

French River Provincial Park
Joint Management Advisory Committee Meeting

March 8, 2006 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

French River Visitor Centre and Off Road Steak House Meeting Room , Alban, ON

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

Also Present: Jane Minden, Ed Chevrette, Chuck Miller

Regrets: Paul Bewick (Ontario Parks), Leslie Joynt (Ontario Parks), Steve Devos (MNR Sudbury), Bart Brown (MNR Parry Sound), Randy Morrison (MNR North Bay), and Rob Hepburn (Peter Rooney – alternate)

Missed Contacting: Robert Giles

Meeting began with a 1 hour tour of the interior of the French River Visitor Centre and the French River Bridge – the base building was complete and the exhibit installation had started. The site meeting reconvened at the Off Road Steak House Meeting Room after the tour.

Mike Palmer notified the group that he might not be able to stay for the entire meeting so new agenda items were dealt with prior to the review of previous minutes.

- 1) French River Park Tabloid – The tabloid was delayed by time commitments of Ontario Park staff and advertisements have not yet been received by those businesses planning to participate. In a recent development the Sudbury Star may be willing to contact advertisers, layout the tabloid, format material provided by Ontario Parks and print the tabloid at no cost to the park. Ontario Parks still needs to confirm details with the Sudbury Star but we still plan on having a tabloid for the summers of 2006 and 2007 printed before season start up.
- 2) Visitor Centre Operations – about \$125,000 will be allocated for visitor centre operations. There are some significant costs such as hydro at \$40,000 annually so the budget will be tight. The centre will open this summer – a specific date has not been determined at this time.

RECOMMENDATION: That the visitor centre strives for financial self sufficiency so that it is not subject fiscal constraints. It is important that the facility be properly maintained. Suggest that an entrance fee be considered or at a minimum a donation box.

- 3) Park Operations 2006 – the final financial intake was less than expected for 2006. The target was \$115 for 2005 and \$150 for 2006. The gate in 2004 was \$90,000

and this was the same in 2005. After permit issuers are paid and the GST - \$90,000 translates into about \$70,000 to spend on river maintenance. In 2006 we anticipated revenue of \$115 and expenditures of \$90,000 an extra warden was hired. For 2006 we will need to live within our budget of \$70,000 so staffing will be reduced. This can be changed in the future if revenue increases. There are no park fee increases this year that would increase revenue.

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: This is still a very good idea. The park still is putting more than the \$50,000 originally allocated into river management. The expectation for the 2006 tourist season is optimistic (provided there are no surprises) as some folks originally put off by fees will return, SAR is almost forgotten, and memories of 9/11 are fading. Expect increased revenue in 2006.

- 4) Boat Houses and / Commercial Marinas – MNR is now treating 2 story boat houses as residences and where they occur on the 66 foot Crown shore allowance they are no longer available for free use and must be permitted by tenure documents such as a Land Use Permit. MNR Sudbury did inventory the two storey boat houses along the French River a single day this winter by helicopter. The boat house issue also raises the issue of other residences and buildings on the shore reserves that are in the park – do they also require disposition? The issue is complicated by the fact that Ontario Parks policy does not allow for private use disposition in parks. No action is planned at the park level until provincial policy is clarified. It is noted that this committee recommended removal of the shore allowances from the park – this was taken forward provincially but rejected. Commercial use land use dispositions are permitted by park provincial policy so the same obstacles are not in place for commercial marina dispositions. The park at present has no plans to implement the commercial marina policy.

PREVIOUS MINUTES REVIEW

- 5) Update First Nations Consultations – No progress since the October 2005 meeting. The visitor centre construction has been delayed and opening is now anticipated for May 2006. Norm Dokis of MNR North Bay has circulated a note to get a meeting together in April.
- 6) Update Mooring Permits – No progress since October – mooring fees will not be implemented for 2006.

RECOMMENDATION: Implementing mooring fees should be a priority. Boaters are using local emergency services, landfill sites etc but not making any contributions to the local communities they attend. It is also not fair to canoeists and kayakers who are paying fees. Revenue is important to look after the park. If possible implement mooring fees this summer.

7) Update Dokis and Keso Bay Roads and Bridges Update – Leonard and Chuck – No change from October.

8) Update Map Reprint – The map is in for reprint. The new map will show the P110 additions as well as the existing park. The P110 additions at this time have not been regulated. The showing of the additions mean the map scale will go from 1:50,000 to 1:55,000 to get the park on one two sided sheet. The map will also have numbered campsites to facilitate better location of people needing emergency services.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider marking campsite markers on the campsites with the campsite number – it would benefit orientation and make emergency response more effective if the camper is not sure which campsite they are on when assistance is required.

9) Update Visitor Centre / MTO Rest Stop – No additional update.

10) Update Snowmobile Bridge Update – No additional update.

11) Update Regulation of Park Additions P110 –Should see boundary regulation in the next 12 months.

12) Update Landfill / Garbage Trailers – Landfill sites in Killarney, Estaire and French River are filling up and new sites will need to be developed. Development cost; even for a small site are expected to exceed \$1 million. In the long term can expect increasing landfill fees. Municipalities are also implementing recycling at Killarney Village Landfill and French River and as such we will need to implement recycling if they are to take our garbage in the Municipality of French River. The Ontario Parks trailer at Wosley Bay is not being used by the lodge there to haul garbage and could be relocated.

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: Be advised hauling fees at Hartley Bay may increase. Dokis and Hartley Bay would like to introduce recycling even although it is not in the area designated by the Municipality of French River. Suggest further discussions with the Municipality of French River on requirements. In the short term place the trailer at Wosley Bay at Hartley Bay and have it modified to accept recycling materials.

13) New Park Tabloid – Previously discussed.

14) OLL Project Inventory and Pit Toilet Installation – Installation on the Upper French River has not started. Additional 100 pit toilets have been prefabricated. Upper French River installation will be a priority when next round of installation begins.

15) OLL Pit Toilet – Pre-fabrication Project – toilet are at the park now.

16) OLL Visitor Centre Operations – Previously discussed

17) Park Operations – Previously discussed.

18) Mashkinonje Provincial Park – 5 km of trail and parking lot ready for use at Loudon Peatlands. Another 30 km of trail should be ready for use this fall.

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: Since next meeting is at the Upper French end of the river a field trip to Mashkinonje would be of interest.

NEW ITEMS

19) Adopt-a-campsite – Upper French River Cottage Association – a successful program that we would like to extend to other cottage associations – UFRCA Volunteer agreement renewed for 5 years.

20) Spring Flooding – Water levels on Lake Nipissing are high, the French river water is high, lots of snow still to melt – expect some significant flooding in the spring.

21) Fishing Regulation Changes – The fishing regulations are changing with some fishing divisions amalgamating. The French river special slot sizes are unchanged on the lower river. The West Arm of Lake Nipissing to be the same as the rest of Lake Nipissing.

22) Bottle Ban – There is a lot of broken glass that is very difficult to pick up – could a bottle ban be considered?

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: Mixed feelings about a ban – put over to next meeting after giving it more thought.

23) Ethics – Be sure tabloid covers ethics of use of the river similar to the current park map insert provided by the Friends of the French River Heritage Park.

24) Fire Danger Signs – Information item the Friends of the French river Heritage Park have funded additional Fire Danger Hazard signs that should be in place this summer.

25) Birch Bark Canoe Ceremony – Dokis First Nation loaned a birch bark canoe to the French River Visitor Centre – a ceremony with those that built the canoe will be arranged.

26) Dokis First Nation Boundary Maps – maps showing the refinement of the Dokis First Nation Boundary are now available from Natural Resources Canada – Maps 90862 and 90861 (613-943-0689 – file SM8206-06150). Legal regulation process should be complete soon. There are no changes after the meeting between Dokis FN / MNR Sudbury / Ontario Parks to refine the P110 additions and the re-regulating of the French River Provincial Park boundaries.

28) Summer – Stones Tossed Off French River Snowmobile Bridge – a safety concern to river users. Ontario Parks may want to consider signs or some policing?

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: Advise snowmobile club of the problem.

27) Next Meeting – to be set for March 12:00 to 4:30 pm, Meadow Springs Golf Club, Hwy #64 - lunch to be provided by Ontario Parks – September 20 – brief field trip to Mashkinonje after lunch.