

French River Provincial Park
Joint Management Advisory Committee Meeting

December 2, 2009, 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Lunch Provided
French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre

12:00 Lunch

Meeting Agenda – December 2009

- 1) Review of Items from Previous Meetings
- 2) Hunt Camps
- 3) Big Chaudiere Dam
- 4) Okikendawt Hydroelectric Project
- 5) Highway #69 Four Lanes
- 6) Speed / Noise Boats Upper French River
- 7) Canoe Donation
- 8) Visitor Centre Operations 2009
- 9) Park Operations 2009
- 10) NEW Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act Planning Manual
- 11) Mashkinonje Lookout Tower and Signs
- 12) Manitou Islands – Abandon Uranium Mine
- 13) Fishing Regulations
- 14) Water Quality Stewardship Council
- 15) Next Meeting

DRAFT
French River Provincial Park
Joint Management Advisory Committee Meeting

December 2, 2009 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm
French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre, Alban, ON

Committee Members: Art Tworo, Mike Palmer, Dave Minden, Peter Rooney
Mary Lemieux

Also Present: Ed Chevrette, Chuck Miller

Regrets: Leonard Dokis, Paul Bewick (Ontario Parks), Bart Brown (MNR Parry Sound), Randy Morrison (MNR North Bay), Ted Shannon (MNR Fire), Karen Mikoliew (MNR Sudbury), Leslie Joynt (MNR Parry Sound)

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

1) Topics from previous meeting– Oct 22, 2008:

- 1) French River Park Tabloid
Adequate supply of tabloids was previously printed tabloid for 2010.
- 2) Visitor Centre Operations
Donation box of Friends of the French river was removed for security reasons.
Two barrier free disability parking spaces were established.
- 3) Park Operations 2008
Campers discouraged from removing campsite signs.
- 4) Boat Houses (Residential) and Commercial Marinas
No action.
- 5) Update Mooring Permits
Chevrette talked with some boaters this summer. Miller still needs to contact North Bay and Georgian Bay boating Associations..
- 6) New Map
Free maps were provided to Emergency Service providers.

- 7) Update Landfill / Garbage Trailers
10 recycling bins purchased for the visitor centre – program to be implemented in 2010 season.
- 8) OLL Project Inventory and Pit Toilet Installation
30 pit toilets installed at new locations or where toilets required replacement.
- 9) Mashkinonje Provincial Park
No action item
- 10) Fishing Regulation
Netting surveys completed on the French River summer 2009 – walleye populations higher than expected.
- 11) Water Management
No action item
- 12) Bottle Ban

New rules on regulations – must give up 2 regulations to get 1 new regulation – proposal stalled.
- 13) Fire Danger Signs
Fire danger sign at Riverview taken to Hartley Bay. Sign with broken arrow was stolen.
- 14) Forest Fires
No action item.
- 15) Stones / Jumping Off / French River Snowmobile Bridge
No incidents reported after prohibition signs installed.
- 16) Pins / Post Cards – Friends of the French
Pins and post cards of the Friends are now available at the visitor centre gift shop.
- 17) Patrols Upper French River
Patrols done at a frequency related to camper use.
- 18) FRVC Special Event
Another successful pow-wow / rendez-vous – visitation highest to date – overflow parking at Cedar Village accommodated about 30 cars.
- 19) NE Georgian Bay Trail Concept

No additional information – more consultation needed with First Nations by trail planners.

20) A new Water Quality Stewardship Council
Active monitoring.

21) Hartley Bay Marina – environment friendly bait buckets
No action item

22) A new Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act
No action item

23) Halton Recycling
Project relocated to Quebec

24) Delegation for Brazil
Visit delayed to winter and relocated to Algonquin.

New Business:

2) Hunt Camps – The 1992 Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies prescribed a phase out of recreational Land Use Permits (LUP's) for 2010 in provincial parks created prior to Ontario's Living Legacy (OLL). In the 1980's planning of the French River Provincial Park all LUP's were to be excluded from the park boundary. The boundary expanded in the mid 1990's in the Keep it Wild Program and again after OLL in 2006. In 2006 the park boundaries were regulated by a map for the first time. Mapping technology has improved from the 1980's and GPS is now utilized in locating properties. LUP's were in the past issued using hand drawn sketches. Four letters were sent to camp owners advising them that their LUPs would not be renewed because of the phase out. These letters were sent in error in 3 cases and the 4th case is under review. In 2 cases the LUP area excluded from the park was different from the GPS location of the buildings. This is a mapping error. In 1 case an old commercial fishing base was granted a life time – but no transfer LUP. In the 3rd case the LUP is in a Keep it Wild addition to the park – we are still investigating but believe that these LUP's were also to be excluded from the park. There was never any intent to phase hunting out of French River Provincial Park. The LUP's that are mapped in error need to be corrected and returned to the MNr District.

3) Big Chaudiere Dam Replacement The Big Chaudiere Dam is owned by Public Works Government Services Canada (PWGSC). The dam is entirely on PWGSC lands - including the bed of the French River – the dam is not in the park. The Dam is old and is need of replacement. The new dam will be built adjacent to the old dam again on PWGSC lands. To improve flood control PWGS may wish to deepen a previously blasted channel downstream of the dam in an historic zone in the French River Provincial Park. Water control is allowed in historic zones in Provincial Parks but is not currently mentioned in the Park

Management Plan. Should PWGSC wish to proceed with this channel deepening they will need to get a park management Plan amendment. This will involve public consultation. This project is in the Main Channel of the French River at Dokis First Nation.

4) Okikendawt Hydroelectric Project

This project is in the Blasted Channel of the French River at Dokis First Nation next to the existing Portage Dam. The “Blasted Channel” is man made. The Okikendawt Hydroelectric Project Proposal is entirely on lands owned by Public Works Government Services Canada (PWGSC). The proposed new dam is entirely on PWGSC lands - including the bed of the French River – the dam is not in the park. The dam will produce power in surplus of the needs of the First Nation and will be exported on transmission lines. Some transmission lines may cross the Provincial Parks at French River and possibly at the Restoule River. The transmission corridor has not been determined. Power transmission corridors are permitted in park policy and the Park Management Plan. Flows related to the dam are at this point unknown. It is likely water flow management will need to consider all current flow parameters. This is a project of Dokis First Nation in partnership with HydroMega.

5) Highway #69 Four Lanes

There are two locations where the Highway #69 – Four Lane Project will impact the park. These locations include the park at Hwy #69 and the French River and the park at Hwy#69 near the Municipality of Killarney Landfill Site. The two sites are in different phases of highway expansion. The French River site currently has detailed design – plans with clearing to begin possibly as early as the winter of 2010 (this winter). The construction work will come within 100m of a known pictograph site. Tree clearing will occur near the visitor centre entrance likely to start before next summer. The detailed design will never leave the visitor centre on a dead end road. When the entire project is complete however the visitor centre will be on a service road and not the main highway. In 2006 some efforts were made to remove lands required by MTO from the park at the French River – there is still a need for slight boundary amendments at this location to remove the new highway from the park. These boundary amendments will occur at the same time as the boundary amendments to the second location.

The second site does not yet have detailed design plans but we are aware that the railway adjacent to the park will need to be relocated. This will require boundary amendments to the French River and Grundy Lake Provincial Parks.

When the boundary amendments do occur we will also enter into discussions with MTO to add lands surplus to MTO and adjacent to the visitor centre to the French River Provincial Park.

6) Speed / Noise Boats Upper French River

There was a performance boat event held this summer on the Upper French River – sponsored by a North Bay Business to raise funds for a North Bay charity. This event generated many complaints about noise, careless operation of vessels, danger to other river users and wake damage to property. There were other occasional performance boats in the area unrelated to this event. The OPP were called. **and d** Discussions between the boat owners, event organizer, **and** local property owners have **not** occurred.

It has been reported that the OPP are aware of the issues **and OPP will be contacting the event organizer at the request of property owners**. The special event on the Upper French river generated complaints of damage to boats and docks with wakes; boats ignoring “no wake” signs; improper and unsafe behaviour – such as full throttle operations in narrow cane passages. This year’s event had about a dozen boats but similar events hosted at other locations have drawn 50 – 60 boats.

Discussion the park has a “Special Events” policy and that the organizers did not follow this policy. The park has noise; and disturb other person; regulations in the park. Charges for noise violations in other parks have been prosecuted against noisy performance boat operators.

RECOMMENDATION: That Ontario Park write a letter to the event organizers advising the event organizers of the Ontario parks Special events policy and regulations related to noise and disturb other users and that Ontario Park enforce the regulations and other safety issues related to performance boats and performance boat special events.

7) Canoe Donation – Mike Gauthier (canoe builder), and Gaetain Gauthier (president) of French River Metis Tribe donated a traditionally made birch bark canoe and paddle to the French River Visitor Centre. The gifts were received with a ceremony hosted by the French river First Nations and Aboriginal Advisory. A canoe previous on loan to the visitor centre from Dokis First Nation was also ceremonially received. A second and larger canoe from Dokis First Nation, dating back to the 1950’s, has also been offered to the visitor centre. The ceremony was held on the May long weekend complete with Metis music and dancing.

8) Visitor Centre Operations 2009

Had a good summer – counted visitors at 48,000 did a little more than \$75,000 in sales in the gift-shop. We had a major break down in the storage tank for fire fighting water supply – very costly to repair over \$40,000. First Nations and Metis annual event had best attendance yet – overflow parking at Cedar Village was utilized by about 30 cars. Event well received has become our annual major event. Also re-enactment special events and an art show by Pierre Sabourin of Killarney. The computer based tourism Kiosk are now up and running and

connected to the internet – staff at the Municipality of French River and Municipality of Killarney have been trained and can update the kiosks.

9) Park Operations 2009

The same staff have returned for 3 years – so they are well trained and do professional quality work, very respectful of park visitors. Visitation was slow in May but picked up during the summer – with anticipated visitation levels similar to last year by year end. Visitors are leaving less litter. The rainbow Tramway must be repaired in 2010 or it will need to be replaced – which would be very costly. The Recollet Falls tramway is in poor repair – to the point it must be removed – may or may not replace it. 50 hP motor has been requiring expensive repair needs to be replaced in 2010.

Delta Association did annual clean up with barge – a fun event with lots of clean up accomplished – thank you.

One fatality of a Lodge guests in Wanipitae River in the park. We know of two other boats that sank – one on Georgian Bay – park staff involved – in recovery of boat and assisting operator. The second boat flipped in the Pickerel River in November a 21' foot work boat – park staff were not involved with this incident.

RECOMMENDATION: The French and Wanipitae Rivers are not naturally flowing rivers – they are controlled by dams – there were fatalities in 2008 and 2009 related to high water flows – there should be signs posted similar to fire danger signs indicating “high water” levels.

Some discussion Ministry of labour now called when fatalities occur in Provincial Parks. Need to be sure park visitors are getting park tabloids. Other possibilities to inform park visitors about high water were also discussed including, hand outs, stamping permits, signs, markers in the river.

10) NEW Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act Planning Manual

There is a new planning manual for Provincial Parks related to the new Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act.

11) Mashkinonje Lookout Tower and Signs

Mashkinonje has installed a new 25 foot lookout tower on the Loudon Trail – with assistance of volunteers – including Ed Chevrette. Board walk also installed in partnership with the Municipality of French River. Species at Risk signs were installed in partnership with MNR Species at Risk. The Friends of Mashkinonje volunteers and coordination of partnerships – have some very nice trails.

12) Manitou Islands – Abandon Uranium Mine

French River park staff also facilitated MNDM&F inspection of the abandoned mine on the Manitou Islands. A diesel fuel storage tank which had fallen over and was in danger of rolling into Lake Nipissing was also secured. These tanks

will need to be removed – if you know of anyone looking for a 10 foot by 20 foot tank.

13) Fishing Regulations

Division 11 – no changes anticipated for January 1, 2010.

Division 10 of the fishing regulations – in the lower French River – no changes to pike or bass fishing, anticipating new slot sizes for walleye.

Sturgeon added to Species at risk list – no open season. Consult the fishing regulations after January 1, 2010 for exact changes.

Index netting was done on the river this year showing lots of walleye in the Dokis and central section of the River.

RECOMMENDATION – may need to take a look at changing bass regulations. Many need to look at river flow to manage flows for sturgeon spawn.

14) French River Water Quality Stewardship Council

The group is incorporated and now has charitable status. The Council had crews sampling 18 areas along the French River for water quality including phosphates. The council has made some recommendations to the Municipality of French River regarding their sewage lagoon discharges. The Municipality has hired a consultant to look at the concerns raised. The group also did some tree planting. Trees planted in association with the park at old MTO rest stop near the visitor centre. A brief discussion occurred regarding “blue-green algae”.

25) Next Meeting –fall of 2010 date to be announced October or November.