

DRAFT
French River Provincial Park
Joint Management Advisory Committee Meeting

April 18, 2007 12:00 noon – 3:30 pm
French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre , Alban, ON

Committee Members: Valarie Duquette (Alternate for Leonard Dokis and Gerry Duquette Jr), Mike Palmer, Dave Minden, Art Tworo, Peter Rooney (Alternate for Rob Hepburn), Mary Lemieux

Also Present: Ted Shannon (MNR Fire), Karen Mikoliew (MNR Sudbury) Ed Chevrette, Leslie Joynt, Chuck Miller

Regrets: Paul Bewick (Ontario Parks), Bart Brown (MNR Parry Sound), Randy Morrison (MNR North Bay),

The site meeting occurred at the FRVC Meeting Room. Meeting began with lunch.

1) French River Park Tabloid – The tabloid was delayed by time commitments of Ontario Park staff and was not implemented for the 2006 summer season. The tabloid is still planned for 2007.

RECOMMEDATION – Proceed with the tabloid for 2007
ACTION: Miller - Tabloid will be done for summer 2007

2) Visitor Centre Operations –Vast variety of visitors, people truly impressed, good expenditure of tax dollars, kids loved the glass floor – lots of brochures and information taken away on the local area. People said they planned to return to the FR. \$125,000 was allocated for visitor centre operations in 2006. The centre operated mid July to Thanksgiving. We had about 700 visitors a day in the summer – 45,000 visitors for the season. The Centre has 3 adult entry staff, 3 student staff and 1 adult cleaning staff. Killarney Provincial Park assisted with the opening few weeks. Several people wished to make donations to the Centre. A budget of \$150 thousand should allow operations Victoria Day in May to Thanksgiving weekend. Exact days and hours of operation will be worked out by mid next week.

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: Set up donation box for summer 2007
ACTION: Miller – Set up donation box for 2007

3)Park Operations 2006 – there was a little short fall in operations this summer with Assistant Park Superintendent off on sick leave for about a month. Litter problems on the river have significantly reduced, more pit toilets installed and some older toilets replaced. MNR –Sudbury District / Ontario Parks had Conservation Officer presence on the river during the hunting season.

4) Boat Houses (Residential) and Commercial Marinas – There are no immediate plans to implement the policy due to current District work priorities. 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. Question about First Nations marinas – to be different than private marinas? Not certain about FN aboriginal / treaty rights – would need to discuss more fully with legal services. Sundown case – re incidental cabins briefly discussed.

5) Update Mooring Permits – No progress since October 2005– mooring fees will not be implemented for 2007. Massassuga PP services are intensive – mooring pins and daily garbage pick up similar to a campground. Perhaps look at Georgian Bay Islands National Park.

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. If possible implement mooring fees this summer. Seasonal pass should be considered as an option.

ACTION: Miller – Begin consultations with Georgian Bay boaters and North Bay boaters this year for implementation ASAP.

6) New Map – The new map has numbered campsites – this would be helpful to get into the hands of the Emergency Service providers. Good supply of maps on hand for summer 2007. Friends have been invoicing for maps. Wholesale request for maps have been made to the French River Visitor Centre.

RECOMMENDATION/ADVICE: Provide free maps to Emergency Service providers, EMS (ambulance), air ambulance, police (OPP Noelville, Still River, West Nipissing, Dokis, Henvey Inlet, Coast Guard (in Britt) and MNR Fire Control.

Ask Friends of French to review wholesale of maps to see if the FRVC could play a role.

7) Update Landfill / Garbage Trailers – the Killarney Village Landfill will be closed in 2008 – with Killarney Village / Park garbage likely being hauled to Hartley Bay. This may be short terms as Hartley Bay will also fill. There may be increased capacity at the Noelville Landfill in the Municipality of French River in the future. The French River Provincial Park will adopt what ever system the adjacent Municipality is using. This will evolve over time but tipping fees are likely to rise.

8) OLL Project Inventory and Pit Toilet Installation –Additional 100 pit toilets have been prefabricated. There is clearing of blow down trees still to occur from the July 17 – microburst storm – the park will be requesting assistance from MNR Fire crews if not required for fire duties. Pit toilets were installed this fall. The 40 campsites not inventoried in fall of 2005 were inventoried. There are now about 100 pit toilets installed on the approximately 250 campsites. The Upper FR has about 15 toilets installed and 45 campsites – request from the Cottagers Association to establish more in this areas – especially adopted campsites. Toilets have been installed on the high use campsites first basis. Need to decide what we are going to do on rock campsites on the Upper French River and at Georgian Bay where soil for toilets is very limited.

RECOMMENDATION: Thank cottage association for their potential financial support. Inventory the campsite on the Upper French River with a brief prescription for each site - location to install toilet / install toilet but soil import required / close campsite if toilet not suitable.

ACTION: Miller- Chevrette- to provide prescription for 45 sites on the Upper French River campsites and present at the UFRCA meeting in August. Continue to seek funding to install all prefabricated toilets not yet installed – about 80.

9) Mashkinonje Provincial Park – 30 km of trail ready for use. Hope to install a parking lot on the west side of Highway 64 this year – in the mean time best access to the west side trails is from Memquisit Road. We are hopeful to also publish a map for use this year with participation by FedNor.

10) Fishing Regulation – the new fishing regulations are not yet in place – fishing Division numbers will change – but the French River and Lake Nipissing had special regulations – these special regulations will transfer to the new Division – the result being the status quo when the new Regulations are implemented.

11) Water Management – River is a summer levels – driest year on record. Additional water is to be released from Lake Nipissing for the walleye spawning period.

12) Bottle Ban – Will request a glass ban on campsites once the new Parks Act and regulations are in place and requests are again accepted for Regulation changes.

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: Implement a glass bottle ban on the land area of the park. Cans are acceptable. Plastic bottles are acceptable.

13) Fire Danger Signs – 4 Signs made by Friends of the French River Heritage Park – installed at Riverview and Dokis Marina's. Signs picked up for Woseley Bay by John O'Hara. Sign for FR Delta still at Riverview – Dokis needs to be installed.

14) Forest Fires – Prime shoreline burned in summer 2006. MNR Fire response adequate but looking for improvements. MNR Fire – always striving for improvement – safety also a concern. Improved communications may help. Review of each fire occurs including

communications between fire attack crews and public members working a fire. Public may not be aware that the presence of boats at a fire (potential to flip in helicopter downwash) may impede crew arrival as well as air attack (water bombing). Safety is always a concern even for trained crews. Response to a fire is prioritized based on values such as human life, property damage, shoreline inside a part etc. Response to an individual fire can change quickly as higher priority fires are detected. Pre-positioning of crews and aerial detection of fires does occur based on fire probability. MNR Fire will not request public help in suppressing a fire for safety reasons. Support for transporting crews to the fire by boat and other means has worked well in the past and is appreciated. Assistance from MNR Fire with Park work in rainy weather is also much appreciated. Resort Associations may be able to provide lists and contact to MNR Fire regarding resources available (boats).

RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE: Improve fire prevention by putting a fire prevention message a front page of the new tabloid, make public more aware of how to respond when they see helicopters and water bombers – i.e. pull back from the fire to allow access and attack (in park tabloid and by MNR Fire staff attending Resort and Cottage Assoc meetings), where possible provide information to the reporting party on any anticipated delays in responding to a fire (resources diverted to a higher priority), continue good working relationships that exist – transport and reporting.

15) Stones / Jumping Off / French River Snowmobile Bridge – signs have been posted and use of the Trespass to Property Act – (disobey sign or verbal instruction) is understood by park enforcement staff as a possible management tool.

16) Pins / Post Cards – Friends of the French - Products are being developed by the Friends of the French River Heritage Park. Ontario Parks will sell the items in the FRVC store with the benefits of the sales going to the betterment of the park.

17) Patrols Upper French River - would like to see more park boat patrols. If park staff are in the area may want to get to know some of the cottagers and drop by occasionally when patrols are in the area – to get information on any current problems in the area.

18) FRVC Special Event – a First Nations Pow-Wow / Metis Rendezvous event will be held at the FRVC the afternoon of Saturday - July 7 – a sharing of cultures – all invited to attend – grand entry starts at noon – artisans, food, trading blanket etc. We are also looking for volunteers to help with the event. Indian and Northern Affairs publication on Ontario Treaties available – samples handed out.

19) NE Georgian Bay Trail Concept – a group is developing a concept to establish a trail from Killbear Provincial Park to the French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre along the Georgian Bay Coast. Could be a good tourism opportunity? The group has been advised by MNR Parry Sound to discuss their concept with area First Nations. The French River First Nations and Aboriginal Advisory Committee to the FRVC will invite the group to their next meeting to learn more about the concept.

20) A new Water Quality Stewardship Council has been established – the group wants to work to see water quality in the River maintained – expertise on the new council – (botanist and engineers). See improvements through education as a likely best method. Information on how to make improvements may be available on websites of other Source Water Protection groups – such as Nickel District – associated with Conservation Authorities. Consider as a tabloid topic.

21) Hartley Bay Marina – now has environmentally friendly bait buckets – deteriorate if left in the park – less likely to blow away from boats – for more information contact Hartley Bay marina. Minimum order 10,000.

22) A New Provincial Parks Act has been approved but not yet implemented. New park regulations also being drafted. Biggest change is to enforcement officer's powers of arrest, search and seizure – new training will also be required for Park Wardens - so phase in of new powers will only occur after training is updated. To the public the general park rules will be the same for the French River. The new regulations will have a few changes at Mashkinonje Provincial Park – as parts of the Management Plan can be implemented and backed by regulations. Once the new Regulations are in place there will be better opportunity to request changes – such as a glass bottle ban – on FR campsites.

23) Next Meeting – to be set for September 20, 2007- 12:00 to 4:30 pm, at the French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre – Hwy #69 and French River.