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**Background Notes Concerning The History And
Future Of Parks In The Northwest Territories - A
Government Of The Nwt Perspective**

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BACKGROUND NOTES CONCERNING THE
HISTORY AND FUTURE OF PARKS IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES - A GOVERNMENT
Sector: Tourism

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Analysis/Review

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THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF PARKS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES:
A GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PERSPECTIVE

A. Vaughan,
Superintendent of Parks,
Department of Economic Development
and Tourism,
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INDEX

	Page
1.0 The Government of the Northwest Territories Park System	1
1.1 In The Beginning	1
1.2 From 1974 to 1983	2
1.3 Our Park System Today	4
1.4 Tomorrow	5
1.5 A Two Year Work Plan - Tasks and Priorities	7
2.0 National Parks	9
2.1 The "Setting"	9
2.2 Recent Agreements	10
3.0 Some Final Observations	14

1.0 The Government of the Northwest Territories Park System

1.1 In The Beginning

On 24 January 1973 at the N.W.T. Assembly, the Honourable T. Butters put forward a motion calling for the establishment of a system of territorial parks. Review of the debates reveals that the Council agreed to support the motion, to counterbalance the pressures of southern "conservationists", and to ensure that there were parks which served "the needs of the people - as well as of the birds and the fish ...".

An Ordinance respecting the establishment, development and operation of territorial parks was passed later that year by the Assembly. That legislation spelled out two prime objectives - recreation, and economic benefits to be derived via tourism. Parks would be, "... developed to maximize public benefit and enjoyment of territorial residents. Economic benefits may be expected to accrue directly to residents, to communities, and to the overall economy of the Northwest Territories. The growth of tourism is accelerating and parks are known to have attractive values for tourism ...".

Supporting material for the legislation provides a clear understanding of the essential desired characteristics of territorial parks, as envisaged at that point in time:

- . traditional rights and privileges of the indigenous people to hunt, fish and trap in the parks would not be impeded;
- . the development potential of renewable and non-renewable resources of prospective park sites would be assessed prior to delineation and designation. Care would be taken not to include areas favourable for mineral exploitation;
- . zoning would be introduced where necessary to permit renewable resource developments "incorporating accepted resource management practices and ... subject to legislation regulating resource use". Care would be taken in selecting sites to avoid potential "mineral exploitation-recreation" conflicts;
- . selected park sites should not only be attractive from a recreational viewpoint, but also "be suitable for the development of accommodation and related visitor services";
- . park sites "should have reasonable access in relation to the potential demand for recreation areas by population centres"; and,
- . public hearings would be held prior to designation of any major park.

The 1974 Territorial Parks Ordinance was intended to result in the creation of the following four types of parks:

There is also the Norah Willis Michener Territorial Park in the Mackenzie Mountains, which is now administered as a game preserve by the Department of Renewable Resources. This relatively inaccessible area on the N.W.T.-Yukon border comprises 13.0 square kilometers.

Over the last two to three years the Government of the Northwest Territories has taken steps to expand the park system, with the full support of nearby communities.

- . Two new wayside parks are now operational on the Dempster Highway.
- . Development is partially completed for an outdoor recreation park of some 14.3 square kilometers at the mouth of the Blackstone River (near Nahanni National Park), and construction has just been initiated for another outdoor recreation park at Long Lake (within Yellowknife city limits - 6.2 sq. km).
- . The federal government has been asked to transfer responsibility for the management of the surface rights for two natural environment parks. One of these natural environment parks is located close to Inuvik (Campbell Hills - 520 sq. km), and the other one is located close to Yellowknife at Hidden Lake (130 sq. km).
- . The Government of the Northwest Territories has expressed long term interest in acquiring the surface rights for parks in several other locations (e.g. Dodo Canyon in the Mackenzie Mountains).

In January 1983 the first substantive change was made to the Territorial Parks Ordinance, since its enactment in 1974. There is now enabling legislation to permit the designation, commemoration, and operation of historic parks. Community consultations have been completed, and by this fall an appropriate development and operation plan will be completed for our first proposed historic park - Peale Point, a Thule site near Frobisher Bay.

Consistent with the recent significant growth in our park facilities and use of our parks, our budget has grown substantially over the past four years. In 1975-76, total expenditure on the system was \$159,000. This year our maintenance budget is \$636,000, and our capital construction budget is \$1,202,000.

	1980/81	1981/82	1982/83	1983/84	1984/85
Square km	42.1	56.4	68.8	720.5	740
Campsites	500	525	580	605	650
Total O&M	\$205,000	\$270,000	\$400,000	\$636,000	?
Man Years	3.0	3.0	4.5	6	?
Capital	\$465,000	\$818,000	\$922,000	\$1,202,000	?

Notes:

1983/84 park lands data assumes the addition of Hidden Lake (130 sq. km) and Campbell Lake Hills (520 sq. km).

1984/85 park lands data assumes the addition of Arctic Red River day-use area, Peale Point historic park, and boundary adjustments to the Long Lake park.

Key Principle

Parks are to assist in promoting, interpreting, and conserving the Northwest Territories culture and land.

Objective

Develop territorial parks to assist in meeting outdoor recreational needs, while assisting local residents in realizing park related training, employment and business opportunities.

Strategies

- . Provide a diversified system of all types and sizes of parks.
- . Develop, through the territorial parks program, significant visitor attractions/activities.
- . Increase the numbers and length of stay of territorial park visitors.
- . Facilitate the development and strengthening of service businesses near territorial parks.
- . Provide local communities with the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the establishment, design, development and operation of nearby territorial park and outdoor recreation area related developments.
- . Promote the reflection of the N.W.T.'s applicable social, environmental, and economic development goals in Parks Canada's programmes.

Objective

Support and encourage traditional skills and pursuits in the Northwest Territories economy.

Strategy*

- . Develop parks for interpretation and conservation, and provide interpretative park programmes to create interesting opportunities for both visitors and residents to learn and experience the Northwest Territories culture and its land.

The Department's objectives and associated strategies will be subjected to public review over the next 12 months, at which time they will be rewritten if and as required. In addition, over the next 12-18 months, work will be completed on developing policies, programs, and priorities within the context of the approved objectives and strategies for the parks system for the "80s". Some of the required background work for preparing this proposed "Territorial Parks Strategy" has already been completed.

* Only the park related strategy has been listed for this strategy element.

- . Where there is sufficient interest, and to the extent feasible and practical, the operations of territorial parks should be locally controlled.
- . The establishment of a system of territorial parks should not prejudice the land claims process.
- . The establishment and operation of territorial parks should not result in any undue interference with the exploration or exploitation of any of the Northwest Territories significant non-renewable resources. Through dialogue, and based on our acceptance of the value of the mining industry, and the mining industry's acceptance of the value of maintaining the integrity of our more significant natural and cultural resources, irreconcilable differences can be avoided.
- . Territorial parks, as with national parks, should not normally be established just to preserve either nationally, territorially, or regionally significant and/or representative features. Rather, territorial parks should be established in response to demonstrated outdoor recreation needs and/or outdoor on-site interpretive conservation needs.

1.5 A Two Year Work Plan – Tasks and Priorities

The following represents the substantive targets/priorities which have been established for the Department's parks programme for the next two years:

- . obtain formal Government of the Northwest Territories approval for a "Territorial Parks Strategy". The document will include policies and guidelines for the selection, development and management of: natural environment parks; outdoor recreation parks; community parks; highway wayside parks; historic parks; landmarks; and, waterways-hiking trails.
- . obtain formal Government of the Northwest Territories approval for specific guidelines/policies/processes to facilitate "turning over" responsibility for the operation of existing community parks to interested and capable groups/communities.
- . obtain necessary approvals for system wide maintenance and construction standards.
- . implement a user "self-registration" system in all campgrounds not staffed with gate attendants.
- . achieve 80 per cent visitor satisfaction (as documented by surveys), with the level and quality of visitor services provided in our parks.
- . encourage DIAND to develop and then publish mutually acceptable criteria for use in assessing the degree of federal support for Government of the Northwest Territories park proposals.
- . encourage DIAND to develop and then publish a workable process for reviewing Government of the Northwest Territories park proposals; and, that leads to the transferring of authority for the administration of the surface rights for those proposed territorial park lands that meet established federal criteria.

2.0 National Parks

2.1 The "Setting"

In 1922, Wood Buffalo National Park was established. Approximately 9500 square km of its 45 000 square km are located in the Northwest Territories.. Nahanni National Park (4780 square km) and Auyuittuq National Park (21 500 square km) reserves were both established in 1972. The East Arm reserve (7450 square km) was established in 1970, and the Ellesmere Island reserve (41 600 square km) established in 1982. This represents approximately 40 per cent of the entire land area contained within the national parks system. This percentage will grow considerably if Parks Canada is successful in acquiring the additional ten or so areas in which it has expressed interest.

Parks Canada (excluding the Crown), is now the largest single private or government agency using Northwest Territories lands (approximately three per cent of our total land area). Given its size, and its historical presence in the Northwest Territories, the residents of the Northwest Territories believe that they are familiar with Parks Canada's policies and management style.

National parks are not viewed similarly by Northwest Territories residents and their predominantly southern "users/champions". Parks Canada's proposed "wilderness" park designation of the late 1970s antagonized many northerners, as did Parks Canada's method for announcing their proposed national park expansion programme.

National Parks have historically been viewed by many northerners as a salve to the "southern" environmental conscience. Northwest Territories lands are used to meet southern needs, and the Northwest Territories is left to bear the significant problems (and costs), and receive few if any offsetting benefits. Existing national parks are traditionally viewed by N.W.T. residents as causing the loss of business and resource development opportunities, making only a minimal contribution to the economic health of nearby communities, and being managed under policies and guidelines that are perhaps more applicable to southern national parks. Less than one per cent of the visitors to national parks across Canada visited parks located in the Northwest Territories (7,000 visitors in 1982).

The Honourable G. Braden, in a speech in 1980 to a group of international media representatives stated, "... in your northern travels thus far you have seen the vast expanse of land and water in our northern territory. Citizens of the north will describe to you in a variety of ways the attachment and feeling they have for the land ... because in the North it is impossible to become detached from that basic factor which makes 45,000 Inuit, Dene, Metis, and non-native northerners believe so strongly in 1.3 million square miles of land and water. If I can be

paper* provides the Government of the Northwest Territories with a direct and meaningful voice in the decision making.

It is to be noted that the paper does acknowledge the legitimate role of other interested groups in the process of establishing parks - including DIAND, the native organizations, resource development interests, and potentially affected communities.

Principles Paper

Following agreement on a process for selecting and establishing new national parks, the Government of the Northwest Territories formally and publicly presented Parks Canada with a series of principles concerning the establishment, development and operation of new national parks in the Northwest Territories. They provide clarification of the criteria that will be used for evaluating new national park proposals, and they provide recommendations to Parks Canada concerning the way in which new national parks in the Territories should be established, developed and operated.

1. Parks Canada, for each new park proposal should clearly identify: the land requirements; the manner in which the park will likely be developed and administered; and, the likely impact of park establishment on the environmental, social, and economic health of the Northwest Territories.
2. A decision by Parks Canada to withdraw lands for the purposes of establishing a national park should be subject, in part, to receiving the support of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Government of the Northwest Territories support for specific new Parks Canada initiatives will be dependent primarily upon:
 - . the degree of support for the park proposal from any directly affected communities;
 - . the potential economic and social development opportunities associated with the park proposal to be created for the local communities;
 - . the potential contribution to the achievement of Government of the Northwest Territories environmental, social, and economic goals and objectives, that could result from park establishment; and,
 - . consideration of the potential economic (e.g. lost resource development opportunities), social (e.g. lifestyle), and financial (e.g. infrastructure costs associated with the park proposal) costs.
3. Parks Canada should provide adequate opportunity for the Government of the Northwest Territories and all potentially affected Northwest Territories residents, communities and associations to fully participate in the planning and decision making processes associated with the selection, establishment, development, and operation of proposed new national parks. Additionally, Parks Canada should develop and implement guidelines and procedures which permit the devolution of significant responsibility for park operations and resource management to the local people.

The criticism of the Memorandum of Understanding by some "southerners", and the interest groups to which they belong, is perhaps based on misunderstanding. Our local newspaper, in an editorial at the time declared, "The tunnel vision actions of those who have a romantic notion of the High Arctic fail to take into account the people that live here, their needs, their aspirations, and their opinions."

The Memorandum of Understanding demonstrates that agreement can be reached on how national parks can respond to both national and more regional sets of objectives. National and regional objectives need not be viewed as being mutually exclusive.

Wood Buffalo National Park

In 1982, the Government of the Northwest Territories for the first time became formally involved in the various stages of a Parks Canada management planning process for an existing national park. A substantive brief concerning all aspects of the management (boundary adjustments, resource management practices, visitor services, local employment, etc.) of Wood Buffalo National Park was forwarded by the Minister to his federal counterpart. Similar input was provided for Auyuittuq National Park reserve.

This year we will monitor and fully participate in the current management planning process for the Nahanni National Park reserve. At the conclusion of the consultation programme, a formal Government of the Northwest Territories position will be forwarded to the federal minister responsible for Parks Canada.