

DRAFT MINUTES - French River Provincial Park
Joint Management Advisory Committee Meeting
December 5, 2012 12:00 pm – 4:30 pm
French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre

12:00 Lunch & Slide Show

Slides Show Topics

- Alban Work Centre
- David Thomson Brigade & First Nations Welcome
- Otter Bay Snowmobile Bridge
- Rainbow Tramway – Current Condition
- Mashkinonje Barrier Free Trail Opening
- Dreaver LUP (expired Commercial Fishing Property)
- FRPP Dalles Camp
- Sturgeon Chutes – Site Photos
- Festival of Peoples
- First Nations / Lake Huron – Earth Day Event
- Dead Island – new sign / honouring ancestors
- Archaeology Work in Park
- Islands Being Donated

Introductions

Agenda 2012

- 1) Review of Items from Previous Meetings
- 2) UFRCA Campsite Signs
- 3) Keso Bay Road
- 4) Visitor Centre Operations 2012 - Financial Sustainability
- 5) Park Operations 2012 - New Management Assistant Park Superintendent / Work Done / Alban Work Centre
- 6) Amendments to Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act - Private Land Use Tenure
- 7) Update Okikendawt Hydro-electric Project
- 8) Update Highway #69 Four Lanes
- 9) Allen Struthers Proposed Hydro-electric Development
- 10) Update Mashkinonje Lookout Barrier Free Trail
- 11) Dead Island - Dokis / Field Museum
- 12) Fishing Regulations
- 13) Rainbow Tramway
- 14) French River Map
- 15) Heritage Film Proposal
- 16) Friends of the French River Heritage Park
- 17) Next Meeting

DRAFT
French River Provincial Park
Joint Management Advisory Committee Meeting

December 5, 2012 12:00 noon – 4:30 pm
French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre, Alban, ON

Committee Members: Leonard Dokis, Mike Palmer, Art Tworo, Dave Minden, Peter Rooney, Dave Minden, Valerie Duquette

Also Present: FR Staff - Jeremy Pawson, Ed Chevrette, Chuck Miller,

Regrets: MNR Staff - Trish Moussa (MNR North Bay) – sent notes not present
Ross Hart (Ontario Parks), Wade Murrant (Ontario Parks)
Anne Collins (MNR Parry Sound), Randy McLaren (MNR North Bay), Ted Shannon (MNR Fire), Tim Cavanagh (MNR Sudbury)

1) Review of Items from Previous Meetings (Action Items)

- French River tabloid now due for reprint for 2013
- Update mooring permits not implemented
- 2012 -13 park map need another reprint
- Recycling bins need to be established at FRVC need set up
- Bottle ban on campsites take forward new regulation
- Fire danger sign at Hartley Bay needs repairs
- Mashkinonje – in forest management planning – provide a 250 m and 200 m no cut buffer between Mashkinonje & FR on Lake Nipissing

2) UFRCA Campsite Signs

Dave Minden - The Upper French River Cottagers Association in partnership with the Friends of the French River – has chloroplast - white signs with green lettering regarding the UFRCA Adopt-a-Lake Program and Please don't Litter - message signs on park campsites – signs are getting older a need to be replaced.

RECOMMENDATION – that the signs be updated by the UFRCA & Friends and installed by Ontario Parks staff – switch colours to new Ontario Parks blue & white sign colours.

3) Keso Bay Road

Leonard Dokis – Ontario Parks had previously met with Dokis Chief and council regarding changing status of the Keso Bay Road from a road maintained by users to the status of a municipal road. This would give

Dokis control over maintenance of the road – that access reserve and dam properties of Public Works Government Services Canada lands. The road is on reserve, park, PWGSC and Crown lands. Municipal roads are normally deregulated from park boundaries

RECOMMENDATION – the committee support the change in status of the Keso Bay Road from a road maintained by the users to municipal road status and recommends the removal of the municipal road from within the park boundaries

4) Visitor Centre - Financial Sustainability

Jeremy Pawson – presented a business plan to make the French River Visitor Centre a fee for use facility – washrooms and gift shop no entrance fee – exhibit are – a per person fee applies to all except children under 6 years old.

RECOMMENDATION – support idea of charging fees, FRVC visitor experience is worth paying for – 50% of existing 45,000 visitors is likely low – think a higher percent will visit, FRVC is hard for the public to find (put up a highway Billboard sign well before turn off, FRVC aggressively market buy all means – posters (Grundy & Killbear – other businesses), tabloid, websites, blogs, signs in existing parking lot highway billboard (store and admission revenues will benefit) , FRVC – market “award winning”, revenues minimal for children – instead of not charging for under 6 years old – don’t charge for children up to 14 years old (will more than get payback – when these children become adults), start capital planning and development – now– for after 2015 when FRVC will be on a service road, consider more boat access friendly (e.g. a dock)

5) Park Operations 2012

Jeremy Pawson - group toured FRVC new exhibits – donor wall, 2 storey map, map book exhibits, & Royal Ontario Museum exhibit case – discussed problems with the ROM case.

Ed Chevette - outlined litter continues to be an issue – taking case to court this winter – looking for approximate \$2000 if party convicted – clean up required - 7 bags of garbage collected on a campsite – CO special investigator also involved in case . 15 pit toilets installed this summer – still have about 15 prefabricated toilets in stock to install in 2013

Chuck Miller – thanked French River staff – for excellent response to shooting at park staff on Highway #607 – including road closure until police arrived and follow up with staff

RECOMMENDATION – support idea of establishing replica rather than original ROM artifacts in the ROM case

6) Amendments to Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act (PPRCA) - Private Land Use Tenure

Chuck Miller – outlined the PPRCA amendments in Bill 55 (Budget Bill) to allow for a new PPRCA regulation to permit a limited number of private land use activities that were previously managed under the Public Lands Act “Free Use Policy”. An Ontario Parks committee looking at drafting a new regulation that would also take into consideration the more general MNR – Modernizing Approvals Project (MAP) approaches – “review & approval”, “registry”, and “rules in regulation”. Changes may also be required to the Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks & Conservation Reserves related to land use dispositions as category “B” project for existing structures – changes to category “A”. Regulation had an original target date for implementation in July 2013 – will likely take longer to complete.

CONCERN EXPRESSED

Ontario Parks is not being transparent in its changes to programs – e.g. items such as park closures - no public involvement.

MNR in general taking a more regional (Broader Landscape) approach what does this mean for the French River Provincial Park?

The FR park & visitor centre are rooted in the community per management plan and community participation following the Tembec Mill fire in Alban.

Chuck Miller – follow up

Impacts on the French River Provincial Park – (re park closures) there seems to be a focus financial sustainability of individual parks – the FR park is not at break even yet – it is for the backcountry / the visitor centre only about 1/3 – will likely benefit from Ontario Parks marketing – e.g. new website will highlight French River

Regional Focus – Central zone will be closed in April 2013 – reorganization of the parks – some to Algonquin Zone (e.g. Samuel de Champlain) - some to Northwest Zone (e.g. Lake Superior) – joining Northeast Zone (e.g. Grundy / Killbear & Six Mile Lake) – how parks will be reclustered within the new zones is at this point unknown – including the French River.

Community Involvement - the existing French River Park Management Plan – is very clear on community involvement in the French River Provincial Park.

7) Update Okikendawt Hydro-electric Project

Trish Moussa (MNR North Bay notes) - MNR North Bay District is currently reviewing the water crossing information submitted by Hydromega. A Memorandum of Understanding for the construction, maintenance and removal will be signed for each crossing. The three bridges proposed by Hydromega have not been submitted to the District – these will require Engineers approval. All work permits will be issued at the same time as well as the Forest Resource License and Authority to Haul. We have not received the survey or legal description back from Peterborough but we will continue to work toward issuance of the Easement. It is important that the district and respective parks monitor the work for compliance. Work on the dam and tailrace is scheduled to start in mid-July 2013.

Leonard Dokis – everything seems to be ready to start – just need final sign off on items to get started.

8) Update Highway #69 Four Lanes

Chuck Miller – showed maps on screen of proposed lands to be deregulated and added as a result of Highway 69 - four laning at the French and Key Rivers – process to deregulate lands for highway needs will occur before process to add lands surplus to MTO to the park at the visitor centre location.

9) Allen Struthers Proposed Hydro-electric Development

Chuck Miller – outlined the requirements of the Class Environmental Assessment – Water Power Projects - section 2.5.6 - Provincial Parks - excerpt - ... in or near provincial park ... values for which the park was established ... to the extent possible, consideration must be given to ensure maintenance of ecological integrity.

Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), MNR District and MOE – be the lead on: fisheries habitat, sedimentation and metal contamination, and species at risk

Ontario Parks conditions on Ecological Integrity (EI) would be additional to those concerns above. Aquatic Community: Need to determine if there are potential negative impacts to the composition or abundance of any species within the native plant, fish, mammal, reptile, waterfowl or amphibian community, or species guilds within the benthic community within the park as a result of the project.

Terrestrial Community: Need to determine if there are potential negative impacts to the composition or abundance of any species within the native plant, mammal, reptile, waterfowl or amphibian community.

Additional Items to consider that are different from general Crown land: Because EI is the target – if there is fish habitat damage – replacement habitat outside the

park is not acceptable, If fish habitat replacement in the park is determined to be required – the Park Management Plan will need to be amended as it has no provisions for habitat manipulation, In Species at Risk “net benefit to species” – must directly benefit the resident/migratory population that uses the park waters, otherwise we cannot consider it a mitigation of a negative impact to E.I. in the context of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act.

Other social and economic concerns: A grave in French River Provincial Park adjacent to Xeneca’s proposed site is to be respected and not harmed.

Archaeological site in the park – no disturbance – need to talk with parks before doing work.

COMMENTS – Glad to see Ontario Parks is taking the approach that hydro-electric development is not a given. Concerns with the cavalier attitude of hydro-electric project proponent to public involvement and the lack of consultation with First Nations. Area of study for the dam ends just below Sturgeon Chutes – air photos shown that – show sediment plume from Wanapitei River extending well down stream of the proposed study area – scope of study for the hydro-electric project is not adequate

10) Update Mashkinonje Lookout Barrier Free Trail

Done during pre meeting slide show.

11) Dead Island - Dokis / Field Museum

Leonard Dokis – important spiritual site –during ceremonies – a real connection with ancestors made - reviewed history - 1890’s Worlds Fair in Chicago – development of the Field Museum in Chicago – to retain artifacts – assistance from Upper French River Cottagers association (Mr. Goodwin) and archeologist Bill Allen – assistance much appreciated – continuing discussions and possible upcoming visit with the Field Museum – work out most appropriate path to take with the artifacts locally or with regional museum or Field Museum – any chance of appropriate storage at the French River Visitor Centre – not at current – problem with even ROM case.

12) Fishing Regulations

Chuck Miller & Mike Palmer – Ontario parks had no objections to delaying the opening date for Muskie to the 3rd Saturday in June for both the French River and Pickerel River, upstream to “Squaw Lake.” (That name won’t be used in the regulation description). This would be consistent with the opening date for the rest of FMZ10 and is recommended by Muskies Canada and backed up by the appropriate scientific data.

COMMENTS

FMZ10 council is in agreement with this proposed reg. change; both Mike Palmer and George Morgan (Laurentian Fresh Water Co-Op unit) are members of the council. Mike had talked with resorts – may get some feed back from a couple of resorts about the change.

Other - Concerns that the research done on Sturgeon was inadequate and not representative and results are invalid based on local knowledge both in Hartley Bay and Dokis.

Other- concerns about the sudden cancellation of fall index netting – money taken back just before program was to occur in the fall

Other – concerns – potential diversion of commercial fishing from Lake Nipissing to the French River

13) Rainbow Tramway

Photos presented in pre meeting slide show

Ed Chevrette –need a dock on the new alternate portage – steep rock landing with low water in Georgian Bay. Barge may be required if old boardwalk is not transferred to land owner – as there is some pressure treated wood in the walkway that can not be burned.

RECOMMENDATION – removes liability and return to a more natural state – alternate route had water all summer and the summer was a vey dry summer.

14) French River Map

Jeremy Pawson – map is ready for printing – Friends of the French are ready to move ahead with printing.

CONCERN – map has been out of print since late August and not available to fall paddlers

15) Heritage Film Proposal

No update at this time – but moving ahead

16) Friends of the French River Heritage Park

Friends revitalization – how we can take more advantage of grant programs for things like trails and interpretive signs. Discuss with the Friends group.

17) Next Meeting

TBA – before next operating season