

PARKS CANADA AGENCY RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY AND SPECIAL EVENT ASSESSMENTS

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SCOPE

This direction applies to the assessment of recreational activities and special events in national historic sites, national parks, national park reserves, national marine conservation areas, national marine conservation area reserves and other federal places administered by the Parks Canada Agency.

This direction will be used to assess new or existing activities and events that present significant opportunities and / or areas of concern in Parks Canada's protected heritage places and does not apply to resource harvesting activities, military exercises or ministerial events.

The process and principles outlined are also useful for providing guidance related to decision-making with respect to activities and events in other situations (i.e., minor events and activities, establishment processes, zoning exercises etc.).

PURPOSE

The purpose is to outline a set of principles that will be used by Parks Canada to assess new or existing activities and events that present significant opportunities and / or areas of concern and will provide guidance for the development of national and local direction regarding activities and events within Parks Canada's protected heritage places.

MAIN REFERENCES AND AUTHORITIES INCLUDE:

Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, S.C. 1992, c. 37
Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act, S.C. 2002, c. 18
Canada National Parks Act, S.C. 2000, c. 32
Historic Sites and Monuments Act, R.S. 1985, c. H-4
Parks Canada Agency Act, S.C. 1998, c. 31
Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park Act, S.C. 1997, c. 37
Species at Risk Act, S.C. 2002, c. 29 and its Orders
Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act
Yukon Environment and Socio-economic Assessment Act
Applicable Regulations
National Parks of Canada Businesses Regulations (SOR/98-455)
National Parks Canada Lease and Licence of Occupation Regulations (SOR/92-25)
Historic Canal Regulations (SOR/93-220)
Comprehensive Land Claim Agreements (refer to applicable Agreements and Legislation)
Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreements (refer to applicable agreements)
Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies. 1994.
Management Directive 2.1.9: Law Enforcement. 2003.
Management Directive 2.4.2: Impact Assessment. 1998.
Management Directive 3.1.3: Public Safety Measures. 1991.
Management Bulletin 4.4.3: Public Safety Management. 1998.
Parks Canada Agency Management Bulletin # 2.6.10

BACKGROUND

Providing visitors with opportunities to participate in activities and events is one way of encouraging meaningful and enjoyable visits that contribute to a sense of connection to place. The provision of these opportunities - in a manner that respects the natural and cultural resources and the sense of place that make these locations special - helps ensure the continuing relevance of Parks Canada's protected heritage places to Canadians, helps foster ongoing support for these places and helps the Parks Canada Agency deliver upon its strategic outcome.

The strategic outcome of the Agency is:

"Canadians have a strong sense of connection, through meaningful experiences, to their national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas, and these protected places are enjoyed in ways that leave them unimpaired for present and future generations."

(Parks Canada Program Activity Architecture, 2007)

Parks Canada is required by policy to assess visitor activities that take place in protected heritage places (*Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* 1994). It is within Parks Canada's mandate to assess activities and events in an informed, inclusive fashion.

Assessing the Activity or Event

During assessments, activities and events are evaluated to determine whether they are compatible with five core principles that stem from Parks Canada's mandate.

The core principles for both national and local assessments include:

- **Principle 1:** Respect the Character of the Place

Activities and events are consistent with Parks Canada's mandate and / or the direction in the protected heritage place's management plan. Activities and events respect the value of Parks Canada's protected heritage places or the unique character of a specific protected heritage place.

- **Principle 2:** Respect Natural and Cultural Resource Protection Goals

Activities and events are consistent with Parks Canada's resource protection goals. Activities and events that have unacceptable natural or cultural resource impacts will not be supported. Parks Canada will monitor activities and events, will follow an adaptive management approach and will engage in ongoing dialogue with visitors, Aboriginal peoples and partners and stakeholders regarding their delivery.

- **Principle 3:** Facilitate Opportunities for Meaningful and Enjoyable Visitor Experiences

Activities and events help facilitate unique, safe, stimulating experiences that contribute to a sense of connection to place. Activities and events respond to the needs and interests of identified existing and / or potential audiences and may provide participants with a sense of personal growth and accomplishment.

- **Principle 4:** Promote Understanding and Appreciation

Activities and events create opportunities to enrich understanding and appreciation of protected heritage places and may foster support of, and involvement in, stewardship.

- **Principle 5:** Value and Involve Local Communities

Activities and events create opportunities for the active involvement of local communities while respecting the rights, interests and values of Aboriginal peoples and the interests and values of stakeholders.

Principle-based considerations will guide assessment discussions to determine whether or not an activity or event is compatible with the five core principles. The systematic discussion of the principles and their associated considerations will ensure a thorough, conscientious and transparent approach to decision making.

There is no specific weight to the core principles. The use of all of the principles and their associated considerations will ensure that direction approved by the Director General, External Relations and Visitor Experience, or the Field Unit Superintendent is made with proper assessment of all elements of an activity or special event.

Principle-based considerations will be reviewed over time to ensure their continued relevance.

If necessary, additional considerations can be included during assessments depending on the nature of the activity or event and the context. The decision to use additional considerations is made by the assessment team.

Operational Considerations

Operational requirements are considered during both national and local assessments. These requirements will differ depending on the activity or event and could include such things as infrastructure requirements (i.e., trails, facilities etc.), information requirements (signage etc.) and / or service requirements (staff availability, public safety etc).

Operational requirements help determine how activities and events occur within Parks Canada's protected heritage places.