

March 5, 2012

Curtis Thompson
Park Superintendent
Ministry of Natural Resources
Provincial Services Division
Ontario Parks
Murphys Point Provincial Park
2243 Elm Grove Road
Perth, Ontario K7H 3C7

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Re: EBR Registry Number: 011-5558 - Murphys Point Provincial Park (MPPP) Management Plan revisions

The Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS-OV) has been working for over 40 years for the establishment and ecologically-based management of parks and other protected areas in eastern Ontario and western Quebec. For nearly two decades we have also been actively involved in the Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Conservation Initiative, a program that we established to promote the maintenance and restoration of ecological connections through the landscape between Algonquin and Adirondack parks. A2A in turn is a key component of a network of connections through eastern North America.

Murphys Point Provincial Park (MPPP) lies in the heart of the A2A region. Hence it is an important protected area in terms of the long-term maintenance of connectivity throughout the region.

We are pleased to be able to input our comments and recommendations concerning the revision of the MPPP Management Plan.

Introduction

Murphys Point Provincial Park is a relatively small but important park that provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, including numerous Species at Risk. However, it is also rather heavily utilized for camping and other forms of recreation. Therefore it is a challenge to devise a Management Plan that permits recreational activities, while ensuring that the Parks natural areas are fully protected.

Recommendations:

CPAWS-OV recommends the following:

(1) *Ecological Integrity first*: CPAWS-OV recommends that the revised Management Plan be based on the principle of the Ontario Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act that Ecological Integrity (EI) is the first principle of park management.

(2) *Campground and other development*: MPPP already has a large campground and several hiking trails. As EI is the first principle of park management, rather than satisfying the public demand for recreational facilities, CPAWS-OV recommends that the Management Plan clearly state that the campground will not be expanded. Should there be demand for more camping facilities, we recommend that a new park with a campground be established in the region.

For example the population of Gray Ratsnakes suffers from road mortality and solutions to this problem need to be identified in the Management Plan.

(3) *Ecological Integrity degraded by habitat fragmentation*: CPAWS-OV recommends that the Management Plan initiate steps to reduce fragmentation caused by roads, or by other means, within the park. For example the population of Gray Ratsnakes suffers from road mortality and solutions to this problem need to be identified in the Management Plan. Additional step should be taken to reconnect the separated habitats/ecosystems in order to maximize the health of the park's natural environment. Finally, trail development should be limited to reconfiguring existing trails to be more ecologically friendly.

(4) *Species at Risk program*: CPAWS-OV recommends that the revised Management Plan establish a program to protect each of the Species at Risk that has been identified in Murphys Point Park and its surroundings and to protect their habitat and reduce human-caused mortality. Provisions to protect Species at Risk should not be deferred simply because a Recovery Strategy has yet to be produced or in order to await further monitoring.

- (a) If an Ontario or federal Recovery Plan is available for a species then the Management Plan should describe how its provisions will be implemented in and around MPPP. For example, this would apply to species such as the Gray Ratsnake.
- (b) If an Ontario or federal Recovery Strategy is not yet available, then the Management Plan should adopt appropriate provisions from Recovery strategies that may be available for other jurisdictions. For example, Nova Scotia's Recovery Strategy for the Blanding's Turtle.
- (c) If no Recovery Strategy is yet available from other jurisdictions, then the Management Plan should adopt provisions based on the information concerning the threats to the species that was provided when the species was listed.
- (d) In each case both the *precautionary* and *weight of evidence* principles should be fully implemented.

(5) *Zoning*: CPAWS-OV recommends that Black Creek downstream of Black Ance Road be zoned Nature Reserve. (P.17, Life Science Report, 2011)

(6) *Biocides*: CPAWS-OV strongly opposes the use of biocides within provincial parks; for Poison Ivy, or any other purposes.

(7) *Invasive Species*: In general, CPAWS-OV opposes efforts to eradicate established invasive alien species. See also #6 above. In addition, efforts to eliminate established alien invasives can be as disruptive as they are (usually) ineffective.

(8) *Fauna*: Many of the studies of the Park's flora and fauna were conducted over restricted time frames, and thus are likely to be incomplete, and perhaps give misleading results. The new management plan must include further studies to rectify the deficiencies in the old ones.

(9) *Park addition*: CPAWS-OV supports the addition of the 5.2 ha property to the park, and recommends that other lands be purchased as they become available in order that the park be better able to serve as a core protected area in the A2A region.

(10) *Greater park ecosystem*: CPAWS-OV recommends that the Management Plan discuss the importance of the park's greater ecosystem, and indicate that activities near the park boundary must be compatible with its status as a protected area. In addition, the need to maintain ecological connections to other nearby protected areas needs to be addressed.

Sincerely,

John McDonnell
Executive Director
CPAWS Ottawa Valley Chapter