licences will be subject to the following limitations for the life of the management plan:

- Over-snow vehicle tours north of Owl River are to be limited to a maximum of three tour operators during the life of this management

plan. The number of vehicles each operator is permitted to operate is to be limited to five. Additional vehicles will be considered based on an environmental assessment of the activity and on the number of vehicles requested.

- Guided hiking in Wapusk is to be limited by the capacity of the infrastructure required to maintain public safety.
- Viewing polar bears emerging from maternity dens in spring by accessing the denning area by oversnow vehicles or aircraft will be limited to one operation based at Wat'Chee Lodge in the Churchill WMA.

Licences of Occupation may be issued to qualified applicants subject to procedures set out in *National Parks Lease and Licence of Occupation Regulations* and Treasury Board policies. Any visitor activity requiring the establishment of a camp or other temporary occupation of park lands fall into this category of licencing. The only existing visitor activity in this category is the camp at Cape Churchill for fall polar bear viewing. Applications for licences of occupation will be managed through a call for proposals in a competitive bid process. The issuance of licences of occupation is subject to the following limitations for the life of the management plan:

- Polar bear viewing at Cape Churchill from tundra vehicle and camp is to be limited to a single operation consisting of a camp and a maximum of four associated tundra vehicles.

Leases may be issued to qualified applicants subject to procedures set out in *National Parks Lease and Licence of*

Occupation Regulation and Treasury Board policies.

Parks Canada's commitment to Aboriginal economic development in the national park is firm. This commitment will be implemented in Wapusk National Park through the following measures:

1. existing Aboriginal businesses operating in Wapusk, which meet licencing criteria will be issued a licence to continue operations in the park;
2. the region from Black Bear Creek to Owl River is reserved for the life of this management plan for proposals from local Aboriginal businesses and organizations; and
3. development of a back country lodge is restricted to Aboriginal businesses or public/Aboriginal partnerships.

Some commercial opportunities within the Wapusk National Park require or benefit from facility developments located in the adjacent Churchill Wildlife Management Area. This infrastructure supports visitor experiences, making the park's operation feasible. Accordingly, consideration of provincial licencing arrangements will be brought to bear on the licencing of operators in the park to ensure complementary planning and management.

All commercial operators have a responsibility to work with Parks Canada and its partners to protect the natural and cultural resources of Wapusk National Park. It is the intention of Parks Canada to build on this responsibility by developing, with commercial operators, a code of ethics and practices that promotes and rewards sustainable environmental practices, quality learning opportunities for visitors, and a commitment to excellence.

5.6 Commercial Operations in Wapusk National Park (continued)

Strategic Goal

Licensing commercial operations follows Government of Canada and Parks Canada policies and implements Aboriginal economic development objectives

Objectives

1. to ensure that the allocation of commercial licences is accomplished in a transparent manner
2. to ensure that opportunities exist for local Aboriginal businesses and organizations to gain economic benefit from Wapusk National Park
3. to ensure that licensing requirements are coordinated with the Province of Manitoba
4. to ensure benefits accrue to the local and regional economies

Key Actions

1. Establish and promote an open process, complete with evaluation criteria, for calls for proposals for commercial licences
2. Work with Fox Lake Cree Nation and York Factory First Nation in exploring opportunities for commercial operations within Wapusk National Park
3. Reserve areas of the park and opportunities for Aboriginal economic development
4. Develop a code of practices in co-operation with the Province of Manitoba and tour companies operating in the Churchill region, defining and committing the industry and its guests to maintaining sustainable tourism practices and exemplary ethical conduct
5. Establish criteria for tourism proposals that demonstrate commitment to local and regional economic development



5.7 Visitor Safety

The Wapusk-Churchill region is a high-risk environment. The climate is harsh with extremely cold winters, high winds, and lack of shelter on the tundra. The terrain places limitations on travel. In summer, the vast wetlands and innumerable streams present barriers to vehicles and hikers, and the weather can change rapidly under the influence of Hudson Bay. In winter, snow and ice create difficult travel conditions. On the open tundra, prevailing winds sculpt the snow into waves and ridges and pack it into a concrete-like consistency. From July to December polar bears pose threats to human safety.

Canoeing or kayaking on Hudson Bay along the Wapusk shoreline is not recommended. The risk to the public due to water conditions, shoreline conditions, broad inter-tidal zones, weather, and polar bears far outweigh the benefits of the experience. Similarly, canoeing on rivers within the park when polar bears are in the maternity denning area should not be permitted. The riverbanks provide ideal denning habitat and many such dens are occupied every year.

Wapusk's high-risk environment requires that provisions be made to ensure visitor safety in the park. The long history of scientific research in the park has informed us of the basic principles and methods for the safety of visitors. Safety standards for visitors to Wapusk will be based on the experience of people living and working on the land in all seasons.

The Nester 1 Research Camp has operated continuously from 1969. During this period, people have travelled by foot from the camp to their study areas. Every year there have been several encounters between polar bears and researchers, yet none of the encounters have resulted in a human

injury or in the requirement of killing a polar bear. This exemplary record is the result of good planning and on preparation for encountering a polar bear. The key elements contributing to this record are:

- bear awareness education for every individual in the camp
- designated bear monitor for each excursion from the camp
- bear deterrent capability
- bear encounter plan
- armed emergency response capability
- activity and travel registration with camp manager
- supervision of the personnel in camp by the camp manager
- minimizing bear attractants
- bear-proof fence around the camp

Development of the tourist industry began around 1980, and to date tens of thousands of visitors have been escorted on polar bear viewing tours and walking tours, or have visited lodges on the Hudson Bay coast. The safety provisions used by the operators are based on those developed by the researchers in co-operation with Manitoba Conservation and include:

- bear deterrent capability
- bear encounter plan
- armed emergency response capability
- bear monitor for walking tours
- supervision of the group
- liaison with government agencies on polar bear risk

Safety provisions related to the climate are required. The existing tour operators have developed their own standards for meeting this need, and they ensure that:

- each group is supervised
- each visitor is properly outfitted with winter clothing
- each excursion is guided
- there is rescue capability through multiple vehicles on each excursion.

5.7 Visitor Safety (*continued*)

Strategic Goal

Visitor safety is an integral component of activities and commercial tourism businesses in Wapusk National Park of Canada.

Objectives

1. to ensure that public safety is maintained in commercial tourism
2. to ensure that visitor risk is managed
3. to provide a response capability in co-operation with local agencies, recognizing the park's remoteness

Key Actions

1. Develop a visitor registration system
2. Develop and implement a strategy for the delivery of visitor safety messages through a variety of means
3. Develop and implement standards for tours that draw upon the experiences of researchers and traditional local users and upon the experience gained from prior tours in the adjacent Churchill Wildlife Management Area
4. Develop a limited visitor safety infrastructure
5. Review the public safety plan annually and revise it as necessary.

5.8 Revenues

Parks Canada has a national fee structure that covers both visitors to and commercial operations in national parks and historic sites. Persons or companies deriving a benefit from the park are expected to pay a fee for accessing the park lands. All revenues from fees are retained by the Parks Canada Agency, Manitoba Field Unit and directly applied to the cost of services and programs provided. The revenue policy was not implemented in Wapusk at the time of its establishment. However, during the term of this management plan, the policy will

be implemented. Fees will include park entrance, business licence, and other fees specified in Parks Canada regulations and policies.

Revenues are not expected to meet the cost of park operations because the park's remoteness and short tourism season will limit the number of tourists and the range of activities in which they can partake. Individual visitor fees will be collected by Parks Canada directly and by commercial operators for remission to Parks Canada.



MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

SECTION 6.0



Parks Canada
Parcs Canada

Canada

6.0 Management Partnerships

The *Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park* established the spirit and the mechanism for involving the residents of the region in the management of Wapusk. The Agreement was made between Canada and Manitoba and witnessed by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and representatives from the Town of

Churchill, Fox Lake Cree Nation, York Factory First Nation. The Agreement clearly defined the co-operative manner in which the park is to be managed. The Wapusk National Park of Canada Management Board has been structured to represent the two levels of government and the communities that have an interest in the park and its adjacent lands.

6.1 Wapusk National Park Management Board

The board is an effective forum for park management. However, it cannot be expected to fulfill all the requirements of maintaining the effective partnerships that

were formed with the establishment of the park. There will be an ongoing need for maintaining effective communications and relationships among interested parties.

Strategic Goal

First Nations and residents of the region have a meaningful role in making decisions which affect the park

Objectives

1. to maintain effective participation by constituencies represented on the Wapusk National Park Management Board
2. to maintain communications between Parks Canada and constituencies represented on the Wapusk National Park Management Board
3. to establish and maintain management practices for the Wapusk park that are complementary to those used for management of adjacent Crown lands

Key Actions

1. Hold regular meetings of the Wapusk Management Board
2. Hold regular consultations with Fox Lake Cree Nation and York Factory First Nation
3. Hold regular consultations with the Province of Manitoba and the Town of Churchill
4. Conduct regular communications on important issues to the public via newsletter, local media, and the Parks Canada web site
5. Solicit public input on important issues through questionnaires, open houses, workshops, and the park web site
6. Host open house workshops and meetings on issues important to First Nations' communities
7. Hold regular consultations with the businesses that provide facilities and opportunities in the park.

6.2 Research Partnerships

For over forty years, world-renowned research has been conducted on polar bears and other natural phenomena on the lands now incorporated into the Wapusk park and on its adjacent lands. Scientists have been attracted to this region because of the richness of this northern environment and because of Churchill's accommodation, transportation, and research support facilities. Science investigation in Wapusk will not be restricted to conducting the research necessary for managing the park's resources. Rather, the research will encompass studies related to the understanding and management of the broader ecosystem represented in Wapusk.

Wapusk researchers, like local residents, are highly self-reliant. They are supported by aircraft, by the infrastructure of research camps, and by the training to ensure that they can cope with the rigours of living and working in Wapusk. Over the period that research has been conducted in the Wapusk region,



strategies have been developed to cope with the challenges that the area presents. The establishment and servicing of camps, the planning and construction of transportation logistics, and the strategies for coping with weather and polar bears



have required unique solutions that have evolved over time. Today, scientists regularly visit the park and conduct their studies in relative comfort and safety.

There are two permanent research camps in Wapusk, both established in the late 1960s to facilitate research on geese. The camp known as Nester 1 is located about ten km south of Cape Churchill and is owned and operated by the Province of Manitoba. It has been the base camp for research on Canada geese, polar bears, caribou, botanical research, and many other studies of plants and wildlife in Wapusk. Nester 2, owned by the University of British Columbia, is located at the mouth of the Mast River in southwest La Perouse Bay. Snow geese and salt marsh ecology have been the primary research foci of scientists using this research camp and many studies by graduate students have been conducted there. These camps will be maintained and operated within standards set by the Canada National Parks Act and Regulations.

The park establishment agreement, identifies two research agencies as lead agencies who will be given first consideration for contracted research; Churchill Northern Studies Centre (CNSC) and Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO).

6.2 Research Partnerships

Strategic Goal

Parks Canada's responsibility for maintaining and monitoring ecological integrity in the park is enhanced through partnerships with researchers in the park and brings science and traditional knowledge to the local residents and visitors

Objectives

1. to maintain research activities and camps in the park
2. to support science in the park as per the Park Establishment Agreement
3. to actively involve agencies identified in the Park Establishment Agreement in research conducted in the park

Key Actions

1. Co-operatively develop research initiatives in order to assemble the necessary information to manage park lands, resources, and visitor activities
2. Work with the scientific community to communicate research results to park visitors, local residents, and First Nations
3. Implement a formal review and approval process for scientific research permits by the Wapusk Management Board
4. Develop leases for the two research camps in Wapusk.



6.3 Tourism Partners

Our partners involved in bringing visitors to the area include Via Rail, OmniTrax, Travel Manitoba, the Churchill Chamber of Commerce, the area's commercial tour operators and service providers. The partnerships will be visible to the general public through the Via Rail and Travel Manitoba operations that are housed in the Parks Canada Visitors Centre, through dissemination of partners' brochures in the Visitors Centre, and through programming.

For most visitors, the local tour operators provide the first point of contact in planning a visit to Churchill. They are often the primary source of information about Wapusk and offer



access to the park. Developing and sustaining strong partnerships between Parks Canada and the tour operators is vital to generating high quality visitor experiences. The relationship facilitates consistent delivery of Parks Canada messages and accurate information about the park.

Strategic Goal

Strong relationships between tourism partners and Parks Canada are developed and sustained

Objectives

1. Integrated and complementary programming with tourism partners
2. Strong Parks Canada Agency presence in Churchill
3. Develop messages with tourism partners that are accurate and consistent
4. Enhance co-operative marketing efforts in the region
5. Raise profile of Wapusk National Park

Key Actions

1. Develop and maintain message package for tourism partners
2. Develop and deliver programs on Wapusk to tour operators
3. Develop programs for visitors that are integrated with tour operator programming
4. Deliver Parks Canada programs in tour operator venues (i.e. on tour buses, camps, etc.)
5. Develop marketing partnerships. Explore key marketing venues

*"We were told, in the past,
not to lose our way of life,
our heritage, to practise it always.
Not to lose touch with our culture."*

Richard Beardy
Voices from Hudson Bay



THE PARK ESTABLISHMENT AGREEMENT

**ABORIGINAL PEOPLE,
TRADITIONAL LOCAL USERS,
AND LOCAL RESIDENTS**

SECTION 7.0



Parks Canada
Parcs Canada

Canada

7. The Park Establishment Agreement: Aboriginal People, Traditional Local Users and Local Residents

The Park Establishment Agreement defines access and use benefits for Wapusk. The management plan does not affect any of these defined users or their access.

7.1 Aboriginal People

Treaty and Aboriginal rights are respected within Wapusk National Park. Activities which support these rights, such as gathering firewood, constructing cabins or using an all-terrain vehicle are also permitted as long as they fall within National Park or conservation objectives

and do not compromise public safety. There is no expiry on these rights or activities in the park.

Land selections to fulfill Treaty land entitlement obligations may be made by First Nations in the park.

7.2 Traditional Local Users

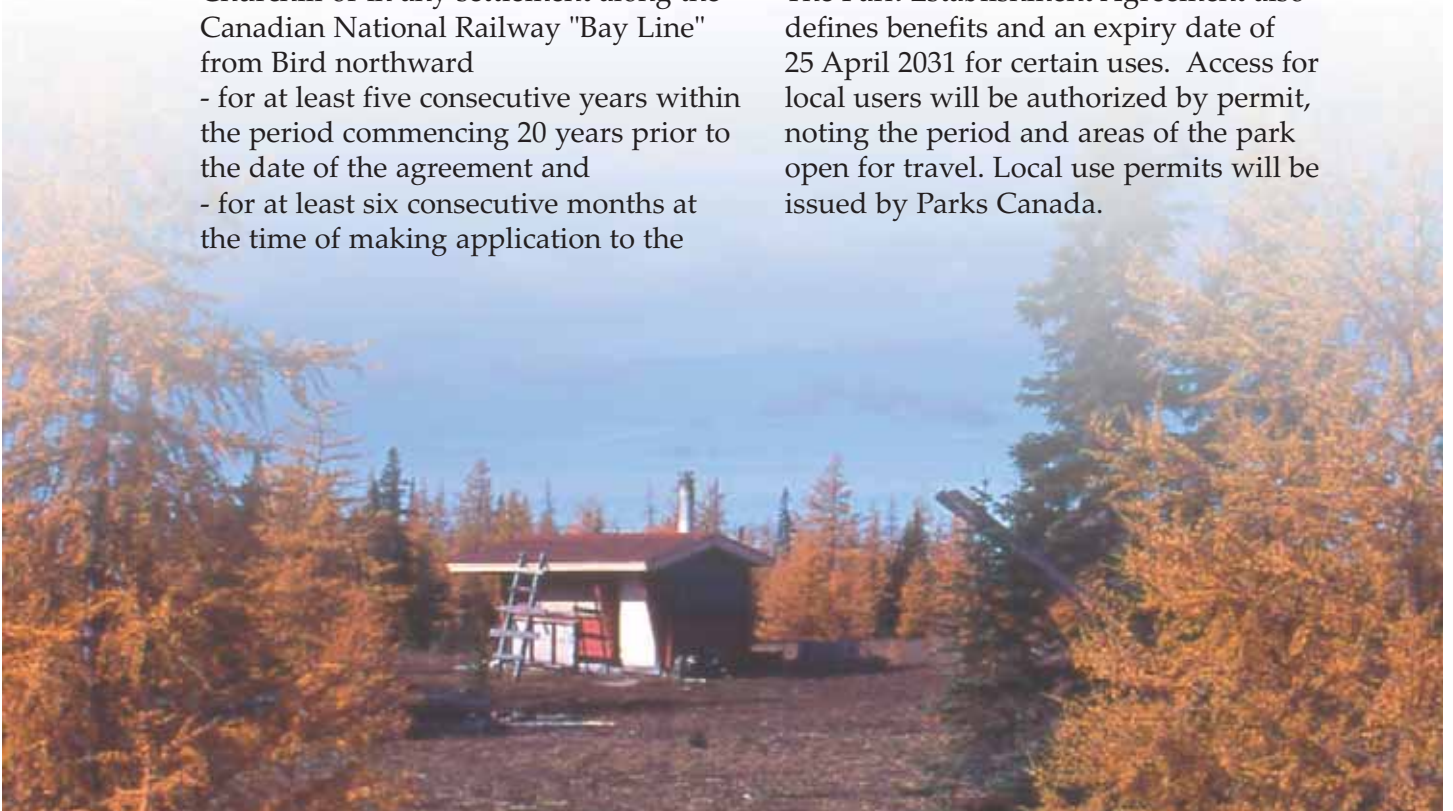
Section 14 of the Park Establishment Agreement defines traditional local users as;

- Any person who has resided
- in the Local Government District of Churchill or in any settlement along the Canadian National Railway "Bay Line" from Bird northward
- for at least five consecutive years within the period commencing 20 years prior to the date of the agreement and
- for at least six consecutive months at the time of making application to the

Management Board for recognition as a "local user"

- and any person who is a child of a person described above

The Park Establishment Agreement also defines benefits and an expiry date of 25 April 2031 for certain uses. Access for local users will be authorized by permit, noting the period and areas of the park open for travel. Local use permits will be issued by Parks Canada.



7.2 Traditional Local Users

14 (2) (a) "Traditional local use" means

- i gathering berries, deadwood, flowers and other natural products of the land for domestic use;
- ii hunting of caribou, Rangifer spp., for domestic consumption;
- iii trapping, in the community trapping area;
- iv trapping, on registered traplines;
- v carrying of firearms for protection; and
- vi use of cabins for purposes of recreation or the uses described in subparagraphs (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv)

14 (14) All local use permits issued for any of the local uses described in subparagraphs (2)(a)(ii), (iii) and (iv) shall expire no later than thirty-five (35) years after the date of this agreement and no local use permit authorizing the said use shall be issued thereafter.

15 (3) Holders of local-use permits issued pursuant to Section 14 shall have access to the Park Land by over-snow vehicle and all-terrain vehicle, while those not holding such a permit may have access to the Park Land by over-snow vehicle only.

- Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement for Wapusk National Park

7.3 Local Residents

A local resident is a person who meets the same residency requirement as a Traditional Local User, but who has not resided in the area for 5 years within the 20 year period prior to the signing of the Park Establishment Agreement. For example, a person who moved to Churchill in January 2004, but never lived in Churchill before that time (or any community Bird and Northward along the Bay Line), would qualify as a local resident after permanently residing in Churchill for 6 months.

The Park Establishment Agreement allows local residents access into the park



by oversnow vehicle but no other benefits such as hunting or carrying a firearm for protection. Local residents will be required to obtain a permit from Parks Canada for park access.

7.4 Uses on Park Lands - Permits and Activities

The following table defines permit requirements described in the Park Establishment Agreement and Canada National Parks Act.

	Aboriginal Person	Traditional Local User	Local Resident	Other Visitor
Snowmobile ⁴ Access	No Permit Required	TLU Permit ¹	PCA Permit ²	Prohibited, except on guided tour
ATV Access	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	Prohibited	Prohibited
Carry or Discharge Firearm	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	Prohibited	Prohibited
Gather herbs, berries or firewood	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	Prohibited	Prohibited
Trapping	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	Prohibited	Prohibited
Cabin Use	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	Prohibited, except as guest of license/permit holder ³	Prohibited, except as guest of license/permit holder ³
Camping	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	PCA Permit	PCA Permit
Fishing	No Permit Required	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
Recreational Outing	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	PCA Permit	Prohibited, except on Guided Tour
Commercial Use ⁵	PCA Business, Photography and/or Other License	PCA Business, Photography and/or Other License	PPCA Business, Photography and/or Other License	PPCA Business, Photography and/or Other License
Enter Park	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	PCA Permit	PCA Permit
Hunt Caribou	No Permit Required	TLU Permit	Prohibited	Prohibited
Hunt Other Species	No Permit Required	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited
Zoning	Does Not Apply	Does not apply for defined activities	Applies	Applies
Research	PCA Research Permit	PCA Research Permit	PCA Research Permit	PCA Research Permit
Other Activities	Consult PCA	Consult PCA	Consult PCA	Consult PCA

1. Traditional Local User Permit
2. Permit issued by Parks Canada under various regulations
3. Parks Canada Licence of Occupation, Lease, Research Permit or TLU Permit
4. Snowmobile and over-snow vehicle means a vehicle that is designed to
 - (a) be driven by any means other than muscular power,
 - (b) run on tracks or skis or both, and
 - (c) operate on snow or ice.
5. means any trade, industry, employment, occupation, activity or special event carried on in a park for profit, gain, fund raising or commercial promotion, and includes an undertaking carried on in a park by a charitable organization, or by an organization or individual on a non-profit basis.



OUR LAND, OUR STORIES

SECTION 8.0



8. Our Land, Our Stories: Communicating Wapusk

The main venue for heritage presentation of Wapusk is the Visitor Reception Centre in Churchill. This facility can accommodate heritage presentations by First Nations and other local communities and the scientific community. The location of the Visitor Reception Centre enables target audiences to be accommodated.

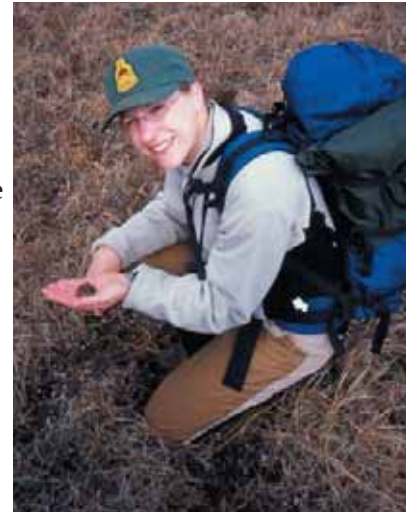
Most of the visitors access the park through the commercial tour operators. Once inside the park, heritage presentations are delivered by the staff of commercial tour companies. These presentations present an opportunity for Parks Canada to work with the private sector, First Nations and with tour operators to develop and deliver a first class presentation on the park and area.

There are a number of key messages that must be delivered on Wapusk:

- Parks are a family of protected areas that represent all natural regions of Canada
- Wapusk represents the Hudson-James Lowlands
- Historically and currently, people are part of Wapusk
- Wapusk's wildlife is abundant, yet vulnerable
- Ecological integrity is maintained by the keepers of the land
- Wapusk is a place to learn
- Wapusk National Park, York Factory National Historic Site, and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site are first places of contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans

The targets for the key messages are diverse, but the first priorities are local residents and First Nations. These people must assume pride of ownership of the park, know the history of the park, and view the park as

a place to maintain their cultural and historical ties. They understand the opportunities the park offers to learn, to explore, and to develop the regional economy, and they are the first line of defence for protecting the ecological integrity of the park.



The second priority for a target audience is visitors to Churchill and Wapusk who come to explore our northern heritage and the origins of our country, both of which are represented by Wapusk and the two National Historic Sites. In addition, Wapusk represents the accessible north.

The third target priority is the print and broadcast media. Wapusk and Churchill attract a large contingent of the world's news and documentary media, and the significant international exposure they provide achieves a multiplier effect. These visitors are ambassadors for Wapusk, helping us tell our story as stewards and keepers of the land.

The fourth audience is the visitor coming into contact with Wapusk through the park's outreach programs. This visitor enters Wapusk on the Park's website, by watching a television broadcast featuring the park or by magazine articles on the park. These visitors enjoy a Wapusk experience without leaving their home.

Strategic Goal

Our Land, Our Stories: the history of the country is written on the land. This is the continuing theme of the heritage of Wapusk. The heritage of Wapusk includes its natural landscape and the rich history of the people on the land. The success in the presentation of this heritage can be measured by the number of visitors at the Visitor Reception Centre, the increased number of tour guides who stop at the Centre, and feedback from the public.

Objectives

1. to maintain a high quality heritage presentation at the Visitor Reception Centre
2. to foster high quality heritage presentation by the private sector
3. to engage First Nations in the presentation of their heritage
4. to establish a presence in the park
5. to enhance Wapusk's international profile
6. to go beyond the borders of the park in our heritage presentation

Key Actions

1. Develop additional displays and video vignettes for the Visitor Reception Centre
2. Engage the Manitoba Tourism Education Council's eco-tourism guide training program to develop a module relevant to Wapusk
3. Develop presentation programs in co-operation with the local tour operators
4. Develop and implement guided tours near Churchill that present the land & history of Wapusk
5. Develop and implement guided tours in Wapusk
6. Facilitate First Nation heritage presentations
7. Facilitate international news and documentary media: film, print, and interviews
8. Develop and maintain a Wapusk park web site.



8. Our Land, Our Stories: Communicating Wapusk (*continued*)

Strategic Goal

Parks Canada, Province of Manitoba and Town of Churchill co-operate to ensure all visitors to Churchill receive an educational, safe, authentic cultural experience and leave with a greater appreciation and respect for the park region

Although only a small portion of visitors arriving at Churchill will enter Wapusk National Park, every visitor to Churchill will have a number of options to choose from if they are interested in experiencing Wapusk and its adjacent attractions. These options include a visit to the Visitor Reception Centre, a visit to Wapusk, a tour of the National Historic Sites, and a variety of natural history and wildlife viewing tours in the Churchill WMA.

It will not be necessary to be physically in the park in order to receive a rewarding experience and gain an appreciation of the park. In order to present an integrated set of opportunities, it will be necessary to have close co-ordination among Parks Canada personnel and those working with existing visitor facilities, tour companies, and other agencies.

Objective

- to co-ordinate visitor programs among Parks Canada, Province of Manitoba, Town of Churchill, and First Nations to provide a range of experiences that will offer visitors a consistent and complete interpretation of the park's history and attributes

Key Actions

1. Position Wapusk as the least developed and most wilderness-featured area on a continuum of visitor activities provided by the area's visitor service infrastructure
2. Lead the development of interpretation programs in co-operation with the Province of Manitoba, the Town of Churchill, First Nations, and tour operators and their associations
3. Promote the Visitor Reception Centre as a major point of interest for local tours
4. Promote the role of the Visitor Reception Centre as the focal point for sharing Wapusk stories of Aboriginal people, researchers, local residents, and visitors



ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

SECTION 9.0



9. Administration and Operations

Wapusk National Park is jointly administered with other northern Manitoba National Historic Sites (among them, Prince of Wales Fort and York Factory). The base of operations is Churchill.

Wapusk National Park of Canada has a management board. The board considers matters related to the planning, management, and operation of the park. Since the park's establishment, the Wapusk Management Board has grown in confidence and capability to fulfill its role in the management and operation of the park.

Wapusk is a remote wilderness area; therefore it has few visitors during the year. Most visitors stay for a brief period, typically for less than an hour as they take an aerial tour to a polar bear maternity den. The

intention is to maintain Wapusk as a largely undeveloped area. Future developments will accommodate visitor safety and enjoyment of the park, guided by the Wapusk Management Board. Monitoring activities and the park ecosystem is essential to achieving the goals of the park establishment agreement and the management board. The preceding sections of this document demonstrate that monitoring will be achieved by engaging and partnering with many individuals and organizations. It cannot be achieved by Parks Canada staff alone.

The Park Establishment Agreement contains provisions respecting staffing and procurement. The Park Establishment Agreement will continue to be implemented and progress made to reaching its objectives.



ZONING

SECTION 10.0

10. Zoning

Parks Canada's Guiding Principles and Operating Procedures specifies five levels of zoning that provide a broad framework for all national parks. Zoning is used to apply area-specific policy and program management and to provide the means of planning and providing for a range of visitor experiences, while maintaining ecological integrity. Three of the five zones are applicable in Wapusk. The two zones that are not applicable are developed outdoor recreation and park services. There will be no development of facilities and services requiring these zones in Wapusk. The applicable zones, presented in Figure 10.1, are Zones I, II and III.

Zone I - Special Preservation: Specific areas or features that deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, threatened, or endangered natural or cultural features. Preservation is the key consideration.

Zone II - Wilderness: extensive areas that are good representations of a natural region and that will be conserved in a wilderness state. This zone offers opportunities for visitors to experience first hand, through outdoor recreation activities, the park's natural and cultural heritage values. The area is large enough for visitors to experience remoteness and solitude.

Zone III - Natural Environment: areas managed as natural environments, which provide visitors with the opportunity to experience the park's natural and cultural heritage values through outdoor recreation activities.

Zone IV - Outdoor Recreation: limited areas which are capable of accommodating a broad range of opportunities for understanding, appreciation and

enjoyment of the parks heritage values and related essential services and facilities. The defining feature of these areas is direct access by motorized vehicle.

Zone V - Park Services: communities in existing national parks which contain a concentration of visitor services and support facilities.

Zoning is specified in the park's management plan. Any changes to zoning constitute a major amendment of the management plan and will require a significant review of the plan to examine the issues associated with the zoning change. The review must include an environmental assessment and allow for public participation in the decision-making process. The ability to change zoning is not guaranteed. Wapusk is a northern park, the uniqueness of which requires careful application of the broad zoning framework. In this first management plan, the park has been broadly zoned to allow for the development of visitor opportunities. Future study and research could lead to rezoning of unique, threatened or endangered features.

Due to the absence of roads to and within the park, visitors wishing to physically access the park will be directed to existing privately owned tour businesses. Further development of tourism opportunities by the First Nations and tour companies in the area has only reached the conceptual planning stages. The Wapusk Management Board is not prepared to direct proponents of future development projects to specific locations in the park. Rather, the proponents will be directed to general areas, offered the opportunity to make their own assessment of park lands, and to submit proposals to Parks Canada for review by the Wapusk Management Board.

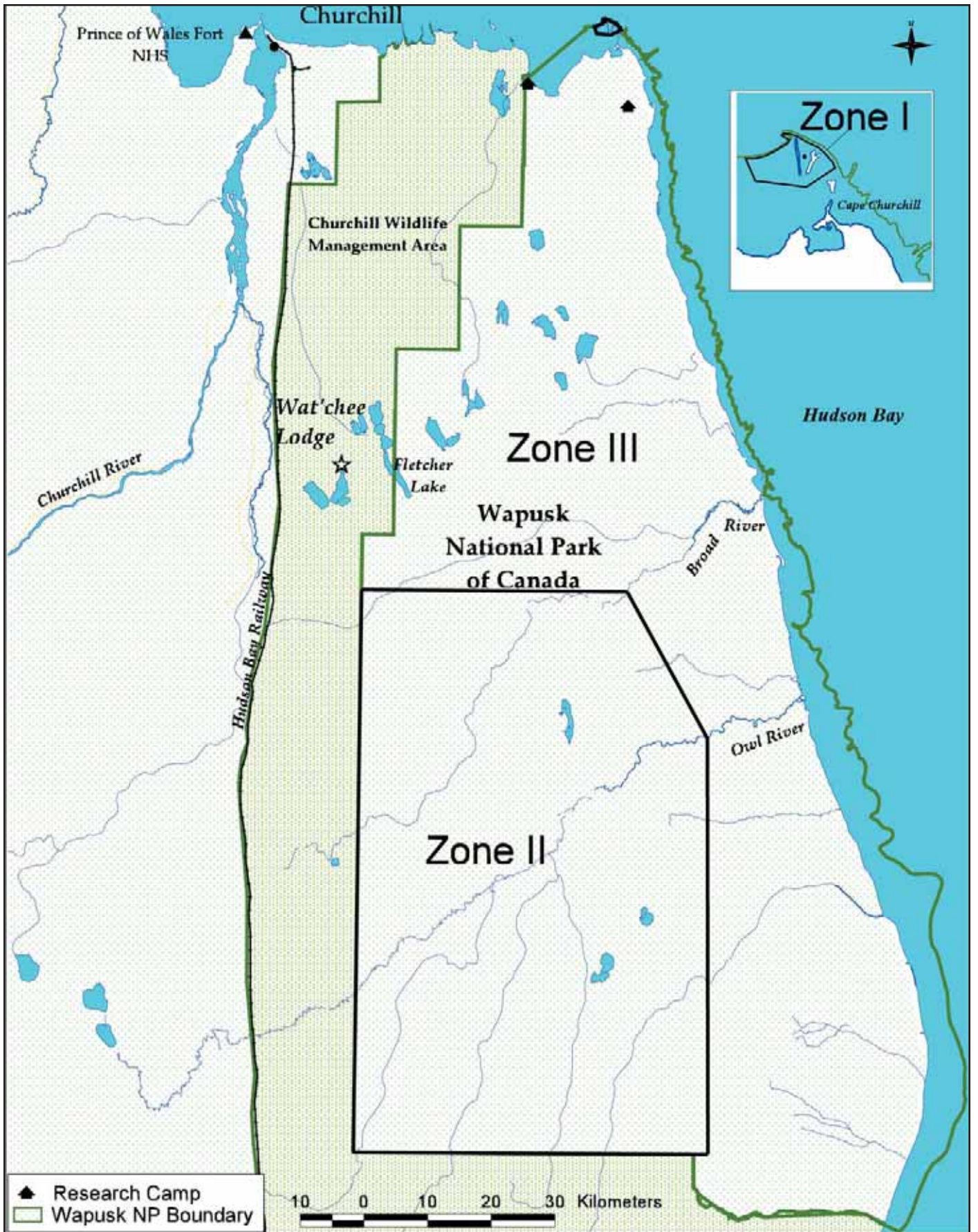


Figure 10.1 - Wapusk National Park of Canada zoning plan

10. Zoning (*continued*)

Parks Canada's policy prohibits the use of motorized vehicles in Zone II (wilderness) areas. The intent of the Park Establishment Agreement and the management board's position is that the whole park should be managed as wilderness and also to facilitate access to and circulation within the park by over-snow vehicles, especially by local users. However, Zone III is required to allow the use of over the snow vehicles. That said, the number and uses of over-snow vehicles in Zone III will be restricted, consistent with maintaining the wilderness character of the park; restrictions will apply to local users and to commercial tourism operations.

The Park Establishment Agreement and the realities of the land, including its lack of landmarks, its snow conditions, and its remoteness, do not allow for zoning of narrow corridors for motorized vehicle use. In order to meet these conditions, broad areas will be zoned as Zone III.

Designated wilderness areas will not be defined during the first period of the management plan. During this period of developing visitor opportunities and with rudimentary knowledge of the park ecosystems, the Wapusk Management Board is not prepared to recommend an area.



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SECTION 11.0



11. Environmental Assessment

The *Wapusk National Park of Canada Management Plan* was subjected to an environmental assessment according to *The Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals (2004)*. The environmental screening was conducted on a draft of the management plan, to ensure that the environmental effects of the initiatives contained in the plan were fully considered before any irrevocable decisions had been taken.

More visitors, researchers and local users are likely to visit the park as a result of the implementation of this plan. Potential effects from their activities include damage/ destruction of cultural resources, damage/ destruction of vegetation, solid waste and wildlife habituation.

To mitigate for these effects, all people entering the park will be encouraged to consider themselves "keepers of the land" and to implement mitigation practices that will protect the land. The various visitor activities may have additional environmental effects such as: contamination of water quality, spread of disease, introduction of exotic species, destruction of wildlife and habitat alienation. To minimize these impacts and ensure mitigation is implemented, all visitors will be required to travel in the park with a guide. Mitigation to address these impacts will be identified in individual environmental assessments of each business licence for guiding operations.

The facilities proposed for construction in the park will also have impacts on the environment. These facilities are conceptual in nature and will require further assessment under the *Canadian*

Environmental Assessment Act when the specific proposals have been developed. The required mitigation, surveillance and follow-up will be developed when the proposals progress from the conceptual phase to the design and implementation phase.

Cumulative effects of the actions in the management plan with projects occurring around the park are not likely to be significant due to the few residual effects and the few projects around the park. Damage or destruction of vegetation and associated soil and permafrost damage will be residual after mitigation. Similar impacts may occur from other projects around the park; however, the area impacted will be very small. Similarly wildlife habitat alienation due to implementation of the management plan will be residual after mitigation. Habitat alienation also occurs around the park due to projects such as the railway, lodges, and activities on the land. These effects will not likely be significant because the amount of habitat alienation is very small compared with the area of available habitat.

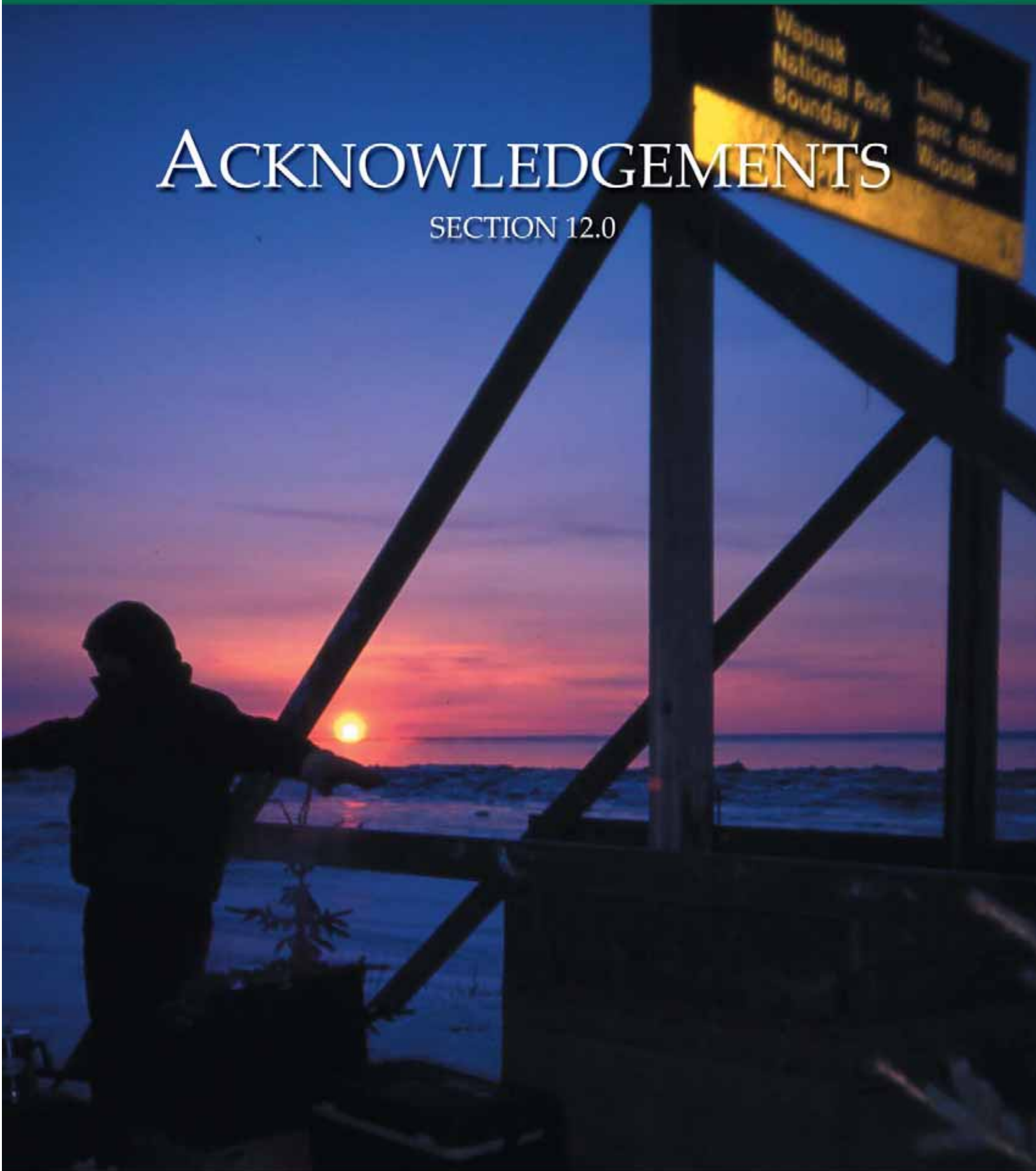
The management plan commits to research and monitoring in a number of areas. These actions will ensure that any impacts can be identified and mitigation implemented quickly. Furthermore, they will provide information to enable park managers to predict and mitigate impacts in the future.

The environmental screening has determined that the potentially adverse environmental effects from the proposals in *Wapusk National Park of Canada Management Plan* can be mitigated to insignificance.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SECTION 12.0



12. Acknowledgements

The development of this management plan has involved the dedicated efforts, advice, and experience of many people. Their help is greatly appreciated; their reward is the creation of Wapusk National Park of Canada. This plan has a strong voice of the Aboriginal people of the area. York Factory First Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation deserve special recognition not only for their work on this management plan but also for their acceptance of the park and its visitors. Thanks go to past and present members of the Wapusk National Park Management Board; to all the members of the early steering committee and working groups who worked towards establishing the park; to the staff of Parks Canada's Western Canada Service Centre; to the staff of Manitoba Conservation, Northeast Region; and to the staff of Wapusk National Park of Canada.

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*When we speak of the land
we mean all parts of the land:
the rocks, the water, the fish,
the birds, the wildlife, the forest.*

*People are keepers of the land.
The land is there for the use of
the people but the land must
be kept in balance.*

- Donald Saunders, York Factory

